



RACKA SHEEP
MACEDONIA, Karadzica
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GOLD AWARD
63 2/8

Ovis aries stephisceros hungaricus

Magyar racka juh (Hungarian); also known as Hortobágyer Zackelschaf (German); Hortobágyi racka juh (Hungarian); *ovis aries strepsiceros hortobágyiensis* (Latin); Racka Sheep or Puszta Markhor (English).

DESCRIPTION (male) Shoulder height approx. 27 inches (70 centimeters). Weight: 120 to 165 pounds (55 to 75 kilos). Females are approx. 15 % smaller. Historic evidence was found that these sheep have accompanied, in semi-domesticated form, the Magyar tribes since the early 9th Century. It originates from central Asia and was introduced to mainland Europe via Turkey. For many centuries it was the traditional sheep of the lower Hungarian flatlands.

In 1903 these sheep were near extinction. A program was developed to keep these sheep in a semi-nomadic and wild state and in the past 100 years their numbers have recuperated dramatically. The wool of these sheep is rather hairy and animals in different colorations are known, predominantly however these sheep are either black (20 % of the known population) or completely white.

Both sexes grow horns, with the males growing these approx. 60 % larger than the females. An adult



male will have horns of approx. 30 inches of length (75-80 centimeters). The horns rise upwards and then obliquely from the skull in an extremely tight corkscrew spiral.

BEHAVIOR Gregarious. All Racka sheep stay in large flocks together for the entire year. Only very mature males depart the herds and form bachelor groups. The mating season is in the summer and, usually, two lambs are born per ewe in January/February.

Being only a grazer, they feed and move for large distances during the day time. Vision is very good, hearing and sense of smell less so. Once hunted it becomes extremely alert and wary and makes for a difficult stalk.

HABITAT & DISTRIBUTION Flatland of the Hungarian Puszta, into the hill ranges of former Yugoslavian states, e.g. Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, as well as in Albania.

STATUS large herds in a completely protected status in the Hortobágy National Park in Hungary; wild herds known in all the range of its habitat.