

CRESKA SHEEP - SHEEP OF THE ISLAND CRES**Vesna Pavić, B. Mioč****Summary**

There is no accurate data on the background of Creska sheep. It is believed that this sheep was created by improvement of domestic rough-fleece sheep with Spanish, French and Italian Merino under the decisive influence of the environment. Due to the poor nutritional conditions under which it was created and still is bred today, Creska sheep is small, but lively, resistant and harmoniously built.

Creska sheep belongs to the group sheep of combined productive characteristics: meat, milk and wool. Basic and economically the most important product is meat. Average liveweight at slaughter is 10-15 kg. Ewes produce 50-80 l of milk during 120-160 days of lactation. Majority of the produced milk is processed into a cheese (Creski cheese). Average weight of unwashed B type fleece is 1,0-1,5 kg.

Key words: Island Cres, Creska sheep, meat, milk, wool.

Breed origin and history

Since to ancient times, textile industry has been developed on Cres, particularly in wealthier families who used wool as a raw material. Sheep-breeding had and still has a great importance, because a sheep is the only animal producing food for people from the roots (Jardas, 1956).

Trading importance of labs is evident in written materials from the Venetian Republic period. Conclusions of the 2. January 1513. confirms a lamb trade in Venice. The care should be taken, that people coming from islands to trade lambs in Venice are not cheated, and the Republic is asked to take care of them in appropriate way though the bank.

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Following conclusion from 1519. says: "The community should protest, represented by appropriate man who speaks fluently, because of the new tax on lambs shipped and sold in Venice".

On the 10. November 1519 "elected is four-member council to take care of spreading terrible disease among lambs, that threatens by destroying the households, and by, that also the incomes from pastures by what taxes to the Republic are paid. There is no certain evidence on Creska sheep origin, but it can be assumed that it was formed, as all island sheep breeds, by crossbreeding with Spanish, French and Italian merinos under the decisive influence of environment. Due to that fact, Creska sheep is small, but lively and durable. First recorded data of sheep number on the island Cres dates in 1870.

Table 1. - NUMBER OF SHEEP ON THE ISLAND CRES

Year	Number
1870.	45320
1911.	31931
1938.	20781
1951	21419
1993	14176

Present population and breeding area

Creska sheep is bred on islands and Lošinj situation in northern part of the Adriatic Sea. Sheep are being kept under very poor nutritional conditions on the rocky terrain, without almost any kind of shelter and left uncared.

Usage

Creska sheep belongs to a group of sheep with combined production characteristics. In the past, a wool was the most important sheep product, but in certain times milk was of greater significance. Today, the main product is meat, primarily young lambs. Some farmers still milk their ewe's and produce quality hard cheese, while wool production has almost no economical signification.

Color

Mostly white, back or brown sheep are rare.

Fleece

Opened to semi-closed, mostly formed of whip-like locks with mixed wool.

Description

Table 2. - MEASURES

Measures	Ewes n=80	Rams n=22
Withers height	60.28 cm	63.18 cm
Small of the black height	62.17 cm	64.63 cm
Trunk length	62.88 cm	64.63 cm
Chest depth	25.67 cm	29.39 cm
Chest width	14.78 cm	15.68 cm
Pelvis width	14.43 cm	15.04 cm
Chest circumference	73.10 cm	80.50 cm
Body weight	32.95	42.45

Head

Rather small and short, narrow and conic. The average length is 23 cm what enables the sheep to take grass blades out of the most inaccessible places. Frontal line is mostly straight, but some animals have convex nasal bone. Whole head is overgrown with rough and thick hair.

Ears

Small, lively, laid horizontally.

Horns

Ewes usually have no horns or (1-3%) have rudimentary horns. Rams have strong and well developed horns.

Tail

Medium long - the average length is 32.72 cm (Jardas, 1956).

Trunk

Medium long and tall. Harmoniously built with somewhat shorter and thinner, but extremely strong legs (because of the terrain).

Front part is shallow and small of the back is slightly higher than well defined withers, so the line of the back is ascendant up to the small of the back and descendant up to the small of the back and descending towards the tail. Generally speaking, Creska sheep is not too corpulent because of the terrain it lives on. Front legs posture is correct, while rare legs is mostly "cow-posture". Hoofs are well built and solid.

Productivity

Milk

Creska sheep is of combined productive characteristics and produce all of these products (milk, meat, wool) in relatively small amounts. Milk production is 50-80 l during 120-160 days of lactation. Researches made by Jardas in 1956. showed that the average production during 141 days of lactation was 77,34 l of milk per ewe. Under the better nutritional conditions milk production can be raised up to 100 l per ewe.

Most of the produced milk is processed into cheese, while some of it is consumed fresh. In the past the profit achieved trough cheese production overcame one achieved by meat and wool production added together.

Wool

Sheep are shorn in June and average wool yield is 1.0-1.5 kg of unwashed wool per ewe (1.5 - 2.0 kg per ram). Average weight of washed fleece is 1200 g. Once much more important, the wool today is a problem because of low interest for wool of such quality. The average diameter of ewe wool thread is 28.4-33.6 μm , B type (Vujasinović i Raffaelli, 1994), while rams have wool thread diameter of 31 μm .

Wool is usually used of household for manufacturing of pillows, quilts, socks, gloves, pullovers, etc.

The amount of wool that remains after washing is higher than in other continental breeds.

Meat

Creska sheep meat, specially young lambs meat is a specialty when roasted on roasting-spit. Mutton has no significance and is consumed dried (after salting and smoking).

Lambs are slaughtered at the age of month and half (still suckling) with the average body weight of 12 kg.

Most of the lambs are slaughtered during a tourist season between Easter and Assumption. The meat is very tasty and juicy. Older shepherds consider lambs meat produced in southern and middle parts of the island of better quality than the one from northern parts.

Fertility

Mating season lasts from September till November, while lambing season is in springtime. However, some ewes mate and lamb earlier.

Mating and lambing is free, without presence of man. Each ram has 20-30 ewes. Rams start to mate at the age of 12-16 months and are kept in breeding till the 4. year of age. Most of ewes lamb a single lamb, while twins are very rare.

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CRESKA OVCA

Sažetak

Točnih podataka o podrijetlu creske ovce nema. Pretpostavlja se da je nastala oplemenjivanjem domaće gruborune ovce španjolskim, francuskim i talijanskim merinom uz presudnu ulogu okoliša. Zahvaljujući, prije svega, oskudnim hranidbenim uvjetima u kojim je nastala, a u takvim se uzgaja i danas, creska ovca je sitna, ali dosta živahna, otporna, i priličito skladno građena.

Creska ovca pripada skupini ovaca kombiniranih proizvodnih svojstava: meso, mlijeko i vuna. Osnovni i ekonomski najznačajniji proizvod je meso, a klaonička masa janjadi u prosjeku se kreće od 10-15 kg. Ovce u laktaciji od 120-160 dana, proizvedu 50-80 l mlijeka. Najveći dio mlijeka prerađuje se u sir (creski sir). Prosječna masa nepranog runa koje pripada B sortimentu kreće se od 1.0-1.5 kg.

Ključne riječi: otok Cres, creska ovca, meso, mlijeko, vuna.

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