

## **Ōnodai Ranch**

The 80-hectare Ōnodai Ranch, operated by the town of Fujisato, is home to hundreds of cattle and sheep. Ōnodai was established as a municipally run cattle ranch in 1964 as part of government-led efforts to boost cow breeding stock and meat production. Not long after the ranch was established, cows numbered over 320 head, but now sheep are far more numerous.

Suffolk sheep, with their distinctive black faces and legs, have lived at Ōnodai since 1987. Prior to 2012 they were raised mainly for hogget meat. Hogget are sheep aged one to two years, a range that falls between the classifications for lamb and mutton. However, rising demands for domestically raised lamb meat led Fujisato to expand production. In 2012, fifty ewes and two rams were brought in from Hokkaido, and the same number again the following year. They formed the basis of a now-thriving breeding program and the “Shirakami Lamb” brand.

Wool from the sheep is used in local products and handicrafts, and in addition to lamb, Ōnodai continues to produce Suffolk hogget meat—one of very few places in Japan to do so. Only 10 to 15 hogget are slaughtered each year, and their meat is consumed entirely locally. Visitors can buy it at Mori no Eki or try it as part of a self-grilled set meal at Suffolk no Kan on the shore of Lake Subari.

The cows are Japanese Black (Kuroge Washu), a domestic breed of wagyu beef cattle. They are pastured separately from the sheep, which are more easily accessible to visitors in the barn near the parking area and at a dedicated petting site.

The ranch and pastures are located on one of the few flat, treeless tracts in the area. A walking path circles the ranch, and there is a viewing platform to take in the fields and surrounding scenery, which includes the mountains of the Shirakami Sanchi World Natural Heritage Site.