

History and study of livestock history essay



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Animal-rearing has its origins in the transition of cultures to settled farming communities rather than hunter-gatherer lifestyles. Animals are 'domesticated' when their breeding and living conditions are controlled by humans. Over time, the collective behavior, life cycle, and physiology of livestock have changed radically. Many modern farm animals are unsuited to life in the wild. Dogs were domesticated in East Asia about 15,000 years ago, Goats and sheep were domesticated around 8000 BCE in Asia. Swine or pigs were domesticated by 7000 BCE in the Middle East and China. The earliest evidence of horse domestication dates to around 4000 BCE.

Older English sources, such as the King James Version of the Bible, refer to livestock in general as "cattle", as opposed to the word "deer", which then was used for wild animals which were not owned. The word cattle is derived from Middle English chatel, which meant all kinds of movable personal property, including of course livestock, which was differentiated from non-movable real-estate ("real property"). In later English, sometimes smaller livestock was called "small cattle" in that sense of movable property on land, which was not automatically bought or sold with the land. Today, the modern meaning of "cattle", without a qualifier, usually refers to domesticated bovines (see Cattle). Other species of the genus *Bos* sometimes are called wild cattle.

During the history of animal husbandry, many secondary products have arisen in an attempt to increase carcass utilization and reduce waste. For example, animal offal and non-edible parts may be transformed into products such as pet food and fertilizer. In the past, such waste products were sometimes also fed to livestock as well. However, intra-species

recycling poses a disease risk; threatening animal and even human health (see bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), scrapie and prion). Due primarily to BSE (mad cow disease), feeding animal scraps to animals has been banned in many countries, at least in regards to ruminants and pigs.

Farming practices vary dramatically worldwide and between types of animals. Livestock are generally kept in an enclosure, are fed by human-provided food and are intentionally bred, but some livestock are not enclosed, or are fed by access to natural foods, or are allowed to breed freely, or any combination thereof. Livestock raising historically was part of a nomadic or pastoral form of material culture. The herding of camels and reindeer in some parts of the world remains unassociated with sedentary agriculture. The transhumance form of herding in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California still continues, as cattle, sheep or goats are moved from winter in lower elevation valleys to spring pasture and summer pasture in the foothills and alpine regions, as the seasons progress. Cattle were raised on the open range in the Western United States and Canada, on the Pampas of Argentina, and other prairie and steppe regions of the world.

The enclosure of livestock in pastures and barns is a relatively new development in the history of agriculture. When cattle are enclosed, the type of 'enclosure' may vary from a small crate, a large fenced pasture or a paddock. The type of feed may vary from natural growing grass, to highly sophisticated processed feed. Animals are usually intentionally bred through artificial insemination or through supervised mating. Indoor production systems are generally used only for pigs and poultry, as well as for veal cattle. Indoor animals are generally farmed intensively, as large space

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requirements would make indoor farming unprofitable and impossible.

However, indoor farming systems are controversial due to the waste they produce, odour problems, the potential for groundwater contamination and animal welfare concerns. (For further discussion on intensively farmed livestock, see factory farming and intensive pig farming).

Other livestock are farmed outside, although the size of enclosure and level of supervision may vary. In large open ranges animals may be only occasionally inspected or yarded in “ round-ups” or a muster (livestock).

Working dogs such as sheep dogs and cattle dogs may be used for mustering livestock as are cowboys, stockmen and jackaroos on horses, or with vehicles and also by helicopters. Since the advent of barbed wire (in the 1870s) and electric fence technology, fencing pastures has become much more feasible and pasture management simplified. Rotation of pasturage is a modern technique for improving nutrition and health while avoiding environmental damage to the land. In some cases very large numbers of animals may be kept in indoor or outdoor feeding operations (on feedlots), where the animals’ feed is processed, offsite or onsite, and stored on site then fed to the animals.

Livestock - especially cattle - may be branded to indicate ownership and age, but in modern farming identification is more likely to be indicated by means of ear tags than branding. Sheep are also frequently marked by means of ear marks and/or ear tags. As fears of mad cow disease and other epidemic illnesses mount, the use of microchip identification to monitor and trace animals in the food production system is increasingly common, and sometimes required by governmental regulations.

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Modern farming techniques seek to minimize human involvement, increase yield, and improve animal health. Economics, quality and consumer safety all play a role in how animals are raised. Drug use and feed supplements (or even feed type) may be regulated, or prohibited, to ensure yield is not increased at the expense of consumer health, safety or animal welfare. Practices vary around the world, for example growth hormone use is permitted in the United States, but not in stock to be sold to the European Union. The improvement of health, using modern farming techniques, on the part of animals has come into question. Feeding corn to cattle, which have historically eaten grasses, is an example; where the cattle are less adapted, the rumen pH changes to more acidic, leading to liver damage and other difficulties. The US F. D. A. still allows feedlots to feed no ruminant animal proteins to cattle. For example, feeding chicken manure and poultry meal is acceptable for cattle, and beef or pork meat and bone meal is being fed to chickens.

Disease

Livestock farmers had suffered from wild animal predation and theft by rustlers. In North America, gray wolf, grizzly bear, cougar, black bear, and coyote are sometimes considered a threat to livestock. In Eurasia and Africa, wolf, brown bear, leopard, tiger, lion, dhole, black bear, spotted hyena, and others caused livestock deaths. In Australia, the dingo, foxes, wedge-tailed eagles, hunting and domestic dogs (especially) cause problems for graziers because they often kill for fun. In Latin America, feral dogs cause livestock deaths in nightfall.

Transportation and Marketing

Since many livestock are herd animals, they were historically driven to market “on the hoof” to a town or other central location. During the period after the American Civil War, the abundance of Longhorn cattle in Texas, and the demand for beef in Northern markets, led to the implementation of the Old West cattle drive. The method is still used in some parts of the world. Truck transport is now common in developed countries. Local and regional livestock auctions and commodity markets facilitate trade in livestock. In other areas, livestock may be bought and sold in a bazaar, such as may be found in many parts of Central Asia, or a flea market type setting.

Stock shows and fairs are events where people bring their best livestock to compete with one another. Organizations like 4-H, Block & Bridle, and FFA encourage young people to raise livestock for show purposes. Special feeds are purchased and hours may be spent prior to the show grooming the animal to look its best. In cattle, sheep, and swine shows, the winning animals are frequently auctioned off to the highest bidder, and the funds are placed into a scholarship fund for its owner. The movie *Grand Champion*, released in 2004, is the story of a young Texas boy’s experience raising a prize steer.

Animal Welfare

The issue of raising livestock for human benefit raises the issue of the relationship between humans and animals, in terms of the status of animals and obligations of people. Animal welfare is the viewpoint that animals under human care should be treated in such a way that they do not suffer

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unnecessarily. What is 'unnecessary' suffering may vary. Generally, though, the animal welfare perspective is based on an interpretation of scientific research on farming practices. By contrast, animal rights are the viewpoint that using animals for human benefit is, by its nature, generally exploitation, regardless of the farming practices used. Animal rights activists would generally be vegan or vegetarian, whereas it is consistent with the animal welfare perspective to eat meat, depending on production processes.

Animal welfare groups generally seek to generate public discussion on livestock raising practices and secure greater regulation and scrutiny of livestock industry practices. Animal rights groups usually seek the abolition of livestock farming, although some groups may recognize the necessity of achieving more stringent regulation first. Animal welfare groups, such as the RSPCA, are often, in first world countries, given a voice at governmental level in the development of policy. Animal rights groups find it harder to find methods of input, and may go further and advocate civil disobedience or violence.

A number of animal husbandry practices have been the subject of campaigns in the 1990s and 2000s and have led to legislation in some countries.

Confinement of livestock in small and unnatural spaces is often done for economic or health reasons. Animals may be kept in the minimum size of cage or pen with little or no space to exercise. Where livestock are used as a source of power, they may be pushed beyond their limits to the point of exhaustion. The public visibility of this abuse meant it was one of the first areas to receive legislation in the nineteenth century in European countries, but it still goes on in parts of Asia. Broiler hens may be de-beaked, pigs may

have deciduous teeth pulled, cattle may be de-horned and branded, dairy cows and sheep may have tails cropped, merino sheep may be mulesed, and many types of male animals are castrated. Animals may be transported long distances to market and slaughter. Overcrowded conditions, heat from tropical-area shipping and lack of food, water and rest breaks have been subject to legislation and protest. (See Live Export) Slaughter of livestock was an early target for legislation. Campaigns continue to target Halal and Kosher religious ritual slaughter.

Environmental Impact

At first reports like the United Nations report “ Livestock’s Long Shadow” cast a pall over the livestock sector (primarily cattle, chickens, and pigs) for ‘emerging as one of the top two or three most significant contributors to our most serious environmental problems.’ The United Nations controversially included emissions from deforestation as part of its methodology. Rather than the 18% figure that placed on the sector as major contributor to emissions, the real figure, less deforestation is actually 12%. In April 2008, the [United States Environmental Protection Agency] released a major stock take of emissions in the United States entitled Inventory of U. S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2006. On 6. 1 it found “ In 2006, the agricultural sector was responsible for emissions of 454. 1 teragrams of CO₂ equivalent (Tg CO₂ Eq.), or 6 percent of total U. S. greenhouse gas emissions.” By way of comparison, transportation in the US produces more than 25% of all emissions.

The issue of livestock as a major policy focus remains, especially when dealing with problems of deforestation in neotropical areas, land degradation, climate change and pollution, water and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. A research team at Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine in Hokkaido found that supplementing the animals' diet with cysteine, a type of amino acid, and nitrate can reduce the methane gas produced, without jeopardizing the cattle's productivity or the quality of their meat and milk.

Researchers in Australia are looking into the possibility of reducing methane from cattle and sheep by introducing digestive bacteria from kangaroo intestines into livestock.

Research from the University of Botswana in 2008 has found that farmers' common practice of overstocking cattle to cope with drought losses made ecosystems more vulnerable and risked long term damage to cattle herds, in turn, by actually depleting scarce biomass. The study of the Kgatleng district of Botswana predicted that by 2050, the cycle of mild drought is likely to become shorter for the region (18 months instead of two years) due to climate change.