

SHEEP BREEDS

- There are over 120 different pure breeds of sheep in the UK
- UK breeds can be divided between the areas where they live.
- There are 3 types of sheep breeds in the UK:

1. MOUNTAIN
2. UPLAND / HILL
3. LOWLAND

MOUNTAIN

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Long wool
- Often horned
- Small size (eg average weight 65kg)
- Lambing in April / May
- 1 lamb on average born per ewe
- long tailed

EXAMPLES OF BREEDS

Scottish Blackface
Welsh Mt
Swaledale
Teeswater
Rough Fell

HILL / UPLAND

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Longish wool
- Often curly
- Bigger than mountain sheep
- Lambing April
- Usually larger than mountain sheep

EXAMPLES OF BREEDS

Blue faced Leicester

Border Leicester

Cheviot

Kerry

Beulah

Mule

LOWLAND

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Short, tight / dense , fine wool
- Big sheep (though some are small)
- Lambing March
- Mostly to produce lamb for meat

EXAMPLES OF BREEDS

Dorset (Down)

Suffolk (Down)

NC Mule

Texel

Charollais

SHEEP INDUSTRY STRUCTURE IN THE UK

The structure of the sheep industry in the UK is based on a mutual dependence of 3 distinct types of sheep farming, which are:

- Mountain sheep farming
- Hill / Upland sheep farming
- Lowland sheep farming

The mountain sheep farmer and the lowland sheep farmer are dependant on one other , since many of the ewes used in the lowlands are purchased from **hill / upland** farmers, who in turn get their sheep from the **mountain** breeder.

Eg The North Country Mule =

Systematic cross breeding is a key feature of the British system of sheep production that is unlike the national industry of any other country.

THIS TYPE OF CROSS BREEDING & DEPENDANCE ON EACH OTHER IS KNOWN IN THE SHEEP WORLD AS STRATIFICATION.

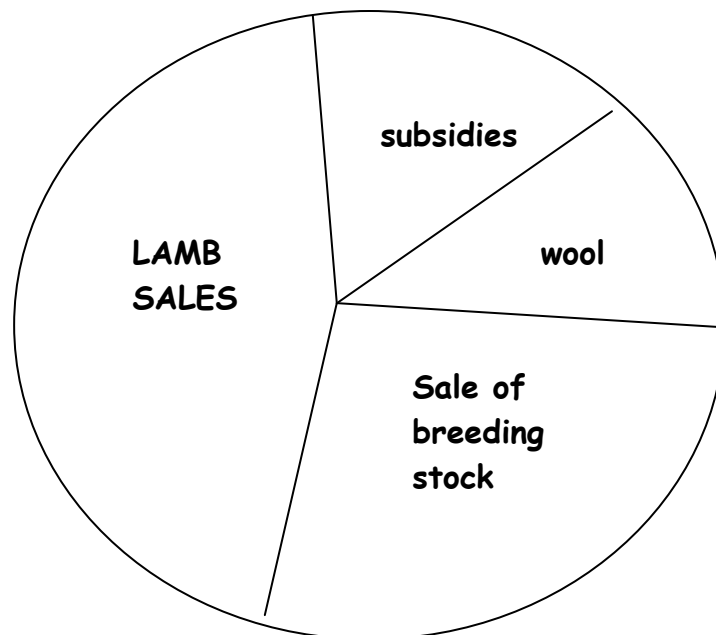
IT IS PECULIAR TO THE UK, AND IS NOT FOUND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

1. MOUNTAIN SHEEP FARMING

The first tier is in the mountain areas (700-1500m)

- 40% of UK sheep are classed as 'Mountain' sheep.
- Areas where they live include
 - Exmoor
 - Lake District
 - Wales
 - Pennines
- Here the land is poor, acid soil, grows heather, poor grasses and has harsh winters. They may only survive for 3 - 4 years.

Breeding stock from these flocks are then sold to the upland / hill farmers where they are crossed with specialised, large-framed ram breeds such as the **Bluefaced Leicester** and the **Border Leicester**.



2. HILL / UPLAND SHEEP FARMING

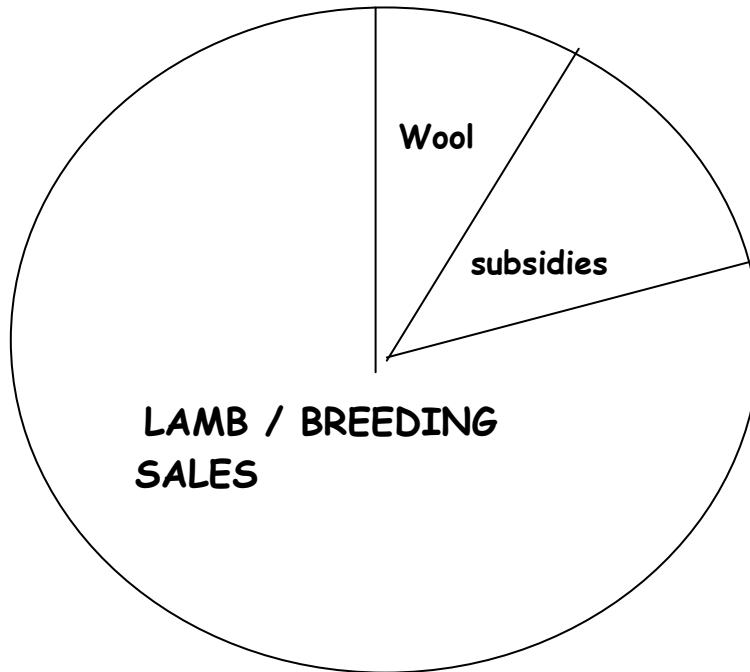
The production of crossbred ewes from hill breeds by crossing with large-framed rams result in ewes with higher prolificacy and bodyweight than their purebred mothers and maximises heritability of maternal traits, survivability, etc. The use of "terminal sire" meat breeds on the crossbred ewes then provides the means to tailor the slaughter lamb carcasses to meet the requirements of the market for the lowland farmer.

Most slaughter lambs consequently contain genes derived from at least three different sheep breeds.

- altitude from 300 - 700 metres
- buys & rears mountain sheep (known as Draft ewes)
- produce crosses such as:

RAM	EWE	= CROSSBRED
BORDER LEICESTER	SCOTTISH BLACKFACE	= SCOTS HALFBRED
BORDER LEICESTER	WELSH MOUNTAIN	= WELSH HALF BRED
BLUE FACED LEICESTER	SCOTTISH BLACKFACE	= SCOTS MULE
BLUE FACED LEICESTER	SWALEDALE	= NORTH COUNTRY MULE
BLUE FACED LEICESTER	WELSH MOUNTAIN	= WELSH MULE

- sells these crosses to the lowland farmer



3. LOWLAND SHEEP FARMING

- Puts a "terminal sire" (meat type ram) onto his ewes
- Produces lambs for meat
- Wool is not important
- Uses breeds such as :

RAMS

SUFFOLK

CHAROLLAIS

TEXEL

BLEU DE MAINE

EWES

N C MULE

SUFFOLK / SUFFOLK CROSS

TEXEL

LLEYN

