

# Characteristics, management practices and peoples' preferences for local cows and exotic crossbreeds in Baltistan, Pakistan

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## Abstract

This study explored and documented local knowledge about the characteristics, management practices and preference for local cows, which are local cattle, and Zomo (Zomo is female hybrid and is the Product of Yak cross with Local cattle) and crossbreeds of Jersey and Friesian (Product of Exotic bull of Jersey and Friesian cross with local cattle) in Khaplu, Northern Areas of Pakistan. Furthermore, the study presents information regarding the adoption of the crossbreeds and their effects on peoples' livelihood in the area. The study was carried out in three villages of Khaplu, namely Gharbuchung (upper village), Hatchi (middle village) and Kraming (lower village). From each village 30% of the total households were randomly selected for interview. The findings of study indicated that milk production from the crossbreed cows was double that of the local cows. The market demand of crossbreed cows was also high. Crossbreeds of Jersey was the most preferred and adopted breeds compared to crossbreeds of Friesian because of relative advantages of being disease resistant, having better feeding habit and high market demand. The crossbreeds were adapted to the local conditions of management system to a certain extent, making more people in the study area to adopt them.



Local and exotic cows

Pictures: Ghulam Raza

On the other hand, their feeding habit (demand for more feed) has made the people dependent on market to buy fodder, which they considered as a major challenge for their livestock production. Nevertheless, the people in study area still favour of keeping the crossbreeds because of their high production to meet the demand of large family size in the households. High incomes due to off farming activities and market opportunities to buy fodder also seem to favour the adoption of crossbreeds. The local breeds were perceived to have good feeding habits and quality products; especially the Zomo was most preferred because of its high quality and tasty butter. The local cattle and crossbreed of Friesian were less preferred breeds because of low production of local cattle and excessive feeding habit of Friesian.

The introduction of crossbreeds in the study area has improved the livelihoods of the people through increased production of milk and producing valuable calves. However, the population of local breeds has decreased due to continuous crossbreeding of local cattle and its offspring with exotic bull, which may lead to genetic erosion of local breeds in the study area. Given a wide range of indigenous knowledge, perceptions and preferences that the farmers have demonstrated during this study provides a room for professionals, development workers to work with these local people on balancing these two scenarios.

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