



# All about the **Sheep**

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# Sheep

## Introduction

Throughout the years, sheep have been used for food and clothing for humans. In the past 200 to 300 years, they have become a major provider of meat. Sheep are now used for their wool, meat, and as farm pets. But whatever you choose to use your sheep for, there is certainly one out there for you.

## General Description

Lambs have certain characteristics that need to be observed for them to be considered good lambs. These characteristics are:

- Conformation – the lamb should have a level top line and should be long bodied with little amounts of fat.
- Muscle – extra muscles should be exhibited through its hind saddle, legs, and top.
- Structural correctness – legs should be in the correct place and position. They should not be bowed or splayed apart.
- Balance – a lamb's body parts should be balanced on each side (e.g., shoulders should be even in height on both sides).

## Selecting your Lamb

When you begin shopping for a new lamb, you need to make sure that breed, size and quality are all taken into consideration. You also want to make sure that the price you pay is not too high for the animal. If you intend to use the lamb in show competitions, then you need to make sure that it meets all the breed standards.



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### A Few Words about Breeders

When purchasing or obtaining a lamb, you should make sure that the animal is free of disease and has been well taken care of, especially if the animal is to be exhibited. Also, if you will be housing the new lamb in with a flock, you should make sure that your new addition does not spread any disease. Buying a lamb from a registered breeder is the safest way to get an animal that is healthy and fairly well-taken care of. Breeders take the time to have the animals tested. They have them treated if signs of infection do show up. And they make sure that the rest of the flock is not contaminated.

### A Few Words about Auctions

Buying a lamb from an auction or auction house is a practice that is looked down upon by many people. Auction houses do not require that animals be tested; therefore, you run the possibility of taking home lambs that have diseases. By the time the signs show up, the rest of your flock could be infected. Auction houses are not recommended places to buy an animal even though it is usually the cheapest.

## Preparing for Your Lamb

When bringing the lamb home, you should make sure that everything is set up before it arrives. The first thing you should make sure you have is an adequate area to house it. The housing area needs to be dry and free of drafts. In the housing area, the lamb needs both a sleeping area and an area for it to play in. You also need to fence in the area where a lamb will be housed, not only to keep him in but to keep other animals out.

Other items you will need when bringing a lamb home are feeds and water. A feed trough and hay rack will be necessary as well. You will also need shears if you plan on shearing your lamb.



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## Care and Feeding

### Lamb Feeding

Lambs require certain nutrients daily to remain healthy and grow properly. These requirements include water, protein, minerals, and vitamins. Water is the single most important thing in an animal's diet, especially during the summer months. Water must be given at least once a day. It is not uncommon for a lamb to drink 2 to 4 quarts of water each day. Carbohydrates and fat are also essential to a lamb's growth. These nutrients help supply energy to the animal. Proteins help the lamb to build muscles, internal organs, and skin, while also making them stronger. Minerals also help to make lambs stronger. The minerals help build strong bones and teeth, and make good muscle tone.

### Lamb Health Care

To keep your lamb healthy, you need to make regular observations of the animal and keep an eye out for signs of diseases. If your sheep starts to show signs of sickness, you need to get in touch with your veterinarian as soon as possible.

### Lamb Containment

Lambs need to have a shelter, especially when the weather turns bad or is very hot. A lamb's containment should be dry and draft free. It needs to be cool in the summer, but still allow fresh air and sunlight to come in. There should also be beddings inside the containment. Bedding materials can be made up of shavings or sawdust. Try to stay away from straws as the sheep will end up eating it. The place that the lamb is to sleep in should be 10 square feet and each exercise lot should be 20 to 25 square feet for each lamb. The area needs to be fenced in with strong materials to hold the lamb as it grows. Gates and doors should also be securely locked and easy to open and close.

## Medical Considerations

Sheep are a species that can easily carry disease or infection back to the rest of its group. Some of the common problems that sheep experience include overeating, lice, ticks, pregnancy toxemia, mastitis, tetanus, and abortions. There are a number of vaccinations that can be given to lambs to help prevent some of these conditions.

## Necessary Items

Lambs are animals that do not require a lot of equipment, unless you choose to show them. The most needed requirements of lambs are food, hay, and water. They also must have a fenced area and shelter to accommodate them. In addition, feed and medication will also need to be kept at hand. You will also need to have a means to transport your animal if you need to travel with it, usually a well-sized trailer or the back of a pickup that has rails on the side will do.

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