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Zovawk: An Indigenous Pig Breed of Mizoram

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Abstract

Zovawk is a widely distributed indigenous pig of Mizoram. The pig is with a black colour coat with a white spot on the forehead. It is a small sized pig weighing 54-59 Kg. This pig is well adapted to the local weather conditions and hilly terrain of the region. Local people believe that the meat of Zovawk pig has medicinal properties. The total indigenous pig population in Mizoram is around 32000 as per the 19th livestock census. Only limited literature is available about this local pig of Mizoram. This article highlights the importance of Zovawk in the swine husbandry of Mizoram.

Keywords: Indigenous, Local, Medicinal, Mizoram, Pig, Zovawk,

Introduction

Pig rearing plays a significant role in the traditional agricultural system of Mizoram, a state situated in the North-Eastern Region of India (Das *et al*., 2016). Mizoram, a state in the northeastern hilly region of India, lies between 20.58°–23.35° north latitude and 92.15°–93.29° east longitude (Lalthansanga and Samanta, 2015). Among the different livestock

species, pigs are the most popular one in Mizoram. Zovawk, an indigenous pig breed of Mizoram, is widely distributed in different parts of the state especially in the rural areas (Fig). The ancestry of the Zovawk pig is believed to be derived from wild pigs of the Oriental region, especially East and South-East Asia. The name Zovawk originates from the Mizo language, where "Zo" signifies the Mizo community and "vawk" means pig. This scavenging pig is believed to have accompanied the Mizo people throughout their migratory history and has been traditionally reared since time immemorial. Zovawk meat is commonly preferred in Mizoram due to its flavour and believed medicinal qualities (Zosangpuii *et al.,* 2020). As pork is consumed by all tribes of Mizoram, pigs are among the most valued and widely reared livestock (Mayengbam *et al*., 2012).

Fig. Zovawk

More than 38% of India's pig population is found in the North Eastern Region (Roy *et al*, 2025). The total indigenous pig population in Mizoram is around 32000 as per the 19th livestock census (Mayengbam and Tolenkhomba, 2017). According to the 20th Livestock Census (2019), the total pig population in India was 9.06 million. Of the total pig population in India, 1.90 million were exotic pigs and 7.16 million were indigenous pigs. India ranked fifth globally in pig population in 2017 (20th Livestock Census, 2019). The Economic Survey (2024–25) reported that pig meat production in Mizoram was estimated to be 5,171 tons (Economic Survey of Mizoram 2023–24). The Zovawk pig has received official recognition as a distinct breed from the ICAR–National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR), Karnal, India (Zosangpuii *et al.,* 2020) with Accession No. India-Pig-2700-Zovawk-09007, and was formally adopted in 2018 (Singh, *et al*., 2020). The breed occurs within a defined geographical range comprising the districts of Aizawl, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Champhai, Saiha, and Kolasib in Mizoram (Roy *et al*., 2025).

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Anatomical Characteristics

The coat colour most commonly observed in this breed is black, accompanied by a characteristic white spot on the forehead (star) and white markings on the ventral abdominal region and distal limbs (appear like white boots). They have erect ears, a concave snout, a pot-shaped abdominal region, a concave dorsal line, and elongated midline bristles, which is seen most prominent in mature animals. The average body weight is 54 kg in males and 59 kg in females. It is a small-sized pig, attaining puberty at approximately 2.5 months of age, with a body weight of around 4.5 kg (Vanlalrozami *et al*., 2018). The first farrowing typically occurs at 9–10 months of age, when the animals reach a body weight of approximately 40 kg (Mayengbam and Tolenkhomba, 2017).

Physiological Characteristics

The characteristics of these pigs vary across regions according to local climate and topography. The breed is highly adapted to the hilly environment of Mizoram, and traditional practices among local communities suggest that pork from these pigs is believed to have medicinal benefits, especially in relation to anaemia. They are characterized by strong disease resistance and rarely experience conditions such as piglet anaemia, piglet diarrhoea, pneumonia, helminthic infestations, and skin disorders, bacterial and viral infections. As a result, they are well-adapted to survive in remote regions where proper disease prevention and therapeutic interventions are unavailable (Zosangpuii *et al*., 2020). Researchers observed that in blood profile this pig is having higher erythrocyte count and higher haemoglobin and iron content which are related to its semi-domestication nature. The characteristic colour of pork of Zovawk is also related to this higher erythrocyte count and higher haemoglobin and iron content. Because of this reason it is believed that meat of this pig is good for anaemic individuals (Mayengbam and Tolenkhomba, 2014).

This pig is highly alert, responding quickly to intruders on the farm through sounds or movements (Debroy *et al.,* 2021), and is characterized by gentleness and sensitivity. However, lactating females display strong aggressive behaviour (Kalita *et al*., 2014). These pigs mainly communicate through grunting sounds, which indicate food, warn of danger, or call their piglets. The average litter size of this breed is six at birth and decreases to five at weaning. The mean birth weight is 0.5 kg, which increases to 3.5 kg by the time of weaning (Zosangpuii *et al*. 2020). The skin of pigs closely resembles human skin with respect to overall structure, thickness, hair follicle density, pigmentation, as well as collagen and lipid composition (Lalramliana *et al*., 2015).

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Conclusion

It is observed that the indigenous pig population is declining gradually. All India Coordinated Research Project on Pig (AICRP on Pig) is working on the conservation and to meet the increased demand of meat of Zovawk. College of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, Central Agricultural University (Imphal), Selesih, Aizawl, Mizoram is one of the centres. More research works are required to support the betterment of this indigenous local pig of Mizoram.

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