



Bos indicus

Common name: **Domestic Cow**Latin name: **Bos indicus**Local name: **أبقار**

INTRODUCTION

The domestic cattle in Sudan belong to the zebu species, characterized by a hump and long horns.

The zebu is a species or subspecies of domestic cattle originating in South Asia. They are well adapted to withstanding high temperatures and are farmed throughout the tropics. They are an important animal essential to the livelihoods of many tribes in the country, as well as the country's economy.

It is thought that cattle have been domesticated in Africa as far back as 10,000 years ago.

The most common Sudanese cattle breeds are Kenana, Butana, Medob, Nuba mountains found in south Kordofan, and Baggara cattle in western Sudan.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

Culture:

Cattle are important for social status, particularly in *Baggara* communities, as they form the base of the economy, politics and social fabric of many tribes. Their horns are also used as head ornaments for some traditional dances such as *kambala* from the Nubian mountains in south Kordofan. Cattle hide is used to make *Nahas*, a drum used for communication and in battle since ancient times.

Livelihood:

Most cattle in Sudan are bred by nomads known as *Baggara*. They are fed on natural pastures and are kept in herds that might reach hundreds. The nomads' migratory patterns are primarily affected by the needs of their cattle; for fodder, water, as well as solid ground. *Baggara* prefer cattle that are able to walk for long distances and are fast enough to keep up with the herd. This contrasts with how other cattle breeds are selected in other parts of the country, favoring high productivity.

Cattle are an essential source of food. Their milk is processed into different types of cheese, yogurt, sour milk (*rob*), whey, as well as ghee, used both in cooking and as a beauty ingredient for the hair and skin. They are the primary source of meat throughout the country, central to many dishes, which can also be dried and made into *sharmoot*.

Cattle are reared for their milk and meat, their hides for leather, as transport animals in some regions, and as draft animals in the fields. Their horns are used as status ornaments, these days for automobiles. Cattle hide is an important commodity to the Sudanese economy. It is processed in and used in making the homes of the nomad tribes, shoes, bags and many household items.

Cultural value

Owning cattle is linked to social status in many cattle-rearing tribes. They are greatly valued and referred to as *mal* (wealth).

Historically, young girls used to wear a *Rahat*, which is a skirt made from many strands of leather, sourced exclusively from a bull sacrificed in the correct Islamic way. During *Gat' al-rahata*, this skirt is symbolically cut by the groom during the wedding ceremony, symbolizing her transition from a girl to a woman.

The western Sudanese city of Al Fashir was named after a bull, which escaped its owner and was found in the current location of the city.

Cultural expression

التور إن وقع كترت سكاكينو

This saying is (Lit. When the bull falls, the knives multiply) used as a metaphor for kicking people while they are .down

أداني حبالاً بلا بقر

(Lit.: He gave me ropes with no cattle)

.A metaphor for empty promises

THREATS

The large number of cattle and uncontrolled grazing can lead to habitat destruction and contribute to increased desertification.

Conflict and instability threaten the cattle population by limiting access to pasture lands.

ECOLOGY

Type:

Domesticated

Role in Ecosystem:

With proper husbandry, the presence of cattle in pastures helps support biodiversity of plants by returning nutrients to the soil.

Cattle Egrets have a symbiotic relationship with cattle, helping them get rid of pests.

HABITAT

In Sudan, most of the cattle are found in west Sudan, where they roam in the natural pastures. In the rest of the country, they are raised in farmlands around the Nile and in eastern Sudan.



Food

Herbivore

Cattle are grazers, feeding on grasses found in pastures. They are also fed a diet of green fodder, such as *Abu sab'een*, a variety of sorghum, as well as concentrates like alfalfa and grain.



Movement and Communication

Communication:

Cows communicate using vocalization and body language. Some of the sounds they emit are the moo, call, hoot, and roar. A distressed cow or calf will call or hoot, an aggressive bull may roar, and a hungry calf will give a high-intensity "menh."

Movement:

Zebu cattle are adapted to long-distance walking. In Sudan, cattle are kept in open grazing herds or in farms. The open range herds often partake in seasonal migration with the nomads that raise them, seeking fresh pastures and water.



Social Habits

Social

Cattle are herd animals. Range cattle live in groups of cows and calves; males are often separated until breeding season. Dominance in cattle is based on age, sex, weight, presence of horns, and territoriality.



Reproduction

Viviparous

Cows breed throughout the year. The gestation period is 285 days on average. Calves can stand and walk shortly after birth, and cows nurse their offspring for about six to eight months under natural conditions. Domesticated cattle are separated earlier, but in traditional husbandry, the herders will bring the cow's calf at milking time to induce milk let-down.

Zebu are considered sexually mature at about 4 years of age.



Attributes



Appearance:

Zebu cattle differ from taurine cattle by a fatty hump on their shoulders, a large dewlap, and sometimes drooping ears.

The Kenana breed is distinguished by a light blue-gray coat color with darker hooves and head. The Butana breed has a red-coat. The *Baggara* breed has short horns and a large hump, with a red or dark red coat or white markings or black markings.

Size:

Males: 140 cm. Females: 130 cm

Weight:

Males: 529 kg Females: 402 kg.

Lifespan:

Up to 20 years.

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