

## SHEEP UNIT

Nucleus flock of Mecheri sheep breed is being maintained at this station to carryout various genetic improvement programmes and to supply superior germplasm to the farmers.

### MECHERI SHEEP

#### **ORIGIN HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION**

Mecheri sheep are distributed in Salem, Namakkal, Erode, Karur and parts of Dindigul and Dharmapuri districts of Tamil Nadu. The name Mecheri has been derived from its place of origin i.e., Mecheri block in Mettur taluk of Salem District. The place Mecheri is said to be derived from “*Mechal Eri*” (*Mechal* - grazing of sheep and Eri-pond). The Mecheri sheep has other synonyms like *Thuvaranchempuli*, *Maiylambadi* and *Kannivadi*. Mecheri sheep with typical morphological features are seen in Tharamangalam, Omalur, Kolathur and Mecheri blocks of Salem district.

#### **BREED CHARACTERS**

Mecheri sheep are medium sized animals with compact body and covered with short hairs, which are not shorn. They are light brown in colour. The profile is slightly Roman nose. Mecheri sheep is classified under polled breeds of sheep. Both males and females are polled. The legs are medium sized, straight and medium in length, squarely set under the body. The hooves are brown or black in colour. Udder is not well developed. It is small and round, tightly attached to the belly with small conical teats placed laterally. The teats are directed slightly outward.



**Mecheri Ram**



**Mecheri Ewe**

The leather made from Mecheri sheep skins have higher tensile, tear and grain crack strengths as compared with leather made from mixed origin. With regard to organoleptic properties of skin, the Mecheri skin is better in quality in

terms of softness, grain tightness, fullness, surface smoothness, and uniformity of colour and general appearance. The hand evaluation assessment and strength characteristics determination reveals that the Mecheri sheep skins are superior and are suitable for higher quality garment or upper valued leathers. **The special features of this breed are early sexual maturity, superior skin quality and high dressing percentage.**

### **PHYSICAL TRAITS**

Body measurements	Sex	Number of observations	Mean ( $\pm$ SE)
a. Height at withers (cm)	Ram	829	68.90 $\pm$ 0.52
	Ewe	770	65.86 $\pm$ 0.49
b. Chest girth (cm)	Ram	829	73.99 $\pm$ 0.58
	Ewe	770	70.90 $\pm$ 0.52
c. Body length (cm)	Ram	829	65.73 $\pm$ 0.51
	Ewe	770	62.79 $\pm$ 0.50

### **BODY WEIGHT**

Effect	Birth	Weaning	Six months	Nine months	12 months	Adult
Male	2.30 $\pm$ 0.02 (1201)	8.30 $\pm$ 0.08 (1064)	12.00 $\pm$ 0.13 (884)	14.87 $\pm$ 0.16 (667)	18.23 $\pm$ 0.19 (447)	32.13 $\pm$ 0.51 (229)
Female	2.18 $\pm$ 0.02 (1164)	7.74 $\pm$ 0.08 (1034)	10.74 $\pm$ 0.13 (930)	13.11 $\pm$ 0.16 <sup>a</sup> (836)	15.39 $\pm$ 0.17 (738)	28.29 $\pm$ 0.20 (504)
Overall	2.24 $\pm$ 0.01 (2365)	8.02 $\pm$ 0.07 (2098)	11.37 $\pm$ 0.11 (1814)	13.99 $\pm$ 0.13 (1503)	16.81 $\pm$ 0.15 (1185)	29.49 $\pm$ 0.36 (733)

### **REPRODUCTION TRAITS**

Character	Number of observations	Mean
<b>a. Males</b>		
Age at first mating (months)	830	12.62 ± 0.09
<b>b. Females</b>		
i. Age at first Oestrus (months)	780	12.06 ± 0.07
ii. Oestrus cycle duration (days)	779	18.63 ± 0.17
iii. Oestrus period duration (hours)	780	22.54 ± 0.15
vi. Age at first mating (months)	780	12.35 ± 0.07
v. Age at first lambing ( months)	769	17.35 ± 0.07
vi. Lambing interval (days)	720	225.9 ± 0.71
vii. Litter size	780	Single
viii. Seasonality	Non seasonal	
ix. Life time reproductive age	6 – 7 years	
x. Reproductive disorders (males)	Cryptorchid in males at the rate of 9.4 per cent	



**MECHERI LAMBS**



**MECHERI RAMS**