



# Valais Blacknose Breeding Guidelines and Recommendations

## 1. Familiarise yourself with the Valais Blacknose Breed Standard and important structural traits

Before you start your breeding program, please ensure you have read the Valais Blacknose Breed standard on this website. This will give you the information that you need when you are looking at a Valais to buy to add your breeding program.

Ensure the animals you are selecting are to your desired outcome.

You need to look further than just colour markings and pedigrees.

Major consideration should be given to other factors which include conformation including leg and feet structure, horn placement, mouth and teeth, testicles, and udders, as well as fleece type, pedigree and overall health of the animal.

Below is the UK Valais Blacknose Society Grading points breakdown.

It clearly outlines the three grading categories, 11 sub categories, and the criteria or quality traits you should be breeding for in each category.

**Animals that are lacking in multiple of these traits should be considered for culling.**

Breed standard: <https://nzsheep.co.nz/valais-blacknose-breed-standards/>



## Grading Points Breakdown

Category	Breed Standards Grading Criteria	
Appearance	Markings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ Black encompassing the eye area connecting with the black of the nose</li> <li>• ♀♂ Black ears – black should meet the white of the head</li> <li>• ♀♂ Black hooves and ankle area ('black socks')</li> <li>• ♀♂ Black spots on knees and hocks (spots can be non-symmetrical)</li> <li>• ♀ Females must have a black tail spot. There must be a finger-width gap of white on the tail.</li> <li>• ♂ Male scrotum may be black, but the black must not spread upward into the belly area and fleece</li> </ul>
	Head & Neck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ Well proportioned, compact head</li> <li>• ♀♂ Roman nose, wide mouth, broad forehead</li> <li>• ♀♂ Pronounced, regal head shape in rams. ♂ Mature rams often develop protuberance behind horn base</li> <li>• ♀♂ Short, straight well-muscled neck</li> </ul>
	Horns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀ Spiral, well set off from the cheeks; horizontal or curved</li> <li>• ♂ Horns curved in large spirals, well set off from the cheeks</li> <li>• ♀♂ Black stripes in the horns are acceptable</li> </ul>
	Chest & Shoulders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ Wide, deep, chest area</li> <li>• ♀♂ Shoulders line naturally with neck and chest</li> <li>• ♀♂ Rib cage curvature is well proportioned and rounded</li> </ul>
	Back & Loin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ Long, straight top line</li> <li>• ♀♂ Wide back and loin</li> </ul>



Category		Breed Standards Grading Criteria
	<b>Pelvis, Abdomen &amp; Hindquarters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Wide and medium-length pelvis</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Medium sized belly with small belly hollows/pits (paralumbur fossa)</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Well-muscled hindquarters</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Weight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Guide for adult animals:</i> ♀ 70 - 90 kg ♂ 80 - 120 kg</li> </ul>
	<b>Withers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Guide for adult animals:</i> ♀ 72 - 78 cm ♂ 75 - 85 cm</li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Well-spaced, wide</i></li> </ul>
<b>Conformation</b>	<b>Posture/ Stance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Hind legs correctly placed, not cow-hocked or bowlegged</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Forelegs broad stance and not knock-kneed.</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Slight hock angulation</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Short, strong pasterns (45-degree angle)</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Limbs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Solid bone structure</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Solid hoof deportment</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Strong, sure footed, well set, evenly padded</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Gait</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Spacious, sure footed and wide legged</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Doesn't sway or waver</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Even and stable movement</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Mobile with ease</i></li> </ul>
<b>Wool</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Staple length is 10cm based on 6 months growth (Recommended to be shorn twice a year)</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Fleece is uniformly white and balanced over the whole body</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Wool on legs is thick and full</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Wool on head is natural and long</i></li> <li>• ♀♂ <i>Some black hairs/fibers are tolerated on the neck area in animals over 18 months old</i></li> </ul>



## **THE RULES ON MOUTHS**

- *Over/Under shot jaw. Incorrect tooth position in animals 18 months and older results in point deduction during grading*

*\*Animals refers to Females & Males.*

*\*\* The Swiss are more stringent on teeth in males over 18 months, however both sexes can be deducted several points if any misalignment is identified but they are never disqualified.*

- *Over/Under shot jaw. Incorrect tooth position in animals during first grading or up to 18 months results in exclusion*

*\*Animals refers to Females & Males.*

*\*\*Exclusion means disqualification. Disqualification means that if an animal, female or male up to 18 months is presented with any of the flaws (inclusive of mouths) listed in the 'reasons for exclusions' column those animals should not be exhibited.*

*Note: In Switzerland the mouths of all animals are checked during the Autumn Shows, Miss Visp and Widdermarkt, if flaws are identified strict action taken.*

## **2. Does your management reflect your production goals?**

Some questions that may be helpful to consider would be:

- Has the ewe had lambs before?
- Has the ewes run with a ram before and not got in lamb?
- Has the ram run with ewes not got all ewes in lamb?
- Has the ewe been flushed for ET or had AI done?
- Has there been issues with any of the progeny in the past?
- Has the animal had regular worming and vaccinations.
- Has the ewe or ram been on good feed?

Don't forget that your choice of ram is as important as the ewe as "the ram is half the flock".

All breeding factors should be considered when selecting breeding stock and when purchasing a Valais.





### 3. Strive to keep genetic diversity at a comfortable level

When looking at pedigrees you need to ensure that you are buying an animal that is sufficiently outbred or genetically diverse for your flock.

The following 'Sheep Breeding System' excerpt is taken from the UK Valais Blacknose Sheep Society Sheep Flock Management tools and is considered highly relevant to the NZVBSS:

#### ***Pure Breeding***

*Pure breeding is the mating of rams and ewes of the same breed. A purebred flock can be managed as a single flock because all ewes and rams are usually of the same breed. The goal of purebred sheep breeding is to provide superior genetics (stud seedstock) which are marketed as rams and ewes to other stud breeders. Within pure breeding, there are also other types of mating systems:*

#### ***Outbreeding***

*Outbreeding is the mating of animals of the same breed, but which have no closer relationship than at least 4 to 6 generations. Outbreeding is the recommended breeding practice for most purebred sheep breeders.*

#### ***Linebreeding***

*Linebreeding is a system of breeding in which the degree of relationship is less intense than in inbreeding and is usually directed towards keeping offspring related to a highly prized ancestor. Typically, it involves arranging matings so that one or more relatives occur more than once in a pedigree, however, the degree of relationship is not closer than half-brother half-sister matings or cousin matings, etc. .. Line breeding is a mild form of inbreeding...*

**Please remember coefficient of inbreeding % (inbreeding) of the animal is only one way of selecting breeding stock, being a sound healthy animal and a good example of the breed should always take precedence.**

Inbreeding, "how your animals are related", may result in inbreeding problems that can compound undesirable issues that are present in the parent animals and then subsequently, with their progeny. Some examples may include the animal's fertility, growth rates, susceptibility to diseases and to the overall structure of the progeny and lamb survivability.



Line breeding can be a successful breeding practice carried out by experienced stud breeder to retain favourable chosen traits of highly prized ancestors. Line breeding involves rigorous culling of both males and females to ensure that only animals with desirable traits are line breed. Culling would take into account all other aspects of successful breeding, type, confirmation, teeth, fleece etc.

Please do your research when buying any animal, so that you are not buying an animal that you feel, is inbred or not appropriate to your breeding program. Researching Line breeding and Inbreeding will give you the tools to decide on what is, and is not, appropriate to your breeding program.

Doing your own research will give you the principles of breeding including inbreeding depression, breeding choices including hybrid vigour. This will help you find the traits that you find important in your flock.

There are a number of computer programs available that can help you decide on your level of breeding that is appropriate for your program, what animals you should and should not use with each other.

Nabssar and are Sobczyk are basic free inbreeding calculator programmes and Bengufarm is a more complete package that includes a mating calculator along with keeping all your pedigree details, lambing records, vaccination data etc. There are many more programmes out there as well but these are ones used successfully by members of the NZVBSS:

[NABSSAR.org](http://NABSSAR.org) - [Coefficient of Inbreeding Calculator](http://NABSSAR.org)

[Inbreeding calculator \(sobczyk.eu\)](http://Inbreedingcalculator.sobczyk.eu)

[Home - BenguFarm | Livestock and Game / Wildlife Management Software](http://Home-BenguFarm.com)

Please remember when using any programme, data can easily be skewed. The level of data you input will affect the result you get. For example, only entering 3 generations will give you a lower inbreeding coefficient than if you enter 5 generations.

The level of inbreeding is up to the individual to decide how happy they are with the level they feel comfortable with. Please do your own research and use all the information that is available for deciding on your own desired stud outcomes.



*If you are not an experienced stud breeder and competent using fine breeding practices, including rigorous culling, then as a guideline, you should not breed anything with greater than a 10% inbreeding coefficient.*

*As a final note, as stated in the excerpt above, genetic diversity or inbreeding of the animal is only one way of selecting breeding stock, being a sound healthy animal and a good example of the breed should always take precedence.*

#### 4. Regularly evaluate your stock

Body condition scoring will greatly help your decisions about adequate feeding regimes.

Checking offspring production, milking ability, feet structure and lameness issues and do ability.

Consider culling ewes that are poor producers, don't milk, have poor mothering ability, have lambing issues, have bearings, regularly produce offspring that don't meet the breed standard, always lame or have a worm intolerance.

Consider keeping ewe lambs from good ewes as this will tend to increase the positive maternal qualities in the flock.

Breed standard: <https://nzsheep.co.nz/valais-blacknose-breed-standards/>

SIL visual score guide for traits and other useful info on traits:  
<https://www.sil.co.nz/technical>