



Woolproject Alpines Steinschaf

A CROSS-BORDER WOOL PROJECT SUPPORTING THE
CONSERVATION OF THE 'ALPINE STEINSCHAF'

Logo



The 'Alpine Steinschaf'

Current Situation

The 'Alpine Steinschaf' is a direct descendent of the so called 'Torfschaf' and thus it belongs to one of the most original breeds of the Alps. With 208 000 animals in 1863 it used to be the most popular breed in the region. However, a hundred years later only a few individual animals were left around the 'Berchtesgardener Land' (Bavaria, Germany), the area of Salzburg and Triol (Austria). Since 1985 interested breeders from both countries were able to stabilize this breed by a specific conservation program and with the help of 'The Sheepbreeder Association' and a new found workgroup. The Society for the Preservation of old and endangered breeds (GEH) in Germany is a non-governmental organization with over 2200 members which appoints since 1984 yearly a productive livestock that is acutely threatened to extinction and on the red list of Germany to 'The Endangered Breed of the Year'. In the year 2009 it is the 'Alpine Steinschaf' that has been given that title since it is one of the most endangered breeds in Germany. Since the beginning of the conservation program in 1986 its population in Germany has increased about to 950 registered sheep.

The 'Alpine Steinschaf'



Rams in summer
in the mountains
(near Unterwössen
in Bavaria)

Foto: V. Hausmann

The 'Alpine Steinschaf'

Breed Discription

The 'Alpine Steinschaf' is a smart, small to medium-sized sheep, with a broad and compact framed body. Its head profile is straight with a slightly bent nose bone, ears stick out a bit. Rams usually have spirally curved horns, ewes' small and slightly curved horns. Their legs are thin but strong with hard hooves. Their long woolen tails reach down as far as the ankle joint and the ends are often bent. Face, stomach and feet are usually wool free. They mature early and are year-round breeders. Special Characteristics of the Alpine Steinschaf are:

- Adoptability to a harsh mountain pastures in heights which are inaccessible to cattle.
- Very fertile with ability to breed out of season
- Excellent potential for milk production and dedicated mothers as well as longevity
- Hardy, rugged, resistant and easily satisfied
- Exceptionally tame

The 'Alpine Steinschaf'



Classic, typ-full
'Alpine Steinschaf'
ram.

Foto: V. Hausmann

The 'Alpine Steinschaf'



Typical of the breed is a fine face with short ears.

Foto: V. Hausmann

The ‚Alpine Steinschaf‘



The 'Alpine Steinschaf' shows a great variety in the coloring of the wool. However, the typical and extraordinary grey fleece is preferred.

Foto: V. Hausmann

The ‚Alpine Steinschaf‘

The Association

A long-term security of flocks depends on to what extent the breed can be included in projects: like selling of breeding animals followed by selling of specific high quality products. This seems to be succeeding for the ‚Alpine Steinschaf‘. Since 2004 the German breeders have joined together and organised a workgroup that makes high quality products out of the sheep' wool which is then sold independently. Those breeders meet annually to discuss breeding aims and commercialization of products

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject

The beautiful and unique wool of the 'Steinschaf' is a distinguishing feature of this ancient and rare breed. It has a dual coated fleece with pithy, long coarse hair, fine wavy and short bottom hair, every wool colour from white, black through to browns and brindled can be found. Ewes produce about 3 to 3,5kg and rams 4 kg. Low prices through direct sales after shearing and low demand for small amounts of wool caused 3 breeders in 2004 to work together. They presented their products to us at the yearly meeting in 2005. This was the foundation of a successful way to commercialize exclusive high quality wool products from close farms. At the annual meeting in May wool is gathered and sorted. This way nearly 2 tons of wool from the 'Alpine Steinschaf' has been collected since its beginning in 2004. Breeders receive a wool voucher of 1,00 Euro for each kilogram of prepared wool. The aim is to raise the prices further in order to make it more profitable for the breeders. The wool quality should also be an object of breeding, especially natural colouring. Collecting raw wool at the annual meetings means that transport costs can be kept very low. Via the wool project the wool is being washed and refined (combed, spun, knitted, walken, woven, sewn ext.) The breeders then sell the finished products to their own customers. This processing is carried out exclusively in Germany and Austria and only at small firms or manufactories, transparency in the production and that the products are unrefined is of great importance

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject



Twice a year the
sheep are shorn.

Foto: V. Hausmann

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject

The 'Alpine Steinschaf' current production range is made up of combed wool, knitting wool, walksticksroff, woolen socks, gloves and mittens, jumpers, troyer. Felt products such as bags, feltinsoles, felt slippers, cushions etc. Yearly, the range of high quality products increases with the customers demand for contemporary wool clothing. Finding the appropriate firms that are prepared to take in small amounts of wool and are able to produce high quality products is not easy. In the textile sector as well as in the agriculture sector and other related branches there has been a strong concentration on specialized firms producing their products in other countries. Crucial for the 'Alpine Steinschaf' breeder, however, is the regional production of high quality products and not cheap mass-production. The products from the 'Alpine Steinschaf' enriches the produce range of Farm Shops, Market Stalls as well as Fairs making the selling of these products interesting for dealers. Fortunately more and more consumers are aware of high quality natural products and are prepared to pay the price. Vice-versa the products promote the 'Alpine Steinschaf'. This is especially important as only with an increased awareness, popularity and better marketing of the animals and its products can save this breed from extinction and thus an object of cultural value.

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject

Targets of the 'Alpine Steinschaf' Woolproject

- Buying pre-sorted wool at a fair prize
- organic processing and production of high quality wool products
- regional production which supports lokal trade
- processing under socially acceptable working conditions
- supporting agriculture and landscape conservation through sheep holding
- promoting an old and endangered sheep breed
- conservation of genetic diversity and an object of cultural value

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject



Impressions of a
market stall with
products from the
Woolproject.

Fotos: V. Hausmann

The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject



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The products from the wool project can also be found on the Internet about:

www.kollektion-der-vielfalt.de



The Alpine Steinschaf Woolproject

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ARGE Steinschaf

www.alpines-steinschaf.net

