



Valais Blacknose Sheep Buyers Guide

Valais Blacknose (VBN) are very valuable sheep, and you need to be careful when purchasing them as like all livestock for sale, there are good and bad specimens on offer. The high prices mean that you should pay extra special attention to what you are being offered and check that all is right before you invest your money, hopefully this guide will help you buy with confidence.

Stock Selection/Viewing

- If possible, arrange an in-person stock viewing appointment prior to any deposit payments as often deposits are non-refundable.
- Request to see the dam and sire where possible.
- Find out when the sheep was last vaccinated and wormed, it's recommended that all sheep should be on the yearly Heptavac P Plus program and wormed regularly.
- Be sure to thoroughly assess the health and well-being of the animal – the four 'Ts' - teeth, toes, teats and testicles should all be in good order. In addition, it should have bright eyes and move well. Don't buy a limping animal and be comfortable with your selection prior to arranging a deposit payment and final purchase.
- If you are purchasing a lamb, make sure it is old enough to have been weaned from its mother – usually around 4-5 months old. Bottle fed orphan lambs or lambs at foot can be younger.
- If you chose to purchase VBN embryos or a recipient ewe in lamb, please check that both Embryo Transfer (ET) donor parents have been fully registered, and DNA profiled. All embryos should be logged with Grassroots and their parentage records can be accessed via the Online register. It is not advisable to purchase embryos where parentage is unverified as offspring cannot be registered.
- If you are looking to buy a specific genotype or Maedi Visna (MV) stock be sure to request for the relevant supporting certification which applies.
- If you are not interested in breeding VBNs then a wether (a castrated male) is a sensible option as they are good natured and not governed by their hormones.
- Have faith in your supplier, never be afraid to ask questions or feel obliged to purchase if the animal is not of the standard you are looking for.
- Try to avoid purchasing from photographs via the internet as often they are not a true representation of the animal and judging overall appearance, conformation and fleece quality is extremely difficult.
- If buying from a website or Facebook page, do your homework and background checks first and if possible, speak to other breeders.

Pedigree Certificate & Registry

- Every pedigree Valais Blacknose should have a Grassroots registration.
- Always check that the animal matches the details on the Grassroots registry certificate – if no certificate is available take note of all the ear tag numbers and contact the registry directly to check if the animal is registered before you purchase. Ideally request all this information prior to any negotiations so that you can validate the animal prior to any viewing or purchase.
 - Grassroots email: agency@grassroots.co.uk
 - Grassroots telephone: 01392 437 788
- The address on the Grassroots certificate should match the one you are buying and collecting the sheep from unless it's an auction sale.

Collection of Sheep

- The Seller should always have a CPH number and complete in the relevant movement licence.
- The buyer is also required to have their own CPH number.
- On collection of sheep check the animal over so that you are a 100% happy with its health status. If you have any concerns address them immediately with the seller.
- The seller will provide you with the relevant Grassroots certificate and any other certification that may be applicable i.e. scrapie results.
- Change of ownership can be managed in two ways:
 1. By the buyer completing the 'Transfer of Ownership' section on the pedigree certificate and posting the slip directly to Grassroots.
 2. By the seller via their personal Grassroots online account.
- Once transfer is completed Grassroots will issue a new ownership certificate.
- Most breeders offer an aftersales service, don't be afraid to use them if you need any support or advice.

Things to be aware of

- If you wish to show your animal correct breed standard markings are mandatory. This can be found in the Breed Society's Constitution and Memorandum of Association and in the Society's Breeding Programme.
- Pedigree registration requires confirmation that the overall appearance (i.e. markings) is correct in all males as well as conformation and fleece. Please note that breeding from pedigree mis-marked ewes and Spitti females is permitted.
- No ear tag – no sale! By law, all sheep must be ear tagged and corresponding paperwork/pedigree supplied to you. If you are ever asked to remove and replace with a different ear tag, do not do this! The EID ear tag is a unique identifier which should remain with the sheep throughout its life and identifies the holding where it was born. By removing the ear tag, you render the animal unidentified and therefore unregistered.
- No paperwork possibly means that the sheep is not a pure pedigree or stolen. However, this may not apply to castrated males born prior to June 2020 who will have been recorded in the registry but not issued a certificate due to their non-breeding status.
- Castrated and Spitti males can be listed with the Grassroots registry as non-breeding animals and will be issued with a pink 'Listed - Non-Breeding' certificate if the breeder requests this.
- Be aware that there is no official breed-up program for VBN in the UK, therefore you will not be able to register offspring from cross breed animals.
- Don't be persuaded that variations or sub species of VBNs exist - for example all VBNs have horns – males and females. There is no such thing as a naturally polled VBN.

- Please do be careful that you check all possible purchases in the Grassroots Online Registry before buying stock to ensure that they are from verified pure Valais Blacknose parentage.
- If it's too cheap and you feel something is wrong, then walk away. Remember that old saying, 'if it's too good to be true, it probably is.'

Imports

If you are looking to purchase sheep from other countries, please be clear on the Society rules that apply to imports and ensure the breeder paperwork matches these criteria prior to purchase.

- Sheep must be fully registered by an EU Zootechnically recognised Registration Authority.
- Sheep must have a Zotech pedigree certificate with three generations of full pedigree ancestors.
- Sheep must be registered by the importer within 6 months of arrival in the UK.
- You will need to provide a copy of the:
 - Export documentation from the source country
 - Import documentation from the UK or Irish ministry

The information within this guide is based on the knowledge and input from VBS members and the Grassroots Registry.