

Sheep to Wool Glossary

(Sheep, Shearing, Wool, Fiber)

Comb Cutting blades that are attachable to the shearing handpiece

Combing Blending long wool fibers while removing short wool fibers

Carding Untangling of wool fibers

Clip Wool collected from a flock following shearing

Core-testing The coring of bales or bags of wool for determination of grade, yield and clean content.

Crimp The natural wave formation of wool. Fine wool is usually crimpier. In most cases, the closer the crimp, the finer the wool;

Dag Wool clotted with dung around a sheep's hindquarters.

Dyeing Coloring wool by dipping

Ewe A female sheep

Felting The matting together of wool fibers

Fleece The wool covering of sheep or the entire coat after shearing

fiber Unspun wool, hair or vegetable material

Grade The classification system used to describe grease wools. The grades are; Fine – 64s, 70s, 80s; half-blood – 60s, 62s; three-eighths-blood – 56s, 58s; quarter-blood – 50s, 54s; low-quarter-blood – 46s, 48s.

Grading The classification of fleeces according to grade and length.

Grease wool Wool that hasn't been scoured

Handle A term referring to the actual feel of wool.

Hogget/ Hogg/ Shearing A sheep aged between 9-18 months that has completed weaning but hasn't undergone its initial shearing.

Knitting Forming a single yarn into fabric of interlocking loops.

Lanolin An oil that sheep naturally make. This oil naturally repels water and coats the skin and fleece of sheep. Wool from sheep must be heated in order to remove the lanolin from the fleece.

Micron One millionth of a metre. Used as a measure for the diameter of fiber.

Mill Wool processing factory

Pencil Roving Thin strips of roving roughly the diameter of a pencil

Ram An adult male sheep

Rooping Removing fleece by hand-plucking, usually late in the spring when molting begins, particularly with primitive European short-tail breeds like Shetlands

Roving Carded wool as produced by carding machines

Scouring Washing or cleaning raw fleece or fiber

Skirting Grease wool that has had the dirty edges removed

Shearing Clipping off the fleece. Some shepherds do it themselves, but most use professional shearers. Afterwards, a sheep is said to be either sheared or shorn.

Spinning Twisting wool into yarn.

Staple The length of wool shorn from a sheep, usually a year's growth equals approximately ten centimeters.

Staple length The average length of fiber in a fleece measured from the skin to the tips of the individual fibers.

Textile Woven or knitted fabric.

Twang test Holding a lock of wool near your ear and pulling or snapping the ends in the opposite direction. You should hear a twang-type sound. Pulling locks from various sections to make sure that the soundness is consistent throughout the fleece.

Soundness Freedom of the fiber from breaks and tenderness; relates to strength.

Vegetable matter Any material of plant origin found in the fleece, such as burrs, stickers, chaff and seed heads.

Weaving Interlacing of two yarns, each at right angles to each other.

Wigging The removal of wool from around the eyes of a sheep to prevent wool-blindness.

Wool The textile fiber obtained from the fine, soft curly or wavy hair forming the coats of sheep and other animals, including cashmere and mohair from goats, qiviut from muskoxen, angora from rabbits, and camelids such as dromedary camels, llama and alpaca.

Wool Picker Opens the wool and prepares it for carding, combing and even spinning.

Yearling A sheep that is between one and two years old is referred to as a *yearling*; a *yearling ewe* is referred to as a *hogget*, *shearling*, or *gimmer*.

Sheep breeds in UK

Hill sheep breeds:

North Country Cheviot Park, South Country Cheviot, North Country Cheviot Hill, Welsh Mountain, Herdwick, Rough Fell, South Welsh Mountain, Beulah, Hardy Speckle, Scottish Blackface, Swaledale, Brecknock Hill Cheviot and Black Welsh Mountain and Hebridean

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

Purpose: Pure-bred breeding stock. Surplus female lambs and whether lambs (castrated male) are sold as stores to upland/lowland farms to be fattened. Older ewes that have lambed several times are transferred to the milder climates of lower areas and crossed with longwool breeds to produce Mules and half-breds.

Where to find them: Mountain and hill areas that have harsh climates, a short grass-growing season, relatively poor quality of soil and long winters.

Upland breeds:

Female hill breeds mated with breeds such as Bluefaced Leicester, Border Leicester, Teeswater, Wensleydale, Devon & Cornwall Longwool.

Traits: More prolific than hill breeds, and do better on the lower, easier terrain. Mules inherit mothering abilities of hill relatives and the prolificacy of upland relatives.

Purpose: Older ewes' drafters from the hills can continue to breed in the easier conditions and are mated with longwool upland breeds to produce Mule lambs. Female Mule lambs are transferred to lowland farms for breeding. They are crossed with a lowland/terminal sire breed. Male lambs are reared for meat production, either here in the uplands or on a lowland farm.

Where to find them: Where conditions are less harsh than in the hills, but land and soil is still not very productive

Lowland

Texel, Suffolk, Charollais, Clun Forest, Romney, Oxford/Hampshire/Dorset Down.

Traits: Grow fast, have a heavier frame, more prolific.

Purpose: Mule ewes are mated to a lowland terminal sire breed to produce crossbred lambs. Most lambs are reared for meat production but some may be kept for replacements. The easier terrain and conditions, better grass growth and larger frame inherited from the terminal sire means these lambs grow faster and produce more meat in less time. Slower-growing lambs join the store lambs that have arrived from the hill and upland areas to be grown on root crops over the autumn and winter months.

Where to find them: Some low-lying areas of Wales and England, mostly in central and eastern England where soil is far more productive and therefore mostly arable. Sheep become part of arable rotations, where fields that have grown crops for a number of years are put to grass to help improve the soil.

Primitive European short-tail breeds

Traditional sheep breeds or types known as the Northern European short-tailed sheep can be found in Northern Europe, particularly in the British Isles, Scandinavia, Greenland, and the Baltic region. They are thought to be the first sheep brought to Europe by farmers, and they were the only type of sheep kept in Northern Europe for thousands of years. They are tough sheep that can handle harsh conditions, but because they are small, they have been replaced in most places by later breeds of larger, longer-tailed sheep.