

Performance traits of Charollais sheep raised in Warmia and Mazury

Summary

In the Warmia and Mazury region sheep of the Charollais breed are now raised only in a single herd on the Jaśkowa Dolina farm in Gruszyny near Górowo Iławeckie. They were transferred there in 2006 under a project implemented by the Podpora Association, funded by Heifer Project International in Warsaw, following liquidation of the herd in Zajączki belonging to the Bałcyny Production and Experimental Facility. The Zajączki herd, owned by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, was founded in 2002 with sheep imported from France. Assessment of the reproductive traits of the sheep in the Zajączki herd indicated that they had significant potential. Evidence of this was prolificacy reaching 175%, but reproduction efficiency was unsatisfactory, as reproductive performance (expressed as the ratio of the number of reared lambs to the number of ewes in the flock) did not exceed 150%. The reproductive efficiency of the herd in Gruszyny is similar. This low reproductive performance, as for this breed of sheep, is mainly due to excessive losses of lambs. In contrast, Charollais sheep in the conditions of the Warmia and Mazury region revealed high potential for meat performance. In this regard they clearly surpass Kamieniecka sheep, the leading meat breed in the region. Fed in a traditional manner from 2 to 70 days of age they attained average daily gain of about 290 g, while that of Kamieniecka lambs under the same conditions was about 250 g. This is largely a consequence of higher milk production in comparison with the Kamieniecka breed. The rapid growth rate of Charollais lambs is confirmed by data from the lambing report for 2016, which show that at 56 days of age the average weight of lambs was 19.14 kg. Thus with reproductive performance at a level of 148.28%, an average of 28.38 kg of livestock was obtained per ewe. In conclusion, Charollais sheep raised in the conditions of the Warmia and Mazury region have very good meat and milk performance, but their reproductive potential is not fully exploited. They are fairly sensitive and require more care than other local breeds, especially during the perinatal period. This breed, due to the quality of its meat, should be maintained in the region.

KEY WORDS: Charollais sheep, reproductive performance, meat performance