Red Poll Cattle – The Best Kept Secret

By Ryan Walker

To say owners of Red Poll cattle love their breed would be an understatement. I recently had the opportunity to join the American Red Poll Association (ARPA) and the Blue Ridge Red Poll Association at Wilkshire Farm in North Carolina. On that day we welcomed the International Red Poll Congress and Tour to the United States for the first time in 15 years. Around 40 Red Poll cattle breeders from seven different countries spent 25 days on a national bus tour to learn about Red Poll cattle operations and conservation efforts in the United States.

Our day started with a meeting of the Blue Ridge Red Poll Association, one of five regional groups of Red Poll breeders and members who make up the larger national association. I got to know several breeders and learned about how they were raising and marketing their cattle. Although I don’t currently raise Red Polls, they warmly welcomed me as a new member, and we discussed marketing strategies for the association. In the early afternoon, the Blue Ridge group lined the driveway of Wilkshire Farm as the tour bus pulled in. As tour members stepped off the bus, just as they had at stops in many different states every day for three weeks prior, they were greeted by their hosts.

The farm tour host for the day was Wilkshire’s owner Jeff Wilkins, who is a sixth-generation farmer, accomplished veterinarian, and Board of Directors member for ARPA. Jeff’s father operated an Ayrshire dairy on their property for over 30 years and in retirement chose to raise Red Polls because of their looks, easy calving, milking ability, gentleness, and successful production on a forage diet. Jeff stated that he wanted to take Red Polls to the next level and spent a good deal of time studying the breed before beginning work with his herd. His cattle are raised on grass, and Jeff supplies beef to several restaurants, including two owned by James Beard Award-winning chef Andrea Reusing.

Attendees traveled throughout the farm learning about each herd and discussing the differences and similarities to their own cattle. Because Jeff has imported genetics from across the world, some attendees’ cattle were close relatives, just located on a different continent. There was also conversation on pasture management and the particular docility of Jeff’s cattle. As we stood in the pasture among several dozen cattle, the only background noise was hooves against grass and the sound of the cattle chewing.

(A quick side story: A couple of years ago I was at Jeff’s farm with a local TV crew and the cattle were so quiet that one of the TV producers didn’t hear a cow walk right up behind her. She turned around, jumped in the air, and gasped in surprise while the Red Poll cow just glanced up at her and put her head back down to graze. Those are some calm cattle indeed.)

As the sun hung low in the sky after an exciting day on the farm, the attendees gathered around to discuss the day’s events and say goodbye to their local hosts. One final comment that Jeff imparted to the group was a reminder that Red Polls are the best-kept secret in the cattle industry, but more people need to learn about them. After unanimous and proud agreement, the group boarded the bus, ready for a trip up to Ohio for the final few stops on the tour.

continued on page 4
Congratulations, Phil!

Our very own Dr. Phillip Sponenberg was inducted as an Honorary Member into the American College of Theriogenologists (a veterinary reproduction specialty group). Over its 46 year history there have been 23 honorary memberships bestowed. He was recognized mostly for his genetics and conservation work, with a nod to some reproductive pathology work as well. The following bio was included as part of his honorary member nominee bio in the ACT newsletter.

Dan Phillip Sponenberg attended veterinary school at Texas A & M and graduated in 1976 magna cum laude. He then pursued post-graduate education in genetics and pathology at Cornell. Studying under Dr. McEntee he began a very successful career in reproductive pathology and genetics at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in 1981. During his tenure as professor, he has authored 11 books, 105 peer-reviewed journal articles, and 418 lay publications related to reproductive pathology, pathology, genetics, and breed conservation. To date he has over 800 publications to his name related to these fields. He has presented at the SFT/ACT conference and trained many pathologists and theriogenologists at V M CVM and abroad. He is an integral part of the education of V M CVM students, residents and colleagues, as well as a valuable educational resource for clinical cases, research projects, and career development. In 1990 he developed the only reproductive pathology course offered on the V M CVM campus. This course is always popular, but also a requirement for pathology and theriogenology residents. Dr. Sponenberg also assists in our theriogenology resident's board preparation for both the practical and written examinations. Most notably he has served as the technical advisor to The Livestock Conservancy since 1978. He has given numerous invited presentations around the world about reproductive pathology, breed conservation, and breeding for healthy populations. He is well known in rare breed circles and is the foremost expert in preserving rare genetics. He has helped counsel breed groups on the conservation of numerous breeds on the endangered, threatened or watch list worldwide. Currently he is the leading expert on the Spanish horse in the Americas as well as the Tennessee M yotonic goat breed. He resides with his wife in Blacksburg, Virginia at Beechheld Farm. When not travelling around the world saving rare breeds he is busy preserving his own lines of Choctaw horses, Fainting goats, K ara-kachan dogs, and Brahma chickens.

Welcome to our Newest Life Members!

The Livestock Conservancy would like to give a special thanks to the following individuals who recently chose to support the Conservancy and its conservation programs by becoming life members.

M ariel R. G oss
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D avid & H eather L oomis
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For more information on becoming a life member, please contact Ryan Walker at 919-542-5704, ext. 102, or rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org.

The Livestock Conservancy News
PO Box 477
Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312 USA
(919) 542-5704 • Fax (919) 545-0022
www.LivestockConservancy.org
rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org

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Basic annual membership is $45 and includes the quarterly Livestock Conservancy News and the annual Breeders Directory. We also accept unsolicited donations. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. Please send changes of address to the Conservancy.

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Eat Them to Save Them
By Alison Martin

MEAT. In this day and age, it is not fashionable to remind people that meat comes from animals. If one Googles images of farming, one sees beautiful pictures of crops. Sustainable farming might bring up one or two images of chickens as well.

Don’t get me wrong, I love veggies and grains and eat lots of both. I also eat meat. So do 97 percent of Americans (MarketWatch, 2016). What is more, we consume a lot of it, estimated at 3.7 lbs. per week.

Yet we have allowed a vocal minority, backed by celebrities, to take the conversation away from meat producers (aka ranchers and farmers).

How did we lose the connection between what’s on our table and where it comes from? During the 20th century, more and more people left the farm. For a time, small livestock and poultry were kept in urban settings. That changed around the 1950s, when a booming economy made it fashionable to purchase food from a store rather than grow it in the backyard. A & P invented the grocery store, butcher shops faded away, and eventually MEAT became a cellophane-wrapped product most commonly promoted for grills and barbecues.

For those who raise and support the raising of heritage livestock and poultry, however, let us be honest. Farm animals need jobs. Jobs on farms include providing farm labor, manure for veggies and crops, fiber, eggs, milk, and meat. Some farms have added entertainment, in the form of agritourism. On most farms, meat pays the bills and fills the freezer. If we eliminate meat as a purpose for farm animals, we limit both the number of animals that can be raised on the farm and the sources of income for the farmer.

For a moment, let us contemplate conserving rare livestock and poultry without eating them. Let us examine the two closest non-farm models, zoos and pets (companion animals). Can livestock and poultry find jobs on and off farms through one of these models? The job of pets is human companionship, while that of zoo animals is entertainment and conservation through reintroduction to the wild.

Farm animals can attract visitors, so could they be conserved like zoo animals, instead of eating them? The zoo model most closely resembles conservation of some of the breeds in the Critical category – very few facilities are breeding them, and breeding populations are very small. Conservation in zoos is expensive, running to hundreds of thousands of dollars per species. Zoo conservation programs are susceptible to inbreeding and financial shortfalls (Snyder et al., 1996), so taking away jobs from farm animals to conserve them like zoo animals is a very risky model. Furthermore, zoos manage their breeding programs with the objective of releasing captive animals into the wild. What is the equivalent of releasing farm animals? Could it be a growing market for companion animals?

Chickens have captured many fans serving as pets or companion animals, which has helped many breeds grow. Most equines are kept as companion and exhibition animals too. Would the companion animal model allow us to stop eating heritage livestock and poultry? Certainly Americans spend an enormous amount on pets - more than $65 billion in 2016 (American Pet Products Association, 2017). Such an expenditure would allow tremendous progress on conservation! An average of $169 per year is spent on 393 million pets; however, most is spent on dogs and cats. Expenditures on pet chickens are likely to be much lower! Equines and other large animals require more space to keep, and horse ownership has declined steadily for more than ten years. This argues that the companionship model will not work well for large animals. Could goats, sheep, and pigs become the next dog or cat? They are companionable and trainable, yet throughout millennia of domestication, humans have never bonded with them in quite the same way, nor invited them into their homes (usually). Even rabbits, which have a niche following as companion animals, have not broken into the mainstream. This appears to pose a significant hurdle for livestock and poultry conservation as companion animals. And downright difficult.
Jeff’s remarks and my experiences evoke the rich history of Red Polls. Let us now take some time to examine the breed that inspired such a momentous tour.

History

Our story begins in East Anglia at the end of the 18th century in the coastal counties of Suffolk (to the east of Cambridge) and Norfolk. The counties derive their names from the “south folk” and the “north folk” residing in the area. Until a series of drainage projects in the 17th century, much of the area had been comprised of marshland and bogs, but today it is one of the driest regions in the U.K. From these counties, the Red Poll breed was born.

The earliest domesticated cattle in England were introduced several thousand years ago by the Celts when they brought with them their Celtic Shorthorns. The Celts most likely tamed some of the ancient wild aurochs (Bos primigenius) that were already on the island and bred the two together. Cattle brought to England by both the Romans and later the Vikings, who owned both red and dun-colored polled (hornless) cattle, are also thought to have been bred with the native cattle to create new breeds.

The people of Suffolk used native cattle to develop excellent polled dairy cattle, known as Suffolk Duns, which were particularly known for their ability to produce high yields of exceptional quality milk. Even on marginal forage, they were said to be the highest producing dairy breed in England at the time. In his book The General View of Agriculture of the County of Norfolk, published in 1794, Rev. Arthur Young wrote of the Suffolk cattle: “This breed is universally polled, that is, without horns; the size small, few rise when fat to above fifty stones (700 pounds)... If I were to describe the points of certain individuals...a clean throat with little dewlap; a thin clean snake head; thin legs; a very large carcase; ribs tolerably springing from the centre of the back but with a heavy belley; backbone ridged; chine thin and hollow; loin narrow; udder large, loose, and creased when empty; milk-veins remarkably large, and rising in knotted puffs to the eye... many of these beasts will fatten remarkably well; the flesh of a fine quality; and in that state will feel well enough to satisfy the touch of skilful butchers. The best milkers I have known, have either been red, brindle, or yellowish cream coloured...the quality of milk is very considerable indeed.”

To the north, the people of Norfolk used native cattle to develop a fine beef breed that retained the county’s name as its own. According to the Red Poll Herd Book, (vol. 1, American ed., 1891) Norfolk cattle were: “a small, hardy, thriving race; fattening as freely and finishing as highly at three years old as cattle in general do at four or five. They are small boned, short legged, round barrelled, well-loined, thin-thighed, clean chapped; the head, in general, fine, and the horns clean, middle sized and bent forward; the favorite colour a blood-red with a white mottled face...and if the London butchers be judges of beef, there are no better beasts sent to Smithfield market. The two qualifications, namely the superior quality of their flesh, and their fattening freely at an early age, do away with every solid objection to their size and form.”

At the dawn of the 19th century, John Reeve, a tenant on the Earl of Leicester’s Holkham Estate in Norfolk, began mating Suffolk bulls with his Norfolk cows. Other breeders from the area started similar breeding programs. In 1846 Norfolk and Suffolk counties merged their agricultural societies and the new breed referred to as “The Improved Norfolk and Suffolk Red Poll” was born. By 1851 at the Royal Agricultural Society’s show in Windsor, the breed took all of the prizes even though it was not yet recognized with its own classes. In 1862 the breed was finally recognized with its own classes at the Royal Agricultural Society show in

One stop on the farm tour included an examination of one of Jeff’s very well-behaved bulls. Photo by Ryan Walker.
Battersea, where a judge said Red Polls "presented several specimens of great merit, size, and symmetry, with good flesh, and constitution and plenty of lean to the fat – all qualifications for making as much good beef at the least possible cost from a given quantity of food as any breed in the yard." According to the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England published in 1889, "good dairy properties, good quality of flesh, and a ready tendency to fatten, in cattle of medium size, not too large for poorish pasture, and hardened to a coldish climate, are highly valuable characteristics, and make the Red Polled breed suitable for conditions of existence which would be very unfavourable to many of the heavier breeds."

In 1874 the Red Poll herd book was published by Henry Euren, an English agricultural writer, making it one of the earliest purebred cattle registries in England. Through carefully gathering farm and estate records, Mr. Euren was able to establish pedigrees of the foundation cattle, creating records back to the very beginning of the breed. Unfortunately, both the Suffolk Dun and the Norfolk breeds are now extinct, primarily due to breeders' desire to cross them with each other. Because of this, these two are examples of breeds that have been crossbred out of existence. Thankfully some genetics from each live that have been crossbred out of existence.

The Livestock Conservancy News, Summer, 2017

Moderate frame size combined with natural and selected feed efficiency allows Red Polls the ability to finish to Choice on grass. Photo courtesy of Jeff Wilkins / ARPA.

which, due to the breed’s dual-purpose history is still in abundant supply compared to some other beef breeds. Due to the small birth weights, calving troubles are very rare for the breed. Regarding temperament, Red Polls are best described as “quiet.” They are very calm, which make them perfect choices for 4-H or FFA projects, and according to ARPA, “quiet cattle convert feed better and create more tender meat.” As most beef producers know, feed is the single largest expense in production, so this comes as a big advantage for the breed. Red Polls also have a smaller bone structure, thinner hides, and less waste, which means less feed necessary for maintenance and more feed available for growth. The moderate frame size combined with natural and selected feed efficiency allows Red Polls to finish to Choice, or high-quality, beef on grass. The high standards in selection over many generations also make Red Polls uniform in color, which can lead to higher earnings when sold in lots. Bulls are pre-potent, passing their structural style to all of their calves, and uniform calves aid in planning the breeding program.

Current status – Threatened

Since the 1960s, registrations have declined with numbers in the 700s during the 2000s falling to just over 500 Red Polls registered by ARPA in 2016. Much of the recent decline has undoubtedly been caused by the national trend toward raising black beef cattle. This has led to a noticeable decline in color diversity in American cattle, especially over the past decade. Because Red Polls are certainly not black cattle, they don’t fit within the current market trend, but this actually works to the breed’s advantage.

As many livestock breeders know, heritage breeds are living, breathing repositories for traits specific to their given breed. Red Poll cattle, by way of not yielding to current market trends, have retained the very traits that made them so popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During those times, the cattle industry looked much different than it does today. We often say that heritage breeds are more well-rounded than mainstream breeds, and Red Polls are no exception. Many of the issues that plague the modern beef industry – calving problems, dry udders, aggressive behavior, poor production on continued on next page
The next opportunity, by the way, is for heritage sheep. Just as for turkeys and pigs, slow growth (especially on pasture) translates to a recognizable difference in flavor, even in animals older than one year. Contact a heritage sheep farmer and see if you don’t agree.

When we are asked why we have to eat heritage breeds to save them, we can hold our heads up proudly. Chances are the questioner enjoys good meat exquisitely prepared. When that person learns how heritage animals are raised, what that means for the animals, and how sales help the farmers, it begins to make sense. Describing the most mouthwatering preparations for heritage meat leads to telling them where to find heritage meats and how to cook them to showcase their distinct qualities.

More people eating heritage meat saves breeds. 

References

www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp


From Service to Stewardship Workshop

The following is an excerpt of feedback received from Joey Walker, a military veteran scholarship recipient for the fourth annual workshop held in April.

I have always wanted to farm ever since I could remember. I always lived off military bases my whole life and when there was no school going on, I gravitated to people who lived in the country and were in some way farming or had horses. I really never thought it was possible that I could farm or never knew what I could farm. When I thought of farming in my youth and early adulthood, I always thought it was this whole Big Ag venture. It wasn’t until later in life that I took notice of those ‘hobby farming’ and after more exploration found that others were homesteading, and living a subsistence lifestyle. Those things really appealed to me.

I have been looking at permaculture farming. Someone had spoken a little on the process and how they were implementing it on their farm. I will be using electric woven wire fencing here at the living history museum, to rotate our livestock and better utilize our pastures and grow better forage.

I really can’t nail it down to one speaker I enjoyed the most, they were all exceptional. So I will give you two. That would be Erica Govednik and Alison Martin, and the reason why is simple – their passion. They spoke with a sparkle in their eyes and a fire in their souls about why they do what they do.

I love the Heritage Breeds and once on my own will only use those breeds. Why? Well, because I find them much like me, an underdog, forgotten and underappreciated. Also because I am at heart a romantic and lover of history, and as former military myself, and a child raised in a military home, I understand and appreciate the sacrifices of those that came before. Our heritage breeds deserve that same respect and recognition. These are the breeds the built our great nation. The bovines that gave us so much in meat, dairy, oxen, leather goods, and even horns to keep gunpowder dry. The sheep with their wool, milk and meat. The pigs that graced our tables and gave us lard for candle and soap making. The poultry with their eggs and meat. All in a time when people knew and appreciated their food.

When we lost family farms America lost a big part of herself. I do see hope on the horizon as more people are wanting to know where their food comes from and are seeking out relationships with local farmers. The task that lies ahead is getting farms back into action and finding people passionate about what they are doing on to those farms.

Thank y’all so much!

Joey Walker is Caretaker and Farm Manager at Exchange Place Living History Farm in Kingsport, TN.

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Attendees learn about Kerry cattle from Conservancy member Kendy Sawyer.
Our Trodden Past: Manure and Rare Breeds in the 16th and 17th Centuries

By Katherine Walker

During the age of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, just as many people were looking down as they were looking up. The 16th and 17th centuries were not only known for scientists’ astronomical discoveries, but also for attention to the ground upon which they walked and the matter of the soil on which most of their livelihoods depended. More so than today, many individuals living in England knew what it was like to get dirty, to access and understand the conditions of the ground that grew their crops, fed their livestock, and furnished them with countless metaphors in literature. To cite one example, Hamlet urges his mother Gertrude to not “spread the compost on the weeds” (Act 3, Scene 4, Lines 153-154). Essentially, Hamlet is saying to his mother that she should not waste valuable, nutrient-rich compost or manure on weeds, but instead apply the manure to what is worthy of being grown, what represents for Hamlet goodness and purity. Shakespeare’s Hamlet features just one of many references to manure and compost in the 16th and 17th centuries. Fierce debates raged over the specific content of manure and which animals produced the best and worst material for ensuring the flourishing of crops. For most people several hundred years ago, manure was a familiar concept and object that influenced their lives.

Many of The Livestock Conservancy’s breeds would have been highly familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Often housed in close quarters (sometimes in the same room) with sheep, goats, horses, and pigs, most individuals were close to the material of the animal and its ordure. Rather than seen as a nuisance, the excrement of an animal was a valuable commodity. According to scientist Sir Hugh Plat, swine and pigeon dung was best for “pot-herbs” and would prevent pesky snails from crawling over one’s crops (The Garden of Eden page 35). An even more famous scholar, Francis Bacon, used the concept of manure to mirror the good cultivation of the mind: individuals should “manure and till the mind, and frame their course of life according to some Rule” (The Essays pages 350-351). In both of these examples, an animal’s ordure is a way for thinking about practical crop growth or the arts of the intellectual. Both the ground and the mind need to be fertilized, and livestock—many of those animals now considered Heritage breeds—were the important means for the manual and intellectual work of the period.

Different types of texts outlined the process of fertilizing the ground. The most common were how-to manuals like Sir Hugh Plat’s works, or in almanacs that outlined the seasons of the year and offered advice on the best time to set certain breeds to pasture for providing manure. Richard Gardiner’s manual even features a poem, promising readers that:

He that desires with skillful hand,
To frame a Garden plot,
And to manure and make it apt
For Herbs that serve the pot [...] 
Let him peruse this little Book,
Which undertakes the charge,
Of all the fore recited points,
To show the course at large

-Profitable Instructions page A 3r

Manure thus inspired poetry, was mentioned in plays, and was part of everyday labor practices. Animals offered so much more than their transportation, meat, eggs, milk, and wool. The relationship was cyclical, with farmers paying careful attention to what they fed animals, who then fertilized the fields, which then fed the farmer. Perhaps the people who lived several hundred years ago have something to teach us about how to value all the products of our heritage breeds. We may not live in the same room with our Oxford sheep or our Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs, but we do have much to discover about the role that manure can play in and upon today’s landscape.

Katherine Walker is a PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She researches Shakespeare and science, with a particular focus on folk knowledge and almanacs from the 16th and 17th centuries. She is the wife of staff member Ryan Walker and can be reached at walkerkn@email.unc.edu.

HAVE PHOTOS TO SHARE?
We always need images of rare breeds on the Conservation Priority List. Digital images are preferred, but prints will be accepted. Send photos to rwalker@livestockconservancy.org or mail to PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312. Please include photographer’s name. Photos become the property of the Conservancy and may be used for promotional and educational purposes.
Swine Brucellosis Pilot Project

In March 2016, a human case of swine brucellosis was diagnosed in the state of New York. The affected person had assisted with farrowing on a farm in New York. Epidemiologic investigation eventually involved 52 swine herds in 13 states; nine infected swine herds in four states were found. Infection was probably present, undetected, in one of these herds for over ten years, likely from mating by a boar which had escaped from a nearby hunting preserve. None of the infected herds were detected by current swine brucellosis surveillance methods.

Beginning in April 2017, swine producers in some East Coast states may be contacted by USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services and asked to participate in a brief on-line survey – the first step in a pilot project to locate and utilize alternative surveillance streams for swine brucellosis, especially for pigs raised outdoors.

To determine if efficient surveillance can be conducted in the growing production system of pasture raised pork, this pilot project is being done in Veterinary Services District 1 (pictured above) to identify slaughter streams for pasture-raised pork, collect samples from pigs of all ages from those slaughter sites, and educate producers on brucellosis risks and biosecurity practices for pasture raised pork. In January and February 2017, web searches and database reviews were conducted to identify pasture-raised pork producers (including farrow-to-finish, breeders, growers, and finishing farms). Producers will be sent a link to a short, on-line survey (via Survey Monkey) in emails or mailed letters. Initial emails/letters will include information on the pilot project, including what happens if a positive pig is detected at slaughter. In addition to questions about where pigs are slaughtered, we will also be assessing producer knowledge on swine brucellosis and biosecurity. Once the questionnaire has closed, all contacted producers will receive information on brucellosis in humans, best biosecurity practices for pasture-raised pork, and on becoming a brucellosis-free validated herd.

From the survey results, a subset of about 45 slaughter sites will be selected to participate in the surveillance portion of the study. Pigs of all ages (not just sows and boars) will have blood samples collected at slaughter which will be tested for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies. Funding for the slaughter surveillance portion of the study is currently pending. Veterinary Services is committed to engaging with non-traditional stakeholders including pasture pork producers. Future plans include mutual dialogue with pasture pork producers through venues such as local meetings, on social media, and one-on-one discussions.

If a pig tests suspect or positive on slaughter samples, federal regulations regarding positive brucellosis animals will be followed. Actions may include:
- Confirmatory testing of the suspect sample by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories
- Contacting the owner of the positive animal and requiring a whole-herd test

If the herd of origin is found to be infected, actions may include:
- Quarantine, test and remove, or whole herd depopulation, and herd clean-up plans for herds determined positive through testing and epidemiologic investigation
- Tracing of animals into and out of the infected herd
- Testing of additional animal species on the positive premises

At the conclusion of the pilot project, a cost-benefit analysis will be done to help determine if alternative B.suis surveillance can be cost-effectively implemented nationwide.

Questions regarding the pilot project may be directed to the project’s authors:
- Leslie Seraphin (DEO, NJ), Leslie.L.Seraphin@aphis.usda.gov
- Paul Pitcher (VMO, PA), Paul.M.Pitcher@aphis.usda.gov
- Ross Free (DEO, NC), Ross.A.Free@aphis.usda.gov

More information on swine brucellosis is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information

Swine producers in USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services District 1 (dark blue on map) may be asked to participate in a brief survey.
A Navajo-Churro Field Inspection

By Dr. Lyle McNeal

The following comes to us from the Navajo Sheep Project, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Congratulations to the Project on four decades of work with the Navajo-Churro breed!

On March 8, a gathering of Dine weavers and shepherds at Cunnington Farms, in Moab, Utah, learned a lot from each other, as Nikyle Begay did a field inspection with Inspector Jim Keyes. Both longtime and relatively new Navajo-Churro raisers were able to hear and see Jim and Nikyle look at teeth, horns, eyes, fleece, and other confirmation points and benefit from discussions of what characteristics are important to the Churro sheep, not only for the breed standard, but also why these characteristics are important out in the field for survival of the sheep. Weavers also told the group about their needs and concerns regarding the wool. Roy Kady, speaking as both a weaver and a Dine elder, spoke about how every portion of a sheep was used in the past and about the close bonds of the elders to their sheep. His apprentice weavers contrasted traditional practices with those of younger Dine, who often focus on particular types of wool and color patterns.

A spirited discussion of the four-horn trait included mention that in many areas of the Navajo Nation, multiple horns are thought to be sacred. However, the split eyelid issue connected to multiple horns is a problem to be considered. It was also a surprise to some when it was mentioned that having no kemp [short fibers] at all in Churro fleece might be an indication of crossbreeding, and that a small amount of kemp is properly included in the standard. As several other breeds of sheep at Cunnington Farms were available for hands-on comparison, Jim and Nikyle discussed and demonstrated crimp, larger sheep size, closed faces, wooly legs, and other characteristics that differentiate Churros from Icelandics and other breeds which have similar fleece on first glance.

Since weavers and shepherds often have different knowledge, needs, and perspectives, it was helpful and exciting to have a forum where these two groups could exchange ideas, disagree, learn, and get to know each other as well.

Among those present were Jim Keyes, Nikyle Begay, Bill Thomas, Jr., Sam Cunningham, Roy Kady, and 3 of Roy’s “apprentice” weavers, and several other Navajo shepherds and weavers.

For more information about the Navajo Sheep Project, visit www.navajosheepproject.com.

Navajo-Churro lambs, currently under Threatened status. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.
Heritage Livestock Conference
November 9-12, 2017

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Fort Magruder Conference Center
Williamsburg, VA

www.LivestockConference.org
Saturday Workshops Include:
Importance of Grass Based Heritage Cattle Genetics | Geese – What Makes Them Special | Pedigree Recording |
Managing Poulty Health Before Problems Happen | Dutch Belted Cattle: One Breed’s Success Story With Universal Applications | Maternal Breed Selection |
The Forgotten Horses | Gardening with Chickens | Five Strategies to Protect Your Favorite Breed for the Future |
The Shocking Truth About Electric Fences | Green Picket Fences - Forwarding Urban Agriculture with an Action Plan |
Preserving the Shire Horse in America | Small Ruminant Health and Biosecurity Measures | Selecting the Correct Forage for your Ruminate |
Value-Added Meat Goat Production - the Why and How

SCHEDULE - AT - A - GLANCE

Thursday, November 9 - Networking Reception
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. For everyone who signs up for clinics or conference

Friday, November 10 - Pre-Conference Clinics
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Promoting Heritage Horses | All Things Sheep |
8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. The Natural Home Dairy | Marketing Heritage Breed Wool |
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Bits & Bridles Tour |
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Breed Registries and Associations | Social Media Marketing for Your Breeds

Saturday, November 11 - Conference Workshops
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast & Poster Session
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Plenary - The Early Days |
9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Breakout Sessions (3 concurrent) |
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Breakout Sessions (3 concurrent) |
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch (included in conference) |
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions (3 concurrent) |
2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions (3 concurrent) |
3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Breakout Sessions (3 concurrent) |
4:45 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Closing Ceremony - The Cowboy Poet

Sunday, November 12 - Post Conference Clinic
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Full-day Card Grading Clinic

This is a tentative schedule, subject to change as the program develops.

BANQUET KEYNOTE

An Interview with President George Washington
Join Colonial Williamsburg Livestock Manager Elaine Shirley as she interviews President George Washington. Washington will share how he developed new breeds of animals and innovative ways to feed and care for them. Washington raised Leicester Longwool sheep, and created the Mammoth Jackstock donkey (which were used for breeding large mules) – both of which are on the Livestock Conservancy Conservation Priority List today!

COME CELEBRATE

The Livestock Conservancy is partnering with Colonial Williamsburg’s Rare Breeds Program to host an extra-special, live animal intensive national conference to celebrate 40 years of conservation.

www.LivestockConference.org
PRE-CONFERENCE IN-DEPTH CLINICS

**Full Day - All Things Sheep**
Join us at historic Seven Springs Farm where Farm Manager Wanda Fields will introduce you to their flock of registered Hog Island sheep and lead a full-day clinic on all things sheep. Wanda and her team will walk you through everything you need to know before getting started with sheep. Topics include breed selection, infrastructure, husbandry and health, nutrition, predator control, and much more. Local fiber artists will be joining the discussion to cover aspects of their craft with heritage breed wool. Participants will be treated to lunch that will include a whole barbecued sheep prepared by long time Hog Island sheep breeder and pit master extraordinarily. Byran Childress. Attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy the gardens and the beautiful early 18th century house and farm buildings rarely seen by the general public. Yes, George Washington litterally slept there! Location: Seven Springs Farm, 6831 Dabney's Mill Rd, Manquin, VA 23106

**Full Day - Using Entertainment, Education, And Public Service to Promote Heritage Horses**
Meet Steve Edwards and learn how he uses several strains of Colonial Spanish Horses in the Mill Swamp Indian Horses program at his Gwaltney Frontier Farm to introduce people to heritage horses and other heritage livestock. Located on the site of a replicated 1650’s era farm site, Steve will show you how he has blended agrotourism, educational programs, and special events to attract hundreds of visitors, many who have no equine experience. Colonial Spanish horses are the focal point around which special programs for PTSD patients from a local Veteran’s hospital, home schoolers, teachers, and others who deal with severely traumatized people, are created. Steve feels that hands-on training is the best way to learn, so come prepared for a busy day! Location: Mill Swamp Indian Horses, 9299 Moonlight Rd, Smithfield, VA 23430

**The Natural Home Dairy**
With the partnership of a few animal friends, you can produce all of your family’s dairy products while letting mothers raise their own babies as nature intended. Deborah Niemann will help you discover how to choose dairy animals, where to buy, how to share milk with babies, and what equipment you need; from the milking parlor to the kitchen; to make all of your dairy products, as well as your own soap. You’ll get information about ingredients and a reference list, as well as recipes to help you get started. Learn what to do with the byproducts of a home dairy, including manure, leather, and meat. Location: Fort Magruder Conference Center, 6945 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

**Maximizing Your Products and Marketing Heritage Breed Wool**
Cows, pigs, chickens and sheep provide income from the sale of their meat, but wooly sheep can offer so much more! Kathy Donovan of Checkmate Farm will present various finished products – roving, yarn, blankets and rugs – that are made from the semi-annual shearing of sheep that continue to produce. This session will explore the profitable sheep products and marketing avenues along with hands-on activities using the wool from long fiber sheep breeds. Location: Fort Magruder Conference Center, 6945 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

**Chicken Processing**
Join Erika Gore at Ed Schultz Farm for a chicken processing clinic that will provide hands-on training and best management practices for small-scale producers seeking to process their chickens on-farm. Topics will include humane killing, processing, handling, cooling, packaging, operational needs, safety, sanitation, and regulations. Whether you want to learn how to process your own birds or just want to see how it’s done, this workshop is a great place for you to learn and ask questions in a small group. Participants should dress casually, and closed toed shoes are advised. Location: Ed Schultz Farm: 3172 Browns Bay Rd, Hayes, VA 23072

**Social Media Marketing Options for Your Breeds**
This seminar cuts through all the fluff and shows you exactly what you need to do to increase your Facebook “REACH!” You will walk away understanding Hashtags and how to use them properly, fully understand the value of the Top 5 Social Media outlets and how to use them to your advantage, and see real-world examples and how to use them in your business. You will learn how to reach your specific demographic to increase your revenue! You will get Dayla Kohler’s bullet-point seminar with all the information at your fingertips -all you have to do is take notes pertinent to your specific business. You will walk away ready to use Social Media like a professional!
Location: Fort Magruder Conference Center, 6945 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

**The Tricky Business of Breed Registries and Associations**
Breed associations, registries and clubs are vital to the conservation of endangered breeds but many struggle with turnover, conflict, and having enough time to do it all. It doesn't have to be this way! Drawing upon the models of successful breed associations, this workshop will cover topics such as how to set up and run an efficient registry, managing studbooks, breed promotion, and avoiding conflict.
Location: Fort Magruder Conference Center, 6945 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

*Extra charge for all pre- and post-conference clinics and workshops*
SPECIAL EVENTS

Bits and Bridles Tour - Friday from 1pm - 2pm
Presented by Colonial Williamsburg Coach and Livestock Department
Treat the animal lover in your life to this one-hour walking tour of Colonial Williamsburg's modern stables and Rare Breeds Program. You'll get a behind-the-scenes look at their facilities, learn more about their carriages, and get up close and personal with some of their heritage animals including Leicester Longwool sheep, Dominique and Nankin chickens, and Cleveland Bay horses. Please arrive by 12:45pm - don't be late! Location: Tour will begin at the corner of Botetourt and Nicholson Streets.

Stephen Monroe - “A Florida Cowboy Poet” - Saturday from 4:45pm - 5:45pm
Stephen Monroe has been called “a Florida Cowboy Poet” and he fits the title... He grew up in the saddle, in the cow pen, on the business end of a pair of hole diggers, and on a John Deere tractor. His family has lived and farmed in Jefferson County Florida for 5 generations. Stephen has competed in rodeos and was a rodeo clown and bullfighter. He learned cowboy poetry to entertain himself during long days in the saddle. Later, in promotion of Florida’s agricultural industry, he discovered that folks enjoy hearing these stories and poems almost as much as he enjoys telling them. Come enjoy some fun stories and poetry!

Post-Conference In-Depth Clinic - Card Grading - Sunday from 9am - 4pm
Card grading is a useful method to evaluate individual animals relative to a breed standard and assess their potential as breeding stock. Card grading, with its evaluation of all individuals within a group of animals, strengthens breeders' understanding of the characteristics and attributes of their breed and, in turn, encourages the protection of genetic diversity within the breed. This is in contrast to competitive judging which encourages uniformity by rewarding only a single “best” animal within a show class. Card grading is one of the best methods to ensure breeds are not altered by show ring trends and are judged in ways that preserve a breed’s qualities that set them apart from more popular or commercial breeds. Elaine Shirley and Phil Sponenberg will lead our panel of experts as we use this technique to evaluate sheep, cattle, and horses at Colonial Williamsburg. Location: Colonial Williamsburg Bypass Facility, 1201 Bypass Rd, Williamsburg, VA 23187

Feature Your Breed
If you’d like to donate meat, eggs, or dairy for Friday night’s banquet, please email: info@LivestockConservancy.org. Each food provider's farm is listed on the Conservancy website for up to a year! It’s a great way to bring customers to your farm.

Silent Auction
Support rare breed conservation by donating an item to the silent auction. Examples of items include vacation getaways, creative artwork, unique dining experiences, gifts baskets, gift certificates, movie tickets, fleeces, fiber, tote bags, books and more. If you’d like to donate to Friday night’s silent auction, please email: info@LivestockConservancy.org. Each item will be listed on the Conservancy website along with contact information and a link to the donor’s farm or business.

LOCATION & LODGING

Fort Magruder Hotel & Conference Center
6945 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

Reserve by: Wednesday, October 18, 2017
Reservations: By Phone: 757-220-2250;
Please reference group: The Livestock Conservancy.
Unless otherwise noted, all Saturday talks and Friday night banquet will be at Fort Magruder. Check pre-and post-conference clinic & tour listings for locations.
# 2017 Heritage Livestock Conference Registration

Register online at LivestockConference.org

Please select what you would like to attend. If registering more than one person, please copy this form or use a separate sheet of paper for each additional registration.

## AMOUNT

### FULL-DAY Pre-Conference Clinics - 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- The Natural Home Dairy - $69
- Maximizing Your Products and Marketing Heritage Breed Wool - $69
- Chicken Processing - $69

### Pre-Conference Clinics - 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Social Media Marketing Options for Your Breeds - $69
- The Tricky Business of Breed Registries and Associations - $35

### Pre-Conference Clinics - 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- The Natural Home Dairy - $69
- Maximizing Your Products and Marketing Heritage Breed Wool - $69
- Chicken Processing - $69

### FULL-DAY Pre-Conference Clinics - 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- All Things Sheep - $110 (includes lunch)
- Using Entertainment, Education, And Public Service to Promote Heritage Horses - $110

### Conference - Friday 6:00pm - Saturday 6:00pm
- Member - $195
- Non-Member - $240

### *Special* Friday Pre-Conference Event
- Bits and Bridles Tour (1:00 - 2:00) - $10

### *Special* Sunday Post-Conference 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- FULL-DAY Card Grading Workshop - $35

### TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED*

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Questions? Please call 919-542-5704

or email: atthompson@LivestockConservancy.org

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*Conference registration may be cancelled for a full refund with 30 day’s notice. Less than 30 day’s notice: non-refundable. Clinics are non-refundable.*
Poultry keeping has been practiced in Belgium for a long time, in fact, the Flemish bear the nickname “the chicken eaters.” There are two Flemish chicken breeds that are nearly identical and spring from a common history and ancestors: the Campine and the Braekel. The Braekel is native to the rich clay soil of the Flanders district and is the larger of the two. The Campine is from the less fertile district of Kempen and is smaller; Campine males are also hen-feathered. Italian scientist Aldrovandus mentioned that the ancestor to these two breeds descended from Turkish fowls. Julius Caesar is also said to have taken Campine chickens home with him after he had completed a spell of looting in Belgium.

In 1893, Campine chickens were first imported into America by Mr. Arthur D. Murphy of Maine. The breed did not prove popular and was dropped from the American Poultry Association’s Standard in 1898. In 1885, Campine chickens were imported into England where they did find a following. Mr. M. R. Jacobus of Ridgefield, New Jersey, imported the breed from English breeders in 1907. But once again, Campine chickens did not prove to be a popular breed chiefly because they were not found to be rugged. The Homestead Campine Farm of Wayland, MA did specialize in Campine chickens and succeeded in improving their hardness, but by the time they succeeded; other breeds had become the preferred egg-layers.

Campine chickens are non-sitting fowl that lay white eggs. The breed started out as a farmyard fowl, but came to play a major role commercially as the Flemish developed and perfected what was the forerunner of today’s commercial production system. The first part of this role was to provide rapid feathering and growth in a cross with the Malines chicken for the production of meat. The second role was as an autosexing breed for egg production. The Campine chicken comes in two varieties: the Silver and the Golden. When Silver Campine females are mated to Golden Campine males the chicks can be sexed at day-old – the female chicks have a reddish blush and the males have gray on the top of their heads.

Campine chickens were recognized by the American Poultry Association in 1914 in two varieties: Silver and Golden. Males weigh six pounds and females weigh four pounds.
Largest Collection of Rare Poultry Breed Paintings to be Exhibited

WATT Global Media has announced that the largest single collection of rare poultry breed portraits worldwide (1926 - 1950) will be on display in the historic “Old Sandstone” art gallery in Mt. Morris, Illinois, formerly the location of WATT office headquarters, from August 11 – 26, 2017.

The complete collection, which has never before been publicly displayed in its entirety, is comprised of 58 framed oil paintings of the most important historic poultry breeds. The paintings were created by three American artists, A.O. Schilling, L. Stahmer and F.L. Sewell, and were commissioned in the mid-1920s by J.W. Watt and Adon Yoder, founders of Watt Publishing Company (now WATT Global Media).

Poultry Art

The following is edited from a 2014 blog post for PoultryBookstore.com about the collection, written by Christine Heindrichs.

Back in the 1920s, the Poultry Tribune’s publisher decided to commission oil paintings of important poultry breeds. He selected the three best poultry artists and honored the paintings with gold frames. Today, those paintings, produced between 1928 and 1952, are carefully preserved by the now global publishing company. They include chickens, geese, turkeys, ducks, and chicks and ducklings.

The complete collection has never been on display [until now], although 18 were exhibited in 2011 at the Rockford Art Museum in Rockford, Illinois. The museum promoted the exhibit with a “Guess the Breed” contest, posting individual paintings with clues to invite people to guess. Exhibiting works by all three artists together allows the viewer to appreciate the differences among the artists as well as the beauty of the birds.

From printing company to global media

The company got its start when 18-year-old J.W. Watt, a Scot from the Orkney Islands, came to America to seek his fortune. He arrived in Chicago in 1907 and learned the print trade. As he became more expert, he went to work for the Kable Brothers, becoming foreman of the composing room in their Mount Morris, Illinois printing plant, south of Chicago.

The Poultry Tribune was printed at Kable Printing, which was how J.W. learned that it was struggling to survive. Convinced he could make a success of it, J.W. and a partner bought it. They hired editors who knew about poultry to handle the content and sales people who knew how to reach their audience.

The magazine prospered, even through the Great Depression of the 1930s, selling mainly on newsstands. It reached 100,000 in circulation, dominating the poultry sector. Watt’s employees became experts in the poultry business. The company operated its own research farm until the mid-1940s. Executives were required to work on the farm.

“They had to sex chicks and do all kinds of work,” said Greg Watt, current CEO and great-grandson of founder J.W. Watt. “They got their hands dirty.”

During those years, J.W. commissioned these oil paintings. He converted the paintings to breed pictures and used one each month in the pages of Poultry Tribune.

“They were like pinups,” said Charles Olentine, former publisher for Watt Global Media’s poultry publications from 1987-2004. “J.W. had a commitment to the poultry industry.”

During the first half of the 20th century, poultry production was a small flock enterprise, with many breeds popular with farmers and consumers. Many poultry magazines competed for their interest. The Poultry Item, American Poultry Advocate, Commercial Poultry, were all filled with advertisements for breeding stock of a myriad of breeds. “Back then, business meant going out to the farm level,” said Olentine.


The poultry and the publishing worlds have changed since J.W. learned the printing business.

“We have outlasted virtually all the publishers who have tried to make a go of it in the poultry industry,” said James Watt, grandson of J.W. and retired company executive. “We do have a worldwide footprint.”

2017 is the 100th anniversary of the company, still owned by the Watt family members. Few family businesses succeed into the fourth generation. The display of these artworks is part of commemorating that achievement.

For more information visit http://encoremtmorris.com/info/OSGallery/

Buff Laced Polish chickens by A. O. Schilling, 1928 as it appeared in a supplement to Poultry Tribune.
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D A T E D M A T E R I A L

C A L E N D A R

★★ denotes Livestock Conservancy event
★ denotes Conservancy participation
See the Conservancy website for a more extensive list of events. The Livestock Conservancy encourages event organizers to submit events related to conservation, farming, sustainability, rare breeds, and more to the Conservancy’s Calendar. Send your submission to rw@livestockconservancy.org or mail to PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

September
September 7-9 - The Rockbridge Fair & Expo will be held in Lexington, VA. Rare livestock parades, oxen workshop and demos, goat costumes, hog agility and chicken shows, sheep-to-shawl exhibit, horse pull, etc. Visit www.rockbridgefairandexpo.org for more information.

September 8-9 - Organic Grower Schools Harvest Conference “Savor the Abundance” will be held in Swannanoa, NC, near Asheville. Workshops include: whole hog charcuterie, fall and winter chicken care, permaculture, seasonal cooking, and more. Visit www.organicgrowersschool.org or call 828-214-7833 for more information.

September 21-24 - The Annual Spanish Barb Horse Association Meeting will be held in Faywood, NM. Visit www.spanishbarb.org for more information.

September 23-24 - The Oregon Flock & Fiber Festival will be held in Canby, OR. The festival includes workshops, demonstrations, livestock shows, seminars, and kids’ activities. Visit www.flockandfiberfestival.com for more information.

September 28-30 - The American Red Poll Association 73rd National Meeting and Sale will be held at Murray State University, Hutson school of agriculture in Murray, KY. For more information, call Kaye Gilbert at 765-425-4515 or visit www.americanredpolls.com.

September 30 - October 1 – The Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival will be held in Turnbridge, VT., celebrating small farms and natural fiber with over 70 vendors offering fleece and yarn, fiber animals, hand-spinning and fiber-crafting equipment and supplies, handcrafted wool items, and local meat and cheese. The Festival includes contests, fiber arts classes and demonstrations, shepherd workshops, herding and shearing demos, fleece sale and more. Visit http://vtsheepandwoolfest.com or email vtsheepandwoolfest@gmail.com for more information.

October
October 1-5 - The 94th American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) Convention and Show will be held in Indianapolis, IN. Visit www.indyarbaconvention.com for more information.

October 21-22 - MOTHER EARTH NEWS FAIR - Seven Springs, PA: These family-oriented sustainable lifestyle events feature dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations, including heritage breed livestock exhibitions. Visit www.motherearthnewsfair.com for more information.

October 14-15 - The 2017 Cleveland Bay Horse Society of North America Annual General Meeting will be held at Colonial Williamsburg, VA. Further details will be posted as available. Contact info@clevelandbay.org with any questions.

Late October – The Great Goat and Sheep Gathering will be held. Please visit www.NARGASA.org, email NARGASA.org@gmail.com, or call Yvonne at 406-403-4070 for updates and to register for the Gathering.

November
★ ★ November 9-11 - The Livestock Conservancy’s Heritage Livestock Conference will be held in Williamsburg, VA. See schedule and registration information in this newsletter.

November 11-12 - The Ohio National Poultry Show will be held in Columbus, OH. Visit www.ohionational.org for more information.

December
December 1-3 - Cleveland Bay breed classes at the Texas Rose Autumn Breed Show in Tyler, TX. Purebred and Part-bred/ Sport Horse Breeding classes are planned. All Cleveland Bay enthusiasts are encouraged to join in for a tailgate lunch “Meet and Greet.” Email info@clevelandbay.org for more details.

★ ★ December 31 - DEADLINE to update information and submit ads for the Livestock Conservancy’s 2018 Breeders and Products Directory. To update your information, log in online, email info@LivestockConservancy.org, or call 919-542-5704.