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Conserving rare breeds since 1977

# THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™ NEWS

## Building a Home for Choctaw Hogs

By Jeannette Beranger, Research & Technical Programs Manager

This spring, The Livestock Conservancy reached out through social media to members and individuals interested in gaining a first-hand work experience with rare livestock in southeastern Oklahoma, and organized its very first “*In the Field with TLC*” event, which brought volunteers together to help the Oklahoma Heritage Horse Sanctuary in Antlers, Oklahoma. The focus was on setting up new breeding pens and fencing forage areas in preparation for expanding the sanctuary’s herd of Choctaw hogs, one of the rarest pigs in America. Surrounded by the rural beauty of the Kiamichi River and the Ouachita Mountains of southeastern Oklahoma, vol-



**Volunteers used their own welding equipment to finish welding corner posts and hog panels purchased with help from Conservancy supporters and Tractor Supply Company for the breeding pens.**

unteers came for three days to help with the project. They enjoyed the experience of working side by side with experts on the sanctuary’s herd of Choctaw horses and hogs and participating first-hand in a proj-

ect that helps and supports the animals.

### The Animals

The Choctaw hog is one of the last domestic breeds to have ranged freely. These smart, hardy, and agile hogs are remarkably self-sufficient in mothering and foraging in their native area of Oklahoma. Descended from swine brought to the Americas by the Spaniards in the 1500s, these hogs crossed the Trail of Tears with the Choctaw Nation in the 19th century, and in the early 20th century provided important sustenance to Oklahomans during hard times. They played a significant role in American history and culture, yet are now highly endangered with only 100-150 animals remaining. The goal of the sanctuary project is to develop a breeding herd of hogs, begin a registry for the breed, and eventually create a market for its products. To jumpstart the program, a work weekend was proposed by The Conservancy to finish the work of preparing breeding pens and to fence in the ten acres of wooded



**Two Choctaw piglets enjoy the green grass in their new home. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.**

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# MEET A MEMBER

In her spare time, Dr. Marie Minnich puts people to sleep – but not with her conversation! She practices anesthesiology in order to support her Sheep Habit. She is one of the many members of The Livestock Conservancy who fancy fibers. And her Romeldale/CVM flock is welcoming lambs right now, so she has little time for sleep.

Among the many important things The Livestock Conservancy is doing, Marie selects as her favorite our groundwork to secure the centuries-old sheep and goat populations on the Hawaiian Islands of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai. She likes the way The Livestock Conservancy has worked with the local people, gathered the history of the flocks, and worked on determining their genetic heritage. There is still much to do, so Marie is glad her gifts help support the long-term outcome.

If she were to select a Bold Vision for The Livestock Conservancy (along with what we're already doing), Marie would want to explore livestock banking. She was impressed by Dr. Cary Fowler's presentation at the last Livestock Conser-



**Marie Minnich owns Marushka Farms in Danville, PA, home to the largest flock of CVM Romeldale Sheep in North America.**

vancy conference, and wonders if it might be vitally important to work to ensure that all breeds have germplasm stored. "I know it would be difficult and expensive," she says, "But if any group were to ready accomplish this, it would be The Livestock Conservancy because we've done so much with so little for so long!"

And speaking of resources, Dr. Minnich is one of our Conservation Champi-

ons (see page 3). When thanked for her monthly donations, Dr. Minnich said, "I do it because it makes supporting our mission so easy. I just sign one document and it happens every month. I never forget, so I have peace of mind. And if something special comes along, I can always choose to support that on a one-time basis." ❖

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR



## By Eric Hallman

There is an old maxim that people only buy flood insurance the day after the flood. In other words, people generally don't assess the true risk until the worst happens. I think about this often with respect to the Livestock Conservancy's mission. Despite clear scientific need for biodiversity in our livestock and poultry breeds, our increasing reliance on just a few highly specialized breeds has left us exposed to great risks. Our agricultural system is the most productive in the world but it precariously depends on a few highly inbred breeds. We are watching the flood waters rise, content in our short-term success.

The Livestock Conservancy takes the long view. By conserving the genetic resources that are heritage breeds, we hold the insurance against the coming flood. I'm preaching to the choir – our membership understands the issue of biodiversity. But we need to educate the general public about our mission and its importance. While this is not a new challenge for the organization, recently our staff and board began a strategic planning process. We have assessed the opportunities before the Conservancy and are setting priorities and goals for moving the organization to the next level.

One of these goals is to take our rightful place in national conversations about the future of agriculture. To achieve this goal we must refine how we broadcast the goals and achievements of the Conservancy. We must make our mission relevant to a national audience. I recently had a chal-

lenging and uncomfortable dialogue with a businessperson who was trying to help me with our message. He kept asking me why he should care about our mission. I tried the usual arguments which we all embrace but he kept responding with, "So, what? That doesn't affect me now. How do you [The Livestock Conservancy] make a difference to me?" We went back and forth for an hour. By the end I think I convinced him but it took much back and forth to find an argument that resonated with him.

We can't reach a national audience one argument at a time. That is why the staff and the board are working on making our message more understandable to the general population. For example, our current mission statement reads, "Ensuring the future of agriculture through the genetic conservation and promotion of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry." To someone unfamiliar with heritage breeds this is not very informative. How does one "ensure the future of agriculture," what exactly does "conservation and promotion" mean? We are considering the following simplified mission statement, "The Livestock Conservancy prevents the extinction of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry."

A clearer statement of the Livestock Conservancy mission is a start. We continue to work on a case statement for the general population that answers the question, "How would your life be different today and tomorrow if the Livestock Con-

servancy weren't around?" I ask all of us to consider this question. Certainly, some of the heritage breeds would survive without us, but without a centralized resource for breeders, how many breeds would slip away? What would our world and agriculture look like if The Livestock Conservancy weren't here?

It's a sobering thought. But we're not going anywhere. After 38 years The Livestock Conservancy is more in demand than ever. The challenge before us is to educate those around us to the importance of our work. You're part of this mission and you can help us educate the public. For example, Judy Wollen, one of our board members, was in the grocery store and approached the register with common yellow bananas and also an exotic red variety. When the cashier commented that she'd never seen anyone buy the red variety, Judy, explained that because of the Banana Bunch Top Virus (BBTV) the common yellow banana might be extinct in a few years. The clerk was aghast and Judy added, "The same thing could happen to the livestock and poultry that you take for granted. That's why we need to work with The Livestock Conservancy." Thanks to Judy, another person now understands our mission and will probably tell a friend. Like the Banana Bunch Top Virus we need our mission to go viral. Then we won't have to be worried about the floodwaters. Our insurance policy of heritage breeds will be secure for those that come after us. ❖

## Become a Conservation Champion

The Livestock Conservancy now offers you the opportunity to give on an ongoing monthly basis and will recognize these donors as **Conservation Champions**. With your help, we can continue to protect America's rarest livestock and poultry breeds which are integral to our national identity and our future generations.

- Your gift will be processed automatically, conveniently, and securely through your credit card every month.
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- Your recurring donation helps us focus on science and conservation, not fundraising.
- You have the satisfaction of knowing that your gift is going where it is needed most, by the fastest, most cost-efficient means possible - which means more of your gift goes directly to support conservation.

**Please sign up to give monthly today!**

Visit [LivestockConservancy.org](http://LivestockConservancy.org), call 919-542-5704, or write to The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312 for more information.



# Choctaw Hogs

*Continued from page 1*

areas that the herd will be allowed to roam in. Once completed, it will be an active breeding facility. It will also offer a rare opportunity for the public to see these pigs in a natural setting while being educated about its history and cultural significance.

## The Sanctuary

The Oklahoma Heritage Horse Sanctuary is a non-profit organization based on the Chahta Isuba Ranch in Antlers, OK. It was created to provide a safe haven for Choctaw horses and later, Choctaw hogs. The facility will serve a dual purpose in both conserving the animals while serving as a means for community development. The intention is for it to bring tourist dollars to Antlers, as a means for the town to get on its financial feet after the recent economic turn down which has resulted in their local community becoming the poorest county in Oklahoma today. The hope is that the horses and hogs will be a driving force to encourage visitors to the area. The facility is the brainchild of Jim Stephens who purchased the ranch and has been a staunch supporter of Choctaw horses and hogs.

The sanctuary itself is approximately 500 acres, most of which is available for the nearly 100 horses to roam freely. Once it is open to the general public, numerous trails will offer opportunities for viewing the endangered breeds as well as the abundant wildlife on the property, which abuts largely untouched habitat along the Kiamichi River. The original farmhouse on the property is currently being renovated with multiple bedrooms, a large bunkroom, and a communal kitchen and will serve as a retreat facility for small groups.

## The Project

The Choctaw hog project began early in 2013 with the stabilization and renovation of an existing barn on the sanctuary property so that it could be used to house the pigs. In 2014 a pond and access roads surrounding a ten-acre parcel that will be used exclusively for the pigs were created. This year the next phase began with noted Choctaw horse and hog owner/expert Bryant Rickman and his close friend Harold Davis laying out and marking the perimeter of the new enclosures at the sanctuary. With the help of some donations from Livestock Conservancy supporters, paired

with funding from Tractor Supply Company, fencing and posts were purchased by Bryant and Harold and delivered to the work site at the sanctuary. Harold also donated the use of a large tractor to help clear brush and a powerful four-wheeler to help deliver fencing materials to the more challenging spots along the fence line.

With Bryant as the lead coordinator of the work weekend, a small core of volunteers began to converge on the sanctuary on April 17th, including one gentleman and his son who arrived at the sanctuary on a chuck wagon drawn by four mules! Many of the volunteers were locals but there were some from as far away as Virginia. I was lucky enough to represent The Livestock Conservancy in the effort and made the trip from the office in North Carolina in order to give a helping hand. Each day we had roughly 10-15 people come to help with the work.

We began the three-day weekend on Friday with several individuals working with chainsaws to finish clearing the brush for the fence line. Meanwhile three other local volunteers showed up with their own welding equipment to finish welding corner posts for the wire fencing and to weld hog panels into place for the breeding pens. Several others began the task of driving over 250 T-posts for the perimeter fence for the large pen that the pigs would range in. Once the corner posts were secured, wire hog fencing was rolled out and secured to the T-posts. It was a great group effort that was a very tiring but certainly satisfying experience for all.

By the end of Sunday, the breeding pen was complete and the ten-acre area was nearly entirely enclosed. The six Choctaw hogs currently housed at the sanctuary were released from a small temporary enclosure into the much larger breeding pen. They clearly enjoyed access to the lush grass and abundant space of their new enclosure. They will soon be joined by others of their kind and very soon will be having regular access to the ten-acre range.

A huge thanks to all those who participated in our first "In the Field with TLC." It was a real success and helps to secure the future of one of our most critically endangered breeds. Hopefully in the future there may be other opportunities to share this one of a kind of hands-on experience with other member and supporters of the Conservancy. ❖

# Protect Your Flocks

By Alison Martin

As many of you are aware, High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) is taking its toll on poultry flocks across the United States. States in the Midwest have been hit particularly hard and HPAI is still being detected on nearly a daily basis. The outbreak started in the Pacific Migratory Bird Flyway in December and expanded to the Central and Mississippi Flyways in March. Minnesota received the brunt of April cases and Iowa is currently seeing the majority of detections. HPAI is not limited to commercial flocks, and several backyard operations have been infected, even in flocks with as few as 10 birds. No human cases of these HPAI viruses have been detected in the United States, Canada, or internationally, and in any event, transmission from birds to humans is extremely rare. The USDA and state departments of agriculture have implemented a multi-state response plan to respond to this health crisis.

***Do Heritage breeds of poultry have stronger immune systems that will protect them from Avian Influenza and other diseases?***

***On the pro side:***

- Research on heritage turkeys has shown stronger immune systems in the heritage breeds.
- The environment that most homestead flocks live in is supportive to strong immune systems (for example, air quality is far superior than for many intensively reared flocks).
- Smaller flocks, lower density, distance from large farms, and less people-traffic to and from farms all help isolate homestead flocks from potential sources of disease. This lower exposure is why small flocks typically experience less disease

***On the con side:***

- HPAI is very deadly, so as far as strong immune systems go, it's like comparing seasonal flu with the 1918 Spanish Flu.
- Small flocks *have* been affected this year.
- The two methods of transmission that have been a problem this year are wild waterfowl and windborne dust from nearby commercial poultry farms, followed by



# Karakul Sheep

By Deborah Y. Hunter

## The Karakul Homeland

Karakul sheep are considered to be one of the oldest domesticated breeds. There is archaeological evidence of the existence of Persian lambskin as early as 1,400 B.C., and carvings of a Karakul type have been found on Babylonian temples. From their ancient homeland of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) Karakul shepherding spread through Central Asia, staying within those areas until the 20th century.

Nine hundred to a thousand miles northwest of Kabul, Afghanistan, lies the desert of Uzbekistan. Sandwiched between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with capital Tashkent far to the east, this parched region is just south of the Aral Sea. Karakul sheep in traditional farming systems in Uzbekistan were described in 2007.

Here, Karakuls for pelts are kept in arid zones, while those raised for meat and wool are kept on the foothills among zones of irrigated farming. Lambs born to ewes living in the desert have thinner skin, making the pelts more valuable. Single lambs are the desert norm. The better pastures are grazed by the two dual-purpose Uzbek breeds of sheep. The habitat of Karakuls is mostly natural grazing on shrub grass, salty grass, or the ephemeral pastures (of the other breeds). Karakul sheep forage up to 20 miles each day and are the only sheep capable of drinking the very salty water found in ordinary fields there.

Karakul sheep are the main source of livelihood for more than two million people in Uzbekistan. Sheep milk, important for feeding young children, is also made into butter and cheese, meat is dried, fat is processed into tallow. Wool is used for pullovers, carpets, and ropes; dung is used for heating. In this country Karakul sheep can have 15 different colors, 30 shades, four wool wave types, and more than 20 wave forms. Karakul sheep are the family's savings, sold when cash is needed and exchanged for other goods.

Maurice Shelton, Professor Emeritus, Texas A&M University, offered his view of fat-tail sheep like the Karakul: "...this may be the most important type of sheep in the world in terms of their contribution to mankind...[They are] multi-purpose animals and many people are near self-sufficient based on products obtained from



*Karakul ram. Photo by Mark and Janie Cheers.*

these sheep.”

## Karakuls in the 20th Century

A little over a hundred years ago, ancestors of these Central Asian Karakuls were introduced to the United States. Also in the early 20th century Karakul sheep were imported to Germany, and from there to the German colony of South West Africa. SWA (now Namibia) became a major Karakul-producing country after World War I, with the USSR heavily involved in pelt marketing at the same time.

Karakul sheep came to the U.S. in four importations between 1908 and 1929, a total of 87 head (48 rams and 39 ewes); 53 from their native land and 34 from other countries. Not only were the imported numbers small, but there existed additional pressure to quickly develop a ewe flock for Persian lamb pelt production. As such, there was much crossbreeding done in the teens and 1920s. The American Karakul was born.

Dr. C.C. Young, a Russian-born, American-educated physician, is credited with the first three imports, 1908 to 1914, from the Bokhara Province of Central Asia. The USDA in Beltsville, Maryland conducted research on Karakuls, intending to quickly build the Persian lamb pelt-producing flock. Dr. Young advocated crossbreeding with good (coarse-wool) pelt producers such as Lincoln, Navajo and Cotswold

sheep; but he kept his own Karakuls pure-blooded. We may never know why, but C.C. Young moved around quite a bit, taking descendants of his imported sheep with him, and farming in Texas, Coahuila, Mexico (along the Texas border), California, and Colorado.

Alex Albright, of Dundee, Texas, had Lincoln sheep for about a decade before C.C. Young moved 13 miles up the road to the town of Holliday, near Wichita Falls in 1909 and got him involved with Karakuls. In February 1927, Albright advertised that he had “sent breeding stock to South America, Nova Scotia, Canada, South Manchuria, Japan, and a third of the States.” Alex was responsible for the final 1929 importation of Karakuls from Germany, and increased his flock to 1,500 even during the Depression. After Alex died in 1937, his wife, Marie, remained in the Karakul business until 1949. The Albright family had struck black Karakul gold.

Charles de Bremond of Roswell, New Mexico, had ranches over 6,000 head of Shropshire sheep when he financed Young's 1912 importation. A year earlier, in December 1911, with 100 head of Alex Albright's Karalinc crosses and a Karakul ram purchased for \$1,080, Charles was already well on his way to having the second largest U.S. Karakul flock. (For

perspective, a 1911 Ford Model T was priced at \$725.) The story continues – de Bremond’s oldest daughter, Marie, married Lowry Hagerman, who inherited and embraced these exotic sheep when Charles died prematurely after World War I. Lowry went on to author the landmark *Karakul Handbook*, dedicated to his father-in-law, and at one point had 4,000 head of Karakul sheep.

Karakuls are unique in the sheep world because of their association with the fashion industry. They have always been bred for variable traits in order to adapt quickly to fashion changes. In the late 1940s white furs, and therefore white Karakuls, were all the rage.

In 1943, there were approximately 1,000 U.S. Karakul breeders, 10,000 registered head, and 20,000 grades and commercials, producing about 10,000 merchantable pelts per year, all consumed in this country. In 30 years of American Karakul sheep, there had been some bad marketing practices, a few exploiters, and a bit too much competition at times, but American breeders worked through, until fashion dealt a critical blow.

The Persian lamb pelt market collapsed. Prices had been low since at least 1949 and the market for fine ladies coats slipped further. The market for Karakul sheep evaporated. Lowry Hagerman’s *Karakul Handbook* was published in 1951. The *Fur Farming Journal*, which started as the *Karakul Journal* in 1947, published its last issue mid-1954. Karakul shepherds had to come to terms with the fashion economy of boom and bust. The breed went through a metamorphosis in the 1960s and 1970s, kept alive by pockets of dedicated shepherds.

Back to the Hagerman flock – down to a few hundred, it remained in existence until dispersal by son Bud Hagerman in 1996. Still ranged in New Mexico, the descendants of this pioneer flock played a couple of significant roles between the 1950s and 1980s. One was the role of Karakul sheep in movies with settings in the Near or Middle East. “...the best suited of any breed found in the U.S.” stated Maurice Shelton of Texas A&M.

Owning Karakuls has spanned generations in more than one family. The pioneer de Bremond/Hagerman family is the longest, 85 years (1911-1996), but they are not alone in long-term admiration of this breed. A few current breeders are at



**Karakuls are the only breed of sheep that can have wattles. Photo by Julia DeVlieg.**

34 years and counting. When Karakuls captivate you, it is tough to let go.

#### **Unique and Special Sheep**

Karakuls, the fashionista sheep – first furs, then movies. And more, Karakuls have been studied for a longer period of time and in more countries than just about any other breed of sheep.

However, after reading this bit of history, some skeptics may still be asking “Why this sheep? The fur history is thought-provoking, but doesn’t really interest me. And the breed’s worldwide numbers seem to be doing okay. So they’re an old, desert breed of sheep; what’s in it for me?”

In one word – easy. Karakul sheep are unique and amazing animals that can take care of themselves. They:

- are rugged, disease and parasite-resistant. Karakuls are tough sheep. They can take what nature throws out, then take some more.
- have great lamb survival. Karakul ewes are some of the most protective mothers on the planet.
- are very lean and superior in flavor with mild, almost sweet meat; even aged animals.
- have distinctive wool to braid, spin, weave, knit, and felt, in a myriad of natural colors.
- are productive foragers and grazers.



**Above: Karakul lamb with large S-shaped fat-tail. Photo by Julia DeVlieg**



**Right: Brown Karakul ewe with elf ears.**

- breed out of season.
- are beautiful, classily-looking sheep.

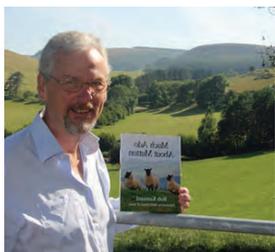
Karakuls are the only breed of sheep that can have wattles. They are one of the few breeds that can have variable ear sizes, ranging from very long to elf size, about one to two inches.

They have fat-tails. Ah, unsightly, you (may) say. Think again, though, of the benefits.

*continued on page 9*



## Save the Date!



Featuring a kick-off banquet keynote address from best-selling author of *Much Ado About Mutton*, **Bob Kennard**, in which Bob explains why mutton is now poised to make a comeback through its extraordinary health & environmental benefits - not to mention its great flavor!

Also featuring a keynote address at the Age of Flavor Gala, benefitting The Livestock Conservancy by New York Times best-selling author of *Tomatoland*, **Barry Estabrook**. Barry's newest book, *Pig Tales: An Omnivore's Guide to Sustainable Meat* has just been released by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.



Fabrication and cooking clinic with **Adam Danforth**, James Beard award winner and best-selling author of definitive guides for butchery: *Butchering Beef and Butchering Poultry, Rabbit, Lamb, Goat & Pork*.

### EXPLORE

Please join us as we explore forgotten uses and flavors that could bring value added income to farms.

### LEARN

Come learn about utilizing products and services from animals at various ages including older and younger animals.

### EXPAND

Come wake up your taste buds! Savor, appreciate, and enjoy heritage breed meats prepared to delicious perfection!



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# Karakuls

*Continued from page 7*

It is not unusual to see American Karakuls in good condition with foot-wide tails filled with over ten pounds of fat. Ewes go into their lactation with plenty of fat-rich milk to successfully wean big twin lambs and remain in decent condition themselves. This is a major advantage of fat-tail sheep.

Karakuls are one of three fat-tail breeds of sheep in the U.S. Tunis sheep are second, but with much smaller fat sacks, four to five inches. Awassi sheep, new to the U.S., are third, with twin ewe lambs born March 2012 via embryo transfer from Australia.

Here is the skinny on breeding fat-tail sheep: rare is the ewe who fails to breed because her tail is too large. I have seen undocked ewes lift their tail for the ram using a lower appendage muscle. Karakul rams get the job done, lambs are born. Twinning in American Karakuls is common in some bloodlines, with occasional triplets.

A final reference back to the Hagerman flock again by Shelton: “[Karakul] breeding stock from [Hagerman] has been exported to other countries, specifically Australia, for potential use in developing flocks of fat-tail sheep to serve Middle East markets.” Because of their fat-tails, Karakul sheep have a large ethnic following, unique to the cultures of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. This brings us back full circle, to homeland. Karakul sheep are inherently independent and self-sufficient. Low-maintenance and reasonably isolated from other flocks are typical

of farm systems that have characterized Karakul breeding for centuries.

## Karakuls in the 21st Century

A group of longtime breeders have initiated a project, Karakul Shepherds Alliance (KSA), hoping to counter and reverse what we see as a declining trend in U.S. Karakul flocks. However, because of the easy-care nature of these sheep, we suspect there are currently unknown flocks. This could be good news for U.S. Karakul breeders—locating isolated, older bloodlines would diversify our current gene pool.

A core group of concerned enthusiasts got the notion that a website could serve Karakul breeders by providing an easy way to find each other, share information, and advertise. From there we had to decide how to bring the pureblood, but uncertified Karakul sheep into the registry. Some breeders would need or want registration certificates. Although KSA is planning to engage with DNA testing for Karakul sheep and their bloodlines in the future, we looked for a faster, more cost-effective solution than flock evaluations or peer-review visits.

A landrace is an isolated, locally developed population that has been improved by traditional agricultural methods. In planning how to evaluate landrace flocks to bring unregistered Karakuls into the fold, it became clear to the KSA Advisory Board that a benefit exists to us. As Karakul shepherds we believe there is not much advantage in out-crossing Karakuls with other breeds of sheep, and if done is easily discernible. If you want to retain the two unique Asiatic features, fat-tails and lamb pelts, you have to keep the breed pure.

American Karakul lambs are born with the traditional pelt curls and patterns that were so sought after for Persian lamb garments. These are immensely attractive but fade quickly. This quality of the breed is visually enjoyable, but transient. The life-long, defining characteristic of Karakul sheep is the fat-tail.

People who breed Karakul sheep *want* fat-tails, the bigger the better. There is little benefit to crossing Karakuls with another sheep breed; their uniqueness disappears. Fat-tails are easily distinguished, no breed misidentification is possible. Therefore, KSA settled, for now, on the time-tested method of using pictures and fleece samples for individual Karakul sheep that need registrations. One photo has to be a rear view. Another should be a lamb photo showing the pelt or photos of progeny showing that the sheep has the genetics to produce Persian lamb pelts.

KSA wants to establish closer contact with Karakul shepherds, and all types of breeders are welcomed. We would like breeders to connect with us and tell us about their sheep. The first Karakul Census is now on [karakulshepherds.org](http://karakulshepherds.org). Our goal is to establish a network of conservation-minded Karakul breeders with whom to exchange information and ideas, buy and sell sheep, trade rams. It will be a 21st century marketplace for an ancient breed of sheep. ❖

*Deborah Hunter is a former Karakul and Tunis sheep breeder in Michigan for 11 years, now a librarian in the Pacific Northwest. She is Web Shepherd for the Karakul Shepherds Alliance website/blog: [karakulshepherds.org/](http://karakulshepherds.org/) For a complete list of references used for this article please email [info@karakulshepherds.org](mailto:info@karakulshepherds.org)*

## LEAVE A LEGACY FOR HERITAGE BREEDS

- BEQUESTS
- STOCK GIFTS
- LIFE INSURANCE
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# First National Heritage Breeds Week

The first ever National Heritage Breeds Week was held May 17-23, 2015 to raise awareness about endangered breeds of livestock and poultry. Events were held around the country and The Livestock Conservancy highlighted heritage breeds throughout the week on social media.

A number of farms, organizations, and businesses participated in the awareness week, holding livestock shows, show-and-tell exhibits, farm tours and lectures, and offering product specials. Thousands of people were reached through social media during the week and many chose to participate using the hashtag #HeritageBreedsWeek. The Conservancy created the infographic below to illustrate the endangerment of heritage breeds; it has been shared amongst nearly 100,000 people as of early June!

Next year's week of awareness will be held **May 15-21, 2016**. Start making plans now to host your own event!



Tractor Supply Company in Galax, VA hosted an educational event for National Heritage Breeds Week in their parking lot.

## #HeritageBreedsWeek Feedback

*Kendy Sawyer, Galax, VA:* Thank you Tractor Supply Galax. We had a great time and met lots of folks – including some that are already raising Heritage livestock. The parking lot reflected a lot of heat, we left before 3:00 because the animals were starting to show signs of stress. Next year we'll plan more shade and more Heritage breeds.

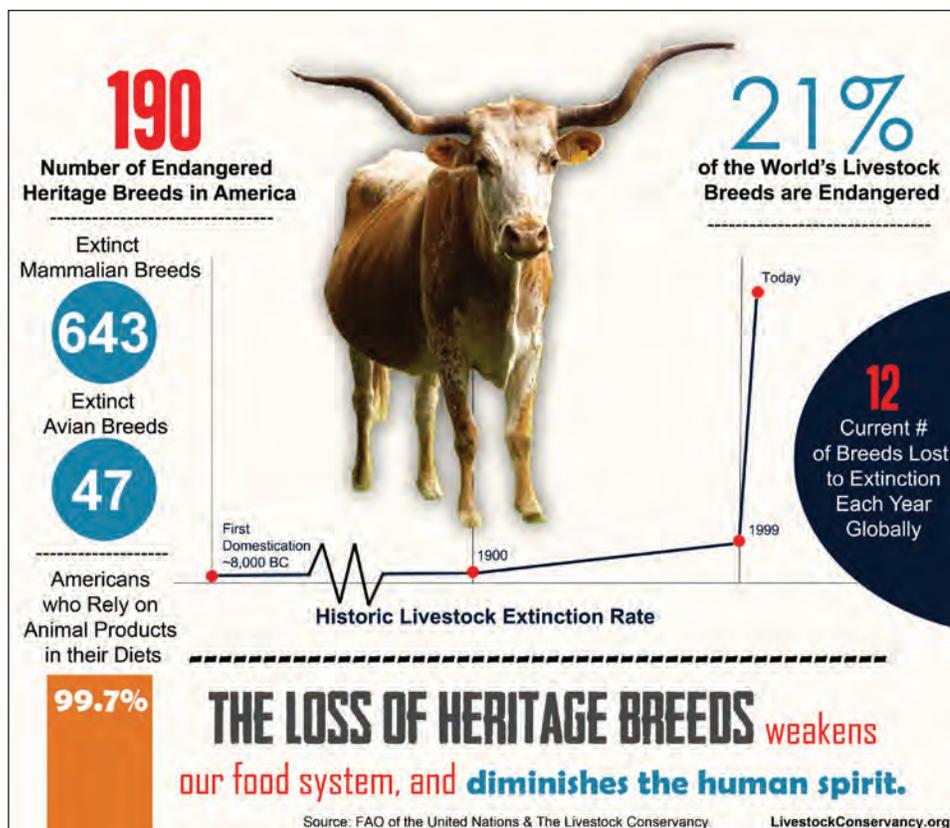
*Knoxville Zoo, Knoxville, TN:* We can't help but smile...it's National Heritage Breeds Week! Heritage animals were once

popular on small family farms, but fell out of fashion with commercial farming and are in danger of becoming extinct. Yes, many domesticated species are considered endangered! We will be celebrating our heritage animals in Kids Cove all week with special keeper chats (be sure to check the Crossroads board for times)! For more information visit The Livestock Conservancy's website.

*Duba & Company, Merchants of Heritage Meats, Grand Rapids, MI:* Every day this week, we're preparing something to feast upon (at least figuratively). This week's menu includes...

- Monday, May 18: Heritage Breeds Survivor Pack Product Launch
  - Tuesday, May 19: Heritage Breeds Podcast, Episode 7 [REPLAY]
  - Wednesday, May 20: Farmhand Day, Belhaven Highlands (Mendon, MI)
  - Thursday, May 21: Duba & Co. Podcast Sneak Preview
  - Friday, May 22: Joel Salatin Ticket Raffle
  - Saturday, May 23: Heritage Meat Sweepstakes Winner Selected
- Get ready for a week of engagement, and bon appetite!

*Hayes Simpson, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI), Pittsboro, NC:* I interviewed Ryan Walker, The Livestock Conservancy's Marketing & Communications Manager at The Livestock Conservancy offices, just a stone's throw away from RAFI-USA. I wanted to get the backstory about The Livestock Conservancy, an organization that has been so effective in raising awareness about nearly 200 endangered breeds of livestock and poultry. And, of course I



This infographic created by the Conservancy for National Heritage Breeds Week has reached over 97,000 people on Facebook.

wanted to hear more about National Heritage Breeds Week!

*Southern Appalachian Family Farms, NC:* It's #NationalHeritageBreedsWeek, courtesy of the hard working folks at the Livestock Conservancy. They're highlighting a variety of species all week long.

*Grabishfarm, Dixon, CA:* The week of May 17th is the first annual National Heritage Livestock Breeds Week and considering that our focus is heritage breed animals – we'd like to invite you to our first open house on Saturday, May 23rd! Come meet Boss Hogg, Sweetheart, Liesl, Blackie and the new goslings. Nothing fancy – it's all about the animals.

*Elizabeth Reichert, KY:* Please consider continuing to post the pictures/brief info of the various breeds on the list. I loved seeing them as did the friends I shared them with! Breed of the week or something!

Alicia Clugh, MD: I know it was a lot of work, but it was wonderful!!!

*Dalby Farm, Scituate, MA:* Have fun and teach your little ones about endangered farm breeds during this #HeritageBreed-sWeek.

*Danette Pratt, Coolville OH:* I wanted to send you a photo of a display I put up in our local library for National Heritage Breeds Week. Our library was thrilled to have the display. Good timing as kids were just out of school and lots of foot traffic with summer programs starting. They received positive feedback and want to work with me next year to expand! I did not have time to schedule a time to download and share your slide show. I hope this next year I will meet more heritage breed people from around the area. I would also like to contact our local county extension agent and see if they know of or would like to participate in programs next year... the library said they would be more than accommodating of any kind of program! They were just so happy with just the display. I left on reserve at the circulation desk my own books, a new *An Introduction to Heritage Breeds*, my old copy of a 'rare breeds' UK publication I have had for a number of years, your newsletters, and another of your books. ❖

## A Chilly Roundup

By Dugan Tillman-Brown

We knew that we were going to have some winter calves this year due to quarantining some new animals together. At the time it was the best logistical option that we had. We were fortunate to have purchased a very enthusiastic bull who broke out of his fence on more than one occasion to visit some yearling heifers. Lydia was one of those tempting jail breaks for Sterling the Bull.

Once the weather hits freezing around here (in Connecticut) we begin to watch the ladies for impending births. We go around a few times a week to really look at them so see if they are getting close. Somehow all the signs were delayed with Lydia. We were out feeding hay when she walked by us and flashed a swollen udder and vulva, what we jokingly refer to as a Mudflap. Those two signs normally mean that baby is soon not to be on board. We have had a horrible winter this year where the snow base has been better than three feet, and the drifts on this hilltop were monsters, some nearing five to six feet deep. Lydia is a spooky girl, and this was a high wind time, a storm on the way, dark only about 45 minutes away, and -10° on the lows prediction. That is a recipe for a very dead calf. Jim and I knew that if she were this close our luck would have the calf born at night, and dead before we could get there. Lydia needed a new

home in the barn, a quarter-mile away. Thus began the Laurel and Hardy Rodeo roundup of a very pregnant lady by two non-cowboys.

We chased her through that deep snow for about 45 minutes coughing from the cold and heavy exertion. With a lady that close, you cannot run her, you cannot let her slip, and she cannot fall down. It is actually pretty dangerous to stress a cow at this point. We were laughing, growling, coughing and cursing this cow and her abilities to flip off the horn noose. Round and round hay bales, other cows, the pasture, and just about anything she could put in our way, we went. Finally we got a lucky throw and the quarter-mile, mule-stubborn drag began. She made sure to force us out of the trodden snow through each snow drift the whole way. Jerk. Finally when we got to the barn and she could smell the other cows she just waltzed in, looked at us like we were big dummies and should have just explained what we wanted, stuck her head in a bucket and ignored us. Soon after, she gave an easy birth to Fortuna, the calf that didn't die! It was a sigh of relief to us as we have a very hard time with outdoor calving in winter. This year we had leased a barn, and we have had wild success with our winter calves, and have been lucky to boot, with five of the six being born beautiful little heifers! ❖

*Dugan Tillman-Brown and Firefly Farms can be contacted at [info@firefly-farmsllc.com](mailto:info@firefly-farmsllc.com).*



**Firefly Farms in North Stonington, Connecticut, made the news after a snowstorm rescue of a Randall Lineback cow ready to give birth to this calf, "Fortuna."**

# Egg Miles in Your Egg Shed

By Patricia Foreman

*In a previous newsletter, the first article in the “Egg Shed Series” defined an egg shed as “the number of eggs a person, household, group, or community, consumes that are produced within a specific distance, within a period of time – usually a year.”*

A useful indicator in determining your egg shed is the distance an egg has to travel from production to your table. This is important because of the associated energy requirements for refrigeration and transport.

The egg mile(s) from family flocks or local farms is easy to calculate. Just measure the distance from your coop — usually in yards (excuse the pun) to your kitchen. Or, estimate the distance from your local producer whose address will be on a table on the egg carton.

To calculate the egg miles for factory eggs, get the address off the egg carton. Somewhere the producer’s address, or the location of the distribution/packing facility will be printed on the carton.

On some cartons, there won’t be an address, but there will be a phone number you can call. When you call, you will eventually get someone who will ask for a number that is printed on the carton, along with the expiration date. With that, they

can tell you where the eggs were produced, packaged, and/or distributed. With the egg-source location, go to Google Maps, or your GPS and plug in the information. The directions from there to your home or grocery market will include the mileage and tell you the egg shed miles from the factory or packing plant to your table.

As the locavore movement and local foods take center stage on many folks’ tables and many, people migrate to local foods because of health problems, food sheds are becoming a frequent topic of conversations not just with us “hippie-foodsters,” but also at colleges, green festivals, blogs, websites and even discussed in many city council meetings. There is a publication called *Foodshed Magazine* dedicated to educating the public and promoting local producers.

The bottom line is that by raising family flocks, and by supporting local family egg producers, it is possible for a com-

munity to be self-sufficient in production of eggs, one of the most easily digestible and highest quality forms of protein on the planet. This is yet another reason to change the local laws to encourage family flocks and support local family farms.

May the flock be with you! ❖

*Patricia Foreman has degrees in Pharmacy and Agriculture from Purdue University and a Masters of Public Affairs from Indiana University. She has kept poultry for over 20 years, including owning and operating a small-scale farm with free range, organic layers, broilers, and turkeys. She is an avid sustainable agriculture and heritage breed advocate. Pat is the co-author of several books including: Chicken Tractor, Day Range Poultry, Backyard Market Gardening, A Tiny Home to Call Your Own, and City Chicks and is the Founding President of the Gossamer Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to global sustainability and local foods.*

## Celebrating Real Food

*An announcement from Food Day, 2015.*

Every October 24, thousands of events all around the country bring Americans together to celebrate and enjoy real food and to push for improved food policies. October 24 is a day to resolve to make changes in our own diets and to take action to solve food-related problems in our communities at the local, state, and national level.

In 2015, Food Day seeks to inspire community action in every city and state in the country, with individuals and organizations coming together on and around October 24 to learn, debate, and mobilize to create a just food system, improve the American diet, and raise awareness about the critical importance of food education in schools.

### What is Food Day?

Food Day inspires Americans to change their diets and our food policies. Created by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest and driven by a diverse coalition of food movement leaders and citizens, Food Day aims to bring us closer to a food system with real and healthy just food that is produced with care for the environment, animals, and the women and men who grow, harvest, and serve it. Food Day 2014, the 4th annual celebration, featured



more than 8,000 events in all 50 states!

### Why should I get involved?

Food Day is a chance to celebrate what our food system does right and take action to address the pressing food issues we face:

- Poor diets cause widespread obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related diseases.
- Millions of Americans struggle with food insecurity and hunger.
- Vital food safety and anti-hunger programs are constantly under attack in Washington.
- Many food and farm workers still labor in unfair, unsafe conditions, and animal welfare is often ignored.

The good news? By collaborating on events like Food Day, we can build the momentum needed to change the American food system.

*For more information on Food Day and how you can get involved, visit [www.food-day.org](http://www.food-day.org).*

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# Wildly Profitable Heritage Breeds Marketing Course

Are your current marketing efforts attracting all the customers you need to sustain your farming efforts?

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This marketing series will provide heritage breed farmers, chefs, breeders, and product producers with a smart, actionable marketing roadmap all set up and ready to go ... so you can focus your efforts on bringing the right prospects to your website and door.

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- Focus your limited marketing resources on finding BUYING customers
- Identify which marketing tactics will produce the best results
- Ensure your website can be found in the search engines with the right keywords

*Length:* 60 minutes each

*Location:* From the comfort of your home, office, or any place you have Internet access

*Cost:* \$97 for the complete 5-part series

*Note:* All sessions will be recorded and available for unlimited replay.

## Course Outline

### Session 1: Ensure a Profitable Start

Start with total clarity about your mission and market so you'll embark on a marketing journey that actually works. In this session you'll define your ultimate destination, understand the other lions in the jungle so you don't get swallowed up, and clearly identify who you want to attract-and why they'll choose you over

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Livestock Conservancy banks germplasm of rare breeds with USDA's Livestock Animal Germplasm Project (NAGP). For more information about adding to this library, contact Jeannette Beranger at [jberanger@livestockconservancy.org](mailto:jberanger@livestockconservancy.org) or Alison Martin at [amartin@livestockconservancy.org](mailto:amartin@livestockconservancy.org), or call 919-542-5704. Unfortunately, NAGP does not accept equine samples at this time.



*The Livestock Conservancy is partnering with animal marketing expert C. S. Wurzberger (left) for this webinar series.*

other options.

### Session 2: Enjoy a High Performing Website

Make sure your website is user-friendly, since all marketing roads lead to it. In this session you'll receive the tools you need to wow customers with your Website - It is the hub of all your marketing efforts, ensure you have a high performing site you can roar about. You'll be introduced to keywords, the foundation of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and their proper placement in your website coding and content.

Plus, you'll receive the seven fundamental guidelines to creating great web content, and ultimately, ensuring the online sales results you desire.

### Session 3: Identify Profit-Producing Marketing Tactics

Cultivate profitable relationships using today's best marketing tools. Discover ways to use traditional print media and other classic offline approaches. Along with incorporating today's best online marketing tools like video, mobile marketing, PR promotions, and podcasting into your marketing mix.

### Session 4: Engage in Social Media

In this session you'll discover the top 5 ways social media can help you grow your business. You'll discover how to lead fans and followers to your business with a clever approach to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, and more.

### Session 5: Create and Implement your Profit-Producing Roadmap

Tie it all together with a Wildly Profitable Marketing Roadmap that only takes 30 minutes a day to implement.

**Each session will also offer time for Q & A to get your individual questions answered.**

### Your Marketing Guide

C. S. Wurzberger, The Green Up Girl, is an accomplished green movement marketing expert with 25 years of experience helping hundreds of animal-related businesses worldwide build and promote profitable, successful marketing campaigns and websites that rank high in the most popular search engines including Google, Bing, and Yahoo.

She is also the co-author of *Wildly Profitable Marketing for Zoos, Aquariums and Other Animal/Nature Organizations*, a hands-on field guide that provides businesses with profit-producing strategies to truly attract more buying customers and profits.

She is on a mission to bring you the knowledge and resources you need to double your sales and build a marketing roadmap that only requires 30 minutes a day to implement. ❖

*Questions? Contact CS Wurzberger at [Office@TheGreenUpGirl.com](mailto:Office@TheGreenUpGirl.com).*

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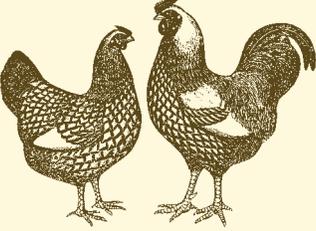
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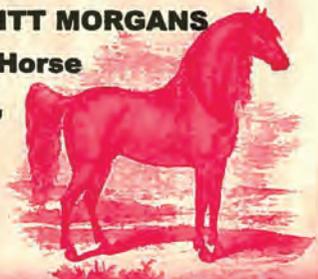
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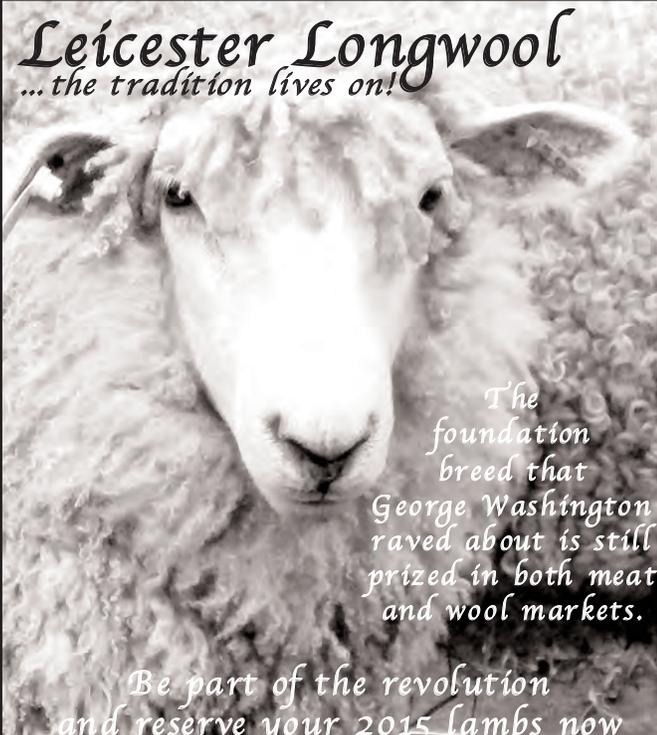
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## DATED MATERIAL

# 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](mailto:rwalker@livestockconservancy.org) or mail to PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.*

## June

**June 19-22 - Fibre Week** will take place at Olds College in Olds, Alberta, Canada. Visit [www.oldscollege.ca/fibreweek](http://www.oldscollege.ca/fibreweek) for more information.

**June 19-21 - The Black Sheep Gathering** will be held at the Lane County Fairgrounds in Eugene, OR. Visit [www.blacksheepgathering.com](http://www.blacksheepgathering.com) for more information.

★ **June 19-23 - The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) Annual Meeting & Conference "Doing & Telling: A Living History Toolbox"** will be held in Williamsburg, VA. Visit [www.alhfam.org](http://www.alhfam.org) for more information.

**June 22-26 - The 2015 U.S. Ayrshires National Convention** will be held in Lake Raystown, PA. Visit [www.2015ayrshirenationalconvention.com](http://www.2015ayrshirenationalconvention.com) or call 717-371-4279 or 717-250-8010 for more information.

**June 27 - Traditional Cherry Fair and Early American Craft Show** will be held at the historic Alexander Schaeffer farm, Schaefferstown, Lebanon County, PA, from 10am to 5pm. Enjoy skilled traditional artisans, early American entertainment,

skilled demonstrations, great food and more. Heritage breeds of livestock and poultry will be on display. For more information visit [hsmuseum.org](http://hsmuseum.org)

## July

**July 3-5 - The All American Junior Sheep Show** will be held at the Big E Fairgrounds in West Springfield, MA. Visit [www.countrylovin.com/AAJSS/](http://www.countrylovin.com/AAJSS/) for more information.

**July 9-11 - The Great Celebration Mule & Donkey Show** will be held in Shelbyville, TN. Visit [www.twhnc.com](http://www.twhnc.com), email [meakin@twhnc.com](mailto:meakin@twhnc.com), or call 931-684-5915, ext. 106 for more information.

**July 11-18 - The American Dairy Goat Association National Show** will be held at the Deschutes County Expo Center in Redmond, OR. Email [branch@adga.org](mailto:branch@adga.org) or visit [www.adga.org](http://www.adga.org) for more information.

**July 17-18 - The Crossroads of the West All-Breeds Sheep Sale** will be held in Herber City, UT. Online entry forms at [www.bannersheepmagazine.com](http://www.bannersheepmagazine.com).

## August

**August 2-3 - The Georgian Homesteading & Survival Show** will be held in Markdale, Ontario, Canada. Vendors and seminars focusing on sustainable lifestyle and being prepared in a disaster. For more information, call 519-794-3434 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/georgianhomesteadingsurvival>.

**August 7 - The Inaugural "Chefs Taste Challenge"** will be Held in New Orleans, LA. The Farm-to-Table Chefs Taste Challenge (CTC) at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, aims to broaden awareness for the use of fresh, healthy, sustainable ingredients in preparing food. Visit <http://chefstastechallenge.com> for more

information.

★ **August 8-9 - The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in West Bend, WI, outside of Milwaukee. 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](http://www.motherearthnews.com/fair) for more information.

**August 12-16 - The Michigan Fiber Festival** will be held at the Allegan County Fairgrounds in Allegan, MI. One of the Midwest's largest fiber festivals, it includes animals, vendors, fiber arts, workshops and more. Visit [www.michiganfiberfestival.com](http://www.michiganfiberfestival.com) or email [staff@michiganfiberfestival.com](mailto:staff@michiganfiberfestival.com) for more information.

## September

**September 5 - The Mid-America Homesteading Conference** will be held at Joliet Junior College in Joliet, IL from 8:30 to 5:00. Increase your self-reliance by learning how to keep livestock, garden, and preserve the harvest. Network with others who are doing what you want to do. Visit <http://www.homesteadingconference.com> for more information.

**September 6-8 - The Sustainable Agriculture Conference** will be held in Durham, NC. Visit [www.carolinafarmstewards.org](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org) for more information.

**September 11-13 - The Wisconsin Sheep and Wool Festival** will be held in Jefferson, WI. For more information, visit [www.wisconsinssheepandwoolfestival.com](http://www.wisconsinssheepandwoolfestival.com) or call Carol Black at 920-623-3536.