

Holmsætra

Monday, August 14 - Mountain farming and dairying (M2)

Facts

Category: Traditional mountain farm
Location: Tretten in Gudbrandsdalen, Oppland County
Year built: 1834
Production: 75 nanny goats
Milk quota: 56,000 litres goat milk
Size of the farm: 5 hectares

Site and buildings

Holmsætra lies 900 meters above sea level in eastern Gudbrandsdalen. The mountain farm is located on the steep slopes of this great valley. Holmsætra was built in 1834 and has been continuously used ever since. The main building is restored and preserved as it appeared in the 19th century.

Management of the farm

Goat production has always been an important part of the production at Holmsætra. The goats kid early in January and milk until late September. From approximately the 20th of June until mid September the goats stay at Holmsætra. The mountain farm also has access to 5 hectares rented pasture-land. Milk from the farm goes to a regional dairy and is used to produce the famous "Gudbrandsdal Cheese", a whey cheese made from both goat and cow milk.

Jorunn Hagen (54) runs the farm with her husband. They took over the farm in 1983 and have two daughters who are 18 and 20 years old. Jorunn works part time (60%) as a production manager at TINE, while her husband is a full-time farmer. In 2002, the goat herd obtained an clearance through a project called "Healthier Goats".

Traditional mountain farming

Mountain farming has long traditions in Norway, dating back to when the very first farmer in Norway adopted the cow as a farm animal approximately 6000 years ago. Mountain farming and the culture associated with this lifestyle have inspired much of the Norwegian literature, fairy-tales, folk music and songs, painting and local myths and stories.

A traditional Norwegian mountain farm like Holmsætra has normally one owner, who runs the farm with traditional working methods and old equipment. Many mountain farms produce milk, butter, cheese and sour cream, and the products are often locally sold to tourists and at local grocery shops.

Most of the Norwegian mountain farms are for cows, but some also keep goats. Goat production is rather small in Norway, with a total goat population of only 47,000. Mountain farming and grazing farm animals have many positive effects on the cultural landscape. Grazing prevents the landscape from overgrowing and has positive effects on the Norwegian landscape, and therewith also aids tourism. Goats are known as effective scrub removers.

Today only 1300 mountain farms are in operation in the Norwegian mountain wilds. The counties of Oppland and Hedmark are the two regions with most mountain farms, with respectively 510 and 240 units. Within the past decade, there has been a negative trend, with frequent close-downs of old traditional mountain farms. Forty years ago there were about 30 mountain farms in the area where Holmsætra is located today. Now only 2 mountain farms are left.

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