

About the Manx Loaghtan breed

The Manx Loaghtan is a small primitive sheep, one of the rare breeds of sheep on the watch list of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. The breed originates from the prehistoric short-tailed breeds of sheep found in isolated parts of North West Europe where they survived because they were not replaced by more developed breeds. Loaghtans and their relatives grazed the hills of the Isle of Man until the 18th century but by the 1950s numbers had declined to a handful. As a result of the work of enthusiasts on the Isle of Man and in England, numbers have steadily increased over the last 50 years. Unfortunately the breed is once again on the priority list of The RBST so much work must be done to raise the profile of a Loaghtan

Loaghtan is the Manx word for the brown “moorit” colour of the fleece which is derived from two Manx words “lugh” meaning mouse and “dhoan” meaning brown, or from “lhosht dhoan” meaning burnt brown.



Ewes photographed on the Isle of Man

The Loaghtan is a multi-horned breed, with two or four horns in both ewes and rams, although occasionally polled ewes occur. Six horned rams have also been known.

The ram on the front of this leaflet is a splendid 4 horned example, but not all 4 horned animals have this even configuration, as horns can go forward, backwards, outwards or straight up.

Two horned sheep look a bit different, with horns that sweep and curl backwards.

Loaghtans should have short tails, ideally with hairy tips, not reaching below the hocks. They should never be docked.



A two-horned ram in the snow



A ewe with her lamb



Manx Loaghtan ewes have good mothering skills, with easy lambing.

The lambs are very dark, almost black, when born, but start to lighten over the months, as their fleece develops. In ram lambs, the horns are just flat areas on their head, but start to grow immediately.

The lambs tend to be very strong, on their feet within minutes, and generally need little care.