VARIETIES OF THE ȚURCANĂ CREAȚĂ DE CARANSEBEȘ SHEEP BREED

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Abstract: *The authors of this paper present tone of the highest-performance variety of the Țurcană sheep breed – Țurcana Creață de Caransebeș. They present the morphological and productive features of this sheep variety, its origin and selection, its use and importance, and its cultural and economic context. The analysis of these features allowed the comparison of five varieties of Țurcană – Creață, Brează, Bucălaie, Oacheșă, and Ruginie from the perspective of their morphological and productive features and from the perspective of the genetic aspects and selection models in Țurcana sheep breed variety Creață de Caransebeș.*

Key words*: Țurcană Creață de Caransebeș, production, meat, milk, wool.*

INTRODUCTION

The **Țurcană Creață de Caransebeș** sheep is a high-performance variety of the Țurcană breed, selected for its superior milk production and adaptability in the Banat area [1,5,6,8,13,14].

This variety is part of the subtypes of the Țurcană breed, one of the oldest and most widespread sheep breeds in Romania, known for its mixed production (milk, meat, wool), resistance, and rusticity [1,8,13,14]. Here are some specific details about the Țurcana Creață de Caransebeș:

Morphological and productive characteristics [2,7,10]:

Adaptability: excellent to the climatic conditions of the mountainous and hilly area of Banat, with resistance to diseases and low maintenance costs;

Body weight: Females: between 35–55 kg; Males: up to 80 kg, with a robust constitution and pronounced mobility;

Milk production is significantly higher than the breed average, being able to exceed 100 l per lactation (5–6 months), which makes it attractive for dairy-oriented farms [3,4];

The wool is curly, hence the name, with finer and denser fibres than other Țurcana varieties.

Origin and selection:

It is one of the few local Țurcană populations with high performance, along with Breaza de Hațeg and Brastavățu from Olt. The variety was developed in the Caransebeș area, part of the efforts to improve the Țurcană breed to increase milk production without losing its rustic characteristics [18].

Use and importance [12,15]:

It is appreciated for its tasty meat, especially in Arab countries, and for its curly wool, used in traditional products. It lends itself well to extensive farming systems, being able to capitalize on mountain pastures. [19].

Cultural and economic context:

Banat breeders consider it a heritage value, being part of the pastoral identity of the region. [16,17] Although specialized breeds (milk or meat) are gaining ground, Țurcana Creață de Caransebeș remains a strategic choice for farms that want versatility and resilience [11].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used in this paper consists in studies on one of the most representative sheep breed in Romania – Țurcana Creață de Caransebeș. The research method is the comparative one given that the study covers a comparison between the morphological, productive, and genetic features of five varieties of this sheep breed.

RESEARCH RESULTS

A comparison between the morphological and productive features of the varieties of Țurcană sheep breed shows (Table 1):

Table 1.

Morphological and productive features of the varieties of Țurcană sheep breed

Variety	Creață de Caransebeș	Brează	Bucălaie	Oacheșă	Ruginie
Adaptability	Mountain and hill pastures	Alpine pastures	Mountain and hill areas	Mountain areas	Hill and mountain areas
Area of Origin	Caransebeș (Banat)	Valea Jiului Parâng	Apuseni Mountains	Făgăraș Mountains	Sibiu (Transylvania)
Cultural value	Regional symbol in Banat	Considered the "Milk Queen"	Symbol of the Apuseni Mountains	Esthetical and mythical	Rustic, linked to traditions
Distinctive Features	Robust body Curly, dense, white wool White face	Black face with a V-shaped white marking Semi-fine, white wool	Bulky body Large head Thick, white wool White face	Black face Outlined eyes Semi-fine, white wool	Rustic appearance Reddish-brown face Reddish-brown rustic wool
Main use	Milk + meat + wool	Milk	Meat + wool	Mixed	Meat + wool
Meat production	Good, tasty meat	Medium	Very good	Good	Very good
Milk production	100-150 l/lactation	Up to 200 l/lactation	Medium (80-120 l/lactation)	Medium	Medium
Other notable features	Good rusticity Good utilisation of pastures	Considered the dairy sheep of Europe	Resistance Valued meat	Mobility Rusticity	Adaptability Tasty meat
Resistance to harsh conditions	Very good	Good	Excellent	Good	Very good

Source: own data

Table 1 above shows the following:

- ***Cultural value***: the variety Brează is often idealised in pastoral culture, the variety Oacheșă has a mythical aspect, and the variety Ruginie evokes Transylvanian rusticity;
- ***Distinctive features***: the varieties Brează and Oacheșă are the most easily recognized by their facial pattern, while the variety Bucălaie impresses with its massiveness;
- ***Meat***: the variety Bucălaie is the most massive, followed by the varieties Creață and Ruginie – all with tasty meat;
- ***Milk production***: the varieties Brează (high daily performance) and Creață de Caransebeș (long, constant lactation) are the most efficient in milk production, with the variety Brează even having the potential to become specialized breeds;
- Mixed use: though all varieties Țurcană sheep breed offer meat, milk and wool, the varieties Brează and Creață are more oriented towards milk, while the varieties Bucălaie and Ruginie are more oriented towards meat and rusticity;

- ***Wool quality***: the variety Creață has curly, dense wool, suitable for traditional textiles, the variety Bucălaie has dense wool, while the variety Ruginie has rarer, reddish-brown wool, very appreciated for its colour.

Genetic data help designing selection models as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Genetic aspects and selection models in Țurcană sheep breed variety Creață de Caransebeș

Variety	*Creață de Caransebeș*	*Brează*	*Bucălaie*	*Oacheșă*	*Ruginie*
Improvement type	Local selection for milk	Selection for performance	Rustic selection and massiveness	Esthetical selection Mobility	Traditional genetic conservation
Dominant genetic lines	Milk Resistance Prolificacy	Milk Fertility	Musculature Adaptability	Mobility Rusticity	Resistance Pigmentation
Genetic risks	Low heterozygosity on farms	Consanguinity in small herds	Great variability	Loss of esthetical features	Pigmentary dilution
Selection strategies	Guided mounting Lactation testing	Controlled mounting Daily testing	Natural selection Free-range	Visual and behavioural selection	Conservation on traditional farms

Source: own data

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, **the best strategic choice of a farmer** depends on the production goal: if the farmer is looking for appearance and aesthetic selection, the varieties Brează and Oacheșă offer visual and genetic variety; if the farmer is looking for milk performance, the varieties Brează and Creață de Caransebeș are the most suitable; if the farmer is looking for resistance and low maintenance, the varieties Bucălaie and Ruginie are excellent in mountain areas.

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