

GAME FARMING

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Our mission is to introduce game animals to the agricultural sector as an eco-friendly and healthy way to produce crops & livestock products that benefit both people, local wildlife and the environment itself.



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TRADITIONAL FARMING VERSUS GAME FARMING...



Advantages of Traditional Farming

- Animals are fully domesticated and gentle towards humans
- Egg & Milk production brings lots of profit in the short term



Cons of Traditional Farming

- Some farms use herbicides that indirectly pollute the local soil
- Several egg & milk products have some amounts of harmful chemical preservatives
- In large-scale livestock operations, non-productive animals are abused or slaughtered in the long term (often happening in factory farms without legal supervision)



Overall...

Traditional farming is a very good option for amateur horticulturalists and ranchers, and it's likely the cheapest option as well. However, aspiring farmers must keep in mind that in the long term, they must be cautious on where the animals live and thrive, which techniques are used for feeding & housing, and how can their agricultural products affect consumers, particularly due to competition with factory farming businesses, chemical pollution and research by agricultural officials.

COMMON MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT THE GAME FARMING INDUSTRY

Myth #1

Game farming, and farming in general, is inhumane and every animal involved is either neglected or mistreated.

Truth #1

It is understandable that many are angry at the current farming industries, but the statement above is not even partially correct. Most of the time, large-scale farmers who mistreat animals work in factory farms, which consists of unethically earning profit by disregarding safety principles, and often keeping the animals indoors while also forcing these to produce more than what their physical and emotional status allow. These factory farms are often involved in animal welfare, fraud and environment pollution lawsuits, and this would

PROS & CONS



Advantages of Game Farming



- Animals are accustomed to local pastures, and usually help to limit the growth of invasive weeds
- Captive populations, although tame, can save vulnerable species from overhunting and disease
- These animals can boost agricultural production in regions where traditional livestock does not perform very well



Cons of Game Farming

- Some captive animals still retain their wild traits & temperament and must be reared with caution
- Game hoofstock & poultry, for example, need large, open farmlands to eat, reproduce and rotate between pastures
- In certain countries, game animal products get expensive due to inflation



Overall...

Horticulturalists and ranchers interested in game farming might need to do accurate research and analyze their livestock facilities and a possible budget. It might require professional breeding instruction, and this isn't very easy for many. However, after starting to breed tame animals for venison, dairy products, hide, eggs & supplying hunting grounds, game farmers can actually boost ecotourism, local production of food (meat, milk & eggs), environmental conservation, agricultural boosts and even their regional economy itself.

never be the case for smaller traditional and game farms. In fact, most of the well-known small farms from different localities in Australia, South Africa, the U.S. and the European Union are renowned for strictly following safety procedures and avoiding over production. These small-scale farms ensure that animals are treated well and their physical & emotional health is more than stable. This is especially important in local game farming. Hoofstock and poultry from game farms need even more medical & behavioral assistance, since some are essentially wild animals and must not be handled as intensively as dairy cattle or horses. And of course, small-scale homesteaders and ranchers are focused on stabilized production, not on profit, making their products eco-friendly and safe to consume for humans, while keeping the animals in a reasonably safe environment outdoors, and work schedule simultaneously.

Myth #2

The offspring of captive-bred game animals is unable to ever return to a wild condition due to genetic selection.

Truth #2

In game farming, even tame animals still retain some of their wild living habits, and many of those are successfully reintroduced in the wild, even recovering previously extirpated populations in wildlife parks & sanctuaries. Such was the example of the Persian fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*), which was originally almost extirpated from its native range in the Near East. At least, in 1998, a group of German farmers donated a few captive animals to the Israeli & Iranian officials, who bred them to other fallow deers already in local zoos, and their offspring was safely reintroduced to several reserves & sanctuaries within Iran and Israel. Their population is currently increasing heavily.

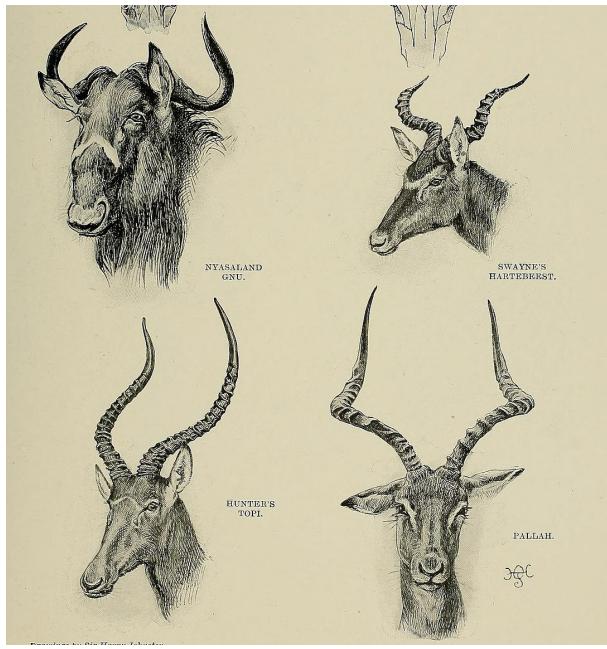
Myth #3

In some countries, captive-bred game animals are genetic mutations of their species, and are destructive to both wildlife and domestic livestock.

Truth #3

Animals classified as color variants do occur in natural wildlife populations, and none of them show recessive genes. In fact, the chance of survival for species with color variants is higher than those who look uniform. Such was the case of the Blue wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*) in South Africa. Farm manager Richard York conducted a genetic research on a few wildebeests with reddish coloration (called Golden Wildebeests) and found these animals are as healthy and vigorous as their common grayish-blue siblings in wildlife parks.

WHICH CHOOSING THE BEST SPECIES FOR GAME RANCHING... ???



< In this 19th Century engraving, the heads of four related antelopes are shown. Even though they are genetically & anatomically similar, their diet, native habitat & disposition are all different. Clockwise:

1. Swayne's Hartebeest
(Alcelaphus buselaphus swaynei)

2. Impala
(Aepyceros melampus)

3. Hunter's Antelope
(Beatragus hunteri)

4. Nyasaland Wildebeest
(Connochaetes taurinus cooksoni)

Aspiring game farmers must study their species of preference and save money before acquiring their founding livestock.

When a farmer or ecologist decides to think “outside the box” of livestock to promote or operate game ranching, it is a very promisory choice, but it’s often very challenging. The first obstacle an aspiring game farmer might encounter could be both the financial situation of the farmer’s current role and the many possible mistakes and inconveniences that potentially could lead to failure (mostly legal, financial and even physical). However, there is also a very important step to take before even thinking about the infrastructure and investments of such business: the game hoofstock & poultry of preference is the heaviest game-changing factor. There is an infinity of both native and exotic game hoofstock and poultry species, each with different needs. Thus, all aspiring game farmers must study their species of preference and save money **before** acquiring their founding livestock (even before thinking about entering the game ranching business). There are several **key principles** to be followed.

The **first** principle is **learning** the names and biology of several species, both native & exotic. As one in many examples, small game mammals (skunks, hares, vo-

les & related rodents) primarily eat invertebrates and can be bred in wood-fenced facilities smaller than half an acre. Meanwhile, large hoofstock (ibex, elk, buffaloes, duikers, etc.) are herbivores and often need large, open pastures guarded by either electric or metallic fences. Even more, all of these species have individual requirements of feeding, shelter & handling (i. e., Banteng and yaks are of the same subfamily, but the former mostly browse on shrubs, and the latter, lichen).

The **second** principle (the easiest) is to detect and **supervise** the biome on which the pastures are located, and where the ranching facilities will be built. Most game farmers agree if an animal comes from certain habitat, its species can only thrive successfully in such or on biomes with similar elevation, weather and soil. This means, for example, that it’s impossible for a dromedary camel from a coastal desert to thrive and successfully reproduce in the tundra. On the contrary, peccaries that come from the Neotropics might be more accustomed to a temperate woodland, likely due to their parent population’s propensity to tropical diseases.

Learning, Supervising and Calculating are three of the many principles to keep in mind when considering to breed game hoofstock & poultry in a farming facility.

A **third** but not last principle is to **calculate** the whole quantity of time, money and efforts required to constantly supervise, finance and engage in farming operations with captive wildlife. There are lots of obstacles, large & small, that often appear (i. e., translocating herds with large vehicles; marketing & selling meat, eggs & milk with both low supplies & demand; acquiring legal permits for building barns & buying game livestock, paying significant bills for veterinary technologists to treat sick animals, and so on...).

As stated, game farming is, for some, the most exciting way of conserving local habitats, while also improving agricultural procedures with alternative livestock. Nevertheless, the three **principles** above often cause obstacles and unexpected problems on the way, and there are many others yet to mention. However, even when these appear, a lot of common people have actually benefited from game farming, many being aboriginal peoples from the farm's geographical region, as well as tourists. How can that be possible?



Another important principle, often less analyzed, is that of studying the temper & disposition of the species of preference in question. Usually, it is better for game farmers to begin their business with hoofstock & poultry that do not need much human handling, but aren't simultaneously aggressive. Below is a list of some game species that are easy to keep...

MAMMALS (SMALL GAME & HOOFSTOCK)

- Gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
- Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)
- Groundhog (*Marmota monax*)
- Marsh rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris*)
- Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- Feral hog (*Sus domesticus*)
- Whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
- Yak (*Bos grunniens*)

POULTRY

- Helmeted guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*)
- Wood duck (*Aix sponsa*)
- White-fronted dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

OTHERS (AMPHIBIANS & FISH)

- Pig frog (*Rana grylio*)
Southern leopard frog (*Lithobates sphenocephalus*)
European carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)
Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)
Gulf flounder (*Paralichthys albigutta*)

HOW GAME FARMS IMPROVE LIFE OF ABORIGINAL TRIBES & BOOST ECOTOURISM

In recent years, game animals have become popular souvenirs for tourists, as well as a life-changing opportunity for many of the world's most neglected indigenous tribes-peoples.

From the earliest stages of the game farming industry in the 19th Century, zoologists and farmers have closely work together to conserve the animals' populations and recover those endangered, while also making profit from conservation efforts to instruct common people and bring high-quality products derived from the animals in question. After long years of dialogs, conferences with international governments, and acquisition of new farming & transport equipment, game farmers now began supervising the constant economic & social changes in several countries at the beginning of the Cold War (1947 - 1991), from which many ethnic, linguistic & religious minorities from South-East Asia, Africa & the Near East were neglected and had no access to food, drinkable water or decent employment.

Very likely, the first steps were taken in **Australia** around 1970. Feral water buffaloes imported from Indonesia & East Timor were damaging protected wetland reserves and water reservoirs across the Northern Territory. At the same time, the Australian Parliament agreed to stop segregation and start giving more human rights to the Australian Aborigines (in particular the Kakadu, Tiwi & Iwaja clans). Then, the Northern Territory's representatives signed a campaign proposal with the NT's Department of the Environment, with the name of BTEC (**Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign**), and the local government allowed many Aborigines to join the capture teams. In 1997, more than a half of Aboriginal Australians in the Northern Territory had experience in ranching, culling and wildlife translocation. Simultaneously, more than a half of the feral buffaloes were slaughtered for hamburger and steaks (the best outcome was that

all of these were not ill with brucellosis or bovine tuberculosis). The remaining buffaloes that were found healthy became re-domesticated.

Later, in **South Africa** during the fall of 2006, cattle rancher Richard York was failing in his business due to his beef cattle's low rates of productivity. While doing research on some animals that could be legally kept as livestock in the Limpopo Province, York discovered that the Blue wildebeest population in the region was shrinking. To his surprise, both the Blue and White-tailed wildebeests were classified legally as livestock. Richard York immediately consulted his subordinate farmhands, and some months later, a few captive-bred wildebeests were acquired. Since then, every year thousands of tourists come to the Limpopo Province to taste the wildebeest's meat jerky (**biltong**), take landscape photographs and buy souvenirs, which are currently the most common tourist investments in all of South Africa. At the same time, many members of the native Zulu, Xhosa and Khoikhoi tribes now had employment, their families were receiving government assistance, and their children finally were able to enter public schools. All of those thanks to game ranching of wildebeest and other large mammals of the African savannah, notably zebra, rhinos and gazelles.

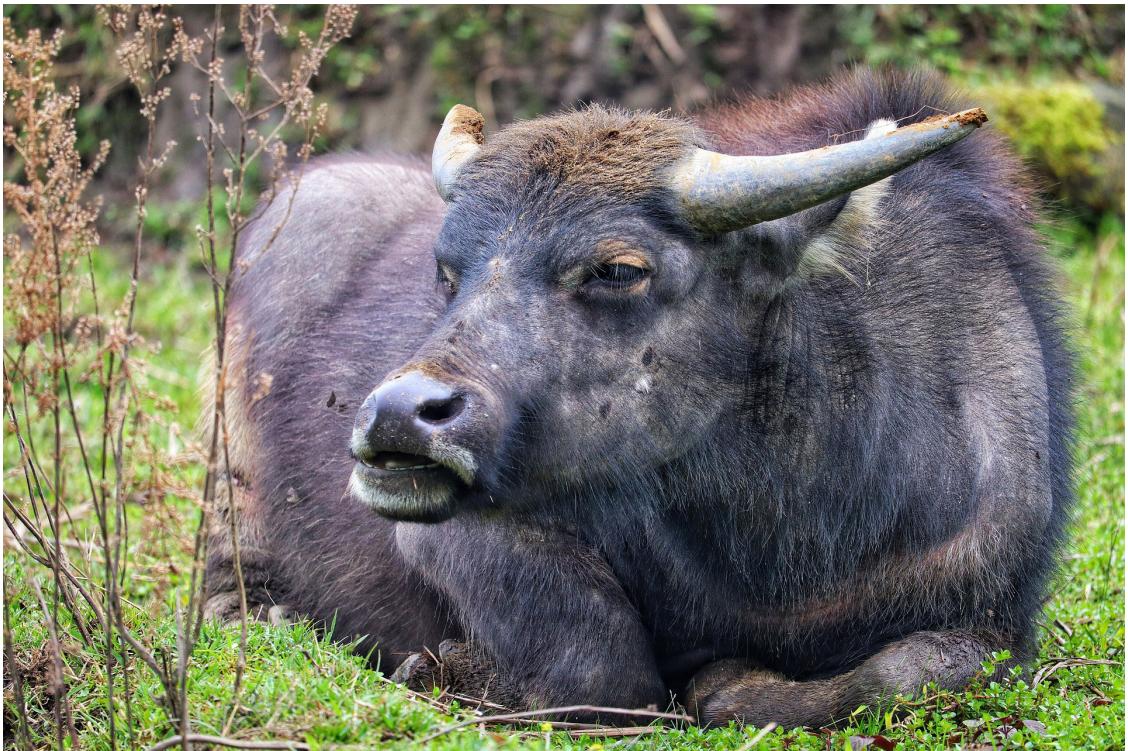
These two sequences were only a few of the many examples on how game animal farming has positively changed several countries across the world. In such countries, and even in developed nations such as the U. S. and those of the European Union, game farming has actually boosted productivity in local ethno-linguistic minorities by supplying employment and income for families of such communities. Tourism has also benefited from game



farming, since many tourists visit these geographical regions to watch uncommon wild animals in a natural environment without reserving a zoo ticket. But the most important benefit is that the local soil is stimulated to grow native herbs and plants, the wild populations do not overgrow or shrink by introducing different animals in large hectares, and of course, many of such game animals (poultry or hoofstock) are donated to **zoos** and **conservation sanctuaries** to keep their species with the least concern of vulnerability to extinction.

And very often, game ranchers involved in conservation of vulnerable & critically endangered animals get **international recognition** and their monetary income is often **high** to some extent. There are also many auction houses, fencing manufacturers, insurance corporations and food factories that are stable and functioning thanks to these game species.

In other words, game farming might show challenges, but it's a very useful choice for farmers who seek eco-friendly alternative livestock, for conservationists who seek to protect their animal of choice from extinction, and even more... To **any** professional worker who has an intuitive, serious precept of helping our planet's wildlife and improve our natural realms.



*See text on Pg. 8 for picture captions.

Description for pictures on Page 8:

Two mammalian species that were kept stable in terms of population thanks to game farming:

- Feral water buffalo (Australia; above)
- Southern white rhinoceros (South Africa; below)



REFERENCES

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