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Conserving rare breeds since 1977

THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™ NEWS

Discover, Secure, and Sustain: Progress in 2015

By Alison Martin

As you review progress in our major programs for the past twelve months, you can take pride in several significant accomplishments. We hope that this report conveys the importance of these projects and the impact they have on heritage breeds and farmers across the country. We owe our continued success to many dedicated and passionate members and conservation partners.

Saving Endangered Hog Breeds

Three-year research initiative. The completion of this program yielded important tools for heritage swine breeders and deeply impacts our approach to swine conservation in coming years. Heritage pork has surged in popularity among consumers

and chefs, and energetic breeders saw four breeds promoted from Critical to Threatened during the course of this project.

The results from the initiative include:

- Breeding recommendations for five breeds were distributed to breed associations with the effect of engaging them in deeper consideration of how to conserve genetic diversity in their breed.
- DNA analysis gave new insight into breed relationships and genetic health
- Carcass characteristics of eight breeds were published on the web by our partners at University of Kentucky
- An enterprise budget and marketing plan worksheet for swine were developed and additional educational bulletins for raising heritage breed swine on pasture should be

available to farmers in coming months.

More details can be found at www.livestockconservancy.org/index.php/heritage/internal/heritage-swine.

Germplasm import. In 2015, we collaborated with breed associations, breeders, USDA, and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust of the U.K. to import germplasm for rare Large Black and Gloucestershire Old Spots. The first import arrived safely at the USDA labs in June 2015, where it is undergoing additional testing and DNA evaluation. Careful management of imported semen is planned to ensure that the new genetics add to rather than replace American genetics, and further additions to the frozen repository will serve as a conserva-

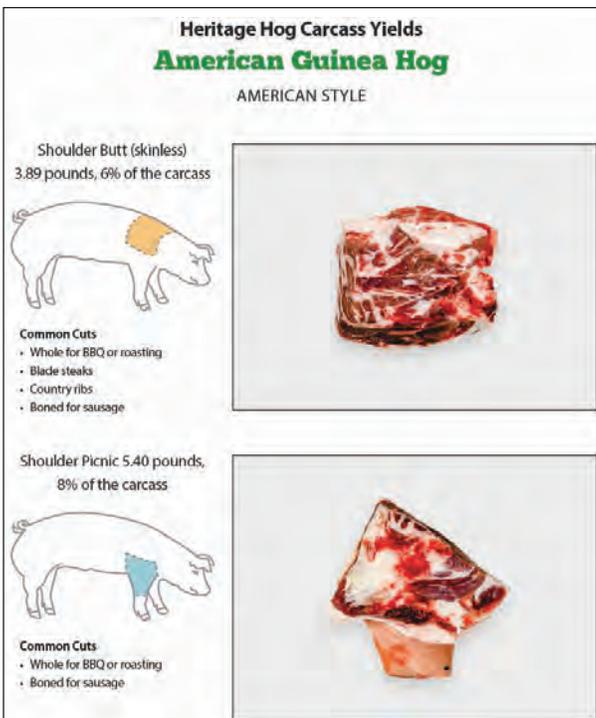
tion reserve.

Choctaw hog project. Choctaw hogs came to live at the Oklahoma Heritage Horse Sanctuary in early 2015, despite ongoing challenges posed by ice storm damage. A three-day work weekend organized by The Livestock Conservancy in April brought numerous volunteers to clear the remaining damage, complete fencing, and make barn repairs needed to expand the breeding herd. The breeding herd now has access to a ten-acre paddock where they can safely forage in the woods, and the first litters were born this fall.

An additional discovery of Choctaw hogs in Michigan was validated and documented, representing a different bloodline from the Oklahoma hogs.

Census

In the decade that has passed since the last comprehensive poultry census, their popularity has exploded, especially for chickens, so a new census was conducted. Unlike for livestock, the poultry census process is much more labor intensive. Important partners such as the American Poultry Association, the Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities, Heritage Poultry Conservancy, Mother Earth News, breed clubs, commercial poultry hatcheries, Rare Breeds Canada, and many more helped make more than four million poultry enthusiasts aware of the census. Results continue to come in; however the bulk of results have been tabulated and it is clear that many breeds of ducks, geese and chickens are more numerous than in 2006. Chicken breeds whose numbers remain critical are mainly in the Continental and Oriental classes. The results of this census will drive our poultry conservation program for years to come.



Carcass characteristics of eight breeds were published on the web by our partners at University of Kentucky.

continued on page 4

FROM THE CHAIR



By John Metzger

The Livestock Conservancy Board is extremely pleased to announce that Dr. Alison Martin has been selected as our permanent Executive Director. She has been our interim Director for the past six months and has done an exemplary job. Under her leadership, we had an excellent annual meeting in Santa Rosa in November, our poultry census was concluded (the results are soon to be published), work has begun on our Caspian horse project, and

there was a tremendously enthusiastic response to our annual appeal in December. Over 450 donations were received, with many from individuals that have never given before. In addition, Alison has been invited to speak at the National Poultry Breeders Roundtable in May to share our vision of preserving rare breeds of poultry to ensure future diversity. She was also instrumental in introducing Bob Kennard, our keynote speaker at our 2015 annual conference, to the American Lamb Board in the hope that he can assist them in their American Mutton Renaissance. There is a new excitement in the air about conservation of rare breeds of livestock and poultry, and the Board of The Livestock Conservancy feels we are exceptionally fortunate to have Alison Martin lead our organization. ❖

From the Technology Desk

In order to clean up our database and keep information manageable, we will only accept one email address to publish in our directory per member account. We can store other addresses in your record as an alternate way to contact you, but if you currently have more than one address, please let us know the primary one you want to use and publish. Thank you for helping us keep our data clean and easy to manage!

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

Dennis V Lange
Audubon, MN

Brian Larson & Jennifer Garrett
Dowling, MI



Sign up for monthly giving at
LivestockConservancy.org or call (919) 542-5704.

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

The Conservancy welcomes articles, photographs, letters, and classified advertising for possible publication. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement

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Jeannette Beranger, Research & Technical Program Manager
Michele Brane, Donor Information and Research Manager
Angelique Thompson, Operations Director
Ryan Walker, Marketing and Communications Manager

Advisors

D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, PhD, Technical Advisor



FROM THE SCIENCE — D E S K —

Rare Breeds, Inbreeding, and Breed Survival

D. P. Sponenberg

Managing rare breeds often boils down to the management of inbreeding. The same is true of the genetic management of individual herds. I used to be somewhat cavalier about inbreeding, thinking that selection for productivity could minimize the risk of inbreeding depression. With a few more years under my belt, I have more respect for inbreeding, inbreeding depression, and the potential risk that it poses to rare breeds. Inbreeding can be a positive and powerful tool in rare breed conservation and management, but it needs to be used wisely because it very definitely has a potentially negative downside!

Inbreeding is the mating of related animals. Exactly how to distinguish it from linebreeding is subjective, because they are both “inbreeding,” but they are usually taken to mean different degrees of relationship. One useful distinction is to consider inbreeding to be the mating of first-degree relatives. “First degree” means parent to offspring, full-sibling, or half-siblings to one another. More distant relationships pose less of a threat, and can be considered linebreeding instead of

inbreeding.

The reason inbreeding needs to be taken seriously is “inbreeding depression,” which refers to diminished vitality in inbred animals. This occurs to different degrees in different populations, breeds, or herds, but usually includes reproductive characters (fertility and prolificacy), and also general health and environmental adaptation. The perplexing part of this is that some populations tolerate great degrees of inbreeding, while others do not. Unfortunately, predicting which is which before undertaking inbreeding is impossible. Some lines of rare breeds have been intensely inbred for several generations, but then suddenly hit a real wall of inbreeding depression where fertility and vitality reach levels that threaten the survival of the line.

Inbreeding within a breed usually occurs in one of a few different ways. In some breeds that are very separated into different bloodlines, inbreeding can occur within a bloodline, or multiple bloodlines, but from bloodline to bloodline unrelated animals are still available. Pineywoods cattle are an example, with many distinct family lines. Each is relatively linebred, some are highly inbred, but each is completely unrelated to other lines of the breed.

Other breeds, usually through use of individual popular sires and their sons, end up with all animals of the breed inbred to

the same individual animal. If memory serves correctly, Lusitano horses all have at least some relationship to a popular sire from the early 1900s. In this case, completely unrelated matings are no longer available to breeders, even though the actual inbreeding level is relatively low, occurred in the distant past, and may pose no real threat. Individual closed herds can experience the same thing by using one male for a single generation, because after that generation every animal within the herd is related to that same single male, even if other herds in the breed are not. Randall cattle are a good example of this, because Everett Randall used a single bull in the herd for several years, then replaced him with a son. That pattern was repeated over several generations, so now all Randall cattle are related.

These two situations (inbreeding across an entire breed versus inbreeding limited to single bloodlines) can have different significance to the breed. In the first instance there are still unrelated matings available for every animal of the breed. In the second situation there is no option for a completely unrelated mating, and if inbreeding depression occurs, there is therefore no remedy. The important and tricky detail here is that when an inbred animal is mated to a completely unrelated mate, the offspring is not inbred at all.

continued on page 11



The Pineywoods cattle breed has many distinct family lines. Pictured: Desoto Pineywoods bull owned by Jess Brown. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

Discover, Secure, and Sustain

Continued from page 1

Heritage Poultry Recovery Project

In 2015, program staffer Jeannette Beranger began a personal project on her farm to restore productivity of Crèvecouer chickens. Considered a fine table fowl in France, Crèvecouer chickens in the United States have long been bred for fun and exhibition. After scouring the country for the kind of breeding stock she wanted to start her flock, Beranger hatched large numbers of eggs in spring 2015 and established satellite flocks in the region. Fortunately, Crèvecouers have proven to be productive layers of medium to large white eggs, and are earning their keep while Beranger works to restore growth and size to the standard she has seen in the breed in France.

The annual heritage chicken giveaway, led by Ogden Publications, the parent company of *Mother Earth News* and several other publications, is a true collaboration of partners. In 2015, The Livestock Conservancy facilitated the donation of a flock of Faverolle chicks by eFowl, which were raised at Seed Savers Exchange farm in Decorah, Iowa. The Livestock Conservancy led a breeder selection workshop at Seed Savers' annual conference during the summer. The "cream of the crop" of the flock was shipped to the winner of the giveaway, along with other necessities for rearing poultry, supplied by Tractor Supply Company, Ogden Publications, and other vendors. More than 31,000 participants



Considered a fine table fowl in France, Crèvecouer chickens in the United States have long been bred for fun and exhibition. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.



Low country Spanish goats have been added to at least 12 herds between 2010 and 2015. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

signed up for the giveaway. Following the drawing, The Livestock Conservancy contacted participants with more information about heritage poultry.

Discovery and Rescue

Our ever-growing network allows us to find and conserve the rarest of the rare breeds, such as Shaw chickens in Mississippi and Choctaw pigs in Oklahoma that were thought to have disappeared. These findings suggest that there are other rare breeds yet to be documented. With this said, it should be noted that some discoveries may not necessarily lead to a successful rescue. In 2014-2015 we:

- Joined with the USDA and University of Alaska to develop an action plan to ensure the future for cattle on the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. Although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not support its implementation in 2015, we continue working with these partners and others in Alaska to refine plans and timetables.
- Investigated half a dozen different herds of native sheep and goats on the island of Hawaii and prioritized them for conservation.
- Low Country Spanish goats have been added to at least 12 herds between 2010 and 2015, after The Conservancy was called upon in 2008 to rescue Spanish goats in South Carolina that could no longer stay on their coastal island.

The Conservancy stands ready to act whenever rescue situations arise.

Called on for Scientific Expertise

The Livestock Conservancy is recognized for its expertise in endangered

breeds and its network of breeders. A few accomplishments in 2015 include:

- We provided guidance on feral pig policies and avian flu response to farms and breeders.
- For ten years The Livestock Conservancy has partnered with Mississippi State University to analyze the gaits of the unique breeds we work with. These studies have appeared at national scientific meetings and in the *Journal of Animal Science* and *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*. In 2015, results for two more breeds were published, Irish Draught and Akhal Teke horses.
- The Livestock Conservancy was asked to join a task force for the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. A white paper for legislators and policy makers on protecting food animal gene pools for future generations is near completion.
- The Conservancy serves on the animal committee of the Association Internationale des Musées D'Agriculture (agriculture museums).

Presentations and national meetings have strengthened our relationship with a number of scientific and technical resources at the government, university and corporate level in 2015. Most gratifying have been requests for collaboration and advice from conservators in the U.K., Iceland, Mexico, Caribbean, and Latin America.

Secure and Sustain Breeds

Breeds in the Critical category need ongoing support. In the past year, we:

- Reconnected the breeders of Santa Cruz Island sheep and promoted these remarkable hardy sheep. A breeder in the Midwest was rediscovered, breeders exchanged genetics, and five new breeding flocks were established. Sheep were also placed at the San Diego Zoo for an educational exhibit.
- Provided breeding recommendations for breeders of Colonial Spanish horses, Holland chickens, and Pineywoods cattle.
- Launched a genetic recovery program for Ossabaw Island hogs.
- Assisted breed associations with breed standards, registration practices, association best practices, and election monitoring.
- Began long-range discussions on adding to our frozen repository at USDA's NAGP laboratories.



A Santa Cruz sheep breeder in the Midwest was rediscovered, breeders exchanged genetics, and five new breeding flocks were established. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

Train the Next Generation

We continue to be overwhelmed by the interest in our educational workshops. Our partnership with Ogden Publications alone brings us in front of more than 100,000 highly engaged Mother Earth News Fair participants, and more through videos and articles. At numerous other venues, our staff presented workshops on heritage poultry and livestock to audiences as diverse as historical farm curators, homesteaders, heirloom seed savers, and scientists.

We are also reaching more farmers than ever through articles, videos, radio, and social media. The Livestock Conservancy website received almost two million visitors, our Facebook reach exceeds 1.4 million viewers, YouTube views topped 270,000 by the end of the year, and the Conservancy's message reached over 100,000 people at fairs and events around the country in 2015. Some highlights:

- Our Heritage Chicks in Classrooms project brought more chicks and ducks to classrooms in North Carolina. Chickens that were hatched in 2014 returned to their classrooms in 2015 so students and teachers could compare one-year old chickens with their new chicks. This year, Heritage Chicks in Classrooms was featured in national and regional media.
- In November 2014 we launched a highly rated podcast series, "Heritage Breeds." The show was ranked #1 in iTunes's New and Noteworthy Science

section and #3 in Kids and Family in 2015.

- The first-ever National Heritage Breeds Week was held in May to raise awareness about endangered breeds. Events were held around the country, including livestock shows, farm tours, product specials, and featured menus. The Livestock Conservancy highlighted heritage breeds throughout the week on social media. From the overwhelming success, it appears that the 2016 Week could be even bigger!

Looking Ahead

The Livestock Conservancy has made great progress in educating the general public, and is regularly featured in the national discussion on sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and conservation. The prospects for further improvements in heritage breed swine and poultry are excellent due to their current popularity and the engagement of the breeding communities.

The programs described above are just a few of the many areas that receive our attention. In 2016, thanks to a generous donor, we've been able to begin a project to learn more about the genetic status of Caspian horses in the United States and plan to preserve germplasm from the rarest bloodlines. For other breeds there is a narrow window for some of our initiatives – we must find ways to ensure the survival of Choctaw Hogs, Aleutian Island cattle, and Hawaiian sheep in particular.

Currently, the greatest challenge to the Livestock Conservancy is meeting the growing demand for services from across the country. Tremendous interest in sustainable farming, access to local food, and a return to historical agricultural systems has increased demands on, and raised the profile of, the Livestock Conservancy. As the only national organization addressing the conservation of all heritage breeds on farms and ranches, the work of the Livestock Conservancy is critical to the future of all of agriculture. ❖

Thank you for being part of this mission.



This year the Heritage Chicks in Classrooms project was featured in national and regional media. Photo by Ryan Walker.

Matching Campaign a Roaring Success

And you, dear friend, are the reason! To be precise, 451 of you participated by making a gift, and when we added up every single precious gift, our goal of \$75,000 (including the original challenge match of \$35,000 from five generous donors) was left in the dust. In fact, we nearly doubled our total! You, each one of you, are appreciated more than you could know. Your gift means we can do even more to protect endangered breeds from extinction.

And here's why: It's hard to overestimate the difference that each gift makes toward advancing our mission. Large or small, each gift represents someone who cares whether we protect valuable livestock genetics. That caring, that commitment, is what causes each of us to tell our friends and neighbors about the dangerously low numbers of Redcap chickens, Beltsville Small White turkeys, Milking Devon cattle, San Clemente goats, Mulefoot pigs, American Chinchilla rabbits, Santa Cruz sheep, and Cleveland Bay horses, along with over 180 other breeds we know about, and others yet to be found and rescued. And that caring is also the critical reason why you support The Livestock Conservancy.

The staff and the Board of Directors are fired up by your tangible support! Thank you from the bottom of our genetically geeky, critter-loving hearts.

—Judy Wollen, Conservancy Development Committee

The Livestock Conservancy's Fall 2015 Matching Campaign Results



WITH EACH \$1,000:

- 7 FARMER VETERANS CAN LEARN ABOUT HERITAGE BREEDS
- DNA FROM 180 CHICKENS CAN BE SAMPLED & ANALYZED
- CONSERVANCY STAFF CAN PRESENT AT 1 EVENT & VISIT 2 LOCAL FARMS
- 83 FARMERS GET PERSONAL CONSULTING BY PHONE OR EMAIL
- NEWSLETTERS CAN BE CREATED & MAILED TO 500 MEMBERS

Cleveland Bay Census

The Cleveland Bay Horse Society of North America (CBHSNA) is pleased to announce the publication of an online census of all Cleveland Bay Horses; purebred and part-bred. This online census is now available on our website, www.clevelandbay.org. Additional horses are being added to the census regularly; this census has recently been opened to Cleveland Bay Horses residing abroad as well.

In addition to the on-line census, the CBHSNA has recently developed and instituted a DNA Data Depository which is inclusive of DNA of both purebred and part-bred Cleveland Bays. The DNA data currently on file is available to owners worldwide and is provided free of charge to the horse owner. In an effort to support this depository, donations are appreciated.

The CBHSNA is a small, independent organization based in North America and originally established in 1885. Through this new census, the CBHSNA hopes to help identify "lost" or unregistered/sus-

pected Cleveland Bays, given the breed's status as an endangered domesticated breed. Currently the DNA Data depository possesses over 120 hair and blood samples from both purebred and part-bred Cleveland Bays. However, at this time, some history is also required to be able to identify unknown horses.

The CBHSNA hopes to shore up its sample collection through donations of DNA samples from the owners of known Cleveland Bays, to be able to more successfully identify through DNA comparisons "lost" members of the breed. The CBHSNA encourages Cleveland Bay owners to donate or share additional DNA reports so that they may be included in the depository.

Labs used for these DNA comparisons are located at Texas A&M University and the University of Kentucky. A duplicate of the depository will be kept with The Livestock Conservancy as a safeguard. ❖

Contact the CBHSNA to donate samples and DNA reports. More information on the history and function of the Cleveland Bay Horse Society of North America may be found at www.clevelandbay.org.

MEMBER VOICES

Sandra Nordmark

I have been a supporter of The Livestock Conservancy since I first met Dr. Don Bixby many years ago. I found in him a kindred spirit, and his passion for the importance of preserving irreplaceable genetics was inspiring. I have tried to share some of my blessings each year since with many non-profits that benefit the things I believe in, namely the sustainable conservation of natural and historical resources. At my age it is not possible to be an actual conservator of rare breeds, but I try to support the work of others through The Livestock Conservancy as I am able.

I have a small horticultural enterprise south of Battle Creek, Michigan, and still have some horses but no more cattle – they were too much for this old gal to care for! I converted my main pasture and old hayfield to native prairie some years since in acknowledgement of my love of indigenous plants and native ecosystems.

Sandra Nordmark has been a Livestock Conservancy member for over 15 years.

From Service to Stewardship

How can you celebrate Heritage Breeds Week and Armed Forces Day at the same time? **From Service to Stewardship** is a two-day intensive workshop that will help transform today's military veterans into tomorrow's successful farmers. It is the third in a series of veteran-focused workshops that The Livestock Conservancy has conducted. This workshop on **Friday, May 20 -Saturday, May 21, 2016** is held in cooperation with Virginia Cooperative Extension and Lakota Ranch, in northern Virginia. It will help educate military service veterans about rare breed animal and poultry options for farming enterprises that can significantly influence the probability of success. The workshop is open to Conservancy members and the public but priority will be given to veterans. A limited number of scholarships are available through The Livestock Conservancy – and your donations can help make these scholarships possible.

The workshop will be held Lakota Ranch in Remington, Virginia, home of long-time Livestock Conservancy supporters Jeremy Engh and his family. The Enghs have been raising Devon cattle since the 1950s and provide certified Devon beef to markets from Virginia to New York.

A registration fee of \$110/person or \$170/couple for the weekend (\$125/person after May 15) includes all conference materials and activities, lunch each day, and a Friday cocktail reception and dinner



Attendees learning poultry processing at Walnut Hill Farm during the 2014 From Service to Stewardship workshop. Photo by Alison Martin.

featuring Heritage Devon beef. Registration is also available *only* for Saturday's Lakota Ranch daytime programs for \$35/person, and includes lunch. Advance registration is required. Requests for assistance in accommodating attendees with disabilities are welcome, and service animals are allowed.

Activities begin on Friday with overview presentations related to farming with animals, including reasons for choosing and saving rare breeds, what you will need for startup costs, and potential income. Following these presentations, local master breeders of heritage livestock will focus on raising animals of different species and breeds from pasture to plate or product.

After lunch, participants can choose between two 90 minute, in-depth sessions

led by the featured master breeders.

The evening at Lakota Ranch includes a cocktail reception and a Heritage Devon barbeque dinner, followed by demonstrations, networking, and information on educational opportunities in Virginia.

On Saturday morning, May 21, intensive classes will be offered at Lakota Ranch:

Jason Rutledge, breeder and trainer of Suffolk Punch horses since 1981 and co-founder of the non-profit Healing Harvest Forest Foundation, will demonstrate real horse-power and talk about draft-powered farming and forestry.

Jeremy Engh, will lead a walk through the rotationally grazed pastures at Lakota Ranch, and farm manager Doug Werner will show participants how to build a fence.

Larry Cooper, will teach scything techniques, snath fitting and blade choices for mowing grass and brush and, with 2014 attendee Steve Hart, will demonstrate the use of walking tractors to cut, rake, and bale hay on a small-farm scale.

On Saturday afternoon, a choice of tours of nearby farms are offered. These include Richard and Donna Larson's Old Gjerpen Farm, Erica Govednik and Harvey Ussery's Govednik's Hock Newberry Farm, and Ayrshire Farm. ❖



Participants learning to work with fiber at Checkmate Farm during the 2014 workshop. Photo by Alison Martin.

Register
at www.LivestockConservancy.org
Interested in sponsoring?
Contact the Conservancy
And please spread the word
to veterans who might be interested.



Heritage Breeds Week Goes International!

International Heritage Breeds Week will be held May 15-21, 2016. The Livestock Conservancy launched Heritage Breeds Week in America in 2015. Many farms participated, and reception was so great that in its second year, the event will now be observed internationally. Help spread the word about rare breeds!

The week will culminate on Saturday, May 21 with **International Heritage Breeds Day**. This is the day for you to hold a local event like a farm tour or workshop

to raise awareness in your community.

So far, 10 different international organizations will be participating:

Australia: Rare Breeds Trust of Australia

Central/South America: Traspatio Iberoamericano (TRASIBER); Asociacion de Criadores de Bovinos de Razas Criollas y Colombianas de los Llanos Orientales Colombianos; Actas Iberoamericanas en Conservación Animal

Europe: SAVE Foundation; Sociedade Portuguesa de Recursos Genéticos Ani-

mais; Rare Breeds Survival Trust

International: Red CONBIAND

United States: The Livestock Conservancy Smithsonian & SVF Biodiversity Preservation Project

Ideas for how to participate

- Adopt-a-Classroom, Adopt-a-Legislator, Adopt-a-Nursing Home,
- Host a Celebrity, line up a speaker
- Set up displays at farmer's markets, libraries, or other public locations
- Have a Heritage Breed Petting Zoo or Heritage Breeds Day Breakfast
- Organize a fundraiser or public contest
- Hold livestock/poultry shows and fairs
- Place an article in local newspapers or a community blog; encourage your state or local newspaper to solicit stories from heritage breed farmers or ranchers to discuss how they are working first-hand to protect genetic diversity and endangered breeds

Brochures, *Conservation Priority Lists*, and other materials can be downloaded from the campaign's website at www.HeritageBreedsWeek.org. We have professionally printed glossy trifold general brochures available for you to hand out as well. If you would like some, contact us at info@livestockconservancy.org or 919-542-5704.

Tell us how you are participating!

Post your event on our Facebook page, Tweet about it, or email rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org to share your story and to get your event listed on our online calendar.



A group of students from Elon University paid a visit to The Livestock Conservancy's office on January 13th. Jeannette Beranger and Ryan Walker gave a presentation about the importance of heritage breeds, livestock conservation, and how it relates to our food supply. The students were members of a Community Agriculture class, where students evaluate the impact of food production and consumption decisions on their personal, local, and global environments. As a special thank you, each student donated an office supply item. These were welcome and much appreciated!

The “King of All Poultry”

By Don Schrider & Jeannette Beranger

In the mid-1800s, a phenomenon known as “Hen Fever” occurred in both England and the United States. At the time, it was all the rage to keep and breed chickens. In the center of this craze was the Brahma chicken. This oriental breed was one of the main influences in the popularity of poultry from the time it became known, shortly after the 1842-43 Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking) opened the ports of China to trade with the Western world. Many of the first Brahma chickens arrived in the West by ship, where they were included as “provisions” to provide meat and a regular source of fresh eggs. Only the hardiest birds survived, and when the ships reached their ports the remaining birds were sold, providing additional profit for the traders. Brahmas came first to America, and from there were exported to England. An early breeder, George Burnham, made great strides in promoting the breed when he made a gift of nine Brahmas to Queen Victoria, causing the prices to skyrocket, with a pair selling for as much as \$150!

The birds’ impressive size was unlike anything Westerners had seen: some roosters weighed over 18 pounds (though most were closer to 12). As their reputation grew, they quickly gained the title “King of All Poultry.” They were a leading meat breed from soon after their arrival until the 1930s when the chicken industry began to select for faster growing American breeds. The breed also had the unfortunate luck to have one show-winning individual negatively influence novice breeders. This bird was not a good example of the breed, but his photo appeared in many publications and led people to believe that their birds should look like him, resulting in the production of many poorly-bred Brahmas and their loss of favor in the show ring.

The Brahma is a very slow-growing chicken that devotes a considerable amount of development time growing into its massive body. To attain this growth, the birds are famous for their ravenous appetite. Once mature, they can fatten easily so attention needs to be paid to the weight of breeding birds to avoid fertility problems associated with obesity. Its



Brahma chickens have been referred to as the “King of all Poultry.” Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

peacomb, coupled with its large body size, makes the Brahma well adapted to cold climates, but the feathering on its feet and legs is a disadvantage in very wet climates or poorly drained soils. For their size, they are decent layers of large brown eggs, producing most of them between October and May. Brahmas are calm and easy birds to maintain. Because of their size, they are easy to keep fenced and are not as likely to jump fences as other lighter breeds.

Brahmas have had great success when used in crossbreeding programs with breeds like the Dorking. The offspring are fast growing, well fleshed, and can produce a table-ready bird in four months.

The recent backyard chicken movement (the 21st century’s version of “Hen Fever”) has resulted in new interest in the breed, although their numbers are not nearly as high as in the past. They are currently listed in the “Watch” category on the Livestock Conservancy’s Conservation Priority List, meaning that there are fewer than 5,000 breeding birds in the United States. The breed is supported by the self-proclaimed “Brahmaholics” of the American Brahma Club which holds annual meets at major poultry shows around the U.S.

I (Jeannette) had the opportunity to speak with Kim and Ken-

dra Aldritch, 14-year veterans of Brahma breeding in Michigan. Kim serves at the President of the breed club. His wife, Kendra, spoke to me as she was washing birds in preparation for the upcoming annual poultry show in Columbus, Ohio – one of the biggest poultry meets in the country.

Kendra feels the best quality about the Brahma is their temperament. She said they are quiet, friendly birds that rarely have disputes among themselves or with other birds. They even keep much smaller bantams in with their massive Brahmas, and the two breeds get along “swimmingly” and without incident. According to Kendra, the birds live up to their reputation of being exceptionally hardy, especially in cold temperatures, but added that heat and humidity can be a real problem for the large roosters. She said that during a particularly hot summer in Michigan, they had to put an air conditioner in their barn to ensure that they wouldn’t lose any birds. Their best success with hatching is by using incubators because the massive hens can be clumsy and crush eggs and chicks. Once hatched, the chicks take a full year and a half to fully mature and attain the impressive body for which the “King” is known. ❖

For more information visit *The Livestock Conservancy website at www.livestock-conservancy.org or the American Brahma Club at www.americanbrahmaclub.org.*



David Anderson, President of the American Poultry Association, holds one of his Brahma chickens. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.



Heritage Breed Education at the New Jersey State Fair

“Jersey John” Haftek, a long-time friend and member of the Conservancy, sent in a recap of the 2015 New Jersey State Fair/Sussex County Farm & Horse Show. A big thanks to John, who always puts on a wonderful educational exhibit about heritage breeds! This year’s fair will take place August 5-14, 2016.

“Thank you for the loan of the table top display. The Rare Heritage Breed exhibit again enjoyed a good year of educating the public about rare heritage breed animals

and heirloom vegetables. This year Seed Savers Exchange donated catalogues, seed packets, and literature for the exhibit. All of this, along with The Livestock Conservancy display, worked well for our fair’s 75th year celebration. Again this year I was blessed with rare breed breeders working with me to show their animals at the exhibit. I had: a Poitou donkey, Arapawa goat, Jacob sheep, CVM/Romeldale sheep, American Buff geese, and Silver and Silver Fox rabbits.

Above left: John reserves The Livestock Conservancy’s display for use at the fair each year. Photo by John Haftek. Above right: Jacob and CVM/Romeldale sheep, American Buff geese, and Silver Fox rabbits on display at the fair. Photo by John Haftek.

My Arapawa goat I hope is bred and next spring I can help the breed. Wishing all of The Livestock Conservancy family the best in 2016.”❖

BOOK REVIEW

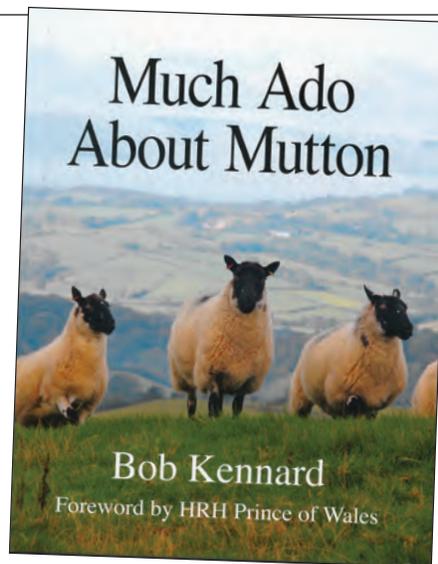
Much Ado About Mutton

Review by John Wilkes

Bob Kennard’s delightful new book takes a multi-layered look at mutton. This highly informative tome reveals fascinating facts around this once-staple global meat. *Much Ado About Mutton* is also a definitive history of the place and importance of sheep not only in the United Kingdom (U.K.) but also in New World sheep producing nations.

This book is packed with detail, literary reference, recipes, pictures, anecdotes, stories and much more. Bob talks about heritage breeds of sheep that produce the best mutton and reasons for the depth of associated flavor. A healthy image of mutton as a *wonder food* is explored.

Says Phil Stoker, Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association UK, “Bob Kennard has been central to the resurgence in interest in quality mutton in the U.K., culminating in the writing of his book



Much Ado about Mutton, and I have been delighted that he has since chosen to help the National Sheep Association leading our work on quality mutton. He is a true ambassador of real food and its importance in society’s future.”

Bob Kennard’s role in spearheading the mutton revival in the U.K. puts him in a unique position to comment and advise. A hands-on approach gained from many

years operating one of the U.K.’s earliest and most successful organic meat businesses enables him to give a deep insight into mutton in all its deep-flavored glory.

As mutton begins to be looked at with less skepticism by the American sheep sector, *Much Ado About Mutton* comes at a great time to learn and understand more about this traditional tasty meat.

Follow the growing trend of eating meat from older animals by reading *Much Ado About Mutton* to be fully in the know.❖

John Wilkes is a sheep industry journalist and commentator.

To order a copy of *Much Ado About Mutton* from The Livestock Conservancy’s store, please send \$36.95 (includes S&H) to The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312, or order a copy online at www.LivestockConservancy.org.

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Inbreeding and Breed Survival

Continued from page 3

This means that inbreeding can disappear completely in one generation if a population's structure is managed well to ensure that all animals are not related. The challenge in rare breeds is to manage the entire breed so that unrelated matings are indeed available, because this can take careful planning and thinking several generations into the future.

Managing inbreeding is always most difficult for small populations, because maintaining all of the genetic diversity that is needed for long-term management is tricky. Add to that the fact that linebreeding certainly does have some advantages as a breeding strategy by assuring such things as predictability and uniformity, and it is important to not throw out the baby with the bathwater! A few practical ways for breeders and breeds to manage inbreeding can be noted. The main goal is to assure that inbreeding is optional, or, to put it another way, to assure that every animal has a potential mate that is completely unrelated.

One strategy is to not necessarily avoid all inbreeding, but to try to limit it to levels that qualify as linebreeding rather than inbreeding. This can take careful consideration, because the goal is to assure that each animal in the herd has a mate that is no more closely related than a cousin of some sort. As a practical issue, this means that several male lines need to be kept going, and, while they can be related, it must be kept to a relatively low level. As males are retained for breeding, their pedigrees must be compared to other males to ensure that relationships are kept distant enough.

While inbreeding of first-degree relatives does have risks, it can still be used as a last resort to save rare bloodlines within a breed. This can be a very useful breeding tool to rescue rare lines. In general, a successful strategy is to not inbreed/linebreed for multiple generations in a row. Therefore, follow close inbreeding by an outcross to another strain, or to a less-related animal. In that way the inbreeding level does not creep up higher and higher, but is taken down a notch every generation or so.

In order to structure breeds to maintain genetic distance between herds, one op-



Everett Randall used a single bull in the herd for several years, then replaced him with a son. Pictured: Randall cow owned by Joe Henderson of Chapel Hill Farm. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

tion is for different herds to be linebred in different directions. This means that each herd can be linebred to a different founding strain, or a different set of ancestors. In this situation the breed is assured of several completely unrelated choices for mates if need be, because animals from different herds are unrelated. One way to manage this strategy over the long term is to use an occasional outcross to the herd, but then to take those outcrossed animals and linebreed back to the original strain for a generation or two. In this way the power of the original strain is not lost, but neither is the risk of inbreeding depression very high.

An opposite situation, where all breeders carefully avoid inbreeding or linebreeding, also has a subtle threat in it. This is especially true of rare breeds that have few options for outside stock. If all breeders of a rare breed carefully search out unrelated males to bring in every two or three generations, the result over time is that they have eventually used up the source of unrelated males. When done across all herds of a breed, the final result is that all of the herds are at least somewhat related to one another. This is because the search for unrelated animals takes the breeder further and further afield, and if this is multiplied over all the herds of the breed, pretty soon they are all dipping into the

same pool in just about the same way. Depending on numbers in the breed, this can eventually result in all animals being related to one another at some level, and at that point every breeding will be inbred to some degree or another.

The most challenging situation for managing inbreeding is small herds, with single males used in the herd over several years. This situation is all too typical of several species like hogs and cattle. As new males are brought in, eventually the source of unrelated males dwindles, and eventually completely unrelated males may no longer be available. "Unrelated" in this case can take on a nearly tyrannical aspect, and very distant relationships may actually not count for much in inbreeding, but should still be noted for long-term management.

Managing inbreeding can be tricky, and usually takes good communication among breeders. Breed associations can be a big help in this regard, by keeping up with the different directions that the breeders are taking their herds and flocks. ❖

D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, Ph.D. is a Professor of Pathology and Genetics at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia. He is a long-time member of The Livestock Conservancy and serves as a Technical Advisor. He can be reached via email at dpsonen@vt.edu.

Ossabaw Odyssey, Part I

By Jeannette Beranger, Conservancy Research & Technical Programs Manager

Those of you who know me know that I've never been one to take a vacation without it having some kind of animal element. This past December I decided I wanted to go someplace warm and, as luck would have it, I got a great opportunity to turn the trip into an Ossabaw Odyssey of sorts. I've been the studbook keeper for the breed for the past several years, and have become familiar with many of the breeders. I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to see Ossabaw hogs in their native state of Georgia?" A few phone calls later, I had a plan for my daughter, Adrienne, and me to head south.

The trip got off to an amusing and somewhat pungent start in that four live, adult Beltsville Small White turkeys were getting a lift to Georgia with me. My daughter was not too keen on traveling with live poultry yet again; I have a habit of bringing feathered, and sometimes furry, passengers on the road if I'm going to be traveling near someone who needs transport for their animals. Last year it was an enormous Buckeye rooster that needed to get to New York.... Thankfully, Beltsvilles are small turkeys, and we somehow managed to fit everyone in and still have room for our baggage. The birds traveled comfortably inside their crates in the back of my hatchback. They did turn a few heads on the highway as they peered out

the window. The turkeys were going to a friend of one of our Ossabaw hog breeders, Marc Mousseau, whose home was my first stop on this trip. After seven hours we made it safely to Marc's home where the birds' appreciative new owner met us to collect her new additions. Marc and his wife, Lydia, hosted us that evening, and we chatted about all things Ossabaw. The following morning we were treated to a visit with the Ossabaw hogs at their Island Creek Preserve farm near Milledgeville, Georgia.

When you first arrive at Island Creek, you can't help being impressed as several hundred hogs come in from the woods to greet you. They range on approximately 50 acres of wooded land; the breeding quality animals are subdivided into family groups and are kept in several very large enclosures. Other areas hold the grow-out pigs – those that did not make the cut to be used as breeding stock. These animals are destined for the tables of some very enthusiastic chefs in Atlanta.

By his diligent work, Marc has been building the largest and most diverse herds of Ossabaws in the country, with the help of his farm manager and chief pig wrangler, Bill Crenshaw. Marc's goal is to maintain a closed herd, which is crucial to the survival of the breed in the state of Georgia. It has not been an easy endeavor. When he first became involved with the breed, the state veterinarian declared that

the Ossabaw was a feral hog, and that it was illegal to breed and sell Ossabaws in Georgia. Because of the feral hog explosion in the state, the Ossabaw was considered "feral by association" because it was a pig that is not pink and raised indoors. This was a blow to Marc's plans, but it did not deter him from trying to change things.

The first phase of Marc's plan was to erect a significant fence around the property to ensure that no feral pig would get in and no Ossabaw would get out. He then worked with his veterinarian to health test every single pig on the property to prove they will not be a health risk for other pig farmers in the region. In the process, he documented every single pig and made sure that all breeding animals were registered, to secure proof that they were pedigreed pigs and not common feral animals. The Livestock Conservancy assisted him by writing an amicus brief to support the breed. It was presented to state officials in defense of legalizing the Ossabaw hog by providing facts on these animals. This document included data on the breed's history and genetics along with an overview of the registry. The careful planning and preparation to address the legalization of Ossabaws led to a successful outcome for Island Creek's pig program. The final hearing on the topic ruled in favor of the Ossabaw being legalized, and once again the future of the breed was secured in their home state.

Once the breed's legal troubles were resolved, Marc turned to developing a larger base of fans for Ossabaw pork. With some help from a local marketing firm, Detreva, a plan for branding his pork was developed and a website, aptly named "Hamthropology," was launched to tell their story and sell product. Today, top chefs in Atlanta proudly serve Ossabaw pork and have won high accolades with recipes using it. Chef David Larkworthy took top honors at the prestigious Vidalia Onion Festival's Golden Onion Professional Chefs Competition, competing against ten other Georgia chefs. He won with an Ossabaw Island pork burger in a Vidalia onion roll, seasoned with Vidalia onion ketchup and French-fried Vidalia onion blossoms.

We had a great time visiting with Marc and his pigs, and then it was time to hit the road for the, next leg of our Ossabaw Odyssey – Ossabaw Island itself!❖

Watch for Part II in our next newsletter.



Marc Mousseau and his pet Ossabaw hog, Kiera, at Island Creek Preserve, near Milledgeville, GA. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.



How to Introduce a Pig

By Sean Towery

Whether you're introducing a Highland cow, a Jersey Giant hen, or, in our case, an Ossabaw Island pig, you must develop a meaningful "brand" story for your customers. This brand story is the single most important marketing asset you can develop for your business. It is the foundation on which all your marketing messaging is built. In the past 12 years of helping companies with the development of their brands, I've discovered there are three hurdles to overcome when crafting a meaningful brand story.

The first thing I tell my clients is that they must get past what is called "The Curse of Knowledge." What is that, you ask? The curse of knowledge is knowing so much about your product that you can't empathize with customers. You are familiar with the age-old expression, "Couldn't see the forest for the trees." I counsel clients to step back and think as a child would when discovering something for the first time. What would interest them immediately? What are the first questions they would ask? This technique helps you ease your way into a conversation without overwhelming them with facts and figures at the onset.

The second hurdle – and it's a high one – is that clients must realize that they are not the sum or mirror of their target market. This means you are not the perfect

embodiment of your customer. Unless you are selling eggs to an egg farmer, or ice to an Eskimo, you most likely are not your target market. You cannot tell potential customers a story about your product that YOU would want to hear if you were buying the product. This way is a definite recipe for disaster. Listening to you market and paying attention to what your customer are asking for will give you a jump start on the competition.

The third hurdle is defining the target market. No product is for everyone. Jamaicans are not in the market for snow tires, except maybe the bobsled team, but you know what I mean. The more specific you are at targeting your customer, the easier it is to craft the story that connects with them. Define what your product attributes are and start asking yourself what group of people would be interested in this product. When researching those groups of people, find out what they like, where they shop, what music they listen to, and what web-



Hamthropology's imagery was designed to connect with its target consumers.

Hamthropology's Marc Mousseau with his herd of Ossabaw Island pigs. Photo courtesy of Marc Mousseau.

sites and blogs they read. This information will help you better understand how to align your business with the target market's wants and needs.

My agency helped Marc Mousseau of Hamthropology craft their story. We started by identifying the target consumer – urban foodies interested in farm-to-table restaurants and specialty food shops. We identified that the customers are more interested in the ingredients than the white tablecloth, so instead of going directly to them, we identified influencer-chefs of high-end, farm-to-table restaurants. These influencers turned out to be the perfect medium to carry our message – a locally-sourced heritage breed of pig with roots extending back to Spain and similar in taste to the Iberico pig. This strategy has proven very successful, with chefs across the Southeast eager for a chance for a formal introduction to Ossabaw Island pig, the pork with "A Tasty Heritage."

I hope the three points I outlined above help to shed some light on how to approach telling your brand story. If you have any questions, email me at sean@detreva.com. ❖

Sean Towery's agency, Detreva, provides marketing, design, advertising, and branding services to help clients share their stories. More information can be found at www.detreva.com.

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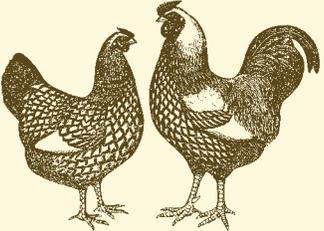
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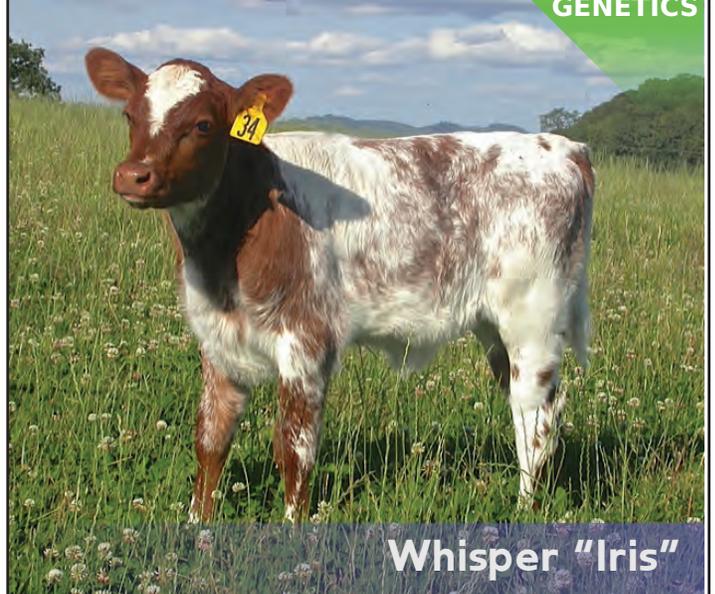
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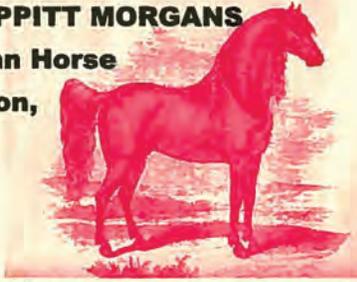
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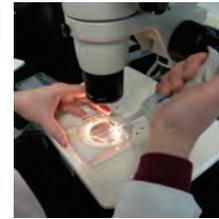
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DATED MATERIAL

CALENDAR

★★ denotes Livestock Conservancy event

★ denotes Conservancy participation

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

February

February 25-27 – Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) Organic Farming Conference will be held in La Crosse, WI. The largest conference in the U.S. about organic and sustainable farming hosts more than 170 exhibitors and 3,000 attendees. Visit <http://mosesorganic.org/conference/> for more information.

March

March 1-20 – The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo will be held in Houston, TX. Billed as the world's largest live entertainment and livestock exhibition, this event sees more than 2.5 million visitors annually. Visit www.hlsr.com for more information.

March 5-8 – The California Small Farm Conference will be held in Sacramento, CA. The four-day educational conference includes day-long short courses and on-farm tours, focused workshops, engaging keynote addresses, and numerous networking opportunities. Call 916-231-2141 or visit www.californiafarmconference.com/.

March 11-13 – The 23rd Annual Spring Conference by Organic Growers



2016 Mother Earth News Fairs

- ★ **Belton, TX:** Feb. 20-21, 2016
- ★ **Asheville, NC:** Apr. 9-10, 2016
- ★ **Albany, OR:** Jun. 4-5, 2016
- ★ **West Bend, WI:** Jul. 9-10, 2016
- ★ **Seven Springs, PA:** Sep. 23-25, 2016
- ★ **Topeka, KS:** Oct. 22-23, 2016

These family-oriented sustainable lifestyle events feature dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations and workshops on everything from beekeeping to using solar electricity. Visit www.motherearthnews.com/fair for more information.

School will be held at UNC Asheville in Asheville, NC. 70+ sessions per day: practical, affordable, regionally-focused workshops on growing, permaculture, homesteading, and urban farming. Trade show, seed exchange, kid's program. For more information visit www.Organicgrowersschool.org.

March 15-17 – The Midwest Poultry Federation Convention will be held at the Saint Paul River Centre in Saint Paul, MN. The event offers the largest regional poultry show, exhibits, and networking opportunities. For more information visit www.midwestpoultry.com, call 763-682-2171, or email info@midwestpoultry.com.

March 19 – The Chicken "Manhattan" Project workshop will be held at Garfield Farm Museum in Campton Hills, IL. Mu-

seum staff will share more on the secrets of chicken genetics. Visit www.garfieldfarm.org for more information.

April

April 16 – Early American Farming workshop will be held at Garfield Farm Museum in Campton Hills, IL. Visit www.garfieldfarm.org for more information.

May

★★ **May 15-21 – International Heritage Breeds Week** will be held across the globe to raise awareness of endangered heritage breeds of livestock and poultry. The Livestock Conservancy launched a U.S. campaign in 2015; reception was so great that in its second year, the event will now be observed internationally! See page 8 or visit www.HeritageBreedsWeek.org.

★★ **May 20-21 – The Livestock Conservancy's "From Service to Stewardship" workshop for military veterans** will be held in Remington VA. Visit www.livestockconservancy.org/index.php/news/internal/veterans-workshop for more information.

May 21 – The SoCal Kunekune Pig Show & Sale will be held in Chino, CA. The show will benefit The Livestock Conservancy and Heritage Breeds Week/Day. Visit www.americankunekunepigregistry.com or contact Mrs. Lori Enright at 951-505-5230 or americankunekune@yahoo.com for more information.

May 22 – The Garfield Farm Museum Rare Breeds Show will be held in Campton Hills, IL. Breeders from around the Midwest display rare and historic livestock. Individual breeders may offer livestock, poultry, and byproducts for sale. Visit www.garfieldfarm.org for more information.