

PRESERVATION OF NATIVE SHEEP BREEDS IN SLOVENIA**D. Kompan, F. Habe, M. Pogačnik****Summary**

The preservation program include three slovenian native sheep breeds: Bovška sheep, Jezerskosolčavska sheep and Istrian Pramenka sheep. Bovška sheep breed, its origin, name origin, breeding area, its characteristics and production traits are presented. Bovška sheep are found in the Soča valley but they are scarce so that a special preservation program has been accepted. Sheep are bred in small flocks of ten to twenty animals, sometimes forty or more. It is estimated that there are only between 500 and 800 animals of Bovška sheep breed left. Jezerskosolčavska sheep breed, its origin, name origin, breeding area, its characteristics and production traits are presented. Istrian Pramenka sheep breed, its origin, name origin, breeding area on Karst region, its characteristics and production traits are presented.

1. Bovška sheep Name

The breed got its name after the small town Bovec that lies in upper Soča valley i. e. in the North-West part of Slovenia near the Italian border. In Trenta valley this breed is also called "trentarka" or "pure trentarka" if it has typically short ears.

1. 1 Origin and history of the breed

The Bovška sheep breed originated in the white sheep which used to be spread in the Alps. Bleiweis (1871) mentioned Trbiska sheep breed and reported that sheep with shorter ears produced more milk. Pirc (quoted according to Zagožen, 1982) reported that Tolminska and Bovška sheep breeds originated in the peat sheep while in the German literature it is stated that in some Alpine valleys and swampy parts Stonesheep (Steinschafe) or Zaupelschafe was found which should have been the ancestor of modern breeds in this area. Sheep are bred in small flocks of ten to twenty animals, sometimes 40 or more. After the weaning sheep are milked in the mountain pastures where all milk is used for cheese production. Most of it is used at home but recently it has been sold in the mountain pastures.

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1. 2 Population and breeding area

The Bovška sheep breed (Fig. 1) used to be reared in the wider area of Tolmin but after 1950 the number of sheep decreased quickly. Mountain pastures on which sheep and goats grazed have been abandoned. In some part they grazed with cattle. In the Tolmin area about 20 mountain pastures for sheep existed. In the years between 1984 and 1994 only three mountain pastures for sheep remain and about 600 sheep graze there. But the number of sheep as well as of sheep breeders have been decreasing. Now sheep are kept only in the Trenta valley and in some smaller valleys like Koritnica and Lepena, i. e. upper Soča valley. It is estimated that only 800 sheep of this breed still exist.

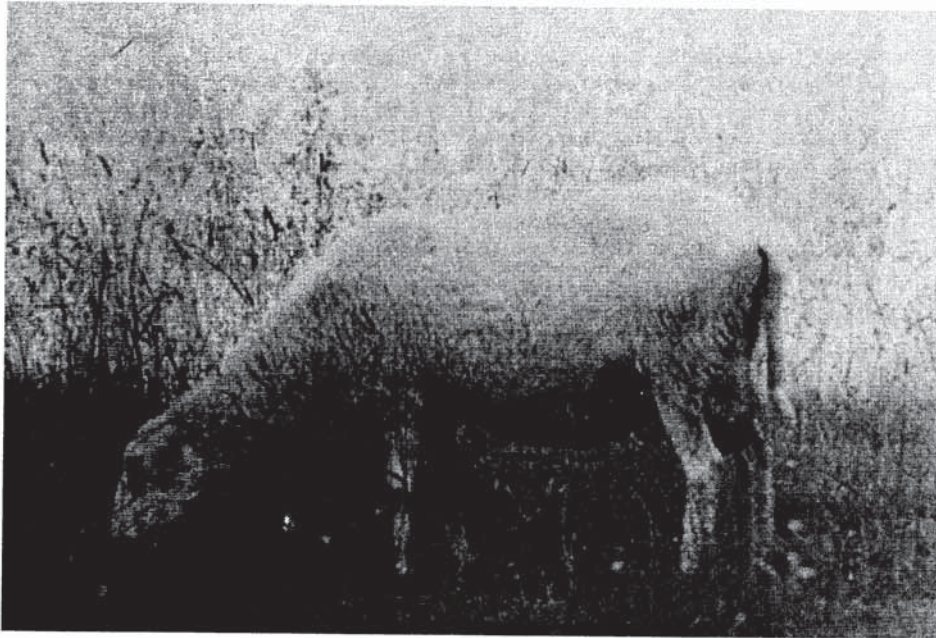


Fig. 1. - BOVŠKA SHEEP

1. 3 Description

Ewes and rams do not have horns. An adult ewe weighs from 35 to 40 KGs and a ram from 45 to 50 KGs. Ewes lamb once a year and about 10% have twins. Ewes with twins are not selected for further breeding. Wool is gruff, fibres are 44 microns thick. They shear between 1.2 and 1.5 kg wool a year per a sheep. Wool is not used even for home production any more. The Bovška sheep breed is primarily white, but some animals are black or brown. There are about 30 coloured ones. A head is small with a convex profile. The forehead is partly covered by wool. It is typical for the sheep in Trenta valley that they have small ears, sometimes they resemble stumps and it is

difficult to mark them. Such sheep is called "trentarka". In Bovec and in the vicinity sheep are weightier and have longer ears.

1. 4 Performance

The Bovška sheep breed is extensively reared. During the winter animals are fed by small amounts of hay and branches of bushes so that they lose weight from December to April and twinning pregnancies often and in abortion. In some ewes in case of twinning pregnancy one of embryos dies and reabsorbs so that the ewe lambs only one lamb.

1. 4. 1 Milk

Milk is the main product of the Bovška sheep breed. After the weaning ewes are milked for 100 and 140 days. Ogrizek (1948) estimated the production at 65 to 80 KGs in the lactation. In the recent years the Selection Service controls the milk yield in some flocks. The milk yield of the Bovška sheep breed in controlled flocks is higher than on average since only better flocks are controlled. Table 1 shows the milk yield results.

In the mountain pastures milking and cheese production are performed in a traditional way. Cheese and curd are produced, sometimes sour milk, all for sell in the mountain pastures to tourist and visitors.

Table 1. - MILK YIELD AND CONTENT OF SOME COMPOUNDS IN MILK IN THE BOVSKA SHEEP

Year	n	Milk yield Kg	Fat %	Protein %	Lactose %	Dry matter %	Milking days
1990	88	130	6.90	5.90	6.11	18.9	96
1991	97	149	6.85	5.92	5.83	18.6	108
1992	105	155	6.93	5.80	5.58	18.3	111
1993	110	192	6.36	5.84	6.12	18.7	124
1994	217	201	5.91	5.10	4.74	16.0	129

1. 4. 2 Gain and meat

Lambs growth rate between 150 g and 210 g/day. At the age 50 to 80 days lambs are slaughtered. Dressing percentage ranges between 42 and 45. Meat is soft and tender with low content of fatty tissues. The conformation is not good. Only suckling lambs are sold, lambs are never fattened up to over 20 KGs.

2. Jezerskosolčavska sheep

Jezerskosolčavska sheep (Fig. 2) resulted from the crossbreeding of native white seep with the Bergamasca sheep and with the Padova sheep. It resembles the Austrian Bargschaf that has a similar origin. The breed got its name after the breeding centres Jezersko and Solčava. The sheep has head with convex profile and hanging ears. Its

legs are long and strong. This breed is very convenient for lamb production in the Alpine and Pre-Alpine region. It used to be reared in farms in combination with cattle. From June to September the sheep grazed in the mountains and mountainous pastures while in spring and autumn they grazed in farms together with cattle.



Fig. 2. - JEZERSKOSOLČAVSKA SHEEP

Since 1980 Jezersko-Solčavska sheep has been crossed by Romanovska sheep, hence number of pure breed animals has been decreased quickly. Therefore, a special program on preservation the pure breed has been started in 1991. It is financed by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Bovška sheep and Istrian Pramenka are also included into the preservation program.

2.1 Performance

Ewes weight between 65 and 80 kg, whereas rams between 80 and 100 kg. The sexual development is quick and ewes mate at the age 7 to 10 months. An ewe has 1.42 lambs per lamming. Ewes are fertile all year and get pregnant during the lactation period. The lamb production per ewe depends on the intensity of breeding and on the frequency of mating, therefore it is between 30 and 70 kg per breeding ewe.

3. Istrian Pramenka

Istrian Pramenka (Fig. 3) originates in Istria and Karst. It got its name after the peninsula Istria. The sheep belongs to the group (Zackel) for milk production. Now these sheep live in two countries: in Slovenia and in Croatia. In Slovenia about 300 breeding ewes are reared, whereas breeding material and conservation program run in both countries.



Fig. 3. ISTRIAN PRAMENKA SHEEP

3.1 Performance

Istrian Pramenka sheep produce milk with high contents of fat and protein. In the traditional way of rearing the sheep produce between 100 and 150 kg milk in the lactation that contains 9 % of fat and more than 6.4 % of protein. Some animals produce milk that contains more than 13 % of fat and more than 7 % of protein whereas above 25 % of dry matter in the lactation.

Table 2. - MILK YIELD AND CONTENT OF SOME COMPOUNDS IN MILK IN THE ISTRIAN PRAMENKA SHEEP

Year	n	Milk yield kg	Fat %	Protein %	Lactose %	Dry matter %	Milking days
1993	51	142	9.29	6.42	5.73	21.44	125
1994	28	107	7.51	5.44	4.34	18.00	103