

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep

Ovis Aries

Description: The Barbados Blackbelly sheep is a breed that evolved in Barbados. The breed is reddish-brown or tan with a black underside and legs. Males tend to have longer hair along their throats and shoulders. They also have black facial bars. Both sexes are polled.

Range: Barbados Blackbelly sheep are widely distributed and are found in North and South America, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Habitat: Domestic: Thrive in hot & humid environments.

Diet: Grasses, grains, shrubs, and zoo herbivore pellets Domestic sheep are extremely hardy animals and can survive on a diet consisting of only cellulose, starch, or sugars as an energy source, and a nitrogen source which need not be protein. The majority of their diet is foraged grass, though they are also fed a variety of oats and hay. They will consume a large amount of food quickly, and then retire to ruminate. They have a large, complex stomach that allows them to digest highly fibrous materials that other animals would not.

Weight: Female- 85 to 100 pounds; Male- 100 to 130 pounds

Height: Up to 3.5 ft in length.

Lifespan: ~12 years

Status: Sheep are not listed by the IUCN red list. Sheep, as a species, are in no danger of going extinct. However, heritage breeds, like our Barbados Blackbelly sheep, still deserve special consideration. The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is an organization that specializes in heritage breeds and lists it as "Watch."

Predators: Large carnivores such as bobcats & coyotes.

Threats: None besides predation, parasites, and improper care

Relatives: Bighorn sheep, thimhorn sheep and snow sheep

Breeding: Barbados Blackbelly reproduce non-seasonally, meaning that they breed and lamb year-round, and the ewes maintain pregnancies throughout the heat of the summer. The ewes are prolific, producing twins or triplets. The gestation period is five months.

Quick Facts:

- Sheep have excellent peripheral vision. Their large, rectangular pupils allow them to see almost 360 degrees. In fact, they can see behind themselves without turning their heads!
- Sheep and goats may look similar, but they're different species. Sheep have 54 chromosomes, while goats have 60 chromosomes.
- An adult female sheep is referred to as a ewe, an intact male as a ram or occasionally a tup, a castrated male as a wether, and a younger sheep as a lamb. A group of sheep is called a flock, herd or mob.

Conservation: Prospects for the Barbados breed in the United States are improving. The strong market for hair sheep, both here and in other countries, has encouraged those engaged in breed conservation.

GSC's Residents

Name: Sorrel
Birthdate: March 22, 2017
Sex: Female
Origin: Public donation



Name: Lavender (Tag 07)
Birthdate: March 22, 2017
Sex: Female
Origin: Public donation



More Information on Barbados Blackbelly Sheep:

Barbados Blackbelly sheep thrive in hot, humid environments that are challenging for most sheep but also do well in colder climates. Barbados Blackbelly are excellent foragers, are highly resistant to disease, and can tolerate a higher worm load without requiring chemical intervention.

The Barbados Blackbelly breed originally developed on the West Indies island of Barbados from hair sheep brought in by African slave traders during the 1600s. In 1904, the USDA imported four ewes and a ram to Bethesda, Maryland. Because the Barbados Blackbelly is a small-framed sheep, the USDA crossed it with Rambouillet and then European Mouflon to develop a larger meat sheep while retaining the no-shear hair coat and the breed's prolificacy, disease resistance, and parasite tolerance. This cross has been a wellspring from which many significant breeds of sheep have evolved. Perhaps none is more dramatic and popular than the American Blackbelly.

The 2004 census indicated that there were fewer than 200 Barbados Blackbelly remaining in the U.S. Of those, fewer than a half dozen were breeding rams.

Through a cooperative breeding effort, by 2007 the census has doubled, and, by 2014, 1900 had been registered. Even so, the U.S. population is far from recovered. With such a small genetic base and fewer than a dozen breeders, the breed remains endangered in the U.S. and desperately needs more conscientious breeders to help in the recovery effort.

Sources:

<https://livestockconservancy.org/heritage-breeds/heritage-breeds-list/barbados-blackbelly-sheep/>
<https://breeds.okstate.edu/sheep/barbados-blackbelly-sheep.html>