Sheep are found in most states and territories of Australia, grazing more than 85 million hectares across the country. Most wool production is located in the sheep-wheat belt of the southern states.

There are two main wool production systems in Australia — high rainfall and low rainfall.

**High-rainfall wool production**
Woolgrowers in high-rainfall areas can grow high-quality **pastures** with nutritious grasses and legumes, such as lucerne and clover.

**Low-rainfall wool production**
Producers in areas that receive less rainfall rely on lower-quality **pastures** and graze their sheep on native grasses and shrubs.

**Stocking rates**
The number of sheep grazing a paddock is called the stocking rate.

Woolgrowers in high-rainfall areas have more **pasture**, so can run more sheep on one **hectare** of land (a higher stocking rate) than a producer in a low-rainfall area (lower stocking rate).

Managing the environment: Woolgrowers manage their sheep and land carefully to protect the animals and the environment.

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**Did you know?**

- In a drought when there has been little or no rain, woolgrowers feed their sheep with hay and grain or sell some of their sheep.
- Farms in low-rainfall areas tend to be very large, while farms in high-rainfall areas tend to be smaller.
- Woolgrowers in high-rainfall areas often use a type of grazing called rotational grazing, where there are lots of small paddocks. Sheep are moved between paddocks according to how much and how fast the pasture is growing.
- Woolgrowers in low-rainfall areas have much bigger paddocks and leave their sheep in the same paddock for longer.

**Fun facts about wool production**

- One hectare equals 10,000 square metres.
- An average paddock size in a high-rainfall system can be as small as 10 hectares (about five football fields).
- Paddock sizes in low-rainfall areas range from 2,000 to 20,000 hectares (which equates to more than 10,000 football fields).

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**Glossary**

- **Hectare** — a unit of measurement used to describe the area of a piece of land, such as a paddock or farm.
- **Legumes** — nutritious plants that contain lots of protein.
- **Lucerne and clover** — common types of legumes used to feed sheep in high-rainfall areas.
- **Pasture** — plants grown specifically to feed animals such as sheep and cattle.

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**More information**

To find out more about wool production in Australia, take a look at:

- learnaboutwool.com
- Beyond the Bale magazine: beyondthebale.wool.com