



Sheep in Afghanistan

Types and uses of sheep in Afghanistan

“Fat-tailed” sheep – known for their ability to survive harsh conditions - are the common sheep found throughout Afghanistan. The main uses and breeds of sheep are:

- Pelts and wool - Karakul
- Meat and wool - Ghaljai
- Meat - Arabi, Turki (also known as “Afghani” in Pakistan), Hazaragie
- Wool - Baluchi, Gadik, Kandahari, and Farahi or Herati.

All breeds produce milk.



Figure 1. Fat-tailed sheep in Afghanistan.
(Source: *ukforcesafghanistan*)

General practices

- **Nutrition.** Sheep feed on crop residues after harvest and in winter, they eat hay, straw, tree leaves and occasionally concentrate (during pregnancy and milking). In spring and summer, village flocks –which often consist of animals from a number of different farmers– are moved to higher grazing areas far from villages. At the end of the day, sheep distribute back to their owners.
- **Housing.** When in the villages, smaller flocks are often housed in sheds at night and during bad weather.
- **Breeding:** Males (rams) and females (ewes) are separated until they are mated from the end of September until November. Lambs are typically born during February and March and are separated from adults during spring and summer.
- **Milking:** Ewes start to produce milk about 2 days after lambing and produce for 3 – 4 months. Ewes are milked morning and evening; after which lambs are allowed to drink. Only a little milk is used fresh. Most milk is used for a range of products (including buttermilk, butterfat, ghee, cheese, *qimag* (similar to brie), *chakka* –liquid from yogurt, and *qurud* –dried *chakka*). Milk production ranges from 250 – 500 g/day.
- **Wool.** Wool is shorn once or twice a year (in spring and/or in fall, when they are brought in for winter). Fall wool is cleaner and earns a higher price. Ewes produce 0.5 – 2 kg greasy wool per year. The fiber is used for carpets, ropes, bags, tents and clothing.
- **Meat:** At around 6 – 9 months of age, male lambs are sold, slaughtered or castrated. A few may be kept as rams for future mating. If there is sufficient feed, castrated males might be kept and sold when they are 18 – 24 months. The preferred time to sell is late fall or early winter, and animals are sold based on weight.

Age (Months)	Expected weight
18-20	4–5 <i>mond</i> (28–35 kg live weight)
At 24	55–60 kg
At 36	about 70 kg

Opportunities

- **Dairy industry.** Opportunities exist in milk processing for cheese, butter, yogurt, milk powder, and ice cream for both domestic and international markets (China for example).
- **Karakul Pelts.** Improvements in marketing and collection services could allow small herders to sell their pelts in Europe.
- **Management.** Improve grazing practices to allow pasture renovation, improve feed nutrition, vaccination, general animal care training for villagers.

For more detail, please check info sheet on Sheep page on <http://eafghanag.ucdavis.edu>.

Prepared by Maria Paz Santibanez, Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell, 2012.

Reference: First Draft Country Report on the Status and Perspectives of the Animal Genetic Resources Development and Conservation in Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Dr. Mustafa Zafar, FAO); Case Study Series Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy: Livestock Husbandry (Anthony Fitzherbert, AREU. 2007); Main investment opportunities in Afghanistan (Said Mubin Shah, AISA. 2009)

For more information visit: <http://ip.ucdavis.edu> Copyright © UC Regents Davis campus, 2012. All Rights Reserved.