

COTSWOLD

Summary

Large, placid and fairly hardy, the Cotswold is a rare breed whose numbers became critically low during the mid-twentieth century. Good marketing opportunities are associated with this breed and being strongly grass-based, the Cotswold is probably best suited to maintenance grazing of restored grassland sites.



Cotswold Sheep Society

Hardiness – a fairly hardy breed.

- *Hardy* – its heavy, all-encompassing fleece provides good protection from extreme weather.
- *Thrifty* – gains weight easily.

Physical Attributes & Husbandry – an easy to handle, placid breed.

- *Appearance* – large and long-legged, with a long wool fleece. Ewes weigh about 85kg and rams may exceed 135kg. Both sexes are polled.
- *Handling* – placid nature, thus despite large size the Cotswold is easy to catch and treat; easily trained to follow a bucket.
- *Fencing* – standard stock fencing suffices. Generally respectful of electric fencing and does not attempt to break out.
- *Fleece* – thick, longwool fleece, thus potential for becoming hung-up in Brambles and thorny vegetation.
- *Breeding* – large pelvic structure facilitates lambing. Ewes are milky and renowned for demonstrating impressive mothering ability.
- *Foot care* – as with many of the heavier lowland breeds, its feet need regular attention.
- *Insects* – the heavy open fleece tends to attract fly strike, so careful monitoring and regular treatment required.

Grazing Characteristics – a strongly grass-based breed, best suited to maintenance grazing.

- *Grazing preferences* – sweet, fine grasses. Less interested in coarse grasses and ignores rank grasses altogether. Does not take Tor-grass unless forced.
- *Rushes and sedges* – not keen.
- *Browsing ability* – minimal, although as with most sheep, it nibbles the new leaves of seedlings and scrub regrowth.

Interaction with the Public – suitable for grazing sites with public access.

- *Public perception* – as an old, rare breed closely associated with one region, the Cotswold may attract interest from the public. An aesthetically appealing sheep with its thick fleece and long forelock.
- *Reaction to dogs* – a breed that stands its ground against dogs extremely well. The usual behaviour pattern is that the sheep stamps the ground fiercely and lowers its head ready to charge.

Marketability – a breed which has become rare through competition with other breeds, the Cotswolds commercial opportunities lie within niche markets.

- *Wool* – produces a heavy, high quality fleece. There is excellent demand for the wool, to the extent that the British Wool Marketing Board collects Cotswold wool separately, in order to sell it by breed rather than by type.
- *Meat* – niche market for purebred Cotswold lamb sold by breed name direct to butcher. Otherwise sold at livestock market. Can be finished at 14-16 weeks.
- *Breeding stock* – high prices may be obtained for good quality pedigree breeding stock.

Sites where Cotswold sheep are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
Other contacts:		Cotswold Sheep Society Website www.cotswoldsheep.org	Mrs Lyn Gibbings 01285 760455
		Rare Breeds Survival Trust	024 7669 6551
		English Nature site manager for Crickley Hill and Cranham Common; formerly used Cotswolds on sites and has contacts for people who know the breed.	Paul Hackman 01531 638500

References