

The Shepherd and their flock

Education Pack
10 – 11 years of age

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The Shepherd and their flock

Introduction

This pamphlet sets out to describe sheep and outlines the requirements needed to keep them healthy. The leaflet explains how sheep provide humans with food and warmth, then goes onto describe sheep reproduction and the lambing process. The final section explains some terminology used in the sheep profession.

Description of a Sheep

Quadrupedal	This means they are four-footed.
Ruminant Mammals	This means they have a four-chambered stomach for digesting food.
Even-toed ungulates	This means they have hooves with an even number of functional toes on each foot.
Herbivores	This means they do not eat meat and feed only on grass and other plants
Gregarious	This means they are sociable and enjoy the company of others.
Preyed upon	This means they are hunted or caught for food.

Lynch, Hinch and Adams (1992).



Fig.1: Suffolk Rams
Birkenshaw (2014)

Housing

Some hill sheep live on open pasture, both winter and summer, these are hardier breeds. This grassland must not be over populated otherwise there would be insufficient nutrition in extremely cold and snowy weather. However, some form of shelter should be available e.g. trees, bushes or walls (Upton & Soden, 1991).



Fig.2: Blackface Ewes

Parkin (2014)

Upland and Lowland sheep live in a less harsh environment and are raised in fenced fields. Again, these areas must not be over populated. In the winter, sheep are housed in specially designed barns. Occasionally, when housed, sheep can get ailments e.g. respiratory (breathing) problems during the winter (Upton & Soden, 1991).



Fig.3: Sheep Housing

Scrivener (2016)

Nutrition

Upton & Soden (1991) go onto explain that winter grass will not provide adequate nutrition, therefore, additional (supplementary) food must be introduced.



Fig. 4: Ewes eating haylage

Parkin (2011)

Occasionally in summer, in severe heat conditions, the grass will be low in nutrients. Again, it may be necessary to provide supplementary food.



Fig.5 Texel ewes

Birkenshaw (2014)

Food for sheep:

It is important that clean, fresh water is provided at all times.

The most popular form of food is in pelleted form and is known as concentrates. In addition, the animal should have hay to eat and a mineral block for licking. Straw, which is used for bedding, when housed, is also edible (Upton & Soden, 1991; Brown & Meadowcroft, 1990).

Other feeds are:

- Haylage or silage: [Click here](#) to see what how haylage/silage is and how it is made
- Sugarbeet: Is a root crop with a high sugar content which provides sheep with energy
- Green vegetables

An inadequate diet will cause weight loss and twin lamb disease at lambing. Also, their teeth have to be in good condition to be able to eat their food.

Teeth

Claeys & Rogers (2003) note that it is possible to estimate the age of a sheep by examining their teeth. When a sheep is approximately 4 years old they should have a full set of teeth on her lower jaw (8). There are no teeth on the upper dental pad.

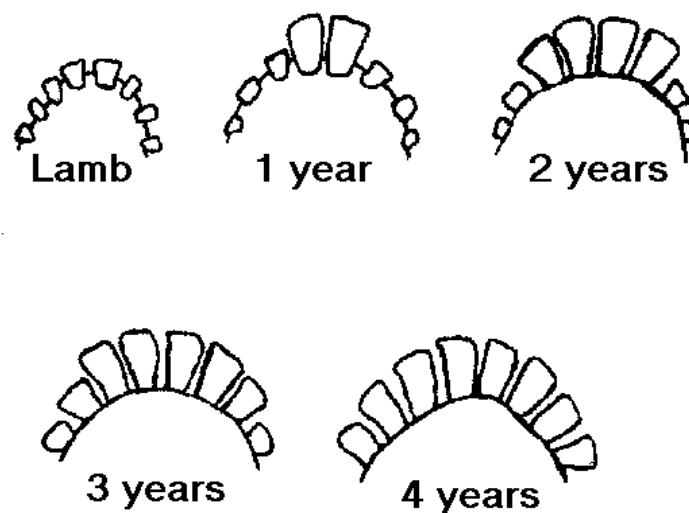


Fig. 6:

Illustration showing number of teeth in relation to age

Claeys & Rogers (2003)

Reproduction

Sheep come into season when daylight decreases in the autumn (September/October), and this is when mating occurs (Henderson, 1995; Brown & Meadowcroft, 1990).

The ram and ewe show courtship just before mating. Both wild and domesticated sheep regard courtship as an important part of the mating process. A ewe is likely to reject a ram if mounted without courtship (Lynch, Hinch and Adams, 1992).

According to Henderson (1995), the ewe is pregnant for approximately 145 days +/- 5 days.

How to remember the length of pregnancy: the ram goes in with the ewes on bonfire night, and the lambs are born on 1st April "In with a bang and out like fools."



Fig.7: Romney Marsh Ewe and Lamb

Boulden (2014)

Lambing

When the ewe gives birth, she alone cares for the lamb. A ewe has two teats and generally gives birth to two lambs, although litter size can vary. Giving birth takes about 1 – 2 hours. Immediately after the lamb is born the ewe will lick the lamb. The licking and smell result in recognition of the lamb by the time the lamb sucks for milk (Lynch, Hinch and Adams, 1992).



Fig.8: Ewe licking lamb

Schoenian (2014)

From sheep to people

Sheep, when slaughtered, provide meat e.g. chops, stews and joints for Sunday lunch.

When sheared we have the fleece which is wool.



Fig.9: Fleeces and wool sack

Parkin (2014)

This is carded and spun, now you have a ball of wool with which the following items are made:

Examples

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Sheep can be milked which can be drunk or made into cheese.

Lanolin (a fatty substance, extracted from wool) which is made into cosmetics such as face and hand creams.

Terminology

Terminology	Definition
Lamb	A young sheep 7 - 9 months old
Sock/caid lamb	A lamb that is reared by a human
Hog/hogget	A young sheep of either sex aged approximately 9 – 18 months
Gimmer/shearling/theave/chilver/teg	A female sheep that has not had her first lamb and is aged 18 months
Ewe	A female sheep that has had her first lamb 18 + months
Mutton	Is the meat from older sheep
Broken mouth	A sheep that has lost or broken some of their incisor teeth, usually after the age of about six years
Cull	A ewe no longer suitable for breeding

Brown & Meadowcroft, (1990).

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