

Things to do before you get your sheep

Sheep, even the charming Hebridean sheep, fall within a raft of legislation surrounding food animals and their traceability, welfare and transport. 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 pet grass mowers 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 0845 603 777, the Rural Payments Agency, 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 a means that you are now a “Registered Keeper of Sheep” and will need to aware of current legislation and requirements. These include:
 - Welfare legislation and codes of practice
 - Animal Identification requirements
 - Animal Movement requirements
 - Animal Transport requirements
 - Record keeping requirements
 - Disposal of dead animals (yes sorry about this one, but in the end it does apply)

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 Hebridean 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)

With Hebridean sheep most people sell their lambs as hogget between 18 months to 30 months of age, so you may as well double tag all of your lambs. It will not be necessary to buy the equipment that reads the electronic tags.

- Pedigree breeding stock will also need to carry the Hebridean Sheep Society registration tag which ties the animal to its papers and societies breeding records.
- 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 Licensees (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 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.

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 case a sad event does occur (you will find that this is a long way off with Hebridean sheep) it is as well to find out where your nearest incinerator is. It is no longer legal to bury a sheep or even a lamb. Your vet should be able to tell you where to go, large, (wheelie-bin liner) black bags are a useful in this eventuality
- Please join the Hebridean Sheep Society this costs just £25.00 (£20.00 after the first year) and the Society exists to promote Hebridean sheep and is the registration authority for the breed within the UK and will register the lambs that you breed for you. For membership information e-mail: membership@hebrideansheep.org.uk or telephone +44 (0) 1908 611.
- The Hebridean Sheep Society has also produced an excellent book on the breed which will give you a lot of advice. Available from the Hebridean Sheep Society website.
- 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. The Hebridean Sheep Society puts on summer and winter events every year and these will also help with practical skills.
- You will also need some basic equipment, a few hurdles, a drenching gun, that will also apply fly strike protection, and some foot shears (the small ones) would be a good start

Finally, please don't be too put off, it's not as bad as it sounds and you will soon get to grips with it all. The Hebridean Sheep Society is here to help you: both with finding pedigree animals for sale and with long term support. If you need to discuss keeping sheep we will be glad to help.