



## Ponwar Cattle

The Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, which lies on the foothills of the Himalayas is the breeding tract of Ponwar cattle. The main area is *Puranpur* block in Pilibhit district comprising– *Mainakot, Mazara, Bhirkhera, Faizulaganj* and *Rajpur Semra* villages. A few animals of this breed are also found in Lakhimpur-Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh. The breeding tract of this cow is a plain area with majority of land area covered with forests. It is a drought breed of cattle. The bullocks of this breed are active, useful for light ploughing and carting and are remarkable for their speed and stamina, the cows however, are poor milkers. The Ponwar also are known as *Kabri* (mixture of colours). It is a small hill type cattle breed and seems to be a mixture of hill and plain cattle.



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### Physical characteristics

Coat colour of these animals is brown or black with white patches in varying proportions. Colour of muzzle, eyelids and hoofs is generally black. The tail switch is white in black animals and black in those having a greater proportion of white patches. The horns are small to medium and curve inwards with pointed tips. The ears are small and erect with a sideways orientation and have pointed tips. The face is small and narrow with a slightly concave forehead, which is narrow and has a white marking.

The body is small, compact and non-fleshy. The skin is tight, the dewlap is medium and the hump is small in females and developed in males. The tail is long and reaches to below the hock. Cows have small udders and teats and milk veins are small. Animals of this breed are aggressive in nature. Bullocks of Ponwar cattle are quick and strong and well suited to agricultural operations. The landless labourers and marginal farmers mainly keep these animals. Bullocks of this breed can easily transport 800 to 1000 kg load upto 10 km. They can plough one acre of land in a day working for 6-8 hours.

### Production performance

Cows produce little milk 0.5 to 2.5 kg per day for 8 to 10 months (avg.  $8.9 \pm 0.1$ ). Age at first calving ranged from 40 to 60 months (avg.  $52.2 \pm 0.5$ ) and intercalving period averaged at  $12.6 \pm 0.1$  months. The service period varied from 60-100 days (avg.  $76.0 \pm 1.1$  days) The cows remain dry for an average of  $110.0 \pm 2.6$  days.

### Current status

The *tharu* tribe is mainly involved in rearing pure Ponwar animals. Some animals have also been maintained by *Pasi* and *Yadav* communities. Most of the animals graze in forest area. The occurrence of diseases in Ponwar cattle has been reported to be negligible.

Due to unplanned and unsystematic breeding the Ponwar cattle population has shrunk to just about 10,000 heads in the entire breeding tract. Male calves of 6 to 12 months of age are sold to farmers outside the breeding tract to be used in agricultural operations and transportation after castration and consequently are genetically dead. Thus, breedable males are radically reduced in the breeding tract. All together effective population size is decreased. Present status of Ponwar cattle breed reveals an urgent need for genetic management and conservation of this locally adapted draft breed.

### Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board

East Wing, III Floor, A-Block, PICUP Bhawan, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226 010, U.P., INDIA  
Phone : +91 522 4006746, +91 2306491, E-mail: [upstatebiodiversityboard@gmail.com](mailto:upstatebiodiversityboard@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.upsbdb.org](http://www.upsbdb.org)