

AN INTRODUCTION TO JACOB SHEEP THEIR CARE, SELECTION & ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU GET YOUR SHEEP

People new to sheep keeping can find this daunting and confusing, so the following checklist should help you be aware of what you will need to do.

Rules do change and they also vary in different parts of the UK. The best advice is check with the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk The 'Animal Disease', 'Animal Welfare' and 'Livestock Movements, ID & tracing' pages are all relevant. For Scotland go to <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare>

Whether you keep a few paddock grazers or a commercial flock you need to be registered with DEFRA. Before moving livestock to your holding you need a County Parish Holding (CPH) number for the land where the livestock will be kept. If you don't already have a CHP number then you will need to phone the Rural Payment Agency on 0845 603 777 and ask to be allocated an Agricultural Holding Reference Number (Holding Number) for your land. You do not have to own the land.

Next you need to register with your local DEFRA Animal Health Office, phone 0118 959 6695 (DEFRA – Animal Health) and ask to be allocated a Flock Number. You will need the Holding Number to get this. This is the UK flock number that will go on the ear tags of any sheep that you breed. They will also provide a helpful booklet on sheep husbandry. Having a Flock Number means that you are now a “Registered Keeper of Sheep” and will need to aware of current legislation and requirements. These include:

- o Welfare legislation and codes of practice
- o Animal Identification requirements
- o Animal Movement requirements
- o Animal Transport requirements
- o Record keeping requirements
- o Disposal of dead animals

All the welfare codes of practice and sheep identification rules that you need can be found at www.defra.gov.uk . Go to the home page, click on Food and Farming and click on sheep and goats on the left hand side of the page.

Electronic Identification or EID - Animal identification requirements have all changed again and from 1st Jan 2010 all Jacob sheep will need to carry double ID tags, one of which must be electronic and must be yellow. The UK number and individual ID are recorded on the chip and also printed on the tag. The secondary tag can be any colour except yellow, black or red and must also show the UK number and individual ID but can also contain management information, e.g. flock name or a year letter. All stock destined for breeding must be identified in this way and any animal that is kept longer than one year of age. One year is taken as 30th June of the year following birth (so in fact more like 15 months). It will not be necessary to buy the equipment that reads the electronic tags.

Pedigree breeding stock will also need to carry the Jacob Sheep Society registration tag which connects the animal to its pedigree certificate and societies breeding records (see www.jacobsheepsociety.co.uk/technical_info.htm). There are also some rules on missing and replacement tags

(always an on-going problem), if an animal loses one tag, this can be replaced with an identical tag (if it loses an electronic tag, it will be possible to order an identical one from the tag supplier). If still on the holding of birth it will be acceptable to replace both tags with new ones and to record this in the holding register. If it loses both tags and cannot be identified, or if it is not on the holding of birth, the replacement tags must be red.

Record Keeping Requirements - the paper work that you are going to need to keep includes Animal Movement Licenses (AML) You will also need to contact your local Trading Standard Office (this is a part of your County Council) and ask for some Animal Movement License, (AML1) forms, you can usually get these from your County Council website. A form has to be completed every time animal's move on to or off your holding. You need to send a copy of the AML to Trading Standards or Scottish Animal Movement Unit (SAMU) in Scotland and keep a copy for your records. Movements between land parcels with the same Holding (CPH) number, within 5 miles of the main holding, and the ownership/keepership of the animals remains the same, need not be recorded or reported. Movements between different CPH numbers where the ownership/keepership remains the same can be batch recorded (e.g. 20 sheep, UK123456 moved from A to B), these movements to be recorded on an AML1 and in the holding register. Movements between different CPH numbers where ownership/keepership changes will require individual animal's numbers to be recorded on the AML1 and in the holding register

The Holding Register - You will be issued with a new style Holding Register when you become a sheep keeper. This is a running record of all animals, births and deaths and records all sheep movements onto and off a holding. It is required for disease control purposes.

The Medicines Book - is to record any medicines you administer to your stock, when, what dosage and the source of the medicines. This is useful because it also helps you to keep track of the dates on your worming and anti fly strike treatments also it helps you to comply with the withdrawals of medicines requirements when sending stock for slaughter. Don't worry if you don't use a computer, DEFRA will send you the relevant documents on tagging, movements and your holding register book when you register as a keeper of sheep.

Transport Rules & Regs - If you are going to transport your sheep and depending on how far, you may also require a Certificate of Competence for Transporting Livestock. Go to The nptc website to find out. Younger people who took their driving test later than January 1997 will also need to take a trailer-towing test; this one is a DVL requirement.

Disposal - In event of a death, you will need to locate your nearest incinerator or fellmonger. It is no longer legal to bury a sheep or even a lamb. Your vet should be able to tell you where to go, if you are not already registered, you should do so with a local Veterinary Practice and keep a note of their out-of-hours/emergency number.

If you have never kept sheep before, then you should seek out some training on basic welfare tasks and the shepherd's calendar. Try your local Agricultural College or Smallholders Association or Small Shepherds Club or most flock owners will be happy to help. Your Regional Council Member may also be able to help you.

THE FIELD

Most people starting with a few sheep seem to have an orchard or paddock that needs grazing. All sheep, of whatever breed, tend to look for escape holes in the perimeter fence and money spent on a few rolls of sheep netting will save many hours of frustrating recovery after they have strayed in to the garden or joined the neighbours flock. If possible, divide the grazing into more than one paddock – sheep health is enhanced from a regular change of pasture and by resting ground, especially in the winter months, which will benefit early spring grazing. Above all, don't be tempted to overstock your small acreage when you first start, just because you have an abundance of summer grass. The grass will very soon disappear and will not have a chance to re-establish itself if it is being constantly grazed. Also do remember that one ewe very rapidly multiply into three or four grazing mouths in the spring, as Jacobs are very prolific breeders and will usually produce two or even three lambs if kept in good condition. Do remember that all animals have a tendency to bark young trees, particularly in the winter months when grass is scarce, and will need protection with wire mesh around the trunks if this is to be discouraged.

The perfect container for water is a low trough with a ball cock, but if this is not available, make sure that your alternative is wide enough for your sheep to drink in comfort - wide horns can make it difficult for sheep to drink from a half full bucket. Whatever you do, make sure that the water is always fresh and clear as sheep are very fastidious creatures.

CHOOSING YOUR FUTURE STOCK

Study a copy of the Jacob Breed Society standards which are a guideline in the choice of your sheep, and are included in this leaflet and on the website at www.jacobsheepsociety.co.uk. If you are buying for the first time at an Official Jacob Society Show and Sale, contact the Regional Council Member or sale organiser, who will introduce you to an experience member or Panel Judge, who will be able to offer a little guidance. If a ewe or ewe lamb is what you have decided upon, it is best to keep two together as they are flock animals and prefer other sheep for company.

Try to choose a nicely rounded sheep with an evenly marked face, a broad chest with front legs well apart and a straight back with tail placed high on good quarters. Good strong horns evenly balanced and not in any way forward growing. All pedigree registered Jacob sheep have two or four horns. If you are buying an older sheep have a good look at its feet and teeth - a sheep has only one row of teeth on the bottom jaw, and these must meet the soft pad of the upper jaw when the mouth is closed. Check that the teeth are all firm as a sheep is dependent upon its teeth for correct grazing. Run your finger along the front of the teeth and check that they meet the pad correctly and that the jaw is neither undershot nor overshot. If the ewe has already produced lambs, feel her udder to ensure that it is soft and supple with no tell-tale lumps that are a sign of mastitis.

FEEDING

This subject is difficult to generalise on, as it depends very much on the availability of good grazing or other forage. Ideally sheep prefer grass that is 2-3 inches high, and if your fields are always bare, it is probable that you have too many sheep on the ground. Supplementary feeding or reducing numbers is advised when grass is sparse. Hay should be fed to the sheep as soon as the grass ceases to grow in the autumn. It should be sweet smelling with no tendency to dust or mould, and "well-made" hay will retain a certain amount of its natural green colour. Sheep prefer the softer meadow hay rather than hard, stalky seed hay. Hay should not be fed on the ground as it very quickly becomes tainted and sheep will then not eat it. Hay nets should be avoided as horned sheep very easily become entangled and can hang or strangle themselves. If a galvanised hay rack is too expensive for a small flock, then home-made racks can easily be improvised out of weld mesh panels and covered to keep the hay dry. Small gauge mesh will prevent hay being pulled through and wasted on the ground. Do not position the hay too high as the seeds will get into the eyes and also the neck wool of the sheep. All animals need minerals and are readily available from Agricultural Merchants as blocks or loose minerals to lick. If the grazing is adequate, supplementary feeding need only be introduced during the last six weeks prior to lambing. Care must be taken in introducing supplementary feeding in order to avoid scouring. It is advisable to take further advice from an experienced shepherd regarding the quantity of supplementary feeding prior to and post-lambing. Jacob ewes are prolific breeders and do tend to carry twin lambs so adequate feeding is essential to prevent pregnancy disorders and optimised lamb birth weights. The feeding should be continued at the high rate until the grass is growing well in the spring, then it can be discontinued. Agricultural Merchants can supply either a ewe and lamb course ration or a ewe and lamb pellet, and it is advisable to ask their advice about the products they stock.

LAMBING

If you want lambs in the spring and are new to keeping sheep, it is advisable to buy older sheep rather than breed from a ewe lamb. Breeding from a one year old sheep (often called yearlings, shearling, gimmers or theaves) will ensure better conception and stronger lambs. The gestation period for sheep is five months or 147-150 days, and for inexperienced shepherds, it is advisable to plan their lambing for the end of March or early April so that the young lambs can benefit from the spring grass. Ewes come in season approximately every 17 days and need to remain with the ram for at least six weeks to ensure that they have adequate contact with a ram. Some breeders may be willing to run your ewe with their ram for a few weeks and it is then usual to agree a service

payment in kind. Remember that a ram should not be used on his dam or on his full sisters so minimising the risk of hereditary defects.

THE IN-LAMB EWE

Remember to clean or dag the fleece around the tail in good time prior to lambing- preferably before tupping in the autumn. It is unwise to turn a ewe up when she is heavy in lamb, so foot-trimming should likewise be carried out in good time. Sheep can be protected against a number of clostridial diseases by vaccination. By vaccinating the ewe, the lambs are given some immunity which she passes on through her first milk (colostrums). When you buy sheep, ask the seller which vaccination system they are on. Trade names include Heptavac, Covexin or Ovivac systems and make a note of the date of the last injection. Ewes already in the system merely require a booster injection given under the loose skin on the side of the upper neck or behind the shoulder, at least three weeks prior to lambing. For sheep not previously vaccinated, a primary course of two injections four to six weeks apart is necessary. Always follow the drug manufacture recommendations.

SIGNS OF IMMINENT LAMBING

A week or so before lambing you will notice the ewe “bagging up” as her udder begins to swell. If it feels tight and heavy the lambs can usually be expected within the week. If however, it is almost “electric” to touch and she is restless, not eating much, lying down and getting up with her tail held away from her body, then lambing may be imminent.

LAMBING

Jacob ewes are noted for their ease of lambing and rarely require assistance. The correct lambing presentation is front feet first with nose resting down on the fore legs and once two hooves appear the remainder of the lamb will quickly follow. Once the lamb is born, quickly remove the mucous from its mouth and nose, and leave the ewe to stimulate its breathing with her licking. Should the lamb be slow to breathe do not be frightened to rub it hard and depress its lungs with your hand so encouraging it to breathe. If the ewe has a multiple birth and tends to favour one lamb so neglecting the other, then pen her in a confined space made with straw bales until you are satisfied that both lambs are up and feeding. It is vital that new born lambs receive colostrums, which contains antibodies as early as possible and certainly within six hours of birth. If the lamb is too weak to suckle then colostrums can be taken from the ewe and the lamb fed from a bottle or given colostrum through a stomach tube at the rate of 60 - 90cc per feed, depending on the size of the lamb. If the ewe has lambed in the field at night and the lambs appear chilled, they can easily suffer from hypothermia. Even if only one lamb needs attention remove the whole litter temporarily or problems may arise later in getting the ewe to accept the treated lamb. The chilled lamb should be removed to a warm place - it can be laid on a hot water bottle or near to the kitchen cooker.

If your ewe has triplets, sometimes the ewe may struggle to feed all three and it is often wise to give supplementary milk from a bottle, to take on off and hand rear it or to given one away. If you wish to rear it yourself, remember that this is very time consuming as it will require bottle feeding every four hours to start with.

CASTRATION

If you wish to castrate your ram lambs, this should be done within 36 - 48 hours. Triplets or small lambs should be left for a few days until they are stronger, before using the elastrator (rubber ring) method of tail docking and castration. This must be done within seven days of birth to conform to welfare regulations, and it would be advisable to ask an experienced shepherd to show you how to do it for the first time. Remember that the Jacob breed is a hill sheep so tails should only be docked sufficiently to keep them clean in adult life - hold the lamb tail out straight and place the rubber ring one third from the tip.

CARE OF FEET

Feet will need attention at regular intervals depending on how firm your ground is. On damp ground, the hooves are softer to trim. On a hot summers day it can be very hard work. Try to get an experienced shepherd to show you how to turn a sheep over by twisting its head round to its back so that it lies down. Aerosol antibiotic spray may be used to treat wounds. Foot clippers or shears are advisable to pare the foot from back to front until level with the sole. Check the small duct between the claws is open to air by pressing upwards with your fingers and removing mud and clogged grease. Foot rot is caused by bacteria which rot the soft flesh between the hooves, particularly if the horn is overgrown so trapping bacteria in soil deposits which then multiply and cause the hoof to rot. Once your ground is contaminated the bacteria is harboured in the soil, and will quickly spread from one animal to another. The infected sheep should have their feet trimmed hard and soaked in a footbath solution for about five minutes. All sheep should be then moved to clean ground and the infected field rested for about a fortnight as the organism cannot survive outside the sheep's foot for more than 9 to 10 days.

WORMING

If you keep your sheep on a small acreage they should ne wormed regularly and in particular lambs should be dosed every three to four weeks from May until the end of the summer, particularly if they show signs of any form of scouring which can be a sign of stomach worms. It is advisable to change the type of wormer each year to avoid building up a resistance on your farm.

FLY STRIKE

Any time from April to November but especially in warm and muggy weather your sheep are at risk of fly strike. The blow-fly will lay its eggs in the sheep's wool and dependant on temperature the eggs can hatch in only a few hours. The maggots then start feeding by burrowing into the skin and very quickly there will be a seething mass which will attract more flies to lay more eggs. The danger areas are dirty wool around the sheep's rear, sweaty wool across the shoulders, open wounds, feet with foot rot and in adult rams the area around the horns. Ideally all sheep should be treated preventatively throughout the season by spraying with fly strike prevention products. These last a few weeks only so read the instructions carefully and re-apply as needed. Shorn sheep will not need protecting until they have a few weeks growth of wool but scoury lambs are especially at risk and left untreated are at high risk. The risk of fly strike is lower if you use the preventative spray regularly. You need to catch them straight away and look really hard in the wool to see if there are eggs there. Do not leave until tomorrow.

DIPPING

At the present time there is no compulsory dipping against sheep scab, but should you wish to dip your sheep either against sheep scab or fly strike, then it is possible that a neighbouring farmer might allow you to use his dip on the same day that he dips his own sheep.

OFFICAIL BREED SOCIETY SHOWS AND SALES

All animals entered for Official sales are inspected by the Society. Any sheep showing serious faults may be rejected by the Society Inspectors. Guidance for entry is on the website or in the show schedules.

BREED STANDARDS OF THE JACOB SHEEP (Updated November 2013)

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Jacob sheep is an alert, active sheep being upstanding and deep bodied, white with well-defined black patches. The head and neck are generally black with a white blaze on the face extending down the chest. Both sexes are horned.

HEAD

The head should be clear of wool forward of the horns. All sheep should have a clear white blaze. A symmetrical blaze with even black cheeks is preferred. In adult sheep, a pink nose in conjunction with a broad white face is undesirable. A dark nose is preferred. Dark bold eyes are preferred with no tendency to split eye-lid deformity. Ewes should have a fine feminine appearance, whilst rams should be thicker set and masculine.

HORNS

Jacob sheep are always horned, with either two or four in number. Where there are four, the top pair should grow upward from the top of the head and have no forward growing tendencies. There should preferably be space between the top and lower horns. Where there are just two horns there should preferably be space between the roots of the horns at the crown of the head, and grow so as to leave space between horn and cheek. Black horns are preferred. Horns should at all times give the animal freedom from injury and comfort when feeding.

BODY & NECK

The back should be straight, level from the base of the neck to the setting on the tail, which should be broad. The tail should be set well up on the chine with well-developed thighs and well-sprung ribs to form a good bottom line. The neck should be strong, of medium length and well set on the shoulders.

LEGS

Legs are medium boned and of medium length, clear of wool below the knee and hock. Legs should preferably be white with little or no black.

FLEECE

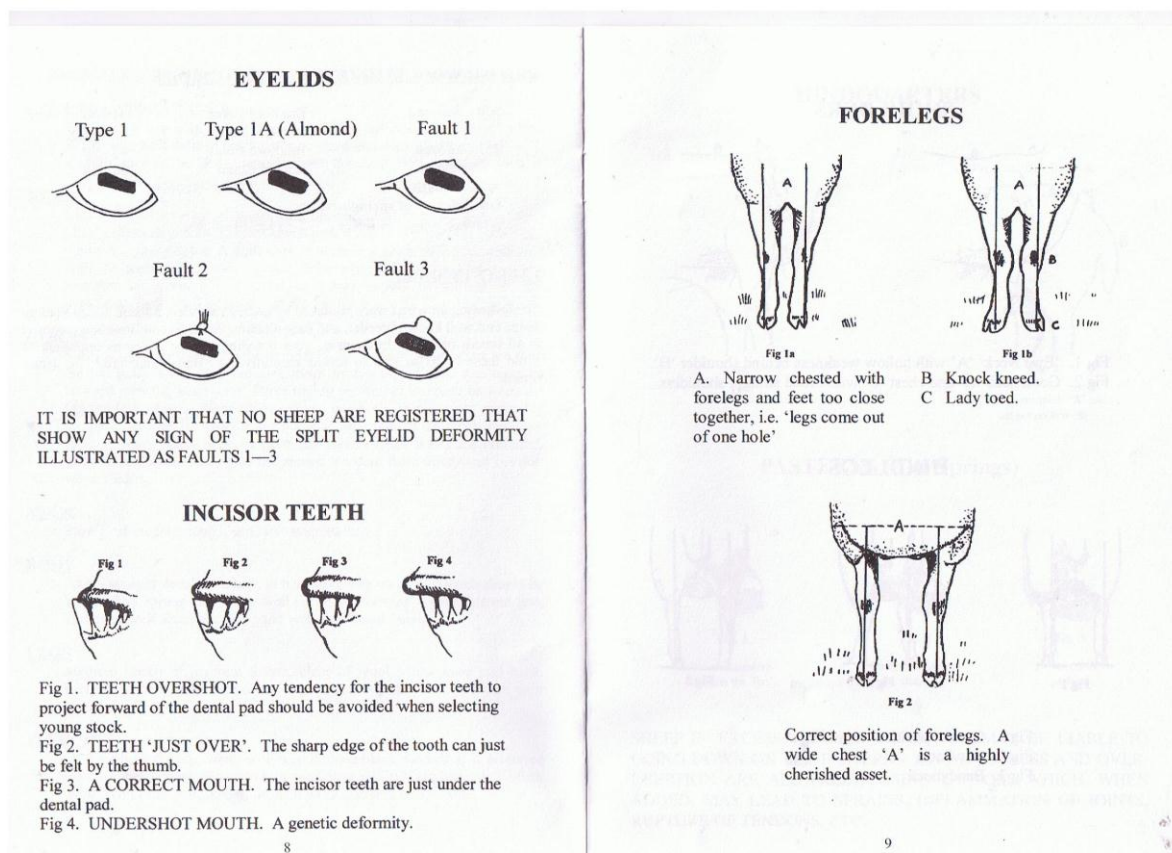
The fleece is of a medium quality, white with well-defined black patches. It is preferred that the skin beneath the white wool be pink, and black beneath the dark wool. There should be little or no kemp. Mottled wool and skin is undesirable.

BRITISH WOOL MARKETING BOARD GRADES

350 - Selected (Fine)	Bradford Count 54 – 58
	Micron Count 25 - 27.5
351 – Jacob	Bradford Count 46 – 52
	Micron Count 30 – 33
Staple Length	75mm to 180mm (3' to 7)
Good degree of springiness	
Average weight of fleece 2 - 3 kgs (4 - 6 lbs)	

FAULTS IN SHEEP

The following drawings were produced by Lesley Partridge, a Jacob Sheep Society Judge and well known breeder, and they illustrate faults in conformation common to all breeds of sheep. In choosing your breeding ewes it is just as important to avoid these faults as it is to follow carefully the "Breed Standards" for Jacob Sheep.



SHOULDERS

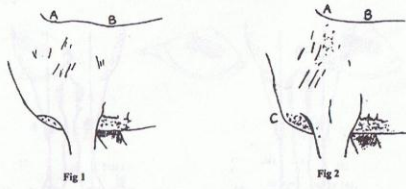


Fig 1. 'Ewe Neck' 'A' with hollow weakness behind shoulder 'B'.
Fig 2. Good neck 'A' and chest 'C' with broad straight shoulders.

HINDLEGS

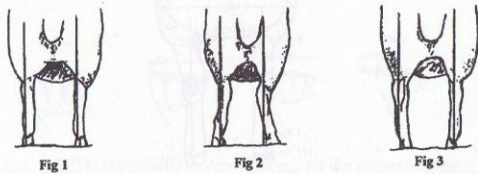
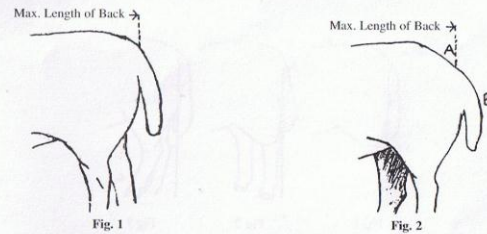


Fig 1. Correct position of hindlegs.
Fig 2. Cowhock.
Fig 3. Bandyhock

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HINDQUARTERS



Good hindquarters

'Goose-rumped' 'A' and tail set on low 'B'

PASTERNS (The Springs)



Fig. 1
Normal pastern
'Up on the Toe'

Fig. 2
Pastern showing
strain

Fig. 3
Down on the
pastern

SHEEP IN EXCESSIVELY FAT CONDITION MAY BE LIABLE TO GOING DOWN ON THE PASTERNS. STRAIN, STRESS AND OVER-EXERTION ARE ALL PREDISPOSING FACTORS WHICH, WHEN ADDED, MAY LEAD TO SPRAINS, INFLAMMATION OF JOINTS, RUPTURE OF TENDONS, ETC.

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HINDLEGS (Side View)

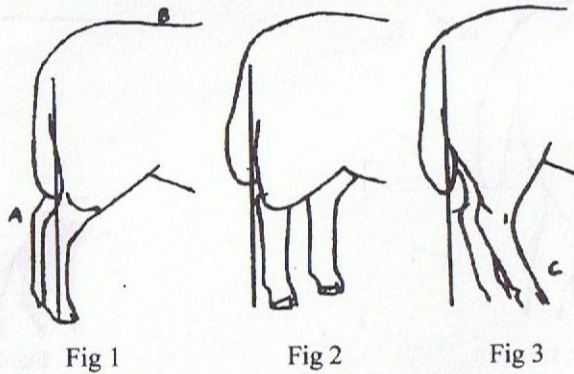


Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 1. Sickle leg
Fig 2. Straight normal leg
Fig 3. Legs too far under.