

COMMODITY

SHEEP

Description

Sheep are raised throughout British Columbia, with approximately 38 sheep and lambs making up the average sized flock. Flocks in the Okanagan, Cariboo and Peace River are mostly larger than those on the South Coastal Region of the province.

Lambs are raised mainly for the freezer market. Some lambs and sheep are slaughtered at local processing plants or sent to Alberta for processing. Wool can be considered a by-product of the industry, and shearing sheep in spring is a normal farm practice. There are a few farms producing milk as well as some farms specializing in breeding stock production.

Most sheep breeds in BC are of the woolen type. There has been recent introduction of hair sheep noted for their small size and meat desirability that fit a niche market. Sheep are generally bred in fall and lamb in spring. Hair sheep are bred and lamb year round.

A number of breeds and their crosses are managed under a variety of systems appropriate to the type of sheep, local climate and resources available to the producer. These systems include, but not limited to range grazing, brush grazing, pasture grazing, and semi-confinement. Ewes, lambs and rams are usually kept on pastures during late spring, summer and late fall. Animals are kept and fed indoors on some farms during winter, while on some other farms they are confined and fed under shelters.

Large flocks are used during the growing season to graze forested lands that were harvested and replanted. It is perceived as a simple, efficient and environmentally friendly method of weed and/or brush control. Sheep grazing contractors are expected to follow a set of comprehensive guidelines, which include health, and on-site management of sheep and lambs. A key component of the guidelines is the Sheep Health Protocol developed to prevent the transmission of domestic sheep diseases to wildlife.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the farm practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to sheep production include:

Animal Husbandry

Recommended animal husbandry practices for sheep are detailed in the Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Farm Buildings

Maintaining sheep require buildings to house animals, protect equipment and to store feed fertilizers and pesticides.

See Farm Practice: [Structures](#)

Grazing

Sheep may be pastured throughout the growing season. They may have access to pasture and range land 24 hours a day.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to sheep producers include the following:

Provincial

[Meat Inspection Act](#) – Regulation of animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat byproducts

Local Government

Applicable *Animal Control* and *Noise bylaws* where in place.

Publications

Publications that provide information on sheep production include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Sheep

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Transportation

Nutrition Guide for B.C. Sheep Producers

Flock Health Guide for B.C. Sheep Producers