

Farming food for you



Sheep

There are over 33 million breeding sheep and lambs in the UK. Sheep are able to survive on hills and uplands where no other domestic livestock can.

The sheep farm and farmer

There are around 35,500 sheep farms in England, with small flocks of 20 sheep to farms with more than 500.

The farmer's most important job is to look after the health and welfare of the sheep.

Farmers help to support 1 million hectares of woodlands and forests, looking after the countryside, for example looking after the habitats of wildlife such as birds, insects and pollinators.

Different breeds of sheep can live on hills and moorland, with harsh conditions, while others are more suited to flatter areas which are warmer and have more grass.

The main lambing period is in March to April, when the grass starts growing.

Herdwick



Swaledale



Suffolk



Uses

Sheep are mostly kept to produce meat, which can be used in a range of different dishes and meals.



Some breeds of sheep are kept for their milk, which can be made into cheese and yogurt.

Wool is used to make carpets, clothes and other types of textiles, like hats, gloves and scarves.

The sheep

There are 57 breeds of sheep which are native to the UK, including the Swaledale, Herdwick and Suffolk.

A mature female sheep is called a ewe and a mature male sheep is called a ram.

Sheep weigh around 45–100 kg, depending on the breed.

Sheep have four compartments that act as a stomach and are called ruminants. This means they are able to eat grass and other plants as their main source of food.

Sheep graze all year round. Some sheep are housed in early spring, before they have their lambs. They are fed hay or silage. Housing protects the lambs from cold weather and predators.

Sheep have ear tags so they can be identified.

Sheep have 300-degree vision – they can see behind them without having to turn around!

In the summer, sheep need shearing, which stops them from getting too hot and keeps them clean.

Feeding time

