

# The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy



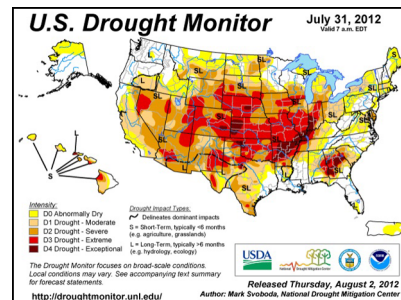
## Special Notice: Securing Rare Breeds in Drought Conditions



Heritage breeds are survivors, although some may be in for a very challenging year. The national drought is about to have a huge impact on the American economy and now is the time to plan ahead. Undoubtedly, food for home and feed for animals is going to skyrocket in price this year because most of the corn crop and other grains are under threat due to the drought. Forage for grazing animals has suffered as well with many farmers already

feeding hay at a time when there should be plenty of grass.

Producers are going to be facing hard decisions in order to weather the tough times ahead. For stewards of endangered breeds, planning for the future is going to be critical for the long term survival of these rare animals. It is their responsibility as stewards to ensure that the breeds will live on, whether they remain on their farms or go into the hands of new owners in this time of struggle.



### Where to start?

If you live in an area of the country that is still getting rain, consider growing supplemental feed for your animals. Depending on where you live, there are some forage items that can still be planted this summer season such as cowpeas, rape, and buckwheat. In the fall, think about planting with your animals in mind or imagine turning your grass clippings into a food source. There is some great information on small scale silage production that might be another answer to turn failing crops into feed for your animals. See the resources below for ideas on gardening and silage for your animals.

For those individuals who will have to make the decision to downsize their herds or flocks, careful consideration for which animals to keep is key. You must retain both quality and diversity in the animals that remain on the farm. Taking a hard look at pedigrees and bloodlines and then judging the animals based on how they conform to breed standard will guide you in the process. It is much like judging by card grading, which is outlined on the ALBC website [here](#).

There may be situations in which it will be financially impossible to keep any of the animals. In this case locating a new steward will be the optimal solution versus the stockyard or sale barn. If you must sell, priority must be given to making sure breeding quality animals get into the hands of capable people. There are many opportunities to network with potential stewards through breed clubs, associations, and of course the ALBC network through the website and office. Selection of which animals must go to other conservation breeders is similar to the decisions involved in the previous paragraph outlining a strategy for making priorities for "must keep" breeding stock.

The next year, and perhaps the future, is going to be a great challenge for anyone raising and feeding animals. It's time to start thinking out of the box (and feed bag) and look for ways to affordably continue working with our treasured heritage breeds. Planning is everything and an early start is a smart move in the right direction.

### ***Resources:***

**Deciding What to Keep** – Card grading for livestock and breeder selection protocols for chickens and turkeys, can be found [here](#).

**Financial Assistance and Support** - The government has a number of assistance programs that may be able to help you get through tough times with your animals. These programs are specifically for assistance in times such as these, and saving rare breeds is one very good use of these resources. One of the best listings of these programs can be found on the [Farm Aid website](#).

**Gardening For Your Animals** - A great resource for learning about gardening to feed your animals is on author [Harvey Ussery's website](#), or on [Mother Earth News' website](#).

**Help Finding New Stewards** – ALBC has an extensive network of conservation breeders and rare breed enthusiasts. ALBC members can list their animals in the [ALBC classifieds](#), visit the [Online Breeders Directory](#), or view the [Breed Association Directory](#) to find others interested in your breeds.

**Small Scale Silage For Feed** – If you have a lawnmower with a bag, you can potentially make your own silage to feed your animals. Check out the following links for details on small-scale production:

- [Small Scale Silage Production for Chicken Feed](#)
- [FAO Electronic Conference on Tropical Silage](#)

If you have additional questions, please [contact us](#) for further information.

Sincerely,  
ALBC Staff