

Industry Overview:

Livestock



Our Food. Our Future.
Growing Opportunities in Agriculture

 Newfoundland
Labrador

The beef, sheep and goat industries in Newfoundland and Labrador are comprised of small farms in mostly rural areas where pastures and other feed sources are easily accessible. There has always been a large demand for locally-raised beef, sheep and goat. With increased marketing efforts in recent years, demand has exceeded the capacity of what local farmers can supply.

Beef cattle (*Bos taurus*), sheep (*Ovis aries*), and goats (*Capra hircus*) are all members of the family Bovidae. They all exhibit an even number of hoofed toes and have hollow horns. Beef cattle have a natural lifespan of 18 to 20 years, with productivity peaking at 8 to 12 years. The natural lifespan of sheep and goats is 10 to 12 years, with productivity peaking at 6 to 7 years. Beef cattle have long been raised in Newfoundland and Labrador for meat. Sheep are raised mainly for meat production, however in some areas the fleece and hides are harvested for wool and leather production which is then used by local crafters. Similarly, goats are raised for meat production, with some renewed interest being seen in the production of goat milk.

Another trait that beef cattle, sheep and goats have in common is that they are all ruminants. A ruminant is an animal whose stomach is comprised of four distinct compartments, rather than just one, like the stomachs of humans and other monogastric animals. The rumen is a fermentation chamber where bacteria and microbes break down plant material.

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Beef cattle are continual breeders - can be bred year round - while sheep and goats are seasonal short day breeders that will only breed once the number of daylight hours decreases (i.e., in the fall). Beef cattle have a gestation period of 283 days, while sheep and goats have gestation periods of 152 days and 150 days, respectively.

Genetic advancements have enabled producers to breed "polled" animals, meaning the animals do not grow horns. This advancement allows increased safety for both the animals and the humans who work with them.

Although producers have embraced technology and use it to improve such things as breeding techniques and feed management, meat production is still very traditional. Producers rely on community or group-run pastures for summer feed, as well as pasturing on islands off our rugged coasts where animals can graze free of predators.

There are voluntary on-farm food safety programs for beef and sheep; designed to reduce food safety hazards and risks on the farm. Verified Beef Production Plus is the Canadian on-farm food safety program for beef. It is operated by the Beef Cattle Research Council and delivered through the Canadian Cattleman's Association. The Canadian Sheep Federation organizes the Canadian Verified Sheep Program and the Canadian Goat On-Farm Food Safety Program is organized by the Canadian National Goat Federation.

Producers raising animals must adhere to the provincial Meat Inspection Act, the Animal Health and Protection Act, and the National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice for Beef Cattle, Sheep and Goats.

The Department of Fisheries and Land Resources works with the beef, sheep, and goat industries to help increase production by providing technical, business and production advice.

