



**SOCIEDADE PORTUGUESA
DE RECURSOS GENÉTICOS ANIMAIS**

**1ª Reunião da Sociedade Portuguesa
de Recursos Genéticos Animais**

**II Congresso Ibérico sobre
Recursos Genéticos Animais**

**RESUMOS DAS
COMUNICAÇÕES**

**Estação Zootécnica Nacional
Vale de Santarém**

19 e 20 de Outubro, 2000

**GENETIC CHARACTERIZATION OF SOUTHWESTERN EUROPEAN BOVINE BREEDS
a reassessment with a set of 16 microsatellites (consortium FAIR1 CT950702)**

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Abstract

The origin of Iberian cattle has been suggested by many authors to be the product of European and North African cattle entrances during the last few thousands of years. However, these hypotheses were mainly based in morphological similarities. This study analysed 889 unrelated individuals from 15 representative Iberian breeds and 3 French breeds for 16 microsatellite loci. Statistical analyses were used to calculate the genetic diversity, differentiation among breeds or groups of breeds, genetic structure and history of populations. Allele frequencies and mean heterozygosity revealed a high level of variation in Iberian breeds. The results obtained suggest that i) there is not a clear influence of North African cattle breeds, and ii) genetic distances among Iberian breeds are related with geographical location with the exception of Retinta, Alistana and Mirandesa.