

WOOL MAN SHEEP

A film by Walter Aigner



Film still © Walter Aigner

11 countries. 2 shepherds. 14 voices.

They protect our landscapes - we burn their wool.

Is Europe's sustainability just an empty promise?

Austria 2026 | 64 min 53 sec | DCP 2K | 5.1 | Colour

The film

SYNOPSIS

At the heart of Europe lies a strange contradiction: while we talk about sustainability and the circular economy, more than half of our wool - one of the most natural and versatile raw materials - is thrown away or burnt.

WOOL MAN SHEEP follows two traditional shepherds in Transylvania over the course of a year. Their daily lives provide the narrative thread connecting 14 interviews from eleven countries. Shepherds, scientists, designers, craftspeople, textile companies and brands explain how a valuable material became waste, and reveal the potential it still holds.

Sheep maintain our cultural landscapes, support biodiversity and help prevent erosion and fires. Yet these vital contributions receive little recognition. Many shepherds are struggling to survive.

The film reveals the value of wool that society fails to recognise. What is missing is knowledge, infrastructure and regional value chains. Valuing wool again means preserving a raw material. It also means caring for landscapes, sheep breeds, crafts and cultures, and supporting a more sustainable way of living with nature.

FILM INFORMATION

Documentary Austria | 2026

Running time 64 minutes 53 seconds

Screening format DCP

Resolution 2K

Sound 5.1

Image Colour

Aspect ratio 1.85:1

Frame rate 24 fps

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Original title

die WOLLE der MENSCH das SCHAF

International title

WOOL MAN SHEEP

Narrator

Frank Langrish

Original interview languages

English, German, Italian, French, Romanian

Language versions

German, English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian

Subtitles in the German version

For interviews in languages other than German

Production and self-distribution

Walter Aigner

Walter Aigner

WHY I MADE THIS FILM

I grew up with wool. Before I was born, my father founded a small carpet factory in Thüringen, in the Austrian region of Vorarlberg. Later, he asked me to join the business and take it over. For almost 25 years, I did so with great pleasure and commitment. The smell of wool still brings back memories.

In 2021, a phone call from Harald Krassnitzer prompted me to take a fresh look at European wool. A shepherd had told him that he threw his wool away. I began researching and travelling around Europe to understand how such a versatile raw material could lose its value. Along the way, I taught myself filmmaking.

Originally, I wanted to give something back to the wool that had given my family and me so much. During filming, this also became a way of thanking the shepherds. Only by spending time with them did I come to understand how much their daily work means to our landscapes and our society.

Over five years, this became my first documentary. I want to bring people into cinemas, show them these connections and then discuss with them what future we want for wool, shepherding and our cultural landscapes.



Walter Aigner
© Walter Aigner



During filming
© Karina Barb

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Walter Aigner is a former handweaver and Austrian entrepreneur who grew up with wool. After leaving the craft behind, a phone call in 2021 about the fate of unused wool in Europe unexpectedly led him to documentary filmmaking. For five years, he travelled across the continent, accompanying shepherds, shearers and specialists while learning to make films. The result was WOOL MAN SHEEP, completed in 2026. The film is his way of giving something back to wool, sheep, their shepherds and Europe's cultural landscapes - and of showing that restoring the value of this raw material can help create a better future.

Filmography: 2026 - WOOL MAN SHEEP. Documentary, 64 minutes 53 seconds. First documentary.

Conversation with the director

What specific moment led you to make this film?

It began with a phone call from the Austrian actor Harald Krassnitzer. He knew me from my years in carpet production and called with a challenge: ‘Walter, you have to do something with wool!’ On a walk, he had met a shepherd with his flock and asked him: ‘What do you do with the wool?’ The shepherd looked him up and down and replied: ‘Throw it away. What else?’

My first reaction was to laugh out loud. But over the course of our hour-long conversation, the idea of a documentary began to take shape. After the first eight weeks of research, I knew I wanted to develop this story myself, on a European scale, without a predetermined budget limit. I wanted to take the time to explore the connections.

How did you gain access to people and build their trust?

I have known Adrian, the shepherd we follow on his seasonal migration, since 2015. His life, his work and his family have stayed with me ever since. I met Nicolae, the second shepherd, through the mayor of his small mountain village.

Trust grew through many visits and conversations, the first photographs and early attempts at filming. To reach Nicolae, I drove a specially adapted SUV into the remote mountain region and slept on the floor of his hut. With both shepherds, I helped with the work, shared meals and spent a great deal of time together. This built the trust that allowed me to spend hours quietly observing events with my camera.

I already knew some of the wool specialists and designers from my years in carpet production. I found most of the others through research. With one exception, I visited everyone several times or for longer periods. For the final interviewee, I made a special trailer in autumn 2024. I wanted to show that, as a first-time filmmaker, I could deliver compelling images and a story to go with them. Ten minutes after he watched the trailer, he agreed to the interview.



Transhumance in Transylvania. © Walter Aigner



Adrian Martin. © Walter Aigner

Conversation with the director

Why did you choose this cinematic form?

I have taken photographs all my life and told stories as a carpet producer and seller. But few things capture our attention as completely as immersing ourselves in a film. From the outset, I wanted to make a compact documentary that would leave room for a conversation after the cinema screening. The film should convey a wealth of information and impressions, while also allowing time to reflect and discuss them together.

What changed your original perspective during filming?

I began with the idea that we needed a Europe-wide recovery programme for wool - a kind of Marshall Plan for wool. After just over a year, two further insights emerged: how important the work of shepherds and their animals is, and that subsidies alone cannot solve the underlying problem in today's market.

For me, that problem lies in unfair competition from synthetic fibres. Pollution from microplastics and chemicals harms our environment and, ultimately, us. At the same time, questions about disposing of these fibres remain unresolved. There is also competition between grazing systems and intensive livestock farming, which can produce more uniform meat more quickly. The future of wool therefore cannot be considered separately from the future of shepherding.

What difficult decisions did you face while filming or editing?

As a first-time filmmaker, you naturally shoot far too much. My biggest challenges were choosing the interviews, distilling them to their essence and shaping a story carried by the work of the two shepherds through the seasons.

My editor, Gerd Berner, faced a particular challenge. He had to work through a huge amount of footage and assemble sequences suitable for the cinema. An experienced filmmaker would certainly have given him more focused and better-prepared material.

Then there were our different perspectives: Gerd's urban view of sheep and wool met mine. I have spent most of my life in the countryside, grew up with wool and then spent five years working closely with shepherds. What seemed obvious to me often was not obvious to him. These differences shaped our work on the film together.

What question still occupies you now that the film is finished?

How can we, as a society, place effective limits on an industrial and financial complex as powerful as the oil industry and its associated industries? For the sake of our future, and so that this planet remains a place where we humans can live in a healthy environment.

Credits and contributors

ENGLISH VERSION

Production, direction, cinematography, writing, lighting and sound

Walter Aigner

Idea

Walter Aigner & Harald Krassnitzer

Narrator

Frank Langrish

English translation

Frank Langrish & Walter Aigner

Editor

Gerd Berner

Music

Thomas Kathriner

Sound studio

BLAUTÖNE Post Produktion

Sound mix

Ingo Pusswald

Voice recording

Eli Seidler

Sound supervisor

Jakob Studnicka

Sound post-production lead

Eva Reithofer

Sound post-production supervisor

Thomas Kathriner

Color grading

David Hughes, 61 color grading

Motion graphics

daniel budka herta produziert

Production assistance - Transhumance

Karina Barb, Peter Vidrighin

Production assistance - Mount Dobrun

Toni Poplacean

Production assistance - Sibillini Mountains

Kresna Dara

Titles, end credits, subtitles and on-screen text

Walter Aigner

Graphic design

bap.cc

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THE SHEPHERDS

Adrian Martin

Romania

Nicolae Poplacean

Romania

INTERVIEWS

Jörg Steiner

Austria

Sabine Budde

Germany

Ramón Cobo

Spain

Éléonore Bricca

France

Friedrich Baur

Switzerland

Rosa Pomar

Portugal

Charlotte Janssen

Sweden

Christien Meindertsma

Netherlands

Luca Battaglini

Italy

Sindy Throude

France

Andrew Hogley

United Kingdom

Adrian Martin

Romania

Paolo Paoletti

Italy

Pier Luigi Loro Piana

Italy

Film stills



Winter transhumance, Transylvania.



Burning wool, Transylvania.



Wool sorting at British Wool.



Rosa Pomar, Portugal.



Transhumance in Spain.

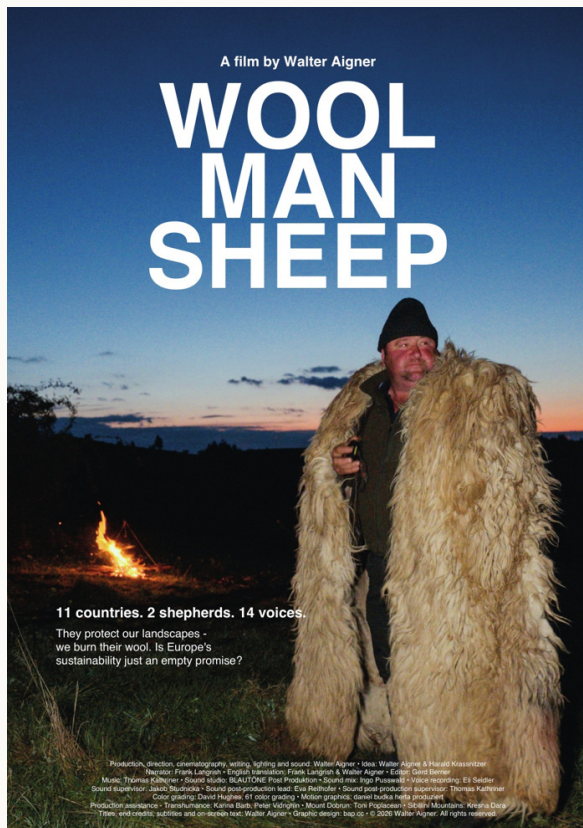


Valais Blacknose sheep, Switzerland.

All film stills © Walter Aigner.

[Download press images and other materials](#)

Press and contact



Film poster

Photo © Walter Aigner · Design bap.cc

TRAILER AND MATERIALS

[Watch the English trailer](#)

[Download press images](#)

woolmansheep.com

Film information and screenings

A protected screener is available on request for press and film programmers.

CONTACT

Press, interview and screening enquiries

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Photo credits: Walter Aigner. Photos of Walter Aigner during filming: Karina Barb.

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

30 May 2026

FICS - International Film Festival Santarém

Santarém, Portugal. Premiere at the invitation of the festival dedicated to rural life.

15 October 2026

Festival du Film Pastoralismes & Grands Espaces

Grenoble, France. Screening.

22 October 2026

Astra Film Festival

International documentary film festival, Sibiu, Romania. Screening.