

Follow the Flock: How Sheep Shaped Human Civilization



Follow the Flock: How Sheep Shaped Human Civilization by Sally Coulthard

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Sheep have been a part of human civilization for thousands of years. They have provided us with food, clothing, shelter, and even inspiration. In *Follow the Flock*, historian John M. Cooper tells the fascinating story of the sheep's impact on our world.

Sheep in the Ancient World

The earliest evidence of sheep domestication dates back to the Neolithic period, around 10,000 BC. Sheep were one of the first animals to be domesticated, and they quickly became an important part of human societies. In the ancient world, sheep were used for a variety of purposes, including:

- * **Food:** Sheep were a major source of food for ancient peoples. Their meat was eaten, and their milk was used to make cheese and yogurt.
- * **Clothing:** Sheep's wool was used to make clothing. Wool is a warm and durable material, and it was used to make a variety of garments, including cloaks, tunics, and blankets.
- * **Shelter:** Sheepskins were used to make tents and other shelters. Sheepskins are waterproof and windproof, and they provided protection from the elements.
- * **Sacrifice:** Sheep were often used as sacrifices in religious ceremonies. Sheep were seen as a symbol of purity and innocence, and they were often offered to the gods in exchange for favors.

Sheep in the Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, sheep continued to play an important role in human societies. In Europe, sheep were the primary source of wool for the

textile industry. Wool was used to make a variety of fabrics, including cloth, felt, and tapestry. The wool trade was a major source of wealth for many European countries.

In addition to their economic importance, sheep also played a role in the social and cultural life of the Middle Ages. Sheep were often used as symbols of wealth and status. Wealthy landowners often kept large flocks of sheep, and they used them to display their wealth. Sheep were also featured in art and literature, and they were often depicted as symbols of peace and prosperity.

Sheep in the Modern World

In the modern world, sheep continue to play an important role in human societies. Sheep are still used for food, clothing, and shelter, and they are also used in a variety of other ways. For example, sheep's wool is used to make insulation, and sheep's milk is used to make a variety of dairy products, including cheese, yogurt, and ice cream.

Sheep have also played a role in the development of modern science and medicine. In the 19th century, Gregor Mendel used sheep to develop his laws of inheritance. Mendel's laws of inheritance are the foundation of modern genetics. In the 20th century, sheep were used to develop a number of important vaccines, including the polio vaccine.

Sheep have played a major role in shaping human civilization. They have provided us with food, clothing, shelter, and even inspiration. In *Follow the Flock*, historian John M. Cooper tells the fascinating story of the sheep's impact on our world.

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