


# Zebu

This article is about the bovine species. For the company, see EVE/ZeBu.

Zebu	
	
Conservation status	
Domesticated	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Artiodactyla
Family:	Bovidae
Subfamily:	Bovinae
Genus:	<i>Bos</i>
Species:	<i>Bos primigenius</i>
Subspecies:	<i>B. p. indicus</i>
Binomial name	
<i><b>Bos primigenius indicus</b></i> Linnaeus, 1758	
Synonyms	
<i>Bos indicus</i> and <i>Bos taurus indicus</i>	



Speculative life restoration of the enigmatic Indian aurochs (*B. p. namadicus*)

A **zebu** (/ˈziːbjuː/, /ˈziːbuː/ or /ˈzeɪbuː/; *Bos primigenius indicus* or *Bos indicus* or *Bos taurus indicus*), sometimes known as **humped cattle** or **Brahman**, is a type of domestic cattle originating in South Asia. They are characterised by a fatty hump on their shoulders, drooping ears and a large dewlap. Zebu are well adapted to withstanding high temperatures, and are farmed throughout the tropical countries, both as pure zebu and as hybrids with taurine cattle, the other main type of domestic cattle. They are used as draught oxen, as dairy cattle and as beef cattle, as well as for byproducts such as hides and dung for fuel and manure.

## Taxonomy and etymology

The scientific name of zebu cattle was originally *Bos indicus*, but they are now more commonly classified within the species *Bos primigenius*, together with taurine cattle (*Bos primigenius taurus*) and the ancestor of both of them, the extinct aurochs (*Bos primigenius*). European cattle are descended from the Eurasian subspecies, while zebu are descended from the Indian subspecies. "Zebu" may be either singular or plural, but "zebus" is also an acceptable plural form. The Spanish name, "cebu" or "cebú", is also present in a few English works.

## Origin

Zebu cattle are thought to be derived from Asian aurochs, sometimes regarded as a subspecies, *Bos primigenius namadicus* Wild Asian aurochs disappeared during the time of the Indus Valley Civilization from its range in the Indus basin and other parts of the Indian subcontinent possibly due to inter-breeding with domestic zebu and resultant fragmentation of wild populations due to loss of habitat.

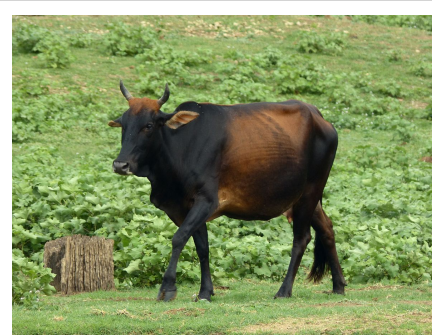
## Breeds

There are some 75 known breeds of zebu, split about evenly between African breeds and South Asian ones. The major zebu cattle breeds of the world include Gir, Guzerat, Kankrej, Indo-Brazilian, Brahman, Nelore, Ongole, Sahiwal, Red Sindhi, Butana, Kenana, Boran, Baggara, Tharparkar, Kangayam, Chinese Southern Yellow, Philippine native, Kedah - Kelantan, and local Indian Dairy (LID). Other breeds of zebu are quite local, like the Haryana of Haryana and eastern Punjab<sup>[1]</sup> or the Rath of Alwar in eastern Rajasthan.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Sanga cattle breeds originated from hybridization of zebu with indigenous humpless cattle in Africa; they include the Afrikaner, Red Fulani, Ankole-Watusi, and many other breeds of central and southern Africa. Sanga cattle can be distinguished from pure zebu by having smaller humps located farther forward on the animals.

## Characteristics

Zebu have humps on the shoulders, large dewlaps and droopy ears.



Female zebu in Sri Lanka

## Spread and hybridisation



Draft zebu in Mumbai, India

Zebu were imported to Africa over many hundreds of years, and interbred with taurine cattle there. Genetic analysis of African cattle has found higher concentrations of zebu genes all along the east coast of Africa, with especially pure cattle on the island of Madagascar, either implying that the method of dispersal was cattle transported by ship or alternatively, the Zebu may have reached East Africa via the coastal route (Pakistan, Iran, Southern Arabian coast) much earlier and crossed over to Madagascar. Partial resistance to rinderpest led to another increase in the frequency of zebu in Africa.

Zebu were imported into Brazil in the early twentieth century and crossbred with Charolais cattle, a European taurine breed. The resulting breed, 63% Charolais and 37% Zebu, is called the Chanchim. It has a better meat quality than the zebu as well as better heat resistance than Asian cattle. The zebu breeds used were primarily Indo-Brazilian with some Nelore and Guzerat.

Many breeds are complex mixtures of the zebu and various taurine types, and some also have yak, gaur or banteng genetics. Wikipedia:Citation needed While zebu are the common cattle in much of Asia, the cattle of Japan, Korea and Mongolia are taurine (although possibly domesticated separately from the other taurine cattle originating from Europe and Africa). Other species of cattle domesticated in parts of Asia include yak, gaur, banteng and water buffalo.

Bulls from the Brahman breed of zebu are often used for bullriding in rodeos.

In 1999, researchers at Texas A&M University successfully cloned a zebu.

Han-u is a traditional Korean breed, hybrid of *Bos primigenius taurus* and zebu.



Zebu market in Madagascar

## Popular culture

Further information: Nandi

In India it is considered as the contemporary representation of Nandi, the sacred bull of Shiva.

Zebu were mentioned in the *Silly Songs with Larry* tune "The Song of the Cebú". Larry the Cucumber sings a story slide show song about Cebu and defines a cebú as "kinda like a cow." At one point in the song, Larry says "... I think that's the bull's cousin. He's a cebú!" This is fairly accurate, as European cattle and zebu are members of the same species.

The Zebu is also famous for its appearance in the book *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* by Margarat Craven.

In August 2007, a study by ITV television show *Undercover Mothers* found that a third of steaks served in Hungry Horse and two thirds served in Wetherspoon public houses in the United Kingdom were from Zebu or Zebu cross-breeds, as indicated by the presence of Zebu DNA markers in the meat (and not that the steaks were 67% zebu as reported in papers such as the *Daily Mail*). Welsh farm leaders claim Zebu meat is "notorious for its tough and poor eating quality."<sup>[3]</sup>

In "Blood Feud", a season two episode of *The Simpsons*, Lisa Simpson tries to teach Maggie Simpson what a Zebu is using flashcards.

An episode of the telefilm *Manimal* shows Jonathan Chase turning into a zebu.

Former professional wrestler The Rock is nicknamed "*The Brahma Bull*". Brahman cattle are a breed of the Zebu bovines.

In a 2012 episode of the A&E program *Shipping Wars* Jennifer ships a Zebu Calf.

## References

- [1] "Hariana — India: Haryana, eastern Punjab" page 245 *In* Porter, Valerie (1991) *Cattle: A Handbook to the Breeds of the World* Helm, London, ISBN 0-8160-2640-8
- [2] "Rath — India: Alwar and eastern Rajasthan" page 246 *In* Porter, Valerie (1991) *Cattle: A Handbook to the Breeds of the World* Helm, London, ISBN 0-8160-2640-8
- [3] *Undercover Mothers*, ITV, 2007-08-21

## External links

- ABCZ - Associação Brasileira dos Criadores de Zebu (Brazilian Zebu) (<http://www.abcz.org.br>)
  - ABCZ - Brazilian Cattle Genetic (<http://www.braziliancattle.com.br>)
  - Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation (<http://www.kangayambull.com/>)
  - TamilNadu's Zebu breeds (<http://tamilnaducattle.blogspot.in/>)
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