

COMMODITY

SHEEP

Description

Sheep are raised throughout British Columbia, with the average flock comprising approximately 40 sheep and lambs. Flocks in the Okanagan, Cariboo and Peace River are mostly larger than those in the south coastal region of the province.

Lambs are raised mainly for the freezer market. Some lambs and sheep are slaughtered at local processing plants or sent to Alberta for processing. Wool can be considered a by-product of the industry, and shearing sheep in the springtime is a normal farm practice. There are a few farms whose primary goal is to produce milk, whereas others specialize in breeding stock production.

Most sheep breeds in B.C. are of the woolen type. More recently, the smaller hair sheep have been introduced to fill a niche market for meat. Sheep are generally bred in the fall and lamb in the spring. Hair sheep are bred and lambed year-round.

A number of breeds and their crosses are managed under a variety of systems appropriate to the type of sheep, local climate, and resources available to the producer. These systems include, but are not limited to, range grazing, brush grazing, pasture grazing, and semi-confinement. Ewes, lambs and rams are usually kept on pastures during late spring, summer and late fall. Animals are kept and fed indoors on some farms during winter, while on others they are confined and fed under shelters.

Large flocks are often managed during the growing season to graze forested lands that were harvested and replanted. Grazing by sheep under such scenarios is perceived as a simple, efficient and environmentally friendly method of weed and brush control. Sheep-grazing contractors are expected to follow a set of comprehensive guidelines which include on-site and health management of both mature sheep and lambs. A key component of the guidelines is the *Sheep Health Protocol* developed to prevent the transmission of domestic sheep diseases to wildlife.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to sheep production include the following.

Animal Husbandry

Recommended animal husbandry practices for sheep are detailed in the *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Sheep*.

See also Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Farm Buildings

The management and maintenance of a sheep flock requires buildings to house animals, to protect equipment and to store feed fertilizers and pesticides.

See also Farm Practice: [Structures](#)

Grazing

Sheep may be pastured throughout the growing season. They may have access to pasture and range land 24 hours a day.

See also Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Waste Handling

Manure is collected, stored or composted until it can be applied to cropland as a fertilizer. Some odours will be generated from waste agitation and land spreading activities.

See also Farm Practice: [Composting](#)
[Farmstead Refuse](#)
[Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners](#)
[Manure Storage and Use](#)
[Mortality Disposal](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, principal farm buildings on sheep farms are barns and shelters. Accessory farm buildings may include storages for agricultural wastes, chemicals, compost input materials, compost products, feed, and wood waste. Other accessory structures could include confined livestock areas, machine sheds, on-farm composting buildings, or processing facilities. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operations. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those Acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the Farm Practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to sheep producers include the following.

Provincial Legislation

The *Food Safety Act* regulates animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat by-products.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* protects all animals (other than wild animals not in captivity) from distress during handling or any activities not considered to fall under generally-accepted animal management practices.

Local Government Legislation

Applicable local government legislation may include animal control, meat inspection and noise control bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on sheep production include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Agricultural Composting Handbook

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide

Flock Health Guide for B.C. Sheep Producers

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Composting Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Burial Option, South Coastal Region of BC

On-Farm Food Safety

Nutrition Guide for B.C. Sheep Producers

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Sheep

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Transportation