

SHEEP TIMELINE

8000 BC - Sheep were domesticated

4000 BC - Wool clothing was worn in Babylon (Land of Wool) Yarn was spun on drop spindles.

55 BC - Sheep were introduced to the British Isles.

1200 AD - The Spinning Wheel was invented.

1493 AD - Columbus took sheep to Cuba on his second voyage.

1549 AD - Cortez took sheep to Mexico. Sheep from these flocks eventually found their way to the southwest where they were the beginning of the Navajo weaving that is still treasured today.

Early 1600's - England forbid the import of sheep to America because they wanted to control the production of clothing for export to the Colonies and keep them dependent on England. During this time, wool fabric made up two-thirds of England's foreign trade.

1635 AD - The Pilgrims bought sheep from the Dutch and smuggled them into the Colonies.

1643 AD - There were 1000 sheep in Massachusetts. Twenty-one years later there were over 100,000 sheep.

1664 AD - The colonies passed a law requiring youth to learn to spin and weave wool so the colonists could become self sufficient. It took four girl spinners to produce enough yarn to keep one boy weaver busy supplied.

Mid 1700's - As the American wool trade grew the English made raising sheep and trading in wool a crime punishable by cutting the offender's right hand off. English Restrictions of sheep and wool was one of the major factors leading to the American Revolution. Wearing homespun wool garments became a symbol of protest against England.

In England textile technology began to develop rapidly. But the export of this technology to the colonies was forbidden.

1733 AD - The flying shuttle was developed.

1764 AD - The invention of the spinning jenny.

1769 AD - The water frame was invented.

1769 AD - The first American woolen mill was established.

After the Revolutionary War in the 1790's the U.S. textile industry developed rapidly.

As frontier farmers moved westward, sheep always went with them providing food and fiber.

Today sheep are raised in all 50 states. Flocks vary in size from a few head to 10,000. Of about 200 breeds of sheep in the world only about a dozen are important in the U.S. sheep industry. The top sheep raising states are: Texas, Wyoming, California, South Dakota, and Colorado.

The top sheep producing countries in the world are Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand, sheep outnumber people 5 to 1.