

## BLUEFACED LEICESTER UNION of NORTH AMERICA



The Bluefaced Leicester was sparse in number in North America in 1995 when the expansion of the breed began. Private individuals purchased two flocks, one from Nova Scotia, the other from Virginia. Then the task of tracing lineage began and crossing the few sheep for the following years until new genetics could be obtained. In 1997 the first BFL ewes underwent laparoscopic artificial insemination at Michigan State University, with frozen semen from UK Bluefaced Leicester sires. Since then more outstanding UK rams have been collected and added to the imported gene pool. The resulting progeny are ever improving the breed here as the genetic base increases.

In 2002, the first natural colored Bluefaced Leicester lambs were born and, meeting the requirement to be of purebred parents, were readily accepted in the BLU registry. The option of white and natural colored BFL fleeces has added to the sale potential of Bluefaced Leicester fleeces.



The increased popularity of the Bluefaced Leicester is a reflection of its success as a premier breed for purebred production, handspinners, ethnic lamb buyers and as a sire of crossbred Mules. The Bluefaced Leicester is proving itself to be a truly multi-purpose breed.

### THE REGISTRY

The Bluefaced Leicester Union of North America (BLU) registers only purebred Bluefaced Leicesters under its name through the Associated Sheep Registries in Wamego, KS.

To learn more about the Bluefaced Leicester, BLU, and its member, visit our website:  
[www.bflsheep.com](http://www.bflsheep.com)

email: [info@bflsheep.com](mailto:info@bflsheep.com)

We are also on Facebook:

Bluefaced Leicester Union of North America



Serving the breed and the breeder

# THE BLUEFACED LEICESTER



In leicesters...blue is finer!

("Leicester" is pronounced "LESS-ter")

**The Bluefaced Leicester Union  
of North America**



[www.bflsheep.com](http://www.bflsheep.com)



### GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Bluefaced Leicester should have a broad muzzle, good mouth, a Roman nose, bright, alert eyes and long erect ears. The color of the head skin should be dark blue showing through white hair, with no wool on the head or neck. Both sexes will be polled. There should be a good length of neck laid into broad shoulders, a good “spring of rib” and a long, strong back, with no weakness behind the shoulder. The hindquarters should be broad and deep, the legs clean, well positioned and strong boned, free of wool below the hocks and knees, black hooves and no evidence of low pasterns. The rams have a definite, proud and stately carriage, and the ewes exhibit a more elegant, feminine look. The wool should be tightly purled, fine, dense, semi-lustrous, and opening cleanly to the skin.

### SIZE

The adult Bluefaced Leicester has one of the largest body weights of the British breeds. In spite of this size, when mated to the smaller hill type ewe, the ewe is able to carry and lamb its cross-bred progeny without the slightest difficulty. A ram at maturity should weigh 200-250 lbs. and have an excellent disposition. Rams are quite manageable, despite their size. Ewes will usually weigh 130-160 lbs. at maturity.

### COLOR

The Bluefaced Leicester, though predominately a white wool breed, does carry the recessive black gene, and natural colored lambs do appear. On a white animal, small black spots are permissible on the face, ears, neck and legs. Lips and nostrils are preferably black, mottled gray is acceptable.

### WOOL



The Bluefaced Leicester is classified as a Longwool breed with a staple length of 3-6 inches, a fleece weight of 2½-4½ lbs., and a fiber diameter of 56s–60s count, or 24-28 microns. It creates high-quality semi-lustre yarns with soft hand, beautiful drape, and excellent dyeing properties. The wool should be tightly purled, fine, dense, semi-lustrous, and opening cleanly to the skin. The average fiber diameter should be from 24-28 microns with a staple length of 3-6 inches.

### LENGTH OF LOIN

The Bluefaced Leicester has an exceptionally long loin which he brings to any offspring in a crossbreeding scheme. The carcasses are excellent and an asset to the market lamb or club lamb producer.

### LAMBING PERCENTAGE

The Bluefaced Leicester is the most prolific of all native British breeds of sheep. It is quite common for registered flocks to achieve a lamb crop in excess of 250%. The ewe

has the maternal instincts and milking ability to match these multiple births.

### HEALTH

The United Kingdom has never had a recorded case of scrapie in purebred Bluefaced Leicester sheep. Because of their genetic resistance to scrapie, many black-faced hill ewes are being crossbred with the Bluefaced Leicester to improve the scrapie resistance of the Mule population, which is the backbone of the UK sheep industry.

### HISTORY

- UK Bluefaced Leicester sheep was developed near Hexham in Northumberland at the beginning of the 1900s. They are descendants of Robert Bakewell’s improved Dishley Leicester. They were bred to produce quality crossbred ewes from the native black-faced and Swaledale draft ewes. It was found that a darker colored ram, with a finer skin and wool produced a better cross-ewe from the black-faced hill ewes; a cross traditionally called the “Mule”.

From its original home in the Northern Pennines, the Bluefaced Leicester has spread throughout the upland areas of England, Scotland, and Wales and into Northern Ireland. In the 1970s there was an importation into Canada, and from there they have migrated down into the USA.

