

Ag in 10 Minutes a Day!

# Sheep



## Sheep Talk

There are many words to learn when talking about sheep. The female sheep is called a **ewe** and the male sheep is called a **ram**. Rams, which are larger than ewes, sometimes fight with each other to prove who is the strongest. The young sheep are called **lambs**. Sheep move around in large groups called **flocks**. Sheep farms may have little flocks of 50 to 200 sheep. Larger operations may have 1,000 to 5,000 sheep. Little flocks of 10 or less sheep may belong to people who like to dye and knit yarn that is made from the sheep's wool. Sheep eat facing the same direction always keeping the wind blowing toward them. Each sheep usually keeps two other sheep in sight when feeding.



## Food and Fiber

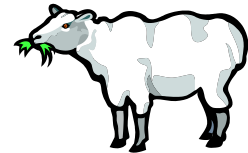
Sheep supply us with both food and fiber. Sheep provide meat called **lamb** or **mutton**. Lamb comes from a sheep less than a year old. Older sheep provide meat called mutton which has a much stronger flavor and is tougher meat.

Sheep have a thick coat of wool on their body which is called a **fleece**. This fleece can be made into a fiber called yarn. In spring, the fleece is removed by a shearer. Skilled shearers can remove the fleece all in one piece in about 5 minutes. A talented shearer can shear over 100 sheep in one day. The wool that comes from sheep is cleaned and turned into yarn which is made into wool fabric. Wool is a very special fabric with unique characteristics. Wool absorbs moisture and keeps a layer of dry insulating air next to the skin. Even if the wool gets wet, the skin stills feels warm and dry. Wool is also fire resistant which means it does not burn easily. Blankets used by fire fighters are often made of wool. Since wool is absorbent it soaks up dyes easily and can be dyed in many beautiful colors. Wool garments resist pilling and snagging. Since wool fibers are naturally elastic, woolen garments don't wrinkle or stretch out of shape.



The wool that sheep provide is used to make clothing and rugs. Sweaters, coats, mittens and suits can be made from wool. Other parts of the sheep are used to make things such as insulation, baseballs, upholstery, crochet needles, and tennis balls. Oil from the wool of sheep is called *lanolin* and is used to make beauty products such as lotions and creams. Sheep keep us both warm and beautiful!

## Earth Friendly Animals



Sheep are hardy animals. This means that they can survive in climates that are cold or dry and live off of the grasses that grow there. They are able to convert grass into high quality food and fiber. Sometimes, sheep are used to graze in fields with leftover stalks and seeds after crops have been harvested. Even though sheep are hardy animals, they have many natural enemies like the coyotes, mountain lions, wolves and even the domestic dogs.

## Sheep Help the Environment



Sheep are animals that help the environment in many ways. Sheep do not have any top front teeth, so when they pull on grass and weeds to eat, they do not pull out the roots of the plants. Leaving the roots in place make it possible for a plant to grow again.

Sheep have split hooves which help them move about and climb rocky areas. These split hooves help break up the soil. This helps spread seeds so new plants will grow. It also helps plants to absorb water and nutrients because the soil has been loosened.

Sheep are used in some areas to control "brush" in the forest. Forest fires often feed on the underbrush so it needs to be controlled. When there is too much underbrush, sometimes forest fires begin and spread. The Forest Service may use sheep to feed on the brush. This helps prevent forest fires and saves hundreds of trees, plants and wildlife. Sheep help us in many ways and are even a renewable resource since they can produce a wool fleece over and over again.



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# Sheep

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read each question and fill in the best answer

1. A male sheep is called a

- A. flock
- B. fleece
- C. ewe
- D. ram

2. Which of the following do sheep NOT provide?

- A. fiber
- B. lanolin
- C. food
- D. jeans

3. Which of the following are characteristics of wool fabric?

- A. absorbent
- B. fire resistant
- C. easily dyed
- D. all of the above

4. According to the article, the split hooves on sheep help the environment by

- A. helping sheep walk.
- B. breaking up the soil.
- C. being renewable.
- D. protecting sheep from predators.

5. In which way do sheep help the environment?

- A. climb rocky areas
- B. don't pull out plant roots
- C. have natural enemies
- D. none of the above

6. In the article, the word "brush" means

- A. to comb the sheep's wool
- B. a tool used by the shearer
- C. push off
- D. small trees, grass, shrubs growing beneath trees

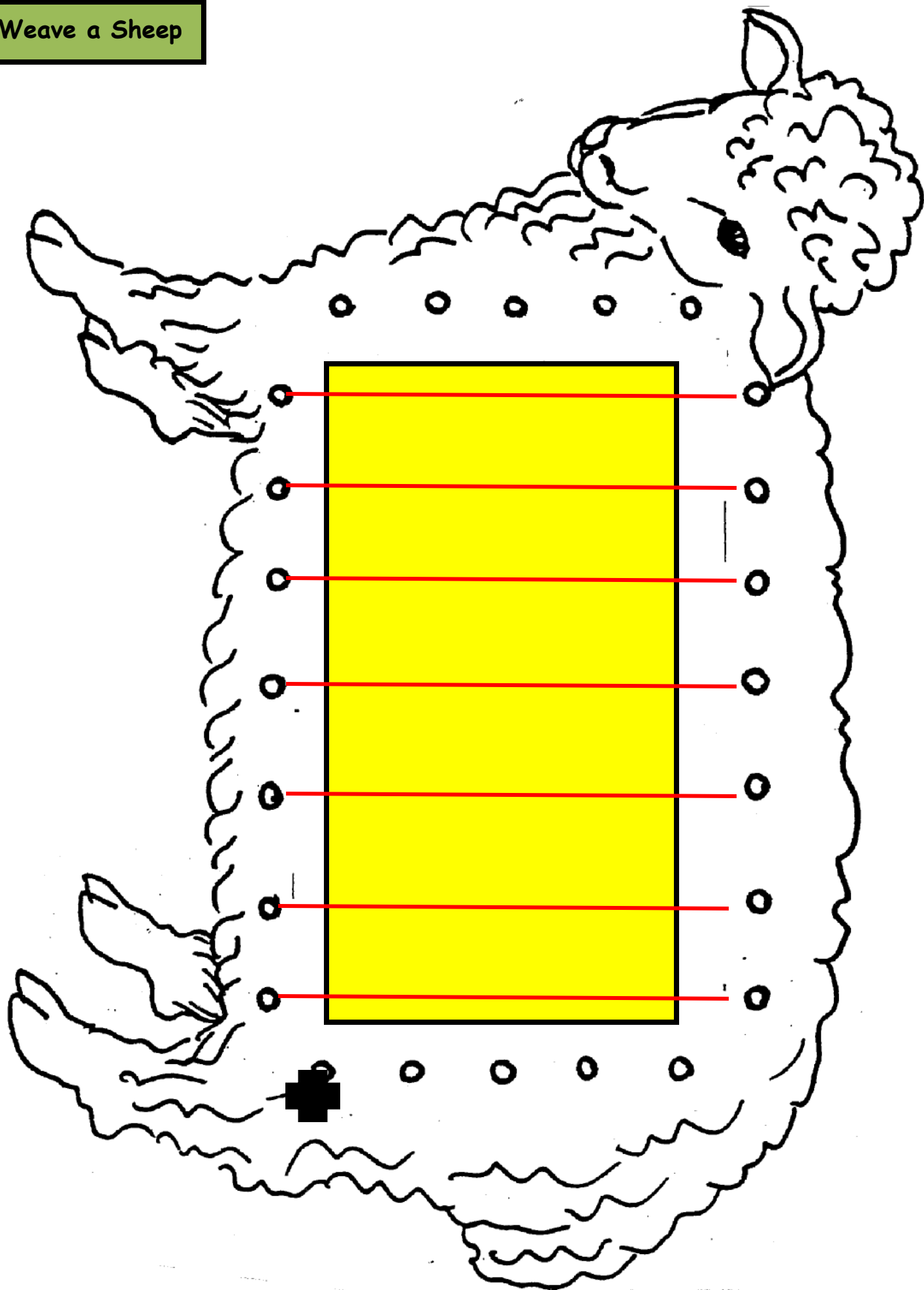
### Extended Response:

You want to purchase some clothes for the winter. Write a note to your mother explaining why it might be good to select clothes that are made from wool rather than another fabric. Be sure to include details that support your choice.

### Sheep Trivia

- Wool is a renewable resource.
- Wool is used to clean up oil from oil spills. Wool sponges soak up the oil and the oil can be cleaned out of the sponge. The oil is recycled and the sponge can be used over and over again.
- Wool clothes are flame-resistant which means that they will not catch on fire.
- When sheared, an average sheep fleece weighs 8.5 pounds which is enough to make a wool suit.
- Different breeds of sheep grow different kinds of wool. Fine wool is often used to make suits. Medium wool is often used to make blankets. Coarse wool is often used to make carpet.

Weave a Sheep



## A Fun Activity for You to TRY... Weave a Sheep

Print the sheep onto a piece of cardstock. Cut out the center section and punch holes at the marked dots. Gather some yarn (wool would be great) but other kinds are fine. Tie the yarn from one dot to the other dot across from one another from the top of the sheep to the bottom of the sheep. (See lines.) Now take another piece of yarn and secure it at the mark ■ to that dot. Weave over and then under all the way across the sheep. When you get to the opposite side, move the yarn to the next hole and again go over under until you reach the other side. Continue until you have used all the holes. You have just replicated the process that a weaver does when he or she creates a woven wool fabric.

✓ Check out these books...

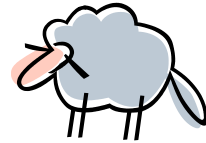


### **Charlie Needs a Cloak** by Tomie de Paola

A shepherd named Charlie shears his sheep, cards and spins the wool, weaves and dyes the cloth and sews a beautiful new red cloak.

### **Warm as Wool** by Scott Russell Sanders

When Betsy Ward's family moves to Ohio from Connecticut in 1803, she brings along a sock full of coins to buy sheep so that she can gather wool, spin cloth, and make clothes to keep her children warm. The story is based on a real family and their determination to make warm clothing for their children.



### **A Young Shepherd** by Cat Urbigkit

Cass is a young shepherd who works on his family's sheep farm. He makes sure the sheep get the attention and care that they need to grow healthy and strong. The text showcases that raising sheep is hard work, and Cass works hard to give them the attention and care that they will need. This book is recommended because it is a solid depiction of raising orphaned lambs (also called bum lambs) and integrating them into a sheep herd. It also showcases how Cass keeps good records of his animals and shows them at the county fair.

### **Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs** by Cat Urbigkit

Like other livestock in the Rocky Mountains, sheep need protection from predators such as coyotes and wolves. That's where the guardian dogs are used. Guardian dogs help ranchers protect their flocks. As puppies, they are placed in fleece and learn to identify with the smell of sheep. With little training, the dogs instinctively know that their job is to keep a lookout for danger, and now and then do some babysitting.



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