

Borealis Pall). But through long isolation the stock has acquired certain characteristics, and the natural conditions of the country have put their stamp on it. The Icelandic sheep are comparatively small of size and covered with rather coarse wool; they are a hardy and very 'frugal-feeding' breed, for they have frequently been but poorly looked after and have often had to graze in the open most part of the winter.

The rearing of sheep has always played an important part in Icelandic husbandry, but in hard times the flock has often been considerably depleted. Owing to crop failure consequent on the volcanic eruptions in 1783 the number of sheep fell to 50 000, but about 1800 it had again reached 300 000. Of late there has, on the whole, been a steady increase in the number of sheep. In 1913 the flock amounted to 635 000; in 1918, to 640 000 head, but there are reasons for believing that the number has really always been considerably higher than it appears from the statistics, according to which it has during the past fifty years been as follows:

	Ewes with lambs	Dry ewes	Wethers & rams	One year olds	Total
1871 . .	173 512	18 615	55 710	118 243	366 080
1880 . .	"	"	"	"	501 251
1890 . .	194 417	25 348	63 215	162 875	445 855
1900 . .	199 967	38 314	74 682	156 514	469 477
1910 . .	271 656	73 672	60 784	172 522	578 634
1920 . .	338 253	78 270	43 096	118 149	578 768
1928 . .	421 509	47 621	36 149	121 861	627 140

The number of *cattle* is considerably lower at present than it used to be in former centuries. About 1830 this stock numbered 28 000 head; in 1770, 30 000; in 1703, 36 000, while in earlier ages the number is believed to have been much larger. But cattle in those days were often poorly cared for; they were badly fed, and oxen even had to graze out all the year round. Now the cattle are much better tended, and therefore cattle-breeding yields a comparatively greater profit than it used to do.

The following table shows the number of cattle during the past fifty years: