Alternative Livestock Overview- Raising and Marketing Exotic, Non-Conventional, Heritage or Rare Breed Animals

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What are Alternative Livestock?

• Broadly defined, alternative livestock can be any non-traditional animal raised on your farm or property.

• Examples of alternative livestock include antelope, elk, buffalo, alpacas, llamas, miniature horses, donkeys, zebra, camels, guardian dogs, ratites, game birds, ducks, wallabies, and more
Are Alternative Livestock Hard to Raise?

• That depends on several factors:
  – What type of animals you choose
  – Your background and experience
  – The acreage and facilities you have or can build
  – Your climate.
Potential Concern

• One particular problem alternative livestock owners face is the lack of qualified veterinary care for sick animals.

• Are you willing to learn about their health needs and nurse them back to health?
Look Before You Leap

• Network with current owners of the species that interest you to observe their facility design and daily care regime.

• Subscribe to breed journals, join the breed associations and attend shows and sales, learn all you can about the species that interest you.

• Check with your local zoning department, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to confirm that a particular species can be raised in Maryland and then if there are any special permits of licenses required.
Land Requirements

- Study your land and get advice from your local soil conservation office to determine if your land can meet and sustain the requirement of the breeds that interest you.

- Do you have adequate shade, grazing land or a good water source?

- Plan for dust, flies, manure management, stored feed, noise, and a change in the vision-scape to avoid neighbor complaints.
Marketing

• A marketing plan for your alternative livestock will be determined on what you see as your final product to sell.

• What are you selling? Breeding stock or products?

• Have promotional materials ready to hand-out, develop a web presence to promote your products, and always be prepared to hand out your business card.
Resources

• The National Agricultural Library’s Alternative Farming Systems Information Center  http:// afsic.nal.usda.gov

• ATTRA- National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service http://attra.ncat.org/livestock.html#Other

• USDA- United States Department of Agriculture http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB
  ?navid=ANIMAL_PRODUCTION&navtype=RT&parentnav=AGRICULTURE