



# Why do we need to shear sheep?



Sheep shearing is a skilled profession which should only be carried out by professionals who have been trained to shear carefully and sympathetically.

**British Wool is the approved provider for shearing and wool handling training in the UK, with a programme designed to support candidates of all abilities.**

## Shearing improves animal welfare

Sheep grow wool continuously to protect them from the weather. Wool is a natural product of the sheep's life cycle and the welfare of sheep is improved by them being shorn every 12 months. Shearing keeps sheep cool in the warmer months and reduces the risk of parasitic infestation and disease. It also reduces the risk of sheep becoming 'rigged' or stuck on their backs, which can make them vulnerable to attack by crows or other predators.

## Shearing reduces the risk of parasite infestation

Sheep are particularly susceptible to insect infestations like flystrike because of their thick fleece. If parts of their fleece become sufficiently contaminated with dirt and fluids, which can easily happen when grazing freely in the fields, this can attract flies, which lay their eggs in the fleece. After hatching, the maggots bury themselves in the sheep's wool and eventually under the sheep's skin, feeding off their flesh. Removing the fleece considerably reduces the risk of diseases of this nature because it removes a potential breeding ground for insects.



## Shearing avoids heat stress



Wool is nature's best insulator and protects sheep from extreme cold in winter months. However, wearing a thick, heavy fleece during warm summer months is uncomfortable and stressful for sheep. Shearing during the late spring/early summer months is ideal as it allows sheep to have adequate wool growth to keep them cool in the summer (and avoid sun burn) and a full fleece in the winter to keep them warm.

“ External parasites can cause sheep severe discomfort and distress and, in the case of diseases like flystrike, even death if not spotted and treated quickly.

” Adult sheep of breeds which have continuously growing wool should be shorn at least once every year, to help reduce the risk of external parasites and keep the animals comfortable.

