



Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13

Uplands Reward Structure

response to the Defra consultation document

by

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Introduction/General principles

1. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is the national organisation concerned with the conservation of native breeds of livestock. More than half the total of native breeds are endangered (see www.rbst.org.uk) but they are an important part of the diversity of animal genetic resources in the UK and an integral part of the UK heritage.
2. Genetic conservation is a specific objective within Environmental Stewardship (ES).
3. The *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, under which Natural England is being formed, requires '*that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development*'.

General principles

4. The strategy for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) must ensure integration not only between the programme's axes, but also between the programme's delivery bodies and stakeholders. The Treaty of Amsterdam stated that "environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the implementation and definition of other community policies and activities". Integration in this way is important for rare native breeds of livestock as their contribution is realised in disparate ways.
5. It is important to adopt an holistic approach to conservation, and this supports the philosophy of integration. Animal genetic resources are part of the wider conservation strategy, but historically they have not received full recognition and support. There should be equality of treatment for plant and animal genetic resources Genetic erosion within rare native breeds should be minimised Numerical criteria of endangerment for breeds of livestock are recognised, but also there is a need to recognise vulnerability through geographical concentration and loss of genetic variability.
6. Native breeds of livestock contribute in many ways to environmental health. They are an important element within the maintenance of a healthy natural environment because of their local adaptation.
 - Grazing attributes of native breeds (e.g. hefting ability, hardiness, thriftiness) are ideally suited to achieve favourable condition of European Sites and SSSIs. Many native breeds evolved to graze semi-natural vegetation types in specific locations and conditions.
 - They assist achievement of UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets, and progress towards CBD targets.

- They provide year-round sustainable environmental land management and wider beneficial effects (through extensive systems with low artificial inputs to land, livestock and natural resources)
 - They provide an holistic approach to genetic resource conservation that embraces the grazing livestock breeds, the habitats and plant species grazed and the wildlife species dependent on those grazed habitats (e.g. bats, etc.).
 - Enhanced farm animal welfare and husbandry by improved matching of animals to grazeable vegetation, and by reducing the likelihood of inappropriate breeds being used in conditions to which they are not suited.
 - They help to sustain desirable livestock grazing enterprises post CAP reform decoupling of production subsidies.
7. Rare breeds fulfil, or contribute to the objectives set out in the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, namely natural environment, public benefit and sustainability. The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (Defra, December 2002) states "*On behalf of the taxpayer, we must identify the **public benefits** - - - for which there is, strictly speaking, no commercial market, and establish how they should be recognised and rewarded.*" [pp. 12 and 13.]. Rare breeds must be included in that category.
 8. Priorities must be identified within the strategy to improve the sustainability of land management and environmental quality to ensure that the economy and quality of life in rural areas benefit from the programme.
 9. The uplands provide a wide range of important public benefits, not only of cultural and recreational interest, but also as a genetic resource. A large number of England's protected areas, including SSSIs, AONBs, ESAs and National Parks, are to be found in the uplands.
 10. Many upland habitats remain under threat from inappropriate management practices, and the RBST urges the recognition of the importance of farm animal genetic resources, by conserving and utilising native grazing livestock breeds to contribute to sustainable upland land management systems.
 11. Environmental Stewardship and in particular Higher Level Stewardship will be vital in securing environmental objectives for the uplands. **Option 2** therefore offers the best opportunity to deliver the management required to maintain and enhance the upland environment and secure public benefits in the medium to long term.

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