

Illinois

AgMag

An agricultural magazine for kids

Issue 13

SIMPLY SHEEP-ISH

- Haircuts for Sheep
- How Wool Becomes Yarn
- You Can Spin Your Own
- Flocks Make Frocks
- Wool for the Wearing

Dear Friends:

Jodi and I have new friends! Our neighbors down the road have two great dogs that actually help them on the farm. Belle, a hard-working Border Collie, and her buddy, Bear, keep our neighbor's sheep safe and out of mischief. Working dogs are very intelligent and help the shepherd herd the sheep. They run around the sheep to make them move, but they are careful not to bark because this would scare the sheep and make them hard to control.

Guard dogs like Bear protect the sheep from wild animals such as coyotes and wolves. They bark at night to scare away potential attackers. Their role is important because sheep are extremely valuable animals and deserve to be protected. Sheep provide us with many useful products, such as fiber for clothing, delicious meat, candles to brighten our world, and even medicine to help us stay healthy. We found out that the list of products made from sheep is astronomical!! Follow along through our Ag Mag to learn more about sheep.

Your friend,
Eddie



Earth Friendly Animals



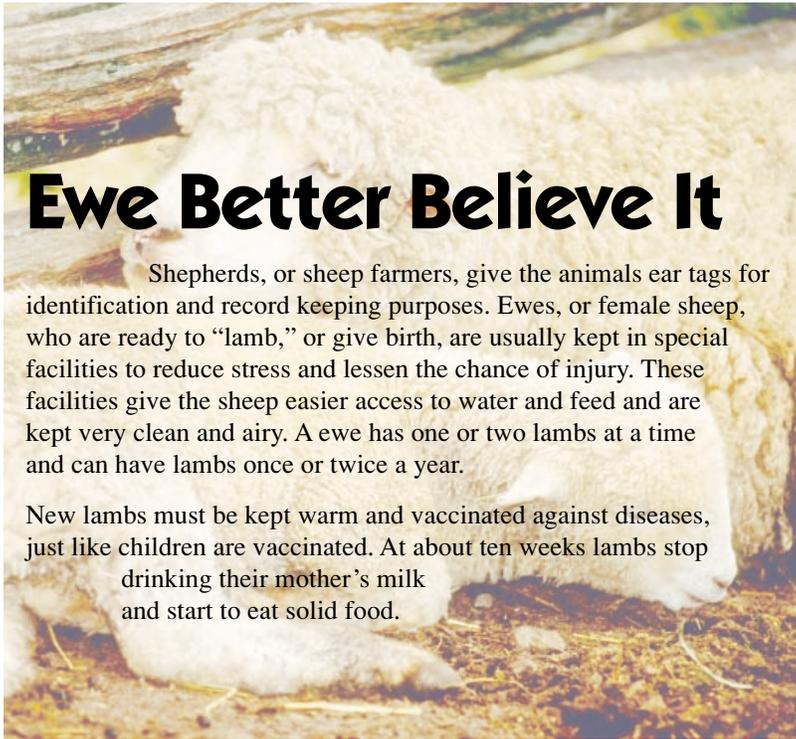
Sheep are a renewable resource! They help convert grass to high-quality food and fiber. Sometimes sheep are used to graze leftover stalks and seeds after crops have been harvested. They even reduce the need for chemical herbicides by helping control weeds along roadsides and pastures.

Sheep are active in fire prevention by keeping the brush controlled to reduce damage from wildfires. They feed from the land, recycle nutrients back to the soil, and provide people with food, clothing, and shelter.



Wool clothes are flame-resistant. That means that they will not catch on fire.





Ewe Better Believe It

Shepherds, or sheep farmers, give the animals ear tags for identification and record keeping purposes. Ewes, or female sheep, who are ready to “lamb,” or give birth, are usually kept in special facilities to reduce stress and lessen the chance of injury. These facilities give the sheep easier access to water and feed and are kept very clean and airy. A ewe has one or two lambs at a time and can have lambs once or twice a year.

New lambs must be kept warm and vaccinated against diseases, just like children are vaccinated. At about ten weeks lambs stop drinking their mother’s milk and start to eat solid food.



Lighten Their Load

Most sheep farms have a shearing room in the barn to shear the sheep. Sheep have their wool clipped off each spring and the person who shears sheep is called a shearer. They use electric shears to clip the wool off as close to the sheep’s skin as possible. The shears are cleaned with disinfectant to kill germs between the clipping of each sheep.

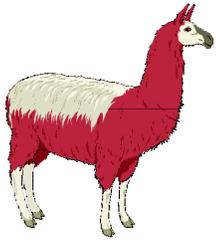
The shearer tries to shear the wool off in one large sheet because it is easier to handle than lots of small pieces. A single sheet of wool is called a fleece.

Let’s Count Sheep

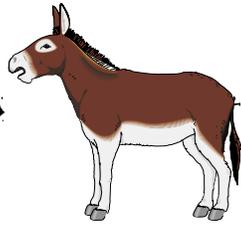
Some farm producers have flocks of 50 to 200 sheep, while other larger operations may have 1,000 to 5,000 sheep. It is also possible to find little flocks of ten or less sheep belonging to people who like to knit the yarn that is made from the sheep’s wool. When counting the number of sheep in a flock—don’t count them by their tails because all lambs have their tails removed at an early age. This helps to keep them cleaner. Most sheep farmers specialize and raise their animals for only meat or wool.

Wool is used to clean up from oil spills. Wool sponges soak up the oil, and the oil can be cleaned out of the sponge. The oil is recycled, and the sponge can be used over and over again.





LA-
LA-
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LLAMA
AND
DONKEY DO

Dogs are not always used to guard sheep. Some sheep farmers use llamas or donkeys because they are natural enemies of coyotes and wolves. When these predators come near the flock, they are chased away by the donkey or llama.

Shear Fun

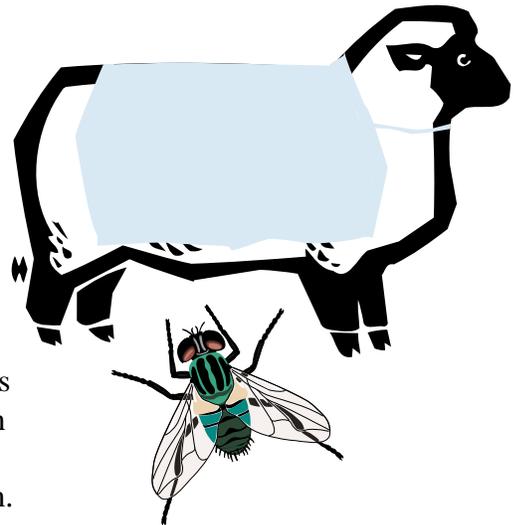
(repeat several times getting a little faster each time!)

How many sheep could a sheep shearer shear,
If a sheep shearer could shear sheep?

A sheep shearer could shear, should shear
wooly, wooly would shear, many, many sheep
that the sheep shearer stood near.

(Now make up your own tongue twister about sheep!)

Ewe Ram A Lamb A Ding Dong



Sheep producers have to keep their flocks clean and healthy in order to grow quality wool. When the wool gets dirty, flies often lay eggs in it and because producers do not want their sheep to get sick, they might have their sheep walk through a “special wash” to remove the insects.

Sheep producers who don’t want wool to get too soiled might put jackets on their sheep, too. The jackets keep dirt, seeds, branches, and flies from getting into the wool. Their hoofs must also be checked for stones that have gotten lodged in them. Stones make hoofs sore and hard to walk on.

It’s a Family Thing

A male sheep is called a ram, a female sheep is called a ewe, and a sheep that is younger than one year of age is called a lamb. A group of sheep is called a flock. Rams, which are larger than ewes, sometimes fight with each other to try and prove they are the strongest.

Woolly Workers



Joy & Dennis Crouch **The Sheep Station** **Eureka, IL**

Please describe your business.

In 1982, we had an opportunity to buy the inventory of a business that sold sheepskin and wool products. Thus, “The Sheep Station” was born.

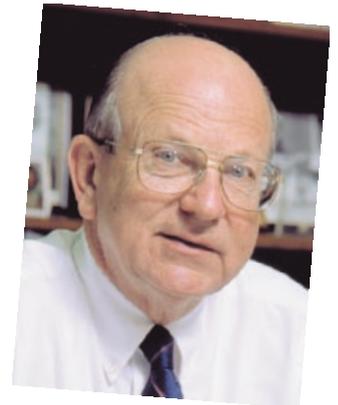
What has helped your business grow?

When our children were little we took our sheepskin and wool items to various sheep shows and festivals throughout the country. We eventually branched out into sheep-related gift items and added a mail-order service. Today, we do mostly mail order and some area sheep shows. Joy’s degree in Fashion Merchandising was a big help in establishing our business.

Gary E. Ricketts **Sheep Extension Specialist** **University of Illinois**

Please describe your job.

I develop and coordinate educational programs for sheep producers throughout the state. I also work with sheep producer organizations on a local, state, and national basis. I teach a college course on sheep production, write a lot of education material, answer many letters and phone calls, and also make farm visits.



How did you become interested in sheep?

My interest with sheep started with raising a pet lamb, and grew very quickly. My first 4-H project was a market lamb. I started raising purebred Corriedales in 1948 and still have a small flock.

What types of subjects from school have helped you the most at your job?

All courses in animal science, math, English, speech, chemistry, and physics. In addition, my experiences and knowledge gained through 4-H, FFA, and Grange have been very valuable. Today, get all of the computer experience you can.

What types of skills do you need to perform your job?

I do a lot of speaking and writing, so these two areas are very important. In Extension, you need to enjoy working with people. Leadership skills are very important and so is sound decision-making. One must be well organized and enthusiastic about his or her work.