



Sheep Breeds by Wool Type

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Sheep breeds come from a variety of climates--evaluating each breed by their wool type can help in choosing the one that's right for your weather, as well as the purpose for which you plan to raise them.

Here are descriptions of different wool types:

Fine Wool
Breeds that produce large amounts of soft wool used for fine, next-to-the-skin garments.

Found mostly in arid and semi-arid regions of Australia, South Africa, South America and the western United States. Most sheep of this type have Merino (Spanish) ancestry. Popular for baby-soft clothing and spinning.

Long Wool

Breeds that produce long, wavy or ringed fleece, used primarily for tweeds and rugs.

Found mostly in high, cool, rainy areas such as England, Scotland and New Zealand. These sheep are popular with weavers.

Medium Wool

Breeds that produce medium-soft wool used as outer garments and blankets.

Most are considered dual-purpose breeds as they produce both meat and wool. They're popular with handspinners.

Hair Sheep

Breeds that do not produce wool, but are covered in hair that sheds naturally. Raised primarily for meat.

Found mostly in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as in temperate climates in the United States and Canada. These breeds are popular with ethnic markets that rely on sheep for meat.

Fat Tailed

Breeds that store large amounts of fat in the tail and rump area.

Found mainly in extreme arid regions such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East, they are raised primarily for milk production and meat. These breeds are popular with rugmakers and with cheesemakers.

Rat-tailed or Short-tailed

Breeds with a thin or short tail that does not need to be docked.

Breeds of this type are typically Scandinavian in origin and are known to be prolific (having multiple lambs per pregnancy). Double woolled, these breeds have a thick undercoat covered with an outer layer called "tog." Tog is a fine, crimped wool similar to mohair. These breeds are popular with handspinners.

Must-have Lambing Kit

Interested in breeding sheep on your farm? In addition to reading, researching and asking lots of questions about how to breed and what to expect, here's a list of some supplies you'll want to have on hand. Protective, latex sleeves or gloves
Obstetric lubricant
Nylon rope, snare or lamb puller
Gentle iodine or other disinfectant for dipping navels
Ewe bearing retainer (spoon) or prolapse harness
Heat lamp or warming box
Broad spectrum antibiotic
Digital thermometer
60-cc syringe and catheter (for tube feeding)
Frozen colostrum
Lamb milk replacer
Nipples
Propylene glycol
Calcium solution
50 percent dextrose
An assortment of syringes and needles
Obstetric S-curve needle
Ear tags
Docking and castrating equipment/supplies
Scale and sling
Towels and rags
Record book

This article contains excerpts from Popular Farming Series: Sheep, a publication with in-depth information for those who own or would like to own sheep. Buy one online today!