

# American Romney Breeders Association Board of Directors Recommendations to Membership for Review

## Topic: Breed Standards

### Note to ARBA Members:

Multiple breeders from a number of districts have contacted board members about the ARBA breed standards, sharing their concerns about the current standards as compared to earlier versions, and whether the standards are being followed by judges in the show ring. In response to those concerns, a group of board members has been reviewing current and past standards and has made a series of recommendations to the board for consideration. The board has accepted the recommendations to be posted for member review; and recommendations are included in **green font** within this document. In those places where recommendations replace existing language, the language that is recommended for change is shown ~~with a line through it~~.

Member review and feedback is an important part of this process, and the recommendations will be available and posted through September 16. Feedback will be catalogued for review by the Education Committee, and then the full board. Please send any feedback to Anne McIntyre-Lahner at [Olympiafarm@att.net](mailto:Olympiafarm@att.net)

## I. Introduction

### Breed Standards

Breed standards establish the ideal animal within a breed. Standards are developed by identifying the requisite and desirable traits and characteristics displayed by the ideal animal. There are many descriptions of breed standards; the one found in Wikipedia is both succinct and useful:

A **breed standard** in animal fancy and animal husbandry is a set of guidelines which is used to ensure that the animals produced by a breeder or breeding facility conform to the specifics of the standardized breed.

Breed standards are devised by breed associations or breed clubs, not by individuals, and are written to reflect the use or purpose of the species and breed of the animal. Breed standards help define the ideal animal of a breed and provide goals for breeders in improving stock. In essence a breed

standard is a blueprint for an animal fit for the function it was bred - i.e. herding, tracking etc.<sup>[1]</sup> Breed standards are not scientific documents, and may vary from association to association, and from country to country, even for the same species and breed. There is no one format for breed standards across all species, and breed standards do change and are updated over time.<sup>[1]</sup>

This document represents the work of the Education Committee of the ARBA Board of Directors, and is being offered as a draft document for review by, and feedback from, ARBA membership.

**Please note the following:**

Proposed language is represented with green font.

Proposed deletions are represented with crossed-out font.

The Board proposes adopting a **one breed; one standard** approach. Since the majority of breeders raise white Romneys, this draft document addresses the standard as it relates to white Romneys.

## **II. Scope of Work and Timeline**

### **October to April:**

Review of historical documents

Review of Australia New Zealand and British standards

### **April to June**

Develop Chart:

List of Specific traits

Current and recommended points on the scorecard

### **July to September**

Presentation to Board

Period for Review and comment by members

Board review of member comments

### **October and ongoing**

Board vote on recommendations

Modify standard and points based on board vote

Education program for breeders and judges

Develop Judge Agreement document for ARBA sanctioned shows

## **American Romney Breeders Association** **Standard of Excellence and Breed Standard**

**Standard of Excellence** underscores the aspirational nature of a breed standard: in effect, the standard describes the ideal animal.

It should be understood that many worthy animals within a flock will not possess all of the characteristics of the ideal animal. It should be further understood that there will be a range in the number and percentage of those characteristics found across individual flocks, and across flocks within ARBA. Unless specifically noted as a disqualification, purebred Romneys, possessing a majority of the characteristics in the breed standard, should be considered as worthy animals.

Similarly, an individual breeder may choose to emphasize one trait or characteristic over another, and as the current Romney breed standards states:

... breeders raise Romneys to meet varying local conditions. A variety of types of Romneys have been developed to adapt to the climate, feed, location and type of soil on which they are grown.

When choosing which Romneys to register, show, and use for breeding, members should refer to the standards to determine if an animal is worthy of registration, and whether the animal should be used for breeding. There is no inspection requirement as part of the registration process, and all ARBA members rely on the integrity of other breeders to ensure quality stock, and the future of the breed.

### **One Breed: One Standard**

Whether a Romney is white, natural colored (black) or moorit (brown), the animal is first and foremost a Romney, and as such, should share the traits and characteristic that define the Romney breed. The ARBA board recommends a unified breed standard; and where variation from the general standard is required based on color, those variations will be specifically identified. **This initial set of recommendations is based on a unified standard, and will not focus on color variations at this time. The next phase of work will identify variations for natural colored Romneys. Variations for moorit Romneys should be guided by the work of the Science Advisory Panel. Accordingly, white Romneys and NC Romneys will be addressed first.**

**General:** Romney sheep, as a dual purpose breed, exhibit the essential qualities found in all good meat-producing sheep. They are sturdy animals, with a strong bone structure, large body capacity and a uniform fleece which is characteristic of the breed. **The Romney is a mid-sized to large, well-muscled sheep. Its size is due to solid bone structure and muscling,**

and a substantial body versus long legs or neck. While not a particularly fast-growing sheep, consistent and ongoing growth during the first two years will result in an adult sheep that weighs within the target range

**Weight:** This will vary as breeders raise Romneys to meet varying local conditions. A variety of types of Romneys have been developed to adapt to the climate, feed, location and type of soil on which they are grown.

a. ~~RAMS as yearlings or approaching maturity should be 200 lbs. or more.~~

b. ~~EWES as yearlings or approaching maturity should be 140 lbs. or more.~~

Mature ewes: ideal target should be at least 150 pounds

Mature rams: ideal target should be at least 200 pounds

**Form:** Straight top line blending from the neck ending at a square rump. The body should be deep and broad although the animal should be narrower in the front than the rear.

**Quality:** Bone should be strong but not coarse in character. Rams should look masculine and ewes feminine. Hair should be fine and the skin pink. White legs are desirable but minor discoloration in the hair on the legs is acceptable.

**Points:** (hooves, nose, eyeliner, lips) should be solid black; a mottled nose should be discriminated against, and a pink nose should be strongly discriminated against.

## CONDITION

**Flesh Covering:** Animals should be shown in working condition.

## HEAD AND NECK

**Head:** Large clear eyes; alert look; broad face with width between the ears. The poll should be covered with wool and free of horns and hair. The head should be carried high and be level between the ears. Ears should be **white, small, felted**, and rather thick; **minor black spots acceptable**. Nostrils should be black ~~or dark, mottled gray~~. **A mottled nose should be discriminated against, Solid** A pink nose should be **strongly** discriminated against. The face should **be open, wide, and mostly free from wool, although some wool on the cheeks is acceptable. Wool blindness should be strongly discriminated against** ~~be relatively free of wool. Sheep with wool on the face must not be wool blind.~~ **Jaw and muzzle should be wide and strong with teeth meeting the pad correctly**

**Neck:** Moderate length, smoothly joined with shoulders.

## FOREQUARTERS

**Shoulders:** Compact on top but not rough or sharp; joined smoothly with neck and body; covered moderately with flesh.

**Brisket:** Full; round, but not overly extended.

**Legs:** Legs should have a strong bone structure. White legs are desirable. Legs should have usable wool that is strong but not coarse, and which extends to the knees. Additional fiber may extend to the hock. Kemp, a course, short, coarse fiber, is also found on the leg, and should be white – minor discoloration on leg hair acceptable. Front legs shall have a slight curvature above the knee, shall be straight from that point down and shall be wide set. Pasterns should be strong and upright. Hooves should be black although some light colored variations are acceptable and will be slightly discounted.

## BODY

**Chest:** Deep and wide.

**Ribs:** Well sprung, long, and showing adequate capacity.

**Back:** Broad although somewhat narrower in the front than the rear; the back should be straight with smooth blending from the neck and ending at a square rump.

**Loin:** Wide and long.

## HINDQUARTERS

**Hips:** Level, smooth, and wide apart.

**Rump:** Long, level, and wide. Should not be a sloping rump.

**Thighs:** Deep and full.

**Legs:** Rear legs straight and wide set apart from a rear view; not post legged; should have a slight natural curve from side view. Pasterns should be strong and upright. Hooves should be black although some light colored variations are acceptable and will be slightly discounted.

**Scrotum:** The ram's testicles should be large, even in size, and well developed.

**Udder:** The ewe's udder should be well formed, large and soft with evidence of two good teats.

## **WOOL**

**Quantity:** Ewes should shear 8 pounds or more, and rams should shear 12 pounds or more per year with a yearly staple length of five inches or more. When shown, fleeces need to be of adequate length to display the Romney fleece characteristics and quality.

**Quality:** Romney wool is dense and free opening in nature with a well-defined crimp from butt to tip. Uniformity of coverage is essential and quality should be maintained from the shoulder to the back of the flank; a weak or open back is not acceptable. Gare (long, hairy medullated fibers that do not spin or dye) is not acceptable within the fleece, and should be strongly discriminated against. ~~over the entire body and spinning count are most important.~~ The fleece is lustrous; it hangs in separate locks with minimal cross fibers between the locks. ~~Animals possessing kemp (hair-like fibers) should be discriminated against.~~

**Grade:** Wool with a spinning count of 50 to 44 inclusive (equivalent to a fiber diameter of about 29 to 36 microns) is within the breed standard. No preference should be given to a coarser or finer fleece as long as it is within the breed standard. Each has its environmental place, its markets, and each should be grown to suit specific manufacturing needs and requirements. Fleece should be bright and white, dense with free opening well-defined staples that are full and oval shaped, not flat. In addition, it should have the necessary bulk and handle that is expected of wool of comparable micron

**Condition:** Fiber should be strong, clean, soft, and bright. Sheep which might have been rinsed with water 6-7 weeks before being shown should not be discounted providing they exhibit the characteristics of a Romney fleece.

**Disqualifications:** Entropion; Unsound mouth (see articles by JoAnn Mast in the Ramblings for reference)