



## Farm animals and farming: Part I



*Judging Blue Face Leicester sheep at The Royal Highland Show In Edinburgh*



*Lambs being fed with a bottle*

When you are out in the countryside in the summer, you will see a great variety of animals running about in the fields, and if you happen to be travelling in the Dales, or in the hills you will mostly find sheep and probably suckler cattle, which are cows with their calves running with them.

Some sheep are bred for the high hills and areas where the land is much less fertile than on the lowland farms. The hill bred sheep are hardy and can stand a great deal of rough weather. In the winter when a blizzard or snow storm is forecast the sheep will come down from the hill tops on their own to lower ground and shelter, they seem to know when a storm is coming.

There are over 50 breeds of sheep in this country and many people from the towns and cities think one sheep is just like another. All the different breeds of sheep have their own characteristics and peculiarities. Some sheep are pure bred and some sheep are cross bred to get a particular lamb, which a farmer may prefer, and which may suit his farm.

Some breeds of sheep have been developed in certain parts of the country and in certain areas, and the name of the sheep is taken from the district where they were born and bred.

In Scotland for instance they have numerous breeds of sheep which are all different. The Blackface sheep provides a hard coarse wool which is suitable for mattress making.

While the Shetland sheep provide a fine soft quality wool which is made into shawls and stockings.

The Cheviot sheep also has a fine wool which is made into clothing. The Border Leicester sheep, which were also developed in Scotland, is an old established breed which dates back to over 250 years. The cross bred Lambs from the Border Leicester is excellent mutton.

There are more collie dogs on the sheep farms than there are on the dairy and beef farms. About thirty years ago every farm had at least one collie dog, many farms had two or three dogs. Some collie dogs are very good at working sheep and some collies are very good at working cattle, but not all that many dogs are good at working both sheep and cattle. Collie dogs have a working life of about 10 years.

Today, many farmers travel around the fields and hills on motor bikes or four wheel quads which cuts out a lot of walking and they don't need as many collie dogs. However there are still a number of collie dogs running about the farms and you should be able to see a dog or two when you visit the countryside and the farms. At one time there were hens and chickens running about free range on many farms. But in the late sixties and early seventies farmers were encouraged to increase food production. Many poultry farmers stayed increasing the number of hens they kept and to house all the extra hens some farmers started keeping their hens in battery cages.

Battery cages are a method of keeping a large number of hens in small confined cages. Many people disagree with the farmers keeping poultry in such confined conditions.

Some farmers that now keep poultry have the hens running free range, because they think the hens are much healthier running free. There are less hens in battery cages today than there were some twenty years ago, mainly because of the vast number of eggs being imported



## Farm animals and farming: Part 2



*A family with a Jacob ewe*



*Jacob sheep and lambs.*

### **Pigs:**

There are several breeds of pigs in this country. The English large white pig is one of the most popular breeds. Some farmers have their pigs running out in the fields with a small tin house, or wooden hut where the pigs can go into at night, or when it's bad weather.

Some pig farmers breed and rear the young pigs for either the bacon trade, or to sell as pork, which means rearing the young pigs to certain Weights. Some pig farmers cross breed the pigs and sell the young pigs when they are about eight weeks old, then some stock farmers, or pig breeders buy the young pigs and finish them off for the market.

A number of pig farmers breed and rear pigs from other countries, such as the Brown Duroc pig from America. This breed of pig is becoming very popular in this country. When some children and the general public see this chocolate coloured American pig, they sometimes ask if this the pigs that produce the 'Smoky Bacon'.

There is a great variety of cattle now in this country. Since the UK joined the common market in 1973 many different breeds of cattle from Europe and other countries have been brought into Britain.

Many of the British breeds of cattle have been cross bred with the cattle from Europe and the Continent, that we now have so many different types of cattle in this country that it is now very difficult to tell what type of cross cattle they are.

However, there are many pure bred pedigree dairy and beef herds in this country, such as the Friesian, Ayrshire, Shorthorn, Hereford, Aberdeen Angus and the Galloway are some of the breeds, and there are also some pedigree herds of European and Continental cattle in Britain.

### **Jacob Sheep:**

This very old breed of sheep is now very popular throughout the British countryside. For many years Jacob sheep were only kept by a small minority of farmers and smallholders.

I travelled around the countryside for 30 odd years from 1960, to all types of farms and came across the Jacob sheep on a few farms. The farms and small holdings where I did find this breed of sheep were only kept in small numbers mainly as a hobby.

Things have changed today, as some farmers now have small flocks of Jacob sheep and they farm them as a commercial business. The lambs are bred for the table and the small joints of sweet lean meat has a flavour all on its own.

The wool of the Jacob sheep can be woven into several weights of cloth, from thick tweeds to a lighter weight material, which is used for dress making and is also used for making bedspreads and mats. The wool in its natural colours can be from off-white to chocolate brown in colour.

The Jacob sheep are a very attractive breed, the young lambs have a distinctive black and white coat, which changes to brown and white as they get older. They have either two, four, or six horns, although some of the breed are polled and have no horns. They thrive, in most conditions and in most districts in the country.

The Jacob sheep society was founded in 1969 to promote and improve the breed conformation in the UK and abroad. The society normally visit the agricultural shows throughout the country and have a stand and stall at the shows, where they market and sell such things as knitting wool, tweed and sheep skin rugs, which help to promote the breed.



## Farm animals and farming



*A Blackface ewe with her twin cross bred lambs*



*A Blue faced Leicester tup*

### **Blackface Sheep:**

The Blackface sheep is one of the most common sheep in Britain today, the breed has also spread all over the World wherever the climate and conditions are very hard.

This breed of sheep is very hardy and can stand up to and survive the worst of snow storms on the open hills.

I can well remember the 1963 snow storm in the north of England, the whole area was disrupted for months. It was night after night of very severe hard frosts and the snows was so deep you couldn't travel around for weeks on the roads till they were cleared.

Out on the hills many sheep died of starvation, because some farmers had run out of fodder and some of them couldn't even travel out onto the hills to feed the sheep, because of the deep snow. The snow was two or three metres high on some roads and this took some time to clear. Around the farm buildings and in some fields the snow drifted as high as six metres in some places.

One hill farmer I went to see during this long hard winter was in a desperate situation. He kept a flock of 200 Blackface sheep, some of the sheep were standing in deep snow frozen solid. It was a dreadful sight to see them.

I helped the farmer to look for some of his sheep buried in the deep snow, some of the sheep we found were still alive after being buried for several weeks. They somehow managed to get some air through the holes in the snow. Most of the sheep we found alive, were only skin and bone and couldn't eat, they eventually died. We did however drag a few live sheep down through the snow and they started to eat a little hay when we got them down into the farm buildings.

The farmer lost a lot of his sheep that year although some of this breed of sheep survived the long Arctic conditions that would have killed most other species including man.

The sheep that survived that winter recovered very quickly, as the versatility of the Blackface sheep is well demonstrated by the wide range of land and conditions which they are kept.

In Britain for instance the Blackface sheep are kept on land at sea-level, to land which is 3000 ft (914 metres) above sea-level. They utilise the different types of grazing very well and on the lower and better hills they can produce two lambs a year. On the very high hills the Blackface sheep produce a lower crop of lambs, maybe one lamb per ewe even when each ewe has about 10 acres (4 hectares) of land to graze on. The lambs from the high hills do very well and fatten quickly for the lowland farmers on better land and on good grass. The Blackface ewe kept on the lowland farms, and cross bred with the Border Leicester, or the Bluefaced Leicester, do very well for the lowland farmers.



## Farm animals and farming

The wool from the Blackface ewe varies in quality according to the district and climate where the sheep come from. The wool is a speciality wool which is in a class all in its own, and has no competitors in its own particular field.

There is a demand throughout Europe for the strong Blackface wool, which undoubtedly makes the best mattress fillings. While the finer wools are used for blending into many strong wearing clothes such as overcoats and heavy blankets. The finest wool goes into the famous Harris tweed trade.

Apart from the Blackface sheep being such a hardy breed, they have a built in instinct to remain on the hills where they have become settled.

This instinct the sheep have is known among the hill farmers as 'letting'. When the sheep become acclimatised to an area, they will not voluntarily leave the area, nor mix with sheep from other areas. This instinct the sheep have reduces the need to have the moors and hills fenced off, this is partly why you see so many open hills and moors and the sheep you see on the roads know where they are and where they are going.



*Swaledale tup sitting on a stone*

### Swaledale Sheep:

The Swaledale sheep get their name from the valley of the river Swale, which is a river in the Yorkshire Dales. There are thousands of hectares of wild hills, moors and mountains in the Yorkshire Dales.

Sheep were carefully selected and bred on the Yorkshire moors for many years, until there emerged the remarkable Swaledale sheep that we know today. The Swaledale sheep are an active and alert breed and are a reasonable size to suit the moorland environment.

The hardiness of the Swaledale sheep is proved by their ability to live out of doors on the wild, tough hills where the breed originated from. As they have to travel on such rough countryside it is very essential they have strong feet and lets. They also have short broad teeth, to eat the heather, moss and grass which is their main diet. Swaledale breeders from the hill area all over the British Isles have found from experience that the Swaledale ram will produce from their flocks, a hardy vigorous offspring which do very well on lowlands farms where there is plenty of good grass.

The Swaledale ewe spends the first four to six years on the hills in the flock where she was born and bred, during which time she will produce flock replacements. The lambs will either be sold in the store market or they will be sold in the fat market ready for the butchers.

After this period of her life on the hills, the ewe will then leave the hills which is known as the 'Draft Stage'. She will then be bought by a lowland farmer, who will cross her with either, the Teeswater ram, or the Bluefaced Leicester ram, which will produce the Masham and Mule gimmer lambs. These females are supreme for commercial lamb production and do extremely well on the lowland farms.

The average fleece of wool from the Swaledale ewe, can weigh around five pounds (2.26kg.). The wool is definitely of a mountain type and in the past has been used for making carpets and for blending with other wools.

Experiments have been carried out with the Swaledale wool to find further uses for the wool. The experiment results proved it possible to produce a lightweight fabric of hard wearing quality material, which is made into clothes for both men and women and for making knitting wool.



## Farm animals and farming



### Donkey:

The Donkey is one of the longest domesticated animals to man. They come in a variety of colours from black, fawn, grey, chocolate brown and piebald. Donkeys are lovely animals and they all have their own characteristics.

Donkeys have been used on many small farms and crofts for centuries, for hauling milk, peat, seaweed, hay and firewood. Some people keep donkeys as pets and like to see them running around their homes.

The Donkey originates from the Wild Ass, and over the centuries with cross breeding and selective breeding, the conformation of today's Donkey came about.

Most Donkeys have a black cross over their shoulders, but some Donkeys are bred without this cross. The reason for this is probably within the breed and is most likely to be a throw-back from the original Wild Ass.

I can well remember a Spinster that lived near to us in Scotland. She had a 12 acre ( 4.8 5 ha) small holding and she kept three or four Donkeys on the farm, as well as a variety of other farm birds and animals, such as chickens, ducks, pigs, sheep and a few calves.

This lady had a small cart made for the Donkeys to pull. She was often seen driving through the village, sitting on her little cart which was pulled by one of her Donkeys. Her woven shopping basket was sitting in the middle of her cart with the few odds and ends that she had bought in the village, as she made all her own bread and cakes.

The Donkeys used to go into the farm kitchen and stand in the middle of the floor, while she was sitting at the fire. I many times visited her small farm and had to push my way past the Donkeys in the farm house to get to the fire where the lady was sitting.

Apart from her using the small cart to drive to the village with, she used the cart and Donkeys to clean out the hen houses and cart in the small amount of hay she made each year. This lady was very popular in the area with her Donkeys.



## Farm animals and farming

### British Friesian Cow



The British Friesian cow is a black and white animal and is a dairy breed. They originate from the Dutch black and white dairy cow.

Most of the milk produced in England and Wales is produced from the Friesian cow. Although over this past 20 years or so, many of the Friesian breeders have introduced the black and white Canadian Holstein blood into their herds, which gives them a bigger cow that produces more milk.

Although the British Friesian cow is known as a dairy breed, they also produce well over 50 per cent of the beef produced in Britain. The Friesian produce some excellent beef when they are crossed with the various types of beef cattle, such as the Hereford, Aberdeen Angus, Limousin, Charolais, Galloway and the Shorthorn. In the south west coast of Scotland where I came from, the brown and white Ayrshire cows were mostly kept, although a few Friesian herds were dotted about the south west Ayrshire countryside

Things are very much different today, as the Friesian Holstein cow, apart from producing much more milk than the Ayrshire cow, they can also produce milk of a much higher quality than some Ayrshire herds.

Since the early part of this century the British Friesian has been developed and improved by the breeders so that the animal is now a good dual purpose cow. This is why so many farmers keep this breed of cow because the Friesian can produce a lot of good quality milk, and provide good quality beef, from the cross, and pure bred calves.

### Ayrshire Cow:

The Ayrshire cow is a dairy breed which is brown and white in colour. Some cows have more when than brown and some cows are a very dark brown in colour with little white, and you get many cows which are a mottled colour.

The breed was developed in the south west coast of Scotland from around 1822. The native breed of cows were cross bred with other Scottish types of cattle, like the oxen type of shorthorn and the West Highland breed of cattle.



As the Scottish farmers developed the Ayrshire cow it wasn't until 1877 that the Ayrshire herd book society was founded, although the name of the breed was known many years before that.

The Ayrshire cow is a much smaller and finer boned animal than some other breeds of dairy cows, this makes it a less suitable animal for producing beef. If however the Ayrshire cow is crossed with the Friesian, shorthorn, or Charolais bull, the bull calves will make excellent beef, but they will take longer to get them fat for the market. There were about 15 pure bred Ayrshire bull calves kept on the farm every year for beef. It took about three years to get the Ayrshire cattle fat, compared with about two years to fatten the other beef bred calves.

With having to feed the Ayrshire bull calves a year longer, the profit margin was reduced. The Ayrshire bullocks were fed with as much home grown food as we could, such as turnips, hay, crushed oats, beans and potatoes which were all grown on the farm.

The Ayrshire cow is a very compact animal with good conformation. The cows have very large horns which are set wide apart and have an upward curve. Many of the Ayrshire cows today are polled and are bred with no horns. The Ayrshire cow has a nice tight udder, and they produce milk which has about 4 per-cent butterfat, which is good for the manufacture of cream and cheese. The Ayrshire cow has won many awards at local and National Shows. The cow is bred that it will perform well in any climate. Some of the breed have been sent out to the Far-East and are producing calves and milk in the desert.



## Farm animals and farming



### Jersey Cow:

The Jersey cow is a small, fine boned animal which was developed on the island of Jersey. It is a dairy breed that produces a rich creamy milk, which on average contains 5 per-cent butterfat and more. It is a very good quality milk.

The Jersey cow has a fine skin and their short fine hair, is either brown, fawn, or a brownish black in colour with white patches on various part of their body.

This breed of cow at one time was very popular with some people, such as landowners) Doctors and a mixture of other country people, it is still very popular with many people. For 30 years I worked among about 12)000 dairy farmers in the north of England and among these farmers there would be no more than about 20 herds of Jersey cows producing milk for the general public. Our present Queen Elizabeth has a pedigree Jersey herd on her Windsor Estate in Berkshire.

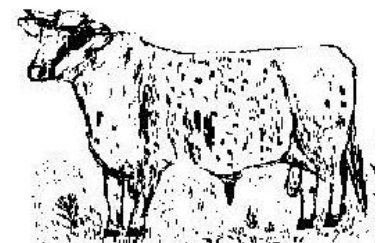
I also knew many other country people that kept the odd one or two Jersey cows a hobby, because they liked the breed, some of them also kept a small number of other farm animals as well.

Today there are less Jersey herds in the north of England than there were some 30 years ago because of the changes in agricultural and the interest in the other breeds of dairy cows.

### Shorthorn Cow:

The Shorthorn cow was developed in Yorkshire, Durham and in Scotland. In Durham the Collings family around 1790 were developing the Shorthorn cow by cross breeding cattle. Two animals bred by the family became very popular throughout the country. One was the Durham Ox, a steer and the other animal was known as the White Heifer. Both animals were fattened and exhibited at various places.

The Shorthorn cow has been bred for both milk and beef, and is a dual purpose animal. Many farmers in the Yorkshire and Durham Dales kept and bred the Shorthorn cows. The heifer calves were kept to replace the milking cows and the bull calves were reared for beef.



At one time most farmers in the Dales kept a type of Shorthorn bull, which they probably bred themselves and some cattle were inter-bred. But progress was being made to the breed. Thomas Bates became well known for developing the milking qualities of the Shorthorn cow.

George Coates was another well known Shorthorn breeder, he started the Coates Herd Book for Shorthorns in 1822. The Shorthorn cattle all over the country really started to improve with the introduction of the artificial insemination of cattle in the 1940's, when the cows were inseminated with semen, from the bulls bred from the top Shorthorn breeders.

The Shorthorn cow varies quite a bit in colour, from pure white, to a darkish red, but most of the breed seem to have a mixture of roans. The Shorthorn is a fairly big and very sturdy animal and will do well in most climates. Apart from them producing milk, they also produce good beef when crossed with various beef breeds of cattle.



## Farm animals and farming



### Farmyard chickens:

I can well remember there used to be five hen houses in the farm stockyard where the hens ran free range. The breed of hens on the farm were the Rhode Island Reds which were good laying hens and were a traditional breed.

The eggs were sold to various people at the farm door and the grocer in the village sold a lot of the eggs in their shop and on the van rounds.

The grocer would take all the eggs the hens could lay if they could get them. The hens were fed every morning mainly with crushed oats which were grown on the farm. Sometimes the hens would also get a bit of mashed potato and scraps left over from the dinner table. Although most of the hens would lay their eggs in the nest boxes in the hens houses some of them would go and find the most unusual places to lay their eggs.

Sometimes a hen's nest was found 30 metres or so down a hedgerow, or a nest might be found among a pile of old fencing posts, or among some old farm machinery in the stackyard. The hay shed and barns were also places where some hens used to lay their eggs.

Sometimes we would find a hens nest just after she had laid an egg and she was cackling away telling us she had just laid an egg somewhere. The problem then was to find her nest and this was sometimes very difficult.

The dark coloured Rhode Island cockerels were the king of the castle as they strutted about the farm yard as if they owned the place. A cockerel had his own group of hens and woe-betide anyone who tried to tamper with his hens.

Some cockerels were very vicious and were quick to attack you. They would jump up at your legs and hit you with their spurs and peck at you with their beaks all at the same time and they often draw blood.

There are various other traditional breeds of hens such as the Light Sussex and the Leghorns. There are also a good selection of Hybrid hens which are also excellent egg layers.





## Farm animals and farming: Woodland Management Part I



*Wenty Beaumont with one of his forestry workers preparing to have a tree felled*



*Young people planting trees on a hillside*

When you visit the countryside you will see many single trees in some fields and pastures and in the hedgerows throughout the whole country. You will also see small and large woods of various sizes. The trees and woods are not just growing willy nilly. Many landowners and farmers have planted the trees and woods for various reasons. There are however many single trees which have been planted because some people like certain types of trees, such as the oak, beech and lime.

Many woods have been planted for sport and for shelter. A good sporting wood is one which is warm with good nesting cover and roosting cover for game birds.

Woods planted for shelter can be a great asset on a farm especially where buildings are on an exposed hillside and where the livestock are wintered out. "which means they are kept outside all the year round".

The woods will shelter the buildings and the livestock from high winds, lashing rain and snow blizzard. The woods also help to conserve the wildlife in the area. The fast growing trees such as the Larch, Scots pine, Douglas fir and the Sitka Spruce fulfil their purpose as a shelter-belt in the shortest period of time.

Some conifers depending on the species take between 60 and 80 years to mature, "this means that the trees have reached an age where they can be felled and harvested".

It is important that if woods are to be effective at providing shelter and for holding game birds and wildlife, then the woods should be designed properly.

Conservation means to protect the natural environment and to look after the things around us and to try and protect the various aspects of the countryside and the buildings.

Here are some of the timber which are grown in this country and which enhance the countryside throughout the year with their different shades and colours.

### **HARDWOODS**

OAK  
BEECH  
CHERRY  
ASH  
WALNUT  
SYCAMORE  
CHESTNUT  
POPLAR

### **SOFTWOODS**

SCOTS PINE  
DOUGLAS FIR  
NORWAY SPRUCE  
LARCH  
SITKA SPRUCE



## Farm animals and farming: Woodland Management Part 2



There are some hardwoods in this country which have been standing for hundreds of years and have footpaths throughout the woods where the general public can walk and picnic among some of the oldest and most beautiful trees in the country.

The weather can have a great effect on many trees and woods. For instance in 1998 millions of trees were uprooted and blown over especially in the north by strong winds and a lot of damage was also done to houses, buildings and property the same night.

A typical estate in the north has around 35,000 acres which includes the moors. About 3,000 acres of woodland are grown on the estate which is mainly a mixture of conifers.

Timber in this country is used for making furniture, building materials fencing posts, pulpwood and firewood. Some trees are cut into planks and are stored until they are seasoned before being made into furniture or for veneer.

With so many footpaths throughout the woods many problems arise; erosion is one of the main problems. Most people using the footpaths are alright, its only the odd few that leave litter, or leave gates open, or have their dogs running loose disturbing everything around them. The landowners and farmers then have to clean up after some hikers or picnickers.

An estate once found a cat with an empty meat tin stuck over its head after some picnickers had left empty cans and bottles lying around the previous weekend.

The landowners and farmers ask children and adults to keep to the footpaths and take their rubbish home with them and keep their dogs on a lead especially where there are sheep, lambs and cattle in the fields.

At Bywell in Northumberland, the Allendale estate in conjunction with the Forestry Commission have created a 70 acre community woodland at Broomley near Stocksfield where the general public have access to nearly all parts of the area.

A car park is provided and there are footpaths throughout the woodland. Some of the footpaths have been created and run in conjunction with existing footpaths.

A mixture of conifers and broadleaved trees have been planted, about 50,000 trees in all have been planted in separated plantations. The trees will be harvested in years to come.

Rabbit netting has been put up surrounding each of the small plantations to keep the rabbits from damaging the trees, although the Roe deer may become a problem in the future.

So if you have happen to visit Broomley at Stocksfield take time and have a walk along the footpaths in this community woodland, it's very enjoyable and you can watch the mixture of young trees as they grow and develop.

The Allendale estate and the Forestry commission should be congratulated for creating this community woodland at Broomley for local people and for visitors for now and for generations to come.