



Buffalo the unique *Dr. Stamatina Trivizaki, agronomist-geneticist at the «Center of Genetical Animal Improvement» at N. Mesimvria, Elena Komninou, agronomist-animal husbandry MSc*

Greece, in the stock of world's genetical animal, has the honour of preserving the Greek Buffalo. It's a unique animal, well acclimatized and adapted to the particular ground climatic conditions of the country, that evolved through long lasting natural genetical selection, and that produces quality products of high nutritional value.

Today, the effort, the safeguard and diffusion of the Greek Buffalo represent an important work executed by the «Livestock Cooperative of Greek Buffalo Breeders» (Κ.Σ.Β.Ε.), with the contribution of the Ministry of Food and Agricultural Development (Υ.Π.Α.Α.Τ) and particularly by the «Center of Animal Genetical Improvement» (Κ.Γ.Β.Ζ.) of Nea Mesimvria in Thessaloniki. The Κ.Σ.Β.Ε. was founded in 2004. It was composed by 11 members all of them breeders of Greek Buffalo from the Serres region (lake Kerkini) and from the region of Thessaloniki (lake Volvi and delta of the Axios river), with a population of 1000 buffaloes. Today, the number of livestock-members amounts to 30 and the number of animals is of 3300. To the increase of the population an important contribution was given by: the public national safeguard programs for the autochthonous breeds, like the one that is applied consecutively from 2002 till today («Preservation of the endangered autochthonous domestic animal species», Metro 214 – Action 3.4 of the Π.Α.Α 2007-2013) as well as the correspondent recording and certification programs of the population («Preservation of livestock genetical resources», Metro 214 – Action 3.4 of the Π.Α.Α 2007-2013).



From 2002 the Κ.Γ.Β.Ζ of Nea Mesimvria, keeps a genealogical book of the Greek Buffalo in which the genealogical data of the animals are noted (necessary condition for the rescue of a breed), records and follows all the changes of the population of the greek buffaloes, while all the animals are controlled and certified. One major issue for the safeguarding of the Greek Buffalo is the importing of buffaloes from

Bulgaria and Romania and their possible crossbreeding with the greek ones, that would lead to the deterioration of the genetical profile of the species. The imported animals differ phenotypically from the correspondent greek ones and in a short time, after their import into our country, a reduction of the production and of the economic value of the breeding is observed, due to their difficult adaptation to the greek environment and the extensive farming conditions. Thus, as intensive farming animals as they were in their original countries, fed exclusively in stables with high demands on food, and not being free ranging animals, frugal and adapted to the greek climatic and environmental conditions, they encounter surviving issues and become antieconomical to be kept. The members of the «Livestock Cooperative of Greek Buffalo Breeders» keep extensive buffalo farming. The animals eat taking advantage of the diversity of the greek natural flora. The products that are produced in small familiar activities or for own consumption, derive from an animal that eats naturally and ecologically, almost «organic», from an animal resistant to the diseases without pharmaceutical treatments, so that its products are free from medicines, harmful for the consumer as well.



The Greek Buffalo is an animal that we have to be proud of, we have to protect it and praise the people who struggle for their breeding. We have to take care to save it and to preserve the traditional way of breeding for the next generations.



BACK to nature

Mr. Anestis Trigas, resident in Agrelia' of Trikala, after working as professor at the gymnasium for 16 years, since 2002-2003 he started to breed black greek pigs in his farm; 4 years ago he abandoned his profession and dedicated his life to animal husbandry. Lately he started to breed Sykia' cattle. **We asked him how he took this decision.**

And he answered: Always I was involved in amatorial farming. But my dream was to make a piece of land, a farm, completely autonomous in every respect; from food, from energy, from everything. I chose the local pig breed, due mainly to economic reasons and resistance. The «improved» imported breeds develop scary problems; in fact it is like you were dealing with drug addicts: they have to eat feed of extremely high quality. Additionally they are dependent from vaccinations, antibiotics, medicines, without which not even far you could reach the output you want. The local breeds don't have problems.

The pigs for example, if you exclude a vulnerability they have for the heat, are animals that can exploit everything, even the most incredible pasture, where only goats normally go. The pigs are extremely resistant and do not show any problem with the exception of the classical one that all the pigs have, namely some diseases of the lungs. But if you take care of their place as it should be, then they are not even affected by this. If I would organize a conventional farm, I would need 60 Euro for each ton of food; now I don't need anything, because they eat grass.

Regarding the Sykia' cows: always I wanted to breed cattle because the region is ideal for this. There are forests and open spaces, it is a mixed pasture, ideal for a resistant animal. I would have to chase the foreign breeds constantly with medicines. Now just some tranquilizers that.... I have to take. I mean: I am very pleased with the result, simply I have toraise the fences. Measured 1.80 m, they just jump it! I am thinking, maybe they are crossed with.... lions.

The traditional breeds, once you find the key, if you have competence, autonomy of food and most important controlled pastureland, then it pays back. They can live literally with nothing. I was giving them expensive food and they preferred to eat the bushes and the dried oak leaves! They don't have any health problem, when the cows are delivering, I don't realize it. With the other cattle breeds you have to be present at all times, together with a veterinary....not to mention that there are breeds that deliver only with caesarean operation like the Belgian Blue. Yes I am very pleased. I am thinking to get also short horn cattle.....

The greek horse's breeds

Cretan breed - Messaras

One of the mountain greek horse's breeds is the charismatic Messaras breed from Crete, that we will learn about:

It is a horse that was once raised on the plateau of the Messaras mountain range, in the Heraklion region. Nowadays it is raised all over Crete. It has a height of 1.32 – 1.42. The head is thin and expressive, the neck is weak, the body is narrow, the backline is straight, the horseback is rounded and the thighs are muscular.



The mane is wide and the tail is long. The ends are thin and long in relation to the body. Characteristic of the breed is the side trot that possibly (like in the Pinias breed), derives from crossbreeding with arabian type horses during the turkish occupation. The Messaras horses have some similarities with the horses that are depicted in Minoan scenes, in coins and sculptures. This amazing affirmation strengthens the view that the genes that are not maintained by the the natural selection, eventually are being lost and characteristics are kept, that are favored by the particular conditions of each place, despite the human intervention.

Guineafowl

one of the ancient domestic birds of Greece

It is not precisely known when the Guineafowls (*Numida meleagris*) first came to Greece, but there is an excellent archaic representation of them on an attic skyphos of the 6th century B.C. Also there are enough representations, testimonials and descriptions of ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine writers (Aristoteles, Columella, Hesychius, Baronos etc.) with the most important references of the 2nd century A.D. from Pausanias (the poor worshipers sacrifice the “meleagrides” to the sanctuary of Isis at Tithorea), of Athenaeus of Naucratis (records the citation of Klitus of Miletus, that around the temple of Artemis Parthenon in Leros there were “meleagrides”) and of Ailianos, who informs us that the ancient Greeks were eating Guineafowls, except for the very pious ones because they considered it a sacred bird. One myth asserts that the Meleagrides were the 4 sisters of Kalydonius, hero of Meleagros, whose death made them to mourn so much that the Goddess Artemis took pity on them and transformed them in birds and sent them to Leros. The great history of this bird, of African origin (Morokko/Ethiopia), in Greece, it is not only accompanied by myths and traditions, but also from breeders, that raised local varieties in different places of it. It is unfair that nobody ever studied the autochthonous genetical material that was created for 2500 years and that got lost

with the import of foreign one. The local names attest the existence and knowledge of the Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris sabyi/meleagris*) in many localities, besides ancient *meleagris* (corruption of *melenargis*) and *noumida*, using for each locality different appellations: *faraonia*,



krokranes, *kokranes*, *tsirikonia*, *petrokotes* *koukouranes* etc. Unfortunately, the references for domestic varieties are quite minimal and the knowledge insufficient, few are the morphological descriptions and behaviors (e.g. typical wild habits) and almost unknown are the current areas of conservation. Unique place that has been reported as traditional area of breeding, where local populations survive until now, is in Lesbos. The bird exists on this island since old times and until few years ago it was common both as domestic and as wild form, displays a variety of shades of color and small body weight. Nowadays there is a population of 200-300 birds in the wild and during the winter months it is a target prey. Other localities, where local populations have been detected are, Evros, Roumeli and an area of Elassonas,



but require still documentations. The research until now, though has found not much, but still important elements about this fowl contribute in this way to the recent awareness of the rich greek wild biodiversity. The researches do not stop and the knowledge of the greek Guineafowl will be expanded through efforts to discover old populations and continuous investigation to find traditional breeding centers, with the aim to preserve them.

Text – photographs:

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«Amaltheia's»

Actions

1. Visit to the nucleus of Argos sheep at Orchomenos that was created by SAVE/Amaltheia.
2. Visit to the nucleus of Oulokeros goat and autochthonous fowls that are preserved from a member of Amaltheia in the district of Malesina.
3. Visit to Skyros island to various breeding places of the Skyrian pony.
4. Skyros. Participation to a workshop on the management of the island's pasture lands and the compatibility of the autochthonous sheeps and goats with them. Record of sheeps and goats of Skyros.
5. Collection of informations about the near extinct Kordolouri shepherd dog of Skyros (see picture above), about the extinct brachyceras (short horn) cattle type of the island, local fowls, donkeys, mules.
6. Visit to the last Kretan brachyceras cattle type (see picture below) nuclei at the wider area of Chania.
7. Localisation of new specimen of Sykia cattle at farms of eastern Macedonia region.



IT'S THE GOAT'S FAULT for the mess in Attica

In 1992 an amendment to the law 1564/85 was done, that prohibited 1) «the grazing of goats in fir forests» and 2) « the grazing of goats in all the forests (independently from the type of tree) of the Attica region». Based on the above, on the 18/01/13 a denunciation against a breeder (inhabitant of Dau in Pentelis) for illegal grazing was done. The farmer was caught in the act, and spent the night at the police station, got to know that it was planned to confiscate 10% of his herd, finally he was condemned to 8 months imprisonment, that was suspended for three years. The family of the specific farmer is in that area since 1952, when the state settled there farmers, who came from the area nowadays known as Kalliternoupoli. It seems that at that time the authorities «thought» that the woods were not at risk from goats and sheeps, having of course the older fact that during the occupation, after a big fire, the Pentelikon mountain recovered, although at that time, 17000 sheeps and goats were grazing there! Meanwhile, what the inhabitants of Attica experienced, after the modification of the 1985 law, was a complete catastrophe at Pentelikon. Due to fires that encouraged of course not the pasturing, but the speculation through infringement, estate development, illegal building and so on. In that way, without anybody really willing to «drive off the goats», does it perhaps mean that it is simply not «chic» for the area! Seriously, we should note that 1) The grazing inside mature woods is beneficial because it removes the dry grass preventing in that way the fires (it is occasionally applied in the US, while similar proposal had been made by the former chief forester of Parnitha, G. Douros). 2) One territory that is under reforestation must be protected from grazing, but mainly from illegal housing. 3) All the witnesses from experienced breeder say that goats do not eat pine trees either adult or sprout. We also note that the few shepherds remaining in the district have in most cases greek sheeps and goats that they inherited from their forefathers and that they kept; the specific is keeping a nucleus of pure blood Mitilinis-Lesbos goats. Bur for the state such things are just small details!

Katerina Plassara'



Local goats



Lesbos goats

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Attikon Ekdoseon Group*

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