Learning About Sheep
Elementary Level Packet

Sponsored By
Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association
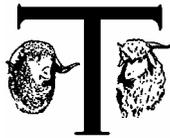
Learning About Sheep

Sheep have been used for food and wool since Biblical times. Today, sheep and wool are important to people in countries all around the world. Sheep provided clothing to early civilizations, which allowed them to explore and inhabit colder regions.

Female sheep are called **ewes**, and male sheep are called **rams**. Baby sheep are called **lambs.** Lambs can stand soon after they are born and quickly start drinking the warm milk from their mothers. The lamb quickly learns who its mother is by smell and the sound of its mother's **bleat**. The smell of the ewe's milk passing through the lamb lets the mother know which lamb is hers. Lambs stay with their mothers for about 5 months. At 6 months of age a lamb is well grown and will weigh between 110 and 120 pounds.

Sheep live in groups called **flocks**. Ranchers are always moving the flocks from place to place so they do not damage the land. The sheep feed on **forage** that grows again next year. Many times this forage is made up of weeds that would hurt the environment if the sheep were not there to eat them. Sheep help to fertilize the **range**, control unwanted vegetation, and help capture rainfall in the little hollows they make in dry soil. These depressions also help to provide shelter for growing seeds.

Sheep must be protected from **predators**. Coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bobcats, foxes, and other types of predators like sheep because they do not have a way to protect themselves and are easy to catch. Guard dogs are often used to protect the sheep. They grow up with the sheep and "patrol" the pastures to protect them from harm. Working sheep dogs are the rancher's best helper. They gather the sheep from pastures and rough, steep rocky areas that are hard for the rancher to get to.

There are over 150 different kinds of sheep. Some sheep are raised mostly for meat. Lamb is one of the most nutritious and flavorful types of meat. Other sheep are raised mostly for the quality of their wool.

Shearing is when the wool is removed from the sheep. A **fleece** is the coat of wool removed from the sheep at shearing time. In addition to wool and meat, sheep also furnish us with leather, milk, lanolin and dozens of other items we use in our daily lives.
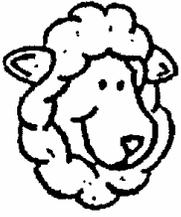
Learning About Sheep
Study Questions
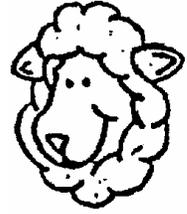
Answer the following questions. Be sure to use complete sentences.

1. How does a lamb know which ewe is its mother? _____
   _____

2. How can a ewe tell her lamb from other lambs? _____
   _____

3. Why are ranchers always moving the flocks of sheep from place to place? ___
   _____

4. Name three things that sheep do to help the areas they graze in. _____
   _____
   _____

5. Why do predators like sheep? _____
   _____

6. Name four predators that ranchers must protect sheep from. _____
   _____

7. Why are dogs useful to sheep ranchers? _____
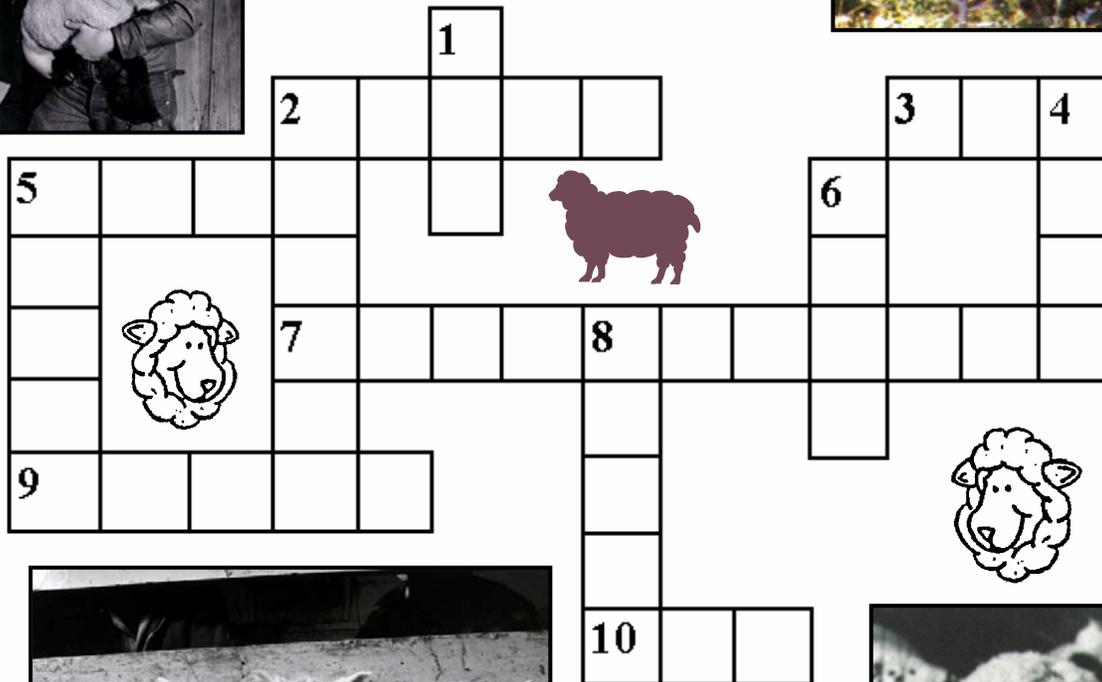   _____
   _____

8. What are the two main items that sheep are raised for? _____
   _____

9. What is shearing? _____
   _____

10. What are some other items that we get from sheep? _____

Learning About Sheep

Crossword Puzzle

Use the words from the reading to help you find the answers to the puzzle.

Across:
2. A group of sheep
3. A male sheep
5. The fiber we get from sheep.
7. What sheep help to benefit?
9. Animal that gives us wool and meat.
10. A female sheep

Down:
1. Animal used to help protect sheep.
2. Wool removed from sheep.
4. Product we get from sheep.
5. Unwanted plants that sheep eat.
6. A baby sheep
8. The land over which sheep roam.