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Meat Promotion Wales

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# Sheep Farming in Wales



# “Tell me one thing you know about Wales?”

- Beautiful Landscape
- Castles
- Dragons
- Rugby
- SHEEP!





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# Let's take a closer look at the Sheep industry in Wales...



# Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Ewe	Female Sheep
Ram/tup	Male sheep
In lamb	Pregnant sheep
Flock	Group of sheep
Tupping	When the ram is turned to the ewes
Pasture	Grass
Weaned	The lambs no longer require milk – eating pasture
Mules	The offspring of a native ewe and long-wool sire

## Facts & Figures

13,738 farms in  
Wales who farm  
sheep

731 average  
flock size

4.7 million  
breeding ewes

9.5 million  
sheep and lamb

Wales produced 63,400 tonnes of mutton and lamb during 2019  
35% of Welsh Lamb is exported to markets around the world.

# Animal Welfare

Wales also boasts...

- high levels of animal welfare, and this is part of the reasons we have PGI status. When you see this logo you can be confident that the lambs were born and reared in Wales and allowed to roam freely across our wholesome, natural habitat.
- We care for our animals which results in tasty, nutritious and high quality meat.



# Welsh Lamb + PGI Status

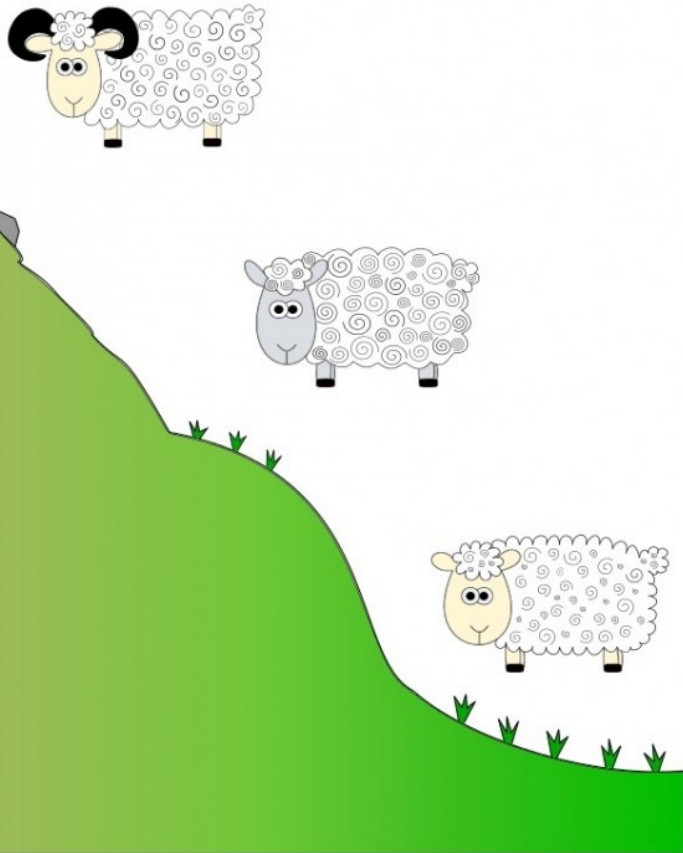
- Welsh Lamb has PGI Status.
- PGI = Protected Geographical Indication
- It's a way of recognising a specific geographical area that produces high-quality food and drink.
- PGI Welsh Lamb is different and has special characteristics that are unique to Wales and cannot be replicated anywhere else.



# Sheep Breeding Systems

Did you know??

- There are over 60 breeds of sheep farmed in the UK
- Each breed has characteristics which suits the land type and climate of the farm
- e.g. Wales = Hilly = Hill Sheep = Hardy
- This is know as **Stratified System**







# Sheep Breeds in the UK

- UK's geography split into three – Hill, Uplands and Lowlands
- A breed will be chosen to suit the location of the farm

Let's take a closer look at breeds in the UK...

# Hill – Typical Breeds



Welsh Mountain

Traits: Hardy, thick-coated, able-bodied, excellent mothers, adapted to living in the harsh hill conditions.



Swaledale

Purpose: Pure-bred breeding stock. Unwanted, surplus female and male lambs are sold to other farms to be fattened. When the ewes are older they are moved to the lowlands where they can be bred with longwool breeds.



Scottish Blackface



Cheviots

Where to find them: Mountain areas of Wales. Hill areas have harsh climates, short growing seasons, relatively poor quality of soil/pasture and long winters.

# Upland – Typical Breeds



Blue Faced Leicester

Traits: Do better on the lower, easier terrain than hill breeds. Mules inherit good mothering abilities of hill relatives.



Teeswater

Purpose: Older ewes' who've come down from the hills can continue to breed in the easier conditions. Ewe lambs sold to the lowlands to be crossed with a lowland/terminal sire breed. Surplus female and all weather lambs sold as stores for fattening in the lowlands.



Wensleydale

Where to find them: Areas of Northern England, such as The Pennines and Lake District, and also in the South West of England.



Border Leicester

# Lowland – Typical Breeds



Texel

Traits: Grow fast, have a heavier and larger framed body.



Suffolk

Purpose: Most lambs are reared for meat production. The easier terrain and conditions, better grass growth and larger frame inherited from the terminal sire, mean that these lambs grow faster and produce more meat in fewer days. Slower growing lambs join the store lambs that have arrived from the hill and upland areas to be fattened on root crops over the autumn and winter months



Beltex



Dorset Down

Where to find them: Low lying areas of Wales where soil is far more productive and grows greater amount of quality grass.



# Sheep Farming

## A 365 day job



# September – Lambing preparations begin

Farmers check the condition of their ewes to insure they are not too fat or too thin, in preparation for tuppung.

Ewes that are too fat or too thin are less likely to conceive lambs.

Tuppung = Mating in Sheep



# October – Mating time

October is the favoured time for tupping as this results in lambs arriving during March. An experienced ram will be put out with anything from 50 to 100 ewes



# January – seeing in the new year

- Sheep carry their lambs for approximately 145 days.
- A contractor trained in scanning sheep will bring all the equipment to the farm and check each ewe individually, and establish their due dates.
- After scanning the ewes are split into groups according to how many lambs they are carrying so that they can have the correct amount of food.





# Spring – It's lambing time

- However ewes can lamb anytime between December – May and either indoors or outdoors depending on breed and management
- Ewes can have a single, twins, triplets and not so common quads and quins
- Ewes don't stop lambing when the sun goes down, so somebody needs to be on hand to keep an eye on them day and night



# April-August: Post-lambing

- Most farmers shear their sheep in early summer, this does not hurt the sheep and it's done to ensure they don't get too hot.
- The lambs are weaned as they can get more energy from grass than milk.
- The lambs get bigger and fatter on grass.
- Most are sold for meat in groups once they are heavy enough.





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# What more is there to know about sheep?

# Wool

- Sheep grow a wool fleece to protect them from the weather
- Wool is the most sustainable fibre in the world
- It's a natural product of the sheep's life cycle and the welfare of sheep is improved by them being shorn
- Wool was incredibly valuable before the invention of synthetic fibres
- The price farmers can get for their wool has dropped considerably over the decades
- One pound of wool can make 10 miles of yarn
- Wool can also be used for house insulation and is used to insulate meat delivery boxes – it keep the meat chilled!



# Did you know?

- Sheep are herbivores so they only eat plants, mostly they graze grass. Silage and hay will be provided to sheep in Winter when grass quality is poor. Sometimes they are also fed swede, kale, clover, straw and grains.
- They 4 stomachs whereas we have 1 – this is why they can digest so much grass!
- Animals with 4 stomachs are called Ruminants like Cows, giraffes, deer and antelopes
- Sheep can also drink up to 12 litres of water every day
- You can age a sheep by how many teeth are in their mouth





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# In conclusion...



- The landscape in Wales favours farming sheep rather than growing crops
- Sheep farming also support wildlife and plant biodiversity
- Sheep have the ability to convert grass into nutritious and delicious food
- Food in Wales and the UK is produced to some of the highest health and welfare standards in the World.

