

The rise of the Lleyn

Surveys have been commissioned by relevant bodies including the MLC, MAFF and now DEFRA and EBLEX. The surveys have been sent out as postal questionnaires directly to sheep keepers in 1971, 1987, 1996, 2003. The results of the most recent survey in 2012 have now been released having undergone analysis.



The Lleyn has continued to increase in numbers, with about half a million ewes found in 2012. Half were mated pure and the rest to a variety of ram breeds. Lleyn rams were mated to half a million ewes. The Lleyn is now the largest non-hill breed in Britain.

The 1971 survey found 7,000 Lleyn ewes in Britain. The below table indicates that 474,000 Lleyn ewes were mated in 2012, some 3.6% of all ewes in the country.

Table 7. The main pure breeds of ewe kept in Britain in 2012 and 2003 based on the estimated number of ewes mated

Breed	2012				2003	
	Breed type	No. Ewes mated (000)	All ewes (000)	% of all ewes	No. Ewes mated (000)	% of all ewes
Scottish Blackface	H	1,125	1,327	8.6	1,686	11.1
Welsh Mountain	H	966	1,139	7.4	1,563	10.3
Swaledale	H	721	850	5.5	1,047	6.9
Lleyn	SE	474	560	3.6	237	1.6
Texel	TS	304	359	2.3	326	2.1
North Country Cheviot	H	294	346	2.3	435	2.9
Romney Marsh	LE	251	296	1.9	165	1.1
Cheviot unspecified	H	227	268	1.7	147	1
Beulah Speckled Face	H	144	170	1.1	498	3.3
Hardy Speckled Face	H	134	159	1	276	1.8
Suffolk	TS	130	153	1	230	1.5
Easycare	SE	101	119	0.8	13	0.1
New Zealand Romney	LE	86	102	0.7		
South Country Cheviot	H	83	98	0.6	94	0.6
Poll Dorset	SE	75	89	0.6	94	0.6
Brecknock Hill Cheviot	H	62	73	0.5	73	0.5
Herdwick	H	56	66	0.4	55	0.4
Charollais	TS	56	66	0.4	45	0.3
South Welsh Mountain	H	36	43	0.3	59	0.4

* H = Hill, TS = Terminal Sire, SE = Shortwool ewe, LE = Longwool ewe

In addition, there were estimated to be 12,600 Lleyn rams in Britain, some 3.4% of all rams used, which were mated to around 500,000 ewes (3.8% of all ewes nationally). About 275,000 Lleyn ewes were mated to Lleyn rams in 2012 and a further 70,000 were mated to Texel rams, 50,000 to Charollais rams and 25,000 to Suffolk rams.

Table 23. Lleyn ram mating to major ewe breeds 2012 (estimated figures)

Ewe breed	Total ewes (000)
Lleyn	279
Lleyn cross	61
Lleyn x Texel	6
Texel x Lleyn	6
Texel cross	19
Other breeds	60

The major ewe types were Lleyn crosses and Texel x Lleyn ewes. About 372,000 ewes containing some Lleyn ancestry were mated to Lleyn rams. About 78,000 crossbred ewes containing Lleyn genes were mated in 2012; 27,000 to Texel rams and a further 20,000 to Lleyn rams. Therefore in 40 years the Lleyn breed has risen from a very small local Welsh breed to the largest non-hill purebred in Britain and the fourth largest non-hill ram breed. In addition, it is third behind Texel and then Suffolk crosses for contributing to crossbred ewes, outside the mule/halfbred types.

The above information is taken from **The Breeding Structure of the British Sheep Industry 2012 - Results of the 2012 survey of sheep breeds in Great Britain**

