

Kids Korner

Farm Animals Can Be Endangered Species

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Today we hear a lot about "endangered species." Animals such as whales, California condors, whooping cranes, American bald eagles, chimpanzees, Russian desmans, or blackfooted ferrets are only a few of the wild animals that are on the list.

"Endangered" means there aren't any of this type of bird or animal left anywhere on the earth. Domestic or farm animals also have an endangered list.

They include nearly 100 breeds of cattle, goats, horses, donkeys, sheep, swine, and poultry.

Reasons for abandoning certain breeds center on large changes in the way farming is done today.

The number of farmers, therefore the number of farm experts, has declined which means we have fewer farmers interested in a smaller number of breeds.

At least one group, the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, thinks it is important to keep some of the genes or characteristics of all breeds alive.

Holstein cattle, for instance, are very productive cows. However, in order for them to give large quantities of milk, it is necessary to give them a good diet which is based on grain.

The first dairy cows in America needed only a grass diet to give milk.

These early breeds of cows did not give as much milk, as, for instance, today's Holsteins, but they did provide good quality milk.

The American Livestock Conservancy believes it might be a disaster to the milk industry if the price of energy became so high it would be difficult for farmers to grow grain. Then, keeping milk cows that need a lot of grain in order to produce milk would not be cost efficient.

Breeds of milk cows which are on the list of declining domestic animals will probably surprise you.

If an animal is on the "critical" list, it means there are fewer than 200 in North America and fewer than 2000 in the world.

"Rare" means there are fewer

than 1000 in North America and less than 5,000 in the world.

If an animal is on the "Watch" list there are fewer than 2,500 in North America and 10,000 in the world.

Ayrshires, Guernseys, and Milking Shorthorns, all milk cows which are shown at local fairs and dairy shows, are on the "Watch" list.

The populations of Guernseys is now less than half what it was in 1970.

Another danger of having fewer cows of these species is, as the numbers decline, improvement of the breed becomes more difficult.

To demonstrate the importance of continuing many of these old breeds, the American Livestock Conservancy gives these examples:

"Irish potatoes," were once the potato source for a large portion of the world. Then, in the 1840s, a blight hit the Irish potato crop. Had there not been another type of potato being grown in Mexico, we might not be eating French fries today.

Or, as recently as the 1960s, when many of your parents were young, "stripe rust" attacked the wheat crop in the western United States. Prior to this, a type of wheat being grown in Turkey had been ignored because it did not bake as well. However, it was this wheat which helped the farmers to eventually overcome the stripe rust.

There are sheep parasites in North America which do not react to any modern day antibiotics.

The Escherichia coli scour which invades the bodies of some Northern American hogs does not phase the Chinese hog.

A number of 4-H members raise Finn sheep because the mothers usually have multiple births. A few years ago, this breed had all but been discarded. They were being raised only by Finnish peasants.

Or, several weeks ago we wrote about Leicester Longwools, the breed of sheep that has recently been revived in America at Colonial Williamsburg.

Another animal on the "Watch"

list with which many young people are familiar is the miniature donkey. Because machines fast replaced mules and donkeys in the 1930s and 1940s, many of these animals began to die out. Now, they are making a comeback mostly for recreational purposes.

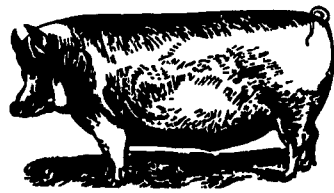
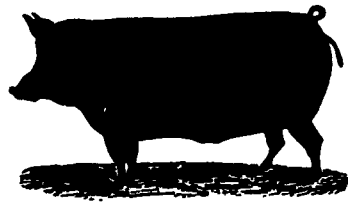
Large horses such as Clydesdale and Lipizzan are on the "rare" list and it has only been in recent years that some farmers have realized how valuable horses can be on a farm.

We live in a complex world and, for more than 10,000 years, farmers have depended on domestic animals as a part of their agriculture.

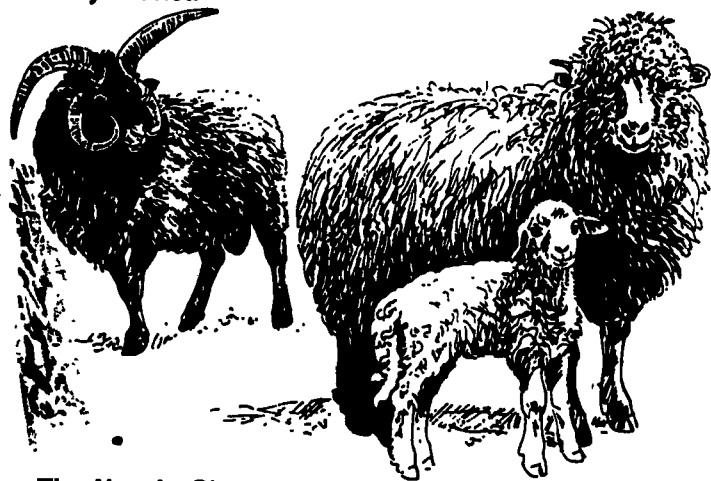
How important is it to keep some of the genes going from the original animals which helped to create farming as we know it today?

It is a question that can only be answered by time.

For more information on "endangered" domestic animals, write to The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

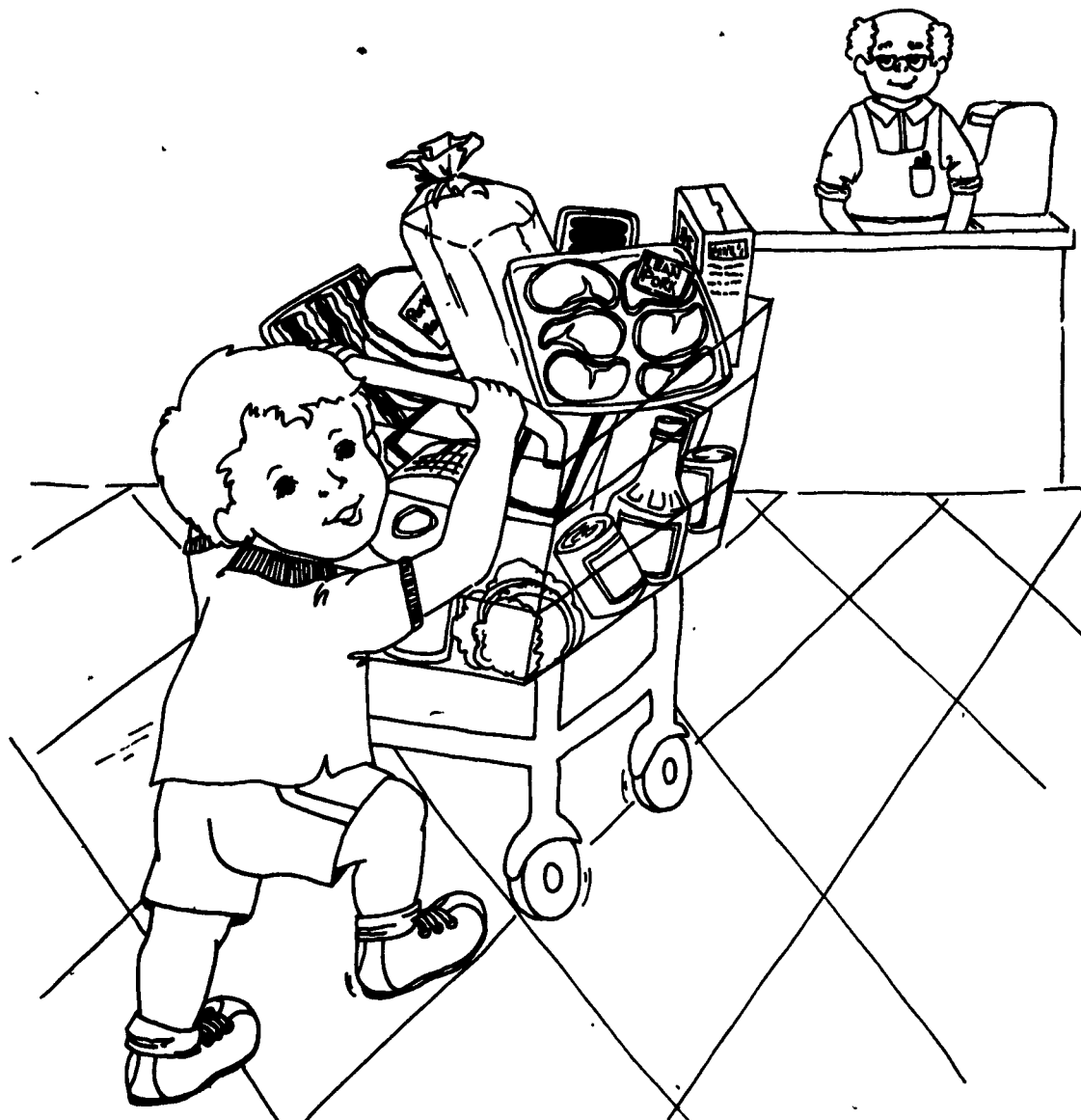


These two breeds of swine, the Essex and Suffolk, are already extinct.



The Navajo Churro sheep are considered rare with less than 1,000 left in North America.

Pork, please.
It's an important part of a well-balanced diet.



Willa Wonka And The Chocolate Factory

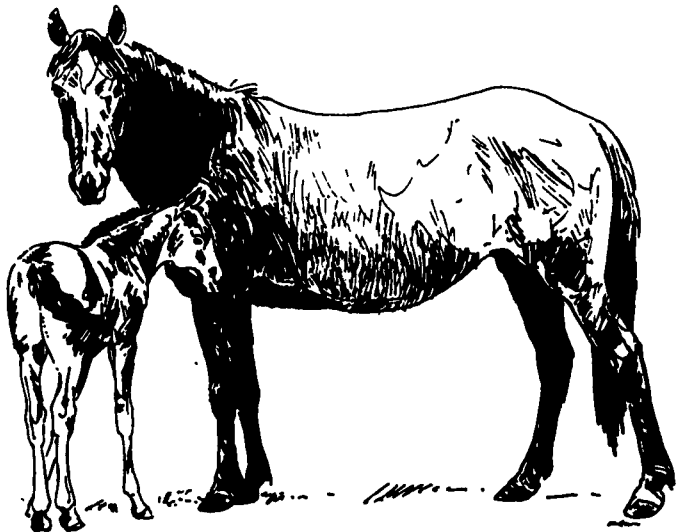
HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — An imaginary candy factory is the theme of a special Saturday morning program scheduled for April 1, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Hershey Museum. Following the screening of the 96-minute film "Willa Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" visitors can participate in

a number of short, candy-related activities in the museum's galleries. The program, appropriate for children ages 5 and up is free with museum admission. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

The film, with its lively music, fast action and imaginative sets revolves around the story of the mysterious owner of a fabulous

candy factory who offers a tour and a lifetime supply of chocolate to the finders of five golden tickets hidden inside Wonka candy bars. However, the winners are in for some thrills and excitement before they can claim their prizes.

For more information, please call (717) 534-3439.



Spanish Mustang Horses are also considered rare among horses.

The sketches are from "Taking stock," The North American Livestock Census.