

BORERAY

Summary

The Boreray is a hardy, rare breed of primitive sheep, which until recently had been isolated on Boreray Island in the St Kilda archipelago since the 1930's; there are now several small flocks on the mainland. The breed has considerable potential for future use in conservation situations owing to its thriftiness and feral evolution.

Hardiness – an extremely hardy breed, well suited to coping with difficult terrain and exposed conditions.

- *Able to withstand harsh conditions* – evolved as a feral flock adapted to the exposed conditions of Boreray.
- *Thrifty* – copes with sparse conditions and a range of vegetation types.

Physical Attributes & Husbandry – a small, largely self-sustaining breed which requires minimal husbandry.

- *Small size* – adult ewes have an average weight of 30kg and 55cm high at the withers.
- *Short tail* – less prone to fly strike. Tail docking not required.
- *Fleece* – quite dense and sometimes naturally shed, especially by breeding females, so shearing not always necessary.
- *Handling* – unlike some other primitive sheep, the Boreray can be gathered using dogs and will flock like a domestic breed. If unaccustomed to being confined, the breed can be difficult to handle in pens.
- *Fencing* – standard stock fence plus single top wire is sufficient. A horned breed, thus electric net fencing not suitable.
- *Hooves* – good hooves with footrot reportedly very rare, although one breeder on mainland UK has indicated that the Borerays' hooves grow rapidly and need regular trimming.
- *Good general health* – few disease problems evident.
- *Breeding* – lambs easily. Lambs are vigorous and quickly get on their feet.
- *Appearance* – cream, grey or occasionally black in colour, with black, tan or grey faces and legs. Both sexes are horned; rams have heavy spiral horns.



British Wool Marketing Board

Grazing Characteristics – a breed with good potential, but currently no known instances of Boreray sheep grazing on nature conservation sites.

- *Grazing* – eats coarse vegetation.
- *Browsing* – browses, but extent of ability unknown.

Interaction with the Public – an attractive unusual breed with high public appeal.

- *Reaction to people* – variable. Some flocks are very shy of human contact, but others become tame and will approach humans for food.
- *Appearance* – small size, fleece colour and horns make the Boreray attractive to the public.
- *Fleece shedding* – can make the breed appear 'moth-eaten' which may need explanation on sites with public access.

Marketability – as an extremely rare breed, there is a market for breeding stock.

- *Meat* – very tender, with good flavour; small carcass.
- *Fleece* – rather coarse and too short for hand-spinners, but usable if shorn. The Boreray is currently exempted from the regulations concerning the sale of wool to the British Wool Marketing Board.

Sites where Boreray sheep are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
Tilgate Park West Sussex Crawley Borough Council	Grass paddocks		Niall Osborne 01293 530168 (after 4pm)
East Mainshill Private	Scottish upland.	Flock of approximately 20 years, grazed year round. Feet require less attention than the Shetland sheep also kept on this site.	Colin Lazenby 01292 560318
Other contacts:		Rare Breeds Survival Trust – for contact with other Boreray Breeders.	024 7669 6551

References