

Fact Sheet

North Ronaldsay is the northernmost island in the Orkney archipelago of Scotland



North Ronaldsay sheep live on the beach and eat seaweed. The only other animal in the world that is able to survive on just seaweed is the marine iguana, which lives in the Galapagos.

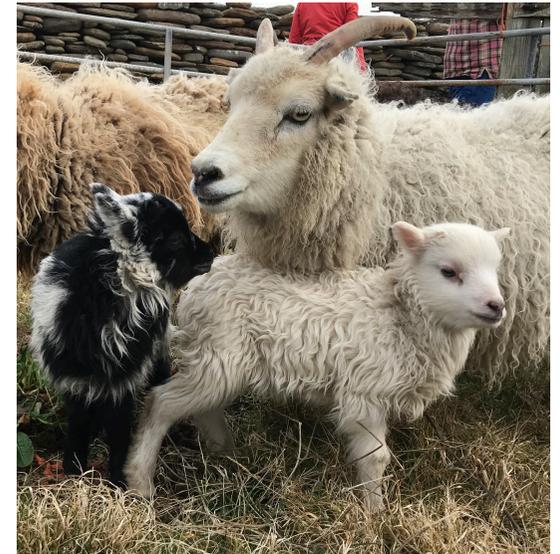


During the winter storms lots of kelp, known as tangles, is washed up onto the beaches, providing lots of food for the sheep. Unlike other breeds of sheep, North Ronaldsay sheep are fattest in winter.

North Ronaldsay sheep feed twice a day, when the tide goes out and exposes the seaweed.



A male sheep is called a ram and they can have large horns. Female sheep are called ewes, they sometimes have horns too, and give birth to their lambs in April.



North Ronaldsay Sheep remain loyal to their own areas of the shore known on the island as clowgangs. The groups will butt-off other sheep encroaching on their territory.

A 12 mile dry stone wall encircles the island and keeps the sheep on the beach. The wall was built in 1832 by people who lived on the island.



Islanders were allowed to keep sheep on the beach, in return they had to repair the wall if it fell down.

Only 50 people now live on the island, and a lot of the wall has been knocked down by storms.

North Ronaldsay sheep are a small breed of sheep which have lived on Orkney for around 6000 years

They come in lots of different colours: browns, white, black and greys



They are rounded up into stone enclosures called "punds" for shearing - which is when their wool is cut off

The wool is spun at a mill on the island. Their wool is soft and warm, and can be made into hats, socks, gloves and jumpers.



The strong tides and shallow reefs around the island made it very dangerous for ships sailing past.



The most famous shipwreck was Svecia, a Swedish ship, lost in 1740. The ship was carrying dyewood, silks, copper, glass, cannonballs and treasure chests.

The first lighthouse on North Ronaldsay was built in 1789 and is called The Old Beacon. This was replaced by a new lighthouse in 1854, which is the tallest lighthouse on land in the UK.



There is a large standing stone, called the "Stan Stane", with a small hole in the middle. According to folklore, the hole was made by a giant woman who found the stone on the beach, stuck her finger through it and went onto the land and planted it into the ground.



