

# BLACK WELSH MOUNTAIN

## Summary

A hill breed from the uplands of Wales, the Black Welsh Mountain is agile, hardy and thrifty. Willing to graze both coarse and fine vegetation, as well as being an effective browser, it is suitable for use in a range of conservation grazing situations. Placid and easy to handle, and with good niche marketing opportunities, the Black Welsh Mountain is a good 'all-rounder'.

**Hardiness** – a hardy, thrifty breed, very suitable for use in conservation grazing.

- *Thrifty* – maintains condition well on low quality forage. Even during winter, supplementary feed only necessary in extreme conditions.
- *Hardy* – tolerant of extremes of weather; its short, but thick, dense fleece enables it to cope well with the cold and rain.
- *Shelter* – natural forms of shelter (rocks, scrub) are adequate.
- *Surefooted* – a lightweight, agile sheep, confident on awkward and steep terrain.

**Physical Attributes & Husbandry** – a placid, easy to handle sheep, requiring only routine husbandry.

- *Handling* – small, easy to handle and more placid than its Welsh Mountain relatives. Flocks well, so can be worked with dogs easily or bucket trained.
- *Fencing* – fairly respectful of enclosure and electric fencing.
- *Brambles* – rarely becomes entangled in thorny vegetation, as its fleece is short and compact.
- *Supplementary feed* – unlikely to be required by non-breeding animals, except in extreme weather; breeding ewes will benefit from some supplements at lambing time.
- *Breeding* – a self-reliant milky breed; generally lambs unaided. Good, protective mothers with active lambs, quick to suckle. Even on poor keep, will support one good-sized lamb or twins with few losses.
- *Fly strike* – generally not thought to be susceptible, although on one downland site, it was affected more frequently than white Welsh Mountain sheep.
- *Hooves* – good, slow-growing feet. Routine care only required. Placid, thus easy to treat individuals.
- *Size* – small. Ewes weigh up to 45kg and rams between 60-65kg.
- *Appearance* – black, with short, dense fleece. Rams horned.



Sandie Tolhurst

**Grazing Characteristics** - a fairly hard-mouthed sheep capable of effective maintenance and restoration grazing.

- *Grazing preferences* – readily eats both coarse and fine grasses, including rank Tor-grass and Upright Brome. Good control of Purple Moor-grass.
- *Browsing ability* – reasonable ability to suppress saplings and scrub re-growth; particularly Willow. Dislikes Bog Myrtle.
- *Sedges and rushes* – effective at winter grazing of rushes and sedges; avoids walking through and does not graze areas dominated by Saw Sedge.

**Interaction with the Public** – suitable for grazing on public sites which are large or where dogs are not permitted.

- *Reaction to people* – a calm, placid breed which will generally ignore people.
- *Reaction to dogs* – vulnerable to attack, although on large sites, is likely to seek cover and avoid confrontation.
- *Public perception* – colour attracts interest from the public, particularly when lambs are present. Well-rounded appearance, even when newly shorn may help avoid welfare concerns.

**Marketability** – particularly suitable for local, niche marketing.

- *Meat* – lambs quick-growing and lamb produces a 'premium' with distinctive flavour. Particularly suited to niche local or direct markets.
- *Wool* – although not in demand by wool marketing board, sought after by local spinners.

## Sites where Black Welsh Mountain sheep are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
<b>Boxhill</b> Surrey  National Trust	Chalk downland and scrub	30 Black Welsh Mountain sheep (plus cattle and ponies) used for restoration and maintenance grazing of Tor-grass dominated chalk grassland to promote variety of conditions for butterflies (e.g. Silver-spotted Skipper, Marbled White) & botanical interest. Successful. Good increase in plant diversity after 3 years; tackled coarse grasses well including Upright Brome and Tor-grass when rank and brown if given some food supplements. Minimal interest in scrub; maintain condition well; bid-dable & easy to manage; some problems with fly strike.	Peter Creasy 01306 885502
<b>Glaslyn and Dyfnant Meadows</b> Montgomeryshire  Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust	Moorland, heath, acid grass and mire.	Extensive grazing using farmers stock on license. Black Welsh Mountain (plus other breeds of sheep and cattle) grazed on the hills between April-January; brought down to lower pastures to finish the lambs quicker. Very hardy; small; docile; catholic eating tastes; the ewes are good mothers.	Clive Faulkner 01938 555654
<b>Forngett Meadows</b> Norfolk	Fen meadow and alluvial grassland.	Grazed year round from 1993-2000. Maintained excellent condition without supplements, usually producing one big single, or more usually twins, occasionally triplets. Minimal assistance. Good mothers. Graze good range of vegetation; particularly effective at grazing sedges and rushes in winter; good browsers, particularly Willow. Rare for breed to become entangled in brambles owing to compact, coarse fleece. Fly strike rare. Good feet. Flock well; easy to handle.	Sandie Tolhurst 01603 610734
<b>Hickling Broad, Woodbastwick and Uppgate Common</b> Norfolk  Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Fen, fen meadow, reed beds and scrub.	Grazing in spring and summer months to control invasive Birch, Sallow and Purple Moor-grass, thus allowing Heather seedlings to establish. Avoided Bog Myrtle at Woodbastwick. Rarely suffer fly strike. Sound feet. Will take rush at the back end and early part of year (avoid dense clumps). Winter grazed at Hickling. Lamb easily, unaided, producing large lambs; mostly twins and with little supplementary feed.	Mel Slote 01603 625540  Gary Williams 07747 844125
<b>Other contacts:</b>		Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Breeders Association.	David Parker 01386 701538

## References

TOLHURST S (1997) *Investigation into the use of domestic herbivores for fen grazing management. A document for discussion.* Report for the Broads Authority, English Nature & the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.