

NFU THE LIVESTOCK LANDSCAPE

A Hiker's Guide

Do you love getting out and walking in the countryside? Do you ever wonder about the farm animals and activity that you see along the way? This guide will give you an insight into some popular breeds of sheep and cattle, farmland birds and wildlife and the farming calendar that delivers the landscapes we all enjoy.

KNOW YOUR LIVESTOCK

Our livestock landscapes vary from wild, remote uplands to the rolling green pastures of lowland Britain. The UK is home to more than 60 breeds of sheep and 34 breeds of dairy and beef cattle - many adapted to grazing specific landscapes. For example hill sheep, like Swaledales or Herdwicks, are smaller and lighter than lowland breeds - perfectly adapted to the harsher climate, steeper terrain and rougher grazing found in their natural habitat.

The grazing action of farm livestock effectively manages the appearance of the countryside. Sheep graze by nibbling the grass close to the ground, giving fields a manicured look. Cattle, on the other hand, tear the grass with their long tongues to achieve a much 'rougher' appearance.

CATTLE BREEDS

HEREFORD



Lowland Beef

HIGHLAND



Upland Beef

HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN



Lowland Dairy

Swaledale Ram

SHEEP BREEDS

SUFFOLK



Lowland

SCOTTISH BLACKFACE



Upland

MULE



Upland / Lowland



Feeding sheep in winter



Yorkshire wildflower meadows



Hedges are important wildlife habitats



Brown Hare

SPRING

Lambs and calves appear in the fields.

SUMMER

Sheep are gathered for shearing to keep them cool and discourage flies.

Grass, grown as a crop, is harvested to make winter fodder of hay and silage (big plastic bales).

Livestock are moved round between fields to prevent overgrazing.



AUTUMN

Rams and bulls are introduced to flocks and herds to start the new breeding year.

WINTER

Daily checking/feeding is essential and is done by farmers using quad bikes.

Wildlife Habitats

Farmers actively manage their land with wildlife in mind. More than 5m hectares of farmland in Britain are managed through environmental schemes and as a result the countryside is home to a wealth of animals, birds, insects and native plants.

Jobs you may see farmers doing to provide suitable habitat for wildlife and encourage biodiversity include repairing dry stone walls, planting trees and digging ponds.

BIRDS & BEES

Just some of the wild creatures you might see on your walk include farmland birds such as lapwings, curlews, yellow hammers and barn owls. Brown hares are a common sight, trout can be found in clear chalk streams and the only poisonous snake in the UK, the adder, can be spotted by the eagle-eyed.

White-tailed Bumblebee

Common Adder

BIRD SPECIES

SKYLARK



CURLEW



LAPWING



BARN OWL



YELLOW HAMMER



PLANTS

Rare plants produce an amazing display in early summer as part of the patchwork of wildflower meadows that can be found in key locations across the country. These are the result of careful management and produce wonderful hay for winter feed. Other plants like the fluffy 'cotton grass' are adapted to key habitats such as moorland and wetlands.

Cotton Grass

DOGS



Do you walk with your dog?
Please be responsible

- Keep dogs on a short lead around livestock
- Clean up after your dog. Bag it, bin it wherever you are
- Never get between cows and calves - walk around the herd & re-join the path when safe
- If cattle follow you, stay calm - walk quickly & quietly around the herd
- If you feel threatened, release your dog and get to safety separately

Please follow the Countryside Code and leave gates how you find them.