



**CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF  
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE**

**PASTORAL LIFE**

**RESEARCH REPORT FOR ESTONIA**

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## **Pastoral life: Everyday life objects, life-styles.**

### **1. Historical background**

There is solid evidence of sheep herding in the Estonian territory dating back to the Late Neolithic period about 5,000 years ago. Bones of sheep, goats, swine and cattle have been found from burial sites of that period. The development of sheep herding is inseparably connected with the development of other types of animal husbandry and agriculture. By the end of the Ancient Era in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, certain differences had developed between the coastal Western and North-western Estonia and inland areas. In the west, there were more grasslands, and animal husbandry and permanent fields fertilised with manure played a bigger role, while inland, shifting cultivation, hunting and fishing were more important. Sheep and cattle were raised more in western parts, while swine were raised in inland areas.

Throughout history, all types of animals have been raised in Estonian farms; the specialisation in certain species only happened in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then other animals were raised for personal use as well. Each farm had to have its own sheep, because in cold winters, when temperatures could drop below -30 degrees Celsius, there was a need for warm clothes, and wool and hides were required to produce them. Sheep products were also processed in farms. There were no regions specialising in sheep herding in Estonia. In addition, there were flocks and shepherds in manors belonging to Baltic Germans. In larger manors, several people could be assigned to pasturage – herdsman, herdsman, herdsman. The job of a manor shepherd lasted throughout the year; herds needed to be taken care of even in winter (Eisen 1926: 9).

Sheep, just as cows and pigs, were under the care of the farmer's wife. Raising and tending horses was the responsibility of the farmer. All work related to wool was the domain of women, while slaughtering and tanning sheep was the responsibility of men. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the help of professional tanners was used to process hides, and furs were sewn by tailors.

Beasts were kept on pastures from the end of April to the end of October. Girls were put in barns in winter and a farm usually had 2 to 3 over-winter sheep. Herding was done in a joint village herd until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, even until the 1930s in Western Estonia and on the islands.

Joint herding could be done without supervision, if the fields and grasslands were surrounded by fences. One herdsman could be hired for one or several villages. In case of timed herding, shepherds came from different farms in rotation. In some cases, each farm had its own herdsmen, but herding was done together. The most common option was to use a village herdsman. A single man who was not well off was most frequently used as the village herdsman; he was hired to work from St George's Day to Michaelmas. The hiring of a herdsman was decided by all the farmers of the village together. In continental Estonia, sheep and cows were herded together. In Saaremaa, each kind of animal had their own herdsman.

After the plotting out of farms in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, joint herding underwent a decline and farms had their own herdsmen. If there were children of the right age in the farm, they served as shepherds, otherwise a herdsman was hired. After the spread of fencing, the need for herdsmen decreased.

In 1941, the Soviet rule in Estonia re-established joint herding under the pretext of developing sheep farming, but the real purpose was to prepare peasants for collectivisation. In the large holdings of the Soviet era, animals were herded by a shepherd until 1970s, after which fencing pastures became more common. At the beginning of the collective farm era, timed herding was used, that is, collective farm families herded the flock in a rotation. Later, a shepherd was hired for every flock. In addition to the collective farm flock, each farm had its own animals in order to survive. These were usually herded by the families themselves, but sometimes individual animals were also commonly herded, especially in Northern and Western Estonia and on the islands. Sometimes, private animals were herded together with the collective farm flock, although this practice was officially forbidden. In Mustjala parish in Saaremaa, joint herding lasted until the 1990s.

## **2. Life cycle**

In the Estonian peasant society, shepherds lived together with the village community. The work of a shepherd was seasonal: spring to autumn, St George's Day to Michaelmas.

*The work of a shepherd started in spring on St George's Day and lasted until autumn, three weeks after Michaelmas (23. IV-20.X). (ERM KV 184: 13, Tartu)*

In determining the duration of work, specific dates have been used, but they were rather for the general delineation of the herding period. In reality, those dates were not strictly followed and the herding period depended on the climate and on the amount of feed stocks collected for winter.

*In spring, the animals were first let into the open, when the food stocks were depleting and pastures and fallows started to go green. (ERM KV 184: 14)*

Specific weekdays have been pointed out for letting out the flock. Letting them into the open on specific days was supposed to bring good luck to the flock.

*The herd was first let out on a good day. Good days in a week were Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Bad and unlucky days were Monday, when the wolf was born, Wednesday was the day of visitations, and Friday that of Christening. (ERM KV 184: 14).*

The village herdsman was usually a man who was not well off, often with a health issue, who was fit for no other work. They were usually single men, because the wage of a shepherd was not sufficient to feed a family. The shepherd was taken from the same village or from somewhere nearby and his person was decided upon by the farmers together. When there were several candidates, the one who demanded the smallest wage was selected. The same shepherd could work in the village for several years.

*The shepherd was hired again in autumn when the wages for the last summer were paid /.../ Paying the shepherd took place in autumn, when the flock remained in the barn. All farmers took part in paying the shepherd and signing the new contract. After paying and signing a new contract, there was a celebration (ERM KV 119: 91).*

In case of timed herding, family members served as shepherds – usually children, but also older women or men who were unfit for harder work. Often, the shepherd was assisted by a child, *karjakorraline*. After the plotting and buying-out of farms in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the shepherds were usually sons of the farm family between ages 7 and 15. When there were no children of suitable age in the family, a herdsboy had to be hired.

The village shepherd spent the night with a different family every night. Moving from family to family like that was called going *karikõrda*. The shepherd was accommodated in the house or in the family room. In summer, however, he stayed outside, in the barn or in the loft and did so until late autumn. Only few older people stayed inside in summer (ERM KV 184: 22).

In addition to accommodation, the family had to provide daily food for the shepherd. He was given bread, milk, fish, sometimes butter and on better days also meat in the morning (KV 184: 24, Tartu). As the shepherd usually woke up first, at dawn, he did not breakfast with the family.

Wages were usually paid in food for winter and in garments, as well as in money, the so-called “tail money“. The wages were paid by every farm depending on the amount of their animals in the flock.

*Jõulukakk* (Christmas bread) was also a part of the wages. Christmas bread was food for the shepherd. It was given to him on Christmas and in some places during New Year’s – for example in Lamjala (ERM KV 184: 215). It was usually collected from the village by the shepherd himself.

*In addition to his main wages, the shepherd had the right to “Christmas bread“. In the morning of Christmas Day, the shepherd rode into the village to receive his Christmas beard. The farmer gave the shepherd Christmas beer, the farmer’s wife brought meat, sausage, a loaf of bread or other holiday food from the barn. The size of the “bread” depended on the kindness of the wife and was given in such an amount that the shepherd could not complain about the family being tight-fisted. The shepherd collected “bread” from several farms, enough for him for the holidays and even more. (ERM KV 138: 49)*

There were also cases where the shepherd worked longer than planned. When that happened, the farmer made a special deal with the shepherd. Shepherds have worked even 2 or 3 weeks over the end date in autumn. He was paid as agreed, in mittens, stockings and towels (ERM KV 184: 13).

The ways of delivering the wages varied. In some places, the wages were delivered in person. In some places, the shepherd had to collect the fee himself. In order to do that, he could borrow a horse or walk on foot from farm to farm.

There have also been cases when a deal was broken. Specifically, ending the agreement by the shepherd himself has been pointed out.

*I do not know of any cases where the shepherd was sacked in the middle of summer. I do know of several cases, however, where the shepherd himself has left mid-summer. The food and the family's attitude were said to be bad (KV 184: 15, Tartu).*

**The work of a shepherd in winter.** Older shepherds were also hired for winter. Herdsboys returned home for winter when the work was done or resumed their studies in the village school.

*The work of a shepherd started in April and lasted until the first days of October, after which, studies in the village school began (ERM KV 493: 190, Põltsamaa).*

In winter, the shepherd lived in his home or in a farm. The shepherd was busy with several types of handiwork in winter – made ladles, spoons, pins, tows, pipes, brooms; repaired the soles of footwear by sewing. Additionally, he helped to cut, saw and carry firewood.

**The day of a shepherd.** The day of a shepherd lasted from early morning till sundown. In the morning, the flock was brought out with the sunrise. In the village, the women had to let their animals out themselves and bring them to the village road. Those who were late had to bring their animals to the flock themselves. In spring, the flock was taken to a grassland, a forest or a bog. The flock usually remained on the grassland until summer holidays. After the summer holidays, the flock was kept on pastures, in a forest or on a fallow. In autumn, they were again brought back to grasslands, fields or stubble fields (ERM KV 184: 15).

The shepherd's responsibilities included several tasks: they had to make sure that the animals got fed and that no predators came to the pasture. During lunch break, the shepherd helped to distribute food to the animals. The responsibilities of a shepherd depended on the time of the year. In the middle of a workday, the shepherd's took a lunch break. The break depended much on whether there were cows in the herd in addition to sheep. At lunchtime, the cows

were milked. For that purpose, the shepherd had to bring the animals home. If the summer was hot, the herd was brought out in early morning and came home for lunch earlier. The responsibilities of shepherds after the end of a herding day depended on the family. In some places, shepherds were free in the evenings – for example in Tartu (ERM KV 184:15). At the same time, in Põlva the shepherd girl had to spin yarn with the women in the evening (ERM KV 493: 209).

Usually, a shepherd did not have a clock and determined lunchtime according to shadows:

*While he was with a herd, he learned the time by measuring his shadow on a sunny day: he had used a clock beforehand to determine the length of his shadow at different times. (ERM KV 493: 190)*

Sometimes the herd was out for a *long day*. It meant that the herd was not brought home for lunch.

*In autumn (in September), the herd was out for so-called long days: the herd was brought out at about 8 o'clock, the lunch break was about an hour or there was none and the herd was brought home at five or six o'clock in the evening. It should also be mentioned that at the time, the clock was one hour behind of what it is now (ERM KV 493: 190).*

Some shepherds also had a helper. It could be a dog or a person from the farm. The shepherd was helped either for only the first days or during the whole herding period.

**Shepherds' days off.** When a contract was entered into with a shepherd, 1-2 off days were sometimes included. It has been pointed out that St John's Day (23.06) was a day off. In some parts, Pentecost (10.05-14.06) was also free. If the shepherd had to be off on some other day, he had to find someone to replace him. But if the day off was decided upon before, the herd was looked after by the farmer or an older family member.

*I know of no customs on St John's Day in relation to herding, but in our parts the shepherd was given a holiday on St John's Day and somebody from the family herded instead from Midsummer's Eve to the end of Midsummer Day. The shepherd went to visit his home (ERM KV 184: 13).*

The things the shepherd did on that day varied. Some went home to rest on that day, some went to church. In Põltsamaa, for example, the shepherd went to church on his days off:

*The shepherd, either their own child or some other, certainly had Midsummer's Day off; an older person from the farm then went to herd and the shepherd had permission to go to a preaching in the church. If a horse was taken to go to church, the shepherd was taken on the carriage, but if the shepherd went on foot, he took his shoes off and only put them on near the church. It was easier to walk and the wear of the shoes was smaller (ERM KV 493: 194).*

**The clothing of a shepherd.** When the weather was fine, a male shepherd wore a light jacket or a coat on a shirt, and a straw hat or a cap on his head. If the weather happened to be rainy, he put a coat on the jacket and wore a felt hat. When the weather grew colder, he put on a sheepskin coat and a winter hat. Female shepherds wore shirts in summertime, later calico dresses and calico scarves. If the weather was cool, they wore a sweater and woollen stockings. For footwear, shepherds wore bast shoes or shoes and foot wraps. It is mentioned more often that the shepherds wore bast shoes. Usually a shepherd made their own footwear. At the same time, in Põltsamaa, for example, the farmer gave shoes to the shepherd: *a hired shepherd had their shoes given by the farmer. The shoes were made by the farmer himself, but boys had to braid the straps themselves from linen given by the farmer (ERM KV 493: 193).*

**Herding on islets.** Estonia is a flat country and there is no larger movement of herds from mountains to flatlands or vice versa. The only large movements of herds both in older times and today are crossing the sea to islets. In older times, sheep were grazed on poorer grasslands such as meadows, alvars and islets, and better pastures were reserved for cows and horses. In spring, the sheep of the whole village were gathered together and led to meadows or islets and in autumn, each farmer's wife had to identify their sheep and bring them back home. If the animals were on islets, there was no need to build fences. If the animals were on meadows that were always surrounded by sea from one side, where the animals could drink, then the other side was covered with a fence and a shelter was also built, which offered protection from rain and wind. According to the number of sheep, so-called sheep days had to be kept; it meant visiting the sheep to look after them and care for them. With the help of the Environmental Board, a few sheep owners now organise the transportation of animals to



protected islets, mostly so that the islets would not grow bosky and to preserve the low-grass habitat of waders. The sheep are also a sight for tourists who visit the islets, because today's city children have often not even seen live animals.

**Hierarchy and organization of shepherds.** In Estonia, shepherds did not constitute a separate social group. As there was usually only one shepherd per village, who communicated with his village, not with other shepherds, then the hierarchy and organisation of shepherds cannot really be talked about. The shepherd was usually among the poorest members of the village society. If a child assisted a shepherd, then the leading position still belonged to the shepherd. If several children went herding, then the leader was usually an older child.

**Local names.** If a shepherd only herded sheep, he was called a *lambakarjane*, *lambur*, *lambrine*, in manors *sihver*. If the shepherd was assisted by a farm child, the child was called a *karjakorraline*. If the shepherds were children, the name was *karjapoiss*.

### **Herding horn**

The shepherd had a horn. He used it when he went out with the herd in the morning and when he came home. The shepherd blew the horn when he came home, so that the owners of the herd would know to collect their animals. The herd scattered into farms from the village streets and road at lunchtime and in the evenings. The animals of every family went home by themselves (ERM KV 184: 15). Sometimes, the shepherd blew the horn while herding. All shepherds did not necessarily have a horn. It depended much on the shepherd himself, because he made the instrument. There was a wooden horn and an alder horn. Making an alder horn was easier and less time-consuming. The shepherd usually wore the horn under his arms or on his shoulder.

*The herding horn was made of aspen. The strength of the lower part of the horn was about 12-13 cm and the length 150 cm, the strength of the upper part (mouthpiece) was 4 cm. It was carved from raw aspen wood in the shape of the horn it was to become. Then it was sawn in two lengthwise, starting from the bottom. Only the upper part, about 10 cm, was left intact and near it, one side of the horn was cut crossways with a*

*saw. Now there were two parts, one 10 cm longer with an intact upper part, the other one shorter. Both sides of the horn were hollowed out with a chisel, knife and "kõmmeldi" so that it was hollow, rather thin and smooth. In the intact upper part of the longer side, a hole of about a centimetre was drilled in lengthwise. The mouthpiece was made with a knife. Now the sides were put together once again and surrounded by wickers, as is done with wooden things. Finally, a birchbark strip was wrapped around it strong and tight from up to bottom. Now it was blown to test the sound, the mouthpiece was adjusted and then the horn was ready. It is said that a real horn was used in the old days; it was short and with a loud and high-pitched sound. I have never seen such a horn (ERM KV 184: 15).*

**Herding rod.** The shepherd could also have a herding rod. He could use it to smite the animals when they started a fight or did not obey. The purpose of the rod was to frighten animals. Farmers' wives did usually not approve of the use of a rod.

*The herding rod was made of birch. The handle of the rod was of rowan and about a metre long. The rope was threewise, linen or hemp and 15 cm shorter than the handle, so that when waving or clapping, it would not reach the shepherd's hand (ERM KV 184: 15).*

**Shepherd's knife.** A shepherd usually carried a knife. The blade was typically about 10 cm long. When carrying the knife, the shepherd held it in the pocket of his coat, in a knife sheath, attached to the belt or in his bag.

The shepherd used his knife to predict his meal. Based on how the knife fell, he was given either porridge or butter.

*If the shepherd lets the knife drop from his hand and it falls with its blade in the ground, then he gets butter (ERA, H II 21, 28 (27)).*

*Shepherd children predict what they get to eat in the evening by throwing their knife on the ground. If it falls lengthwise, then it is porridge, if not, then something else (ERA, H II 54, 566 (66)).*

When herding, the shepherd could make different things – men used to make baskets, sheaves, shoes, hats; women used to knit stockings, mittens etc. The things made when

herding were made either for their own use or according to a commission from the village or the farm. Whether the shepherd got paid for his products depended on the agreement made with the farmer or the village.

*Items made when herding belonged to the shepherd and he could sell, exchange or give them out to everyone he wanted. Some of those items were commissioned, such as brooms, baskets and sheaves. The items produced when herding were paid for according to an agreement, with a few kopecks (ERM KV 184: 15).*

### **Markings of sheep in the herd.**

*As it was usually hard to distinguish between animals from different farms, women used to make different markings on their sheep. For example, every woman had cut a different mark in the left or right side of the sheep or in their right ear (ERM KV 184: 15).*

**Washing the sheep.** Before the sheep are sheared, their wool is washed. Washing the sheep was usually the responsibility of women, children and shepherds. Washing traditions vary by the time of the year and the geographic location. In summer and in spring, it was common for the sheep to be washed in the sea or in the nearest body of water. 1–4 days before shearing, the sheep were washed. After washing, they dried on the pasture or in a cleaned barn. In some places, the sheep dried for several days, in others the shearing took place the next day. "Soft" water is usually preferred for washing wool (ERM V II:1285). Soft water usually means either rain water or melted snow.

In Häädemeeste, the process of washing sheep was described as follows:

*The sheep were washed in river holes, in places near the sea. The sheep were driven into water, the washer put the sheep's head between her legs and washed its behind. Then the sheep was turned around and washed from the front. In winter, the sheep were not washed, except for St. Catherine's shearing in rare cases. Warm water was brought in tubs, one person poured water from the tub on the sheep, another one washed. Washing was done about two or three days before shearing. The shepherd had to look after the sheep, so that they would not get dirty again (ERM KV 60/61: 207).*

Generally, it appears that it was preferred to wash the wool while it was still on the sheep. It was believed that then the wool would be soft and would not shrink.

*In older days, the wool was not washed, but the sheep were washed in the sea. If you wash the wool on the sheep, it does not shrink, but if you wash wool, then it will (ERA, RKM II 346, 345 (7)).*

*When washed with sea water, the wool is beautiful and clean. It dried in the wind. After washing, the sheep were sheared. It is not good for the wool to wash it afterwards (ERA, RKM II 86, 375/ 6 (16)).*

*It was better if the sheep were washed before shearing. The sheep were driven into Lake Peipus. They were washed with soap. Afterwards, when they had dried, they were sheared on the second or third day. The wool of the third day was the best. In winter, the sheep were put in a clean barn. If it was dirty, their bellies were cleaned of dirt. Once the sheep were sheared, the shearer spat in his palm three times, stroked the sheep three times woolwise (head to tail). It was done three times. Why it was done, I do not know. They also do this nowadays (ERA, RKM II 27, 396 (148)).*

For this work, the lunar phase was considered important. The washing and shearing of sheep had to occur during new moon.

*Sheep were sheared three times. In spring, when it was warm and the sheep went outside, shearing always took place during new moon. When they were sheared, they were washed. They were washed before shearing and again afterwards (ERA, RKM II 75, 313 (4)).*

It has also been pointed out that if the wind was soft, there was hope that the wool would also be soft.

*When the sheep are washed and the lamb is first brought in water, soft wind is always sought after. Then it will become a sheep with nice soft wool (ERA II 289, 234 (14)).*

Wool washing is still mainly a domestic craft. In coastal areas, the wool is often washed in the sea; inland, pressure washers and thick grids are used. If there is clear and windy weather, the wool is dried outside. An old custom is to wash the sheep in the sea. In old times they were also washed in ponds, streams and peat holes. It is better to shear washed sheep, and the wool washed when it is still on the sheep will not mat, Dried chunks of manure and dirt will also

wash away from the wool in 10–15 minutes. When washing sheep, detergents are not used. While the washed sheep dries by the same evening or the next morning in windy weather, wool washed in a basin takes at least 3–4 days to dry.

However, sheep washing is not a common sight nowadays. It is mostly done in case of wool sheep grown by artisans and in small flocks. The owners of large mutton sheep herds do not use wool; it is either composted or burnt.

### **Shearing the sheep**

To obtain wool, sheep have to be sheared. The word *niitma* (to mow) has also been used for shearing. Sheep are sheared 2–4 times a year. In earlier times – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – it was customary to shear sheep four times. Shearing was usually connected with holidays: Shrove Tuesday, St. Catherine's Day, St. George's Day and Midsummer Day. Over time, the number of shearings has decreased. Specific reasons have not been mentioned. When shearing, sheep irons were used; they were also called sheep shears and shearing irons.

Sheep shears were made by local smiths. It has been mentioned that during the Tsarist Era, shears were also brought from Sweden. One could buy them from stores. The shears made by local smiths were big and clumsy, and were bought from fairs (ERM KV: 94 190).

Many different beliefs and traditions have been related to the use of sheep shears:

*Sheep shears were put into sheep barns so that wool would grow well and be long and fine* (ERA II 234, 63 (5)).

*When sheep were sheared, their irons were used to cut hair – it was said to make hair grow well* (ERA, RKM II 349, 440 (26)).

*Once the shearing begins, a bit of wool is first cut from the sheep's head with the shears and put into the sheep's mouth, so that they would not fear the shears and struggle* (ERA II 308, 431 (4)).

If the family did not have their own sheep shears, shears were borrowed from neighbours. But certain customs applied to borrowing. *If sheep shears are borrowed from another person, a handful of wool should be put between the shears when bringing them back, otherwise the owner of the shears could inflict damage on the shearer, if he hits the stove with the shears*

*and at the same time declares what bad things he wants to happen to the other. Thus a woman had hit the stove with shears when they were brought back empty and said, "You shall be as empty as these shears!". Spring came and the sheep of the woman who had borrowed the shears died one by one (ERA, H II 57, 553 (149).*

For the time of shearing, the head of the sheep was held between the shearer's legs. It has been mentioned that in old times, when there were no shears, the wool was torn out. After shearing the belly, the legs of the sheep were tied up with a belt, cloth or rope – so that the work would go on more smoothly. The exact manner of tying the legs together varies from place to place. Smaller sheep herds are sheared with sheep irons even today, but large herds are visited by special machine shearers. A sheep shearing service is officially provided in Estonia by seven people or companies, but once every summer, sheep shearers from New Zealand also come to Estonia.

Sheep were raised in farms in the countryside during the Soviet period as well. Firstly, wool was needed and meat could be used for different kinds of food. Each family mostly had 5–10 sheep. Village sheep were kept together as people were not allowed to feed them on the land of a collective farm. Sheep-shearing was a great undertaking. Sheep were sheared twice a year – in spring and in autumn before bringing them to the barn. If there was a water body, a river or a pond nearby, sheep were washed there. In the absence of a water body, sheep were washed at home, in a bath but in the yard. Nevertheless, there were cases when sheep were sheared without having been washed beforehand. Much more work had to be done with unwashed wool, as this wool had to be soaked for a longer time and a detergent had to be used. Washed wool was of higher value and it gave better yarn, and its price was considerably higher as well. When wool had been washed, it was put on a rack in a windy place to dry. Wool could not be dried in the sun as then it became brittle. After shearing, wool was sorted. Wool from the underbelly, legs and head had to be soaked for a longer time (ERM, 2011).

In the old days, wool was an important raw material for producing textiles; today it is often a cumbersome by-product that is difficult to get rid of. For the health of the sheep, they have to be sheared even if there are no plans to use the obtained wool. The frequency of shearing depends on the purpose of raising the sheep and the sheep breed. For the sheep in Estonia, one shearing a year is usually sufficient. It should take place in spring – in April or May –, but definitely before warm summer weather. Sheep with faster-growing wool are sheared several

times a year, usually in spring and autumn. The total amount of wool obtained from two shearings is also larger than that from one shearing. It has been proven that shearing ewes some weeks before giving birth reduces the mortality rate of lambs.

Most of the sheep in Estonia are sheared with a special shearing machine. Shearing with a machine is done quickly; shearing one sheep takes about ten minutes. It is also unnecessary to tie the sheep, because a professional shearer can lock the sheep, adjusting his or the sheep's position as needed. A professional shearer separates the wool from the belly and leaves the rest in one pile. The rubbish-filled neck wool and dirty bottom wool is also extracted, but a more detailed sorting is usually performed later.

When packing the wool in bags, dark and white wool is usually placed in different bags, as is the case with lamb wool, which is the softest and finest. If the sheared flock is very "coloured" – of different colours, different breeds and with different wool quality – the wool can be assorted into different sorts (brown, light grey, black, double etc.) or all types of wool can be packed in different bags with markings of the name or number of the sheep. The latter option is especially tempting for artisans who spin their own yarn, because this way it is possible to process every type of wool differently and make wool with a "name": the yarn can be named after the sheep from which the wool originates (<http://maavillane.ee>).

**Feeding and watering sheep.** In old times, the sheep were only given additional food in the winter barn period. Sheep received marsh hay, sheaves, pea stems etc. Sheep were usually given the worst quality hay. It was cut in summer with a scythe. If the weather was good, the hay could be dried on the ground, but in case of rain it was piled up. The dried hay was brought to a barn located on the grassland, or if there was none, put in a stack. The hay was brought home in winter according to need. The hay was transported in winter because in summer, there was urgent fieldwork to be done, while there was more time in winter. Marsh grasslands were also frozen in winter and thus more accessible, and a sleigh could carry more hay than a carriage.

Making sheep sheaves is an old custom and it was still vital a few decades ago in the collective farm era. The most common sheave tree was ash, which grew shoots well. On Estonian islands, old truncated ashes, whose top was cut off every few years to make sheaves for animals, can still be seen. The stump grew a new crown and the process was repeated in a

few years' time. Sheaves were also made from other deciduous trees, such as linden, birch, maple and buckthorn. Sheep sheaves were left to dry under the barn and used to feed the sheep in winter.

Nowadays, sheep get no additional food when on pastures, but they are given salt and minerals.

A small amount of additional food is mostly necessary in summer to keep the sheep docile. As these days, sheep are freely herded even in winter, feeding the animals usually takes place on a feeding spot outside near the barn, where balls of hay are put in the snow or in special ball holders to avoid the excessive waste of hay. In winter, the animals are also given silage and pea, oat or barley flour. Sheep prefer to eat fine forest grass. Sheep were watered when they were brought home from pastures. As the villages were usually located near bodies of water, the animals were allowed to drink from a natural body of water. If there were none, the animals were watered with water taken from the village well in large cans. Often, there was a body of water near or on the pasture and the animals could drink from there.

In coastal areas, sheep are usually watered from the sea or other natural water bodies, thus making the shepherd's life easier. If there is no body of water nearby, the water has to be transported to the pasture in different cans. In winters, water dispensers with electric heating are used in cold barns.

**Manure.** Sheep manure is not held to be a good fertiliser by people. In old times, sheep manure was composted for at least two years before bringing it to the fields. Nowadays, more airing is used when composting, which speeds up the process noticeably. Several sheep farmers have said that instead of paying manure handling fees they grow pumpkins on fresh manure piles.

**Dogs.** A herding dog helped the shepherd. Often, the dog belonged to the shepherd. Herding with sheepdogs is nowadays more used in Estonia than before. No dog breeds have been developed or used specifically for sheep herding and protection; common livestock guardian dogs could be of help to the shepherd, but they were not bred or trained specifically. These days, Border Collies are used for herding. They are mainly brought from England, the



Netherlands and Finland. The first 200 Border Collies were brought to Estonia in the 1980s. To protect the herd from wolves, dogs of the Maremma Abruzzo breed, Spanish mastiffs and Central Asian sheepdogs are used. There are many Caucasian sheepdogs in Estonia, but there is no information about any of them working with sheep. They are rather used for guarding the home.

**Danger and protection.** Wolves have constituted the greatest threat to sheep in Estonia. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wolves destroyed 1/6 of the sheep. The shepherd had no weapon against wolves; he could only frighten them or bring the herd home. Sheepdogs also helped to drive away the wolf. It is known that spikes have been put on their neck straps so that wolves would not be able to kill them that easily. To frighten the wolves, herding horns, rattles and yelling were used. Wolf damages were reduced by bringing the sheep home for the night, where they were held in a shelter or in a paddock. Wolves were usually hunted in winter, when their tracks were visible on the snow. They were hunted with weapons, and different traps and pitfalls were used as well.

Nowadays, sheep are kept outside for all day long in summer. To drive away wolves, electric fences at least 1.5 m high with several wires and sheepdogs with special training are used.

To protect against unfavourable weather, sheep were held inside in winter. In Western Estonia and on the islands, different animal species had different barns. In Eastern and Southern Estonia, the most proper structure was the cattle shed, while sheep were held in small compartments built adjacent to the cattle shed or to the wall of another building. Animals were also held in the threshing barn in winter. If the sheep happened to give birth during cold weather, the animal giving birth was brought to the threshing floor and newborn lambs were kept there for some time.

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