SAVE foundation
Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe

pro specie rara
Swiss Foundation for Cultural and Genetic Diversity of Plants and Animals

Portuguese Native Breeds: Status and Outlook

FERA
FEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DAS ASSOCIAÇÕES DE RAÇAS AUTÓCTONES

Rui Dantas

Annual Meeting of the SAVE Network
«The Future of the SAVE-Network»

8th to 10th September 2025

Headquarters of the ProSpecieRara
Hellgasse 1, CH-5103 Möriken-Wildegg, Switzerland,
www.prospecierara.ch

Introduction & Historical Background

Centuries of selection shaped diverse local breeds adapted to varied agro-ecologies.

“Rich heritage of local breeds”
“Adapted to diverse regions”

“National strategy in place”
“Local implementation of goals”

Formal herd-books and breed associations created during the 20th century.

“20th century organisation”
“Structured herd-books”

Portugal active in EU, FAO and ERFP frameworks for AnGR.

“Commitment since 2007”
“Biodiversity as pledge”

“Guided by FAO strategy”
“Worldwide framework”

“Portugal represented abroad”
“Integration in FAO/ERFP”

Current Situation – Overview

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Portuguese Native Breeds by Species

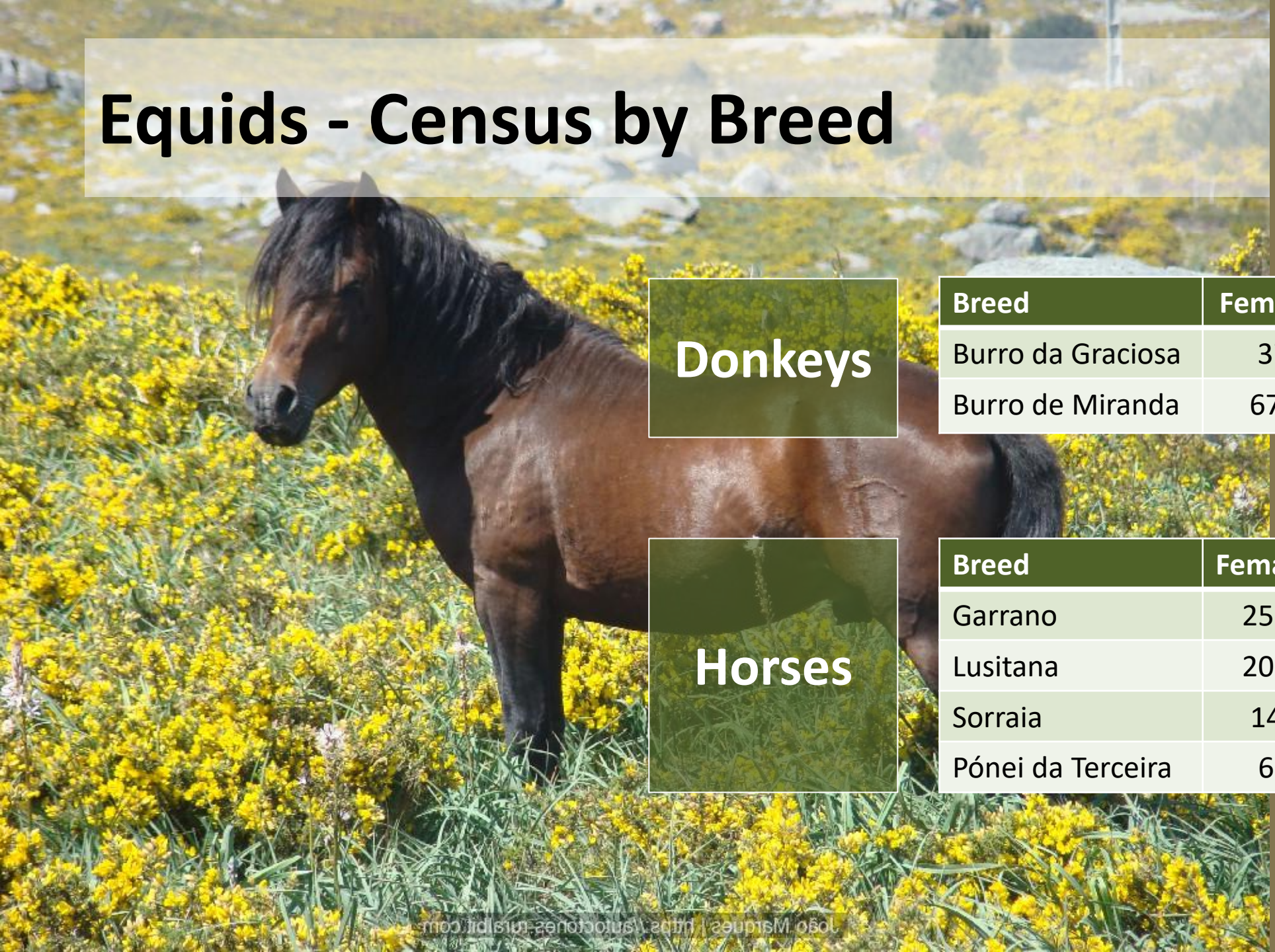
Species	Number of native breeds
Cattle	17
Sheep	16
Goats	6
Pigs	3
Horses	4
Donkeys	2
Chickens	4
Turkeys	1
Dogs	11

52 native livestock breeds officially recognised + 11 native dog breeds.

Portugal is a European hotspot of domestic biodiversity.

Many native breeds have small census sizes and are at risk; conservation actions are ongoing.

Equids - Census by Breed



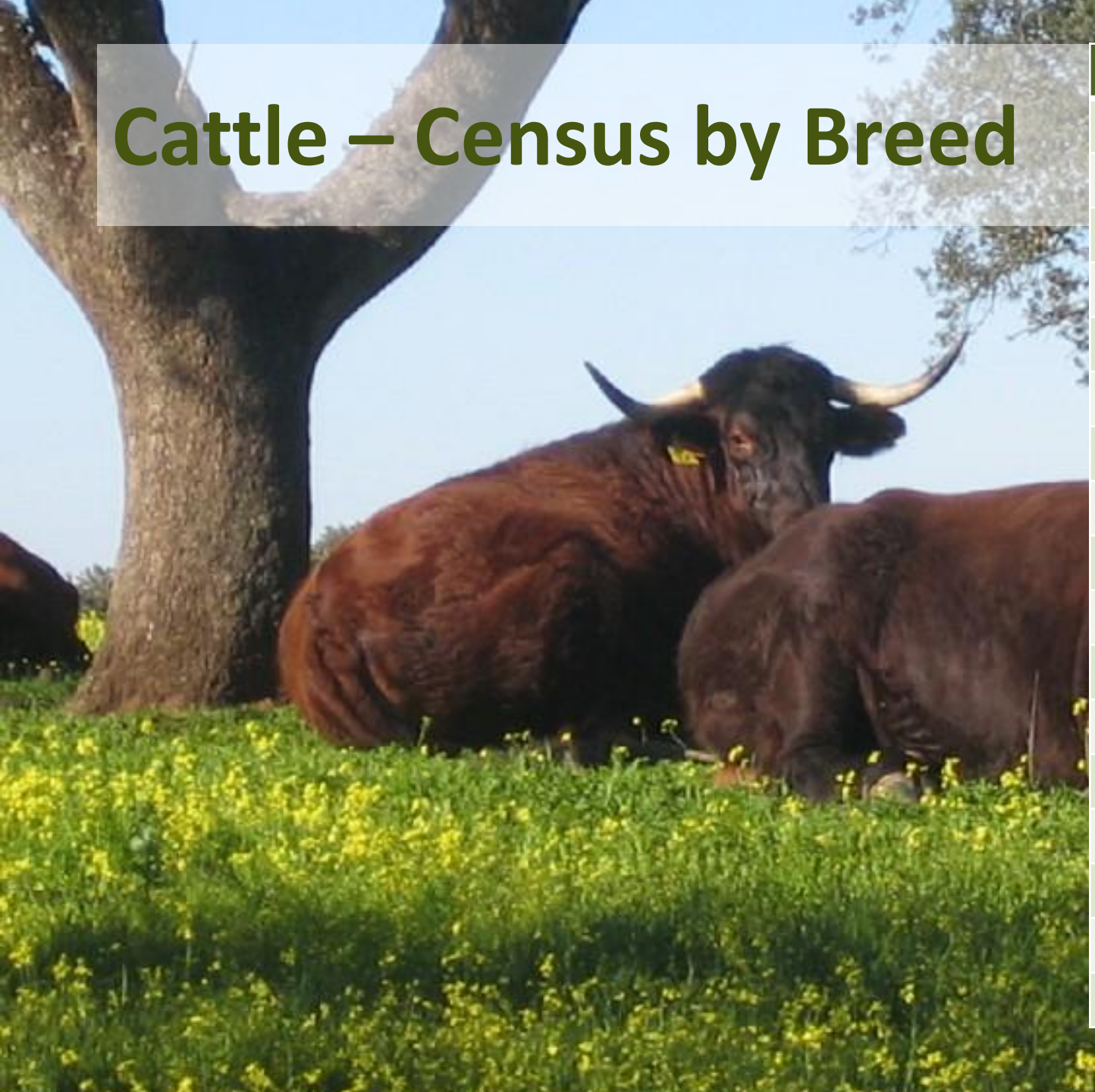
Donkeys

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Burro da Graciosa	37	27	23
Burro de Miranda	678	128	593

Horses

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Garrano	2552	225	631
Lusitana	2000	1300	300
Sorraia	144	116	17
Pónei da Terceira	68	36	20

Cattle – Census by Breed



Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Alentejana	10242	182	135
Algarvia	25	2	4
Arouquesa	4100	150	1055
Barrosã	7966	406	1806
Cachena	7039	312	889
Catrina	46	13	4
Garvonesa	665	27	22
Jarmelista	319	26	37
Marinhoa	973	73	268
Maronesa	4078	150	869
Mertolenga	11484	203	196
Minhota	6038	175	2020
Mirandesa	4201	258	323
Preta	2273	61	49
Brava dos Açores	730	547	38
Ramo Grande	1265	75	261
Brava de Lide	6022	285	91

Goats and Pigs – Census by Breed

Goats

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Algarvia	3127	112	70
Bravia	11728	432	127
Charnequeira	2057	71	42
Preta de Montesinho	1878	73	45
Serpentina	7219	328	65
Serrana	12846	321	132

Pigs

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Alentejano	3639	247	63
Bísaro	5028	466	160
Malhado de Alcobaça	429	34	20

Birds – Census by Breed

Chicken

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Amarela	6106	1053	200
Branca	3167	604	179
Pedrês Portuguesa	6526	1611	316
Preta Lusitânica	6482	1337	248

Turkey

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Perú Preto Português	556	98	24

Sheep – Census by Breed

Breed	Females	Males	Breeders
Bordaleira Entre Douro e Minho	5348	189	231
Campaniça	11976	385	67
Churra Algarvia	3822	63	47
Churra Badana	2440	92	29
Churra da Terra Quente	11415	400	121
Churra do Campo	1039	61	9
Churra do Minho	6370	362	127
Churra Galega Bragançana Branca	15329	548	157
Churra Galega Bragançana Preta	3590	155	56
Churra Galega Mirandesa	5648	176	66
Merina Branca	14645	738	55
Merina Preta	17454	703	78
Merino da Beira Baixa	4203	160	46
Mondegueira	2707	81	35
Saloia	1625	70	30
Serra da Estrela	22967	779	268

PEPAC Support Framework

- PEPAC measures support breed conservation and herd-book management (mainland).
  - C.1.1.4 – Maintenance of native breeds at risk (support to breeders by threat level).

    Rare breeds - €160,00/Normal Head

    At risk breeds - €250,00/Normal Head
  - C.1.1.5 – Conservation and Genetic Improvement of Genetic Resources (in situ & ex situ actions, BPGA).

    From €7.500,00 to €1.500.000,00 per breeding program (2 years)

Herd-Books: Data Backbone for Conservation & Use

Ensure breed authenticity and protect genetic integrity via defined standards.

Provide genealogical & performance data to guide selection and conservation.

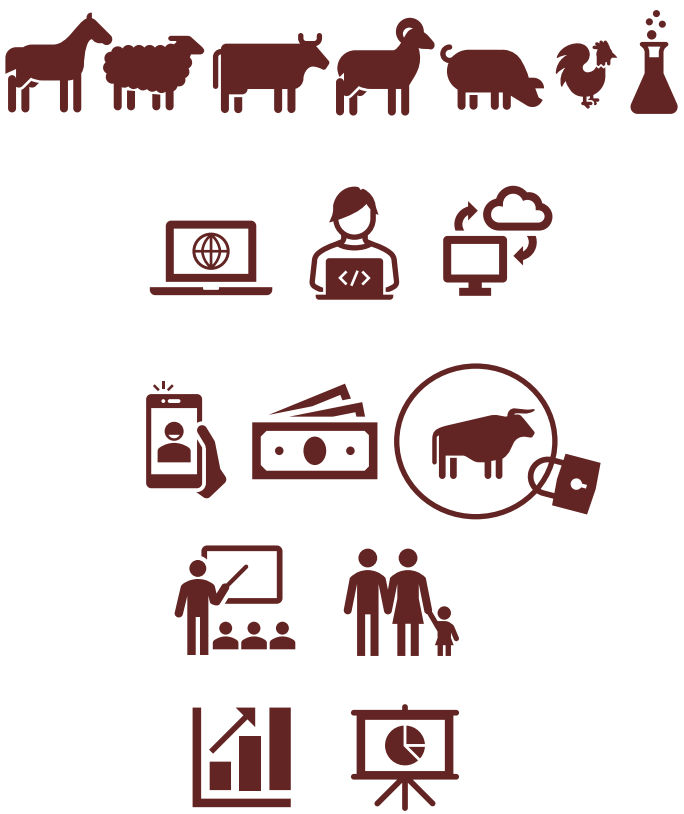
Underpin product differentiation (PDO/PGI) and market value for native breeds.

Supply evidence for public policies on rural development and territorial cohesion.

Global Importance of AnGR (FAO)

- **Food security & livelihoods**: genetic diversity buffers shocks and underpins productivity.
- **Climate adaptation**: locally adapted breeds offer resilience to heat, drought and disease.
- **Ecosystem services & culture**: grazing systems, landscapes, and cultural heritage.
- **Global Plan of Action (FAO)**: calls for conservation, sustainable use and development of AnGR.

Future Perspectives



- Reinforce in situ conservation & BPGA collections; prioritise breeds at risk.
- Leverage digital systems (SNIRA, herd-books, RNE/GESEQUS) for data-driven decisions.
- Strengthen value chains (PDO/PGI, short supply chains) to reward breeders.
- Enhance training, youth engagement.
- Monitor outcomes via PEPAC indicators and transparent reporting.

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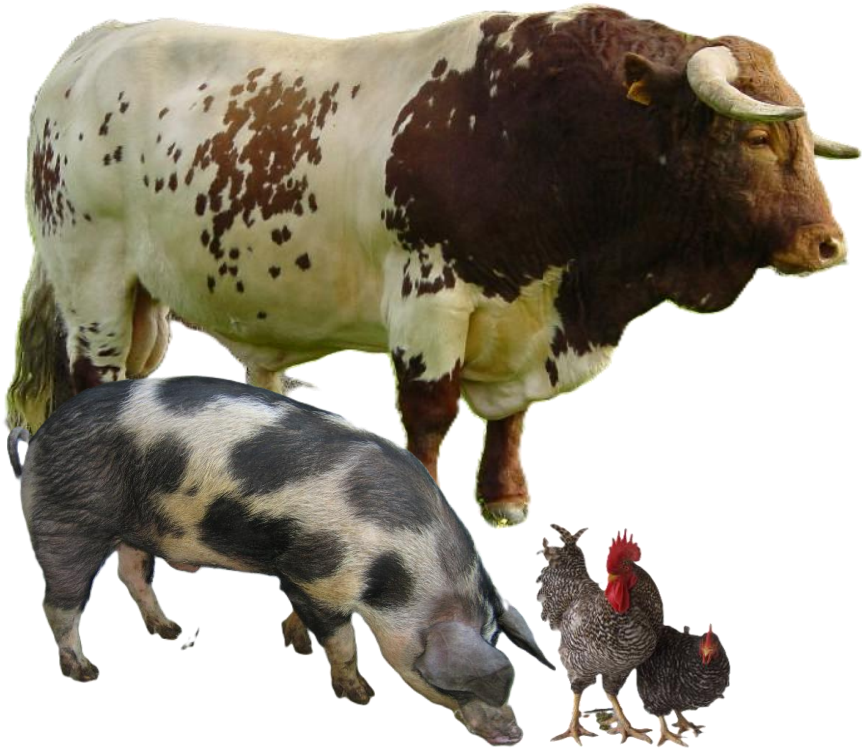

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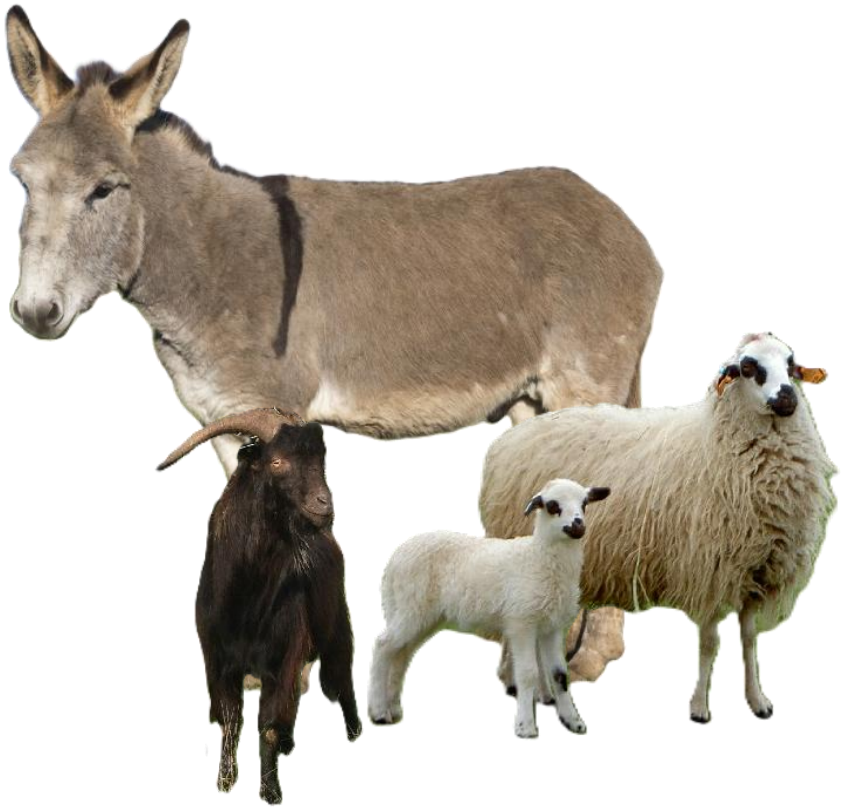
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