

Miniature Southdown Sheep (Domestic)

(Ovis aries aries Southdown)

Habitat and Distribution: The Southdown sheep originated in the eastern stretch of Chalk Hills in England. They were first imported to the US in 1803.

Size: Up to 130 pounds

Wild Diet: They are grazers, feeding primarily on grasses.

Predators: Dogs, coyotes, lynx, mountain lion

Life Span: 10-14 years

Reproduction: Gestation is about 145 days and lambing occurs in early spring. Ewes are good mothers who often have twins and occasionally triplets.

Behavior: Southdown sheep are an early maturing docile breed of sheep. If raised gently, calmly and with lots of human attention, they will become quite tame. But those with little human contact or those hunted and chased may become almost impossible to find, as they become extremely cautious.

Conservation Connection: Listed in the UK Rare Breed Survival Trust as “at risk.” The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy lists Southdown as “recovering.”

Interesting Facts: Southdown sheep are a medium-sized breed of sheep. The fleece is short and light, reaching far down the leg and over the face giving the animal a “teddy bear” look. They have large rubbery hooves that provide excellent traction on the rocks. Their sturdy well-powered legs and big joints absorb the energy of long jumps and steep drops and are always ready for high and rapid jumps.

