



The **Leicester Longwool** is a hugely important breed in the history of livestock development. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the longwool breeds of the midlands were large, slow growing with a poor carcass. Robert Bakewell took the example of the Leicester breed and by crossing it with the Lincoln and Ryeland breeds was able to create the new Leicester. Although the objective was breed improvement the new Leicester had several faults and never dominated the industry. The breed did play a large role in developing other breeds and the Wensleydale, Border Leicester, Lleyn and Ile de France are some examples of breeds with Leicester ancestry. In time the name of the breed was changed to the Leicester Longwool and the Breed Society was formed in 1893.

## Key Characteristics:

**Size-** Large- ewes- 80-100kg, rams- 100-150kg

**Looks-** A very tall, long legged breed with a characteristic long wool fleece. A woolless white face and legs and both sexes are polled. There is a black strain of the breed.

**Uses-** Crossing sire, specialist wool production.

**Hardy-** The breed is relatively hardy and able to cope with cold conditions. However in common with most longwools the breed is not best suited to prolonged wet periods.

**Docile-** The breed can easily be bucket trained and will not jump fences. However firm handling is required due to the huge size of the sheep.

**Lambing %-** Generally around 150%.

**Birth weight-** Medium sized lambs. Few lambing problems but lambs can be slow to get going.

**Crossing-** As with other longwool breeds the Leicester Longwool can be used in cross-breeding systems. Leicester Longwool rams can be used on commercial ewes to sire heavyweight lambs and hoggets for specific markets. The breed can be used on hill breeds to produce a halfbred ewe although other breeds such as the Teeswater are favoured because of higher prolificacy.

**Specialist wool production-** The wool is popular with hand spinners and well suited to direct marketing of woollen products.

**Meat-** The purebred Leicester Longwool lamb can reach 18.9kg at 8 weeks old<sup>2</sup> and will be ready for slaughter at 4-5 months to give a carcass of up to 20kg.

**Wool-** Staple length- 20-25cm. Fleece weight- 5-7.5kg. Quality- 40s-46s<sup>2</sup>.

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust is the leading national charity working to conserve and protect the United Kingdom's rare native breeds of farm animals from extinction. We rely on the support of our members, grants and donations from the public to raise the £700,000 a year needed to maintain our conservation work with rare UK native breeds of farm animals. Visit [www.rbst.org.uk](http://www.rbst.org.uk) to see how you can help.

More information available from the Leicester Longwool Sheepbreeders' Association-  
[www.leicesterlongwoolssheepassociation.co.uk](http://www.leicesterlongwoolssheepassociation.co.uk)  
or 01664 840642

<sup>2</sup> "Efficiency estimates of UK sheep breeds"- John Vipond  
<sup>2</sup> Most information from "British Sheep Breeds"- NSA, The Leicester Longwool Sheepbreeder's Association

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