

# COMPARISON OF THE FLEECE PRODUCTION OF TWO EXTENSIVE FRENCH SHEEP GENOTYPES

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Sheep fleece became problematic Europe-wide for many reasons, including its very low price. From an animal welfare standpoint, the thick fleece may cause discomfort for the sheep as it can be a welcoming environment for parasites and may cause heat stress during hot summer days; therefore, annual shearing is necessary for most sheep genotypes. Physiologically, growing fleece and maintaining normal body temperature to decrease heat stress distract resources from producing valuable products such as meat. Thus, we aimed to compare the fleece production of two meat-type sheep genotypes from South-France, Berrichon du Cher (Berrichon) and Blanc du Massif Central (BMC), which have relatively little fleece production but thrive in the local Hungarian weather. Furthermore, we fill the gap by providing data on the fleece production of meat-type sheep in Hungary. A total of 180 sheep ewes were included in the data collection (N=99 Berrichon and N=81 BMC). Data was collected at the annual shearing by a digital scale measuring the weight of fleece originating from the back and shoulders. Student's t test determined the differences in fleece weight between genotypes. Significance was set at  $P < 0,05$ . The average fleece production of BMC ewes was 1,66 kg, which was significantly ( $P = 0,0001$ ) less than that of Berrichon ewes (2,4 kg). Based on the results, further study is needed to study the performance of BMC ewes with little fleece and their lambs' in order to improve performance indices and increase profit.