

# British Wool LEARNING



## Seasons

We have four seasons in a year; these seasons are spring, summer, autumn and winter. Each of the seasons has different weather and different hours of daylight.

The Earth tilts at an angle of 23.5 degrees and moves slowly around the Sun. We have seasons because the Earth takes a year to move around the Sun, which gives us both warmth and light. In winter the part of the Earth that we are on tilts away from the Sun and in the summer it tilts further towards the Sun.

The seasons don't just affect how much light and warmth we have. The seasons have an effect on plants, animals, humans and some of the jobs they do. A year in farming is never dull and there is always lots for the farmer to do. Here you will discover how sheep live through the different seasons and how the farmer looks after his sheep over the year. Someone that looks after sheep is called a shepherd.

## Spring - new beginnings

Spring is usually when the lambs are born and is a very busy time for the farmer because the sheep need to be looked after day and night. When a lamb is born it is very wet and slippery; the mother licks it dry and a healthy lamb is soon standing up and drinking milk from its mother.

The first milk, called colostrum, is very important. It contains antibodies, giving the lamb immunity and protecting it from disease. It can only get these antibodies from its mother.

Sheep have lambs in the spring months when the weather is warming-up and there is lots of tasty new grass to eat!



Farmer



## Spring on the sheep farm...

- Lambing
- Worming ewes
- General health checks
- Ewes vaccinated to maintain disease protection and pass on immunity to new born lambs
- Ewes run through foot bath to protect against footrot
- Vaccinate lambs for disease prevention

## Did you know?

Adult female sheep are known as ewes.

Adult male sheep are known as rams.

When young lambs run and jump around it is known as gamboling.



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## Weather

The seasons, and the weather changes they bring, have a big impact on our daily lives. From the food we eat to the clothes we wear and the activities we do. We can't go sledging in summer!

**Winter** - In the winter the year ends and a new year begins. The days are short and often cold. Sometimes it will sleet or snow and we often see frost and ice.

**Spring** - The sun rises earlier each morning and sets later. Spring flowers start to show, birds build their nests and lambs arrive. Weather in spring varies, it can be very cold or mild and it is often quite rainy.

**Summer** - The days become warmer and longer, the sun shines more and the school holidays arrive!

**Autumn** - Days become shorter and nights become colder. Leaves fall off the trees and some animals begin hibernation. The weather begins to turn colder and Autumn can be very windy.

## Summer - out in the fields

Summer is time to clip off the wool fleece from the sheep (this is called shearing). It doesn't hurt the sheep and the sheep need this 'hair cut' to keep them healthy.

It takes 2 or 3 minutes to shear one sheep. Fleeces are taken to a grading depot. The farmer is paid by the British Wool Marketing Board for the weight, type and quality of wool.

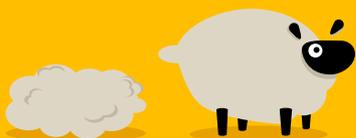
Summer agricultural shows give farmers the chance to show their very best animals. 12 weeks after the lambs are born, some are ready to take to market. The best lambs will be kept by the farmer to replace his stock, or sold later to other farms for breeding.



**Shearing** sheep is a little bit like giving them a hair cut and doesn't hurt them.

## Summer on the sheep farm...

- Shearing
- Routine sheep work
- General health checks
- Fly control for lambs and ewes
- All lambs ear-marked for identification
- Agricultural shows
- Pedigree stock registered with breed societies



## Did you know?

A lamb can recognise the call of its mum in a field full of other noisy sheep. Sheep live in groups called flocks.

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## Through the seasons

For thousands of years, sheep have been able to adapt to even the worst environments. Their wool protects them through hot, cold, wet and dry seasons. Wool has lots of tiny little air pockets which helps to keep warmth in during winter and out in the summer.

Because wool is such a useful natural material people have also used wool for thousands of years to protect them from wet, warm and cold weather. Humans have been wearing wool for thousands of years. Some astronauts have even worn wool in space because it is so comfortable!

Wool is often used to make carpets, rugs, blankets and as insulation to keep our homes warm. Perfect for keeping us all nice and warm in the colder seasons like autumn and winter.

## Autumn - out in the fields



The farmer picks the sheep he'd like to use to breed to produce new lambs from his flock.

Coloured dye (raddle mark) is put on to the ram (male sheep) which then rubs off on to the ewes (female sheep). This tells the shepherd which ewes the ram has mated with.

The ewes are kept in fields with good quality grass to eat for 3 weeks before and 6 weeks after they have mated so that they are healthy and strong to help the unborn lambs develop well. It takes 5 months until an unborn lamb is big enough to be born.

As part of regular footcare, sheep can be treated against a disease called footrot during the autumn months.

Wool contains a special grease called lanolin that keeps sheep dry when it rains.

## Autumn on the sheep farm...

- Buy new breeding ewes
- Worm breeding stock before mating
- Breeding flock prepared for mating
- Dip all sheep against sheep scab
- Routine footcare



## Did you know?

Sheep have 2 toes on each hoof.

Lanolin from sheep's wool is very useful and is used in skin creams and health products.





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## Temperature

Spring in the United Kingdom is March to May. Spring temperatures can often rise in the day but get much cooler at night. The lowest temperatures can be around 0°C to 6°C in the north and between 8°C and 10°C in the south of the UK where it is warmer. Water will freeze and turn to ice at 0°C.

Summer lasts from June to August and is the warmest season. Summer temperatures do not often rise above 35°C in the Britain but sometimes summer temperatures can reach over 38°C! Too hot for wool coats!

Autumn in the UK is September to November. Temperatures begin to fall. Mountains and hills are often the wettest and coldest areas. The sheep that live here have adapted to the conditions to help them survive.

Winter is our coldest season and lasts from December to February. Winter temperatures don't often get below -10°C or above 15°C but it can be much warmer or colder some years. The temperature has been known to dip to around -26°C!

## Winter - more hay please

The care of ewes carrying unborn lambs is checked throughout the winter months. It is important that they have enough food. They might not be able to find grass because of frozen or snowy fields. Sometimes the sheep are moved from the hills onto lower grassy pastures and the farmer gives them extra hay and feed. If the sheep don't get enough food at this time their wool becomes weak and the fibres can break.

The ewes are vaccinated to keep both them and their unborn lambs healthy.



A farmer must look after his sheep through all seasons and in any weather.



### Winter on the sheep farm...

- All pregnant ewes scanned
- Sort ewes with single/twin lambs (feeding purposes)
- Extra feeding is important
- Annual booster injection for ewes
- General maintenance of fences and walls

### Did you know?

Hay is made from grass that has been cut, dried and stored. As long as there is grass to graze on sheep will produce a new fleece every year. This means wool is renewable.