



**For Immediate Release**

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## **2012 Conservation Priority List: A Snap-Shot of Endangered Breeds**

(Pittsboro, NC) – The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) today released its 23rd annual Conservation Priority List (CPL). The list is a tool for evaluating the level of endangerment of domestic livestock and poultry breeds throughout the United States. For 2012, there are 189 total breeds of livestock and poultry on the list, and 61 breeds are considered critically endangered.

“Many people are familiar with endangered species such as Siberian tigers, but they fail to realize that many domesticated breeds of livestock and poultry are suffering the same fate,” said Dr. Alison Martin, Research and Technical Programs Director for ALBC. For many of the breeds ALBC works with, there are fewer than 200 breeding animals left in the United States. “The Conservation Priority List helps raise public awareness that many historic farmyard breeds are disappearing from the agricultural landscape,” added Martin.

This year’s most dramatic change was the movement of the Newfoundland Pony from the Study category to the Critical category. Recent DNA investigations have shown that the Newfoundland breed has a unique genetic make-up and their numbers are declining, with fewer than 250 breeding animals left in the world. ALBC has shifted its conservation priorities to support the promotion and breeding of this critically endangered equine.

Aside from reporting conservation priorities, the list also reports conservation successes. Three rabbit breeds have improved their status on the list following an emerging trend in rabbit showing, keeping, and raising. In addition, the Myotonic or Tennessee Fainting goat has moved from the Watch category to Recovering. Many people know the breed for the unique stiffening characteristic it displays when alarmed, but more and more farmers are finding that the perpetual stiffening increases muscle size and creates an animal with a superb meat-to-bone ratio.

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy publishes the Conservation Priority List once a year. The organization gathers census information from breed registries, through direct contact with breeders, and by international collaboration to determine a breed’s status. Guidelines have been established to define the conservation priorities.

“If you think about agriculture as a stock portfolio, you don’t want to invest all your money in just a few breeds. Diversifying your assets, through a variety of breeds, ensures genetic diversity and security for agriculture’s future,” said Charles Bassett, ALBC executive director. “The annual Conservation Priority List allows ALBC to assess the ‘breed portfolio’ and make the public and farmers aware of the critical importance of biodiversity in agriculture.”

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**Equid CPL Highlights:**

- The **Newfoundland Pony** moved from Study to Critical.

**Livestock CPL Highlights:**

- The **American rabbit** moved from Critical to Threatened.
- The **Silver Fox rabbit** moved from Critical to Threatened.
- The **Crème de Argent rabbit** moved from Watch to Recovering.
- The **Myotonic or Tennessee Fainting goat** moved from Watch to Recovering.
- **Criollo (North Central Mexican) cattle** was added to the Study category.

For more information about how the CPL is determined, visit: [http://albc-usa.org/cpl/cpl\\_explained.html](http://albc-usa.org/cpl/cpl_explained.html)

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**About the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy:**

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect over 180 breeds of livestock and poultry from extinction. Included are donkeys, cattle, goats, horses, sheep, pigs, rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. Founded in 1977, ALBC is the pioneer organization in the U.S. working to conserve historic breeds and genetic diversity in livestock. ALBC's mission is to ensure the future of agriculture through genetic conservation and the promotion of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry.

**Why are domestic breed of livestock and poultry in danger of extinction?**

Modern agriculture and food production favors the use of a few highly specialized breeds selected for maximum output in intensively controlled environments. Many traditional breeds do not excel under these conditions, so have lost popularity and are faced with extinction.

**Why is genetic diversity important?**

Like all ecological systems, agriculture depends on genetic diversity to adapt to an ever-changing environment. Genetic diversity in domestic animals is revealed in distinct breeds, each with different characteristics and uses.

Traditional, historic breeds retain essential attributes for survival and self-sufficiency – fertility, foraging ability, longevity, maternal instincts, ability to mate naturally, and resistance to disease and parasites. As agriculture changes, we need to be able to draw on this genetic diversity for a broad range of uses and future opportunities. Once lost, genetic diversity is gone forever.

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