

DRAYTON *gossipe*

Issue 18
March '11



Cover photo courtesy of O. Allan

**FREE MONTHLY MAGAZINE
DELIVERED TO HOMES AND BUSINESSES
in Market Drayton & Adderley**

Spring is definitely here as Fordhall's first lamb of the year was born on 22nd February and despite the chill at the time, both mum and lamb are still doing well.



Over the next month, we are expecting between 100-180 new lambs. They will weigh the same as an average newborn baby (5-9llbs) and will feed from the ewe for at least 4 months before moving on to just grass. Here at Fordhall the ewe and lamb will be kept indoors for at most a couple of weeks at first to make sure that there are no health problems and to keep the lamb sheltered from the cold. Farmer Ben will have his work cut out and as a consequence - very little sleep!

Fordhall's sheep live outdoors all year round as they graze on our luscious organic (chemical free) pastures, drink from spring fed pools and shelter in our rich woodland. The sheep will rotate around different fields at Fordhall. This helps to protect the sheep from health problems as they eat fresh grass continually. This system also encourages all of different varieties of grass to be grazed which makes for thick and vigorous growth throughout the year - the sheep especially love Sheep's Fescue (a species of grass), which is rich in saccharine (sugar) matter, yum!

In the UK sheep have been domesticated for 11,000 years. They were bred for their meat, milk and wool; even their fat was used to make candles and soap.

Today, sheep are mostly bred for their meat. There are about 1 billion sheep on the planet and around 30 million in the UK. Sheep can usually be spotted grazing in open fields, generally people have fewer concerns about their welfare than other types of farm animals and in the UK sheep are generally intensively farmed, however shepherds have larger flocks than they used to and some farmers will fatten their lambs indoors.

Grass is greener on the other side

Sheep are often given the unfair title of 'stupid', however scientific evidence has shown that sheep can form social relationships within their flocks and can remember faces of at least 50 other sheep. One study found that sheep actually learned to roll over a cattle grid to get to the tastier grass on the other side!

Sheep are prey animals. They stick together in their flock, keeping a safe distance between them and any threat they might face. They will also protect themselves by not showing easily recognisable signs of suffering or weakness. If they are in pain they will not bleat loudly as it could attract unwanted attention from predators such as foxes.

Sheep are very sociable animals, they like to be surrounded by other sheep they are familiar with and find it very upsetting to be away from their flock. They even have a social hierarchy within a flock that will often be enforced with aggression between rams. Why not come and visit the new lambs at Fordhall during weekends in April or at our Spring on the Farm event on Sunday May 21st.

Becca, Children's activities coordinator, Fordhall Farm.

(Some facts in this article have been taken from the RSPCA website)



RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



LOTTERY FUNDED

