

Fact Sheet:- Sheep

TERMS:-

Ram (male) Larger than female with heavier coat. Horns turned outwards and some species have no horns.

Ewe, (female) begins lambing at around 2 years and has babies every year for 12-13 years. Gestation 5 months.

Lamb, (baby sheep) mainly born in spring

- Walk on hoofs that are divided into two toes.
- Ankles are slim and upper leg is muscular to help them move quickly and easily.
- Sheep have no incision or cutting teeth on their upper jaws, but have eight on their lower jaws. .
- Sheep have long tails which are cut short at birth for cleanliness and to prevent blowfly
- Sheep are shorn once a year , (Excellent description of sheep shearing at www.nywool.com/shearing.html)

Differences between sheep and goats:-

- Sheep have fleeces – goats have hair(except Barbados sheep)
- Sheep say baa goats say maa (listen and you will hear the difference!)
- Sheep are often polled (no horns) whilst goats always have horns
- Sheep are considered stupid whilst goats are considered smart
- Sheep can over eat
- Sheep are grazers which means they can bite off grass/ weeds much closer to the ground than cattle Goats are browsers that is they nibble all over the place
- Sheep are much more skittish than goats
- Sheep milk is higher fat than goat's milk. Both can make Feta cheese
- Mostly a sheep's tail is down and a goats up

INTERESTING FACTS:-

- Australian sheep flock is the world's largest,
- 80% of which are Merino which is used for its heavy fleeces of fine quality wool. It has been adapted to Australian conditions.
- In 1997 there was 123.3 million head
- .Australia is the largest producer of sheep meat in the world, with about 9% of the world's total production, totaling 650,000 tonnes of sheep meat.
- In 1999: 15.8 million sheep were slaughtered. 84,000 tonnes exported. Value of exports \$304 million.
- In 96/97: export of skins, hides and leather were valued at \$65m.

- Sheepskins used for tanned products including chamois and collagen
- In WA there are about 23.6 million sheep. WA exports lamb worth \$56 million annually. The biggest buyer is Europe (about 30 %) followed by UK and Belgium.
- Australia is the biggest exporter of live sheep in the world, shipping close to 5 million sheep in 99/00 with a value of \$187 million. 80% were from WA.
- Middle East (mainly to Kuwait, Jordan and the UAE) imports about 95 % of our live sheep. Asia and South America also take a few.
- Fat tailed sheep including Damara, Karakul and Awassi have been introduced to WA to meet demand for peak religious festivals in the Middle East of Ramadan and the Hajj

HISTORY:-

All domestic breed descended from two types of wild sheep: –

The *URIA* that lives in Southern Asia

The *MOUFLON* which is the only kind of wild sheep still living in Southern Europe

Australia is the world's leading producer of sheep

- Governor Phillip brought nine breeding sheep on the first fleet.
- Merino sheep were introduced by Captain King from South Africa in 1797.
- Captain John McArthur and Reverent Samuel Marsden were pioneers of the Australian wool industry.
- Napoleonic wars prevented wool getting into English mills and therefore encouraged wool production in Australia with its wide open spaces and convict labour.

POPULAR BREEDS

Merino, Corridale, Bond, Perendale, Romney, , Border Leicester, English Leicester, Lincoln, Southdown, , Suffolk, Cheviot, Poll Dorset, Shropshire

For information on coloured breeds visit website

www.ballaratweb/net/besbaa/breeds.html

Exotic Breeds introduced to Australia:- Damara, Awassi, Karakul, Dorper and Finn

Damara:- (sheep), are an ancient breed of North Africa Eastern Asia.

- * Damara is a coloured breed
- * Is hardy and a browser eating grass, but 64 per cent of its diet is bush and shrubs.
- * Has long legs and short hair.

- * Damara are prolific breeders
- * They have a fat tail that is utilized as a drought reserve if there is insufficient feed
- * They have large droopy ears
- * Damara sheds its glossy fleece, which consists of hair with a fine layer of wool

Advantages:- doesn't require shearing or tail docking. Introduced into Australia in 1995.
Majority of the sheep's fat is stored in the tail, producing a leaner sheep.

Awassi:- (milking sheep), highly valued in the Middle East for its meat and milk.

- * Coloured breed.
- * Awassi is one of the biggest producing dairy breeds in the world (1.75L per day compared with 1L per day in other sheep). Lactation is 200 days instead of 100 in other sheep
- * Sheep milk is higher in fat, protein and total solids than goat and cow milk so is therefore higher yielding.
- * Most sheep milk is used for cheese and yogurt
- * They need shearing twice a year.
- * Awassi produces carpet type wool

Karakul (sheep) A rare breed of Middle Eastern Origin

- * Karakul is a fat tailed sheep able to survive in drought conditions
- * Karakul was known as the "Persian Lamb"
- * Producer of high grade pelts – best taken from unborn lambs and those under three days of age
- * Older sheep's long lustrous fleece, usually black, is used in Persian carpets
- * Karakul is very lean and breed's abundant milk supply is used for butter & cheese

Dorper (sheep)

- * Dorper is a South African Breed
- * It is mainly known for its black head
- * Very little wool which it sheds late spring summer
- * Dorper sheep are primarily a mutton sheep
- * Has a high lambing percentage
- * Under intensive management has three lambings per year

Finn (sheep - Finnish Landrace)

- * Finn sheep can be traced back to Iron Age of Finland
- * They were able to cope with exceedingly cold weather
- * In the beginning they were mainly used for meat that was dried
- * In the Iron Age their manure was used for fuel

- * They are one of the most easily handled sheep – very quiet and docile
- * Finns are considered one of the most productive and profitable sheep
- * Fast growing lean sheep
- * Finns have a much higher lambing percentage than other breeds
- * Triplet & quadruplets are common (best lambing recorded is 9 lambs)
- * They are crossed with other breeds to produce higher lamb percentages.
- * Crossed with Merinos they produce a longer fleece that can be cut twice a year.

SHEEP PRODUCTS:-

- Wool, Meat and Leather.
 - Australia produces 73 % of the world's apparel wool
 - They also furnish raw materials for many by-products such as glue, tallow, suet, soap, cosmetics and fertilizer.
 - Glue can be made from skins, connective tissues & bones of animals. Glue is an impure form of gelatin (made from boiling bones or other animal parts).
 - Adhesive tapes, antifreeze, artists' bandage strips, baseballs, brake fluid, bone handles, brushes, bone china, buttons, candles, car seat covers, carpet, crayons, creams and lotions, cellophane wrap, cheese, chewing gum, clothing, deodorant, drum heads for music, fertilizer, film, floor wax, footwear, gel, hide glue, ice cream, insulation, lanolin, leather goods, medicines, mouthwash, paraffin, perfumes, protein hair conditioner, piano keys, paneling, photographic soap, tennis balls, tyres coolant, violin strings, wallpaper, yarns.
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