

AUTOCHTHONOUS HEN BREEDS IN SLOVENIA THE STYRIAN HEN

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Abstract

The Styrian hen is an autochthonous chicken breed in Slovene and Austrian Styria. The article describes it as an independent genetic form similar to adherents of Mediterranean order as well as its genotypic traits together with breed standards. Its economic potential is modest in comparison to the intensive crossbreeds, therefore its conservation depends on fanciers. Hence the study of this breed is important from ethnographic point of view.

Key words: hen, autochthon breed, Slovenia

Name and basic characteristics

Štajerka (Slovenian) - The Styrian hen (English) - Altsteirer Huhn (German) is an autochthonous breed in Slovenian and Austrian Styria. Its home country is the southern part of Austrian Styria and the region between the rivers Mura and Sava in Slovenia. The Styrian hen adapted to the conditions in its country and developed some properties like:

- it can find quite a lot of food by itself (therefore it is suitable for farm yards).
- it is modest,
- it is resistant to diseases,
- it is racy.
- and it is brave.

Standard (partridge-like Styrian hen)

The ratio of body length to body width and to body depth is of 8 to 5 to 3.

BREAST: strong, large.

COMB: mid high, single, upright, cock's comb should not be too high, hen's comb is upright folded in front.

BACK: large, slightly falling towards the end.

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- CREST:** hens have more abundant crest, cocks' crests are thinner but feathers are longer; but crests should not be too big.
- EYES:** red, fiery.
- EAR-LOBE:** small, white.
- WATTLES:** small.
- LEGS:** mid high, white with slight red spots among fingers, cocks have pink points at sides, bones are thin.
- COLOUR:** cock' head, crest, neck and saddle are brown-red, shoulders and back are dark red to brown-red and at lower part it is (shiny)black. The outer edge of black wings is brown, inner sides of upper parts of wings are black. A hen has black spots with bright lines in the middle of the feathers. A breast is salmon-coloured, belly feathers are lighter, a bottom (back part from leg to tail) is grey. Egg shell is ivory-coloured.
- WEIGHT:**
- | | |
|------|-----------------|
| cock | 2,5 to 3,0 kg |
| hen | 2,0 to 2,25 kg. |

Origin and historical review

- The Styrian hen was often in trouble during its development in Slovenia. Nevertheless, there was always someone who saved it.
- The Styrian hen was already mentioned in the 14 th century.
- Styrian capons were mentioned in 1352. and again in the 17th and 18 th century. They were famous because of their soft and delicious meat.
- In 1846 professor Lubeck quoted the Styrian hen as a special European breed.
- In 1898 E. Martiny encouraged the selection of the Styrian hen in Graz and he established a trial station for this breed in Celje. Armin Arbeiter called it "the Celje hen".
- In 1900 the Association for Animal Protection and Rearing was founded in Celje in order to save the Styrian hen and to select the breed systematically.
- In 1902 the names "Celje hen" and "Old Styrian hen" were dropped, and only the expression Styrian hen remained. The Styrian Agricultural Society organised a conference in which certain advantages of this breed were stressed in comparison to foreign breeds. The basic breed description was formed. The main colour type was the red-brown Styrian hen (darker partridge-like, lighter brown and wheat-coloured). but white and barred existed as well.
- In 1903 the Styrian Agricultural Organisation founded the Poultry Department that was engaged in the rearing of the Styrian hen.
- The importance of the Styrian hen was stressed at three poultry congresses: in 1907 in Vienna, in 1908 in Graz and in 1913 in Maribor.
- Between the years 1904 - 1913 the Styrian Agricultural Organisation distributed about 3800 Styrian cocks and hens and more than 50000 hatching eggs to breeders.
- During the first world war the promotion of the Styrian hen died away. After the war the new border divided the breeding region into two parts.

- After the first world war the remains of the Styrian hen were collected and in 1920 and 1925 the Association from Maribor organised an exhibition of Styrian poultry. Exhibitions were held in Maribor in 1932 and in Maribor and Celje in 1934.
- In November 1930 the conference in Celje determined the standards of the breed. More attention was paid to body mass of the Styrian hen and weight of eggs. Barred Styrian hen was abolished. They decided that in ten years time partridge-like and wheat-coloured types of Styrian hens should have been abolished as well. Fortunately these decisions were not realised, therefore the most typical partridge-like Styrian hen still exists.
- In this period 37 breeding centres for Styrian hens were organised.
- During the second world war the promotion of the Styrian hen was stopped. Only few samples of the breed were kept.
- The Styrian hen was revived again between the years 1948 and 1959 when the Selection Station for the Styrian hen functioned at Loče near Poljčane, but a period of dying away followed.
- Since 1960 only few animals have survived on some farms, at lovers' but their breed purity is doubtful. In the seventies some efforts to revive the Styrian hen were noticed. Agricultural Faculty of Ljubljana organised the rearing of the Styrian hen at cooperators, (nearly 2000 hens) who were given one day old chickens from these flocks. Because of diseases (Salmonella) the activity died away.

Productivity

From the economic point of view the Styrian hen represents only a genetic potential that can be developed. Its present values are only particularity and autochthonism.

Nevertheless, available sources reported on economic importance in the previous century and in the first thirty years of this century. Around 1930 poultry products which originated in the Styrian hen represented an important share in the export. According to the mentioned sources it was not surprising since egg production matched that of Leghorn breed. It is true that Leghorn was in the beginning of its development at that time, but it was among the best breeds. The Styrian hen was stricken by development and introduction of new light and mid-weight layers and their crossbreeds. Those breeds were adapted to intensive way of rearing, therefore economically more suitable. New breeds developed quicker, and the Styrian hen lagged behind regarding the production capacity. Its gain is too modest to be included into economic categories.

The programme for revival of the Styrian hen

Both world wars endangered the existence and development of the Styrian hen but some possibilities were found to preserve and continue the work, of course due to lovers who kept the animals only because they were autochthonous and interesting. The reason that the destiny of the Styrian hen was in hands of lovers lay its production and economic capacities that were far behind the modern crossbreeds.

The Ministry of Agriculture has already attended the autochthonous potential of domestic animals (due to economic, ethnographic and biological reasons). Therefore Programme for Preservation of Autochthonous Slovenian Breeds of Domestic Animals was formed and in 1993 the preservation programme for the only autochthonous Slovenian hen breed - the Styrian hen- was also included. With the means of this programme the State decided to co-finance the selection of this hen.

The objective of the project is to collect, secure, activate and preserve the breed.

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BLACK SLAVONIAN PIG

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Summary

Black Slavonian breed formation started in 1860 on husbandry of Karlo Pfeiffere in the vicinity of Osijek by crossing of Lasasta Mangulica and Berkshire boars and inserting Poland Chine pig blood from time to time a domestic autochthonous breed has been made. It was of better fattening and meat quality from the former used pig breed. It is possible to differ more types (depending on Berkshire blood share) within the breed. It is nature, for reproduction in the age of 12 months. It can achieve average daily gain over 600 g by intensive fattening. According to our own reserches a fattened pig of 100 kg has a carcass weight at 81.05 kg, carcass length from tuberculum ossis pubis to the chranical edge of the first rib 67 cm, participation of muscie tissue 32,6%, fat tissue 48,2% and less valuable parts 9,2%. Indicator of qualitative meat characteristics are: pH₁, 6,5, pH₂ 5,6 W.b.c. (cm²) 5,1 colour 68 (Göffo). The Slavonian pigs contain in their meat 2,15 - 3,01% less water and aprox. 2,78 - 2,84% less protein compared to meaty types. This breed is disappearing (dying), but its scarce samples could stil be found in some Slavonian villages. From the economic, cultural, and historical point of view, our opinion is that this breed should be saved and protected.

Origin of the breed

Black Slavonian pig was created by planed mating of Lasasta Mangulica sows with Berkshire boars with occasional usage of Poland China pig blood. The breed was named after the black color of the skin and hairs, and after the place of origin - Slavonia. Considering the fact that this breed was created on the farm owned by Karl and Leopold Pfeiffer near Osijek the pig was often called Pfeiffer's pig, in the literature. Breeding goal of the Pfeiffer family was to create the pig which will be early matured, but resistant enough and convenient for letting out on pasture. Big interest and achievement of high price on Wiena market were proofs that created pig had enhanced productive characteristic comparing other breeds used at that time.

The creation of that breed started Karl Pfeiffer in the year of 1860. He chose 10 Lasasta Mangulica sows, which were mated with Berkshire boars, intending to improve the quality of the body. In the year of 1870 Leopold Pfeiffer imported from united States male Poland China pigs for reproduction. Only the best boar from the imported group he used for insemination of 10 sows from newly created herd. Produced female

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