

HOW TO BUY SHEEP

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Instructions

Preparing to Buy

- Step 1:

Determine the plans for the sheep before deciding what breed to buy. Consider whether you will raise the animals for wool production, as feeder lambs for market or for their meat.

- Step 2:

Consider the amount of land available for grazing the sheep. You need several hundred acres to start a commercial lamb operation, while 5 to 10 acres can sustain a small flock.

- Step 3:

Research the various breeds of lambs available in the area. Look through periodicals and journals like "Sheep Magazine" for information about specialty breeders around the country(see Resources below).

- Step 4:

Buy from a reputable breeder rather than at auction. Purchase adult sheep unless you have experience raising lambs. Select adult sheep that are hardy and resilient (see Resources below).

Selecting Sheep

- Step 1:

Inspect the sheep you're considering in a pen. Push your hands into the wool to make sure that the animal is well-fed and not emaciated. Pass if you feel its ribs, spine or hip bones sticking out.

- Step 2:

Examine the sheep's hooves and make sure there is no heat emitting from one and not another. Make note of any odor that indicates foot rot. Closely trimmed hooves that are tinted green indicate a recent case of foot rot. Check a ewe's udder for masses, lumps and graininess. Reject a ewe with mastitis.

- Step 3:

Separate the sheep's lips and look for 6 to 8 teeth on the bottom with no incisors. Look for missing or broken teeth, or misaligned teeth, which indicates an older sheep.

- Step 4:

Test the wool for density and texture. Wrap a finger into the wool and gently tug out a bit as examine the color. Use coarser wool for rugs and finer wool for sweaters and other hand knitting.

- Step 5:

Ask about the sheep's medical and family history. Examine any paper records kept by the breeder.

Tips & Warnings

- Lambs are more susceptible to illness and require an experienced handler.
- Be aware that sheep breeders may sell sheep that are undesirable. Adult sheep can carry diseases that are difficult to spot.

Resources

- [A veritable sheep encyclopedia.](#)
- [Sheep marketplace.](#)
- [Magazine for the independent flockmaster.](#)

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