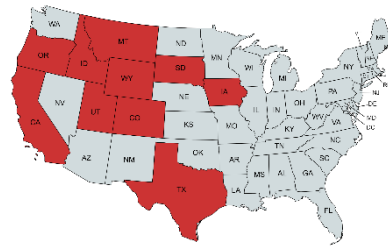
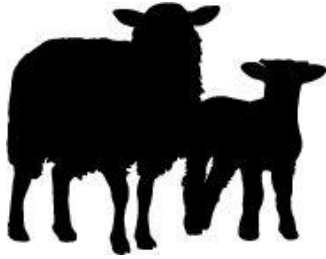


American *SHEEP* Industry

By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland. Updated for 2024.

5.03 million

is the number of sheep and lambs in the US as of January 1, 2024.



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 2023, US wool production totaled 22.7 million pounds. 3.22 million head of sheep and lambs were shorn.

The average price paid for wool in 2023 was \$1.56 per pound, with direct-marketed fleeces bringing much more. Fleece weight averaged 7 lbs. Colorado, California, Utah, and Wyoming are the leading wool-producing states.



Lambs

are the primary source of income for most sheep farms and ranches. In 2023, the US lamb crop totaled 3.03 million head. The lambing rate was 1.03 lambs per ewe. Virginia producers had the highest lambing percentage at 138.

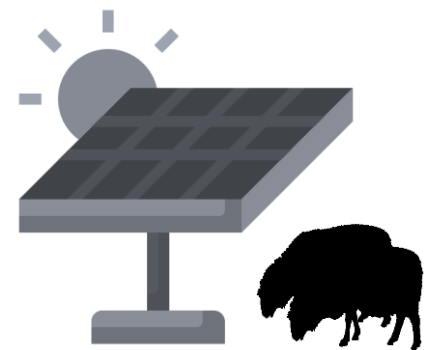


101,387

is the number of US sheep farms and ranches in the US, according to the most recent US Ag Census. Fewer than 200 are classified as dairy sheep farms.

Diversity

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. Hair sheep continue to grow in popularity, especially in Texas and the southeastern US.



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.