

NSIP 201: Ultrasound Scanning Muscle and Fat for Carcass Data

Adding Carcass Data

Once you've mastered the basics, adding ultrasound carcass data can significantly increase the value of your Estimated Breeding Values for terminal traits. It only takes about one more day's work.

Ultrasound measurements provide objective data on traits such as loin eye area and fat depth, helping identify sheep with superior carcass merit. This information can improve selection decisions and provide valuable data for both seedstock and commercial customers.

Do I need to scan my entire flock?

No. Only the current year's lamb crop needs to be scanned. You do not need to scan older sheep.

The scan data collected on lambs is used to evaluate the genetics behind those lambs, helping identify sires and dams that consistently produce sheep with superior carcass merit.

Getting Started

- Work with an experienced ultrasound technician who regularly scans sheep. Accurate measurements are critical because the quality of your data directly impacts the quality of your EBVs and selection decisions.
- For the most accurate measurements, Texel lambs should ideally weigh around **100-120 pounds** at scanning. Lighter lambs (around 100 pounds) can still be scanned, but accuracy tends to improve as lambs approach the 120-pound mark. Lambs should be at a similar weight to what they would be marketed at.
- Most Texel breeders scan lambs between **4 and 6 months of age**, although the ideal timing may vary depending on your production goals and marketing plan.
- Lambs should be weighed within a day before/after scanning, allowing you to collect another NSIP weight record (from 101) at the same time.
- Only a small area between the 12th and 13th rib will need to be shorn. A quick buzz cut immediately before scanning is sufficient and is typically done by the scanner—the entire lamb does **not** need to be shorn. A simple handling system or chute is helpful to keep animals still during the scanning process.

By combining growth data with carcass measurements, breeders gain a more complete picture of an animal's genetic potential and can make more informed breeding decisions.

For Texel breeders, ultrasound data helps identify sheep that are not only growing well, but are also converting that growth into muscle.

This allows breeders to select animals with superior carcass characteristics and continue strengthening the traits that have made the Texel breed known for muscle, yield, and carcass quality.

NSIP certified scanners can be found [HERE](https://nsip.org/nsip-resources/ultrasound-scanners/) <https://nsip.org/nsip-resources/ultrasound-scanners/>