

## **Ōnodai Ranch**

Ōnodai Ranch was established in 1964 in response to a government campaign to increase the amount of beef produced in Japan. This municipal pasturage, an 80-hectare flatland encircled by mountains, is now home to hundreds of cattle and sheep—and is open to visitors.

The cows are Japanese Blacks (Kuroge Washu), a domestic breed of wagyu beef cattle. In the years just after the ranch was founded, the cattle numbered over 320 head. Today, however, sheep are far more numerous. Prior to 2012, Ōnodai maintained a modest flock of Suffolks (an English breed of sheep identifiable by their black faces and legs) for producing hogget meat. Hogget are sheep of between one and two years of age—a phase older than lambs (less than a year) but younger than mutton (older than two). Fujisato is one of very few places in Japan to produce hogget meat. Only 10 to 15 are killed each year, and their meat is only sold locally. Visitors can purchase it uncooked at Mori no Eki, near the World Heritage Conservation Center, or grill it at their own table as part of a set meal served at the Suffolk no Kan restaurant on the shores of Lake Subari.

In recent years, the demand for domestically produced lamb meat has been rising, and in 2012, Fujisato decided to expand the ranch's production. Fifty ewes and two rams were brought in from Hokkaido to bolster the Ōnodai flock, and the same number were purchased again in 2013. Breeding continues to be a success, and visitors who arrive at the ranch parking area will be greeted by loud bleating from the nearby lamb barn. Inside, visitors can pet the lambs who eagerly crowd forward to greet them. Ewes and newborns still with their mothers are pastured outside. March to April is the best time to see newborn lambs at Ōnodai.

A walking path circles the ranch, and a viewing platform near the lamb barn offers a panorama of the pasture and views of the surrounding mountains. Ōnodai is an approximate 20-minute drive from the center of Fujisato.