

.... and Jesus said to Petrus:
Tend my sheep!" (Joh.21,17)

Sheep is the biblical symbol of a human being. The Qur'an does not at all use symbols. Nether the less sheep and goat are the most important livestock in Muslims' live. Muhammad as their prophet was shepherd. Mutton is view as pure meat, and so is allowed for consume; just as well the Jews, ancient pastoral people are living by sheep and goat, they are eating the kosher sheep and goat meat. So, to God's own pleasure the good herder ought to care for his flock. So sheep is unifying this frequently hostile and estranged religions. Sheep brings peace and harmony, work and good food, prosperity and God's pleasure.

More than 10.000 years ago started in Anatolia the domestication of the Mouflon being the progenitor of the domestic sheep. At the same time in the Persian Zagros-mountain the *Bezoar ibex* also was domesticated. Past to the dog sheep and goat are the first domesticated livestock.



Since then sheep breed has strongly progressed. Primary sheep has got a hairy fleece and no crucial productivity. Soon breeding changes the animal: today they serve to human with wool, meat, milk, dung, and not least with their biodiversity conserving capabilities.

.... I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." (Joh.10,11)

3.100 years ago the Phoenicians breed the wool-sheep, and bring it to Southern Spain using it for swap. Wool was the most serious alternative to skin and linen. It gets fashionable designed, or transformed as fiber cloth and felt. The Romans used wool creating genteel clothing. In the Middle Age the export of the "golden fleece" of the merino sheep brings prosperity to the Spanish Royal Dynasty and funds the conquest of America. Short time after the Medici of Florence set up their wealth on wool fashioning. Until 100 years ago wool is the most important product of the sheep husbandry. The wool price collapses due to cotton production.

Nowadays the production of mutton has become most important. Actually another transition has to be expected. Meat production is supposed to be replaced by environmental oriented grazing. Herders have to be taught in fulfilling this job in an adapted manner.

Impressum

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Nomad Sheep: Carriers of Biodiversity



Sheep feed gras and herbs
(all pics by H. Beckmann)



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Modus vivendi

1 billion sheep do live on earth, 42% in Asia, 23% in Africa, 17% in Oceania, 10% in Europe and 8% in America. Generally sheep get 10 until 15 years old. 20 years are ideal. Mouflons get 8 until 10 and at most 16 years old. The domestic sheep *Ovis orientalis aries* descends from the armenian Mouflon *Ovis orientalis gmelinii*. The habitat of this animal is the Mediterranean mountain. Females and lambs create flocks up to 100 animals, meanwhile the rams are solitaries. Only for mating they are adding to the flocks.

Pregnancy of both Mouflon and sheep lasts 5 months. Generally in spring they part 2 or 3 lambs. This is the season of highest forage over, thus the lambs can suckle best milk quantity.



Sheep are living in both dry and humid regions, as well as warm and cool. If temperature exceeds 25°C they reduce ingestion. Humidity decreases the wool-quality. Hairy sheep have been re-bred for living in hot-humid tropics. In all human history there has not been another animal been breed same intensively than sheep. Hence it has to be said:

sheep are great!

Nutrition

Sheep are not stupid at all. Their excellent long-time-memory recognizes plant species all live long by their typical odor. Same can be applied for old friends once met in foraging.



Naturally sheep do live transhumant. The cold Mediterranean winter they do spend either at the warmer coastlines or in the warm valleys of the south. In hot summertime they are spending there *vacations* in the upper mountains, while the valleys wither beneath a blistering sun. Hence they avoid any forage-bottleneck. Additionally they are able to reduce their energy demand about 35%, when at the end of summer forage offer decreases significantly. Sheep are a miracle of adaptation.

Also many plant species utilize to be ingested by sheep: a gut passage enhances the germination rate of hard-shelled seeds; feces are serving as start-fertilization advancing survival odds of a germ bud.

Fare in the Seed-Taxi

Sheep are best seed-taxi!

Mouflons stroll the Mediterranean rangeland according to the rhythm of annual seasons. Human while he being able to conserve fodder is copying this way of search for food. In his walk sheep carries up to 10.000 seeds in his fleece and ingests up to another 4.500 seeds in early summer. Seeds then are dispended along the way: it is a miracle of evolution!

After 8.000 years of sheep foraging as well turkey as the Iberian Peninsula have become hot spots of species diversity in herbs and grasses being diet of sheep.

Climate warming changes the habitat conditions. At the end of 21st century about 70% of plants might be threatened by extinction. Sheep may help them to migrate and to give them a new existence. The number of endangered species decreases up to 40% in case of full migration. And 500 sheep carry more than 5 million seeds.

The object of TRUNPA is ecosystem resilience through biodiversity. Biodiversity is essential for ground water, a secure agricultural production, recreational value of landscapes, oxygen production, and so on ...

... and simply: just for our live!

* Transhumant Rangeland Use and Networking of Protected Areas