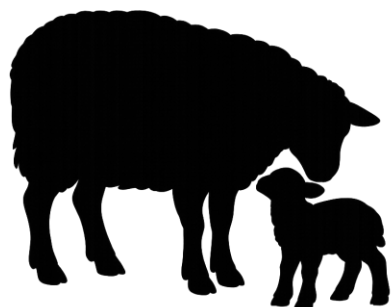


American *SHEEP* Industry

By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension. Updated for 2026.

4.99 million

is the number of sheep and lambs
in the US as of January 1, 2026.



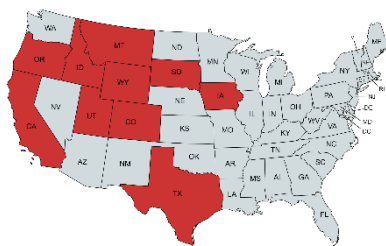
Lambs

are the primary source of income for most sheep farms and ranches. In 2025, the US lamb crop totaled 3.03 million head. The lambing rate was 1.05 lambs per ewe. Minnesota producers had the highest rate at 138.



88,853

is the number of US sheep farms and ranches in the US, according to the 2022 US Ag Census. The average is 57 sheep per farm.



Sheep

are raised in all 50 states, with Texas, California, and the Intermountain states having the most sheep.

Wool

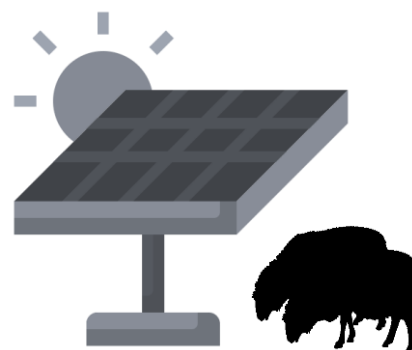
Wool has a long tradition in the US and is still important to many states, ranches, and farms. In 2025, US wool production totaled 20.5 million pounds. Three million head of sheep and lambs were shorn. The average price paid for wool in 2025 was \$1.40 per pound, with direct-marketed fleeces bringing much more.



In 2025, the average weight of a fleece was 6.8 lbs. California, Colorado and Utah are the leading wool-producing states.

Many breeds

The American Sheep Industry Association recognizes 45 breeds of sheep and classifies them as meat, fine wool, long wool, dual-purpose, minor, or hair (meat) breeds. 27 percent of sheep are now hair sheep or hair x wool crosses.



mighty grazers

Sheep are increasingly valued for their ability to control unwanted vegetation, including grazing under power lines, reducing fuel loads to help prevent and control wildfires and grazing solar arrays.

To learn more about the American Sheep Industry, go to sheepusa.org.