

SHEPHERDING 1

SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS

Sheep (called bleating chete) are one of the most common and productive types of livestock in the medieval culture. They require very little to raise as they survive on grazing throughout most of the year. They produce milk (1/2 gallon per day), wool (3 pounds per year), meat (15 pounds per lamb) and hides which are made into vellum for writing material.

Shepherd FRP characters and shepherding skill can be used to tell accurate location (breeds and markings of sheep), they can be used for sources of income, and they can tell the seasons by the condition of sheep. Shepherds can be used for adventure lead-ins as many village by-laws deal with livestock (and sheep in particular) and shepherds have many friends among merchants (butchers, weavers, cloth merchants, etc.). Shepherd wagons can be used for a base of operations while traveling in rural areas.

BREEDS

On Harn, there are twenty major breeds of sheep separated into the categories of mountain, hill and lowland breeds. There are also countless crossbreeds as each shepherd tries to create the best sheep for the location and resulting products. Each type of sheep survives best in it's native environment and won't survive at all in environments that are too different.

MOUNTAIN BREEDS

Mountain breeds and where they are most commonly located are Orbaalese Blackface (Orbaal), Ternu Horn (Tharda), Rayesha Mountain (Rethem), Felsha Gritstone (Kaldor), Shorkin Herdwick (Azadmere) and Sethadale (Chybisa). Mountain breeds lamb a month later than hill breeds and their wool is courser. They can survive only in the mountains and grassy hills.

HILL BREEDS

Grassy hill breeds include Kathela Hill (Kaldor), Shava Forest (Evael), Kanday Speckled Face (Kanday) and Cheviot (Tharda). These are the most common breeds and they can survive in the grassy hills and the lowlands (except for marshy areas).

LOWLAND BREEDS

Lowland breeds include Southdown (Melderyn), Ryeland (Kaldor), Athul Down (Tharda), Tharda Horn (Tharda), Peran Horn (Rethem), Anadel Down (Melderyn), Horadir (Chybisa), Nuthela (Orbaal), Ilmen Marsh (Kaldor) and Tharda Longwooled (Tharda). Lowland breeds can only survive in level areas and are the only breeds that can survive in the marshes.

CALENDAR

NUZYAEL

This is the month when most of the hill breeds of ewe give birth. The mountain breeds lamb a month later and the lowland breeds a month earlier. Each ewe has one to

three lambs weighing an average of ten pounds. If there are three lambs, one must be fostered or it won't survive.

PEONU

Lambs are castrated and their tails are cut off and sacrificed to Peoni. Special fences are used that the lambs can creep through but the ewes can't (this is called creep feeding). This allows the lambs to have the best grazing while the ewes are brought back to maintenance feeding.

KELEN

The flock is moved to fresh pasture and the sheep are dagged to prepare for shearing. Dagging is the process of removing the dirty wool at the back end so it doesn't foul the wool to be sold. Good pasture supports fifteen ewes and their lambs per acre without additional feed.

NOLUS

Sheep are sheared and lambs are sold to be slaughtered. Lambs sold at this time average 40 pounds in weight. Wool produced averages one pound for mountain breeds, one and three quarters pounds for lowland breeds, two and a half pounds for hill breeds and two and three quarters pounds for long woolled breeds.

LARANE

Lambs that are kept to replenish the herd are weaned at this time. Ewes that are barren or too old are sold to be slaughtered. The average weight of a ewe is 125 pounds of which 35% is meat. The woolly skins (called fells) are sold to hideworkers to make heavy coats as they are too thick to be made into vellum.

AGRAZHAR

Ewes and rams are selected for breeding. Rams are mated after they are a year old. Ewes are mated after they are two years old. One ram can service thirty ewes and ewes can be mated for five years.

AZURA

Breed ewes are flushed (fed extra food), dipped and dagged to prevent parasites and diseases. Any unknown sheep disease is referred to as murrain. When sheep are not just grazing, they're fed a combination of one pound hay, eight pounds kale or silage and one pound concentrated food (three parts grain and one part beans) per sheep.

HALANE

To honor the goddess Halea, the rams are turned in with the ewes to breed. Ewes are in heat for 24 hours once every 16 days. The sheep are marked by notching their ears, painting colors on their body or branding with tar. Careful records are kept of the markings to determine ownership and breeding history.

SAVOR

All of the village sheep are penned on the lord's demense to get the benefit of their manure. This is

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sometimes resented but it is enforced by the manor court with fines for those who don't oblige. Ewes are gradually fed more in preparation for lambing.

MORGAT

Lambing pens of thatched hurdles are made in sheltered fields to prepare for lambing next month. The end of this month is when the sheep are again returned to the fields.

EQUIPMENT

Shepherds use a covered wagon (in the style of a gypsy wagon) for shelter while following the flock and to be near during lambing. Unlike swine (which can defend themselves) sheep need a shepherd to protect them from predators and sheep thieves (called bleating culls). In the wagon is a straw mattress, a small iron stove (for cooking and heating), a stool (for milking) and cooking utensils. Shepherd tools include lamb feeding bottles (a clay, pewter or glass bottle with a cork and a pipe in the neck), a shepherd's staff (either neck crook or leg crook), dipping staff (like a crook with blunt ends), fold beetle (wooden mallet for hammering in hurdles), fold bars (for making holes and for hammering in hurdles), sheep bells (clucknet, canister, crotal or rumbler) sheep bows (yoke to restrain the sheep), and hurdles (wooden frames tied to the outside of the wagon).

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Male lambs (called wethers) are often castrated to produce a finer type of wool for four to five years.

If sheep (or other livestock) wander onto the lord's land without license (called waif and stray), the lord's men can keep them and sell them and keep the profit or charge 2d per day to care for them.

Shepherds can tell the age of sheep by examining their lower teeth. They grow two adult (larger) teeth per year. Shepherds count their sheep in pairs by a rhyming chant such as "one-erum, two-erum, cog-erum, shu-erum, shith-erum, shath-erum, wine-berry, wagtail, terrydiddle, den". This counts ten pairs which make a score.

The people of Tharda were the first to use sheep shears. Before that, wool was plucked from the sheep when they molted. Kaldorians were the first to do extensive cross-breeding.

Shoplifters are sometimes called sheep shearer's and garrulous people are called sheep headed.