

# Barbados Blackbelly Sheep

*Ovis aries*

**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Artiodactyla*

**Family:** *Bovidae*

**Characteristics:** Barbados Blackbelly Sheep are polled (horns bred out of the species). The hair is a rusty brown on its back, hindquarters and head. Black is also found on the underbelly, along the throat, the inner legs, above the eyes and below the chin. Males tend to have longer hairs along their throat and possibly on their shoulders. The hair is not considered a wool. The face is proportional to the body. The bridge of the nose is high set, giving rise to a quick slant downward towards the nostrils (aka Roman nose) ([Oklahoma State University](#) see also [breed standards](#)).

**Behavior:** The species is considered weather robust, but mostly because of their behaviors. Flocks will often seek shelter in temperatures woolly sheep species don't. These sheep are considered relatively active and protective. Ewes with young will often vigorously defend their young against predators. However, even ranged Barbados sheep are relatively docile when interacting with humans ([Oklahoma State University](#)).

**Reproduction:** This sheep species is highly proliferative, having an average of two ewes per parturition. They also naturally breed more than once per year as opposed to other sheep that are seasonal. The mortality rate of lambs is also lower when compared to other sheep. The lambs are sexually mature by seven months ([Hair Sheep of Tropical America](#)).

**Diet:** Wild: Grasses, grains and some shrubs  
Zoo: hay, herbivore pellets and access to salt lick.

**Conservation:** As of 2007, there are fewer than 300 pure breed individuals left in the US. Some breeders are working on preserving the purity of the species ([livestockconservancy.org](#)).

## **FYI:**

-Origin story: In the 1600s, the Barbados black-belly was created via a hybridization of a short-haired African sheep species that came with the slave trade and a prolific Northern European woolly sheep species. The African species fell into disfavor because of its low reproductive rates. The European sheep died out because the thick wool was disadvantageous in Barbados's tropical climate and prime grounds for parasites ([Combs 1983](#)).

- Bred mostly for its high prolific rates and meat ([Oklahoma State University](#)).



## **Range & Habitat:**

Found around the world, but the origin is Barbados. Prefer tropical climates.



**Lifespan:** up to 13 years in captivity, unknown years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** resistant to parasites, high proliferation rates

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Not Evaluated

