

“Putkisaloon kartano” farm, Rantasalmi, Finland

Source: Michael Den Herder

The “Putkisaloon kartano” farm is located 300 km north of Helsinki in the Finnish Lake District. The farm is managed by the farmers Susanna Nuutinen and Mikael Westerstråhle. It is a very diverse farm. The farm produces sheep for breeding and meat production, lamb meat and cereals. The farm also has some forest for timber production and manages traditional rural landscapes.

Two different sheep breeds are kept at the farm: Dorset and FinnDorset. Dorset is a fast growing breed, has a good milk production and is an efficient and peaceful grazer. Dorset sheep are kept and sold for crossbreeding. Dorset sheep are crossbred with Finnsheep (Suomenlammas), this results in an economic and easy-care breed called FinnDorset which is excellent for meat production. Crossbreeding with a third breed can further improve the result, for example Texel or Oxford Down.

Sheep dogs are joyful companions and a great help in herding the sheep. They greatly reduce the workload at the farm. Putkisaloon kartano also breeds sheep dogs (Border collies) and offers sheep dog training which starts when the dogs are still puppies. It is the best to start the training very early to avoid mistakes being made in the first year of the dog's life which may destroy the dog's interest in herding. The training is not only for the dogs; Shepherders should also attend the same training. For the best chance of success, the training programme includes the whole education package and training for both the dog and its owner. Shepherders from many countries have attended sheep dog training courses at the farm.



Figure 1. Inka ready to go to work (above) and Inka at work (below)



Figure 2. Wool pasture near the lake



Figure 3 . Horses grazing at a wood pasture with Scots pine

The farm also manages traditional rural biotopes, including 20 hectares of wood pasture, some of which has been there for more than 200 years. Traditional wood pastures are among the most bio-diverse habitats in northern Europe. With proper management, grazed areas have in general higher biodiversity compared to areas without grazing, and therefore it is very important to maintain the grazing management. The wood pasture belonging to Putkisalokartano are grazed by sheep, cows and horses. Lambs are born in February or March and they go with their mothers to the pastures around mid-May where they can graze the whole summer. Two Finnhorses (Suomenhevonen), Jessela and Palomi, take care of the management of 5 hectares of wood pasture. In addition to the farm's own horses, other horses also graze on these pastures. Furthermore, Putkisalokartano has an agreement with the Finnish Forest and Park Service to rent sheep for management of the grazing areas in the nearby Linnansaari National Park which is situated in Lake Haukivesi. The sheep are taken to the island by boat.



Figure 4 . Wool in different colours. Credit: Sampo Luukkainen

The farm shop offers special and quality products which are hard to find in the normal supermarket. There is lamb meat, lamb sausages, sheepskins, wool for knitting and hand-made woollen blankets.

Rural landscapes have a very important function in preserving our cultural heritage. In addition to the wood pasture, at Putkisalo kartano there are several historical buildings. The owners of the farm have done and are still doing a tremendous job in restoring these buildings to their former glory so that in years to come younger generations can enjoy what a Finnish farm and its surroundings landscapes once looked like.

There are open regular days at the farm where you can watch, for example, the new-born lambs or a sheep dog at work. For more information on Putkisalon kartano, please have a look at the farm's [website](#) or [facebook](#).

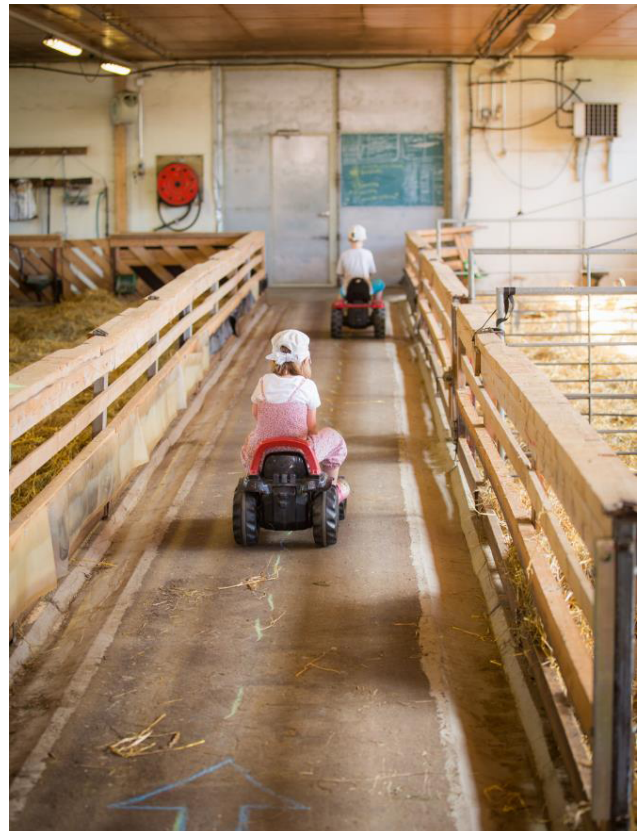


Figure 5. Driving a tractor. Credit: Sampo Luukkainen



Figure 6. Open day at Purkisalo. Credit: Sampo Luukkainen