



# KIDS CONNECTION

## Sheep



### Neat Sheep!

Sheep are used for many things, including meat, wool and leather. They are one of the oldest domesticated animals in the world and can be found in most countries across the globe! In the United States, there are 5.32 million head of sheep. Sheep are raised in all 50 states; however, most sheep production takes place west of the Mississippi River. There are many different breeds of sheep. Some of the most popular breeds are Suffolk, Dorset, Columbia and Rambouillet.

### Fun Fact

President George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both owned sheep! They used the wool to make suits for their inaugurations.

### Fun Fact!

President Woodrow Wilson grazed sheep on the White House lawn! The wool from those sheep was sold to raise money for the Red Cross during World War I.

### Match the Word with the Definition!

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1. ewe       | a. a group of sheep  |
| 2. fleece    | b. a neutered male sheep   |
| 3. flock     | c. a mature female sheep capable of reproducing                                |
| 4. gestation | d. the act of removing wool from sheep   |
| 5. lamb      | e. a mature male sheep capable of reproducing                                  |
| 6. lambing   | f. the natural fiber covering sheep  |
| 7. ram       | g. the process of a sheep giving birth   |
| 8. shepherd  | h. the outer covering of wool on a sheep, removed in one piece during shearing |
| 9. wether    | i. a person who takes care of sheep  |
| 10. wool     | j. the period of time a sheep is pregnant                                      |
| 11. shearing | k. a young sheep; meat from sheep  |



# Counting Sheep

A ewe's gestation period is 145 to 155 days, which means it only takes five months for a lamb to be born. Ewes often have twins or triplets.

Lambs are able to stand up within 30 minutes of being born. Instinct tells them to look for milk from their mother. If they have trouble finding the milk, the ewe will help them.

After lambing, the ewe produces milk with special nutrients and antibodies called colostrum. The nutrients and antibodies in this milk help protect the lamb from harmful bacteria and viruses during the early part of its life. A lamb needs to consume 10 percent of its body weight in colostrum within its first 24 hours of life.

Soon after being born, lambs are able to eat grasses and grains like their mother. Lambs will be almost fully grown by six months of age and typically weigh between 110 and 120 pounds. Lambs at this age and size are sent to market. They are then transported to a processing plant where the meat is cut into lamb products that you can find at a restaurant or grocery store.



## Did You Know?

**The best way to tell the age of a sheep is by examining their lower incisor teeth. Sheep do not have any incisor teeth on their upper jaw. After one year their baby teeth are replaced by permanent teeth.**

**By four years of age, sheep will have all of their teeth. At the age of eight, most sheep have lost all their teeth.**

# Grazing Sheep

Sheep are ruminant animals, which means their stomachs have multiple compartments that allow them to digest plants that humans cannot. This is an advantage because sheep can also digest coproducts from plant processing like soybean hulls, peanut hulls and corn gluten feed.

Sheep will graze and eat grasses, clover and other forbs and other pasture plants. A forb is a plant whose stems and broad flat leaves die down to the soil at the end of each growing season. Sheep help with weed control by eating plants. This allows more room in the pasture for desirable grasses and plants to grow!

## Fun Fact!

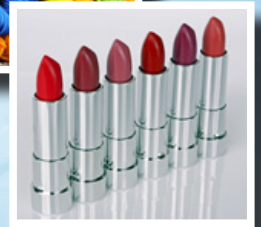
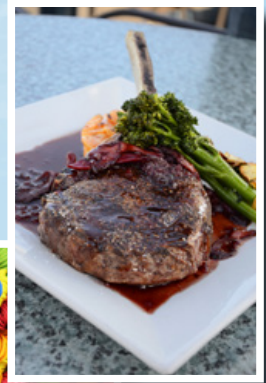
**A sheep will spend an average of seven hours a day grazing. They prefer to graze in the early morning around dawn or in the late afternoon near sunset.**



# Lamb Chops and More

Lamb is used to define meat from sheep less than one year old, while mutton is used to describe meat from an older sheep. Lamb meat is the most commonly consumed sheep meat. Lamb meat is chock full of protein, vitamin B-12, niacin, zinc and iron. One serving of lamb has half the iron most people need in one day!

In addition to meat, sheep provide us with wool, the natural fiber that grows as an outer covering on a sheep. Different breeds of sheep can produce different types of wool – fine wool, medium wool or coarse wool. One sheep can produce from 2 to 30 pounds of wool per year! The wool is used to make clothing, carpets and blankets. Baseballs are stuffed with wool and sewn with wool thread. Other coproducts from sheep include leather products like shoes and luggage, cosmetics like lipstick and mascara and beauty aids like shampoo and hair conditioner.



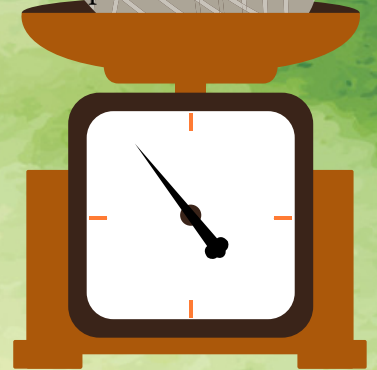
## Wool to Fabric

- 1. Shearing:** Sheep are shorn (sheared) once per year, usually in the spring. The wool is removed in one piece called a fleece.
- 2. Sorting:** The fleeces are sorted by type and wool quality, which can vary depending on the part of the sheep's body it came from.
- 3. Scouring:** The wool is washed to remove grease and dirt and then dried.
- 4. Carding:** The fibers are straightened by combs or rollers.
- 5. Spinning:** The wool is spun into yarn.
- 6. Dyeing:** Color is applied to wool when it is still a fleece, after the fibers are spun into yarn or after the yarn has been woven into cloth.
- 7. Knitting/Weaving:** The yarn is knitted or woven into garments or other items. Carpet comes from short fibers that are separated earlier in the process or come from a different type of wool than those used for knitting or weaving.

**Fun Fact!**  
One pound of wool  
can be spun into  
20 miles of yarn!  
That's a lot of  
Sweaters!

# Kansas Economy

In 2015,  
**42,000**  
head of sheep were  
shorn and produced  
**275,000**  
pounds of wool.



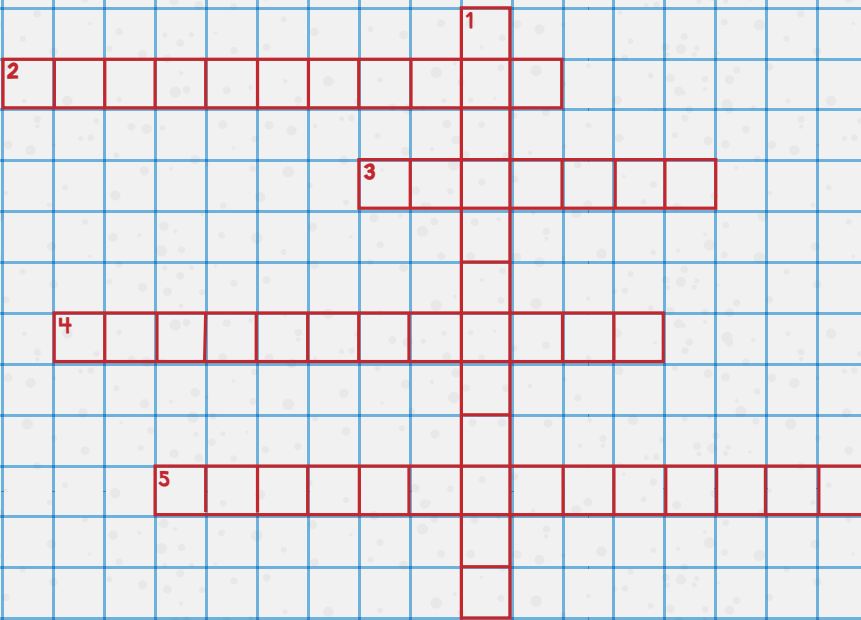
Kansas ranks in the  
**top 25**

states in the U.S. for sheep  
and lamb numbers.

There are  
**65,000**  
head of sheep in Kansas!



## Careers in the Sheep Industry Crossword Puzzle



1. Vaccinates and provides regular care, emergency care and helps ensure sheep and other animals are in good healthy, condition.
2. Raises and cares for sheep to produce lambs meat and wool.
3. A person who shears sheep.
4. Ensures sheep are given a well-balanced diet and creates feed rations appropriate for sheep.
5. Develops and delivers educational programs and resources about sheep to farmers, ranchers and consumers.

1. Veterinarian 2. Sheep farmer 3. Shearer 4. Nutritionist 5. Extension agent



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