

GENERAL STUDIES II

16 Indigenous Animal Breeds 2026: UPSC Complete Notes

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India's recognition of 16 indigenous livestock and dog breeds in October 2026 marks an important step towards documenting and conserving the country's animal genetic diversity. The breeds represent cattle, buffalo, goats, sheep, equines, pig, yak and dog populations from different Indian regions. Their identification draws attention to the role of ICAR's National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR), scientific breed registration, adaptation to local climates, rural livelihoods and conservation of traditional animal husbandry systems. These comprehensive UPSC notes explain the newly recognised breeds, their native states, the registration process, biodiversity significance, major challenges and relevant Prelims questions.

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UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS | 23 OCTOBER 2026 | GS PAPER III

Explore all 16 indigenous animal breeds, their native states, the role of ICAR-NBAGR, scientific breed registration and the importance of conserving India's livestock biodiversity.

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GS Paper III

Animal Husbandry

Biodiversity

UPSC Prelims 2027

India's indigenous livestock breeds are a valuable part of the country's agricultural biodiversity. In October 2026, the recognition of 16 indigenous breeds across eight animal categories brought renewed attention to the need for scientific documentation, genetic conservation and sustainable animal husbandry. The development is significant for farmers, pastoral communities, researchers and policymakers seeking to build

resilient livestock systems.

1. Why Are Indigenous Animal Breeds in the News?

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare reported the formal recognition of 16 indigenous breeds of livestock and dogs from different regions of India.

The recognition process involves scientific characterisation and evaluation of native animal populations, with ICAR's National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources playing a central role.

The development highlights the importance of protecting genetic resources that may possess valuable adaptations to local climatic, ecological and production conditions.

16

Newly Recognised Breeds

8

Animal Categories

13

States Represented

1

Union Territory

2. What Is an Indigenous Animal Breed?

An indigenous breed is an animal population that has developed or become established in a particular region over generations.

Such breeds may possess distinctive physical characteristics, reproductive traits, behavioural features or adaptations to their local environment.

Examples of potentially valuable locally adapted traits include:

- Tolerance to heat and environmental stress.
- Ability to utilise locally available feed resources.
- Adaptation to difficult terrain.

- Resistance or tolerance to certain local disease pressures.
- Suitability for specific farming or pastoral systems.

Important Distinction: Indigenous status does not automatically mean that every breed is superior in productivity or resistant to all diseases. Traits must be evaluated through reliable scientific evidence.

3. Complete List of the 16 Recognised Breeds

The following table provides the breed names, animal categories and associated native regions reported in the October 2026 current-affairs update.

No.	Animal Category	Breed	Native State / Region
1	Cattle	Kopral	Karnataka
2	Cattle	Mahakaushali	Madhya Pradesh
3	Cattle	Periyar (Periyar Kulian)	Kerala
4	Cattle	Umarda	Maharashtra
5	Buffalo	Gomanchali	Goa
6	Goat	Battisi	Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh
7	Goat	Totapuri	Rajasthan
8	Sheep	Asomi	Assam
9	Sheep	Kow Debar	Uttarakhand
10	Sheep	Madgyal	Maharashtra and Karnataka
11	Sheep	Seemanchali	Bihar
12	Equine	Braj Donkey	Uttar Pradesh
13	Equine	Kashmiri Horse / Pony	Jammu and Kashmir
14	Pig	Nagal Pig	Nagaland
15	Yak	Sikkimese Yak	Sikkim
16	Dog	Kombai	Tamil Nadu

4. Category-Wise Distribution

Animal Category	Number of Breeds
Cattle	4
Buffalo	1
Goat	2
Sheep	4
Equines	2
Pig	1
Yak	1
Dog	1
Total	16

Cattle and sheep account for the largest numbers in this recognition round, with four breeds each.

5. ICAR-NBAGR: The Key Institution

The National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) is a research institution under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Important Facts for UPSC

- **Full Name:** ICAR–National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources.
- **Location:** Karnal, Haryana.
- **Parent Organisation:** Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- **Primary Work:** Characterisation, documentation, registration and conservation of animal genetic resources.
- **Registration:** Distinct indigenous breeds are evaluated through a scientific registration process.

Why Is NBAGR Important?

Without systematic identification, unique local animal populations may remain poorly documented and vulnerable to genetic erosion.

NBAGR helps establish reliable information about indigenous breeds and supports their conservation and sustainable use.

6. How Are Indigenous Breeds Registered?

Scientific breed registration typically requires multiple stages of examination.

Stage 1: Field Survey

Researchers document the native breeding tract, population size, management practices and physical characteristics.

Stage 2: Characterisation

Animals are evaluated for distinctive phenotypic, production and reproductive features.

Stage 3: Genetic Evaluation

Where appropriate, genetic analysis supports the assessment of distinctiveness and population relationships.

Stage 4: Expert Review

The Breed Registration Committee examines the evidence supporting the registration proposal.

Stage 5: Registration

Approved breeds receive official registration and unique identification in the national breed records.

Stage 6: Conservation Planning

Registration can support breed-specific conservation, research and development initiatives.

7. Why Is Breed Recognition Important?

A. Protection of Genetic Diversity

Indigenous breeds preserve genetic variation accumulated over many generations.

This diversity can be valuable for future breeding programmes and adaptation to changing environmental conditions.

B. Climate-Resilient Agriculture

Some local breeds possess adaptations that may support livestock production under heat stress, limited feed availability or challenging terrain.

Scientific conservation helps retain these options as climate risks increase.

C. Rural Livelihood Security

Livestock provides milk, meat, fibre, manure, transport and other services in rural economies.

Locally suited breeds can be important for smallholders, pastoralists and resource-constrained farmers.

D. Research and Innovation

Breed documentation provides valuable information for veterinary research, genetics and sustainable animal production systems.

E. Cultural Heritage

Many breeds are closely associated with regional traditions, pastoral knowledge and local community identities.

8. Indigenous Breeds and Climate Change

Climate change creates new pressures on animal husbandry through rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, feed scarcity and shifting disease risks.

Conservation of diverse animal genetic resources can help maintain options for adapting livestock systems to future conditions.

Potential Adaptation Benefits

- Improved suitability to local climatic conditions.
- Greater flexibility in breeding programmes.

- Reduced dependence on a narrow genetic base.
- Support for low-input farming systems.
- Preservation of traits relevant to future production challenges.

UPSC Analytical Point: Genetic diversity is a form of biological resilience. Conserving a wider range of animal breeds helps maintain options for future agricultural adaptation.

9. Conservation Strategies: In Situ and Ex Situ

In Situ Conservation

In situ conservation involves maintaining breeds within their native production environments and farming communities.

For livestock, this often takes the form of in vivo conservation of live animal populations.

Ex Situ Conservation

Ex situ conservation involves preserving genetic resources outside their normal production environment.

Methods can include cryopreservation of semen, embryos and other genetic materials.

Aspect	In Situ	Ex Situ
Location	Native environment	Specialised conservation facilities
Primary Method	Maintaining live populations	Genetic material preservation or managed populations
Advantage	Supports ongoing adaptation and community livelihoods	Provides backup genetic resources
Challenge	Requires sustained farmer participation	Requires technical infrastructure and maintenance

10. Major Challenges in Conserving Native Breeds

- **Genetic erosion:** Replacement or uncontrolled crossbreeding may reduce distinct breed populations.
- **Economic pressures:** Farmers may prefer animals with higher immediate commercial returns.

- **Habitat changes:** Loss of grazing land can threaten traditional pastoral systems.
- **Limited documentation:** Some populations remain insufficiently studied.
- **Veterinary gaps:** Disease control and healthcare access remain uneven.
- **Low market recognition:** Products from native breeds may lack differentiated markets.
- **Climate uncertainty:** Drought, extreme heat and changing forage availability increase risks.

11. Policy Measures and the Way Forward

1. Strengthen Breed-Specific Conservation

Develop conservation plans based on population status, genetic distinctiveness and local ecological needs.

2. Support Livestock-Keeping Communities

Provide appropriate incentives, veterinary services and market access to farmers and pastoralists conserving indigenous breeds.

3. Expand Scientific Research

Improve genetic characterisation, performance recording and long-term population monitoring.

4. Protect Grazing Resources

Support sustainable management of common lands, pasture resources and traditional livestock migration routes.

5. Integrate Conservation with Livelihoods

Breed preservation is more likely to succeed when it contributes to viable rural incomes and community participation.

6. Improve Awareness

Encourage universities, research institutions and local administrations to document and promote India's animal genetic heritage.

12. UPSC Prelims: Important Breed–State Pairs

- **Koppal Cattle:** Karnataka.
- **Mahakaushali Cattle:** Madhya Pradesh.
- **Periyar Cattle:** Kerala.
- **Umarda Cattle:** Maharashtra.
- **Gomanchali Buffalo:** Goa.
- **Battisi Goat:** Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Totapuri Goat:** Rajasthan.
- **Asomi Sheep:** Assam.
- **Kow Debar Sheep:** Uttarakhand.
- **Madgyal Sheep:** Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- **Seemanchali Sheep:** Bihar.
- **Braj Donkey:** Uttar Pradesh.
- **Kashmiri Horse/Pony:** Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Nagal Pig:** Nagaland.
- **Sikkimese Yak:** Sikkim.
- **Kombai Dog:** Tamil Nadu.

13. Original UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1. Consider the following pairs:

1. Gomanchali Buffalo — Goa
2. Seemanchali Sheep — Bihar
3. Kombai Dog — Karnataka

Which pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

Gomanchali Buffalo is associated with Goa, while Seemanchali Sheep is associated with Bihar.

Kombai Dog is associated with Tamil Nadu, not Karnataka.

Question 2. With reference to ICAR-NBAGR, consider the following statements:

1. It is located in Karnal, Haryana.
2. It works on animal genetic resource characterisation and conservation.
3. It is a specialised institution of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Which statements are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3.

All three statements are correct. NBAGR is located in Karnal and is associated with the documentation and conservation of animal genetic resources.

Question 3. Consider the following statements about indigenous livestock conservation:

1. It can preserve genetic traits useful for climate adaptation.
2. Ex situ conservation may include cryopreservation of semen and embryos.
3. Recognition of an indigenous breed automatically guarantees its survival.

Which statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Genetic conservation can support future adaptation, and cryopreservation is an important ex situ method.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Official recognition alone does not prevent population decline or genetic erosion.

14. UPSC Mains Practice Question

GS Paper III | 15 Marks | 250 Words

"Conservation of indigenous livestock breeds is essential not only for biodiversity protection but also for climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable rural livelihoods." Discuss with reference to India's animal genetic resource management.

Model Answer Framework

Introduction

India's indigenous livestock breeds represent a valuable reservoir of genetic diversity, traditional knowledge and locally adapted production traits.

Significance

- Preservation of animal genetic diversity.
- Potential adaptation to local environmental conditions.
- Support for smallholder and pastoral livelihoods.
- Availability of traits for future breeding programmes.
- Conservation of regional cultural heritage.

Challenges

- Unplanned crossbreeding and genetic erosion.

- Loss of grazing resources.
- Inadequate breed-level data.
- Weak market incentives for conservation.
- Limited access to veterinary and breeding services.

Way Forward

India should strengthen scientific breed registration, community based conservation, cryopreservation, research and market-linked incentives. Conservation strategies must integrate genetic diversity with farmers' economic needs.

Conclusion

Indigenous livestock conservation is a long-term investment in biodiversity, food security and agricultural resilience. Sustainable outcomes require both scientific institutions and active participation by livestock-keeping communities.

15. Frequently Asked Questions

How many indigenous breeds were newly recognised in 2026?

The October 2026 update reported the recognition of 16 indigenous breeds across eight animal categories.

Where is the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources located?

ICAR-NBAGR is located in Karnal, Haryana.

Which state is associated with the Kombai dog?

The Kombai dog is associated with Tamil Nadu.

Which indigenous yak breed appears in the 2026 list?

The Sikkimese Yak, associated with Sikkim.

Why are indigenous livestock breeds important?

They contribute to genetic diversity, locally adapted animal husbandry, rural livelihoods and future breeding options.

Is breed registration the same as conservation?

No. Registration formally identifies and documents a breed. Conservation requires continued efforts to maintain viable populations and their genetic diversity.

16. Conclusion

The recognition of 16 indigenous animal breeds demonstrates the importance of documenting India's rich animal genetic resources.

Scientific breed identification can improve conservation planning, support research and strengthen awareness of locally adapted livestock populations.

However, registration must be followed by effective population management, community participation, veterinary support and sustainable economic opportunities.

For UPSC aspirants, this topic connects agriculture, biodiversity, genetics, rural development and climate resilience under General Studies Paper III.

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Educational Disclaimer: This independently written article is intended for UPSC examination preparation. Breed names and home tracts reflect the October 2026 current-affairs reporting. Candidates should consult the final official ICAR-NBAGR breed register and relevant government notifications for authoritative classifications, spellings and accession numbers.

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