

Naming ANKOLE

- By Martin Joubert, Full Blood Genetics



The naming of Ankole cattle has a long history, the first official names are believed to have been coined one thousand years ago. As years have passed new names formed which have been documented and some older names vanished. The names are recorded in recitations called Ebyevugo.

The pastoral Bahima culture and Ankole cattle are intrinsically interlinked and the demise of one would inevitably be the demise of the other. The Bayankore and especially the Bahima people, show appreciation for the beauty of their Ankole cattle by taking pride in naming them. Important factors when naming Ankole are the colour of their coat, whiteness and shape of the horns, body structure and behaviour. Each has a specific and descriptive name. The names allowed farmers to describe individual cattle and refer to them with universally understood accuracy, which was also helpful in managing one's herd.

This allowed single animals to be picked out and helped in the selection of breeding. The ability to

distinguish between the more than ten shades of red from Kisa, which is a red dilution that looks like cream, to Kyozi which is a melanistic black, made it possible for farmers to choose individual combinations in an effort to produce the sacred and preferred colour of purple, Bihogo.

Story of Bihogo, the sacred cow

According to traditions passed on by word from generation to generation, it is believed that the Batembuzi were the founders of the Bunyoro Kingdom. They are believed to be gods hailing from heaven and their existence is shrouded in legends and myths. Their reign dates back to the time of Africa's Bronze Age. In total there were 22 kings who ruled over Bunyoro, with a king named Isaza being the last of the Batembuzi.

A king called Bukuku ruled over the kingdom after overthrowing Isaza and claiming his massive wealth

in a herd of Ankole cattle. He was so proud of his wealth and named every single cow relative to their coloration and markings on their hide. The pride of his bounty was a solid brown cow, so perfect it had no colour marking breaking the earth-brown colour on its skin. He named it Bihogo. His pride and joy and the darling of his herd.

Bihogo, the dark red, purple is the name today, still describes the traditional ideal colour of Ankole cattle. The colour purple has been connected with royalty, power and wealth for centuries. Purple's elite status is derived from the rarity and cost of the dye, originally used to produce it. Purple fabric used to be so extremely expensive that only kings could afford it. The dye first used to make purple came from the Phoenician trading city of Tyre, which is now in modern day, Lebanon. Fabric traders obtained the dye from a small mollusk which was only found in the Tyre region of the Mediterranean Sea.

In Ruyankore the suffix to root name determines the sex of the Ankole in naming.

Example, preferred colour; deep red (purple):

Ruhogo: Bull

Bihogo: Cow

Kahogo: Heifer

"In naming the cows the 'K' stands for heifers and when they give birth they stop being Kahinda and then become Lhinda, or Kagabo becomes Ngabo, for example. Essentially going from a heifer to a cow, with the exception of 'Kiroko' and 'Shamaitu'. Bulls retain the 'Ru' from birth; for example:

Rugabo, Ruhinda, Ruroko, Rwozi." Ugandan Ankole rancher.

"Rule number one: All cattle have colour, as long as it has a spot it can't be named on colour but you can decide to use horn structure or behaviour.

If you have many Kyasha in your herd then you can name it Nkome to avoid duplicating the same name." Ugandan Ankole rancher

Names by solid colour

All cattle possess one of three basic solid colours: Black, Red or White. Ankole coat variation is focused around these main colours. The black is dominant to red and both black and red are co-dominant when combined with white. One black or red gene

with a white gene would result in either a black or red roan animal. In order for an animal to be red or white, they must have two genes for either red or white genes. There is another set of genes that control the intensity of that colour. Dilution causes black to be faded to grey and red to be faded to yellow/cream in Ankole.

Although the traditional preferred colour is one single unbroken solid colour, many Ankole cattle have various sized white spots or patches. The specific distribution, intensity and location of these markings determine the name. It is important to realise that the dark colour is the "base" colour, regardless of how large the white "covering" colour is. In general the fewer and smaller the white patches, the better.

A few individual Ugandan farmers have become renowned for breeding their specific preferences of colours or markings. There are over one hundred names for these colour markings. If spotted or patched, the name changes from describing the solid colour to describing the colour marking.

Examples of suffix to root name changing, depending on the gender of the Ankole cattle.

Cow/ Bull/ Heifer

- Kyasha/ Rwash/Kasha:
- Kirembe/Rubamba/Karembe:
- Bugondo/Rugondo/Kagondo:
- Mayenje/Ruyenje/Kayenje:
- Kiroko/Ruroko/Kagondo:
- Nshanga/Rushanga/Kashanga:
- Ntanani/Rutanani/Katanani:
- Ngobe/Rugobe/Kagobe:
- Ihinda/Ruhinda/Kahinda:
- Ibamba/Rubamba /Kabamba:
- Shamaitu /Rushamaitu/Kashamaitu:

Names of the structure of Cattle

Horns shapes

The horns of Ankole are their most unique and distinctive feature. Horn shapes that are graceful and elegant in curve, are favoured. Ideal horns should be large, long, heavy in mass and ideally forward pointing. The whiter they are the better and Ugandan farmers select for horns that are white from the base to the horn tip. They should have a "wet" and "glowing" look to them. For Ugandans, however perfect a cow is visually, phenotypically,

physically or structurally, if its horns are not ideal is cannot be considered a beautiful Ankole.

Body frame

- Mirundi: Long legs
- Nfundo: Short legs

- Rurembezi: Without horn growth spirals
- Kabango: Big hump
- Kiromba: Long naval flap
- Mbogo/ Kabogo: Wide head, like a buffalo

Ankole

NAMES

Names by solid colour

Ugandan name	Colour	Description	Note
Mbazi	Grey	Grey	
Ruhumbo	Grey	Ashy, clouded grey	
Ruhuzumu	Grey	Strawberry grey	
Kisa	Cream	Cream	Cream
Mwera	Red	Lightest red brown	Highest
Gaaju	Red	Light red brown	Light
Nsirabo	Red	Orange as an Oribi	Orange red
Nende	Red	Red brown	Red brown
Mpare	Red	as an impala	Brick red
Sinna	Red	Darker red brown	Dark
Bihogo	Red	Dark brown almost purple	Darker
Nkyerengye	Red	Blackish brown	Dark brown
Mbindi	Red	Darker blackish brown (white horns)	Almost black
Kyozi	Black	Black (Black horn tips)	Black

Names by Spots

Ugandan name	Description	Note
Shamaitu	One or a few white spots on sides of waist or both sides of neck	
Karaara	Small white spots on both shoulders	
Barasi	White hairs on ears, mouth or eyes	
Kirezi	Single elongated white marking on forehead	
Kyasha	Spot on head	
Kihonzi	Small white spot on or around eye lid	
Kanyonza	Two small spots on forehead	
Katimba	Many small spots, evenly distributed all over face and body	Akimba means net
Bugondo	Many small spots mainly on head and hindquarters	
Mayenje	Scattered small white spots	
Nturance	White with mottled brown spots all over body	Plovers egg
Ibamba	Many relatively big white spots all over body	

Names by Spots

Ntabangi	Mixed spots of white, brown and black	
Mwangagye	Small white spots on the face	

Names by Patches

Kishomero	White patch over mouth	
Byeyera	V shaped white marking on forehead	
Bitarira	White patches on side of head	
Nshanga	White patch on lower neck	
Ihinda	Big white patch on face and chest	
Ngabo	Large white patches all over head and body	
Kanyamuhebe	White patches on both sides of abdomen	
Kiremba ky'omurara	White markings over head and back to tail, not on sides	
Kiremba ky'ekitarizo	White patches	
Kiremba ky'ekikanga	White markings covering both hind quarters	
Kiroko	White patch on face and side of head	
Kitanga	Black and white patches all over body	
Mpuuga	Single white patch on udders, sometimes to abdomen sides, chest and flanks	
Kinyubure	White tail tip	
Njegye	Big white patch covering almost all of the body	
Kasingo	White patch on face going around head	
Kanaaba	White patch on fore or hind legs below ankles to hooves	

Names of Horns

Bishunga/Bushonga	Large white horns	
Bitsina	Horns large at base	
Kakome	Horns that curve in tightly to face each other	
Kakondo	Horns facing forwards	
Kamosho	Small horns facing but not matching	
Kimosho	Big horns facing forward but not matching	
Kishure	Horns upright and curving back at the tips, lyre	
Kashaya/Mushaya	Unbalanced horns, twisting to one side	
Kitaara	Big horns spreading sideways	
Nkome	Horns that curve in gently to face each other	
Nkondo	Big horns facing forward	
Nhara	Loose horns falling downwards	
Macumu	Horns that spread upwards without bending	As a spear
Rushongoza	Very sharp horn tips	
Nkungu	Without horns	Polled
Nshara	Loose horns falling forward	Scurred
Bukurura	Small stunted horns	
Ngoro	Growing in a circle across each other	
Rutara	Flattening out and growing upforwards	
Kikondo	Horns forming a heart shape	
Richenche	Growing straight up and tips connecting	
Ricumitana	Thick horns growing straight up	
Kashungye	Thin long horns growing out then upwards	