

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12AM MONDAY 8TH APRIL 2019

Latest RBST Watchlist shows resilience of native breed livestock sector

A decade on from the last recession, Britain's native livestock breeds are proving resilient in the face of economic challenge. So says the Rare Breed Survival Trust (RBST) on the publication of its Watchlist, an annual report into the state of the UK's registered native livestock breeds.

Christopher Price, CEO of RBST says: "One of the key factors that can affect the health of our rare breed populations is the economic situation and the pressures that it places on breeders. The encouraging news this year, a decade on from the last recession, is that breeds and breeders have generally shown resilience with trends for most species over the last five years being stable or increasing. They are proving that native livestock have a key role in the future of farming.

Native breeds are being recognised for their versatility. They are increasingly used to graze sensitive landscapes and require fewer inputs, making them perfectly suited for farms looking for flexibility in an uncertain post-Brexit future. In addition, more people are caring about the provenance of their food. Rare and native breeds fit perfectly into this narrative; they can even be introduced alongside tourism projects to add value and interest to farm holidays."

The main exceptions in the 2019 Watchlist are some horse breeds, especially the iconic heavy horses; Suffolks, Shires and Clydesdales. The charity says that these breeds were amongst the hardest hit by the recession with many breeders calling a halt when the market for youngstock fell dramatically. The recession also had a significant impact on native pig breeds, but they too are showing more signs of stability.

The picture for cattle is positive, with some breeds enjoying a particularly good year as farmers recognise their versatility for a range of farming systems. RBST has made cattle breeds the focus of its fundraising efforts for 2019 - to ensure these valuable genetics are saved as an insurance policy for the future.

The outlook is also bright for native breed goats – small, thrifty and characterful, our native breeds are suitable for keeping on a relatively small area for domestic milk production, or managing scrub on large conservation sites.

The UK has more sheep breeds than any other country – an unparalleled resource for farmers with a breed to match every climate and environment. 2019's Watchlist shows most sheep breeds are stable or increasing.

Producing high-quality meat and fibre, and inextricably linked to the management of our most treasured landscapes, native breeds may yet prove to be the future of farming.

Significant changes were seen in the following breeds on RBST's 2019 Watchlist: (attached Lincoln Longwool, Golden Guernsey, Shetland cattle – other photos available on request).

Key movers on RBST's 2019 Watchlist

Going up

Goats – [Golden Guernsey](#), [Bagot](#)

Sheep – [Hill Radnor](#), [Castlemilk Moorit](#)

Cattle – [Shetland](#), [Whitebred Shorthorn](#)

Equines – [Fell pony](#), [New Forest pony](#)

Going down

Sheep – [Lincoln Longwool](#)

Cattle – [Irish Moiled](#)

Equines – [Clydesdale horse](#), [Shire horse](#)

Pigs – [Gloucestershire Old Spots](#)

-Ends-

NOTES TO EDITORS

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ABOUT THE CHARITY – RARE BREEDS SURVIVAL TRUST

Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is the sole charity dedicated to promoting and preserving the UK's rare and native breeds of farm livestock. Started in 1973, RBST monitors numbers of animals, and threats of inbreeding and geographical concentration. It promotes the breeding and registration of rare and native breeds. Through its 4,500 members, staff and support groups it provides a network of knowledge to support and encourage breeders to reduce these threats. See the website www.rbst.org.uk. For more information on the Watchlist visit <https://www.rbst.org.uk/watchlist-overview>, and for more information on the Gene Bank visit <https://www.rbst.org.uk/gene-bank>.