



JACOB SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

INSPECTION COMMITTEE FACT SHEET

EXCESSIVE QUILTING

October 2019

LANGUAGE FROM THE STANDARD:

Unacceptable/Disqualifying Traits: **Excessive quilted appearance to the fleece (where the dark fibers are shorter than the white or vice-versa) occurring after the first shearing.**

DEFINITION FROM THE GUIDEBOOK:

Quilted (fleece): **Fibers of one color grow longer and often coarser than fibers of the other color. The fleece has an uneven “quilted” appearance. This may be present on lambs and disappear after the first shearing or become noticeable on older animals.**

DISCUSSION AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Varying amounts of quilting are not uncommon in Jacob sheep. Sometimes, the difference between dark and white fibers is just a matter of length. In other instances, the dark fiber has a distinctly different texture than the white – for example it may be coarser and less crimped. Coarser fibers often look longer because they “stick out” more.

The definition of quilting *does not* include longer or coarser britch or neck wool; these are typical variations that do not impact use of the fleece as a whole.

Why is quilting a problem? One of the benefits of using Jacob wool for spinning or other fiber arts is that two colors are present in the same fleece – which makes it easy to blend and otherwise work with two natural colors from the same fleece, resulting in a uniform wool product. However, if the two colors are of different lengths and textures, this benefit disappears. Because quilting – like many other traits – appears to be hereditary, JSBA does not register adult animals with **excessive** quilting (or lambs with quilting that is judged likely to remain excessive as an adult). However, ewes that do not meet the standard may be included in the Appendix Certified (AC) category if both parents are registered and the inspectors find them otherwise acceptable.

A moderate amount of quilting – a visible but limited difference in the dark and white locks – is not as objectionable to spinners and will not disqualify an animal. And, of course, quilting may not be as great a concern for those who raise Jacobs for purposes other than production of spinning wool.

What is “excessive” quilting? There is no absolute point at which quilting become “excessive” – but generally it could be described as a degree of quilting that would make it difficult to blend the white and dark wool. Excessive quilting shows up as a very distinct difference between the dark and light locks and is apparent to an experienced Jacob breeder. The photos below show some examples of uniform fleeces, wool with a limited amount of quilting, and fleeces which clearly show “excessive” quilting. A moderate degree of quilting might raise questions during inspection of a lamb, with a recommendation that the registration be delayed until the fleece is more developed or until after the first shearing. However, lambs with only a minor degree of quilting are typically passed. The photos below are intended to illustrate the range of quilting that may be observed during inspection. Realistically, if quilting cannot be observed in registration photos, it is not “excessive.”

Changes with age. As noted in the definition, quilting that is present in a lamb fleece will often (but not always) even out to an extent in the adult fleece. Therefore, the standard refers to excessive quilting after the first shearing. Because most breeders register lambs before they are a year old, the inspectors must make a judgement call about a fleece that is SO quilted that it is very likely to remain so throughout an animal’s life, based on their knowledge and experience. For whatever reason, where the quilted appearance is produced by *longer dark wool*, it seems to be more likely to even out with age. However, *very short dark wool* often seems to persist. While lambs are rarely failed due to quilting, this decision is made on occasion. In the event that the breeder wants to retain the failed lamb, he/she may wait until the fleece regrows after the first shearing, and submit an appeal at that time if the fleece becomes more even.

On the other hand, quilting may only show up in an adult animal. If the sheep is already registered, it cannot be failed retroactively. However, breeders are advised to take the quilting into account in their breeding decisions, knowing that this trait appears to be hereditary.

Photo examples [Note: all photographs are used with permission of the owner.]



Figure 1. A uniform fleece in a lamb. Note that the wool is uniform in both length and texture.



Figure 2. Another uniform fleece in a ewe lamb with longer staple length. Note that longer britch or neck wool is not considered "quilting."



Figure 3a. Minor quilting in a young lamb. At only a few days old, the "baby fuzz" obscures true length of wool. In this photo, the black wool appears longer. See next photo.



Figure 3b. Same animal as in photo 3a (in different lighting and with sun fading), taken 5 months later. "Baby fuzz" is gone, but there is still some minor quilting that would not interfere with use of the wool, and probably would not disqualify the ewe from registration. It may even out further with age. Note that the white wool now appears longer.



Figure 4. Minor quilting in a lamb resulting primarily from coarser black wool which appears longer. Jacob lambs with this degree of quilting would typically be expected to pass inspection.



Figure 5. Relatively minor quilting in a lamb where the white appears longer. Jacob lambs with this degree of quilting would typically be expected to pass inspection, but inspectors would have to consider whether quilting is excessive.



Figure 6. Quilting in a lamb, with the dark wool being shorter. It has often been observed that quilting where the dark wool is short is unlikely to even out. This lamb was not registered. If presented for inspection, it is likely that some inspectors would request a delay until the fleece was more mature, or until the second (post shearing) fleece could be evaluated. Alternatively, a ewe lamb with both parents registered might be placed in the AC category.



Figure 7. A quilted fleece in a young lamb. Note that the black fleece is obviously coarser than the white, and it is also longer. It is likely that some inspectors would either delay a decision on this lamb, or would recommend the AC category (for a ewe) or fail the animal (ram).



Figure 8. Another questionable degree of quilting in a very young lamb, with darker black wool. Because this could even out with age, inspectors might recommend delaying a decision regarding registration. Or, additional photos may clarify the extent of quilting.



Figure 9. A quilted fleece on a lilac lamb showing longer white wool. This lamb passed inspection, but the quilting became more pronounced as an adult, and typically showed up in her lambs as well. She should probably have been placed in the AC category.



Figure 10. Excessive quilting in an adult fleece. This Jacob did not meet the standard and was assigned Appendix Certified status.



Figure 11. This Jacob lamb showed clearly excessive quilting before the first shearing. It is obvious to an experienced breeder that this type of quilting will not even out in the adult. This lamb was not registered.