

Extinct Swiss cow turns up in Patagonia

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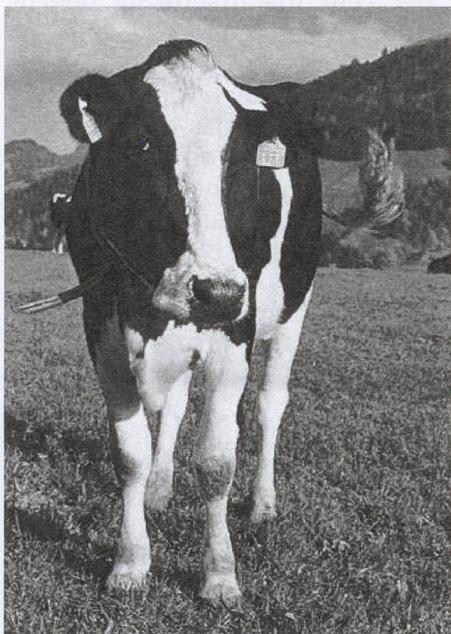
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Extinct Swiss cow turns up in Patagonia

For over 35 years the classic black-and-white Fribourg cow was thought to be extinct. But several examples seem to have reappeared - in South America. Retired Swiss economist Roger Pasquier rediscovered what are thought to be Fribourg cows, imported from Switzerland in the 1930s, while investigating his family roots in Punta Arenas in Southern Chile.

Pasquier also collected information on José Davet, a Chilean with Swiss roots and a former Swiss vice-consul, who imported a dozen cows from Blessens, a village between Fribourg and Lausanne, in the 1930s.

Pasquier's discovery has created considerable media interest in Switzerland. The animal and plant protection foundation Pro Specie Rara now intends to carry out further research into the Chilean black-and-white cows.



The Fribourg cow, like many other breeds of cattle, died out in the second half of the 19th century during the process of industrialisation. The Holstein cow from Holland, which is an excellent milk-producing cow and also has black and white markings, replaced the symbol of canton Fribourg. Many Swiss do not real-

ise that the original Fribourg cow died out. Nobody foresaw the extinction of the old breeds, but everyone looked to the future of new ones. They saw that a cross between a Holstein cow and a Fribourg cow resulted in larger animals with better milk production. Everyone then produced crossbreeds and nobody thought about preserving a purebred like the Fribourg cow which subsequently disappeared.

The very last purebred Fribourg cow - a bull named Héron - was slaughtered in Switzerland in 1975.

If the information collected by Pasquier proves to be correct, the Fribourg cow survived on the grasslands in Punta Arenas, Patagonia. Apparently the farmers in Punta Arenas also tried to cross-breed cows to make them more productive. But they were unsuccessful because the crossbred calves, unlike the Fribourg cows, couldn't stand the extreme southerly climate.

This leads experts to believe that the breeds found in Chile are relatively free of other genetic influences and the 'extinct' Swiss breed can be saved.

from swissinfo

1st April is April Fool's Day - can you spot the April Fool's Day article in this Helvetia?"

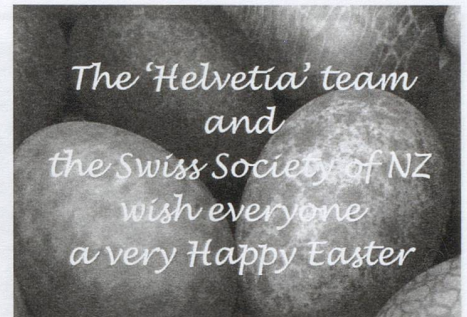
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