

# TRADITIONAL SHEPHERDING

IN THE SHARR / KORAB-KORITNIK MOUNTAIN RANGE

*An Ode to the Homegrown*











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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

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This booklet aims to highlight migratory shepherding for its cultural as well as ecological value within the beautiful mountain landscape of Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik- through pictures, facts, and stories of local people. The mountain range is situated in the border area between Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, and is one of the pearls along the European Green Belt.

The Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik mountain range possesses a valuable cultural heritage, reflected in the specific landscape formed over centuries by traditional forms of land use, such as migratory grazing of sheep. Local people in the region depend on the use of natural resources for their livelihood in different ways, such as farming, wood, and various non-timber forest products as well as tourism.

With this booklet, we want to bring attention to traditional and migratory shepherding as a sustainable way of life.

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Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania







## EUROPEAN GREEN BELT

An extraordinary ecological network has developed along the former Iron Curtain, which is known today as the European Green Belt.

It runs along more than 12.500 km and connects high-value natural and cultural landscapes of 24 countries.

The European Green Belt Initiative aims to harmonise human activities with the natural environment and to increase opportunities for the socio-economic development of local communities. The initiative is also a symbol for a joint, pan-European cooperation.

More information under:  
**[www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org)**







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“I have 5 brothers and I saw that they were unhappy and making plans to leave the country. So, I decided that we should buy 5.000 sheep and run a family business. Our father has been working as a livestock keeper for most of his life, so it’s a family tradition”, explains Naser Xhemaili, one of the last young people left in North Macedonia to continue investing in shepherding. Across the border, on the Sharr pastures in Kosovo, Merfan Xhemaj states: “I belong to the fifth generation of my family that deals with sheep”. In Albania another young shepherd, Ambër Fida, additionally says: “My father did this, my grandfather did this and my great grandfather did this. I want to continue to do it as well. I enjoy it.”

It's important to regard transhumance as something worth investing in. As “sculptors of the landscape”, local people and their traditional land uses are key players in ongoing sustainable landscape development.



© Arta Starova



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## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>LIVELIHOOD</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>TRADITIONAL BREEDS</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>EVENTS &amp; FESTIVALS</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>TOURISM</b>	<b>72</b>







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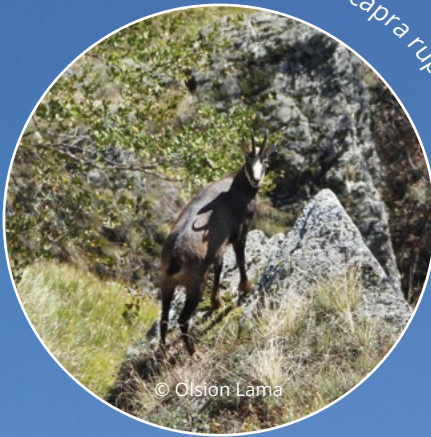




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## BIODIVERSITY





*Rupicapra rupicapra*

© Olston-Lama

**At least 45 mammal species**

The Sharr/Korab-Koritnik mountain range provides a variety of different habitats, such as large unfragmented forest areas, glacial lakes, grasslands, or alpine gravel slopes. Therefore, the area has an exceptionally high biodiversity. This includes a large number of rare species, from which around 150 species can only be found in this region.

Through grazing, pathways, wallow, resting, and water places, as well as droppings and carcasses, sheep create a variety of habitats and provide a basis for the existence of many other animals and plant species. In addition, they play an important role for the distribution of seeds - through their droppings, hooves and fur.

Nowadays, the tradition of shepherding and its positive effect on biodiversity is threatened by land exploitation as well as land abandonment. This leads to the degradation and loss of habitats in the open landscapes- and the species bound to these habitats disappear. Many species of the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik mountain range are already endangered and listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



*Falco tinnunculus*

© Svetoslav Spasov

**At least 125 nesting bird species**



*Vipera ursinii macrops*

© Pank Katorna

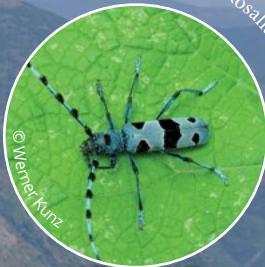
**Over 15 reptile species**



*Salamandra salamandra*

© Karsten Grebe

**At least 12 amphibian species**



*Rosalia alpina*

© Werner Kunz

**Around 140 ground beetle species**



*Crocus scardicus*

© Ljuboimir Stefanov

**Over 2.000 vascular plant species**



*Parnassius apollo*

© Ljuboimir Stefanov

**Over 140 butterfly species**



“Shepherding affects the natural environment very positively. Wherever there’s shepherding, that land profits from it. Also, the produced fertilizer from sheep help the nature.” - *Merfan Xhemaj*



© Toni Stojanovski

© Metodija Veleviski

**Shepherding - done in an seasonal and migratory way - has an important contribution to the development as well as protection of high biodiversity in open landscapes.**




















© Toni Stojanovski

## LIVELIHOOD




A large flock of sheep, mostly white and light brown, is grazing on a lush green mountain slope. The sheep are scattered across the hillside, with some in the foreground and others further up the slope. The background shows dense green vegetation and a clear sky.

In the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik mountain range, rural communities have practiced transhumance for hundreds of years. In this region - like in most parts of south and south-eastern Europe - the people choose sheep and goats as livestock. They are small, sturdy, and resilient, and thus well adapted to the mountainous landscapes.

Transhumance is a type of pastoralism based on the seasonal movement of livestock between different grazing grounds. The animals follow the availability of food - in summer they graze in the mountains and in winter they graze pastures in the lower valleys. This practice has been globally present for centuries, but it has different forms depending on the geographical and socio-political context.



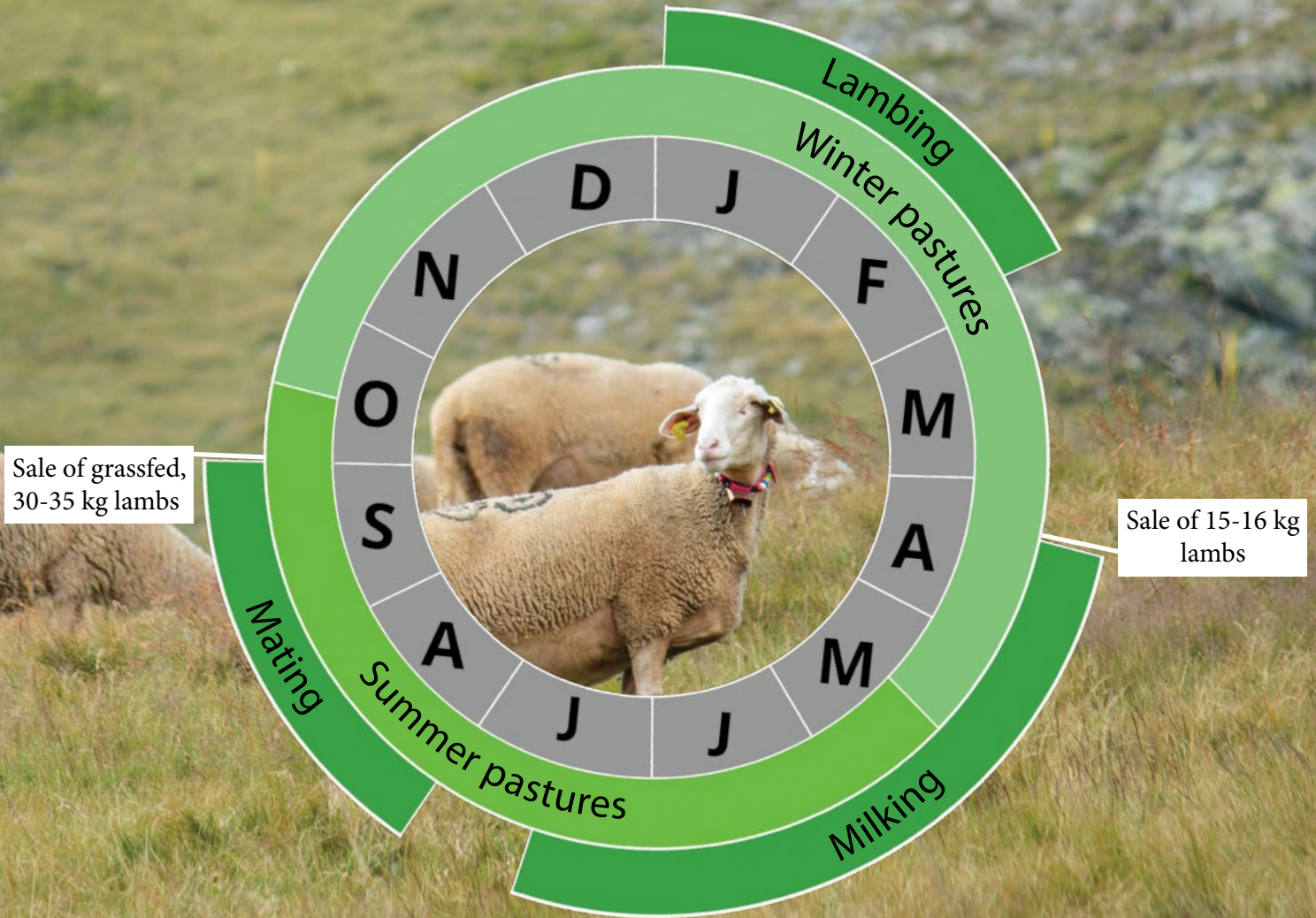
Gradually, traditions and lifestyles began to circulate around the livestock and their seasonal movement - highlighting their importance to the rural livelihood. Transhumance requires teamwork with multiple actors involved in the process and, therefore, it is often a family business with everyone participating. In this way, the tradition is passed on to the next generation. Close co-operation and exchange throughout the years has helped to shape a personal identity amongst shepherds. For centuries the rural communities in the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik region have been sharing similar traditions, migration times and farming styles.

A man with short grey hair, wearing a dark jacket over a white shirt, is sitting on a grassy hillside. He is playing a long, slender, golden-brown flute (kaval) with his mouth and fingers. The background shows a vast, hilly landscape with patches of green vegetation and dry, brownish ground under a cloudy sky. The man is looking towards the camera while playing.

The shepherding flute (called a kaval in this region) is an instrument that shepherds would take with them on pastures to pass the time. Today, the flute is typically played by musicians such as Sali Hafuzi although some shepherds still know how to play it.



## ANNUAL CYCLE OF MIGRATORY GRAZING





An aerial photograph showing a sheepfold in a mountainous region. The sheepfold is a large, irregularly shaped enclosure made of stone walls, containing a small building with a blue roof. It is surrounded by green grass and trees. A dirt road runs along the bottom right of the enclosure. The surrounding landscape is hilly and covered in dense vegetation.

A sheepfold

The distance from the winter to summer pastures vary across the region, with some shepherds only needing a day to complete this on-foot migration while others would need several weeks. Due to the seasonal movement between various pastures, oftentimes different accommodations are needed - for the livestock as well as the people.

Usually, in the summer they reside in summer huts with attached sheepfolds located on or near the pastures up in the mountains. The sheepfold includes different areas for livestock keeping as well as for milking, cheese production, and storage. Many huts and pastures in the mountains are owned by governmental institutions. Usually, shepherds have to make annual contracts to rent the huts and pastures.





© Toni Stojanovski

A sheep pen located behind a shepherding cabin.



© Azem Ramadani

Indoor sheep shed.



Although Xhemil Noka works abroad, he sometimes comes back to help at his family's farm in Albania.

© Arta Starova



During the summer, the whole Fida family takes part in different shepherding activities.



© Arta Starova

"My mother is the busiest person on the farm. Whatever we try to work, she is always asking us if we need help!" - Vebi Jusufi



© Arta Starova



## Typical Day on a Sheep Farm

There are several different actors involved in a typical farm day. In a company context, the main manager on site oversees all the tasks that need to be done. Different individuals function as shepherds, cheese makers, and others complete various other tasks on the farm (including meal preparation). In a traditional family context, all of these tasks are shared.



© Jovan Bozinovski

Zoran Zoksimoski (left) and Imerija Mersimi (right) grew up together in the Sharr Mountains. Although they have their own flocks, every summer they herd their sheep together.



© Jovan Bozinovski



Preparation of the fresh milk for cheese production.



© Arta Starova

A typical shepherding day starts off early- around 5:00 or 6:00 AM. Right after the shepherd wakes up and has their breakfast, the sheep are milked. This milk is later handled by the cheese producer. Before the day begins to become warm, the shepherd sets off to the pastures with the flock.

Throughout the day, those who stay behind at the farm tend to other tasks. This can include feeding other animals, carrying out needed renovations, and making food for the other workers or family members.

The shepherd typically spends their whole day on the pastures and comes back to the farm towards the beginning of the evening- once it starts to get dark. When they are back at the farm, sometimes the sheep are milked once more.

At the end of the day everyone at the farm has dinner and , thus, the shepherding day comes to an end.





Nazlije Jusufi is the main cheesemaker in her family. When she isn't producing cheese, she is busy with other tasks on the farm—such as feeding the animals.

© Arta Starova





Preparing food for the other  
workers at the farm.



© Toni Stojanovski



© Jovan Bozinovski









© Jovan Bozinowski



Shepherds sometimes pour salt on the path, so that the sheep follow them and get the minerals they need.

© Jovan Bozinowski











## MODERNISATION

In the past decades, traditional shepherding has modernised in some regards.

Today, most farmers use transportation trucks to transfer the flocks to the summer pastures in the mountains and back, which only takes one day. This saves a lot of time, but also means that many areas between the main grazing grounds are not grazed anymore.



“In the past, I would trek for 2 weeks with the sheep. We would sleep outside in the open! Nowadays it’s easier to use a truck...although it is still quite expensive.” - Hasan Rizvance





© Arta Starova

Telecommunication services have improved and shepherds (depending on their location) are able to communicate through their mobile phones whilst in the mountains during the summer months. Therefore, they are not as isolated as in the past.

Another example is solar panel installations which can improve the electrical capacity in summer huts. Sometimes, farmers are supported by governmental institutions or non-governmental organisations in their investment of solar panels.



© Arta Starova



## TODAY'S CHALLENGES

With ongoing modernization and industrialization, traditional shepherding has been affected negatively. Today, locals engaged in transhumant shepherding face three main challenges - which are also interlinked with one another.

### MARKET

The market competition has dramatically increased and small-scale farms often need to compete with high productive industrial farms. Production standards and food safety regulations have also increased for the domestic and the international market. Small-scale farms often lack proper working conditions to meet these standards. Shepherds need planning security through long-term rent of pastures and huts as well as suitable subsidies and investment opportunities.

### URBANISATION

Urbanisation leads to the depopulation of rural areas, resulting in a decline in the farming workforce. Shepherding is often not attractive enough. One reason is that in many cases shepherding does not provide sufficient income. The cultural and ecological value needs to be reflected in the price and/or subsidies of traditional sheep products. In addition, the work as a shepherd is in need of a more positive public perception.

### USAGE

The mountain landscapes with their pastures and high biodiversity are threatened by overexploitation of the natural resources or the opposite - the abandonment of any usage and thus the occurrence of succession. Further destruction of habitats occurs through unsustainable developments, such as hydropower plants and large-scale tourism. The status of a protected area can offer the opportunity for sustainable development with benefits for the natural environment as well as for the local community - but this requires effective communication and supporting the needs of shepherds.



“The products need to have a market where they can be sold. We produce a lot and some of the products are not sold. It’s difficult.”



“This activity should be protected because otherwise, where would you get your meat and cheese from? The people need to eat and everything else is fake!”



“Many people are abandoning shepherding... there are less and less people everyday. The ones that are doing it today are doing it out of passion and are used to this type of work, or have no other source of income. I need support in different ways so that it can be profitable for me.”



“It’s a beautiful tradition and you can live off of it, but it is useless if there aren’t any people...”



“There are no investments... The work here isn’t valued as it should be.”

















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## TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS



## CHEESE

One of the most popular shepherding products in the Balkans is the white shepherd's cheese - a salt brine cheese (Albanian: djathë i bardhë; Macedonian: belo sirenje) made from sheep's milk. It has a tangy, salty taste and is crumbly in texture when mature. It is a staple food you can find in most households.

The cheese is usually made directly at the summer huts by a cheesemaker. Typically, each hut has its own cheese production room as well as an aging and storage unit, which both are kept at 5-10° Celsius to ensure that the cheese ages properly and is well preserved.

Next to the white cheese, also a variety of other cheese are made, including:

- beaten low-fat cheese called salcë djathi (Albanian) or bieno sirenje (Macedonian)
- whey cheese called gjizë (Albanian) or urda (Macedonian)
- a type of aged cheese (pasta filata) called kaçkavall (Albanian) or kashkaval (Macedonian)
- a salty, hard yellow cheese aged with dill, typical in Kosovo called djathi i Sharrit (Albanian)

In addition, sour cream, butter, and yogurt are also produced.

In the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik region the milk products are sold to private customers directly at the farm, local restaurants, and sometimes to local food stores. Additionally, in a few areas local dairy farms collect the milk from the shepherds. In contrast to the other sheep products, the cheese market is more or less stable with a high demand. Despite this, the price of cheese has not improved significantly.

"We produce Sharri cheese, white cheese, and cottage cheese. We sell our products locally and have our usual clients. Most of the time, we bring the dairy products to each of their houses or businesses. The offers are generally very good and there is a lot of demand." - Zineli Kasumllari



© Arta Starova





“I learned how to make cheese out of sheer will. I asked other people, I collected literature and I watched videos online... that is how I learned. In the cheese business, you need to have love for the work and you also need to be aware of everything! For example, during the springtime the milk is thinner and during the fall it's thicker. The milk isn't always the same.” - Akize Rizvance

Hasan Rizvance inherited the shepherding tradition from his family. When he saw his wife's passion to make her own cheese, he supported her in pursuing a university degree in Food Technology and Nutrition from the University of Tetovo. Akize is actively involved in the Nationals Farmers' Federation in North Macedonia.

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# PRODUCTION OF SHEPHERD'S CHEESE

## STEP 1

The milk is heated to a temperature of 30-35° Celsius and rennet - typically called "maja" in this region - is added when the necessary acidity level is achieved, to help curdle the milk (which takes around an hour).

"I began making cheese in high school. During the summer vacations, I would not have anything to do at home so I would go with the old cheese makers to the mountains and stay there for 3-4 months. I like this work. When the season is over and I go home, I can't sit still. The work calls me and I want to go back." - Slobodan Ristovski





**STEP 2**

When the milk has curdled, it is cut up.



**STEP 3**

The curdled milk is put in a cheesecloth and strained.



**STEP 4**

The cheesecloth is placed in a square mold for 2-3 hours.



**STEP 5**

The cheese blocks are submerged in a salt brine and aged for a minimum of 30-40 days in a cold and dark storage unit.









## MEAT

Considered a delicacy, lamb meat is an important dish in local communities - popular for religious holidays and celebrations like weddings. Different parts of the lamb and edible offal (liver, brain, eyes) are used for traditional dishes such as: Drob Sarma, Tavë Kosi or Lamb Stew.

Some consumers prefer the lamb meat to be milk based, whilst others favor lamb that has grazed during the summer. Depending on the diverse range of flowers and plants that the lamb eats, the meat carries a unique taste. It is said that a diet rich in diverse vegetation gives the best tasting meat. In the context of traditional shepherding, lamb is a seasonal product and is only available during spring or autumn (depending on the consumer's choice).

Additionally, when farmers recognize that certain ewes (adult females) will not be able to lamb or provide milk in the next season, they make a salted and dried meat called pastirma from them during the autumn.

In the past, lamb meat was consumed much more and was popular throughout all of former Yugoslavia. In Albania and Kosovo lamb is still a popular choice of meat, but in North Macedonia it's not within the everyday menu.



"I sell most of my lambs during the celebration of Eid al-Adha - an Islamic Holiday. " - Merfan Xhemaj

A traditional lamb dish named Tavë Kosi.



“We have the best lambs and sell them in August when they are 18 kg. I’ll tell you why. First, the lambs drink milk from their mothers for 3 months. Afterwards, we adapt them to graze the pastures here for another 2 months. In that way, the first spring flowers are eaten by the lambs and get accumulated in their organisms. The vitamins in the flowers and grass enter the body and the lambs are without any pesticides!” - *Hasan Rizvance*





## WOOL

Much like other sheep products, wool was essential for local communities in the past. Wool was important to stay warm and was used to produce clothing (socks, hats, pants etc.), blankets and carpets. It is a very suitable material for thermoregulation, and shepherds would sometimes put it directly on their chest to protect them from colder weather. Furthermore, wool can be used as isolation material for walls, because it is also flame retardant - it does not burn, it only chars.

© Arta Starova



During the mid-20th century, the textile industry started to mainly use other types of fibers instead of wool. This caused a fall in the price and value due to the reduced demand.



© Jovan Božinoski





“Most things I make are bought by Albanians living abroad. They can’t make products like these themselves, but want to be tied to their culture so they order from me. I am happy with the work and to help these people stay connected to our culture. Wool today has mainly been replaced with other materials, such as synthetic. It’s difficult to find products which are 100% wool.” - Haxhire Tacilla



"I learned how to make these woolen pants from my mother; it's a tradition. It passed down from my mother, to me and now to my child. All the things we make portray our identity from this area. In the past, shepherds would wear these but now only older individuals do." - Sude Noka



Wool processing, like the other traditions of shepherding, is passed down and transmitted through generations.

© Arta Starova





These days wool is barely used or sold, but one can still find some households using this material. Pictured is Hasan Perzhilla with a felted fleece rug.

© Olsion Lama





© Arta Starova





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## **TRADITIONAL BREEDS**



## SHEEP

An important aspect of shepherding is having the right kind of sheep, which is well adapted to the environment. Across the Balkans, many different sheep breeds and strains have evolved under the specific geographical and climatic conditions.

The sheep in the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik Mountain range have to be hardy and resilient. They need to not only withstand the long mountainous terrains, but also the harsh temperature conditions that accompany these landscapes. As a result of their reliability, local communities develop close ties with their local sheep breeds.

The most common types in the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik region are the Ruda and Sharplaninian sheep, which have a tri-purpose - to produce meat, milk and wool.

“I don’t think any strain of sheep is bad. All sheep are good but you have to consider the place they are grazing. You have to find the right kind of sheep for the right kind of place.” - *Hasan Rizvance*

As the sheep graze high up in the mountains, sometimes intense fog can limit the shepherd’s sight of the herd as a result of their white fleece blending in with the mist. In this case, black sheep can act as ‘lighthouses’ - making it easier for the shepherd to pinpoint where their flock is.

















# RUDA SHEEP

The Ruda sheep is found mainly in north-eastern Albania, especially on the pastures in the Korab- Koritnik Nature Park. The breed is very common here and makes up 85% of the total amount of sheep in the park. The Ruda harbours half-fine wool, making its fleece suitable for the production of socks, vests and similar products. It is also known for its long legs, which are adapted to extensive transhumant journeys on different types of landscapes and high-altitude pastures. The breed is typically not crossed with other types and purebreds can still be found.



“In the past when the sheep gave birth, the children of the family would immediately run and hug the newborn lambs. This is an example of how important the sheep is in this community.” - Hasan Perzhilla



Height	Adult Ewe: around 55 cm Adult Ram: around 65 cm
Weight	Adult Ewe: around 45 kg Adult Ram: around 60 kg
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long legs</li><li>• Usually half-fine, white fleece</li><li>• Neck and abdomen are not covered with wool</li></ul>
Production Yield	Wool: 1.5 kg per season Milk: 90 kg (average of milk one sheep gives in a lactation period)



# SHARPLANINIAN SHEEP

The Sharplaninian sheep is a traditional breed in the Sharr Mountain, both in North Macedonia and Kosovo. It is part of the Pramenka/Zackel breed and is hardy with great adaptability to colder mountain climates. In the present day, the Sharplaninian makes up 30% of the total sheep population in North Macedonia and 24% in Kosovo. Nowadays, it is difficult to find a purebred Sharplaninian sheep as many shepherds have mixed them with different breeds (such as the Merino), or other Pramenka strains for the purpose of higher milk production.



A Sharplaninian- Merino mix

© Toni Stojanovski

“The Sharplaninian is more resistant to winter temperatures, so the climate on this mountain suits them well. People say that the lamb is of higher quality, and that it is one of the most sought after meat.” - Zoran Zoksimoski



© Arta Starova

Height	Adult Ewe: around 55 cm Adult Ram: around 63 cm
Weight	Adult Ewe: around 32 kg Adult Ram: around 44 kg
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small/Medium size</li><li>• Open/Semi-open white fleece</li></ul>
Production Yield	Wool: 1.3-1.6 kg per season Milk: 60 - 80 kg (average of milk one sheep gives in a lactation period)









## SHEEP DOGS

Alongside every shepherd's flock are their trusty companions - the sheep dogs. Sheep dogs can be divided between:

- Livestock guardian dogs - Responsible to protect the livestock from wild animals
- Herding dogs - Help to guide the flock on pastures

There are a variety of sheep dog breeds in the world, all suited to their terrains and tasks. On the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik Mountain range, the Sharr Mountain dog is the first choice as a sheep dog - especially as a livestock guardian. The breed is also known under different names including Illyrian or Yugoslavian Shepherd dog.

Other breeds found in this region are the Central Asian Shepherd dogs and Kangal Shepherd dogs, which originate from the region of present day Turkey. In addition, many farmers keep mixed breeds.

People hiking through mountains and pastures are advised to stay away from flocks. If confronted by sheep dogs, hikers should stand still and call out for the shepherd (who should be nearby). If the shepherd cannot be found, then it is advised to move back slowly and calmly from the area in a lateral position.



# SHARR MOUNTAIN DOG

The Sharr Mountain dog (Albanian: Qeni i Sharrit; Macedonian: Šarplaninec) has historical and practical value for shepherding and livestock guarding in this region, and has become a symbol of this mountain range. For example, in North Macedonia you can find its image on the country's 1 denar coin. Globally, it is known as an old breed of sheep dog.

During the 1950s, it was difficult to find a purebred Sharr Mountain dog, due to the fact that the focus was on selling, rather than breeding them. In 1975, breeding programs started, specifically to try to revitalize and protect the Sharr Mountain type and in the following years more breeding farms have been emerging throughout the region.



© Toni Stojanovski



© Nacko Savovski

Height	Adult Female:	around 58 cm
	Adult Male:	around 62 cm
Weight	Adult Female:	30-40 kg
	Adult Male:	35-45 kg
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong build</li><li>• Light or dark (typically dark grey), thick fur with two layers</li><li>• Fairly sized head</li><li>• Dark, wide snout</li><li>• Dark or amber, almond shaped eyes</li></ul>	



The first meeting with the calm and fearless stare of a Sharr Mountain dog is impressive. The dogs size and behavior can speak for itself. With a thick coat, it is equipped to endure the severe climate conditions found in the mountains- hence it's popularity.

The dog is also known for its personality. The breed has a calm temper and, if trained well, is fiercely obedient and loyal. In addition, they are independent by nature. Shepherds are fond of the breed for its intelligence and ability to make decisions, when needed, on its own. They are trained to defend, and not to attack first - unless they are directly threatened. If a stranger comes too close to the flock, the dog immediately stands guard.

The Sharr Mountain dogs have the vital role of protecting the flock as well as the shepherd against any attacks - usually from wild animals. There are countless stories in which these dogs have lost their lives, due to their unshakeable bravery, when confronted by wolves or bears. It is typically known that they will fight to their death, just to ensure the protection of the flock.

Nevertheless, they also harbor a tender and sweet nature. When they are not guarding, they are friendly towards individuals and have been noticed to be playful with children. When it comes to their owners, they are especially loving and protective. The bonds that these dogs establish are strong and enduring.





“The Šarplaninec does not care whether there is snow, rain or wind.... even if it’s snowing, it sleeps on top of the snow!” - Zoran Zoksimoski



© Arta Starova

“The dogs are important because when the shepherd is herding the flock, he cannot watch them all and the dogs help out. When there is a wild animal nearby, the dogs immediately sense it and drive it away.” - Veseli Ferit



© Toni Stojanovski





“For me, one dog is equal to one person. They are just as important as people.” - Ambër Fida

© Arta Starova



“This Sharri puppy will grow up with the flock of sheep. So she will build a lifelong bond with the sheep as well as with the shepherd – like a family” - Flutra Ramadani

© Azem Ramadani

















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## EVENTS & FESTIVALS



Regional festivals celebrating the culture surrounding shepherding are broad events filled with folkloric dances, music and traditional foods.

Throughout the region, these events are more and more visited by non-locals and tourists as they provide an insight to the beauty of traditional rural life.



In Albania, there are several festivals across the country such as the Cured Meat (Pasterma) Festival in Lekbibaj (4<sup>th</sup> June) and the St. George's day (5<sup>th</sup> May) in Shishtavec. The festival held in Nivica (6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> June) celebrates the long-held tradition of keeping sheep and goats, as well as the historic livestock trails found throughout the area.



In Kosovo, one can find a variety of different traditional festivals which mostly focus on folkloric music and dance, like the Hasi Jehon festival (2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> May) in Gjonaj. Additionally, events like the Agrokos fair in Pristina promote local products such as cheese, milk and meat.



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In North Macedonia, the regional manifestation of “Sheep and Goat Breeders’ Day” in Galicnik (11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> July) is one of the most popular shepherding events. The local farmers show off their livestock as they enter competitions involving assessment of product quality, milking, and shearing. New events, such as “The Day of Sharr” in 2019, aim to promote traditional dishes, dances, and local products, as well as drawing attention to the mountain’s ecological value.



## TOURISM

Agrotourism has become more popular in recent years and rural areas have the potential to offer different tourism activities such as hiking, mountain biking, camping, horseback riding, etc. Protected areas are especially recognised as tourism destinations for recreation. Furthermore, tourists are given the opportunity to learn more about the region and its traditions.

Younger generations are increasingly investing in their capacities to include touristic offers in their farms. This provides locals with an additional income and an incentive to stay in the area.





## ACTIVITIES & SERVICES THAT SHEPHERDS COULD OFFER:

- JOINING A SHEPHERD ON THE PASTURES
- EXCURSION WITH HORSEBACK RIDING
- LESSONS FOR CHEESE PRODUCTION
- RESTING PLACE FOR HIKERS
- SELLING OF DIFFERENT TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS (FOOD & CRAFTS)
- ACCOMMODATION SERVICES



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A cozy shepherd's cabin.

© Arta Starova



A mountaineering lodge.

© Jovan Bozinoski



Mountain hut.

© Jovan Bozinoski









**YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION HERE:**

[www.sharriregion.com](http://www.sharriregion.com)  
[www.sharplanina.com.mk](http://www.sharplanina.com.mk)

App: EXPLORING SHAR MOUNTAIN



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## ABOUT THE FIELDWORK

Between July and September 2020, Arta Starova conducted fieldwork in the Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik region, visiting all three countries: Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia. Accompanied by local guides and photographers, she travelled to high mountain pastures to visit shepherds and livestock keepers. She conducted interviews, gathered information and photographed. During the trips, Arta had the opportunity to speak with locals and representatives of local institutions about the cultural, environmental and economic importance of the traditional shepherding practices.





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**Kukës region**

Novosej

- Sude, Ymer and Xhemil Noka

**Dibër region**

Kala e Dodës

- Hasan Perzhilla

Maqerallë

- Ambër and Rejana Fida

**Tetovo region**

Ceripasina

- Veseli Ferit and Hamza Xhemaili  
(facebook: Biofarma 1 Maj)

Jelak

- Zoran Gjorgjievski  
(facebook: Eskimo Freeride)

Popova Šapka

-Vebi and Nazlije Jusufi

**Gostivar region**

Lera

- Akize, Hasan and Furkan Rizvance

Gorno Jelovce

- Zoran Zoksimoski and Imerija Mersimi

**Dragash region**

- Merfan Xhemaj, Farm M. F. Xhemaj

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Protection and Preservation of  
Natural Environment in Albania



Macedonian Ecological Society



Center for Education and  
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NGO FINCH



Connecting Natural Values  
and People (CNVP) Pristina



Regional Administration for  
the Protected Area Kukës



Regional Administration for  
the Protected Area Diber



Public Enterprise for  
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National Park Sharri (Kosovo)



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AgroEko Dibra



Breeding Farm Korab  
FCI 1988



NGOTA Dairy Farm





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**EURONATUR**

This booklet aims to highlight migratory shepherding for its cultural as well as ecological value within the beautiful mountain landscape of Sharr/ Korab-Koritnik - through pictures, facts and stories of local people.

