

Main breeds of domestic farm animals

Livestock breeds originated from the adaptation of animals to their **environmental and geographic** surroundings and **human-directed action to increase the production of farm animals**. The set of breeds in our country is compiled in the Official Catalogue of Cattle Breeds of Spain (2019) which distinguishes them between **native promotion breeds**, **native breeds in danger of extinction** and **integrated breeds** from outside the Peninsula. This sheet shows some of the **most representative breeds** of the different types of livestock.

A breed is defined as a sufficiently uniform population of animals that it can be considered different from other animals of the same species (Regulation 2016/1012, of June 8, 2016 on animal husbandry). There are **two main factors that give rise to livestock breeds**:

1) **Environmental and geographical action:** depending on where they live, animals have been modifying their bodies in order to adapt to different environmental conditions. This group includes **autochthonous breeds**, with traditional production systems, which require animals that, although less productive, have very valuable functional characteristics, which make them unique in their places of production and allow progress towards a necessary sustainability (Official Catalogue of Cattle Breeds of Spain, 2019).

2) **Human action through directed reproduction: livestock species are improved for productive purposes.** Thus, dairy breeds have been improved to have large udders, with a great potential to produce milk, much more than what the baby cows need for their development. **Breeds destined for meat tend to be larger**, more prolific and precocious: they develop more quickly and reach sexual maturity earlier.

In Spain, the main livestock breeds present in the territory are listed in the **Official Catalogue of Cattle Breeds of Spain (2019)**. It includes "**autochthonous breeds**", which may be either "**in development**" (in expansion) or "**in danger of extinction**" and "**integrated breeds**" from outside the Peninsula, which have been here for more than 20 years and have genealogy and performance controls.

Some of the most outstanding breeds within each type of livestock and productive purpose are described below.



Figure 1. Herd of cows of the Simmental or Fleckvieh breed, which is the breed used in Polyfarming. Photo: Maria Josep Broncano.

Razas de vacuno

In Spain there are **46 breeds of cows**, which include 8 breeding breeds, 32 breeds in danger of extinction and 6 integrated breeds with known yields. The most representative are:

a) Beef cows

MORUCHA		RUBIA GALLEGA		BRUNA DE LOS PIRINEOS	
<p>Autochthonous promotion breed locally adapted to the dehesa area that comes from the Iberian Tronco Negro. It has the highest fertility of all the Spanish meat breeds, with a productivity of 0.75 calves/year.</p>		<p>Autochthonous promotion breed more than 500 years old originating from Galicia. It is characterised by being very rustic and easily adaptable to any territory. Docility and meekness that facilitates handling. Productivity of 0.69 calves/year.</p>		<p>Breed in danger of extinction widespread in the Catalan Pyrenees and Pre-Pyrenees. It is raised extensively in high mountain pastures, with transhumance from the valleys. Docile animal.</p>	

b) Milk cows

HOLSTEIN FRIESIANS		PARDA		SIMMENTAL OR FLECKVIEH	
<p>Integrated breed that is the first in milk and cheese production in Spain. It represents 60% of the total count.</p>		<p>Integrated breed that ranks second in dairy production for the manufacture of cheeses. Abundant on the Cantabrian coast: Asturias, Santander and the Basque Country, where it has easily acclimatised.</p>		<p>Integrated breed that has been in Spain for more than four decades. It is one of the most important and widely distributed in the world with dual purposes, they produce milk and meat. It is the most fertile breed.</p>	

Sheep breeds

In Spain there are **44 autochthonous breeds of sheep**, of which 10 are for promotion and 34 are considered in danger of extinction. There are 4 integrated races from other locations, plus 2 races that are foreigners in expansion.

a) Meat sheep

CHURRA		MERINA		RIPOLLESA	
<p>Autochthonous promotion breed and one of the most primitive in the Peninsula. Very high count, with great production of both milk and high-quality lambs.</p>		<p>Autochthonous promotion breed, described by the Romans. It is the most valued breed in the world for wool production. It is the breed that has given rise to most of the current meat breeds.</p>		<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. It is of Catalan origin. Very rustic, it takes advantage of resources that are difficult to value when there is a lack of forage. Its meat is linked to the traditional gastronomic tradition.</p>	

b) Milk sheep

LATXA		MANCHEGA		CARRANZANA	
<p>Autochthonous promotion breed, abundant in the north-east of the peninsula. Adapted to mountainous areas with high rainfall. Milk destined for the production of Idiazabal and Roncal cheeses. Coarse and long wool.</p>		<p>Autochthonous promotion breed, which owes its name to the geographical area where it is most abundant. Adapted to dry and hot climates. High rusticity. Herd instinct. High longevity and shelf life. Production of Manchego cheese.</p>		<p>Abundant autochthonous promotion breed in the north of the peninsula. Adapted to mountainous areas with high rainfall. Used for the production of Idiazabal cheese.</p>	

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Goat breeds

We found a total of 22 breeds described in the catalogue, of which 3 are for promotion and 19 are classified as "in danger of extinction". The following stand out:

a) Meat goats

RETINTA



Native breed in danger of extinction. Its name comes from its red colour. Breed whose origin is considered to be very old. It is raised extensively in Extremadura for its meat.

MALLORQUINA



Native breed in danger of extinction. It extends through the Sierra de la Tramuntana and the Llevant mountains of the island of Mallorca. It is raised extensively and is appreciated for its meat and antlers (a fact that has generated hunting reserves).

PIRENAICA



Native breed in danger of extinction. It originated and distributed in the Pyrenees, mainly in the Aragon's section. It is a breed adapted to cold mountain climates whose main productive use is meat.

b) Milk goats

MURCIANO-GRANADINA



The most numerous **autochthonous breed** in Spain whose origin comes from the south-east of the peninsula. It is appreciated for its high milk production and for its fat content. It is essential in the production of Murcian cheeses D.O.P.

MALAGUEÑA



Native breed, originally from Malaga. It combines the extensive milk production with the production of high-quality suckling goats. It has a high rusticity, being very adaptable to different production systems and environments, even in very disadvantaged areas.

FLORIDA



Native breed whose name comes from the red spotted coat on a white background or vice versa. Breed that spans Andalusia and Extremadura. Highly rustic animal valued for producing milk with a high fat content.

Pig breeds

There are 16 breeds of pigs in the Peninsula, of which 3 are promotion breeds, 9 are in danger of extinction and 4 are integrated breeds. Among them, the following can be highlighted:

IBERIAN PIG



Native breed evolved from *Sus scrofa ferus*. Traditional system of extensive bait exploitation with the use of the natural resources of the pasture (herbs and acorns). Iberian pork products with a great gastronomic quality.

DUROC



Integrated breed from the USA widely distributed in Europe. It is rustic and adapted to hot climates. It stands out by providing quality to the meat due to the fat infiltrated in the products.

CELTIC



Native breed in danger of extinction. Originally from the Celtic Trunk of European origin. Traditionally the breed has been exploited extensively in Galicia. Among its products, Galician bacon and Galician chorizo stand out.

■ Avian breeds

Among the official breeds there are 20 breeds of chickens recognised in Spain. Of these, 19 are considered to be in danger of extinction. Other breeds, although not in the catalogue, are widely used for both meat and egg production..

a) Meat hens

CORNISH		BROILER		EMPORDANESA	
<p>Breed not included in the Spanish official catalogue. It owes its name to the fact that it comes from the county of Cornwall. These chickens, as well as Cornish crosses, are the most widely used breed in the chicken meat industry. They are heavy and muscular birds with abundant and juicy meat.</p>		<p>Breed not included in the Spanish official catalogue. The Broiler variety comes from the cross between a Cornish male and a Barred Rock female around 1930. This variety was developed for meat production as chickens grow very quickly and produce highly-prized meat.</p>		<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. Originally from the Catalan region of Empordà. It is semi-heavy with a double aptitude: meat and eggs. Adapted to the low temperatures of the Mediterranean winter.</p>	

b) Hens for eggs

CASTELLANA NEGRA		MENORQUINA		PLYMOUTH ROCK	
<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. This light breed is believed to have been brought over by the Arabs. Spread throughout the Iberian Peninsula, it is most abundant in the centre. It is a very rustic and disease-resistant breed. Extensive producer of large eggs.</p>		<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. Selected by the English during the occupation of Menorca in the 18th century, it was distributed internationally. It is a hen of medium rusticity with great aptitude for producing eggs.</p>		<p>Breed not included in the Spanish official catalogue. Originally from the United States, it was imported to Europe around 1880. Semi-heavy breed, considered one of the best dual-purpose breeds, although the barred variety stands out for producing eggs.</p>	

■ Rabbit breeds

The European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) was listed as an endangered species by the IUCN in 2019. From the domestication of this species many races arose for different uses: hair, skin, meat or pets. In Spain, there are two breeds of meat that are in danger of extinction.

COMÚN DOMÉSTICO OR PARDO ESPAÑOL		FLEMISH GIANT RABBIT		NEW ZEALAND	
<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. It is believed to originate from Roman times and is considered to be one of the most primitive races. It stands out for its rusticity and discreet reproduction. It has been displaced by larger and more productive breeds.</p>		<p>Native breed in danger of extinction. It emerged at the start of the 20th century, it is spread over different breeding centres throughout the Spanish territory. They are slow-maturing animals that produce very lean meat.</p>		<p>Breed not included in the Spanish official catalogue. Very widespread rabbit throughout the world, it emerged in the United States in 1912 with the function of producing meat. In general, it is a prolific breed, with very fertile females, good growth rates and good carcass performance.</p>	

New Zealand rabbit photo: Unsplash, [Minsha Walker](#).