

RARE AND HERITAGE BREEDS OF SHEEP

Heritage breeds are breeds raised by our ancestors. They have been here awhile and have interesting histories. Rare breeds are so-named because their populations are declining. Most heritage breeds are rare, but not all rare breeds are heritage breeds. Heritage and/or rare breeds are a great choice for small farms.



The **COTSWOLD** is a very old English breed of sheep known for its long, coarse wool with wavy curls. It was first brought to America in 1832 for crossing with range ewes. The breed became nearly extinct in the mid 1900s. Nowadays, it is popular with hand spinners.



The **FLORIDA CRACKER▲** and **GULF COAST NATIVE** are similar breeds that descend from Spanish flocks brought to the New World in the 1500s. Having developed via natural selection, the sheep are well adapted to the heat and humidity of the South and more resistant to internal parasites than other breeds.



The **HOG ISLAND** evolved on a barrier island off the coast of Virginia. The breed developed via natural selection over many centuries. The last of the original sheep were removed from the island in 1978. There are flocks at Mt. Vernon (George Washington's birthplace) and the National Colonial Farm at Piscataway Park.



The **LEICESTER LONGWOOL** (or English Leicester) is an English breed of longwool sheep, popular during colonial times. It all but disappeared in the 1930s and 40s. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation re-established the breed via importations (from Australia) in 1990. Today, there are conservation flocks.



The **LINCOLN** is a rare, heritage breed of sheep known for its long, lustrous, and heavy fleece. It is one of England's oldest long wool breeds. The Lincoln was imported into the US in the 1800s and used primarily for crossbreeding and to create new breeds. Nowadays, it is mostly valued for its wool.



The **NAVAJO CHURRO** is the first domesticated sheep breed developed in North America, having descended from sheep brought to the New World by Spanish in the 1500s. It found a home with Native Americans, who use the sheep's doubled coated fleece to make their famous Navajo blankets.



The **SANTA CRUZ** is an extremely rare breed that once inhabited one of the Channel Islands off the Coast of California. In 1890, there were as many as 50,000 sheep. Due to environmental concerns, the sheep were removed from the island; the last ones leaving in 2016. Some of the sheep were distributed to private flocks.



The **TUNIS** is one of the oldest American livestock breeds. It originated from fat-tailed sheep imported from Tunisia in the late 1700s. The breed was popular in the Mid-Atlantic and South due to its ability to thrive in warmer climates but was nearly wiped out during the Civil War. There is renewed interest in Tunis sheep.