



Photo: Rund ums Moor

Zickentaler Moorochse

Record Number: 73

Disclosure Date

For centuries cattle breeding and cattle trading in the region of today's Südburgenland (South Burgenland).



Photo: BM...

Title

Zickentaler Moorochse
(Zickental "fen steer")

Abstract or claim

The breeding of the *Zickentaler Moorochse* (literally "fen steer") is the result of Traditional Knowledge on breeding and extensive livestock husbandry in the fen area of Zickental, Burgenland.

Steers of the breeds *Galloway* and *Aberdeen Angus* as well as crossbreeds graze on meagre meadows surrounding the Zickental fen. The keeping of cattle contributes to the sustainable preservation of the biggest fen of the Pannonic area.

Steers raised in the fen deliver beef which is characterized by short- fibrous texture, tender pure-white marbling and a uniform pure-white fat cover.

This, together with optimal meat ripening, accounts for the excellent flavour, the juiciness and tenderness of the beef.

Name of product, Product class

Beef, fresh meat

Name of region

Zickental, Burgenland, Austria

Field of search

Food and Agriculture

Name of information provider

Dr. Jürgen Frank, project manager

Werner Sinkoviks, Chairman of the Association "Rinderweide am Zickentaler Moor"
(Association for cattle grazing around the Zickental fen)

Christian Reicher, Agricultural Chamber Burgenland, head of the local office Güssing

Name of applicant for title

Holder of knowledge or associated resources

about 37 farmers in the region Zickental

Grantee(s), holder(s), assignee(s) or owner(s) of title, if any

Descriptors**- History:**

For centuries cattle has been bred and traded in the region Südburgenland (South Burgenland), which was a part of Hungary until 1921.

Cattle was grazed on pastures called “Halt” or “Hutweide” (old German expressions for pastures on which livestock has to be tended) which could be used neither for hay production nor as “kuchlgarten” (kitchen garden). School boys had to work as herders after school every day. They had the task of driving cattle onto these meagre meadows with the help of ropes or just using sticks. This form of herding diminished due to a decrease in cattle breeding in the 20th century.

As a result, scrub encroachment and proliferation of the undesirable goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*) and other plants occurred. This suppressed the native fen flora and, subsequently, endangered the breeding places for ground-nesting birds.

In 1991 the Provincial government of Burgenland bestowed the denomination “Europaschutzgebiet Auwiesen Zickenbachtal” on this protected area. It became part of the EU’s Natura 2000 Network, which aims at the protection of endangered species and habitats.

In 2003 the association “rund um’s moor” (“around the fen”) was founded by private persons together with the municipalities Heugraben, Kukmirn and Rohr. Its aims are the preservation of the fen, the careful usage of surrounding areas and the promotion of sustainable regional development through innovative actions in agriculture and tourism.

In 2006 the denomination “Moorochse” was protected as a word trademark and the denomination “Zickentaler Moorochse” was protected as a word/picture trademark.

The region and its activities have been awarded several prizes:

2004: Agricultural Innovation Prize

2007: Rotary Environmental Prize

2008: Burgenland Animal Protection Prize for Animal Welfare

In 2007 the association “Forum Land” ranked the project as one of the best six LEADER projects in Austria.

- Region:



Photo: BMLFUW/Rita Newman

In the context of REGION OF DELIGHT AUSTRIA the region “Zickentaler Moorochse” is situated around the protected area “Auwiesen Zickenbachtal” in the political district Güssing, South Burgenland.

It encompasses the municipalities Heugraben, Eisenhüttl and Rohr.

The creek Zickenbach is about 17 km long. It has its sources in the village Burgauberg and flows into the creek Strem near the city of Güssing. The Zickenbach and its feeder creeks supply about 10,000 hectares with water.

Habitat:

The Zickental fen covers over 40 hectares and is the largest fen in the Pannonic region. It is situated at an altitude between 250-390 m and spans for 1.8 km along the creek Zickenbach. Test drills revealed that the fen is about 13 metres deep and around 10,000 years old.

Various analyses of pollen let assume that the area was already populated in the Neolithic and then again round 5000 A.D.

The fen was only scarcely exploited in the last centuries as the area is swampy and frequently flooded.

Only peripheral areas were used as kitchen gardens by farmers of the village Eisenhüttl.

The entire region is characterized by wet meadows, patches of sedges, rests of lowland forests and gentle hills.

Today farmers have changed from intensive agriculture to extensive pasturing, which serves the protection of the environment by reducing the introduction of nutrients into the fen, creating a new habitat for extensive cattle breeding and preserving the habitat for native birds and other animals.

This way of cattle breeding benefits many animals. It has led to new breeding places for the meadow-nesting, endangered whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), the corn crake (*Crex crex*), or to new feeding places for the white storch.

Soil and climatic conditions:

The fern soil is the result of frequent flooding and high water levels in the wetland along the creek Zickenbach.

The soils are free from carbonates and usually acid.

The annual precipitation is about 750 mm with a maximum in June and July and little precipitation in autumn. The annual average temperature is about 10.3°C.

Soil and climatic conditions result in meadows having manifold plant communities consisting of e.g. swamp-iris, Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), wild orchids, Carex species (*Carex gracilis*, *Carex acutiformis*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), bittersweet nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*), thistles (*Cirsium rivulare*), Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), Grey willow (*Salix cinerea*).

- Zickentaler Moorochse (Zickental "fen steer"):

In context with REGION OF DELIGHT the term "Zickentaler Moorochse" refers to steers of the breeds *Galloway*, *Aberdeen Angus* or cross-breeds thereof. These breeds are kept today because of their frugality and grazing attitudes.

Method of production

Breeding/fattening:

The Association for cattle grazing around the Zickental fen buys 6-8 month old male calves. Most of them come from three breeders in Lower Austria (northern Wine Quarter), East Styria, northern Burgenland (Seewinkel) and few from southern Burgenland. The calves stem from herds extensively kept and are, therefore, used to this form of grazing. The bull calves are castrated at 8 - 9 months of the latest.

The animals live outdoors in herds up to 150 individuals for 24 months.

They are kept on about 120 hectares of non-fertilized pastures. Thus, every individual has about one hectare for grazing.

Feeding:

Generally, the cattle live outdoors and feed on grasses and herbs found on the pastures. Occasionally old hay is offered on hay racks and licking stones are present for supply with minerals.

During winter steers are kept under a winter shelter in accordance with animal protection and environmental protection legislation. When the soils are hard and dry enough the cattle are on winter pastures. During winter the steers feed on hay and grass silage produced on the farm.

Before slaughter the steers are fattened within a separated part of the winter shelter for 3 - 4 months. Then they are fed with hay and grass silage produced on the holding. In addition, shredded wheat, barley and triticale are offered in a common feeding trough. This method of production allows for the slow building of fat.

The water offered to cattle on pastures and in winter shelters is drinking from pipes of the regional water supplier.

The administering of antibiotics as a preventive measure is banned. Vaccinations or veterinary drugs may be administered only by veterinarians.

Transport and Slaughter:

To avoid stress, special attention is paid to the welfare of the steers during transport. About 50 - 60 steers from the Zickental region are slaughtered annually.

The steers are slaughtered at 30 - 32 months having a final slaughter weight of about 300 - 330 kg.

The steers are slaughtered at the regional EC slaughterhouse at Ollersdorf (company Strobl). Then the meat is matured in a cold storage room of the company for 4 - 6 days.

After that the meat is cut at the EU-certified meat cutting hall of Oberdorf (Stefri Frischteam Halper GmbH). There the post-maturing of half-carcasses takes places and then the beef is

prepared for marketing.

Description of meat:

The beef is tender and short-fibred, as the steers are slow in growth. The meat is finely marbled and has a uniform pure-white fat cover, which is essential for the juiciness of the beef.

The beef's taste and full colour is in direct relation to the diversity of plants and herbs on the non-fertilized pastures around the nature conservation area.

- Proof of origin:

Zickentaler Moorochse is identified by means of the official marks (ear tags) in accordance with the Austrian Animal Identification and Registration Ordinance (Tierkennzeichnungs- und Registrierungsverordnung) 2007. Veterinarians check the steers and carcasses according to legal provisions.

Traceability is ensured by the certified VUQS-system of the Association for Assurance of Quality and Origin. As a consequence, traceability is ensured from the point of sale to the farm. This means that at each state of production the meat and cuts of the meat can be traced back to the animal and the holding.

The Association for cattle grazing around the Zickental fen controls the companies responsible for slaughtering and cutting on a quarterly basis. The sales figures of the cutting hall to gastronomy are checked semi-annually.

- Marketing:

Beef of *Zickentaler Moorochse* is available throughout the year.

It is marketed by the company Stefri Frischteam to consumers in its own shop, to the local gastronomy and to five retailers.

Connection with the geographical area and Traditional Knowledge

- Specific soil and climatic conditions in and around the Pannonic fen result in a local flora which enables extensive management of *Zickentaler Moorochse* on non-fertilized meadows.
- Traditional rearing systems: Extensive keeping of herds on pastures with specific plant societies throughout the year. This type of management produces beef with specific characteristics in terms of composition and marbling. The meat has a very unique aroma and a unique flavour which are directly related to the local flora.
- The breeding and production of *Zickentaler Moorochse* is the result of Traditional Knowledge passed down from generation to generation: the Traditional Knowledge and experience of the cattle farmers (adapting the management of herds to environmental constraints, know-how of the herdsmen), the know-how of the butchers (animal transport, experience in slaughtering, cutting, meat ripening).

- Utilization:

Beef specialities range from fresh beef to ham and air-dried ham. Moreover the meat is processed to various sausages and to Burgenland Leberkäse (meat loaf).

- Protection:

Word trademark "Moorochse" (Austrian Patent Office No. 233827, 22 August 2006).

Word/picture trademark "Zickentaler Moorochse" (Austrian Patent Office No. 233828, 22

August 2006).

Key Words

Food and Agriculture, Traditional Knowledge, Austria, region, Burgenland, South Burgenland, Zickental, steer, cattle, *Galloway*, *Aberdeen Angus*, Moorochse, fen, Zickentaler Moorochse, Zickental “fen steer“

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All internet references listed last accessed on 20 January 2009.

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Yes

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