



## Sheep Fact Sheet

We are committed to finding safe, loving homes for our rescued animals and want to make sure that you are making an informed decision when choosing to adopt. Please read this Fact Sheet carefully before filling out the application, as well as do your own research.

### Characteristics:

- Sheep can live 12-14 years.
- Sheep are very social animals; ewes tend to stay in maternal groups for life.
- No sheep should be housed alone! Isolation of a single sheep can cause health problems due to the stress of being alone.
- Be very calm and gentle in your approach. Sheep are suspicious animals by nature, and will spook easily if they are yelled at, handled roughly, or even approached quickly.
- Sheep and gentle goats get along well, so mixed herds are often fine. Aggressive goats will pick on and potentially even injure sheep.
- If your dog is a hunting breed, be mindful that he may perceive your sheep as prey. Monitor this introduction closely, and never leave your instinct-driven hunting dog with free access to your sheep.
- Repeat their names and talk to them while feeding and grooming, and they will become your affectionate and playful companions.
- Before adopting sheep:
  - Check your local zoning regulations to make sure that you can have them.
  - Make sure that you have the time to care for them and that you have responsible caretakers to cover for you in the event of illness or when on vacation.
  - Make sure your veterinary practice includes sheep; if it doesn't, find one that does **before you adopt**.

### Feeding:

- Clean, fresh water must always be available to your sheep. Use heavy containers to avoid spilling.
- Minerals, either loose or as mineral blocks, are one of the most important factors in providing proper nutrition for your sheep, and should always be available to them. If you are keeping sheep and goats together, make sure that the mineral you use are for both, since sheep cannot tolerate copper and goats require it.
- Feed - Sheep are ruminants (multi-stomached animals) and rely mainly on hay or pasture for their dietary needs. They require at least 8 hours of grazing time per day. Grain is very high in fat and should not be used on a regular basis, as sheep tend to have weight problems. Watch carefully for obesity, as it is very unhealthy for sheep.
- Pasture – The best sheep pastures include clovers and mixed grasses. Be sure to remove all plants that are poisonous to your sheep (your County Agriculture Extension can provide a complete listing of poisonous plants in your area).
- Adult sheep need two to four pounds of hay per day. Timothy hay is best. Alfalfa hay is very high-protein and should only be used for sick and debilitated animals.

### Health Care:

- Every five to six weeks, sheep should get a thorough, individual health check and have basic procedures done. These include: hoof trimming; ear cleaning; feeling the body for lumps and bumps; checking udders on females for heat, hardness, swelling, or discharge; checking eyes for injury, ulcers or discharge; checking horn growth for any areas of horn touching the skin; and checking teeth, especially on older sheep.
- During your daily contact with your sheep, always be on the lookout for any physical or behavioral changes.
- Symptoms indicating illness include loss of appetite, weakness or staggering, labored or fast breathing, diarrhea, and an above normal temperature.
- Make sure you vaccinate your sheep for Rabies, Tetanus, and Clostridium (CTD). The rabies vaccine is very hard on sheep; therefore the other vaccinations should be given at least one month before or after the rabies vaccine.
- Sheep need to be shorn once a year in the spring. Unless you have had training, hire a professional. Your local veterinarian should have a list of sheep shearers in your area.
- Sheep are relatively easy to take care of, and sanitary housing, good quality pasture, nutritious food, and plenty of sunshine will help reduce health problems.

### Shelter & Fencing:

- A large barn or shed makes a fine shelter for sheep. Allow at least 25-square-feet per sheep, and be sure the shelter has good ventilation and no direct drafts. Always provide plenty of clean, dry straw for bedding and remove damp and soiled straw daily. Hydrate lime will help absorb moisture and prevent the spread of bacteria, and should be spread lightly on any wet areas.
- In addition to adequate shelter, you will need a fenced-in area. The ideal fencing to use for sheep is a 4-foot-high, no-climb horse fencing, available at farm supply stores. Field fence has large square openings, and sheep, especially those with horns, can easily get their heads caught. Sheep are easily frightened, and when this occurs their natural instinct is to run – often straight into the fence. Never use barbed wire or electric fencing, as sheep can become easily entangled in it and it is not sufficient for keeping predators out. Be sure always to walk your fence line to check for holes dug by predators under the fencing.
- Tethering your sheep (putting them on a long leash) is not recommended, as it can be stressful and sheep can hang themselves on a tether.
- Pasture- We recommend 1/2 acre of land for every two sheep. For warm weather, the fenced area must have plenty of shade. Sheep can easily overheat, and need to have a place where they can be cool during the heat of the day.