

Sheep Breeds Information

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© Oogie McGuire

Black Welsh Mountain

Black Welsh Mountain is a down breed that has good luster and loft. With its gorgeous reddish, deep brown fleece, the Black Welsh Mountain sheep commonly win colored fleece competitions in the UK. Sought after by spinners and weavers who like to take advantage of its beautiful, natural color.

Stats:

Down

Bradford Count: 54s-50s

Micron Count: 28-31

Staple Length: 3-4"



© Carol Bator

Blue Faced Leicester

This is the stuff! One of the finest of the longwool breeds, Blue-faced Leicester is soft, long, and semi-lustrous. BFL fiber will tend to get a lot of “touch time” outside of spinning. It just wants to be rubbed on your cheek.

Stats:

Longwool

Bradford Count: 60s-56s

Micron Count: 24-28

Staple Length: 3-6"



© jack_spellingbacon of flickr

Cheviot

Originally, a Scottish down breed but now found all over the world, Cheviot sheep make up one seventh of the total wool produced of Scotland. The fiber is airy and lofty.

Stats:

Down

Bradford Count: 56s-48s

Micron Count: 28-33

Staple Length: 3-6”



© Whitefish Bay Farm

Corriedale

Bright, springy, and soft, the wool from a Corriedale sheep is impossible to resist. The Corriedale breed originated in New Zealand in 1868 with the breeding of Lincoln and English Leicesters rams with Merino ewes.

Stats:

Fine Wool

Bradford Count: 58s-50s

Micron Count: 26-33

Staple Length: 3-5”



© Grace Willmott

Cotswold

The Cotswold sheep are lovely animals. They are an ancient breed dating back to Roman times. Classified as luster longwools, the Cotswold fleeces have a Bradford count of 40s-50s fineness. Listed as Category 5, Minority by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in the UK, Cotswold wool is a rare treasure for handspinners.

Stats:

Long Wool

Bradford Count: 46s-36s

Micron Count: 34-40

Staple Length: 7-10"



© Devonshire Traditional Breed Centre (UK)

Devon Devon Closewool is a fuzzy faced sheep with a very dense coat. It produces excellent wool being a down breed. This breed is a crossbred of Devon Longwool and Exmoor Horn. Devon Longwool sheep have a very sexy look with its floppy Elvis like wool falling over its eyes. Its curly locks cascade in long ringlets. It is truly a wonderful fiber for worsted spinning. This wool has length, luster, and sheen. A delight to spin!

Stats:

Down

Bradford Count: 54s-46s

Micron Count: 28-34

Staple Length: 3-4 ½" Longwool

Stats:

Long Wool

Bradford Count: 40s-32s

Micron Count: 36-40

Staple Length: 8-12"



© Steve Davies

Falkland

White, soft, and with a creamy texture, Falkland wool is a terrific choice for your next spinning adventure. Falkland sheep are not subjects for sheep dipping which leaves their fleeces free of chemicals.

Stats:

Medium Wool
Bradford Count: 58s-46s
Micron Count: 26-34
Staple Length: 5”



© Anne Grassham

Fleecewood Leicester

Fleecewood Leicesters are a special breed being developed by Anne Grassham of Fleecewood Farm, New Zealand. They are a cross between English Leicesters and New Zealand Halfbreds, with the intention of making a superior woolcraft fiber. Fleecewood wool is silky and lustrous.

Stats:

Longwool Cross
Bradford Count: 52s-48s
Micron Count: 28-32
Staple Length: 4-6”



© Göran-Bergström

Gotland

Gotland sheep originated from the Island of Gotland, which is off the east coast of Sweden. Sometimes known as Goth or Gotland Pelt, these sheep hardly make you think of the contents of a gothic novel. It is lustrous, silky, and felts easily and has an old-world charm all it's own. Loved by handspinners the world over. Give it a try!

Stats:

Primitive
Bradford Count: 52s-48s
Micron Count: 28-32
Staple Length: 3-5”



© ElfsBergurSigurbjörnsson

Icelandic

The sheep of Vikings! During the ninth and tenth century, the Vikings brought what was to become the modern Icelandic sheep over to Iceland. Famous for its looks and wool, this breed has many possibilities and is inspiring for the handspinner. The fleece has an inner coat called thel and an out coat called tog. The soft, light thel has a micron count of 19-22 and is 2-4 inches long. The mohair like tog has good luster, a micron count of 27-30, and grows 5 to 8 inches long. This is truly a fun fiber to comb. The Icelandic breed has not changed significantly in 1100 years.

Stats:

Double-Coated:

Thel-

Bradford Count: 70s-64s

Micron Count: 19-22

Staple Length: 2-4"

Tog-

Bradford Count: 54s-50s

Micron Count: 28-31

Staple Length: 5-8 inches



© Grace Willmott

Jacob

You know them as the stunning sheep with horns and brown and white spots, but did you know that the English kept them in parks just for looks? We see this today with peacocks but how would it be to go around a corner and come face to face with a four horned beauty! Spinner's delight!

Stats:

Medium Wool

Bradford Count: 56s-48s

Micron Count: 26-33

Staple Length: 3-6"



Manx Loaghtan

Instantly recognizable by their distinguished, multiple horns, the Manx Loaghtan is classified by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust as at risk. This primitive breed of mountain sheep live on the Isle of Man. Historically, their wool was highly prized for its beautiful burnt red brown color from which its name was derived. (Loaghtan is the Manx word describing the wool's natural pigment.) The Manx Loaghtan is a striking animal with a lovely fleece both due to its color and hand.

Stats:

Primitive

Bradford Count: 54s-36s

Micron Count: 28-32

Staple Length: 2 ½-4”

© George Steriopulos



Masham

The Masham (Mass-ham) sheep have gorgeous longwool locks and black and white spotted faces. They are truly a magnificent animal. Regal and strong, the Masham produce a lustrous fleece that begs to be spun

Stats:

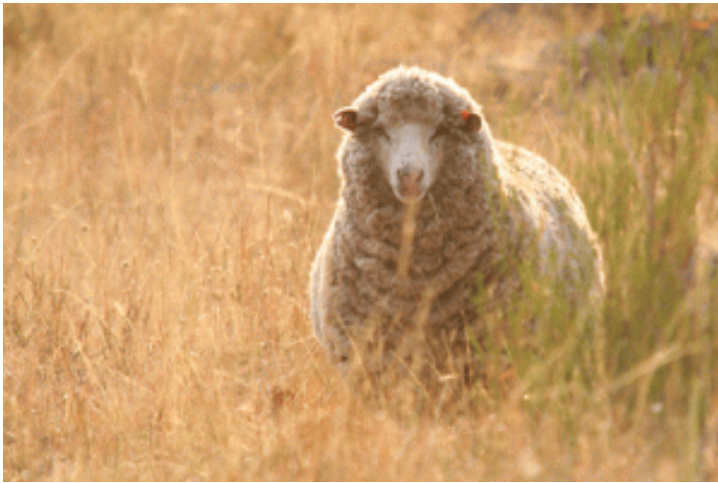
Long Wool

Bradford Count: 50s-46s

Micron Count: 29-34

Staple Length: 4-14”

© suburbank of flickr



© MarjK of flickr

Merino

Soft and crimped, most spinners are aware of this breed and its excellent qualities. Merino sheep is the most popular of sheep breeds and is the most populous too. Wool from Merino sheep is next to the skin soft.

Stats:

Fine Wool

Bradford Count: 70s-60s

Micron Count: 17-24

Staple Length: 2 ½ – 4”



© KnutP.Bøyum

Norwegian

Norwegian sheep are one of the oldest sheep breeds in the world and remain one of the most primitive. Their fleeces vary in color range from white, grey, brown, and black. Norwegian fleeces can grow to almost 12 inches long. An almost mythical looking beast, the Norwegian sheep and its fleece are wonders to behold. Dare to dream.

Stats:

Primitive

Bradford Count: 50s-34s

Micron Count: 29-36

Staple Length: 7-12”



© KnutP.Bøyum



© Grace Willmott

Portland

The Portland sheep is one of England's rare breeds. As you can see, the Portland sheep has a noble bearing and a stately manner. It is classified as a down breed and produces a lovely soft fleece weighing between 4-6lbs. Currently, the Portland sheep is listed as at risk by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. To learn more about Portland sheep and sheep history in general, see *Portland Sheep: A Breed with A History* by Norman Jones.

Stats:

Down

Bradford Count: 56s-50s

Micron Count: 26-31

Staple Length: 5-8"



© Melissa Lines, SkyLines Farm,
note that sheep has ½ year's growth or less of wool.

Romney

When people are asked to think of an image of sheep in their minds, this is the breed of sheep that the image will most likely look like. Traditional. Beautiful. Peaceful. Romney wool is recommended by teachers for new spinners and used extensively by all. The wool is lustrous and has well defined crimp that practically seems to spin itself. Romney is versatile wool that is a pleasure to spin which keeps spinners going back to this breed of sheep time and again. Classic.

Stats:

Long Wool

Bradford Count: 50s-46s

Micron Count: 33-37

Staple Length: 4-8"



©Karen Tesson

Ryeland

One of the oldest sheep breeds of Great Britain, the Ryeland got its name from its use by monastic houses in the ryelands of England. Ryeland wool is a down type wool that is very elastic, fine, and is commonly used in hand knitting wool. Fleeces range in weight from 5 – 9 lbs. Lovely fleece from a lovely sheep!

Stats:

Down-type

Bradford Count: 56s-50s

Micron Count: 26-32Staple Length 3-4”



© Andrew Michaels of flickr

Shetland

Famous for its use in Shetland Shawls and in the Shetland wool industry, the Shetland sheep grows the finest wool of all the UK breeds. Shetland wool is light, open, incredibly soft, silky, and luxurious. The fabulous wool traditionally used for Shetland shawls comes from the neck of the sheep. Wool can be harvested by rooing or plucking but now is mostly shorn. A beloved sheep to all handspinners.

Stats:

Primitive

Bradford Count: 60s-50s

Micron Count: 23-30Staple Length 2-5”



Stansborough Grey

Love the Lord of The Rings? Narnia? Stansborough Grey sheep are a unique, registered breed that are raised in Wairarapa Farm, New Zealand. Stansborough Grey wool was woven to make the famous costumes for Lord of The Rings and Narnia movies.

The fiber has no kemp, guard hair, coarse fibers, or brown tips. It is blue grey, has high luster, and has a micron count of 25. Stansborough Grey has often been misidentified as Gotland but it is incorrect.

The two fibers are completely different as they are two distinct registered breeds of sheep. There is no comparing these two wools. Stansborough Farm, in the Wairarapa district, NZ, has the only flock of Stansborough sheep in the world making this fiber truly a unique find. Try it, you will be very glad you did!

Stats:

Long Wool

Bradford Count: 56s-46's

Micron Count: Lambswool: 22, Adult: 28

Staple Length: 3-5"



Suffolk

Once known as "Black-Faces" for obvious reasons, the Suffolk sheep is one of the most popular breeds of sheep in the UK and the USA. The crossing of Southdown rams and Norfolk Horn ewes has produced this lovely, down-type breed. Their wool is extremely lofty and elastic, and does not felt easily making it a terrific choice for sock yarn.

Stats:

Medium Wool

Bradford Count: 58s-56s

Micron Count: 26-28

Staple Length: 3-4"



© flyhoof of flickr

Teeswater

Teeswater is a sheep that inspires romance. Picture it's curly locks swaying in a gentle breeze as it feeds in a pasture at Pemberly with Mr and Mrs Darcy quietly walking by. If Jane Austen were to include sheep in her novels, this would be the one. The Teeswater is a rare breed and is currently listed as a Category 3: vulnerable sheep on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in the UK. Their fleece is lustrous, silky, smooth, and long. A wool for those who cry during old movies, love a happy ending, and of course, fans of Miss Austen.

Stats:

Longwool

Bradford Count: 50s-44s

Micron Count: 30-36

Staple Length: 6-12"



© op of flickr

Texel

This is the Arnold Schwarzenegger of sheep. The Texel has amazing muscle mass. They must work out. The Texel originated in the Netherlands in the early nineteenth century. Their fleece is somewhat spongy with nice loft. It is bouncy and is fun to spin. To our knowledge, Texel wool has not made any action films or held office, yet! But it is sure to be a star! Try some.

StatsMedium Wool

Bradford Count: 56s-46s

Micron Count: 26-34

Staple Length: 3-6"



© Bob Travis

Tunis

An incredibly beautiful red faced sheep, the Tunis sheep is where it is at! An ancient sheep breed that is of the down variety, the handsome Tunis is born red or tan. As the sheep matures, she will grow a lovely white fleece while retaining her red/tan face and legs.

Stats:

Down

Bradford Count: 58s-50s

Micron Count: 25-30

Staple Length: 3-5”



© flyhoof of flickr

Wensleydale

Bluecap was the name of the lamb that started it all back in 1839 in East Appleton. His father was a Dishley Leicester and his mother, a Teeswater Muggs. Bluecap was a stunning sheep with blue skin, enormous size, and excellent quality wool. These qualities still typify the breed that was created by his birth. Bluecap is as famous as it gets for a sheep! Wensleydale sheep are listed as being at risk by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in the UK.

Stats:

Longwool

Bradford Count: 50s-44s

Micron Count: 30-36

Staple Length: 6-12”



© Heather Onions

Whitefaced Woodland

Handsome with its curling horns, the Whitefaced Woodland is a large, hill sheep whose lofty fleece is much sought after by handspinners.

Alternatively called Penistone, a name which was attributed to it by its proximity to the sheep fairs, held at Penistone in Yorkshire since 1699. The Whitefaced Woodland is a down breed that has been classified as at risk by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. Fleeces weigh between 4 – 6.5 lbs.

Stats:

Mountain Breed

Bradford Count: 54s-50's

Micron Count: 28-31

Staple Length: 4-7"