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Conservation in Action! - Rare Breeds join the Mainstream

The Rare Breed Survival Trust's annual Watchlist is based on registered breeding females and allows us to measure a breed's rarity. It is therefore a great cause for celebration when our aims are achieved and a breed exceeds the numerical threshold of the Watchlist and can be considered mainstream.

There are numerous success stories to celebrate this year. Three cattle and two sheep breeds can now be classified as mainstream native breeds. In addition to Red Poll cattle and Hebridean sheep, Beef Shorthorn, Belted Galloway cattle and Southdown sheep follow in the steps of the Longhorn, which achieved mainstream status last year.

Richard Dawes, Chairman of the Red Poll Cattle Society, comments "We are delighted that the efforts of the society, assisted by the RBST, to demonstrate the attraction of the Red Poll in the changing agricultural environment have proved so successful. The society looks forward to working with the RBST to build on this revival and is grateful for the past assistance it has received from the Trust." (Tel: **01908 551291**)

Jeff Moore, Chairman of the Hebridean Sheep Society, comments "For a century, the Hebridean had survived only in small numbers in a few ornamental flocks under the misnomer of St, Kilda. In 1974, the breed was included in the first RBST list of endangered breeds of livestock. It is thanks to the dedication of The RBST and the breeders that just 33 years on, the breed's dramatic recovery has resulted in the Hebridean being removed from the Watchlist, having gained its rightful place in the mainstream sheep industry. Thank you RBST for your major part in this amazing success story". (info@hebrideansheep.org.uk)

Alan Mummery MRICS, Chairman, the Southdown Sheep Society, comments "This marks a significant milestone in the continuing revival of the Southdown Breed on its journey to being restored as a key Native Breed in the commercial sheep industry. The RBST must be thanked for the huge part they have played in keeping Southdown Sheep in the forefront of Native Breeds, and their promotion of Rare Breeds generally have enabled our Society to rebuild numbers back to a significant level. We are confident that the Southdown will continue to challenge other breeds to re-establish its rightful place amongst the leading terminal sheep sires."

However, these breeds will not be leaving the care of the Trust completely. They will be monitored, to ensure their continued success. From January 2007, RBST will list all the mainstream native breeds on its annual Watchlist document. Robert Terry, RBST Executive Director says "We believe it is important to recognise the rich diversity of all our native breeds, and their role in the modern agricultural environment. We believe also that the public should be informed that the UK has such a wide range of attractive, valuable and increasingly competitive breeds".

Ends

Notes for editor

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is a charity established in 1973. It works to conserve more than 70 breeds of native farm livestock. The charity is funded entirely by membership subscriptions, donations and legacies.

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