

**BREED FOCUS**

# The terrific Teeswater

**S**TYLISH and upstanding, the Teeswater is an impressive longwool sheep breed originating from the Teesdale area of County Durham. It has been around for more than 200 years.

Distinguished by their dark noses and panda eyes on an off-white face, Teeswaters are long, tall hornless sheep with fine stapled lustre fleeces that have a natural permanent curl. Characteristic trademark ringlets falling down their head adds to the striking appearance of the Teeswater.

Ewes are easy lambers, with lambing percentages of about 250 per cent, and can still breed at ten years old. They are generally easy to handle with a friendly, quiet nature and can be quickly halter

trained. Fully grown mature rams weigh up to 150kg and ewes 110kg.

Teeswaters first gained popularity as a crossing sire on hill ewes. The resultant halfbred ewe – the Masham – carries the best characteristics of the Teeswater: it is prolific, highly maternal and hardy.

Mashams are renowned for both their longevity and for rearing quality prime lambs year after year, making them an excellent choice in a lowland sheep flock.

It is a little known fact that meat from the Teeswater and its crosses is high quality in terms of loin muscle depth and leanness, as well as being very tasty.

Teeswater wool is in great demand by spinners all over the world and is used for

worsted suits, knitting and blending. It is uniform in texture across the whole body, with each lock hanging free, and should have no dark fibres. The wool is silky soft and its lustre can be seen as a pearly sheen in the finished product.

First clip fleece is particularly highly sought after, weighing in at 4kg-8kg with a staple length of 20-30cm. It sells for a good premium over commercial breeds.

In the price schedule, British Wool grades Teeswater wool at the top. In 2019, a Teeswater fleece was the winner of their highly prestigious National Golden Fleece competition, beating entries from all over Great Britain.

Many agricultural shows in the North of England have



The Teeswater breed originates from County Durham



Teeswater classes, often with more entries than other breeds. It isn't unusual for a Teeswater to take interbreed show champion honours, as at Westmorland in 2013 when one beat off competition from 1,026 other sheep.

The Teeswater Sheep Breeders' Association was established in 1949 and promotes the breed as a distinctively different longwool.

Each of its 150 breeders can contribute as custodians

by following breed points to ensure not only the continuation of what is a rare breed, but to preserve and enhance it for future generations.

Association chairman David Waite said: "Recent years have seen Teeswaters gain popularity both in their own right and as a crossing sire. Social media has helped.

"We've had a Facebook site for seven years with 500 members but, since last year,

that number has doubled to close to 1,000.

"We receive interest from all over the world with new breeders in America, Germany and New Zealand. People see Teeswaters as striking sheep with unbeatable supreme quality fleece."

## TEESWATER SHEEP BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION

For further information, contact Olivia Conner, Breed Secretary, on: **07881364503** or [info@teeswatersheep.co.uk](mailto:info@teeswatersheep.co.uk)



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