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Conserving rare breeds since 1977

THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™ NEWS

The Lustrous Leicester Longwool

By Elaine Shirley

The Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association of America is celebrating its 25th Anniversary at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, Maryland on May 2-3, 2015. The Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival is the largest fiber festival in the United States and a must for all fiber enthusiasts and sheep breeders. The highlight of the weekend will be the card grading of Leicester Longwool sheep by three evaluators, Brenton Heazlewood from Australia, Polly Jones from Wales, and Dr. Phil Sponenburg from Blacksburg, Virginia.

The Leicester Longwool was the first modern breed of livestock with a breed standard and is the basis for modern animal agriculture in the industrialized world. The breed was developed in England in the mid-18th century by a farmer named Robert Bakewell. Bakewell had several forces pushing him and his livestock toward this dramatic shift in animal breeding. In the 17th century the beginning of soil science was occurring. Innovative farmers started adding lime to soils, planting cover crops and rotating crops. As crop yields became higher it was possible to over-winter more livestock and thus have more animals to choose from when breeding occurred. During Bakewell's time the Industrial Revolution was beginning, with the mechanization of textile production, so people were moving from the country into towns, infant mortality was dropping, life expectancy was climbing and the popula-



The Leicester Longwool is an old English sheep breed with an interesting history and great importance to the sheep industry. Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

tion was demanding more meat. Farmers had to become more efficient in their farming practices to feed the growing population. Robert Bakewell saw the opportunity to improve meat production through the standardization of livestock. The sheep in his part of England were slow growing, coarse boned, not standardized, and slow maturing. Bakewell, through heavy selection for desirable characteristics, faster growth, finer bones, faster maturity, standardization, and more meat on the desirable cuts, eventually produced a group of sheep that bred true to type, generation after generation. He selected especially for good meat production, saying, "I want to put two pounds of meat where there has only been one before." One of Bakewell's famous stud rams he called Two Pounder. Two Pounder had his portrait painted and he was exhibited at fairs and shows.

Robert Bakewell was written about in numerous agricultural publications

that circulated in Great Britain and in the North American colonies. Forward-thinking men like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were reading these publications and commenting on them in their letters and diaries. Washington referenced Bakewell in several letters in which he wrote that the Bakewell Leicesters had improved his flock at Mount Vernon. Washington raised large numbers of sheep every year at Mount Vernon, and he took a particular interest in his flocks, using several different breeds of sheep to improve his animals.

Robert Bakewell bred cattle, pigs, and horses using the same techniques of heavy selection for specific characteristics but his sheep were his most famous and most successful livestock venture. In the 1830s a British agriculture writer named Youatt wrote, "Within little more than half a century the New Leicester had spread

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Participate in Our Strategic Planning

The Livestock Conservancy will soon undertake a strategic planning process to evaluate its strategy, or direction, and make decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Our Board is asking members to send feedback on the following questions which will help guide our decisions in the strategic planning process.

- What are the one or two most useful things The Livestock Conservancy has done in the last five years?
- What are the most important issues The Livestock Conservancy must deal with in the strategic planning process?
- What are the Conservancy's strengths and weaknesses?
- As members, what do you need or expect from the Conservancy?
- What ideas or suggestions do you have that would help us do an even better job of ensuring the future of agriculture through the genetic conservation and promotion of endangered breeds?

If you have additional comments or feedback, please include them as well.

Please send responses to the above questions to The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312, or email them to info@livestockconservancy.org. Thank you for your active role in guiding our organization!

Livestock Conservancy Recognized by James Beard Foundation and Food Tank

The James Beard Foundation and Food Tank, along with a prestigious advisory group of food system experts, have awarded The Livestock Conservancy recognition in the first annual "Good Food Org Guide." This definitive Guide highlights nonprofit organizations that are doing exemplary work in the United States in the areas of food and agriculture, nutrition and health, hunger and obesity, and food justice. Only nonprofit, scholarly, and municipal initiatives have been selected in order to spotlight efforts that are focused on community building and engagement, advocacy, and service.

The vision and objective of this annual publication is to focus attention on the dozens of nonprofit organizations (listed in alphabetical order, not ranked) who are working in fields, kitchens, classrooms, laboratories, businesses, town halls, and Congress to create a better food system. The list was determined by distinguished experts, including past recipients of the James Beard Leadership Award and food and agriculture leaders.

"We hope this guide will serve as a resource for chefs, farmers, students, advocates, and others to find the resources they need about the growing good food movement in the U.S.," says Susan Ungaro, President of the James Beard Foundation.



This annual guide was launched at the James Beard Food Conference at the end of October 2014 as the definitive guide to organizations—national and state-by-state—who are making an impact with their work.

These groups include organizations who combat childhood obesity, malnourishment, and physical inactivity; prevent food waste; educate consumers on healthy, nutritious food choices; create networks of social entrepreneurs; protect food and restaurant workers; highlight solutions for restoring the health of people and the planet; work with indigenous communities to preserve traditions, culture, and biodiversity; inspire and educate individuals to cook more of their own food; and protect public health, human health, and the environment. ❖

FROM THE DIRECTOR



By Eric Hallman

Forgive my enthusiasm, but we are awesome. We recently reviewed progress on our *Discover, Secure and Sustain Initiative for 2013-2014* and The Livestock Conservancy has completed another year of successful conservation projects. As I read this report I was amazed and proud of all that we have accomplished in the last twelve months. We've achieved major progress in the following critical projects:

- Completion of a comprehensive census
- Successes in saving endangered hog breeds
- Progress on heritage chicken recovery projects

- Advances in our master breeders program
- Outreach to train the next generation of breed stewards
- Rare breed discoveries and rescues

This report does not include the many smaller but just as important successes that we experience every day working with folks around the country. There is a great deal of important and successful conservation work happening now.

I am very proud of what our staff and our breed stewards have accomplished. I can't acknowledge all our collaborators and partners in this column but we are grateful to work with some of the finest conservation organizations around the world. After all, there is much to do and we can't do it alone.

The Livestock Conservancy's *2013-2014 Annual Program Report* is available on our web site; if you would like a printed copy, let us know and we'll mail one to you.

As we look toward another successful year we are examining what issues are critical and how to allocate our resources to maximum effect. We are guided by our five-year strategic plan (now in its third year), *The Legacy Conservation Program: A Gift for Generations*. The three pillars of this plan are: (1) strengthen our scientific base, (2) translate these data to on-the-ground solutions, and (3) train the next generation. (See the box at left to participate in the process of developing our next five-year plan.)

Today, the demand for the services of The Livestock Conservancy is more widespread and the needs are more immediate. We are losing heritage breeds at an ever increasing rate. Our census work informs us about the breeds we track, but how many other dwindling populations are out there that we have yet to discover? What we know for sure is that The Livestock Conservancy is needed now more than ever.

A lot of our day-to-day work feels like fighting one fire after another. While putting out fires is necessary, we are working on a more proactive approach. Over the next few months we will be critically examining our programs, identifying resources, and setting priorities. With nearly 200 breeds on our *Conservation Priority List* we need to be thoughtful about how we disperse our resources. For example, there are over fifty breeds of chickens on our list. There could easily be one hundred. To successfully manage and conserve such a large number of endangered poultry breeds requires the cooperation and coordination of everyone involved in breeding and promoting these breeds. To this end The Livestock Conservancy is working with the American Poultry Association, Farm Forward, hatcheries, and important breed stewards. With these breeds and the others on our *Conservation Priority List*, the aim is to create a long-term, sustainable conservation and rescue plan. ❖

Our New Podcast Series

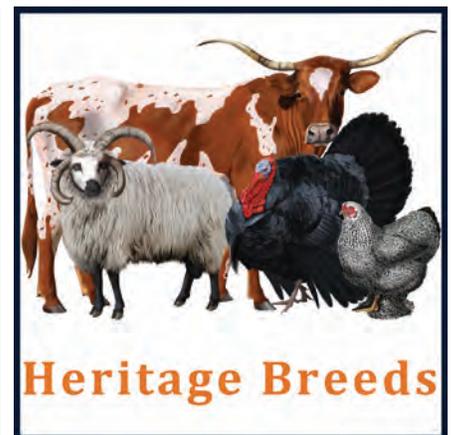
The Livestock Conservancy is proud to announce the rollout of our new weekly podcast series "Heritage Breeds." Each podcast will not only introduce people to Heritage breeds and breeders, but share the history and importance of saving each animal from extinction.

If you are not currently aware, podcasts are a FREE radio/television-like shows that center around certain topics like science, green lifestyle living, business, kids and family, news and politics. They are produced by professionals and posted to the Internet for download. You can easily listen or watch them on your computer, smart phone, iPad, iPod, or any portable

media player. (The name "podcast" derives from the combination of "iPod" and "broadcast.")

They can be downloaded individually or subscribed to so that each new episode of the podcast is automatically downloaded to your computer or device. You can subscribe to podcasts directly at the iTunes Store, Stitcher, or any of the other podcast streams that are available. Currently there are over 575 million active subscribers on iTunes and that number is growing daily. Although just launched, our Heritage Breeds podcast has already hit #1 in the Science category on iTunes and #4 for Kids and Family. Listening and giving positive reviews will help our ranking and get the podcast more exposure.

The Conservancy is currently seeking sponsors and interview candidates to feature in the new podcast series. Those who



are interested should contact the show's host, C. S. Wurzberger, at TLCPodcast@TheGreenUpGirl.com.

This podcast series is a way of connecting people worldwide with each Heritage breed and the people working to save them. Listen today at www.heritagebreeds.org. ❖

★★ Texas Conference Is a Huge Success! ★★



The Livestock Conservancy's National Conference was held in Austin, Texas in November. With a lineup as big as Texas, the workshops, clinics, speakers, and meals were extremely well-received. Attendees enjoyed an expanded selection of workshops including some on topics pertinent to Texas and surrounding areas like Choctaw horses, Spanish goats, and of course, Texas Longhorns.

The Keynote address was delivered by Dr. Cary Fowler, who was a driving force behind the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway. His address shed light on loss in agricultural biodiversity and, although mainly focused on seeds, the parallels for animal agriculture were clear. The address ended with a moving video highlighting the seed vault with traditional Norwegian folk music that brought tears to the eyes of many watching. It was truly amazing to see seeds from countries like North and South Korea sitting near each other in the vault. Cary joked that the seeds from all countries were getting along just fine.



Bixby-Sponenberg Awards, 2014

By Phil Sponenberg

The Bixby-Sponenberg Award recognizes people that have stood between breeds of livestock and their extinction. These people are true heroes of breed conservation. This year we were pleased to be in Texas, and to be able to recognize multiple people who have contributed greatly to conservation.

The Rickmans

Bryant and Darlene Rickman have diligently worked to keep the Choctaw horse from extinction. This effort also includes the Cherokee and Huasteca horses. Without the Rickmans all three of these strains of Colonial Spanish Horse would have disappeared long ago. This effort has extended over decades, and has involved heroic action including the maintenance of a herd of equine infectious anaemia (EIA)-infected horses in order to assure that their infection-free foals could continue rare bloodlines on into the present.

Being in the Kiamichi Mountains with Bryant, calling up the horses, and seeing what new foals were added to the group was always a special thrill. Being in Darlene's kitchen was also always special, and usually included some of the world's best biscuits served up with big helpings of love and good humor. If I had a special horse that needed to go to Oklahoma for a while, I would always make sure to give it to Darlene, because I knew the horse would get special attention and care. The only real disagreement we had was on horse names, because none of mine were dignified enough!

The Rickman family has been essential to Choctaw horse conservation in many ways. They have also contributed greatly

to Choctaw hog conservation, and without their input this breed would also now be extinct.



Leslie Edmundson

Leslie Edmundson richly deserves the Bixby-Sponenberg Award for her tireless work with San Clemente and Spanish goats. San Clemente goats had the advantage of a good breed definition (after all, what could be easier than "goats from San Clemente Island?"). They did NOT have the advantage of a careful breed association. Leslie has bridged that gap to serve as a vital link between breeders, and has diligently kept up the details of which goats are where. She has also asked important questions about culling practices, retention of genetic variation, and a host of other issues that go into keeping a breed viable.

Spanish goats also present huge conservation challenges. One challenge was breed definition. So many goats are now crossed with dairy, Angora, Boer, or Kiko breeding that finding the original type of Spanish goat can be tricky. Leslie has aided greatly in procedures for evaluating goats. In addition, with several huge herds as well as several tiny herds, keeping track of who has what has been essential. This is especially tricky with a breed that has traditional extensive herds as well as smaller herds where individual animals are more likely to be identified. Leslie has managed to create an association where all types of breeders are welcomed and work together to save the breed. This is a first for a local American landrace that is still raised in traditional ways.

She truly deserves great recognition for this, and especially for the low-key but effective way in which she accomplishes so very much



Debbie Davis

Debbie Davis has been a key point of the success of the Cattlemen's Texas Longhorn Registry for years. This registry faces the special hurdle of trying to identify and conserve the small remnant of purely Spanish cattle that persisted in a breed that had undergone significant crossing with other breeds to enhance horn growth. An additional challenge was that the traditional type of the breed had become increasingly marginalized and denigrated by the breed registries that had first endeavored to save the breed.

Debbie has diligently pursued the identification of pure Texas Longhorns, and has taken that to both field evaluations as well as high-tech genetic analysis. The result has been a very impressive body of knowledge about the breed, its relationships, and how best to move into the future. She has been able to coordinate this effort with a number of other dedicated conservationists, and together they have been able to stave off the extinction of this breed through the crossbreeding that had become so rampant.

Enrique Guerra

Enrique Guerra hails from a family that has ranched on both sides of the Rio Grande for generations. He is a fount of knowledge, and more importantly, a fount of wisdom. Enrique has been involved in conserving Texas Longhorns for decades. His grasp of the history of this breed is phenomenal, as is his understanding of its role in cattle production. In the 1950s, he spearheaded an exploratory trip to northern Mexico to ferret out remnants



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The Leicester Longwool

Continued from page 1

themselves over every part of the United Kingdom and to Europe and America.”

In the young United States the Bakewell Leicester, also called the New Leicester, the Dishley Leicester (for Bakewell’s farm in Dishley Grange), the Improved Leicester, the Leicester Longwool and the English Breed, was thriving. Fair prize lists and farmers records from the 19th century show that Leicesters were popular animals and consistently winning at shows. George

Bixby-Sponenberg Awards

Continued from previous page



Enrique Guerra

of the old Spanish cattle. That effort has been key in providing today’s conservators with the raw material they need to move forward.

More decades ago than I care to confess to, my college roommate and I had a herd of traditional Texas Longhorns. As we were searching for cattle, the few we found from Enrique Guerra’s herds (now in the herds of others) were at the very top end of all the traditional cattle we encountered. I’ll never forget one bull, Hondo, a brindle lineback that had length, sound conformation, and incredible traditional conformation that was so excellent that he quickly surpassed our ability to even think of acquiring him! Enrique’s long-term commitment to the breed and his keen eye for cattle have secured the breed a much brighter future than could have been imagined several decades ago. ❖

Washington Parke Custis, step-grandson of George Washington, had continued the sheep-raising tradition by raising Leicester Longwools at his farm in Arlington, on the banks of the Potomac just outside the new capital of Washington. An American agriculture book from 1820 says, “Mr. Custis of Virginia is rearing a new breed, which he calls the Arlington sheep, that yields fleeces of long wool, well fitted for the manufacture of worsted fabrics. They are a mixture of the Bakewell breed, with a long-wooled Persian ram, which was imported by General Washington. They promise to be a valuable acquisition to our country.” Unfortunately the breed doesn’t seem to have lasted long.

The Leicester was used extensively in the British colonization of New Zealand and Australia. The sheep did very well when put in conditions similar to the climate in England, damp and cool. In the dry and hot parts of both countries the Spanish sheep, the Merino, did better. Numerous new breeds of sheep were developed that included the Leicester Longwool in them, including the Coopworth and the Corridale. In England two men who had worked with Bakewell developed the Border Leicester from a cross between a Leicester Longwool and a Border Cheviot. The Leicester Longwool continued to influence the sheep industry throughout the entire 19th century. Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel, trying to understand genetics, looked back at Bakewell’s work with livestock to understand how traits move from one generation to another.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries the Leicester’s importance started to fade. New breeds developed from Bakewell’s sheep took over the market place. Demand for their heavy, strong wool declined and other breeds had surpassed them in rapidness of maturity. In the United States the Leicester Longwool seems to have been absorbed into the Border Leicester or to have died out in the 1920s or 1930s.

When The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Williamsburg, Virginia, was looking for a breed of sheep to exhibit in the 18th century town, the Bakewell Leicester kept appearing in documents. A search in the U.S. and Canada came up empty so the search moved to England, Australia, and New Zealand, the three countries in which the Leicester Longwool still survived. An encounter with Ivan Heazlewood from Australia, who is a

Leicester Longwool sheep breeder with a long family history of raising the Leicesters, helped get a project underway to re-establish the Leicester Longwool to the United States. In 1990, a flock of Leicester Longwools from four different Australian flocks arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation worked with the Leicester Longwools for several years increasing the numbers and then began a satellite program to get sheep into the hands of breeders who understood the importance of the conservation effort. Dr. Phil Sponenberg, a geneticist and Technical Advisor to The Livestock Conservancy, helped the breeders use the genetics available to them carefully. Artificial insemination with semen from New Zealand, Australia and England has made the U.S. population of Leicester Longwools even more genetically diverse. The Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders has more than 100 members, concentrated on the East Coast and the Midwest but extending to the West Coast.

The Leicester Longwool is a medium sized sheep with ewes weighing between 150 and 230 pounds and rams weighing between 180 and 275 pounds. They are a hornless breed and come in white and natural colored types. Their wool is a luster wool, reflecting light to your eye, which gives it a nice shine not common to most wool. The fleeces average 8 pounds (female) to 12 pounds (male) with fleeces of up to 18 pounds recorded. The average

Welcome to Our Newest Life Members!

The Livestock Conservancy would like to give a special thanks to these members who recently chose to support the Conservancy and its conservation programs by becoming life members. For more information on becoming a life member, please contact Ryan Walker at 919-542-5704, ext. 102, or rwalker@livestockconservancy.org.

Elizabeth P. Gordon
Thousand Oaks, CA

JoAnn C. McCall
Maeford, ONT

Roger V. McMaster
Yelm, WA

Kayla Wright
Franklin, TN



A shearing demonstration takes place in the 18th century town of Colonial Williamsburg. Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

staple length is 5 to 7 inches with longer yearly staple lengths recorded. The fleece has a distinct lock formation with the wool falling in ringlets with a wide crimp. The wool is extremely versatile and can be combed or carded and felts very well. Leicester ewes are good mothers with good milk production. Lambing percentages of

175 to 200 percent can happen with good shepherding.

The Leicester Longwool is a breed that The Livestock Conservancy lists as Critically Endangered, with fewer than 200 annual registrations in the United States and an estimated global population of less than 2000. The card grading that will be used at

the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival is a key tool for their conservation.

The objective of card grading is to evaluate individual animals relative to a breed standard, not to other animals, and assess their potential as breeding stock. Card grading strengthens breeders' understanding of the characteristics and attributes of their breed and 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 in the class. In card grading, the animals are evaluated by two to four people familiar with the breed standard. Since education is a big part of card grading, the evaluators give reasons for the card that they award the animal. Blue for an excellent breeding animal, red for a good breeding animal, yellow for an acceptable breeding animal and white for an unacceptable breeding animal.

The Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association would like to invite any breed associations that have an interest in card grading to come to the festival and see it in action and think about how their group could use card grading as a tool to help their livestock and their members. For more information find the Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association on the web at leicesterlongwool.org. ❖

31,000 Sign Up for Annual Chicken Give-Away!

The 2014 annual Heritage Chicken Give-Away Contest came to a close this year with our lucky winner, Jessica Starr, of Westminster, Colorado, receiving a flock of ten quality Dominique chickens. This year over 31,000 people signed up for the contest.

In the early spring, eFowl generously donated chicks for the program to Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), who in turn grew out the chicks on their farm. During their annual SSE meeting, Conservancy staff traveled to their farm in Iowa to teach a flock evaluation workshop using the contest chicks. At the end of the evaluation, superior individuals were identified as breeding quality and tagged for the contest winner. Additionally, Tractor Supply Company provides a \$500 gift card and transport for the chickens to their new home. To support the education of the new flock owner, the Conservancy donated an

annual membership along with several helpful books including *City Chicks* by Pat Foreman, *Pocket Full of Poultry* by Carol Ekarius, and *Small-Scale Poultry Flock* by Harvey Ussery. The chickens arrived safely to their new home in Colorado and have settled in quickly.

This was all made possible through a partnership between Mother Earth News, The Livestock Conservancy, Seed Savers Exchange, Tractor Supply Company, and our newest partner, eFowl. A big thank you to Mother Earth News whose staff ran the contest from their website and their Mother Earth News Fairs throughout the country. ❖

Corrections

Please note the following corrections to the spring, 2014 newsletter.

In Remembrance: The college listed in the piece remembering Debbie Hamilton erroneously listed Stephens College as being in Columbia, Mississippi instead of Columbia, Missouri.

Wakeup Call: The Conservancy member who called to congratulate Kendy was referred to as Alban Bone. The name should have been Alban Salser.



A flock of Dominique chickens awarded to Jessica Starr of Colorado as part of the 2014 Heritage Chicken Giveaway Contest. Photo by Jessica Starr.

A Conservation Success: Celebrating Dutch

Belted Cattle

By Don Bixby, DVM

Registration numbers published in the November 2014 issue of *Dutch Belted Bulletin* provide firm documentation of the great conservation strides achieved for the Dutch Belted breed. Registrations have increased from practically nothing in the 1980s to 200 to 300 annual registrations by 2010, and this year will likely surpass 1000.

A quote from the October 1915 *Dutch Belted Bulletin*; “The (Dutch Belted) breed is practically free now of the speculator and the trader. It’s nearly free of the faddist and novelty seeker. The handsomest and best dispositioned breed in the world has in a few recent years gone into the hands of the practical dairyman and scientific breeder, and it’s making good far more than it ever has before.” This quote became true again in the 1980s. The eye-catching Dutch Belted cow was in such demand that every cow with a belt was declared a “purebred” Dutch Belted cow. Since the registry numbers were then at a terrifyingly low level, it was hard to believe there were so many high-price “purebred” Dutch Belted cows available. Indeed, the offspring of these belted wonders proved the fallacy of these claims. Not only did the succeeding generations of these look-alike Dutch Belted cattle lose their belted beauty, the lack of selection pressure also led to the loss of production potential.

Conservation strategies of the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), now The Livestock Conservancy, and the Dutch Belted Cattle Association of America (DBCAA) were challenged by this lack of genetic integrity. The fake Dutch Belted cows could be easily reproduced since the belt is the result of a simple dominant genetic trait. But a belt does not make a Dutch Belted cow, which like other breeds is made up of a unique array of characteristic genetic traits. The Dutch Belted breed is not alone in suffering from possessing a distinctive trait, and the same lack of genetic understanding by the public. Examples include naked neck chickens, green/blue-egg laying chickens, lineback cattle, fainting goats, mulefooted hogs, wattled hogs, and four-horned sheep. Because an animal exhibits a characteristic

of a particular breed does not make it a member of that breed. The full genetic component is what defines a breed. The value of pedigree and registry documentation is demonstrated because these records capture the genetic component for multiple generations.

For nearly three decades DBCAA, ALBC, and Dutch Belted breeders have collaborated in the recovery of this historic dairy breed. ALBC staff managed the revived registry and produced the first herd book in many years in 1988. Subsequent editions of the herd book with grade-up appendices will be of great value for the conservation of this breed for years to come.

The revived *Dutch Belted Bulletin* turned into an invaluable promotional tool for DBCAA. While the DBCAA has been in existence since 1886, publication of a regular *Bulletin* was periodic in the past. The first issue of the modern *Dutch Belted Bulletin* was in February 1994, so this year will mark its 20th anniversary. This was the first regular publication from DBCAA since the old *Dutch Belted Cattle Bulletin and Livestock Journal* published from 1914-1935. ALBC staff initiated and published the first 20 issues from February 1994 to January 2001. In March 2001, Kenneth and Winifred Hoffman and their computer-savvy sons took over the publication. Since February 1994, the *Bulletin* has grown just like the association itself. Articles on a wide range of issues connect

current and potential breeders, giving the association a defined self-identity.

In 2013, the DBCAA contracted with AccuRegister of Darlington, Pennsylvania to assume the management of the registry. Beginning on January 1, 2015, all bulls being registered must be DNA tested, including those registered but not DNA typed bulls being transferred to new ownership. This requirement is an effort to maintain accurate and useful genetic information for Dutch Belted cattle.

Some dairy producers are embracing a number of reconsidered concepts. These include sustainable practices such as rotational grazing, grass-based dairying, and optimal rather than maximum production. These concepts provide the Dutch Belted cow with an appropriate production system. High fertility, soundness, grazing efficiency and good conversion of feed to milk along with their amenable disposition and great beauty have led to an increasing recognition for this valuable dairy breed. Once again we can accept the validity of that quote from 1915, thanks to all of the dairymen and women who have become valued stewards of this historic breed, and put them back to work. ❖

The Dutch Belted Cattle Association of America can be reached at Secretary/Treasurer Kristine Haag, 15470 N 3400 East Road, Cullom, IL 60929, (815)689-2231, rhaag@frontiernet.net, www.dutchbelted.com.



A Dutch Belted cow owned by Sean Stanton. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

Autosexing Chicken Breeds

By Paul Bradshaw

An autosexing breed of poultry is one that produces young that provide visual clues to their gender immediately upon hatching. Since one male can breed with many females to produce young, and since only females have any value for egg production, the ability to identify and cull males at a very young age is a valuable trait in the unflinchingly efficient world of both the subsistence farmer and the commercial producer.

America has a long history of relying on autosexing goose and duck breeds. For example, the Cotton Patch goose emerged in the South as an autosexing breed centuries ago. However, until very recently autosexing chicken breeds have been exclusively a European phenomenon. This is about to change.

To understand the forces that shaped autosexing chicken breeds, we have to travel to another continent and a very different time. Imagine that you live almost a hundred years ago in a Britain decimated by World War I. Your nation has lost almost an entire generation of young men in a cataclysm unprecedented in the annals of violent conflict. Every available resource – iron and steel, oil and coal, food and cloth – have been diverted to the war effort. Ultimately, you emerge victorious but broken, prosperity the most remote of prospects.

This was the dire circumstance faced by Britain following World War I. As a nation it had survived, but just barely. Among its most precious resources was its food supply, and a key component of that supply was the commercial poultry industry. The problem confronted by Britain's chicken breeders was this: because roosters can't lay eggs and few are required to produce more chicks, they have very little value in the commercial food chain. Yet, farmers and poultrymen could not identify roosters until the birds were mature enough to grow combs and other signs hinting at their masculine gender. At a time when Britain had not an extra kernel of corn to waste, farmers faced the bleak prospect of feeding millions of pounds of grain to roosters that ultimately had no practical purpose.



The Cotton Patch goose emerged in the South as an autosexing breed centuries ago. The gosling at left with white wingtips is a female; the one at right is male. Photos by Mark See.

So it was during and after the war that a university professor named Reginald Punnett, who essentially founded the study of genetics at Cambridge, worked with a small group of colleagues to breed a chicken that produced visually sexable chicks based on their coloration at hatching so that even a person of modest intellect and training could readily identify the gender of chicks within hours after they hatched (a determination, it must be said, that ultimately resulted in the immediate killing of millions of hatchling roosters). Because the ability to easily and immediately sex newly hatched chicks essentially doubled the efficiency of the poultry flock, Punnett's concept offered an enormous economic advantage to the farmers of England.

Professor Punnett found that by crossing certain breeds with Barred Plymouth Rocks – ironically a breed that originated in the United States – chicks were produced in which the day-old female chicks had clearly defined stripes on their backs and the males had a clearly visible white spot in the down on the back of their heads. Over generations, the genome that produced these clear visual gender signals could be stabilized, and the autosexing breeds were created. The first autosexing breed that began as a cross between a Campine rooster and a Barred Plymouth Rock hen would come to be known as a Cambar.

The second breed produced by Punnett, and the one that reveals his quirky wit, was to be known as a Cream Legbar. Cream Legbars were a combination of at least three breeds: the Leghorn (for its legendary egg laying ability), the Barred Plymouth Rock, and the exotic Araucana that had only recently made its way to

Britain from the remote regions of Chile (for its blue egg laying ability and its jaunty feather crest). Punnett's work yielded a shocking mix of the practical and the whimsical; He created an autosexing breed with flamboyant feathers that cranked out an enormous volume of sky blue eggs. While Punnett would later go on to create more than a dozen autosexing breeds, it is this creation, the Cream Legbar, that to this day enjoys a place in the commercial flocks of Britain.

Punnett went on to produce other autosexing breeds using American stock, including Rhode Island Reds to produce the beautiful Rhodebar. Rhodebars are one of the few breeds of chickens that bear a striking red barring pattern on their feathers. Punnett also crossed Plymouth Rocks with established breeds to create the Brussbar (from Brown Sussex), the Welbar (from Welsummers), and the Wybar (from Wyandottes). Most of these autosexing breeds, after enjoying popularity for a few decades in the mid-1900s, now teeter on extinction.

Despite the rapid acceptance of autosexing chicken breeds in Europe during the last century, America has taken a different approach to creating visually sexable chicks. If you go to your local feed store and buy chicks in the spring, chances are you are buying sex-linked – as opposed to autosexing – chicks. Sex-linked chicks are the first generation hybrids of two separate chicken breeds. They are produced by the millions in large commercial hatcheries. If you allow the sex-linked chicks to reach adulthood and breed with one another they will not produce visually sexable chicks in the second generation. In other words, until recently if you wanted

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Holistic Grazing and Heilan Coos

Story and photos by Ryan Walker

It isn't often that opportunities arise like the one I had this past summer. My wife is PhD candidate in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received a research grant to study at the British Library in London and the Scottish Library in Edinburgh over the summer. Since she was already going to be there, I decided to take some time to travel with her and we turned the trip into a work-play vacation. After our flights and hotels were booked and I was preparing for the trip, a great opportunity fell into my lap. While in England, I wanted to visit with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, or RBST, (the UK equivalent of The Livestock Conservancy), so I contacted their head office. They let me know that, like our busy staff, their staff would be on the road most of the time when I was there, but they asked if I was attending the Savory Institute's conference in London. The Savory Institute promotes large-scale restoration of the world's grasslands through holistic management. Honestly, I wasn't aware it was going on at the same time I was there, but RBST mentioned that The Livestock Conservancy's good friend, native Englishman John Wilkes, was helping with the conference. I contacted John, who



Highland cattle in a field near Loch Lomond, Scotland.

was able to help arrange for me to attend, and it fit into my schedule perfectly!

The Institute uses properly managed livestock to heal the land and empower others to do the same. They also remove barriers on the path to large-scale success through activities such as conducting research, creating market incentives and raising public awareness. The conference started with a fundraising gala hosted by The Countess of Mar at London's Hurlingham club, where I was introduced to the Savory Institute's staff and met with many people served by their organization from around the world. At the gala I had several terrific conversations about how rare breeds can fit into Savory's grazing model with attendees. I had a very interesting experience riding the "tube" (subway) in

a "dinner jacket" (tuxedo), but I'll save that story for another time. Unfortunately, RBST was not able to make the conference after all, so I served as the representative for heritage breeds and helped answer questions from U.K. attendees as well.

The following two days were filled with information about the roles livestock can play in healing the land and restoring grasslands, and it was quite refreshing to hear so many people agree that, if properly managed, they can actually help reduce greenhouse gasses and atmospheric carbon, rather than only contributing to it. We listened to speakers from all over, including some from places as far as China and Australia. Many of the attendees were The Savory Institute's "hub leaders" who practice their grazing methods and educate others on behalf of the organization. Another refreshing experience was seeing support from several university professors who support holistic and sustainable management of livestock, and the always-inspiring Joel Salatin was on the speaker lineup. Although I had heard of grazing methods similar to those of The Savory Institute before, the testimonials and before-and-after photos shown at the conference were astonishing. Although results may vary, the speakers who used their techniques had experienced incredible results, sometimes turning almost barren, weed-filled landscapes into lush, healthy, grass-filled pastures – without the use of fertilizers or herbicides. For anyone who wants to grow forages and improve their pastures, these methods are definitely



Sheep have the right-of-way on the single-lane roads on the Isle of Skye.

worth looking into.

One of the last workshops was a traditional old-world meat cutting demo of a side of beef in which the crowd was captivated by what the meatsmith referred to as an “absolutely beautiful” carcass. Toward the end of the demonstration, he cut off slivers of fresh meat for a couple of people in the audience to try and before we knew it, something very primal kicked in and almost every person in the room was lined up to try a piece of the freshly cut meat. Another highlight of my time in London was at the Museum of London, where I saw the skull of an ancient Auroch, the ancestor to modern domesticated cattle, said to have lived in London between 245,000-186,000 BC. Sadly, the last known Auroch died in Poland in 1627, adding it to the long and ever-increasing list of extinct livestock.

After our time in London was over, we took the train up to Edinburgh, Scotland, and the whole time my eyes were open looking for livestock. I saw many Holstein cattle and what appeared to be Black Angus cattle, a few English Longhorns, and thousands of sheep from various breeds. It was hard to identify them from the train, but I’m pretty sure we saw some Leicester Longwool, Border Leicester, Cotswold, and Shetland sheep, along with



The skull of an ancient Auroch, the ancestor to modern domesticated cattle, said to have lived in London between 245,000-186,000 BC.

many Cheviots. There weren’t many real livestock in Edinburgh, but I couldn’t believe how many Highland cattle, or in the native tongue, “Heilan coos” showed up on everything a tourist could ask for. The first tourist shop I stepped into had a life-size replica of a Highland cow right in the doorway and people were lined up waiting to take their picture with it. After a few days in Edinburgh, we rented a car and drove nearly 1,000 miles around Scotland where I saw many, many more sheep, some Shire horses, and Highland cattle... in the Highlands! On our day on the Isle of Skye, several times we had to stop the car and let the sheep pass in front of us – just like on the travel shows!

The following day, we drove up to the northern tip of the Highlands, where

we took a ferry over to the Orkney Islands and saw Skara Brae, northern Europe’s best-preserved Neolithic village, dating from over 5,000 years ago, as well as the standing stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, and a 900-year-old Viking cathedral. Seeing ancient stone and bone tools, I couldn’t help but think about the connection between our livestock breeds of today and the ancient ones the Neolithic people would have used. Our island tour guide told us the story of how Orkney once had a thriving poultry industry, supplying eggs all over Scot-

land’s mainland, but the “Great Storm of 1953” literally blew thousands of chickens, and essentially the entire local poultry industry into the North Sea. On the way back south, we stopped for a distillery tour at Dalwhinnie, Scotland’s “highest distillery” in the mountains of the southern Highlands, where I once again saw an example of how important livestock have been in Scotland’s development. A small exhibit on the history of the local area gave much credit to cattle drovers who were some of the earliest people to settle the area. Images similar to America’s Wild West came to mind as I listened to the story, only in a much greener, colder, and wetter locale and with the iconic Highland cattle.

As our trip came to an end, my pride in the work that we are doing at The Livestock Conservancy couldn’t have been stronger. Just as most Americans descend from immigrants, so do most of our livestock breeds or at least their foundation stock. Seeing the reverence given to livestock in the United Kingdom and the homage paid to their native breeds reminded me of the parallels in the migration patterns of both humans and our animals. Wherever we go, we take them with us. They are a part of our heritage, and we truly are stewards of living and breathing pieces of history. ❖

Ryan Walker is the Marketing & Communications Manager for The Livestock Conservancy. He can be reached at rwalker@livestockconservancy.org.

For more information on The Savory Institute, visit www.savoryinstitute.com.



A replica of a Highland cow greets tourists at a shop in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The Great Black Welsh Sheep Migration of 2014

By Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire

An outcome from the genetic analysis done by the National Animal Germplasm Program (NAGP) was the discovery of several rare or threatened clusters within the Black Welsh population in North America. Here is the story about a couple of them and how cooperating breeders can make a difference to genetic variability and conservation.

Once we got the data back of the clusters that existed I cross-referenced that with the sheep names. The original data were by registration number only so this took a while. What I discovered was that of the existing eight cluster there are some issues with several of them.

Cluster 1 exists primarily on the east coast and in Canada. Cluster 2 exists in a single flock in New Hampshire. Cluster 3 exists in two flocks on the West Coast. Cluster 4 exists all across the country with the largest group on the East Coast. Cluster 5 exists in a single flock on the West Coast. Cluster 6 exists all over the U.S. and Canada. Cluster 7 exists only in Canada. Cluster 8 exists primarily on the East Coast. With this data in hand, I started contacting the breeders of the sheep in these clusters with an eye to ensuring that the clusters that are in very few flocks are carefully managed so disease or predators or just plain breeder attrition doesn't mean we lose these lines. I have several success stories with this effort.

In Canada the last remaining Cluster 7 ram alive was not in a flock where any Cluster 7 ewes lived. The Canadian breeders all got together and arranged to consolidate the Cluster 7 animals into a single flock for breeding. Once the line is secured the sheep will be redistributed back to the original flocks. This is how breeders can work together to ensure the survival of a threatened line. I hope that the Canadian breeders will share their story as it is a great one.

I started by contacting the two flocks on the West Coast that owned the Cluster 3 sheep. We are an export-qualified certified scrapie free flock. This certification took seven years to get and we restart at year zero if we bring in any new ewes. So

the only way for us to bring in new blood is via rams. So I decided to purchase two outstanding ram lambs, one from each flock and bring them here. These two boys arrived here on August 10th after a fortuitous opportunity to ship them out when a person from that area was coming here to pick up her new Baby Doll Southdown lambs from the town next to us.

Then I contacted the owner of the Cluster 2 sheep. Meurig Davies was in the process of putting his farm up for sale and planned to disburse his flock. Working quickly, a number of breeders came together and with a massive sheep transport got breeding groups disbursed to two new owners, Irene Banning and Jackie Harp. I purchased two rams from that flock as well. While we had a trailer coming from back east I was able to get two new Cluster 4 rams for our flock, one adult ram and one ram lamb. I also arranged to get a Cluster 1 ram lamb and two ram lambs that are crosses between Cluster 1 and Cluster 4.

The trip started in New Hampshire with Irene collecting sheep from Meurig Davies. The sheep arrived at her place in New York and after a brief stay they set off on the rest of the trip. Next stop was Maryland to pick up the Wye Heights sheep

for me. Then, the truck proceeded on, dropping sheep off in Missouri for both Steve Andriano's and Jackie Harp's flocks in Missouri. Steve got a Cluster 2 ram lamb, a Cluster 4 ram lamb, and a cross between Cluster 1 and Cluster 8. Jackie got a breeding group in Cluster 2, two ewe lambs and a ram lamb. Irene Banning got seventeen Cluster 2 ewes and three Cluster 2 rams.

The seven new rams arrived here at Desert Weyr and were quickly unloaded. On the return trip the truck delivered two ewes, from Cluster 6 to Matthew Kline in Ohio. Their final stop was to deliver three ewes from here to Irene in New York, a Cluster 6 ewe and two Cluster 8 ewes.

The number of flocks involved meant that while it was expensive, no single owner had to cover the entire cost of the transport. That really made the whole thing possible.

We do not have any Cluster 1, 2, or 3 ewes here, but we work closely with the USDA NAGP to collect semen for preservation as part of the national gene bank. None of those clusters are currently represented in the NAGP semen collection. We are close enough to the facility that the researchers can drive out here in a single day and so we are ideally suited to be the central place for those rare cluster rams to come for semen collection. None of the 8 ram lambs were old enough to collect in September. We may try them again in December but if not we plan to collect semen next year from all of them.



A Black Welsh Mountain in the snow. Photo by Oogie McGuire.

We now have breeding groups of critical clusters moved to additional flocks and ram lambs from which to collect semen for freezing as well as several sheep as backups in flocks across the country. I know how expensive it is to ship sheep all over, having just purchased and shipped sheep from both coasts to here but this sort of project is possible when we all work together to preserve the lines. Irene Banning was instrumental in arranging the entire trip. Without her relentless work it never

would have happened. I want to thank everyone involved for helping preserve Black Welsh genetic diversity in North America. This was a monumental effort and is very appreciated. ❖

This article originally appeared in the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association newsletter. Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire, Desert Weyr, LLC - Black Welsh Mountain Sheep www.desertweyr.com/ LambTracker - Open Source SW for Shepherds, www.lambtracker.com Paonia, CO.

Old Traits, New Trends

By Lauren Cichocki, Rodale Institute

Rodale Institute, the oldest organic farm in the country, is using new trends to bring back heritage breed popularity. The 2014 Culinary Forecast produced by the National Restaurant Association placed locally sourced meat and seafood as the number one trend in the food industry. Free-range pork also made the list at number 61. Educating chefs, farmers, educators, and restaurant owners on the values of heritage breeds can aid in the regrowth of critically endangered and threatened breeds. There is no better time or place to push these values than now, and Rodale Institute's strong relationship with the public through research, education, and outreach can help to shed some light on the importance of saving heritage breeds.

Although the organic livestock program is only in its infancy at the Rodale Institute, we are already in the process of publishing our first research project featuring our Large Black X Tamworth hogs. I spent an hour each day watching the 26 grower finishers as they approached their finishing weights. This six-week-long observational study resulted in a better understanding of pastured pig behavior as well as an analysis of parasite loads in organic pastured swine. The communication abilities and routines of the young pigs can be perfectly expressed at Rodale Institute, as they have unlimited resources and a large area of land to roam. Without any suppression of natural behaviors, the breeds are able to thrive. Hopefully the publishing of this observational study will encourage other farmers to not only raise heritage breeds, but raise them in a way that utilizes the

animal's instincts in order to create a better product.

My past experiences with swine have primarily included commercial breeds raised in commercial settings. This commercial process resulted in an average product that inspired few and disappointed many. After visiting Rodale Institute, I knew that pork could make a comeback in the foodie world; it was just a matter of reeducating members of the agricultural community. Rodale Institute, as a leader in research and education, has already begun to influence the way chefs and farmers view pork. During our first pastured pork seminar, about 20 people from five different states listened as we explained the benefits of raising heritage pork on pasture. Additionally, we have supplied our pork to three local restaurants and fed it to thousands of attendees at Rodale Institute events. The feedback has been extremely positive and has even inspired one of the chefs to volunteer with the animals on the farm. The best education we can provide is a taste of the passion with which we raise and care for our product.

Along with providing classes and delightful tasting opportunities, we hope to expand our resources to the public through outreach. Our new building will provide a scalable model for other farmers to begin a pastured pork project similar to our own. The building will allow us to closely monitor the excellent foraging qualities of our heritage breed hogs, reduce grain intake, and teach farmers how to greatly reduce costs associated with high feed prices. This will come through pasture and parasite management and will allow more

Autosexing Chicken Breeds

Continued from page 9

to buy visually sexable chicks in America, you'd be traveling to that feed store year after year to buy sex-linked birds produced by large commercial hatcheries. Your flock of sex-linked birds will not be a self-sustaining flock that can produce visually sexable chicks.

A few years ago the Jærhøn, an obscure autosexing breed developed in the 1920s in Norway, was imported into this country. In the spring of 2011, some of Punnett's creations, including the Cream Legbar and Rhodebar, finally arrived on our shores. Greenfire Farms in Florida is in the process of creating flocks of these British autosexing breeds. (Perhaps just in time since fewer than a hundred Rhodebars remain in their native Britain.) America's poultry enthusiasts will soon have the ability to breed visually sexable chicks generation after generation, relying on breeds that have a rich and fascinating history. The good work that began in a small laboratory at Cambridge University in a different century can continue in our American farmsteads and backyards this year. ❖

Paul Bradshaw is a long-time member of The Livestock Conservancy and owns Greenfire Farms in North Florida where he raises heritage breed livestock and operates a commercial hatchery. See the website at www.greenfirefarms.com.

farmers to raise heritage pork in a profitable manner. It will encourage more farmers to put pigs on pasture, thereby reducing the stress associated with confinement.

Ultimately, we chose heritage breeds because commercial pork is at a dead end. You cannot inspire chefs and pork lovers with commercial hogs raised in total confinement and experiencing daily stress. Foraging, marbling, head to tail, local, organic, research, inspiration, passion, and community encompass all that Rodale Institute hopes to accomplish with our livestock. Heritage breeds are the only way, in our opinion, to reach our goals of animal agriculture reform. ❖

To learn more about Rodale Institute, visit www.rodaleinstitute.org, call (610) 683-1400, or visit at 611 Siegfriedale Road, Kutztown, PA 19530-9320.

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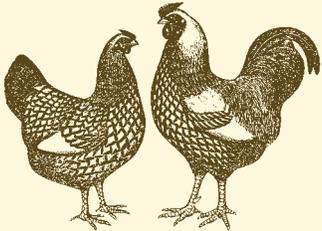
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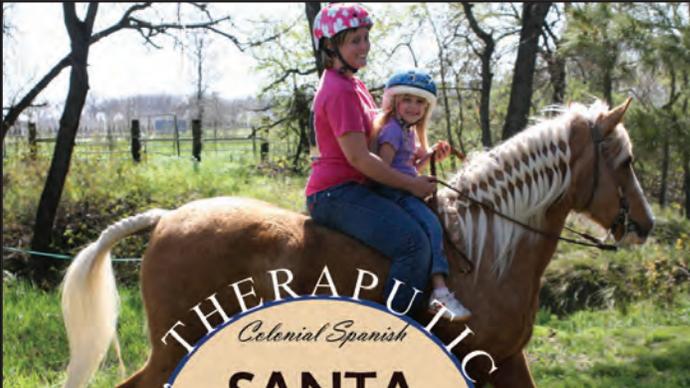


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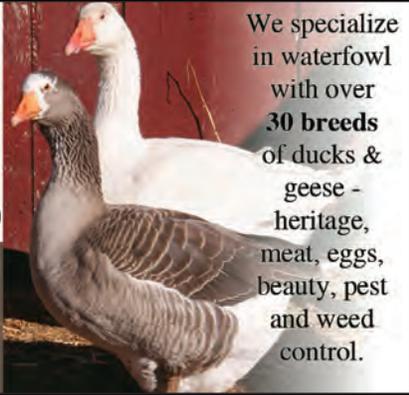


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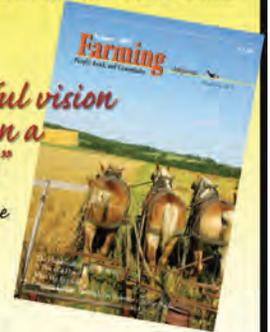
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DATED MATERIAL

CALENDAR

★★ 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 rwalker@livestockconservancy.org or mail to PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

February

February 14-15 – Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association's 36th Annual Conference, "Sustainable Agriculture: Renewing Ohio's Heart and Soil" will be held in Granville, OH. Visit www.oeffa.org/conference2015 for more information.

Feb 26-28 – The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) Organic Farming Conference will be held in La Crosse, WI. The largest conference in the U.S. about organic and sustainable farming hosts more than 170 exhibitors and more than 3,000 attendees. Visit www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html for more information.

February 28 – Goats 101 will take place at Antiquity Oaks Farm in Cornell, IL from 9:30 to 12:00. On-farm class on the basics of goat care, including housing, fencing, nutrition, and health care. Visit <http://antiquityoaks.com/classes.html> for more information.

February 28 – Goats: Breeding and Birthing will take place at Antiquity Oaks

Farm in Cornell, IL from 1:00 to 3:30. On-farm class on breeding and kidding, including information on normal birth, how to know when something goes wrong, and what to do about it. Visit <http://antiquityoaks.com/classes.html> for information.

March

March 7 – The Heartland Highland Cattle Association Annual Membership Meeting and Gathering will be held at the Branson Towers Hotel, Branson, MO. Visit the www.heartlandhighlandcattle-association.org meeting page for more information.

March 7-8 – The 22nd Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference will be held in Asheville, NC. Visit www.organicgrowersschool.org for more information.

March 14 – The Forum for Rural Innovation will be held at the Best Western Lee-Jackson Motor Inn & Conference Center in Winchester, VA. Visit www.biz.loudoun.gov or call (703) 777-0426 for more information.

★ **March 28 – The Southeastern Sustainable Livestock Conference** will be held in Atlanta, GA. This annual conference of the southeast promotes sustainably produced meat from livestock raised under high animal welfare standards. Visit www.southeasternsustainablelivestock.org for more information.

March 28-29 – The NorCal Poultry Association (NCPA) 3rd Annual APA/ABA Sanctioned Poultry Show will be held at the Tehama County Fairgrounds in Red Bluff, CA. For more information

visit www.norcalpoultryncpa.com, e-mail norcalpoultry@sbcglobal.net or call (530) 226-0413.

★ **April 11-12 – The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in Asheville, NC. This family-oriented sustainable lifestyle event features dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations and workshops on everything from beekeeping to using solar electricity. Visit www.motherearthnews.com/fair for more information.

April 16 – The Virginia Beef Expo will be held in Harrisonburg, VA. Contact Hugh Wilson at (570) 286-7952 for more details.

April 18 – A Fans of Lamb workshop, Walkertown, NC. Begins with James Naquin demonstrating how to break down a lamb carcass and the class will participate, then delectable lamb sausages will be made, with discussion about recipes and how to cook lamb. Participants will take home fresh lamb, sausages and some other lamb swag. For more information, visit www.yellowwolffarm.com/butchery--food.html.

April 23 – The 4th Annual Highland Cattle Auction hosted by the Heartland Highland Cattle Association will be held in Southwest MO beginning at 4PM at the Norwood Sale Barn in Norwood, MO. Visit www.highlandcattleauction.com for more information.

April 25 – Butchering Poultry at Home, a half-day, hands-on class will be held in Walkertown, NC. For more information, visit www.yellowwolffarm.com/livestock--homesteading---farming.html.