Introduction to the New Hampshire 4-H Sheep Project

4-H Sheep members learn about the care and nutrition of sheep and lambs, as well as breed differences and wool production, whether they are interested in meat production or fleece production. While it isn’t necessary to own a sheep or lamb, there are opportunities for showing for those who want to.

The term ‘Sheep” refers to animals that are over one year of age. A yearling is a sheep between one and two years of age that may or may not have produced offspring. In 4-H, a sheep cannot be shown for more than two years. Some yearlings have had a lamb and can be shown as a yearling. Lambs are less than one year of age. They usually have not produced offspring. Lamb is also the term for the meat of a young domestic sheep eaten as food. A mature female sheep is called a ewe. A young female sheep is called a ewe lamb. The process of giving birth is called lambing. A mature male sheep is called a ram or buck. A young male sheep is called a ram lamb. A castrated male is called a weather.

There are more breeds of sheep than breeds of any other livestock species. There are more than 40 breeds in the United States alone. Sheep come in all different shapes, sizes, and colors. They can be differentiated by their primary purpose (meat, wool, milk), the type of fibers they grow (fine, medium, long, carpet wool; or hair), the color of their faces (black, white, red, or mottled), and various production or physical characteristics.

**Required Participant Age:** 8-18 as of January 1 of the current year

**Required Animal Age:** 4 months of age or older to go to any 4-H fair or event. Sheep over two years of age cannot be shown at any NH 4-H Fair or at Eastern States.

**Recommended Animal Vaccinations:** Rabies vaccination (recommended vet administered) 30 days and not more than one year prior to the date of the show.

**Required Animal Identification:** Permanent ID – The animal must have an ear tag or ear tattoo and an official Scrapie ID tag in their ear. They can have a microchip providing a reader is available.

**Forms**

**4-H Online Animal Registration/ Intent to Show Form:** Must be complete with animal information and all signatures.  
**Due Date:** June 1st at your County Extension Office.

**Lease Form (if applicable):** Lease form must be complete with animal information and all signatures.  
**Due Date:** June 1st at your County Extension Office.
**Policies**

**NH 4-H Policy on Replacement Animals** - If a 4-H member’s ONLY project animals dies, is critically ill to the point of being “unusable”, or is deemed unsafe for the 4-H member to use as a project, after having been properly listed on their Intent to Show form, the 4-H County staff member may verify the loss or condition, and allow the 4-H member one replacement project animal. A new Intent to Show form is to be submitted. In this instance, the replacement animal can be shown at all fairs (except Eastern States).

If a 4-H member’s animals are unable to be exhibited for any reason (illness, death, etc.) and they have other project animals listed on their Intent to Show form that are eligible, then there is never any substitution allowed. They may show the remaining animals on their Intent to Show form only. Should a county have a member who misses an appropriate deadline, due to their not owning an animal at the time of the deadline or their only project animal(s) is (are) sick the county may make an exception for their county only. When a County makes the exception the youth’s Intent to Show form must be marked that these animals can be shown at their county fair only. Under no circumstances are replacement animals (for any species) eligible for Eastern States.

**Rabies Requirements for NH 4-H Animals** - Upon the recommendation of the New Hampshire State Veterinarian, all mammals shown or exhibited at New Hampshire 4-H events including fairs, shows, clinics, 4-H club meetings, county activities day or any other event sponsored by 4-H, must have a current inoculation for rabies given at least 30 days prior to the event. A licensed veterinarian administered rabies vaccination is recommended. Rabies vaccinations cannot be given to 4-H animals under three months of age AND we require the vaccination be given at least 30 days prior to exhibiting an animal. All 4-H project animals must be at least four months of age by show day to be shown, exhibited or brought to any 4-H event.

Other health requirements vary by species and show. Individual shows and fairs may have additional vaccination and health requirements as recommended by the New Hampshire State Veterinarian’s office. Always check the fair book for additional health requirements.

**Resources**

- National 4-H Sheep Curriculum
- University of Tennessee Sheep Activity Page:
- Breeds of Sheep Page
- Sheep 101 Page
- USDA Scrapie Fact Sheet
- Sheep Facts
- MyLamb.org: http://www.mylamb.org/
- Clemson University Showing and Fitting Your First 4-H Lamb:
- Market Lamb Showmanship:
- Texas A&M Market Lamb 4-H Show Guide:

**If you have any questions or for more information:**

Call Jolee Chase (603) 641-6060 or email at Jolee.Chase@unh.edu or Mary Davis (603)862-2188 or Mary.Davis@unh.edu

Visit our website: extension.unh.edu

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