

SHEEP



ORIGIN OF THE SHEEP

- ▶ Today's sheep originate from wild sheep of several regions.
- ▶ The Mouflon from Europe and Western Asia, the Urial and the Argali from Asia and the Bighorn found in Asia and North America.
- ▶ Two wild mouflon populations still exist: the Asiatic mouflon that live in the mountains near Turkey and southern Iran; and the European mouflon that live on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica.
- ▶ Sheep were domesticated by humans around 10,000 BC. They were among the first animals to be domesticated.
- ▶ Sheep have been mainly raised under very tame conditions; this has influenced several changes as the breeds have evolved.
- ▶ The colour of the wool and hair changed from shades of brown to include whites and black.
- ▶ Their ears became more of a lop ear than an upright ear as they no longer needed to be as alert to danger.
- ▶ The horns that the wild sheep possessed were weakened and disappeared from many breeds.
- ▶ Sheep arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. Intended as a source of meat, they were not well suited to the Australian environment.



WOOL INDUSTRY

- ▶ Sheep shearing is probably the most iconic activity in rural Australia.
- ▶ Quality wool farming wasn't widely established until 1797 with the importation of Spanish Marino's.
- ▶ It took almost 25 years for breeding programs to produce enough wool to auction. In 1821, the first Australian wool was sold at Garraway's Coffee House in London.
- ▶ By 1840, Australia was producing more than two million kilos of wool each year.
- ▶ The success of the wool industry made many squatters and pastoralists immensely wealthy and by the 1880s the wool business was booming.
- ▶ Two world wars and a depression affected wool prices, demand and labour negatively, but the industry boomed again in the 1950s.





SHEEP SHEARING

- ▶ Australia is now one of the world's largest wool producers, producing around 25% of wool sold on the world market.
- ▶ At the start of the wool industry sheep were shorn with blade shears, similar to garden clippers.
- ▶ Electric clippers are now used
- ▶ The value of Australian wool exports in 2016-17 is estimated to be around \$3.615 billion; this reflects the continuing strong global demand for Australia's wool, which is regarded as among the world's best.
- ▶ Wool is produced in all Australian states except the Northern Territory.
- ▶ New South Wales produces the greatest volume of wool, followed by Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia.
- ▶ In 2016-17, it is estimated that over 74.3 million sheep were shorn in Australia.



MARINO WOOL

- ▶ Australian sheep farmers breed sheep to suit the climatic in their part of the country.
- ▶ The predominant breed of wool sheep in Australia is the Merino.
- ▶ The Merino was first introduced into Australia in 1797.
- ▶ Merino wool is dense and super soft.
- ▶ The wool is usually bright white in colour.
- ▶ The wool grows in small bundles or staples. Wool staples are commonly 65 - 100mm.
- ▶ Merino wool is most-suited for luxury clothing, high-performance sportswear and next-to-skin apparel.
- ▶ Fashion designers love this unique fibre for its quality and versatility - nothing else feels like Merino wool, looks like Merino wool, or wears like Merino wool.

LAMB INDUSTRY



- ▶ Australian sheep producers now tend to focus on the production of meat as the demand for prime lamb has increased over the past 50 years.
- ▶ The lamb industry makes an important contribution to the Australian economy. In 2017-18 it accounted for around 7% (\$4.1 billion) of the gross value of agricultural production (ABS 2019) and around 5% (\$2.6 billion) of agricultural export income.
- ▶ Since the early 1990s the number of farms producing lamb has increased.
- ▶ Australia's lamb producing regions are concentrated in the south-east of Australia including Tasmania, Victoria, central and southern New South Wales and south-east of South Australia and in south-west Western Australia

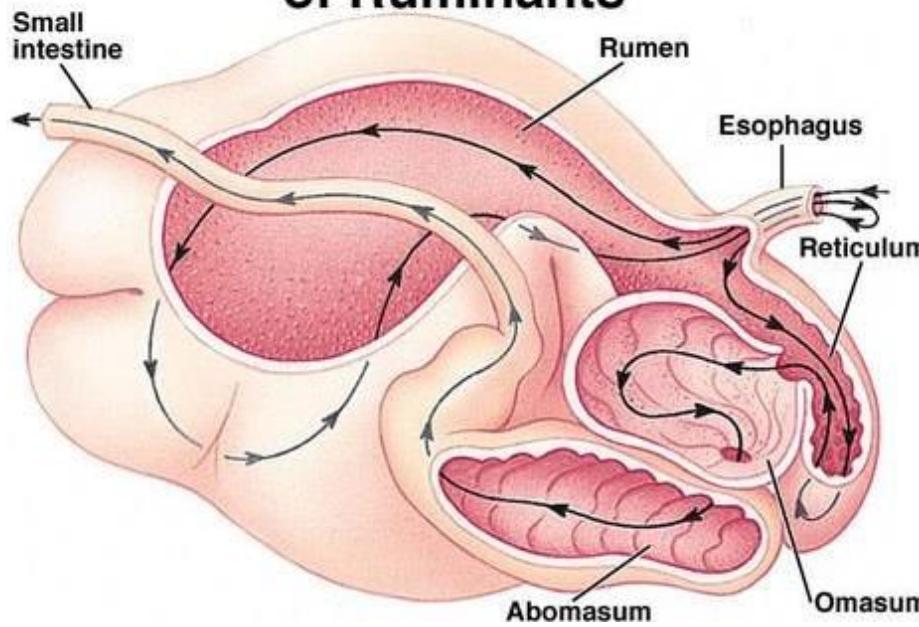
SHEEP TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ Female sheep are called ewes, baby sheep are called lambs, and male sheep are called rams.
- ▶ A group of sheep is called a flock.
- ▶ Sheep are social animals and like to flock together. They are also timid, nervous and easily frightened.
- ▶ Defenceless against predators like wild dogs the most important reason they like to flock together is for protection Maybe you've heard the term "safety in numbers"
- ▶ Shepherds and farmers often use sheepdogs to protect and move them around safely.
- ▶ Sheep usually give birth once a year and have 1-3 lambs.
- ▶ Pregnancy lasts for 147 days.
- ▶ Sheep have a high degree of independence at birth although lambs form strong bonds with their mothers. They can identify their mother by her bleat.
- ▶ Their average lifespan is about 8 years but in the right conditions could live to be as old as 20.



SOME INTERESTING FACTS

Four-Chambered Stomach of Ruminants



- ▶ Sheep have a four-chambered stomach, the first chamber stores quickly ingested food called cud, which they then bring back into their mouths to chew again before fully digesting it. Sheep spend about a third of their life chewing the cud.
- ▶ Sheep have an excellent sense of hearing. They are more sensitive to high frequency noise than people and get scared by loud noises. They need a quiet, peaceful environment to thrive.
- ▶ When sheep are on their back, they will need to be helped, because they can't get up from that position.



HEALTH CARE, PESTS & DISEASES

- ▶ Animal health, welfare and biosecurity are all important stages of the livestock production chain. If managed poorly each can have adverse impacts on productivity.
- ▶ Biosecurity programs for the sheep industry are designed to prevent the spread of infectious disease and contain disease outbreaks when they occur.
- ▶ Parasites and disease impact on all livestock production systems, including sheep. Livestock affected by disease may not always show obvious clinical signs but there may still be negative impacts on growth rates, reproduction rates, carcase quality and milk production.
- ▶ Biosecurity is important at the national, regional and property level.
- ▶ Producers are governed by Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. State and territory governments are responsible for animal welfare laws and their enforcement. These are enforced through animal welfare or prevention of cruelty to animals' legislation.



RISKS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Like any primary production enterprise there are risks associated with commercial production of sheep. Some will be outside of a producer's control however experienced producers are usually able to manage these risks.
- ▶ Risks include the loss of vital export markets. The COVID-19 outbreak had a massive impact on a lot of our export markets.
- ▶ Disease and pests, it is extremely important that we maintain Australia's freedom from major diseases through strict quarantine laws and procedures.
- ▶ Here in Australia weather events such as drought, fires and flooding take a huge toll on our farming communities. They really need our support.



POP QUIZ

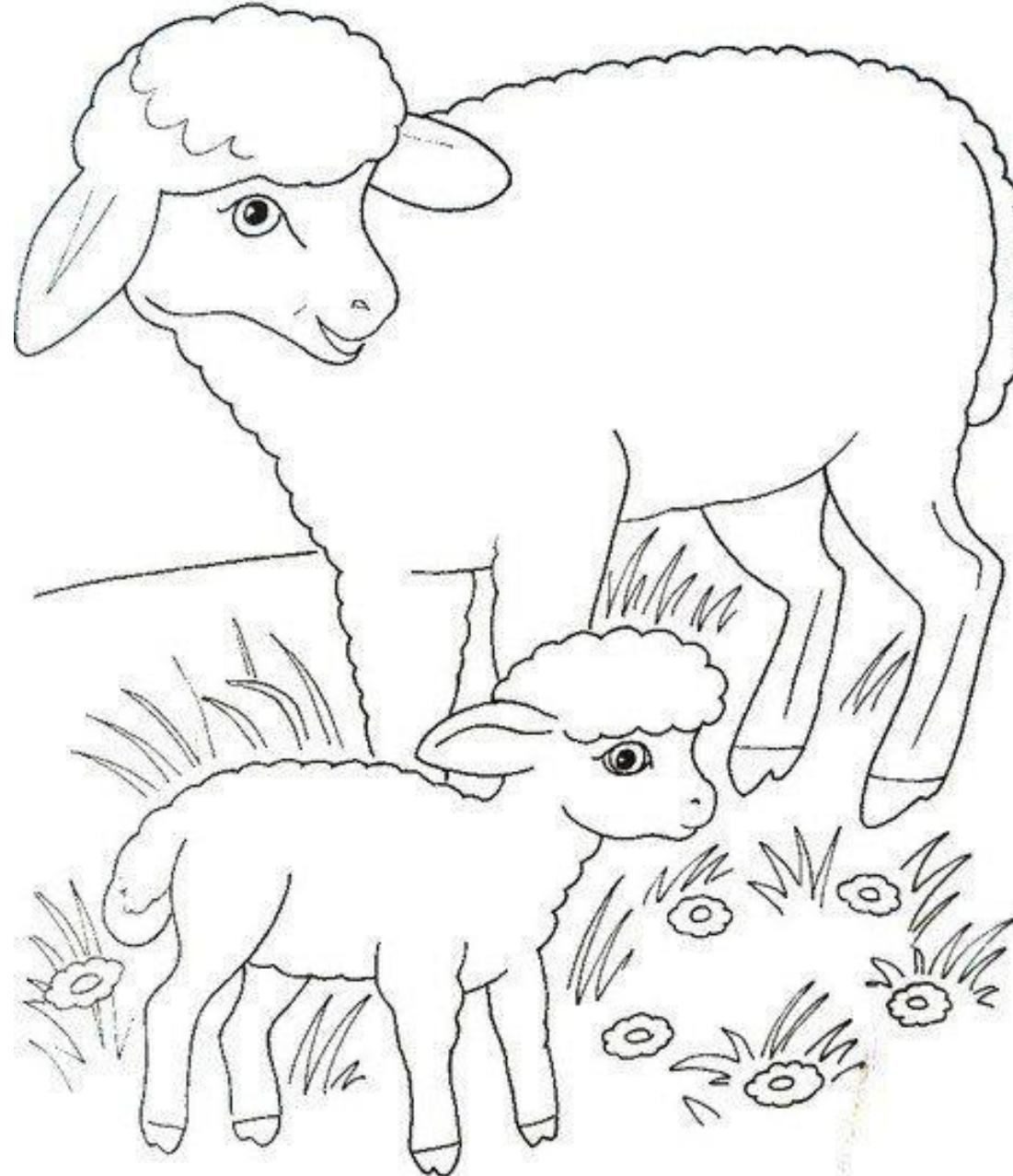


- ▶ Sheep are only white in colour TRUE/FALSE
- ▶ The most common breed of sheep used for wool is _____.
- ▶ Australia produces both _____ and _____ from sheep.
- ▶ A male sheep is called a _____, a female sheep is a _____ & a baby sheep is called a _____.
- ▶ Australia produces around _____ of wool sold on the world market.
- ▶ What's one interesting fact you've learned about sheep _____
- ▶ Sheep pregnancy lasts about _____.
- ▶ Wool is produced in all states and territories TRUE/FALSE
- ▶ Sheep were first domesticated around 1000 years ago TRUE/FALSE.
- ▶ What are the three environmental challenges farmers face in Australia _____, _____, _____.

NOTES



SHEEP





RESOURCE

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au>

<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au>

<http://mundooisland.com.au>

<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au>

<https://www.nma.gov.au>

<https://maas.museum>