

Black Welsh Mountain

Black Welsh Mountain sheep came to prominence in the Middle Ages, due to their unusual fleeces that did not require dye. Over time, they became a distinct breed, very different from the other Welsh Mountain breeds. Most dark-wooled sheep gray with age. Black Welsh Mountain sheep tend to maintain their dark color. The ewe lambs at right show the slight sun-bleaching often apparent on the tips of the locks; it normally disappears into the black in processing.

Black Welsh Mountain wool can be fairly soft or quite crisp. Some will be suitable for cardigans or jackets, while some may work better for woven, tweed-style fabrics. Mill-spun yarns will generally hit a middle note in terms of texture.

If you plan to buy a fleece, discuss your intended project with the shepherd, in order to match the fiber quality to the purpose. A single fleece will likely provide enough for a sweater or for a cluster of mittens



and hats. The wool is usually easy to process and work with. Kemp is rare; it may occur in the britch area, and that section can be sorted out for alternative uses. While carding may be the most familiar preparation method, combing can provide a

delightful spinning experience and comparatively smooth yarn with a bit of loft.

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| Fleece weight | 2¼–5½ pounds (1–2.5 kg), usually 3–4 pounds (1.5–2 kg). |
| Staple length | 2–4 inches (5–10 cm), usually 3–4 inches (7.5–10 cm). |
| Fiber diameters | Generally 28–36 microns, although the North American breed association aims for a finer range of 26–32 microns. |
| Lock characteristics | Dense, firm, not especially long. Almost completely free of kemp. Individual fibers have significant crimp that is not organized in the locks, which blend together in a mass except at their slightly pointed tips. |
| Natural colors | Deep black, perhaps with a slight reddish cast. |



lock photos reproduced to the same scale



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