

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy defines: Heritage Cattle and Their Products



DEFINITION Heritage Cattle and Their Products

DEFINITION of Heritage Cattle

Heritage Cattle must adhere to all of the following:

1. **True Genetic Breed.** The breed is a true genetic breed of cattle. That is, when mated together, it reproduces the breed type.
2. **Endangered Breed.** The breed is or has been endangered, as defined by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), and appears on the ALBC Conservation Priority List in the Critical, Threatened, Watch, or Recovering categories.
3. **Long History in US.** The breed has an established and continuously breeding population in the United States since 1925. If developed since 1925, foundation stock is no longer available. If more recently imported, the breed is globally endangered. (Please refer to ALBC's criteria for listing on the conservation priority list for details on this).
4. **Purebred Status.** Heritage Cattle must be registered purebred animals or immediate offspring of registered purebred animals. Cattle that are the result of a breed association sanctioned grade-up program must have obtained purebred status.

Purpose

Cattle have been a part of the American agricultural landscape since the arrival of New World colonists beginning in 1493 with the second Spanish voyage. Cattle indigenous to Europe were brought with immigrants during the colonization of America, and the many different types of cattle they brought have provided milk, meat, leather, tallow, draft power, and pleasure for centuries. Modern breed associations maintain pedigree registries of purebred animals for each breed that descends from these colonial, as well as later, introductions. Registration of animals destined to become breeding stock is essential to the long-term security of the breeds. Registration validates purebred status of animals and assures their availability for conservation by future generations.

Many cattle breeds that were once core components of regional cultures are now in danger of extinction. As cultures are homogenized and historic agricultural traditions abandoned, the flavors and food traditions that revolved around specific breeds are threatened as well.

In response to this threat, the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is defining Heritage Cattle, and the Heritage Beef and Milk that come from them. This ensures that the legacy left to succeeding generations has as much genetic breadth and biological robustness as the current generation has itself inherited from previous generations. The definition draws attention to endangered breeds of cattle, supports their genetic integrity and long-term conservation, encourages management strategies that are biologically appropriate and agriculturally sustainable, and celebrates the cultural and culinary traditions of these breeds. Cattle and cattle products marketed as Heritage must meet all of the following criteria.

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Heritage Cattle Products must come from:

- Heritage Cattle only.
- Herds with ongoing breed selection practices for longevity, fertility, and productivity.
- Herds that follow sustainable management practices that provide for animal well-being
 - diets that are all plant-based, and primarily forage-based.
 - raised primarily in open, pasture or range, environments. This specifically excludes total confinement operations.
 - free from routine prophylactic antibiotics.
 - free from administered synthetic or natural growth promoters or growth hormones.
 - humanely slaughtered.

A. Definition of Heritage Beef Products:

Beef animals and their products marketed as Heritage Beef must:

- Be produced from the mating of registered, purebred parent stock.
 - This allows for the sale as Heritage of those offspring that are produced by mating registered animals of two different Heritage breeds.
- Include the name of the breed of that animal on the label, or the two Heritage breeds used in crossbred production.

B. Definition of Heritage Milk or Heritage Milk Products:

Milk marketed as Heritage Milk must:

- Be exclusively from animals that have been produced from the mating of registered, purebred parent stock.
 - This allows for the sale as Heritage of milk from those offspring that are produced by mating registered animals of two different Heritage breeds.
- Include the name(s) of the breed(s) of the animals on product label.

Products made with Heritage Milk:

- Must be made exclusively with Heritage Milk to use Heritage in the product name.
- As an ingredient may use "Made with Heritage Milk" on the label but cannot use Heritage in the product title, and the label must state the percentage of milk from each Heritage breed.
- Must include the name(s) of the breed(s) of the animals on product label.



For more information about this definition or other ALBC Heritage definitions, mbender@albc-usa.org
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← Heritage Beef

← Heritage Milk

← Heritage Milk Products

Terms like "heirloom," "antique," "old-fashioned," and "old timey" imply heritage and are understood to be synonymous with the definition provided here.