

## **A Sketch of Pakistan (1) : "Livestock Kingdom" Balochistan**

Balochistan is the biggest province in Pakistan, covering 347,000 square km, and accounting for about 44% of the whole country's land area. Due to small amount of rainfall and an arid climate, most of the province is either covered by sparsely vegetated mountains or equally sparsely vegetated desert. Only around 5% of the land is cultivated and merely half of this is cropped. As in all other arid zones, livestock breeding is very important in Balochistan. A vast area of land, which is not suitable for agriculture, is utilized as grazing land. According to the 1986 livestock census, 7.3 million goats and 11.1 million sheep are kept in Balochistan. These figures account for 24% and 48% of Pakistan's stock respectively. Following goats and sheep, Balochistan has 1.1 million cows, 6 million chickens and 0.75 million camels, donkeys and horses. The province's population is estimated to be around 7 million, or approximately 6% of the national population. Therefore, it can be said that Balochistan is a "livestock kingdom" where there are more goats and sheep than people.

There are many different breeds of sheep seen in Balochistan. The Harnai breed is good for yielding wool. High quality mutton comes from the Baloch and the Bivragh stock. As for cows, the Bhagnari on Kachhi plain is excellent for agricultural work, and the Red Sindhi in the Lasbella area is famous for being the highest quality dairy breed which is well adapted to high temperatures and arid climate. Balochistan has the Ministry of Livestock Breeding, an separate entity from the Ministry of Agriculture, which introduces new breeds and conducts research to improve existing stocks.

Grazing land in the area does not bear rich pasture. Most is called "rangeland" with poor vegetation as shown in the photographs below. Rangeland is defined as "self regenerating and self-maintaining vegetation used for livestock grazing". A FAO investigation has reported that more than 80% of livestock fodder is supplied by rangeland. Other fodder includes grass such as alfalfa, maize, sorghum and barley, as well as crop residue (wheat remained after harvesting). It seems that weeds in farmed land are also precious as fodder.

Near Quetta, some rangeland is experimentally fenced to keep livestock out. Compared with the surrounding land, there is a clear difference in forage production, which shows that there is a potential for vegetation to recover even in areas with annual rainfall of only 200 to 300 mm. However, in reality, it is difficult to fence off rangeland. This is not only because of economic reasons, but also because of complicated relationships existing with local people and nomads. Sustainable grazing in this kind of arid areas can be achieved, if degradation of grazing land can be prevented by carrying out grazing control in concert with the full understanding and participation of local people.



**Rangeland with sparse vegetation**



**Flock of goats and sheep on grazing land**