

‘SA’s Ile de France sheep is the ideal choice for crossbreeding’

By Annelie Coleman

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The Ile de France is a dual-purpose breed that improves the carcass quality of its crossbred progeny.



According to Mark Gietzmann, council member of the Ile de France Breeding Society of South Africa, the Ile de France is the ideal choice for any sheep crossbreeding programme.

Mark Gietzmann, council member of the Ile de France Breeding Society of South Africa, told *Farmer's Weekly* at Nampo 2025 that the Ile de France sheep breed is ideal for crossbreeding purposes, with the introduction of the breed's genetics to any crossbreeding concern invariably adding to that concern's sustainability and profitability.

“The breed is gaining popularity in the country, and the Ile de France is increasingly being used for crossbreeding purposes, especially with indigenous breeds such as the Dorper and Meatmaster,” said Gietzmann.

He described the Ile de France sheep as a large, smooth-bodied, polled mutton sheep that produces strong white wool of acceptable quality, free from coloured fibres, and a top-class carcass that meets the requirements of consumers.

While its roots are in France, Gietzmann says that over the past 50 years, the breed has developed into a truly South African breed, known for producing quality carcasses, and its exceptional growth and feed conversion rates.

Gietzmann said the modern South African Ile de France is a dual-purpose breed, with Ile de France rams generally used as terminal sires in crossbreeding programmes.

The influence of the Ile de France ram on his crossbred progeny results in exceptional confirmation and muscle development, amongst other positive traits, said Gietzmann.