

“Preservation or Adaptation?” – Conservation in the face of a changing environment

The example from an endangered breed of Waterbuffalos in Ukraine:

Carpathian buffalos have been existing for several hundred years in Maramoresh, so in the Ukraine territory of today.

They have been used for work, milk, meat and herd protection. Traditional size of a buffalo household is between 2 up to 4.

In nowadays there is no need for work with buffalos in Ukraine, the meat has no market and a very bad reputation. Just milk and cheese products reach very good prices.

The handling with Carpathian buffalos is not easy and lots of accidents make people afraid of keeping them. Big cultural change leads to a lower interest in small agricultural farming. Corn prices rise, extra high shepherd payment for buffalos, special knowledge for buffalo breeding and a small market due to low quantity of individuals, make breeding not interesting for new entrepreneurs.

Getting milk from buffalo is the positive result of keeping them. To get milk from an 15 years old Buffalo cow that has pure blood of Carpathian type it needs an adaptation period of about 30 to 45 days. After this period you can get 4 to 6 l of milk per day. Some of them show a difficult adaptation process and can not be milked at all by hand.

For milk machinery there is big investment required. For a small milk fabric with elaboration of products it needs about 15 000 to 20 000 Euro. But this investment at the moment requires a concentration of all available individuals at one farm. That means that out of 110 Buffalos there will be 40 Individuals gathered at least. This leads to other different problems.

So there are two variants of keeping buffalos in Ukraine in future: first is to build up a buffalo farm with all individuals available in Ukraine to make economical income profitable, like the example in Italy shows. My personal opinion is that this Carpathian type of buffalos will cause big problems in milking at the first years, as experiments of sowjet time in 1984 show. The quantity of milk is partly very low and needs a strong selection in future if necessity of competition with other milk is given. The easy availability of high quality buffalo semen from Italy will lead to make the farmer choosing the cheaper way and instead of keeping expensive bull and making strong selection, they will do artificial insemination.

That will lead to an adaptation and equilibration of the breed (population) to neighbor variants.

Second variant of keeping buffalos is small family farming with multi purpose usage of buffalos. That requires multi dimensional usage of individuals as tourism, working, meat, milk and personal idealism. That requires small numbers of individuals in one farm household to stay in personal attitude to individuals and to guaranty working skills of the animal. Dairy products need to be specially placed in the market to have demand all year round. A network of breeders or a breeder association has to organize the male management or need to have contact to semen bank.

There is no opportunity for the Carpathian breed to be conserved now days. Selection will lead to calm, fast growing individuals, with high quantity of milk. The knowledge of working power and brave fighting skills against bears and wolfs in the mountains is nearly forgotten. All selection will be based on milk production in future. The only different will be weather the Ukrainian buffalo population will be able to generate quantity and quality miki results out of its own or will the milking result in future be based on external gens?

The conditions for animals are always difficult in Ukraine, the mortality of individuals is very high, that means the buffalos will always be more ruff than others in similar situations. But globalization and marked requirements pressures the population to this adapted aim. The only chance to save the variety of Carpathian buffalos in Ukraine is to build a special heritage population that is supported by independent financiation with this special goale to preserve this gens.

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