

FARM 'HORNÍ KONEC'

A fire-ruined farm with big plans.

Identification data:

Name: Vojtěch and Karolína Holl

Location: Police, Czechia

Farm size: 3 ha of own land, 7 leased

Year established: 2016

They breed: poultry, sheep, greater rhea

Web / Facebook / Twitter: <https://www.farmahornikonec.cz/>

The farm is located at the foot of the Hostýn Hills in the small village of Police, 7 km from Valašské Meziříčí in the Zlín Region.

In total, Vojtěch and Karolína manage approximately 10 ha of land, of which 7 ha are leased from private owners. They breed black East Frisian sheep, Quessant mini sheep and Zwartbles sheep. There is also a pony and two donkeys on the farm. It is also possible to meet poultry and rheas on the farm. They use the land either for grazing or for producing their own hay, resp. haylage.

They both started farming in 2016, when they slowly took over the land and beef cattle from Vojtech parents. Thanks to the possibility of obtaining subsidies from the Rural Development Program ("Young Farmer" program), they compiled a detailed business plan and expanded their herd by goats and sheep. They also bought 2 ponies for fun. Until then, the couple had only cattle experience, so they learned everything on their own in their free time. They both had own professions.

The grant application was successful. The aim of the business plan was to build a small family farm on breeding and later processing of Aberdeen Angus beef cattle, dairy products from goat and sheep milk and egg production. Slowly, Vojtěch and Karolína learned how to milk goats and sheep and process milk into dairy products. They built a milk processing plant in their own house.

On the farm, they organized professional excursions for the public, environmental programs for family centres, children from kindergartens and primary schools.

In December 2018, a tragic event took place in the form of a large fire. Stables for animals, a workshop and the entire barn, including newly purchased machines from the subsidy, burned down. At that time, the location was newly purchased, so buildings were not properly insured, or the insurance did not cover fire damage. After consulting with the managers of the local paying agency (SZIF Olomouc), Vojtěch and Karolína withdrew from the project. Approximately CZK 600 thousand (EUR 24 thousand) was already paid from the subsidy, another CZK 1 million (EUR 40 thousand) have already been invested in the pre-financing of the approved plan. At the same time the damage amounted to about CZK 700 thousand (27 thousand EUR). The fire destroyed many, 5-year sustainability could not be met as well as they did not have enough capital to finalise all goals, targets they promised to reach.

The family had to sell a whole herd of cattle (about 20 pieces) and goats. Unfortunately, due to the withdrawal from the project, the family began to face penalties for delays associated with the return of the amount they received already. Thus, they had to sell a large part of the land to return the subsidy.

Even though they are in debt, they still have not stopped farming. The farm is not so nice, the consequences are still visible, but visitors can still find 7 sheep, 5 greater rheas, poultry and 2 donkeys on the farm.

After two years of restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic, the family is trying to revive excursions and environmental programs for children. They still mow the leased land for hay and silage. As

they no longer have own machines, they contract those activities as a service. We try to sell the surplus to cover at least some of the costs associated with renting the land.

In addition to his activities on the farm, Vojtěch is engaged in excavation work, Karolína continues in project and subsidy management not only in agriculture, but also in public administration, profit and non-profit sector.

The plans remain. The expansion of activities to process our own production of beef and dairy products from goat's and sheep's milk is still the current goal of the family. At the same time, the couple wants to expand the farm with afternoon circles, suburban camps, or a small farm kindergarten.

Photos:

