

**SAVE Head Office:**

Paradiesstr. 13, D-78462 Konstanz/Germany

Web: <http://www.save-foundation.net>

E-mail: office@save-foundation.net

Prespa cattle in the Greek-Albanian border area

Identification

Within the framework of the study "Animal Genetic Resources in Greece", carried out by the Monitoring Institute, several hints were received about the existence of "dwarf cattle" in the village Psarades in the Greek part of Prespa. According to the information the cattle are very small-framed and move "like goats" in mountainous terrain. The official Greek side, however, only mentions a slightly smaller form of the "Greek shorthorn" called Brachyceros. In "Mason's World Dictionary of Livestock Breeds, Types and Varieties", Prespa cattle is not mentioned but a "Western Macedonian Cattle", described as follows: *West Macedonian: (Greece)/dwarf/variation of Greek Shorthorn/cf. Macedonian Blue*



All hints concerning dwarf cattle centred on the Greek village of Psarades. But, taking into account experiences of the Monitoring Institute with populations in border regions, it was assumed that the breed also occurs in the bordering neighbour countries. In order to answer as many of the questions as possible, to document the population and to discuss if it really represents an own breed or just a local type of another breed, a search tour was conducted.

Using a checklist, it soon became obvious that Prespa Cattle is an own breed. It is similar to Busha and Brachyceros but distinctively different. A short description: The head is long with a narrow nose, relatively large eyes, the size of cows at wither is only 95-105 cm, the mucous membranes are grey-black, and the colour of coat is grey – greyish blue – brown – reddish brown – ochre, sometimes dark; the hair coat of original type often is coarse and sometimes shaggy.

Results of the search tours

- Using the historical photo material, a dozen animals of the old Prespa type could be identified in the Greek village Psarades. For further breeding, animals differing slightly from the old type can possibly also be used.
- The Albanian area at the Prespa Lakes has to be divided up into two parts: the part at Lake Micro Prespa, open towards the Devoll Plains. Here, the influence of foreign breeds has nearly completely swamped out autochthonous cattle breeds. The second part is located at Lake Macro Prespa and separated from other Albanian regions by a 2500m mountain range. Modern high performance breeds have only been introduced quite recently. All villages at the Lake and in the mountains were visited individually. Of the total of 1500 cattle livestock some 300-400 were classified as pure bred. Sires of the old breed are still kept. The offspring is therefore suitable for conservation breeding.
- In FYR Macedonia the Prespa breed apparently lived until two years ago in a very remote area in two villages directly at the Albanian border with a stock of some 200 cattle. Today only one dozen Holstein cattle are found there.



The question arises why Prespa cattle has survived in its original form. The reasons seem symptomatic: The area of distribution is geographically isolated, it is situated in a remote large-scale depression without overground flow off. Massive and high mountain ranges form the border to neighbouring areas. The Prespa catchment area is situated in the border region of three countries (AL, GR, MK) and was military area for a long time. Until recently, there was little human influence from outside. Performance breeding was just unknown, the local breed was optimally adapted to local conditions and performed according to expectation without much input.

So called „blue“ cow in the Greek Psarades

Conservation measures

If the old breed is to survive, it has to be made "fit for the future"! Particularly its reputation amongst farmers has to improve. This includes showing that the breed's performance relation of input-output is very good and raising awareness for the breeds excellent suitability for low-input agriculture and use in nature protection. This is very important as the Prespa catchment area is a region of outstanding importance for international nature protection (amongst others Ramsar wetlands). The challenge for the future for the traditional breeds is therefore in the framework of the „Prespa Park“, not only for Prespa cattle but also for Busha cattle (stock data rapidly declining), Ligenas goat and water buffaloes, that the Society for the Protection of Prespa is successfully engaged with. The combination of agriculture and nature protection (protection/use) with the networking of agrobiodiversity, nature protection and rural development is a challenge, which must be met unconditionally.

Meanwhile the conservation measures have started in the Albanian part. ALBAGENE, the Albanian SAVE partner, received a GEF Small Grant and SAVE itself supports in a first phase the establishing of a new bull management.

Weblink: http://www.save-foundation.net/english/PDF/Prespa_cattle.pdf

The working in Greece is financed by MAVA Foundation, Montricher, the one in Albania by Heidehof Foundation, Stuttgart, and Sonnenwiese Foundation, Vaduz.

Local Scottish crops on Shetland and the Outer Hebrides

For a long time it was generally and silently assumed that local agricultural varieties had disappeared from the UK. Recent renewed interest in landraces resulted in a more accurate picture of heritage agricultural crops of Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides. A short summary of findings is presented here.



Shetland cabbage garden with cabbages and seed plants in flower, Isle of Yell, Shetland Islands, July 2006

To start in the North, Shetland Cabbage has reputedly been on the islands since Cromwell (seventeenth century). Although not threatened with immediate extinction and to be found on most of the Shetland Islands, Shetland cabbage cultivation has become very rare. Two traditional cereals were still present on a very limited scale: bere, a very old six-rowed barley variety and Shetland oats, a local *Avena strigosa* variety with

a history of cultivation of centuries on the Scottish islands. *Avena strigosa* is an oat species related to the more widespread *Avena sativa*, or milling oat, and was widely grown in the British Isles before modern higher yielding varieties were introduced.

Both bere and oats are targeted in a special project with the objective to multiply seed and to encourage growers to grow these heritage varieties (<http://www.organics.shetland.co.uk/>). Several potato varieties were present, among these Shetland Black Potato and Foula Red potato. Both bere and oats are also grown on a limited scale on Orkney.



Small oat and rye mixture, Benbecula, Western Isles, August 2006

On the Outer Hebrides, west of Scotland, a local *Avena strigosa* variety named small oat or 'Corc baeg' in Gaelic, is still widely grown on the coastal grasslands, Machair, of the islands of North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist. The oat is usually grown in a mixture with a local rye variety and sometimes with bere barley as well.

These three traditional local varieties form the only cereals grown on the Machair as the conventional oats (*Avena sativa*) do not grow very

well on the light manganese and copper deficient soils of the Machair.

Because of the importance of cereal cultivation for the wildlife of the Machair, supporting cereal production through agro-environmental schemes has been in place for years. Also, the British bird protection society, RSPB, has subsidised traditional harvesting methods of cutting the crop with a binder, putting up sheaves and stacks. Integrating seed production into Single Farm Payment schemes has been proposed in the local biodiversity action plan (<http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/biodiversity>).

Maria Scholten, Honorary Research Associate with the University of Birmingham. Fieldwork on *Avena strigosa* this summer was funded by a Science and Research Grant of the Botanical Society of the British Isles and the work on Shetland Cabbage by the University of Birmingham.

E-mail: maria_scholten@hotmail.com



Highland cattle feeding on local oat and rye, North Uist, Outer Hebrides

Newsflash

ERFP Workshop "Collaboration between Balkan countries"

At a workshop of the European Regional Focal Point for AnGR on 18 November 06 in Tirana, Albania, met the national co-ordinators and interested stakeholders from the Balkans countries. The main discussion points were: "Priorities for the collaboration between Balkan countries" and "Ways and instruments to strenght the collaboration between Balkan countries". It was agreed that the networking process should be intensified at the governmental, the scientific and the NGO level.

Monitoring and Indicators for Agro-Biodiversity

Symposium 7-8 November 2006, Königswinter, Germany

Creating an indicator system for agro-biodiversity is an extremely complex matter. The two-day symposium, filled with numerous exceedingly interesting presentations, highlighted the many problems and complexities. The main questions raised were: What is the task and goal of genetic monitoring? By which method/s can the goal be reached? The interplay between science and politics, the safeguard of genetic resources for the future, the attempts to find a scientifically reliable indicator system, the ideas of economically and socially based indicators and the use of Red List systems were all discussed, along with presentations of various successful monitoring systems of wildlife. Although the main questions were, naturally, left unanswered, the participants of the symposium left inspired about the future of agro-biodiversity monitoring.

Bioversity International

IPGRI, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, has a new name: "Bioversity International" or "Bioversity" for short. This new name shall echo the new strategy, which focuses on improving people's lives through biodiversity research. As it is communicated, the research is about much more than genetic resources and genetics. The new name shall evoke more than biodiversity, it includes "universe", "universality" and "university". Web: <http://www.bioversityinternational.org>

CGIAR Virtual Library

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) recently launched the CGIAR Virtual Library, an internet gateway allowing users to search the online libraries of the CGIAR centres as well as more than 160 outside databases. It provides access to over 4,000 e-journals as well as full-text documents, abstracts and references from pre-selected databases that are grouped according to information type (e.g. CGIAR libraries, reference books, news) or subject (e.g. fish, forestry, genetic resources, water) or database groupings created by the user. See <http://vlibrary.cgiar.org>

Global Livestock Production and Health Atlas (GLiPHA)

The Global Livestock Production and Health Atlas (GLiPHA), is a user-friendly, highly interactive electronic atlas developed by the World Agriculture Information Centre of FAO. The atlas provides a scaleable overview of spatial and temporal variation of quantitative information related to animal production and health through the combination of maps, tables and charts. The objective of the system is to facilitate access to large amounts of information stored in databases of governmental and international organisations. Moreover, it is intended that the atlas will contribute to increased awareness of socio-economic, human and animal demographic and health related issues and that it will improve information management and exchange at national and international levels. See <http://www.fao.org/ag/aga/glipha/index.jsp>

Uso de Recursos Genéticos Locales

The Spanish NGO "Red de Semillas" has published a monograph on the use of local genetic resources. This publication highlights practical aspects as well as legislation on plant genetic resources. The monograph "Cultivar Local" has 29 pages and can be downloaded for free from <http://www.redandaluzadesemillas.org/>

Important dates (extract)

2007

15-18 February: Biofach - The world's largest organic trade fair, in Nuremberg, Germany. Web: <http://www.biofach.de>.

21-23 February: "Salon du Végétal", Angers, France. Contact: salon@bhr-vegetal.com, Web: <http://www.salonduvegetal.com>

8-11 March: 2nd Nature Fair in Basel, Switzerland. Congress "Growth in Nature and Economy" March 9th. Contact: kongress@natur.ch, Web: <http://www.natur.ch/kongress>

23-26 May: 18th EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section Meeting "Plant Genetic Resources and their Exploitation in the Plant Breeding for Food and Agriculture", Piestany, Slovak Republic. Contact: eucarpia.pgr@vurv.sk, Web: <http://www.eucarpia.org/>

5-8 June: International Symposium: Environment and Culture in the Mediterranean Region. Antalya, Turkey. Web: <http://geomed2007.balikesir.edu.tr>

10-17 June: World Gathering of Nomads and Transhumant Herders; La Granja (Cantabria), Spain. E: pastores.sinfronteras@pastos.org, Web: <http://www.pastos.org>

20-22 June: Colloquium "Live plant collections: place and role in conservation"; Nancy, France. Contact: AFCEV@jardin-bota.uhp-nancy.fr, Web: <http://www.afcev.org>

1-2 September: 25 year Jubilee ProSpecieRara Foundation, Bern, Switzerland. Contact: info@psrara.org, Web: <http://www.prospecierara.ch>

1-7 Sept: FAO International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources, Interlaken, Switzerland (with exhibition of rare Swiss breeds from ProSpecieRara). Web: <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/angrvent2007.html>

24-28 September: Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity (COHAB 2007), Galway. Ireland.



28-30 September: Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and SAVE Network on the occasion of the Allitalian Organic Fair in Guastalla (near Parma), Italy. Contact: info@monitoring.eu.com

29 September: European Agro-Biodiversity Day (**EAD**). PR event to the topic "use it or loose it" (conservation through consumption). Various activities of the SAVE Network organisations in their respective countries. Contact: info@monitoring.eu.com.

13-21 October: International Fruit Exhibition Europom 2007 in Luxembourg. Contact: hellef.nord@pt.lu, Web: <http://www.europom.be>

