



High-Altitude Yak

Why in News

Recently, the **National Research Centre on Yak (NRCY)** at Dirang in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district has tied up with the **National Insurance Company Ltd.** for insuring the high-altitude yak.

- **NRCY** is a **premier research institute exclusively engaged in research and development of yak in India.** It was **established in 1989** by the [Indian Council of Agricultural Research](#).

Key Points

▪ About:

- The Yak **belong to the Bovini tribe**, which also includes **bison, buffaloes, and cattle.** It can **tolerate temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius.**



- Adapted for **living at high altitudes**, they have **long hair that hangs off their sides like a curtain**, sometimes touching the ground.
- Yaks are **highly valued by Himalayan peoples.** According to Tibetan legend, the **first yaks were domesticated by Tibetan Buddhism founder Guru Rinpoche.**
- They are also known as the **lifeline of pastoral nomads in high altitudes of the Indian Himalayan region.**

▪ Habitat:

- They are **endemic to the Tibetan Plateau and the adjacent high-altitude regions.**
- Yaks are most **comfortable above 14,000 feet.** They climb to an elevation of 20,000 when foraging and usually don't descend any lower than 12,000 feet.
- The yak-rearing states of India are **Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**
- The countrywide population trend shows that the **yak population has been decreasing at an alarming rate.** The total **yak population in India is about 58,000.**

▪ Threats:

- [Climate Change](#):

- The **increasing trend of environmental temperature at high altitudes is resulting in heat stress in yak** during warmer months of the year. This, in turn, is affecting the rhythms of physiological responses of the animal.
- **Inbreeding:**
 - As wars and conflicts have led to the closing of borders, the yaks outside borders are thought to be **suffering from inbreeding due to the lack of availability of new yak germplasm** from the original yak area.
- **Protection Status of Wild Yak (*Bos mutus*):**
 - [IUCN Red list status](#): **Vulnerable**
 - IUCN considers the **wild species of yak under *Bos mutus***, while the **domestic form is considered under *Bos grunniens***.
 - [CITES](#): **Appendix I**
 - [Indian WildLife \(Protection\) Act of 1972](#): **Schedule I**

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