

**PRESERVATION OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL BREEDS  
AS HUMAN PRODUCTS****Bodó I.***Introduction*

Animals were domesticated for their different products : meat, wool, bones, hide, fur, animal power for work etc. The most important is the food production, beyond the shadow of doubt. If we take the starving world into consideration, the production of animal protein has a crucial importance for mankind indeed. Other functions of domestic animals, for instance fur production or the animal power for work in agriculture and transport have been replaced by machines and fossil energy. Far back in the past farmers could produce food first of all for their own family but now according to the urbanization and the development of animal production the products of domestic animals are more and more involved in the international, global food chain.

Nowadays, however, the „non food function” of domestic animals comes more and more to the front, their importance is increasing again.

*Aspects for the preservation of domestic animals*

One has to argue for the preservation of non commercial, rare animal breeds, because it needs money, i.e. or subsidies from the human society. The arguments for preservation can be divided into two groups : technical (1) and cultural aspects (2) (Bodó, 1992):

(1)

\*The far future need of mankind for the products or production of different domestic animal breeds is unknown. E.g. the Hungarian Mangalitza is a fat producing breed and nobody thought, that after some decades its products becomes in fashion again (Living heritage, 2000).

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\*The marginal areas of the world can be exploited well by some primitive local breeds based on their ability for compensation and adaptation.

\* In well constructed crossing systems the traditional breeds have often a role of excellent maternal lines

\* The traditional breeds, which were not improved genetically represent gene sources in the development of special lines in modern breeding systems. The progress of biotechnology increases the importance of this view-point.

\* An old traditional breed can serve as control population in animal science first of all in long term research process.

\* In the last years human society appreciates more and more the natural organic products which are produced by traditional local breeds in natural conditions. It is not only a fashion, but also the realistic need for healthy products.

(2)

\* The domestic animal breeds are human products like the historical monuments . They are, however, living beings at the same time, as wild animals. Both are protected by the law. The preservation of domestic animals threatened by extinction started only some decades later.

\*In teaching the topic of traditional breeds is as important in animal science as in general history.

\*Animals of these breeds are carrying high aesthetic value as well.

\* The role of these breeds is increasing in nature and environment protection.

\* The old traditional, grazing herds studs or flocks belong to the panorama of traditional rural areas and national parks.

\* In the folklor the products of shepherds of traditional breeds can be an important topic.

\* A non neglectible aspect is the potential utilization of the view of this traditional, local herds in the tourism. It would be necessary a financing system for the benefit of farmers.

#### *Historical value of animals and animal breeds*

There is evidence from cave drawings and paintings of historical value of wild and domestic animals a long time ago.

The traditional breeds and the shepherds remind us to the past historical time.

The domestication of animals solved the permanent provision with milk, meat and fur for food and clothing of humanity. It enabled expanding the living area of mankind.

The process of domestication, the origin of old traditional breeds is an interesting topic of historians. There are many theories but the theme is inexhaustible. The ancient statues can give some data to the history of the breeds as well as artists can help the breeds' historical data collection as well.

The evolution of horse in ancient times gives a nice possibility to reconstruction of extinct old forms based on excavated skeletons. Nice work for archeozoologists.

#### *The aspects of aesthetics and arts*

The beauty of traditional animals inspired many painters and sculptors. In order to give historical atmosphere to a picture traditional old animals or herds can be well used.

Artists can portray sometimes the excellent animals showing their beauty and character sometimes even the animals can be used for expressing something else, a sentiment, an atmosphere or human character etc.

The beauty of domestic animals which can be judged and qualifies in scoring and the conformation of them is not always in accordance with the normal aesthetic value and the performance of the animals.

#### *The role in nature protection*

The protection and sometimes reconstruction of nature is a promotion of the last years all over the world.

In nature protected area one prefers the birds. In this respect the coexistence of birds and herds/studs or flocks is more and more in mind of nature protectionists. The destruction of a nest by grazing animals compared to the supply of insects for the birds' feeding seems to be neglectable.

In natural parks the role of animals is even more to cut the grass and weed than to produce meat or other animal products.

Also dedomesticated animals, feral breeds can be serve in nature protection, e.g. North Ronaldsay or the Ratzka sheep in Hortobágy (Hungary). The Mustangs in North America or the Przewalsky horse are also feral breeds.

The long term selection of traditional breeds however can give more aesthetic perfection and at the same time beauty to domestic animals.

### *Traditional domestic animals in education and culture*

According to the possible roles of animals and traditional old breeds in human life, they must have an important position also in education of children.

Challenge for animal scientists is not only to develop production but to keep some cultural aspects as well.

To shorten the food chain where it would be possible can give domain to old traditional and natural food without too much artificial, synthetical human intervention. „Western children who thinks milk comes from supermarkets and not from cows, reflect a large scale ignorance and even lack of interest in the food chain” (Hodges, 2002). To preserve the ancient food of peasants belongs also to the gastronomy culture of nations.

Promotion of the welfare of farm animals and the conservation of rural environment in order to serve the sustainable human life should be a future project.

### *Conclusions*

To take into consideration only the short term financial value of animal breeds and not to deal with their long term survival would be modern barbarism (Sambraus, 1994). „The emphasis on maximum short term financial gain may result in anything currently unfashionable or less profitable being discarded and lost. These losses may detract immeasurably from quality of life”. (HRH Charles the Prince of Wales, cit.: Alderson, 1978).

To preserve traditional, local animal breeds for their possible future food production is an important task of humanity, as well as to maintain them for their non food function.

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