

OVCHEPOLIAN SHEEP - BRED IN MACEDONIA

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Abstract

One of the three local breeds of sheep that is bred and is under the protection in Macedonia is the Ovchepolian sheep. The interest of breeders over the past years is stable, and the number of heads bred from this breed is increasing. The aim of this research was to give a picture of the breed itself, some productive features and its importance.

The data presented in this paper are obtained as a result of field research within the program for protection of biodiversity in our country over several years. They are part of the reports of the Macedonia Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy. The average weight of rams is up to 45 kg and of ewes is up to 35 kg. The color of its hair is often white, sometimes mixture of white and black, and sometimes they are completely black. Rams have well-developed and large horns, while sheep do not have horns or they have significantly smaller horns. The average lactation length in this sheep was 6 months, the average milk lactation was 50 - 60 liters and the average daily amount of milk was 0.3 liters. The percentage of fertility was 100 - 110%. Macedonia ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1997, and in 2004 adopted the first National Biodiversity Strategy with an action plan. Since then has been started with an effective protection to stop the loss of biodiversity. In sheep breeding, the only domestic breed that will be protected is the Ovchepolian sheep. After the determination of the farms during 2003, from 2013 until today, this breed is continuously monitored and financially supported by the state. The financial support is 9 euros/per head yearly. The annual monitoring includes 26 - 30 farms, with about 8,000 heads of all categories, but new herds are also explored, where it is determined whether they meet the criteria for financial support. Because the Ovchepolian sheep is characterized by low productivity that directly affects the financial stability of stock raiser, endowment of the same is of particular importance. At the same time, it makes a significant contribution to the conservation of biodiversity in our country. Until the number of heads increases from 9,999, when the breed will no longer be valued as endangered, intensive activity is needed in its maintenance and appreciation.

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Key words: *Ovchepolian sheep, Biodiversity, Production, Macedonia.*