



Ryeland and Shropshire Sheep

Background information on the Ryeland sheep

The Ryeland is currently recognised as a Traditional breed by the RBST and in the 1997 census there were 2600 breeding females.

The Ryeland evolved in Herefordshire and is one of the oldest British breeds of sheep. It has been famous for its wool for at least 600 years since the monks of Leominster bred sheep in the Rye-growing areas of South Herefordshire.

It is a docile animal with a reputation for being able to survive in poor conditions. A stocky build the sheep have white faces and legs which are almost covered with wool. The head is broad and covered with wool. Both sexes are polled. The Ryeland fleece is free from coloured wool and is popular with manufacturers of hosiery and hand knitters. The lamb is early maturing and produces a quality carcass.

Background information on the Shropshire sheep

The Shropshire is currently categorised as At Risk by the RBST and in the 1997 census there were 1085 breeding females.

The Shropshire emerged in the mid 19th century, having been developed from several breeds popular in the West Midlands and Welsh border counties, including the Longmynd (small, black-faced and horned), the Morfe Common (horned, speckle-faced and fine-woolled), the Southdown and possibly the Leicester. It is a Downland breed acquiring its name from the region of Britain where it first became popular. The breed society was founded in 1882 and the first flock book published a year later.

Hardy and prolific, the Shropshire is medium in size, with typical mature rams and ewes weighing 120kg and 75kg respectively. The sheep are polled, with a black face, wool-covered poll and legs. The body is deep, muscular and well fleshed producing good quality carcasses. The Shropshire fleece is white, fine in texture and dense, averaging 4kg in weight.