

**FATTENING PERFORMANCE AND MEAT
CHARACTERISTICS OF LAMBS FROM THE BREEDS
REARED IN CENTRAL BALKAN MOUNTAINS REGION**

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ABSTRACT

A comparative trial was conducted to determine fattening performance, meat production and quality traits of lambs from the following breeds: Karakachanska, Srednostaroplaninska and Tetevenska. The lambs were weaned at 45 days of age, and then fattened for 100 days indoors, in order to obtain high quality carcasses for exportation.

The Staroplaninska lambs featured faster growth, averaged 0.240 kg/day for males and 0.214 kg/day for female ones. The median feed consumption per 1 kg of weight gain was 5.26 FU for the male lambs and 5.63 FU for the females. Their carcasses had the highest meat yield, 54.55%, and lowest bone percentage compared to the Karakachanska and Tetevenska breeds.

The sheep breeds raised in the Central Balkan Mountains proved ability to produce suckling lambs matching the specifications of the European standards, intended for commercial realization in younger age and at high price.

The meat of the Karakachanska lambs had the best water retaining capacity, tenderness and fat content in the muscle tissue – traits that are highly valued by consumers.

When raised indoors, the Karakachanska lambs accomplished weight gain of 1 kg from 5.68 FU for males, and 6.17 FU for females. For Srednostaroplaninska lambs these figures were less by 7.40% for the males, and by 8.75% for the females, respectively, and in Tetevenska lambs were less by 3.88% (males) and 2.24% (females).

Key words: *milk characteristics, fattening performance, Karakachanska breed lambs, Srednostaroplaninska breed lambs, Tetevenska breed lambs*