



# Initial Yak Domestication 2,500 Years Ago

[Source: DTE](#)

## Why in News?

A recent study has unveiled the **earliest evidence of human domestication of yaks**, discovered in **Bangga**, a settlement situated within the **Shannan prefecture of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China**.

- Shannan, which shares borders with **Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh**, is traversed by the [Brahmaputra River](#).

## What are the Major Highlights of the Study?

- **Coexistence of Domesticated Yaks and Taurine Cattle:** The study highlights the **coexistence of domesticated yaks and taurine cattle** within Bangga, indicating a sophisticated level of animal husbandry and agricultural practices from **2,500 years ago**.
  - The researchers also expressed surprise at the **presence of taurine cattle in an area so near to the Indian subcontinent**, where Zebus are predominant.
  - It asserted that taurine cattle probably reached central and eastern Tibet from **Anatolia (modern-day Turkiye) via the Silk Route** and northern Tibet.
    - Most modern cattle breeds of Europe as well as the temperate regions of Asia are taurine. They are distinct from the Zebu or humped breeds native to the Indian subcontinent and tropical Asia.
- **Evidence of Hybridization and Advanced Breeding:** Intriguingly, researchers unearthed evidence of hybrids, a result of intentional crossings **between yaks and cattle**, further underscoring the nuanced understanding ancient inhabitants possessed about animal breeding.

## Note

There are an estimated **14 million to 15 million domestic yaks in the highlands of Asia alone**. They are also found in the Indian Himalayan Border States and Union territories, such as **Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh**. However, wild yaks, never domesticated by humans, are on the brink.

## What are the Major Points Related to Wild Yaks?

- **About:**
  - The wild yak, known as ***Bos grunniens* or *Bos mutus***, thrives in remote areas within the [Tibetan plateau](#), specifically inhabiting high-elevation alpine tundra, grasslands, and cold deserts.
  - The [Convention on Migratory Species \(CMS\)](#) reports that native wild yak population, while previously also found in Bhutan and Nepal, is now presumed extinct in those regions, limiting their current habitat to **China and India**.

▪ **Major Threats to Wild Yaks:**

- **Habitat loss, genetic hybridization with domestic yaks**, and poaching pose significant threats.
  - Communities across the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau use **Dzo (Male hybrid) and Dzomo (Female hybrid)**, bred by crossing cattle and yaks.
- Disturbance from human activities and their livestock forces wild yaks to relocate to less favorable habitats, impacting their populations.

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- [IUCN Red list status](#): **Vulnerable**
- **CITES: Appendix I of CITES**
- [The Wild Life \(Protection\) Amendment Act 2022](#): **Schedule I**

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