



19 Feb 2015 to 7 Feb 2016

## Get into Sheep Shape

三羊开泰 (sān yáng kāi tài) make a good beginning for a happy ending

The sheep is among the animals that people like most. It is gentle and calm. Since ancient times, people have learned to use its fleece to make writing brushes, woolly jumpers and UGG boots to keep warm. As the fleece is commonly white, people see it as delicate and precious – and representing something good.

The Chinese character for sheep and goats (and rams for that matter) is the same – 羊 yáng. Chinese people regard sheep and goats as auspicious and therefore Sheep Years ought to be good. Sheep are gregarious – hanging around in flocks, peace loving and family oriented. Mental abilities will triumph over brute force in 2015 and common sense should win out. However, emotions can run high and we mustn't be sheepish: face up to your problems in a Sheep Year. Sheep years often bring an end to conflicts – like the end of World War 1 in 1919. Heeding the idiom “亡羊补牢 wáng yáng bǔ láo” – you may lose a few sheep but it's never too late to mend fences – is a good one to keep in mind this year.

### ON THE SHEEP'S BACK

Sheep years present hope when people will spend more time with family and friends and get back to the basics. After some hectic years – especially the galloping horse – the sheep will calm us down and let us get back in touch with our emotions. The sheep sign is the most feminine. They can be shy but gullible;

always compassionate and looking stylish in their very fashionable woolly jumpers. They are home bodies – generous and caring. They appear docile and detest conflict but can be courageous – especially when family and friends are threatened. “I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion”, said Alexander the Great.

**Getting someone's goat** – they can beat around the bush and therefore be annoying to people who prefer a direct approach. They are laid back and dislike routines and deadlines; nevertheless, they would rather be hanged for a sheep than a lamb and will stand up for something they believe in and demand perfection on projects of interest.

Artistic abilities are a claim to fame – they are well represented in the arts, but no good in sales. They are great mountain climbers, like that well known mountain goat Sir Edmond Hillary.

Sheep are lucky and often inherit things of value and while this may not be the best year for the sharemarket, some shepherds believe the first half will be positive; it was a Sheep Year when the US sharemarket rebounded in 1943 after a long malaise.

Possessing remarkable endurance and spirit, many people have ridden on the sheep's back. There is an iron will and enterprising spirit underlying their soft and fluffy façades. Chinese historical texts portray the sheep as embodying patience and virtue, while the ancient I Ching, or “Book of Changes,” equates the animal with luck and prosperity. Making a good beginning in 2015, indeed, as the idiom goes, should lead to a happy ending.

### GOATSCAPE

People under the sign of the sheep are tender, polite, filial, clever, and kind-

hearted. They have special sensitivity to art and beauty – certainly not mutton dressed up as lamb. They are wise and can cope with business cautiously and circumspectly. In their daily life, they try to be economical. Who wouldn't want to be a sheep!

### BELLWETHERS

Michelangelo, Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, Rudolph Valentino, Pierre Trudeau, Orville Wright, Julia Roberts, Bruce Willis, Li Shimin (Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty), Cao Cao (King of Wei in China's Three Kingdoms Period), Yue Fei (a patriotic general in China's South Song Dynasty), Empress Dowager Cixi, Zhao Ziyang, Lin Biao, Nobel laureate Mo Yan, Premier Li Keqiang, actors Liu Xiaoping, Zhang Ziyi and Chow Yun-Fat.

**Also:** Kurt Kobain, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Whoopi Goldberg, Eddie Van Halen, Yo Yo Ma, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards Robert de Niro, George Harrison, John Denver, John Kerry, Joni Mitchell, Cilla Black, Christine McVie, Rupert Murdoch, Mikhail Gorbachev, Desmond Tutu, Liberace, Eva Peron, Sir Edmund Hillary, Margot Fonteyn, Mikhail Kalashnikov, John Wayne, Katharine Hepburn, Sir Laurence Olivier, Lech Walesa, John Major, Vangelis, Michael Palin.

**Sporty sheep:** Ryan Harris, Mitchell Marsh, Ian Chappell, David Hookes, Allan Border, Greg Norman, Olivia Rogowska, Grigor Dimitrov, Simona Halep, Kiki Bertens.

**Aussie Sheep:** A good flock from Canberra – Paul Keating, Barnaby Joyce, Michael Danby, Ian Macfarlane, Christopher Pyne, Richard Marles, Phillip Ruddock, Bill Shorten; also James Packer, Guy Pearce, Peter Carey, Janet Holmes a Court, Judith Durham, Margaret Whitlam, Nicole Kidman, Keith Urban, Heath Ledger, ACDC's Angus Young.

### WOOL CLASS

Great at team work and good with horses. They are not crazy about status and power and, apparently, won't ever volunteer for anything or act as leaders – politicians listed above are obvious exceptions! Good career choices for goats are paediatrician, actor, early childhood teacher, interior designer, florist, hairdresser, musician, editor, illustrator, art history teacher, as well as jockey.

### SHEEP EYES – FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Sheep can always rely on the love of a horse and are good with pigs and rabbits; best to avoid roosters, dogs (well that is a given); oxen and rats are too ambitious.

### LAMBING

There is a popular Chinese folk saying ‘Only one out of ten people born in a year of the sheep finds happiness’ (十羊九不全 shí yáng jiǔ bù quán), which suggests babies born this year might not be lucky, therefore many Chinese couples take steps to avoid having children in a Sheep Year. And many have been racing against time to have a baby in the Year of the Horse, which is considered far luckier. Maternity hospitals are even offering discounts during the coming year as bookings fall.

Find out why: [www.chincommunications.com.au/chinesenewyear.php](http://www.chincommunications.com.au/chinesenewyear.php)

# Counting Sheep Years

Looking back to previous Sheep Years can help sort the sheep from the goats: good for medical breakthroughs, fast food and political change!

## 2003

- Hu Jintao took over China's presidency
- Beijing closed all schools for two weeks because of SARS
- Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, killing all seven astronauts
- Prime Minister John Howard announced Australia would join US in war against Iraq
- The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia officially renamed Serbia and Montenegro
- Serena Williams won the Australian Open – sound familiar? [NB January 2015 is still under the Horse Year]
- A massive earthquake devastated Iran; over 40,000 people killed in Bam

## 1991

- A tropical cyclone hit Bangladesh, killing an estimated 138,000 people
- Leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine signed an agreement ending the Soviet Union and establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
- Keating (a sheep) became PM

## 1979

- The one-child policy was introduced in China - it has since prevented about 400 million births (yes, they selected a Sheep Year)
- Sino-Vietnam war started
- Margaret Thatcher became the UK's first female prime minister
- The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and war started
- The Australian Federal Police was established
- Sony released the Walkman

## 1967

- Indigenous Australians given the right to be counted in the national census after a national referendum
- The postcode system introduced throughout Australia.
- Prime Minister Harold Holt disappeared while swimming near Portsea
- China tested its first hydrogen bomb.
- Dr Christiaan Barnard and team of South African surgeons performed world's first successful human heart transplant
- The first ATM was put into service

## 1955

- Dave Edna Everage emerged
- First Guinness book of World Records published
- McDonalds fast food chain started
- Winston Churchill resigned as PM
- Australia's millionth post-war migrant arrived
- Velcro and Lego invented

## 1943

- First women elected to Australian Federal Parliament: Dame Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney

- Selman Waksman discovered streptomycin and coined the term antibiotic
- Development of the Colossus computer by British to break German encryption

## 1931

- Yellow River flood, thought to be the deadliest natural disaster of historic times, and almost certainly of the twentieth century killed between 900,000-2,000,000 people in China
- General Motors-Holden's Ltd formed with merger of Holden's Motor Body Builders and General Motors Australia
- The two ends of the Sydney Harbour Bridge joined in the middle
- Nylon and Aerosol can invented

## 1919

- Worldwide influenza epidemic reached Australia – death toll more than 12,000
- Ross and Keith Smith and crew landed in Darwin and won £10,000 prize for flying from England to Australia in under 30 days
- End of World War 1

## SHEEP TAIL – A STITCH IN TIME

亡羊补牢 (wáng yáng bǔ láo) – Zhuang Xin was a minister to the King of Chu during the Warring States period (475 – 221 BC). The King of Chu was a pleasure seeker and had been neglecting the affairs of state; Zhuang Xin was concerned and pleaded with the King to mend his ways, but to no avail. Zhuang Xin resigned out of frustration. Shortly after, the capital city was invaded. The King escaped and from his bolt hole, recalled Zhuang Xin to his aid. The King asked his minister "What can I do?" Zhuang Xin recounted a tale:

One day a shepherd found that one of his goats was missing. He checked the enclosure and saw a hole in the wall through which a wolf had come in and stolen a goat at night. His neighbour suggested he fix the hole but he refused, saying "The goat is already gone. What's the point?" The next morning he found he had lost another goat and he deeply regretted not listening to the neighbour's advice. Quick smart he fixed the hole and never lost a goat to wolves again.

The happy ending (of course) – the King and his subjects fought off the invaders and recovered most of their lost territory.

## PLAYING THE GOAT

三羊开泰 Sān yáng kāi tài – three rams bring bliss – has a positive and harmonious implication and symbolizes making a good beginning, to which a happy end comes.

羊羔跪乳 Yáng gāo guì rǔ – meaning lambs kneel down suckling from their mother, representing a feeling of being thankful.

羊入虎口 Yáng rù hǔ kǒu – a goat falls into a tiger's mouth, meaning someone is in extreme danger.

驱羊攻虎 Qū yáng gōng hǔ – drive a herd of goats to attack a tiger – use the very weak to attack the very strong and it's destined to fail.

**For more goat idioms see:**  
[www.chincommunications.com.au/chinesenewyear.php](http://www.chincommunications.com.au/chinesenewyear.php)

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*“Without tradition, art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Without innovation, it is a corpse.”*  
**Winston Churchill**