

= Large Black pig =

The Large Black , occasionally called the Devon , Cornwall Black or Boggu , is a breed of domestic pig native to Great Britain , particularly Devon , Cornwall and Essex . The Large Black is accurately named , as it is a large swine breed and is the only British pig that is entirely black . It is a hardy and docile pig , with Large Black sows known for having large litters . The breed 's foraging ability make it particularly useful for extensive farming , while a poor candidate for intensive farming .

The Large Black combined local black pig breeds from the West Country and the East of England . With the founding of a breed association in 1898 or 1899 , variations between the types from the two areas decreased . The Large Black was popular in the early 1900s and was exported to many areas of the world . Population numbers declined after the Second World War as farmers turned to breeds more suitable to intensive pig farming , and by the 1960s the breed was almost extinct . Numbers have slowly risen , but it is still considered vulnerable by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust , the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy , and Rare Breeds Canada .

= = History = =

The Large Black resulted from the amalgamation of black pigs from two geographically separate areas , Devon and Cornwall in the south @-@ west of England , and Essex , Suffolk and Kent in the east . The pigs from eastern England , mainly Essex , were influenced by importations from China in the late 18th century , while those from Devon and Cornwall were probably more closely related to the pigs in mainland Europe , particularly France . The Devon pigs were originally selected for " the length of their bodies , ears , noses , tail and hair , the longer the better , without reference to quality or substance " , but selective breeding brought improvements to the breed , and by 1850 the type was small @-@ boned and thick @-@ bodied , with good conformation and constitution . Alternative origins proposed for the black colour of the breed are black Guinea hogs imported from Africa (similar to the Guinea Hog of the US) or from Neapolitan pigs .

During the late 19th century , the Large Black grew in popularity . A breed association , the Large Black Pig Society , was formed in 1898 or 1899 , in Ipswich , Suffolk . A trademark , consisting of the letters LBP within a shield , was registered in 1902 .

The Herd Book of Large Black Pigs was first published in 1899 . In it the large black pigs of Devon and Cornwall were combined under one name with the remnants of the smaller Black Essex , Black Suffolk or Small Black , and other black East Anglian breeds whose numbers had fallen below sustainable levels . There were considerable variations between the types in the two areas , but breeding stock was exchanged between them and by 1913 " general uniformity " had been achieved .

= = = 1920s to modern times = = =

In 1919 a Large Black sow was Supreme Champion at Smithfield , and at the Royal Show that year 121 Large Blacks were entered , more than any other breed . Popularity of the breed peaked in the 1920s , however , and after World War II , population numbers declined as farmers began to favour pig breeds that would do well in intensive indoor farming . The breed association was merged with the National Pig Breeders Association (later the British Pig Association) in 1949 .

In 1955 the Howitt report on the development of pig production in the United Kingdom was published . Its main conclusions were that UK pig farms were poorly placed to compete with European producers , that the diversity of local breeds in the UK was an obstacle to progress , and that British pig farmers should focus on three breeds only : the Welsh , the British Landrace , and the Large White . The report initiated a period of decline in all other British pig breeds , including the Large Black . By the time the Rare Breeds Survival Trust was founded 1973 , numbers of all traditional pig breeds were dangerously low , and many of them were extinct . The Large Black was placed on the Trust 's endangered list .

= = = In other countries = = =

By 1913 , Large Black had by then spread throughout most of Britain , and had been exported to most of mainland Europe and to North and South America , Africa and Oceania . The first exports to Australia were in 1902 or 1903 , with the Large Black being chosen over the Berkshire pig because of their ability to thrive in hot weather , their foraging abilities and their fecundity . By 1930 , Large Blacks represented only 1 percent of Australia pig population , and were raised mainly by breeders in Victoria , South Australia and Tasmania . The breed population continued to hover around 1 percent of the total population , with a slight increase after World War II and a decrease to almost zero new registrations in the 1980s . The first exports to the US were in the 1920s , but the population in that country dwindled to the point where imports were again necessary in 1985 . Today , small herds can be found in the US that descend from the pigs imported in 1985 and 1990 , and there are also herds in Canada , Australia , and South Africa .

= = Characteristics = =

The Large Black is a long , deep @-@ bodied pig , well known for its hardiness and suitability for extensive farming . Large Blacks are best suited for pasture @-@ based farming due to their strong foraging and grazing ability , which efficiently converts poor quality feed into meat . It is the only pig breed in Britain to be all black , and this helps protect the pig from sunburn in sunny climates . Temperamentally , the Large Black is a very docile breed which is easily contained by fencing . This is partly because its large , drooping ears obscure its vision , although they also help to protect the face and eyes while the animal is foraging , especially when rooting in dirt .

The breed is also known for its long periods of fertility and strong maternal instincts . Sows give birth to a large litter of 8 ? 10 piglets , but some sows have been known to have litters of up to 13 piglets . Also of note is the Large Black sow listed in the Guinness Book of Records for having produced 26 litters between 1940 and 1952 ? the largest number of litters ever recorded for a pig . Boars weigh 700 to 800 pounds (320 to 360 kg) and sows around 600 to 700 pounds (270 to 320 kg) , although obesity in sows sometimes results in cystic ovaries and a loss of fertility . The breed has become larger over the years ; in the early 1900s , weights averaged 500 pounds (230 kg) for sows and larger for boars .

At its peak of popularity , the Large Black was used mainly for meat production , especially bacon . The meat from the Large Black is known for its lean quality and flavour without an excess of back fat , but for commercial production it was often crossed with the Yorkshire and Middle White pigs , producing a vigorous hybrid that was well regarded by farmers . However , today commercial processors do not favour the black skin of the purebred Large Black .

= = Conservation status = =

In 1954 there were 2195 Large Black pigs recorded , 269 licensed boars and 1926 registered sows , representing approximately 3 @. @ 4 % of the UK pig population of about 65 @, @ 000 . At the end of 2011 there were 421 Large Black pigs (86 boars and 335 sows) registered , a small increase over the 2010 figure of 405 (65 boars , 340 sows) . The Large Black is the rarest historic pig breed in Britain , although numbers are slowly on the rise due to an increase in demand for meat from traditional pig breeds . In 2011 it was classified as " vulnerable " on the watchlist of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust , meaning that there are believed to be between 200 and 300 breeding females . The British Pig Association currently recognizes 6 boar lines and 24 sow lines within the breed .

In 2004 the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia listed the status of the Large Black as " critical " , meaning that sow registrations in the Australian Pure Bred Pig Herd Book of the Australian Pig Breeders Association were fewer than 30 per year .

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy estimated the Large Black population of the United States at 300 breeding hogs in 2008 , and lists its status as " critical " , which means that fewer than 200 animals are registered each year in the United States , and there are estimated to be fewer than

2 @, @ 000 worldwide . The US population of Large Black pigs stood at around 300 as of 2008 . Besides conservation for the sake of genetic diversity in livestock , the breed is also coming to be seen as a good option for fulfilling the needs of an increasing number of consumers interested in pasture @-@ raised pork . Rare Breeds Canada identified the single remaining Canadian herd in 1997 , and has since included the breed on its conservation watchlist as " endangered " , with fewer than 500 of the animals in that country .