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Conserving rare breeds since 1977

# THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™ NEWS



Photo courtesy of Jeff Wilkins / ARPA

## Red Poll Cattle – The Best Kept Secret

**By Ryan Walker**

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

Our day started with a meeting of the Blue Ridge Red Poll Association, one of five regional groups of Red Poll breeders and members who make up the larger national association. I got to know several breeders and learned about how they were raising and marketing their cattle. Although I don't currently raise Red Polls, they warmly welcomed me as a new member, and we discussed marketing strategies for the association. In the early afternoon, the Blue Ridge group lined the driveway of Wilkshire Farm as the tour bus pulled

in. As tour members stepped off the bus, just as they had at stops in many different states every day for three weeks prior, they were greeted by their hosts.

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

Attendees traveled throughout the farm learning about each herd and discussing the differences and similarities to their own cattle. Because Jeff has imported genetics from across the world, some attendees' cattle were close relatives, just located on a different continent. There was

also conversation on pasture management and the particular docility of Jeff's cattle. As we stood in the pasture among several dozen cattle, the only background noise was hooves against grass and the sound of the cattle chewing.

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

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

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## Congratulations, Phil!

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

Dan Phillip Sponenberg attended veterinary school at Texas A&M and graduated in 1976 *magna cum laude*. He then pursued post-graduate education in genetics and pathology at Cornell. Studying under Dr. McEntee he began a very successful career in reproductive pathology and genetics at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in 1981. During his tenure as professor, he has authored 11 books, 105 peer-reviewed journal articles, and 418 lay publications related to reproductive pathology, pathology, genetics, and breed conservation. To date he has over 800 publications to his name related to these fields. He has presented at the SFT/ACT conference and trained many pathologists and theriogenologists at VMCVM and abroad. He is an integral



**Phil Sponenberg is Technical Advisor to the Conservancy.**

part of the education of VMCVM students, residents and colleagues, as well as a valuable educational resource for clinical cases, research projects, and career development. In 1990 he developed the only reproductive pathology course offered on the VMCVM campus. This course is always popular, but also a requirement for pathology and theriogenology residents. Dr. Sponenberg also assists in our theriogenology resident's board preparation for both the practical and written examinations. Most notably he has served as the technical advisor to The Livestock Conservancy since 1978. He has given numerous invited presentations around the world about reproductive pathology, breed conservation, and breeding for healthy populations. He is well known in rare breed circles and is the

foremost expert in preserving rare genetics. He has helped counsel breed groups on the conservation of numerous breeds on the endangered, threatened or watched list worldwide. Currently he is the leading expert on the Spanish horse in the Americas as well as the Tennessee Myotonic goat breed. He resides with his wife in Blacksburg, Virginia at Beechkeld Farm. When not travelling around the world saving rare breeds he is busy preserving his own lines of Choctaw horses, Fainting goats, Karachan dogs, and Brahma chickens. ❖

### Welcome to our Newest Life Members!

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

**Mariel R. Goss**

Rapidan, VA

**David & Heather Loomis**

Troy, PA

For more information on becoming a life member, please contact Ryan Walker at 919-542-5704, ext. 102, or [rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org](mailto:rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org).

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR



## Eat Them to Save Them

By Alison Martin

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

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

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

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

For those who raise and support the raising of heritage livestock and poultry,

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

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

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

Chickens have captured many fans serving as pets or companion animals, which has helped many breeds grow. Most

## Save the Date Annual Membership Meeting December 12, 2017

7:00 pm Eastern Standard Time

Can't attend in person? This year, you will be able to participate by telephone or internet. Call-in and log-in details will be provided in the autumn newsletter.

## Temple Grandin Records Video for the Conservancy

Award-winning author, professor, and animal welfare and autism awareness advocate Dr. Temple Grandin, known for her groundbreaking approach to decoding animal behavior, has recorded a video for The Livestock Conservancy, discussing the importance of Heritage breed conservation. Dr. Grandin has previously given the keynote address at the Conservancy's national conference and has been a long-time supporter and member. The video interview was recorded and produced by Backyard Green Films, an independent documentary film production company located in San Diego that has been traveling the country documenting Heritage breed operations.

To watch the video, visit our website at [LivestockConservancy.org](http://LivestockConservancy.org) or the Conservancy's Facebook page at [facebook.com/LivestockConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/LivestockConservancy).

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

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# Red Polls

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Jeff's remarks and my experiences evoke the rich history of Red Polls. Let us now take some time to examine the breed that inspired such a momentous tour.

## History

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

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

The people of Suffolk used native cattle to develop excellent polled dairy cattle, known as Suffolk Duns, which were particularly known for their ability to produce high yields of exceptional quality milk. Even on marginal forage, they were said to be the highest producing dairy breed



**One stop on the farm tour included an examination of one of Jeff's very well-behaved bulls. Photo by Ryan Walker.**

in England at the time. In his book *The General View of Agriculture of the County of Norfolk*, published in 1794, Rev. Arthur Young wrote of the Suffolk cattle: "This breed is universally polled, that is, without horns; the size small, few rise when fat to above fifty stones (700 pounds)..."

*If I were to describe the points of certain individuals...a clean throat with little dewlap; a thin clean snake head; thin legs; a very large carcass; ribs tolerably springing from the centre of the back but with a heavy belly; backbone ridged; chine thin and hollow; loin narrow; udder large, loose, and creased when empty; milk-veins remarkably large, and rising in knotted puffs to the eye... many of these beasts will fatten remarkably well; the flesh of a fine quality; and in that state will feel well enough to satisfy the touch of skillful butchers. The best milkers I have known,*

*have either been red, brindle, or yellowish cream coloured...the quality of milk is very considerable indeed."*

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

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



**Jeff Wilkins discusses his Red Poll herd with tour attendees. Photo by Ryan Walker.**



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

Battersea, where a judge said Red Polls “presented several specimens of great merit, size, and symmetry, with good flesh, and constitution and plenty of lean to the fat – all qualifications for making as much good beef at the least possible cost from a given quantity of food as any breed in the yard.” According to the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England published in 1889, “good dairy properties, good quality of flesh, and a ready tendency to fatten, in cattle of medium size, not too large for poorish pasture, and hardened to a coldish climate, are highly valuable characteristics, and make the Red Polled breed suitable for conditions of existence which would be very unfavourable to many of the heavier breeds.”

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

The first importations of Red Poll cattle to the United States occurred in 1873 by G.F. Tabor of New York. Between 1873

and 1900, about 300 head were imported, forming the foundation for today’s American population. The breed name was shortened to simply “Red Poll” in 1882. The American Red Poll Cattle Association was formed the following year. Shortly after arriving in North America, some of the cattle made their way to Canada, where they were often called “moolies” or “mulies,” the Celtic word for polled. The Canadian Red Poll Association was formed in 1906.

The heyday for American Red Polls lasted from the 1920s to the 1950s, when about 5,000 to 6,000 were registered each year with a brief dip during the Great Depression. Often producing 10,000 pounds of milk per year even as teenagers, they were known for longevity. One cow, Florabel, had an eleven-year milk total of 108,310.5 pounds in 1933, which was an all-breed record for the time. Due to the dominance of Holstein cattle in the dairy industry starting in the 1960s, Red Poll breeders started emphasizing beef characteristics, and in 1972 they were officially declared a beef breed.

#### **Characteristics**

The breed has responded very well to beef selection. In studies conducted at the Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) in Clay City, Nebraska, the Red Poll led all breeds in 200-day calf weight per cow bred. Red Polls are naturally fertile and rebreed quickly after calving. Calves exhibit much vigor, and though small at birth they grow quickly on their mother’s milk,

which, due to the breed’s dual-purpose history is still in abundant supply compared to some other beef breeds. Due to the small birth weights, calving troubles are very rare for the breed.

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

#### **Current status – Threatened**

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

As many livestock breeders know, heritage breeds are living, breathing repositories for traits specific to their given breed. Red Poll cattle, by way of not yielding to this current market trend, have retained the very traits that made them so popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During those times, the cattle industry looked much different than it does today. We often say that heritage breeds are more well-rounded than mainstream breeds, and Red Polls are no exception. Many of the issues that plague the modern beef industry – calving problems, dry udders, aggressive behavior, poor production on

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# Eat Them to Save Them

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for ducks and geese, which it could be argued are only modestly trainable and unlikely to be housebroken.

After reviewing zoos and companion animals, it appears that livestock and poultry would need to do a better job of captivating our hearts in order to captivate our pocketbooks.

Bringing us back to MEAT. Isn't this why we domesticated these animals in the first place? Most breeds were selected by our forebears as a source of animal protein, especially meat, and even for their hides. We dishonor those who developed these breeds by not using them at least somewhat for the purpose for which they were intended.

Consumers understand that their desire for heirloom vegetables on the table caused more gardeners and farmers to grow them. Better yet, many farms that raise heirlooms are not the mega-farms in Florida, California, and Texas, but smaller market gardens and farms – in other words, the local food economy. The same holds true for putting heritage meats on the table.

Better yet, most heritage livestock and poultry are raised sustainably. That's the system in which they fit best. A benefit is that pasture-raised meat, eggs, and dairy products have significantly more omega-3 fatty acids, the ones associated with positive health changes (Duckett et al., 2014; Manning, R. 2015).

Two of the greatest conservation successes happened because we eat meat from rare livestock and poultry. Consumers discovered the flavor advantages of heritage turkey and heritage pork. That encouraged more farmers to raise heritage turkeys and pigs (with a little help from the Conservancy and its partners), and their numbers grew. By eating them, we have prevented heritage turkeys and pigs from going extinct.

The next opportunity, by the way, is for heritage sheep. Just as for turkeys and pigs, slow growth (especially on pasture) translates to a recognizable difference in flavor, even in animals older than one year. Contact a heritage sheep farmer and see if you don't agree.

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

More people eating heritage meat saves breeds. ❖

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## Red Polls

*Continued from previous page*

grass, are nearly foreign to Red Poll breeders. Red Polls are most definitely a breed worth considering. ❖

Ryan Walker is Marketing & Communications Manager for The Livestock Conservancy. For more information about Red Poll cattle, visit [www.LivestockConservancy.org](http://www.LivestockConservancy.org) or the American Red Poll Association-- website, [www.AmericanRedPolls.com](http://www.AmericanRedPolls.com), call 765-425-4515 or email at [americanredpolls@gmail.com](mailto:americanredpolls@gmail.com).

## Thank you to The Livestock Conservancy's 2017 Sponsors!



# From Service to Stewardship Workshop

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

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

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



**Attendees learn about Kerry cattle from Conservancy member Kendy Sawyer.**

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

I love the Heritage Breeds and once on my own will only use those breeds. Why? Well, because I find them much like me, an underdog, forgotten and underappreciated. Also because I am at heart a romantic and lover of history, and as former military myself, and a child raised in a military home, I understand and appreciate the sacrifices of those that came before. Our heritage breeds deserve that same respect and recognition. These are the breeds the built our great nation. The bovines that gave us so much in meat, dairy, oxen, leather

goods, and even horns to keep gunpowder dry. The sheep with their wool, milk and meat. The pigs that graced our tables and gave us lard for candle and soap making. The poultry with their eggs and meat. All in a time when people knew and appreciated their food.

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

Thank y'all so much!❖

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

## The Dorking Cockerel

### The Dorking Cockerel



- Early origins of the Dorking
- Growing reputation of the breed and of Dorking as a market
- Studying, breeding and exhibiting in the Victorian age
- Popularity around the world
- Ensuring its survival
- An emblem for all things Dorking
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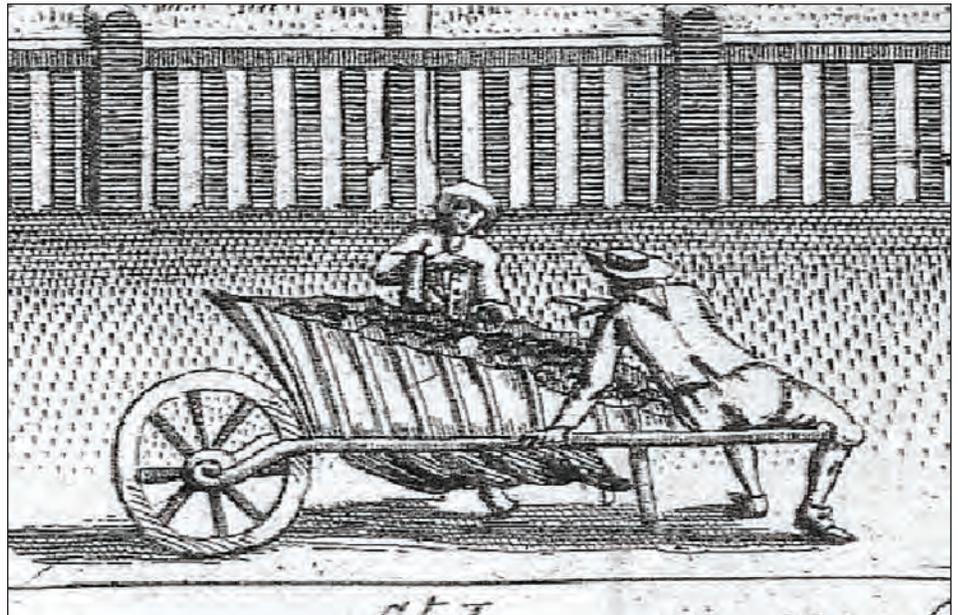


# Our Trodden Past: Manure and Rare Breeds in the 16th and 17th Centuries

By Katherine Walker

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

Many of The Livestock Conservancy's breeds would have been highly familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Often housed in close quarters (sometimes in the same room) with sheep, goats, horses, and pigs, most individuals were close to the material of the animal and its ordure. Rather than seen as a nuisance, the excrement of an animal was a valuable commodity. According to scientist Sir Hugh Plat, swine and pigeon dung was best for "pot-herbs" and would prevent



**Gardeners with a dung cart at Moorfields. From Nutting & Walker's *A New Prospect of the North Side of the City of London, with New Bedlam and Moore Fields, 1690.***

pesky snails from crawling over one's crops (*The Garden of Eden* page 35). An even more famous scholar, Francis Bacon, used the concept of manure to mirror the good cultivation of the mind: individuals should "manure and till the Mind, and frame their course of life according to some Rule" (*The Essays* pages 350-351). In both of these examples, an animal's ordure is a way for thinking about practical crop growth or the arts of the intellectual. Both the ground and the mind need to be fertilized, and livestock – many of those animals now considered Heritage breeds – were the important means for the manual and intellectual work of the period.

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

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

– *Profitable Instructions* page A3r

Manure thus inspired poetry, was mentioned in plays, and was part of everyday labor practices. Animals offered so much

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

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

## HAVE PHOTOS TO SHARE?

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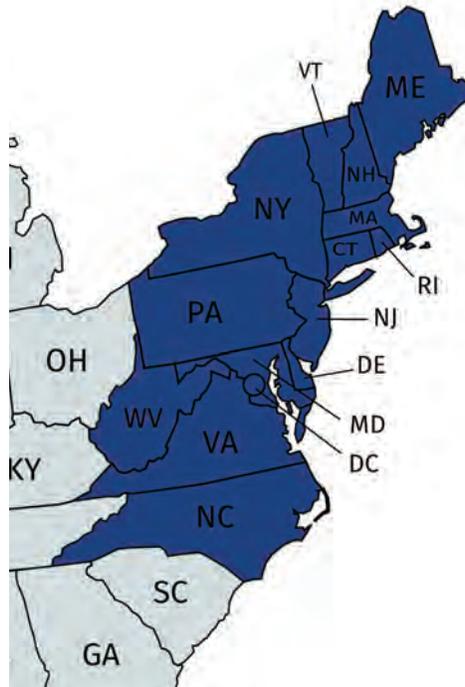
# Swine Brucellosis Pilot Project

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

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

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

From the survey results, a subset of about 45 slaughter sites will be selected to participate in the surveillance portion of the study. Pigs of all ages (not just sows and boars) will have blood samples col-



**Swine producers in USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services District I (dark blue on map) may be asked to participate in a brief survey.**

lected at slaughter which will be tested for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies. Funding for the slaughter surveillance portion of the study is currently pending. Veterinary Services is committed to engaging with non-traditional stakeholders including pasture pork producers. Future plans include mutual dialogue with pasture pork producers through venues such as local meetings, on social media, and one-on-one discussions.

If a pig tests suspect or positive on slaughter samples, federal regulations regarding positive brucellosis animals will be followed. Actions may include:

- Confirmatory testing of the suspect sample by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories
- Contacting the owner of the positive animal and requiring a whole-herd test

If the herd of origin is found to be infected, actions may include:

- Quarantine, test and remove, or whole herd depopulation, and herd clean-up plans for herds determined positive through testing and epidemiologic investigation.
- Tracing of animals into and out of the infected herd
- Testing of additional animal species on

the positive premises

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

Questions regarding the pilot project may be directed to the project's authors:

- Leslie Seraphin (DEO, NJ), [Leslie.L.Seraphin@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Leslie.L.Seraphin@aphis.usda.gov)
- Paul Pitcher (VMO, PA), [Paul.M.Pitcher@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Paul.M.Pitcher@aphis.usda.gov)
- Ross Free (DEO, NC), [Ross.A.Free@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Ross.A.Free@aphis.usda.gov)

More information on swine brucellosis is available at [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information)

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# A Navajo-Churro Field Inspection

By Dr. Lyle McNeal

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

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



**Navajo-Churro lambs, currently under Threatened status. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.**

A spirited discussion of the four-horn trait included mention that in many areas of the Navajo Nation, multiple horns are thought to be sacred. However, the split eyelid issue connected to multiple horns is a problem to be considered. It was also a surprise to some when it was mentioned that having no kemp [short fibers] at all in Churro fleece might be an indication of crossbreeding, and that a small amount of kemp is properly included in

the standard. As several other breeds of sheep at Cunnington Farms were available for hands-on comparison, Jim and Nikyle discussed and demonstrated crimp, larger sheep size, closed faces, woolly legs, and other characteristics that differentiate Churros from Icelandics and other breeds which have similar fleece on first glance. Since weavers and shepherds often have different knowledge, needs, and perspectives, it was helpful and exciting to have a

forum where these two groups could exchange ideas, disagree, learn, and get to know each other as well.

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

For more information about the Navajo Sheep Project, visit [www.navajosheepproject.com](http://www.navajosheepproject.com).

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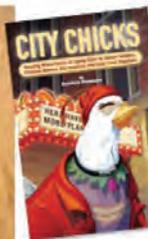
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# Critical Breed Spotlight: Campine Chicken

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

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

Campine chickens are non-sitting fowl that lay white eggs. The breed started



**A Campine cockerel exhibited by Wallace Buttram at the 2011 APA National Show in Indianapolis. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.**

out as a farmyard fowl, but came to play a major role commercially as the Flemish developed and perfected what was the forerunner of today’s commercial production system. The first part of this role was to provide rapid feathering and growth in a cross with the Malines chicken for the production of meat. The second role was as an autosexing breed for egg production. The Campine chicken comes in two varieties: the Silver and the Golden. When Silver

Campine females are mated to Golden Campine males the chicks can be sexed at day-old – the female chicks have a reddish blush and the males have gray on the top of their heads.

Campine chickens were recognized by the American Poultry Association in 1914 in two varieties: Silver and Golden. Males weigh six pounds and females weigh four pounds. ❖



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# Largest Collection of Rare Poultry Breed Paintings to be Exhibited

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

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

## Poultry Art

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

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

include chickens, geese, turkeys, ducks, and chicks and ducklings.

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

## From printing company to global media

The company got its start when 18-year-old J.W. Watt, a Scot from the Orkney Islands, came to America to seek his fortune. He arrived in Chicago in 1907 and learned the print trade. As he became more expert, he went to work for the Kable Brothers, becoming foreman of the composing room in their Mount Morris, Illinois printing plant, south of Chicago. The *Poultry Tribune* was printed at Kable Printing, which was how J.W. learned that it was struggling to survive. Convinced he could make a success of it, J.W. and a partner bought it. They hired editors who knew about poultry to handle the content and sales people who knew how to reach

their audience.

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

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

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

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

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

As the poultry industry changed, Watt Global Media moved beyond the *Poultry Tribune*. Its publications now focus on business-to-business interests: *Poultry USA*, *Poultry International*, *Egg Industry Technology*, *Watt Executive Guide to World Poultry*, and Spanish and Chinese editions. The poultry and the publishing worlds have changed since J.W. learned the printing business.

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

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

For more information visit <http://encoremorris.com/info/OSGallery/>



**Buff Laced Polish chickens by A. O. Schilling, 1928 as it appeared in a supplement to Poultry Tribune.**

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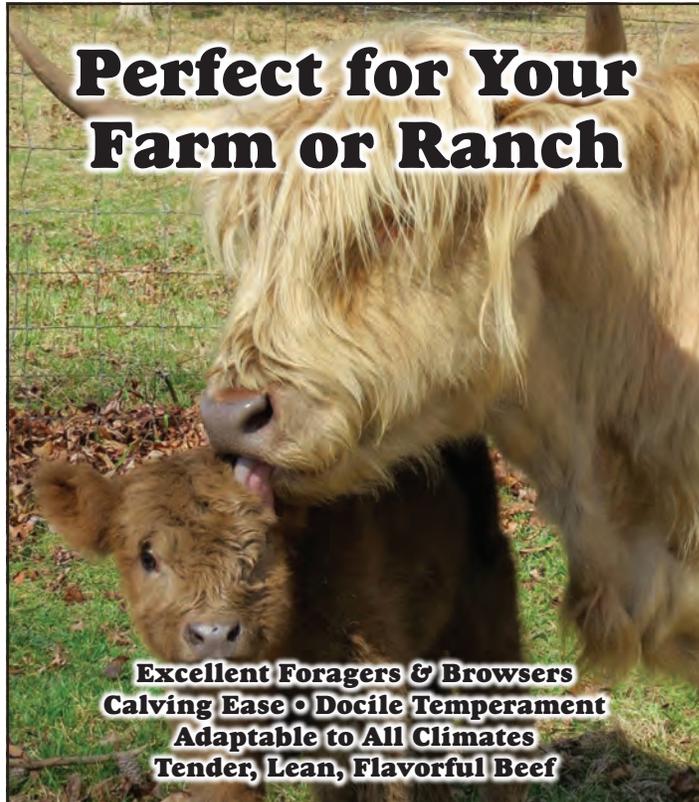
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## CALENDAR

★★ 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.*

### September

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

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

**September 21-24 – The Annual Spanish Barb Horse Association Meeting** will be held in Faywood, NM. Visit [www.spanishbarb.org](http://www.spanishbarb.org) for more information.

**September 23-24 – The Oregon Flock & Fiber Festival** will be held in Canby, OR. The festival includes workshops, demonstrations, livestock shows, seminars, and kids' activities. Visit [www.flockandfiberfestival.com](http://www.flockandfiberfestival.com) for more information.

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

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

### October

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

### 2017 Mother Earth News Fairs

★ Seven Springs, PA:  
Sept. 15-17

★ Topeka, KS:  
Oct. 21-22

These family-oriented sustainable lifestyle events feature dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations, including heritage breed livestock exhibitions. Visit [www.mother-earthnewsfair.com](http://www.mother-earthnewsfair.com) for more information.



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

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

### November

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

**November 11-12 – The Ohio National Poultry Show** will be held in Columbus, OH. Visit [www.ohionational.org](http://www.ohionational.org) for more information.

### December

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

★★ **December 31 - DEADLINE to update information and submit ads** for the Livestock Conservancy's 2018 Breeders and Products Directory. To update your information, log in online, email [info@Livestock-Conservancy.org](mailto:info@Livestock-Conservancy.org), or call 919-542-5704.