



ENDANGERED LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY BREEDS

Conservation Information Sheet

Biology Series

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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WHAT IS AN ENDANGERED LIVESTOCK BREED?

It is difficult to imagine that farm animals could be in danger of extinction. However, according to experts at the United Nations, almost one-third of all livestock breeds are in danger of becoming extinct. These endangered animals are known as “heritage breeds.” These breeds provide a reserve of genetic diversity for farmers throughout the world.

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) monitors the status of livestock and poultry breeds throughout North America. They categorize endangered heritage breeds into Critical, Rare, and Watch.

“Critical” livestock breeds are defined as fewer than 200 North American annual registrations and an estimated population of less than 2,000 in the world. “Critical” poultry breeds are defined as fewer than 1,000 breeding females in the United States.

“Rare” livestock breeds are defined as fewer than 1,000 annual registrations in North America and an estimated world population of less than 5,000 animals. “Rare” poultry breeds are defined as fewer than 2,000 breeding females in the United States.

“Watch” livestock breeds are heritage breeds with fewer than 2,500 annual registrations in North America and an estimated world population of less than 10,000 animals. “Watch” poultry breeds have less than 10,000 breeding females in the United States.

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT ENDANGERED LIVESTOCK BREEDS?

Heritage breeds have many valuable qualities that are important to preserve. Some breeds produce a



larger number of offspring or tolerate extreme weather conditions better than common breeds

Some heritage breeds have longer life spans or possess better disease resistances than common breeds.

Modern agricultural practices favor a handful of highly specialized livestock breeds. For example 90% of the dairy cattle in the U.S. today are Holsteins and the number one egg-laying chicken breed, the Leghorn, dominates the poultry industry. If a specialized disease attacked these breeds, our food supply would be drastically affected. Just like in our natural landscapes, it is important to maintain genetic diversity. These over-looked heritage breeds could hold the genetic keys for the future of agriculture.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Tables 1 and 2 identify the endangered livestock and poultry breeds in the United States as recognized by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. The ALBC provides information regarding each one of these endangered breeds. By contacting them (See For Further Information), you can become more familiar about the unique characteristics of each breed.

You may decide to raise these unique breeds on a small scale. That will help in ensuring that these unusual and unique breeds will be maintained for the future. These heritage breeds need landowners who are interested in raising and propagating them.



Raising heritage breeds may provide an excellent project for young adults, especially for 4-H Scouting projects.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information contact:

American Livestock Breeds Conservancy , P.O.
Box 477, Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312
www.albc-usa.org

New England Heritage Breeds Conservancy Inc.,
P.O. Box 20, Richmond, MA 01254
www.nehbc.org

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Table 1. Endangered Livestock Breeds.

CRITICAL	RARE	WATCH
	<u>CATTLE</u>	
Canadienne*	Ankole-Watusi	Ayrshire
Dutch Belted	Dexter	Belted Galloway
Florida Cracker*	Red Poll	Galloway
Kerry		Guernsey
Milking Devon*		Highland
Pineywoods*		Milking Shorthorn
Randall Lineback*		
White Park		
	<u>HORSES</u>	
Akhal-Teke	Dartmoor	Clydesdale
American Cream*	Hackney horse	Friesian
Canadian*	Lipizzan	Gotland
Caspian	Rocky Mountain*	Shire
Cleveland Bay		
Exmoor		
Mountain Pleasure*		
Spanish Mustang*		
Spanish Barb*		
	<u>PIGS</u>	
Choctaw*	Tamworth	
Gloucestershire Old Spots		
Hereford		
Guinea Hog*		
Large Black		
Saddleback		
	<u>SHEEP</u>	
California Variegated Mutant -	Cotswold	Barbados
Romeldale*	Jacob American*	Blackbelly*
Gulf Coast Native*	Karakul American*	Dorset Horn
	Leicester Longwool	Katahdin*
	Wiltshire Horn	Oxford
	Navajo-Churro*	Shetland
	St. Croix*	
	Tunis*	
*Unique to North America		

Table 2: Endangered Poultry Breeds

CRITICAL	RARE	WATCH
	<u>CHICKENS</u>	
Ancona	Brown Leghorn	Barred Plymouth Rock*
Black Jersey Giant*		Black Australorp
Black Minorca		New Hampshire*
White Wyandotte*		Rhode Island Red*
Delaware*		
Dominique*		
White Jersey Giant*		
	<u>TURKEYS</u>	
Black Bourbon Red*		Broad-breasted Bronze*
Standard Bronze*		
Narragansett*		
Royal Palm*		
	<u>GEESE</u>	
American Buff*	Toulouse	
Pilgrim*		
	<u>DUCKS</u>	
	Cayuga Rouen*	Indian Runner
		Khaki Campbell
* Originated in the U.S.		