

## Raccoon dogs

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the Japanese dogs, compared with 56 chromosomes per cell in those from Finland.

### Chromosome Puzzle

The average number of chromosomes also varies from dog to dog and from cell to cell within individual raccoon dogs from Japan, an abnormal situation for mammals. The Japanese dogs also possess from two to five extra chromosomes, whose function is a puzzle, and some of the dogs bear an oddly shaped X chromosome.

Some reference books have listed the raccoon dog as nearly extinct, yet Ward and Wurster-Hill encountered numerous tales of Japanese farmers shooting the animals as pests. In one of the two research sites, a different raccoon dog was trapped every night.

The scant scientific literature on the dogs reports "fainting when frightened," and that's almost accurate. Ward reports that though the dogs were feisty and hissing like a cat during capture, "they grew passive and quiet in our arms, apparently with a lowered heart rate. It was as if they were afraid to offend."

Hoping to unravel some of the raccoon dog's secrets, Wurster-Hill and Ward chose two Japanese islands — Honshu and Kyushu — for their study, which was supported by the National Geographic Society and Earthwatch. Scientists presume the animals traveled to the islands over an ancient land bridge from mainland Asia.

The study sites, separated by

more than 1,000 miles of mountains and water, were contrasting raccoon dog habitats. Though low in elevation, the site on northern Honshu was steeply mountainous, covered with hardwood forests, while the Kyushu site was a 3,000-foot-high platform studded with steaming volcanoes and thick with bamboo undergrowth.

The research teams battled typhoon rains, dense fog, snow, and always the inky night. "In the northern site, the innkeepers didn't understand what we were doing," recalls Wurster-Hill, who is a specialist in chromosomal studies. "Instead of going to bed at night, we put on coats and went out."

### Pursuit Through Bamboo

The scientists spent nearly sleepless nights hiking vertical terrain or crawling through dense bamboo in pursuit of a dog, regularly checking traps that had been baited with cooked chicken heads (a raccoon dog favorite). If a dog was snared in one of the traps, the scientists would retrieve it, transport it on foot to a cabin, where under car headlights it was examined, measured, and biopsied. Skin samples had to be rushed to an airport by 7:30 the next morning to go to a laboratory for analysis.

Meanwhile, the dog was fitted with a radio collar so it could be tracked electronically through the woods. And its belly and legs were dusted with fluorescent powder so that as it traveled the undergrowth, it left a trail.

In all, 13 dogs were captured, fitted with collars, and released. Analysis of data from this preliminary study is not complete, but it appears that Japan's raccoon dogs are more active during

## Cornell offers updated vegetable varieties list

ITHACA, NY — Home gardeners in New York State need look no farther than their county Cooperative Extension agents when it comes to selecting vegetable varieties for the 1986 growing season.

In addition to existing resources and their own knowledge of vegetable crops, these agents have the 1986 "Selected List of Vegetable Varieties for Home Garden Use in New York State."

Updated annually by Cornell University experts, the list includes more than 400 varieties of vegetables that have been proven in university test gardens.

Instead of browsing through the thousands of selections offered in

commercial seed catalogs, a gardener, at a glance, can use the list to select varieties that have a good track record in New York State.

This year's list was compiled by Roger A. Kline, a Cornell Cooperative Extension associate, and David Wolfe, an assistant professor of vegetable crops, both in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

"We've selected these varieties by testing them, usually two years or more, in Ithaca and often in other areas of the state," Kline says.

Information about varieties on the Cornell list was also collected from Cooperative Extension agents, commercial growers, and home gardeners.

This year, several varieties of Chinese cabbage have been added to the list, as well as varieties of bush bean, lettuce, peas, pumpkins, and radishes, among others.

"By no means are we saying these are the only ones that will grow well, but they have proven themselves in the unpredictable, sometimes adverse conditions that New York has to offer," Kline explains.

Kline says that the varieties included on the list are chosen based on their yield, tolerance to disease and insects, quality of the

crop, taste, and other factors essential for gardening success.

Crops included in the 1986 Cornell list range from common vegetables such as summer squash, tomato, watermelon, and turnip to exotic vegetables such as chicory, kohlrabi, leek, kale and several types of hot peppers.

New additions to the list this year include: "Jumbo" green bush bean; "Captain Marvel" brussels sprouts; "Erdeno" and "Brutus" late storage cabbages; "Spring A-1," "Lei Choy," "Prize Choy," "What-A-Joy," "Two Seasons," and "Dynasty" Chinese cabbage varieties; "Aldo" endive; and several chicory varieties.

Other new varieties include: "Burpee Iceberg" and "King Crown" crisphead lettuce; "Kagran Summer" and "Patty" butterhead lettuce; "Red Sails" and "Lil Sweetie" looseleaf lettuce; the "Green Towers" cos lettuce; "Snowflake" snow pea; "Big Max" and "Atlantic" giant squashes; "Baby Pam" pumpkin; "Summer Cross" radish; and "Taxi" yellow tomato.

For a free copy of the list, contact your local Cooperative Extension agents, or send a self-addressed, stamped long envelope to Roger Kline, Department of Vegetable Crops, Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-5908.

the day than previously believed, and less solitary. The scientists would pick up simultaneous signals of a male and female dog, indicating they were together outside of mating season.

The animals seem to have a loose system of territories for resting; on Kyushu especially, each animal remained in a fixed area, with little overlap. And though they're generally sedentary, one monitored dog wandered at least 10 miles in 24 hours.

Wurster-Hill and Ward hope results of the chromosomal analysis and future field work will explain exactly where in the dog family the raccoon dog fits. And, they would like to discover other raccoon dog races that bridge the chromosomal gap, from 38 to 56. Or, they wonder, has the missing link magically vanished, in the style of the tanuki?

## Penns Valley Beef Club

Penns Valley Beef Club recently selected new officers.

They are: president, Michele Hosterman; vice president, Howard Dashem; secretary, Kerry Long; treasurer, Lori Cash; news reporter, Beth Korman; historian, Sherri Strouse; social chairmen, Niki Myers and Kristi Myers; program committee, Michele Hosterman, Beth Kor-

man, Sherri Strouse and Kenny Strouse.

Officers training will be held on April 29.

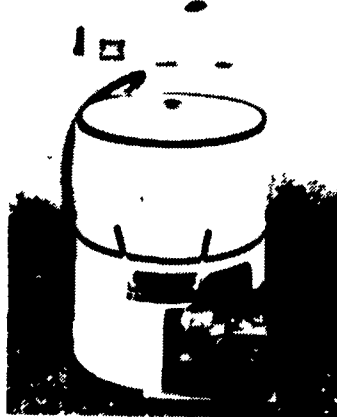
Four-H kick-off will be held March 22 from 7:30 to 9:30 for younger children and until 12:30 for older persons.

The leader's banquet is planned for March 17. The next meeting will be on April 6.

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