



Ad hoc "Merino network":

Merino and Merino-derived breeds in Europe

State of art – *in situ* valorization.



Merino sheep in Poland

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Polish Merino history

Merino sheep breeding has a long tradition in Poland:

- XVIII-XIX
 - the first merinos were brought to Poland in 1786 from Saxony
 - after 1860, merino-type Rambouillet and Merino-Precoco - from France
- In the interwar period
 - Ile de France
- after II World
 - Fleishmerino and Landmerino from Germany
 - Caucasian merino - from the former USSR
 - woolly Bulgarian merino - from Bulgaria
- in the 1970s, the dominant direction was woolly and meat
- In the 80's, selection works began to pay more attention to meat and breeding use.



Polish Merino

Polish Merino is a breed with good wool and meat performance

The most important features

- strong herd instinct
- small feed requirements
- adapted for indoor and grazing farming
- early maturing
- the aseasonality of her reproduction
- lambs are useful for intensive fattening



- Body weight: ewes 80 kg, rams 100 kg
- Ewes and rams are polled
- The folds are on the neck
- The wool:
 - covers the whole body of the animal except the face
 - uniform, well-closed fleece, clearly crimp,
 - hair 22-26 µm thick and 7-8 cm long
 - annual yield of rams wool 7 kg, ewes 5 kg with the efficiency of 45-49%.
- Prolificacy is about 135%

Merino derived breeds

- Merino sheep took part in development of many important sheep breed:

- breeding from the 1950s.
- included in the group of lowland sheep
- created by crossing regional sheep breeds with Polish Merino and long-haired English sheep breeds
- direction of use meat-wooly
- uniform, medium and compact wool
- high wool yield
- good meat qualities



Wielkopolska sheep

Local breed x Polish Merino, Romney marsh



Merino derived breeds

➤ Breeds are perfectly adapted to local conditions

Żelaźnierska sheep



Local breed x Merino
F1 x Leicester

Polish Corriedale



Merino x Lincoln

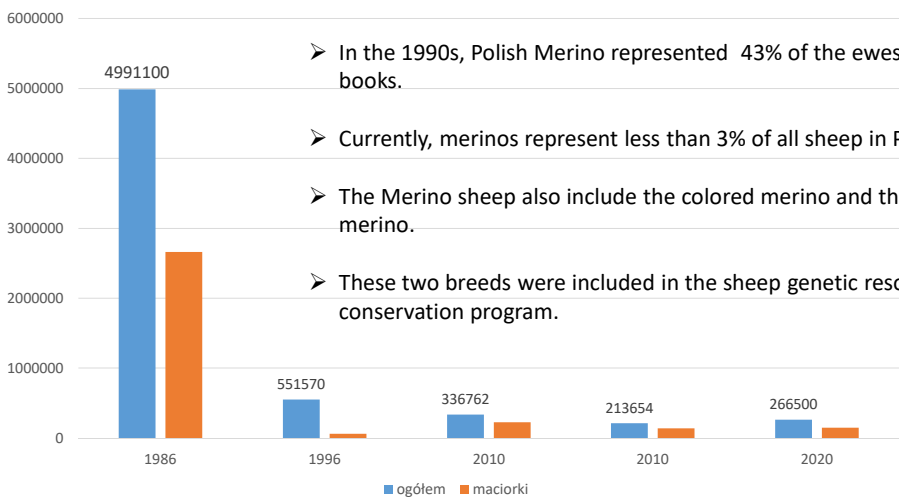
Uhruska sheep



Merino x Leine, Romey Marsh



Share in the population



- In the 1990s, Polish Merino represented 43% of the ewes in the breeding books.
- Currently, merinos represent less than 3% of all sheep in Poland.
- The Merino sheep also include the colored merino and the old type merino.
- These two breeds were included in the sheep genetic resources conservation program.

Coloured Merino



In the 1980s in the Experimental Station of the National Research Institute of Animal Production in Kołuda Wielka it started breeding work aimed at producing a variety of colorful Polish Merino.

- In the initial stage of work, coloured individuals, born in the herds of the Polish Merino, were left for breeding.
- As a result of many years of breeding work, a herd of 200 mothers and 11 lines of paternal rams with a colored fleece was created.
- The following types of color are distinguished: mouflon, uniformly colored, badger appearance, mouflon-badger appearance
- The actually population numbers over 1,000 mothers
- Prolificacy of Coloured Merino – 170%



Coloured Merino

- Merino mothers after rearing lambs can be used dairy from 3 to 6 months of lactation.
- During this period, from ewe, about 40 kg of milk is obtained.

Cheeses and yoghurts produced from the milk of Coloured Merino ewes and the Kołuda sheep were honored with the emblem of the "Polish Food Producer" for the high quality.





Old-type Polish Merino

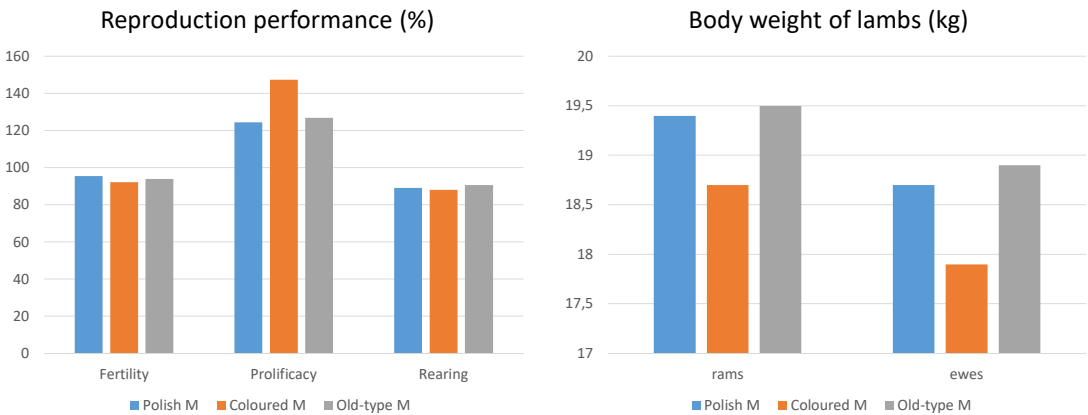
- Old-type Polish Merino have not been crossed for generations with fertile, meat and woolly breeds.
- Old-type Polish Merino was covered by the Genetic Resources Conservation Program in 2008.

The most important features:

- large sheep with a strong constitution
- body weight: rams 90-110 kg, ewes 60-75 kg
- wool covering the entire body except for the face and legs
- wool yield is relatively low (about 4 kg)
- only one skin fold is allowed on the neck
- daily gains of lambs about 300g.



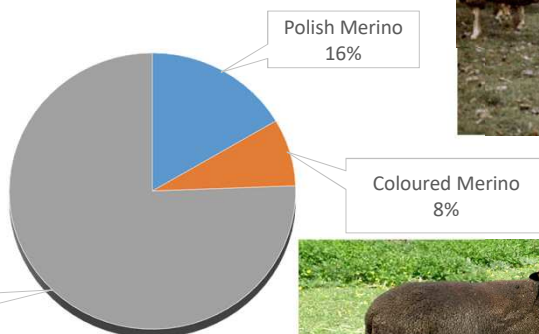
The selected performance parameters over the last decade



Acctually situation

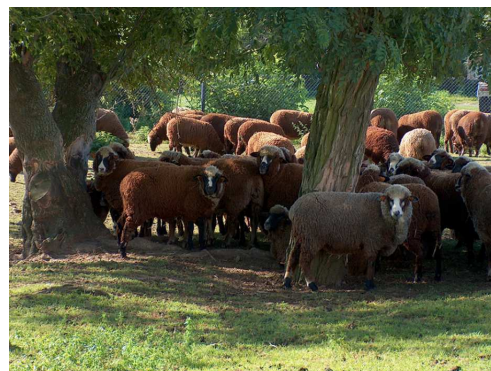


Old Type Merino
76%



Today situation

- Merino sheep and the breeds derived from them provide the best and most uniform slaughter material and the best quality wool
- Wool is in Poland a marginal product, only excellent quality merino wool finds buyers
- The development of local markets for meat and the management of wool could improve the situation of sheep farming in Poland



Fot. B.Borys, M.Grycz,
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