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The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

NEWS

Looking Back and Forward with Choctaws

By Mary McConnell and Jeannette Beranger

Five years ago this spring we embarked on the Oklahoma Choctaw horse rescue. We began with inventorying the threatened Bryant Rickman herd and driving over to their home range on Blackjack Mountain in southeastern Oklahoma. Our group included Bryant Rickman, ALBC staffers Marjie Bender and Jeannette Beranger, and ALBC members Mary and Jamie McConnell.

During our drive that day to find horses, Bryant saw a small herd perhaps a mile away and decided to stop the truck in the hope that we could view the band more closely. This particular group Bryant recognized as being led by a beautiful dun stallion known as “SS.” Bryant got out and began to call the horse to him. It was clear as we stood by the truck and watched the scene that the stallion knew and trusted Bryant. He proceeded with purpose down the mountain towards Bryant, and it was as if the horse were recognizing a friend. The lead mares were less trusting, and they all hung back to see what their leader was doing. We suspected that there were too many humans for them to evaluate and that the circumstances were perhaps a bit scary for them. Despite this, a buckskin foal came forward with the stallion, and because of her intent to follow SS, her very reluctant mother came also. The foal was beautiful, and her attitude and trust immediately endeared her to all of us. Bryant knelt and offered SS, the mare, and



Bryant Rickman offers Choctaw horses feed on Blackjack Mountain. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

the foal a feed tub filled with sweet grain that none of them could resist. The scene engaged all hearts within our group.

When Bryant’s grazing lease was pulled on the land in 2008, all of the 300 horses on the mountain had to be moved. Thanks to a large financial gift from an anonymous donor and further support from others, ALBC was able to step in and help Bryant with the rescue of this genetically important herd. Over the course of a year, Bryant was able to capture almost all of the horses and move them to his ranch and into the hands of new stewards.

The buckskin filly on the mountain was at the top of the McConnells’ list to personally rescue. That fall, eight weanlings and eight older horses were safely captured and then taken east to the McConnells’ farm in Virginia. The buckskin

filly, which Mary McConnell named She Comes Dancing, was among them and proved to be everything Mary, an avid horsewoman, had hoped she would be. Today the horse is four years old, going on five. Several months ago Mary arranged for Dancing and two other mares to go to Josh and Emily Rector to begin training for driving. This was done in an effort to promote the breed and make them shine in the show ring and grab people’s attention as they had that day on the mountain five years ago. Giving these horses a job is crucial for the long-term survival of the breed; it was hoped that this job would be a good one for Choctaws.

Josh Rector is one of the best drivers in the sport of combined driving events. Within the sport, the teams compete at

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The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy News

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Basic annual membership is \$35, and includes the quarterly *ALBC News* and the annual *Breeders Directory*. We also accept unsolicited donations. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. Please send changes of address to ALBC.

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Lowcountry Goat Project Continues Its Success

By Jeannette Beranger

This year marks the third year that ALBC has been working with Brookgreen Gardens in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, on building the population of the Lowcountry line of Spanish goats. The project began in 2010 with the capture of a small breeding group of goats that came from a feral population that had been living on a river island in the Lowcountry for nearly 50 years. The population was under threat due to newly introduced hogs and an increasing population of alligators in the area. Brookgreen entered the project as a partner with ALBC to try and save this potentially important population.

Because of the declining gene pool of Spanish goats specifically adapted to the heat, humidity, and parasites of the Southeast, it was important to find new blood to invigorate the population. With

the help of George Carden, a local resident living across from the goats' island, ALBC got permission from the island owner to remove a small group of goats for our conservation project. With the further help of George and his friends and family, we successfully captured male and female goats and placed them in the hands of Brookgreen, where they continue to live in a lush and secure environment (but without alligators!)

Since their arrival, the goats have become a major attraction for visitors to Brookgreen and have reproduced at the facility better than expected. We are happy to report that we were able to place a second batch of kids into the hands of new stewards at the end of 2012. A total of 13 kids were delivered to four new stewards who are all currently working with southeastern strains of this breed. Among the new stewards is North Carolina A&T University that plans to build a pure herd of Spanish goats and study their adaptations for life in the Carolinas. Thanks to all for making this project possible and we look forward to its continued success in 2013. ❖

ALBC Researches Breeds at APA Show

ALBC's Jeannette Beranger traveled to Lucasville, Ohio, recently for the American Poultry Association (APA) Annual Meet, accompanied by Virginia Tech poultry geneticist and professor Ben Dorshorst and two graduate students, who collected blood samples from birds to study color, comb, spur, leg feathering, and egg color characteristics. Jeannette also photographed many of the over 4,000 birds in attendance to add to our library of rare breed images. "We were excited to get photos of about 50 colors and variations we did not have," said Jeannette.

"One was a white Faverolle, and there are only about 50-60 left in the United States."

The winner of "Best in Show" was also a Faverolle, of the salmon variety. Faverolles are currently listed under the threatened category on ALBC's *Conservation Priority List*, indicating that there are fewer than 1,000 breeding birds in the United States, with a global population of less than 5,000. Jeannette discussed the quality of birds exhibited with Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities President Craig Russell, and both agreed that the birds at the show were top-notch. ❖



ALBC's Jeannette Beranger traveled to the American Poultry Association National Show in Lucasville, OH. Photo by Ben Dorshorst.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



By Eric Hallman

Where will ALBC be in 35 years? That question is a weighty one. And to trust the answer to someone who had been with the organization for only a few months seemed like an ill-conceived joke or merciless hazing. But addressing this question was my assignment for the ALBC conference this past fall. How does a newcomer imagine the future of the organization?

Fortunately I'm surrounded by experts who are patiently teaching me about the complexities of our mission and have helped bring the future of ALBC into focus. So, supported by my colleagues, I presented a vision of ALBC's future at the Annual Conference in November. I would now like to share that vision of ALBC's future with you. The inspirational insights I credit to ALBC's amazing staff; any shortcomings are all mine.

So what is in store for ALBC's future? I'd like to dream that in 35 years we will have accomplished our mission – there are no endangered breeds and the world embraces the importance of diversity. But I have a feeling that ALBC will always be needed and we will always stand as the guardians of our genetic heritage.

If we have learned one thing from our past history, it is that ALBC has been successful because we maintain a laser focus on our mission – *Ensuring the future of agriculture through genetic conservation and the promotion of endangered breeds of livestock and poultry*. The world has changed drastically in the last 35 years and we can expect no less in the next 35, but at the end of the day ALBC will continue

to make an impact and lead the way if we stay true to this simple statement.

ALBC has been successful in this mission over the last 35 years – we have not lost a breed that has been on our *Conservation Priority List*. We have had many success stories but we are needed today, more than ever. As we understand more about the status of various breeds, we are reminded of the critical role that ALBC must maintain in breed conservation and rescue. How do we continue on this undertaking? The key to the success of our mission involves the following three pillars:

1. Expand the Scientific Base
2. Translate Science to Application
3. Train the Next Generation

Expand the Scientific Base: The day-to-day work at ALBC is driven by a firm scientific understanding of breeds and breed conservation. Our focus on any particular breed is guided by census numbers -- where do we need to act and when can we declare success? With a *Conservation Priority List* of over 180 breeds, maintaining a clear picture of the numbers of each breed is a challenge that we will continue to face. ALBC will rely on our members, breed associations, and our conservation partners to compile reliable counts of both endangered and non-endangered breeds. As the pace of change quickens both here and around the world, ALBC must increase our vigilance on breed numbers. In addition to breed numbers, we must also understand the internal structure of breeds. With the widespread availability of DNA testing, we must increase our knowledge of genetic diversity within and between breeds. Accomplishing ALBC's mission requires continual attention to census counts and genetic information.

Translate the Science to Application: All of this data benefits no one unless we can translate the numbers into information that can be used to make the best decisions for the future of our breeds. ALBC will continue to apply the scientific knowledge to everyday solutions. One way we do this now is through the guidance of our master breeders – those that understand the art required to successfully maintain a breed. Sadly, if we don't learn from these masters now, we could lose this knowledge to eternity. The art of breed husbandry gathered through years of experience is essential to the survival of these breeds. ALBC will continue to secure the unique knowledge

and functional experience of master breeders to share with those coming behind.

Train the Next Generation: This leads us to the third and arguably the most important pillar – ensuring that the next generation has the knowledge and skills to carry on this conservation work. The data and information generated from the first two pillars must make it into the hands of those who will continue the work of conserving rare breeds. Fortunately there is no shortage of people interested in small farming and heritage breeds. The challenge is in providing the training and support so that this next generation of stewards is successful. ALBC will continue to provide educational material and training for the next generation. We are targeting veterans, women, and youth – groups among whom we see a growing interest in heritage breeds. If ALBC can help this next generation succeed with their farms then the breeds also succeed.

These three objectives support each other to realize ALBC's mission to discover, secure, and sustain heritage breeds for the future of agriculture. Thinking of our mission in the context of these three pillars helped me appreciate where ALBC has been and how we build upon and extend our history of success in the future. The next 35 years are going to be exciting and productive.

ALBC has never experienced such a high level of interest and national exposure. Our staff is constantly sought out for its expertise and ALBC's work is regularly featured in media outlets across the country. The public interest in sustainable farming, locally grown foods, and cooking puts ALBC squarely in the spotlight. With this exposure we are educating more people about our mission than ever before. But to accomplish the objectives above, we need to convert this interest into ALBC membership. I'd like to challenge everyone to recruit one new member – give them this newsletter and ask them to join. We have a lot of work to do over the next 35 years and we can use all the help we can get. Thanks so much for everything you do for ALBC!❖



Visit facebook.com/ALBCfans

Choctaws

Continued from front page

dressage, an obstacle course of cones, and then in a marathon with various obstacles. Josh competes at an international level with his four-in-hand and will soon be driving a four-in-hand of buckskins from the McConnell herd. This is a huge opportunity for a breed barely known outside of Oklahoma. Josh had this to say of his experience, "Dancing's tenacious and brilliant spirit, along with her desire to please and protect her people, gives her the amazing qualities that make her a quick study for driving. Her strength through and through makes me excited to drive her in the lead of the team I am training." He observed that the horse is a natural leader with an incredible desire to learn.

Back in Oklahoma, much has been accomplished by Bryant and his friends to further promote the breed at home and with the Choctaw tribe. Each Labor Day weekend for the past several years they have been invited by the Choctaw Nation to bring horses to their annual Festival and Inter-Tribal Pow Wow, which sees nearly 100,000 visitors each year. The Choctaw Nation further supported the horses with an offer to display them at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian Choctaw Days celebration in Washington, DC. Windrider Farm and Dr. Robert Kraybill and his wife, Tricia, of Cumberland Valley Equine Service, brought Choctaw



She Comes Dancing practicing competitive driving. Photo by Emily Rector.

horses to the event. Visitors were able to meet the horses as they also enjoyed Choctaw culture with food, dancing, and storytelling.

Another project, led by Bryant's friend and fellow Choctaw horse enthusiast Jim Stevens is using the horses as a catalyst to revitalize the small town of Antlers, Oklahoma. The town has a long history with the horses, which are a part of its local culture. Jim fenced over 800 acres of his own property to set up a center for training the horses and for visitors to see them first-hand. Revenues from tours will lend financial support to the Choctaw herd. Be-

yond the local agritourism opportunities, Jim has also built the Hungry Horse Café in town, working with Dianne and Randy Weeks. The café, decorated with Choctaw horse memorabilia and information, will supply an income stream to support the conservation efforts. Local artisans have also joined in and will sell items at the café, with part of the proceeds going to horse conservation.

One of the mountain herd of five years ago which was rescued and moved to the McConnell herd was a golden dun mare. In the spring of 2011 this mare, Ki-michi True Gold, produced a gaited golden dun colt sired by the McConnell Cherokee stallion, Tabac. The colt, Tabac Gold, is destined to return to the Rickman herd in Oklahoma as a breeding stallion and brings the objectives of the Choctaw rescue project full circle. With local floods, drought, and other natural disasters in Oklahoma recently, Tabac's rare bloodlines were lost at the Rickman ranch and needed to be replenished. It is a measure of the success of the work done by everyone concerned with these horses that we have the bloodlines safe on a number of farms and are able to share them with one another. Through the dedication of many people on a wide array of fronts, the future of the Choctaws is much more secure than we could ever have expected five years ago. Thank you to all the breed's stewards and friends for their amazing dedication!❖



Choctaw colt Tabac Gold (right). Photo by Mary McConnell.

Green Shepherd Project

By Ryan Walker

At ALBC, we often say that heritage breed animals need jobs in order to prove their usefulness and ensure they have secure populations. For a flock of Jacob sheep in Indianapolis, having a job is a reality, thanks to Sue Spicer and Kay Grimm, who have been ALBC members since 2005. In addition to managing a local CSA and permaculture fruit farm, they use a flock of Jacobs to “mow” some of the vacant properties on Indianapolis’s East Side.

The crime-ridden area of town where the Jacobs graze is full of boarded-up homes and vacant lots – not the typical place you would expect to find livestock. “We constantly have people stopping by to take pictures,” said Sue. The idea for using sheep came when the city wouldn’t give a community development group they are involved with a contract for mowing because of their lack of commercial equipment and liability insurance. Sue and Kay’s initial Internet research turned up a story of Turin, Italy, bringing in sheep to mow city parks over the winter. “That example was enough proof for us that this project could be successful.” And the rest was history. The Efroymsen Family Fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation helped them purchase solar-powered electric fencing to both keep the sheep in and the people out. “The sheep are the least of our worries,” said Sue. “We occasionally have people with dinner in mind ask if they are for sale...and there was also a close call with a hungry man with a hammer.”

The two women spent three years researching breeds of sheep to find one that would fit their needs. Through online research, farm visits, and help from ALBC, they settled on Jacobs and used the *ALBC Rare Breeds, Breeders and Products Directory* to locate stock. “We took several things into consideration when choosing a breed,” said Sue. “It needed to like eating weeds, do a good job around fence lines, and look a little gnarly.” Jacob sheep, an ancient breed, are known for their unusual horns and interesting color patterns. Sue and Kay felt that the community would be more accepting of the sheep if they had a non-traditional look to them, and Jacobs fit



Jacob sheep Twisty (wethered male) and Lily (ewe lamb) “mowing” for the Green Shepherd Project. Photo courtesy of the Green Shepherd Project.

the bill. They also fit in with Sue and Kay’s beliefs in sustainable, environmentally sound practices.

When asked how effective the sheep were at their job, Sue recalled a vacant property where grass was about three feet tall in the front yard and five feet tall in the back yard. “It took three wethered males seven days and nights to turn those yards into stubble.”

“I would advise anyone considering doing this to do their research first,” said Sue. “If your goal is to have them graze in city parks or football fields, you might look to other breeds. Jacobs work perfect for our project, but other breeds might perform better in different situations.” Sue said the Jacobs prefer to eat the weeds (which are abundant in these lots) before the grass and actually do a better job (even in the city’s Board of Health Inspector’s opinion), than the city’s mowing contractors because they don’t shred the trash and debris on the overgrown lots like the lawnmowers do.

Currently, Sue and Kay are serving as the primary shepherds, but have plans to locate a couple of local homeless disabled veterans to take over the job. Their plans are to have the shepherds live a mobile lifestyle, moving from lot to lot with a tent and stove, tending the sheep. One of the legacies of last year’s Super Bowl in Indianapolis was a new community health center with showers and other facilities that the shepherds could use through member-

ships provided by the project.

The Green Shepherd Project is planning to add three more sheep to its flock this spring and would like to expand into lots that have code violations for overgrown vegetation after they prove that their Jacob sheep can “turn the neighborhood into an English estate.” “I really do love the shepherd part of this project,” said Sue. “I get so much satisfaction out of watching the sheep frolic, jumping for joy.” ❖

To learn more about the Green Shepherd Project, visit its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/GreenShepherdProject. Interns and volunteers are welcome.

Welcome to our Newest Life Members!

ALBC would like to give a special thanks to our members who have most recently chosen to support ALBC and its conservation programs by becoming life members.

Linda Sherrill
New Palestine, IN

Judy Wollen
Falls Church, VA

If you would like to learn more about becoming a life member, please contact Ryan Walker at 919-542-5704, ext. 102, or rwalker@albc-usa.org.



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Our 2012 Conference

The 2012 ALBC Conference – and the sunny, 72-degree November North Carolina weather – were a huge hit with attendees. After the conference, ALBC sent out a survey to attendees and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Some of the responses we received were: “very well organized”, “a great value”, “food was delicious”, and “the best yet!”

Festivities started Friday morning with six pre-conference clinics. People who

signed up for Heritage Breed Hog Semen Collection, Evaluation, Processing, and Preservation enjoyed a full day of education on semen collection and artificial insemination at nearby North Carolina State University, which was also host to the FAMACHA® Parasite Management and Certification course. FAMACHA attendees enjoyed hands-on experience with small ruminants, learning to identify and treat parasite infections.



Board Chair Charles Taft and Executive Director Eric Hallman pose with “Oprah Hen-Free.” Photo by Ryan Walker.



THE 1772 FOUNDATION

The William J.J. Gordon Family Foundation



Phil Sponenberg presents D.P. Lowther and his wife, Ms. Dan, with the Bixby-Sponenberg Conservation Award. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

Two poultry clinics were also held by the Chicken Whisperer®, Andy Schneider and co-host Patricia Foreman, both of which were thoroughly enjoyed by attendees. Getting Started with Backyard Chickens covered “everything you need to know” about starting your own flock. Garden Chick – Growing Food with and for Family Flocks discussed creative ways to “bird-scape.” Garden Chick attendees also enjoyed the company of Pat’s celebrity chicken “Oprah Hen-Free,” quite possibly the most well-traveled chicken in America.

After the popularity of the 2011 rabbit clinic, Eric and Callene Rapp from the Rare Hare Barn were asked back to host the Wonderful Warrens clinic on how to construct and maintain a profitable rabbitry. Another popular clinic was Tricky Business of Managing a Breed association. This clinic featured a panel of experts who advised attendees on issues like fiscal management, conflict resolution, politics,

and registrations for associations, clubs, and societies.

Friday night’s Conference Kick-Off Banquet featured a rare breeds dinner and silent auction. Heritage breed meats featured were Mulefoot pork, St. Croix lamb, and Pineywoods and Randall Lineback beef. Attendees took part in networking opportunities and the silent auction, which raised more than \$6,000 for ALBC. Key-

note speaker Diane Ott Whealy from Seed Savers Exchange delivered a presentation of Seed Savers’ history. One of the highlights of the night, (and the conference) was the presentation of the Bixby-Sponenberg Conservation Award. This year’s recipient was D.P. Lowther of Ridgeland, South Carolina. D.P.’s family has raised Marsh Tacky horses for three generations, tracing their original herd back to the civil war in South Carolina. D.P. recalled many fond memories from his 80 years working with Marsh Tackies and captivated the audience with his passion for the animals.

Saturday followed with 14 presentations on a wide array of topics, from knitting to marketing to animal husbandry. That evening, attendees gathered for a networking reception over hors d’oeuvres and enjoyed book signings by several authors. Attendees also watched as a live broadcast from the of the radio show “Backyard Poultry with the Chicken Whisperer” took place from the reception room. The show is broadcast to over 15,000 listeners daily; this show featured an interview with ALBC Executive Director Eric Hallman. Oprah Hen-Free wrapped up the night by making a final appearance for photographs with her fans.

Save the date for this year’s conference: November 8-9, 2013. We’re back in North Carolina again; more details to follow soon! ❖



Participants enjoy the Rare Breed Dinner at the 2012 ALBC Conference. Photo by Ryan Walker.

ALBC Wishlist

Did you receive some gifts over the holidays that you aren't using and don't know what to do with? Maybe you've upgraded and still have that old computer monitor sitting in the garage, or have all of those airline miles you're never going to use. Don't throw them out – we may be able to use them!

Below is a list of items ALBC could use to help it accomplish its mission. If you have any of these items and would like to donate them to ALBC, please contact us at (919) 542-5704, or email albc@albc-usa.org. All donations are greatly appreciated!

Livestock trailer

Minivan

Farm truck < 50K miles

Gas cards

Airline miles

Car rental miles

Hotel reward points

Printing and photocopying gift cards

Laptops < 1 year old

Desktop computers < 2 years old

iPads with cellular capability

19-inch LCD monitors

LCD projectors

New copy machine

Digital video camera

Printers and print cartridges

Copy paper

Bubble mailers

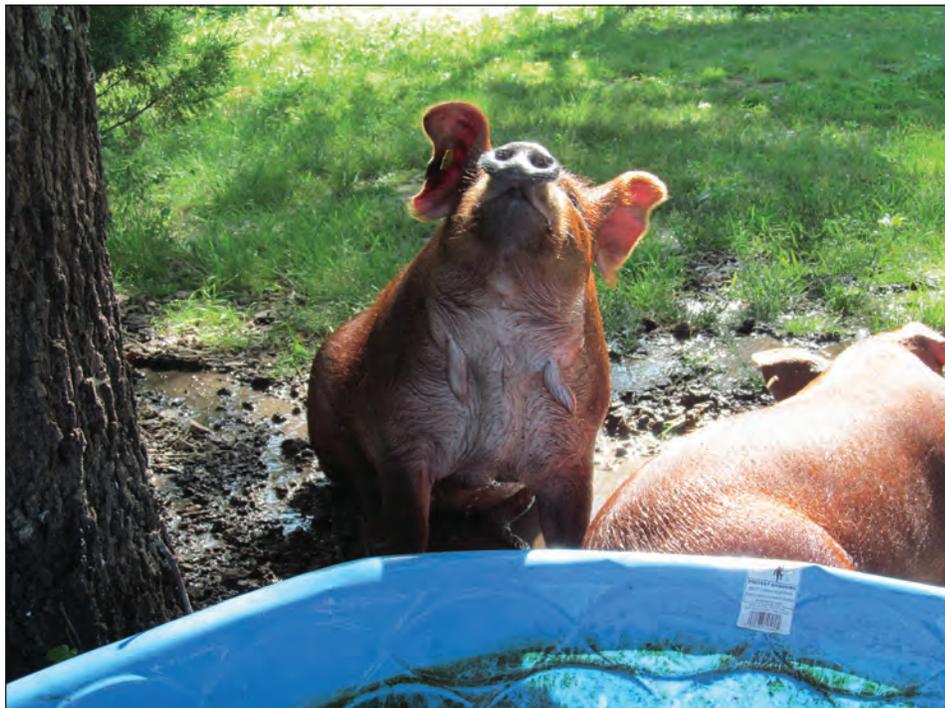
Postage stamps

Silent auction items

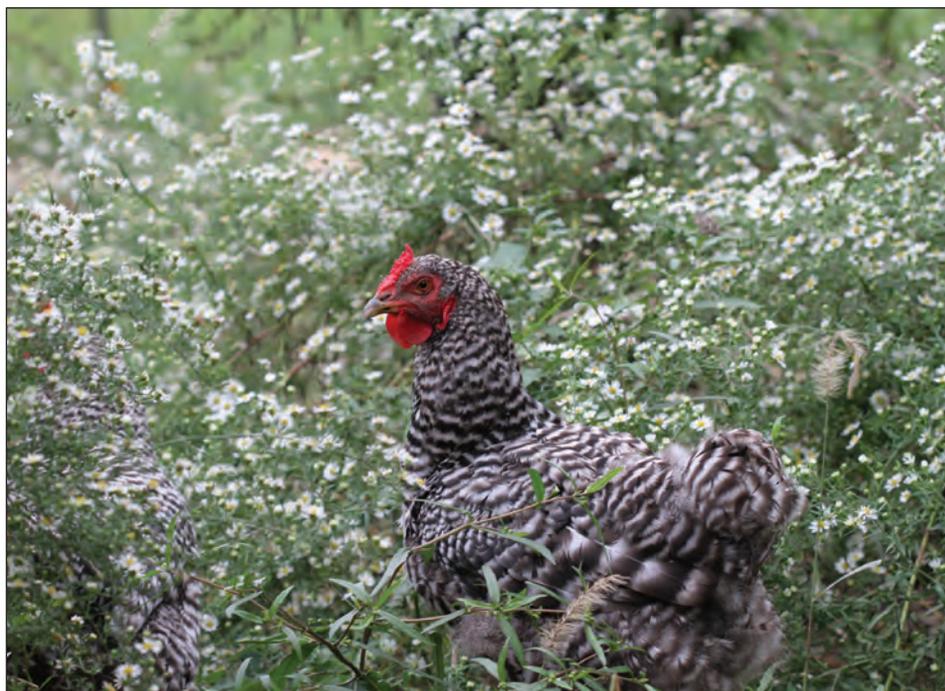


Where's Your Sticker?

Thanks to everyone who donated to ALBC during our end-of-year fundraising drive. Those who made a donation in any amount received a "Save Rare Breeds" bumper sticker and an invitation to submit photos with their sticker in them. We received many great photos. ALBC still has stickers for new donations, so donate and get yours today!



First Place: Red Wattle hog "Ruby" by Amanda Werner.

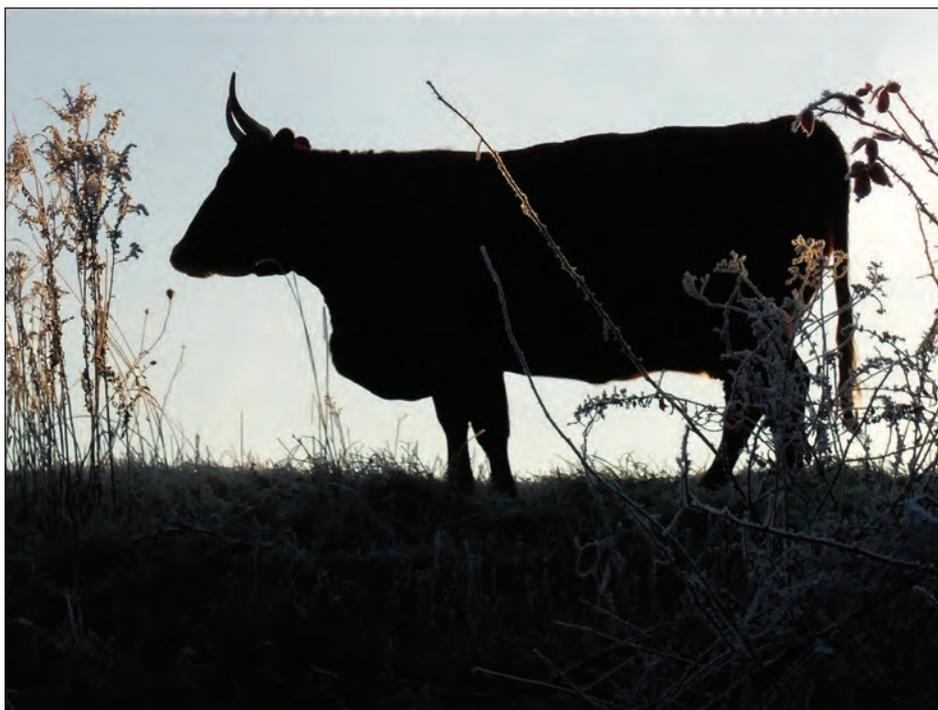


Second Place: Dominique hens in wildflowers by Andrea Holladay.

Photo Contest Winners

ALBC would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who participated in the 2012 photo contest. We had nearly 50 entries – one of the best years on record! The top three photos, shown here, were selected by ALBC staff, and winners received official Member Photo Contest award certificates.

ALBC invites everyone to participate in this year's contest by taking photos of your rare breeds throughout 2013 and sending them in to ALBC. We prefer digital files in a high-resolution format. The annual photo contest helps to build the ALBC photo archive and is a way for members to showcase their animals and the work they do with them. Photos can be emailed to rwalker@albc-usa.org, or mailed to ALBC, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312. Mailed images will not be returned.



Third Place: Milking Devon silhouette by Jackie Cleary.

Thank you!

ALBC thanks all these individuals and organizations that worked to make the 2012 conference a great success.

Meat Providers

Jess Brown of Cowpen Creek Farm
(Pinewoods beef)
David Grant of Carolina Marsh Tacky
Outdoors (farm raised chicken)
Gra Moore of Carolina Heritage Farms
(Mulefoot pork)
Charles Taft of Stauber Farm
(St. Croix lamb)

Guest Speakers

Nils Berglund
Dan Campeau
Olga Elder
Anne Fanatico
Billy Flowers
Patricia Foreman
Julie Gauthier
Ben Goldsmith
David Kendall
Jean-Marie Lugimbuhl
John Metzger
Gra Moore
Melody Nye

Callene & Eric Rapp
Frank Reese, Jr.
Tim Safranski
Andy Schneider
Phil Sponenberg
Bradley Taylor
Della Williams

Staff Speakers

Jeannette Beranger
Eric Hallman
Alison Martin

Volunteers

Nell Allen
Bob Armbruster
Jess Brown
Cabell Garbee
Lisa Lynn
Karen Mast
Wayne Metheny
Neil Perin
Amy Stamey
William Towne

Silent Auction

Thanks to those who donated and bid on items in the silent and live auctions. Over \$6,000 was raised to help support ALBC!

Special Thanks

To the staff at the Embassy Suites Raleigh Durham Research Triangle.

Thanks to everyone who attended the conference. We hope to see you next year!



Congratulations to the American Milking Devon Cattle Association for winning the poster contest! Photo by Ryan Walker.

Holiday Farm Visits

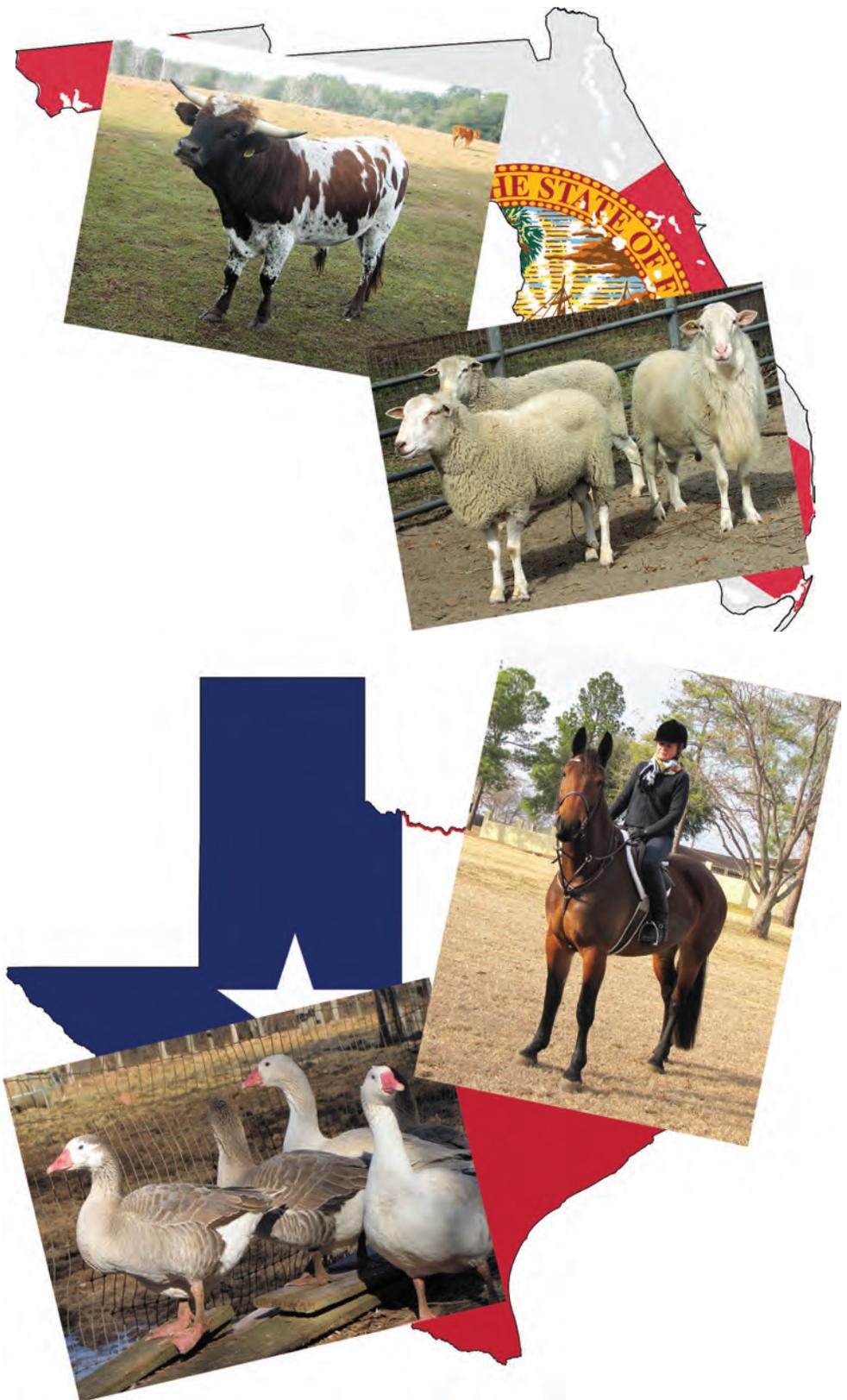
ALBC staff try to seize every opportunity they get to visit members who raise heritage breeds. Over the holidays, Research & Technical Programs Director Alison Martin and Marketing & Communications Manager Ryan Walker took advantage of their holiday travels to visit with members in Florida and Texas.

Alison visited Ralph Wright, president of the Florida Cracker Sheep Association, and sheep breeders Lewis Cox and Carol Postley. Ralph raises Florida Cracker cattle, Florida Cracker sheep, and Cotton Patch geese in Lake City, and Lewis and Carol raise Florida Cracker sheep in Lake City and Ocala. Florida Cracker sheep and cattle share a name referring to the “Florida Cracker” colonial and pioneer settlers who raised them. Florida Cracker sheep roamed woods and scrub for 450 years until Florida ended the open range at the end of World War II.

Both the sheep and cattle are heat-tolerant, long-lived, resistant to parasites and diseases, and productive on the low quality forage found on the grasslands and in the swamps of the Deep South. Carol uses parasite resistance as the priority for her breeding program and gets stellar fecal egg counts (FECs) on her annual tests, with some of the sheep producing FECs of zero. Florida Cracker cattle and Cotton Patch geese are listed as Critically endangered on ALBC’s *Conservation Priority List (CPL)* and Florida Cracker sheep are currently in the Study category.

Ryan’s trip to Texas also included a visit with Cotton Patch geese on ALBC member Mark Chapin’s farm. Cotton Patch geese get their name from their historical roles in weeding cotton and corn fields. A couple of geese could keep an entire acre of cotton weeded and they are regaining popularity with organic farmers today for this reason. Cotton Patch geese work well in vineyards and for other broad-leaf crops like potatoes, beets, beans, and strawberries.

Another Texas visit brought Ryan to the farm of Gabrielle Gordon, vice president of the Cleveland Bay Horse Society of North America (CBHSNA), where they discussed ways to market and promote the Cleveland Bay breed. Cleveland Bays are



listed as Critically endangered on ALBC’s *CPL*. As Gabrielle pointed out, they are extremely versatile and intelligent animals that can be used for anything from carriage driving, to showing, to hunting, to police horses. With their good temperament, they also make terrific horses for

youth to work with. ❖

For more information about the breeds mentioned above, as well as the rest of the breeds on ALBC’s Conservation Priority List, visit the Breed Information section of our website at www.albc-usa.org/cpl/wtchlist.html.

The Extinction of the English Leicester in the U.S.

By Bruce H. Kalk, PhD

This is the second installment of the Extinctions Project series. The article below is in its original, published form from 1991. Updates on the Leicester Longwool breed's status in the United States since the article was published follow.

It is a single irony of the American sheep-raising industry that as it came of age, the progenitor of modern sheep-breeding, the English Leicester, was lost in this country.

Before explaining the curious rise and fall of the Leicester it is important to explain several important developments to the history of American sheep-raising. The first of these is fundamental: sheep never made it big in the United States. The British had made a success story out of sheep-raising nearly everywhere they went: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and of course, in Great Britain itself. But these successes were not imitated in British North America.

Perhaps the most obvious reason for the underdevelopment in North America was that Americans simply did not care for mutton very much. Lamb and mutton, in fact, have long represented only a small part of the American diet. As a result, per capita consumption of lamb in the United States has hovered around seven pounds a year, in contrast with beef and pork consumption, which are each about ten times as great.

Unlike beef and pork, lamb consumption has varied little with price fluctuation. Toward the end of the nineteenth century lamb did become somewhat more popular, especially with immigrants used to its taste, but this development did not permanently alter the unfavorable position of lamb in the United States. The other economic function of the sheep-wool production-might well have made the animal catch on more in the United States, but American consumers continued to import much of their wool from abroad instead.

A second development which has a tremendous impact on the economy of sheep-raising was the emergence of the "Ameri-



Kelly Anderson showing off one of her Leicester Longwool sheep at the Mother Earth News Fair. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

can Merino" and the "Merino Craze" of 1812-15. The popularity of the Merino stemmed from the movement toward fine woolen fleece. The Merino sheep originated in Spain but were dispersed to many other European countries. When the Merinos were imported to the United States, however, the different geographic varieties were reconsolidated into a breed quickly termed the "American Merino." This animal was highly prized for the excellence of its fine fleece.

With the outbreak of the War of 1812, Great Britain abruptly ceased exporting woolen goods to the United States. The result was a dearth of fine fleece and a correspondingly dramatic interest in the American Merino breed. As a "Merino Craze" set in, the price of Merinos went through the roof. Before the war broke out, one pound of merino wool brought 75 cents. By 1813, the price of Merino wool had skyrocketed to two to three dollars per pound. Investors speculated on the animal, certain of a high return if they resold the sheep.

The craze ended abruptly in 1815 when hostilities with Great Britain ended and

the trade in imported wool resumed. Many speculators lost a fortune as a result, having spent a lavish sum for sheep that now returned to their modest prewar value on the marketplace. But even if the frenzied speculative craze had passed, the Merino had established itself as perhaps the preeminent breed to many American breeders. As a general rule, the American Merino was regarded as the ideal in American agriculture from that point forward.

The third development that shaped much of the history of American sheep-raising was the collapse of the market, especially the market for fine woolens, following the "panic of 1837." Low points in the business cycle affected agriculture drastically, but the severity of the economic collapse of 1837 fundamentally altered the dynamics of sheep-raising.

In the wake of the collapse, wool prices plummeted. The result was that ca. 1840, producers turned away from wool production towards meat production. With the collapse of the wool market, the Merino temporarily ceased to be the breed of preference. Producers for a time turned away from fine-wooled breeds toward medium wool breeds because the price of their fleece had held steadier amidst the 1837 collapse of the market. Producers also geared their

continued on next page

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Extinction of the English Leicester in the U.S.

Continued from previous page
flocks toward mutton type sheep.

The fourth development shaping the industry took place between 1840 and 1860 and affected not only sheep-raising but all livestock raising and indeed all of American agriculture: the decline of the eastern seaboard with western migration. This development permitted farmers to take advantage of cheap and plentiful land where there animals could graze on wide open ranges.

In 1840, the nine northeastern states of New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania produced 56.6 percent of all American sheep; by 1860, 27.4 percent. The explanation was simple: it cost too much to raise sheep in the East. By the late 1850s, it was becoming next to impossible for eastern sheep producers to compete with westerners. It cost one to two dollars per head to raise sheep in Pennsylvania, but only twenty-five to fifty cents per head in parts of the Midwest.

As American sheep-raising moved west, the breed of choice in the western livestock ranges was the Merino. Thus the Merino was prospering where sheep were on the rise; simultaneously, the breed had fallen out of favor in the East, where sheep-raising was on the decline anyway.

This understanding of the developments that shaped the economy of sheep-raising in America provides a context for understanding the rise and fall of the English Leicester. The four developments, that sheep-raising failed to compete with beef and pork; the rise of the American Merino as the “ideal” breed; the readjusted marketplace following the panic of 1837; and the westward movement of sheep-raising between 1840 and 1860, all assist in explaining the loss of the Leicester.



A Leicester Longwool ewe, part of Colonial Williamsburg's Rare Breeds Program. Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

The Leicester, in fact, was born of illustrious origins. Robert Bakewell, the father of modern animal breeding, through his numerous efforts at scientifically improving livestock, originated the Leicester Long-Wool in the late eighteenth century. Although the Leicester did not immediately capture the fancy of English sheep-raisers, Bakewell created a breed association, the Dishley Society, in 1790. The Dishley Society proved helpful in promoting the Leicester. In time, two types of Leicester arose in Britain: the Leicester and the Border Leicester, but these differences are of no concern in American agriculture because they were considered the same breed in the United States.

The animal was introduced to North America before the American Revolution. It was highly prized, especially for its value in selective cross-breeding. George Washington, in fact, purchased Leicesters for Mount Vernon. The animal spread in popularity in the United States in the earli-

est part of the nineteenth century.

But the Leicester, which like other long-wool sheep was ultimately bred primarily for its meat rather than its fleece, exhibited two major defects that greatly hindered it. The first was the poor quality of its meat, which was not only extremely fatty, but also had the fat deposited in a layer around the meat. The second problem with the Leicester was also its main attraction: its fleece was very coarse and coarse wool lost favor with American consumers over time. While the demand for coarse wool had its ups and downs, discriminating consumers ultimately decided that they preferred fine wool. With sheep-raising sharing the highly competitive conditions that prevailed in swine and cattle raising, once producers adopted the mindset that demanded they make decisions based on the exigencies of the marketplace, sheep-raisers determined that the defects of the Leicester were too serious to continue raising the animal.

The American Merino began to eclipse the Leicester during the famous “Merino Craze” of 1812-1815. The Merino, which possessed a very fine fleece, continued in the ascendancy until the “panic of 1837” brought about the collapse of the market for fine wools. This alternation in the marketplace initially appeared to bode quite well for the Leicester, which benefited considerably from the Merino's decline. But the Merino's decline was short-lived indeed.

Although the Leicester came back into vogue *ca.* 1840, its popularity was restricted largely to the Eastern Seaboard; the Merino was by far more popular in the West. Unfortunately for the Leicester, the east at that very point was beginning its rapid decline as the epicenter of sheep-raising in America. Thus the Leicester was becoming entrenched in the one part of the country where the industry was on the verge of collapsing almost entirely.

It is not to say, however, that the Leicester was lost by the advent of the Civil War, by which time the focus of sheep-raising was centered in Illinois, Wisconsin, and



Leicester Longwool yarn from Longhill Farm in Snow Camp, NC. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

Missouri. In fact, the American Leicester Breeders' Association formed in 1888 and registered over 15,000 purebreds between 1888 and 1914. By the turn of the century, the breed was represented primarily in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Oregon in the United States

and in Ontario in Canada.

Gradually, the Leicester's one undisputed asset, its excellence for selective cross-breeding, resulted in its loss, for the animal was bred to improve other stock to such an extent that as early as 1914 one writer commented that there were no

pure-breds in existence. The American Leicester Breeders' Association continued to register pure-breds, however. By 1930, only 213 registered purebreds were in existence. It is safe to say that the animal became extinct in the United States shortly thereafter. ❖

Dr. Bruce Kalk is the Associate Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Southern Connecticut State University. At the time this article was written, he was a PhD candidate in history at the University of North Carolina. He can be reached at Kalkb1@southernct.edu.

Updates on the Leicester Longwool breed

Leicester Longwool sheep were re-imported to the United States by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and Willow Brook Farm in 1990. Ten sheep were brought from Tasmania, Australia and have served as the base flock for the Leicester Longwool sheep in the United States today. The breed had progressed to being classified as Threatened on ALBC's *Conservation Priority List*, but moved back to Critical in 2009 due to declining numbers both in this country, as well as in its home country of England and worldwide. Numbers have started to increase slightly over the past few years as people have begun to take notice of the wool, which is favored by handspinners and weavers for its handle, sheen, durability, and beautiful dye acceptance.

Although this article was critical of the meat quality of Leicester Longwools, and the breed has historically been used primarily for fiber production, with proper management, the meat can actually be quite good. ALBC staff had the opportunity to sample some outstanding Leicester meat recently. Today, fewer than 2% of Americans consume lamb. Although U.S. per capita consumption has fallen to around 1 pound per year, it may be increasing as the country becomes more racially and ethnically diverse. About half of the lamb consumed in the United States today is imported.



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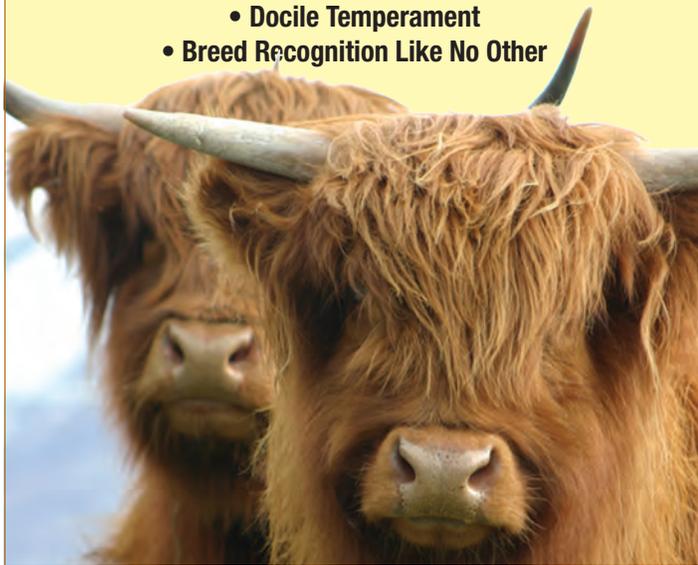
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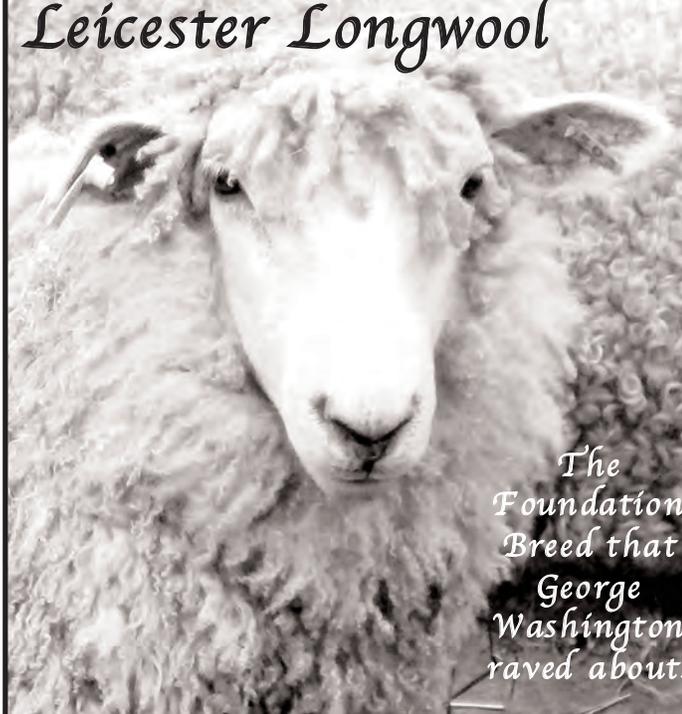
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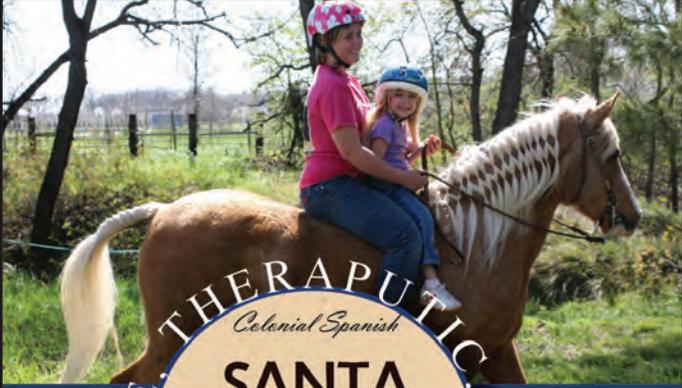
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February 16-17 – The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association's annual conference, Growing Opportunities, Cultivating Change, will take place in Granville, OH. The event is Ohio's largest annual gathering of farmers, consumers, researchers, gardeners, and businesses committed to organic and sustainable agriculture. Visit www.oeffa.org or call (614) 421-2022 for more information.

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