



LESS SEASONAL BREEDS OF SHEEP

In temperate climates most sheep are seasonal in their breeding habits. They are most likely to breed in the fall when the days are becoming shorter. However, some breeds will breed outside the normal breeding season. They may have extended breeding seasons, being more likely to breed in the summer months or they may breed year-round. At the same time, it is important to understand that there is considerable variability within all breeds. Also, it is possible to select any breed for out-of-season breeding, though the heritability is usually low.

- **DORSETS** are the breed best known for breeding year-round. There is some belief that the Dorset Horn is more likely to breed out-of-season than the Polled Dorset, due to selection emphasis. **DORPER**, a shedding breed from South Africa, probably owes its aseasonality to its Dorset background.
- Hair sheep from tropical regions, such as the **ST. CROIX** and **BARBADOS BLACKBELLY**, have extended breeding seasons. They breed year-round in the Islands. The out-of-season breeding capability of the **KATAHDIN** is probably intermediate between hair and more seasonal wool breeds.
- Sheep native to the southeastern US are known for their extended breeding seasons. The **GULF COAST NATIVE** and **FLORIDA CRACKER** evolved under natural conditions. The **NAVAJO CHURRO** which shares some common Spanish ancestry with Natives will also breed out-of-season.
- Fine wool sheep, e.g., **MERINO** can be successfully bred out-of-season. Similarly, breeds with Merino ancestry tend to have longer breeding seasons, e.g., **RAMBOUILLET**.
- Prolific breeds such as **FINNSHEEP** and **ROMANOV** will breed out-of-season. Both breeds are popular in crossbreeding programs.
- **POLYPAYS** breed out-of-season, as three of the four breeds in their genetic composition are aseasonal: Finnsheep, Dorset, and Rambouillet. The Canadian-bred **RIDEAU ARCOTT** which is 40% Finn also has an extended breeding season.
- Two less common breeds that will breed out-of-season are the **TUNIS** and **KARAKUL**. Both breeds were originally fat-tailed before being “Americanized.”



The surest way to lamb in the fall or in an accelerated lambing system is to have sheep that will naturally breed year-round. There are many advantages to fall and accelerated lambing.