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Pastoralism



Common Pastoral Animals by Region

- Asia
 - Horses
 - Camels
 - Sheep
 - Goats
 - Cattle
 - Donkey
 - Water Buffalo
- Middle East
 - Camel
 - Water Buffalo
- Africa
 - Cattle
 - Donkey
 - Camel
 - Sheep
 - Goat
- Europe
 - Cattle
 - Horse
 - Reindeer
- Americas
 - Cattle
 - Llamas
 - Alpaca

What is Pastoralism?

Pastoralism is a subsistence practice that relies heavily on the assistance and usage of animals. Animals are the main source for food and supplies because often very little of them will be wasted if slaughtered. They also can be very helpful with travel. Their ability to handle larger loads relieves the stress on humans while going long distances.

Occasionally small-scale farming is done but very often these societies are nomadic and eventually abandon the field for some time. Since pastoral peoples tend to move around often this gives them the opportunity to trade with other peoples. Pastoralism is often done because the region a group occupies cannot support other subsistence approaches. In the steppes of Asia, large open grass fields can be found. This area was not ideal for farming or settled ranching because the soil was not fit for cultivating but great for feeding herds.

Extreme weather differences were also an issue that would require one to move to specific areas throughout the year to find bearable temperatures and resources. Throughout the Middle East and Africa people deal with harsh deserts that do not offer long term subsistence. In order to sustain themselves and their animals they must occupy only the most useful pieces of land through the year. Although it is not featured on the map shown, pastoralism can be found in the Americas. Ranches that focus on cattle are scattered around the American west and in the Andes people focus on animals in the camelid family.

Why is it important to know this?

Although much of the information in my project was based on historical data, many people today still live this way. Groups that are still actively practicing this way of life are at risk of losing this lifestyle. Since most of them live within developing countries this is frequently their only way of sustaining themselves. Very often if a group is forced to quit this practice their entire life will have to be adjusted accordingly. Societies that practice pastoralism tend to have their cultural identity deeply tied to it. Losing that may not only affect an individual's livelihood but the culture they have created. When it comes to applying this in our own lives we must also remember that pastoralism has a place in our lives. Much of the meat that we use come from pastoralist. By learning more about this practice we will not only be able to raise awareness about the issues facing some of those that practice it but you can also become more knowledgeable about the where our own food comes from.

For Further Information

http://anthro.palomar.edu/subsistence/su_b_3.htm

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y2647E/y2647e02.htm>

<http://www.timemaps.com/pastoralists>