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Conserving rare breeds since 1977

THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™ NEWS

Conserving Romeldale CVM Sheep: An Interview with Patti Sexton

By the National Romeldale CVM
Conservancy

In 1915, A.T. Spencer purchased New Zealand Romney rams from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (the 1915 World's Fair) in San Francisco. The prized rams could not be returned to New Zealand, and A.T. Spencer seized an opportunity. These rams were bred to Rambouillet ewes and with careful selection created a sheep with improved meat carcass and longer fleece length. The Romeldale breed was born. Beginning in the 1940s, J. K. Sexton's family continued work to firmly establish the Romeldales as a breed. They raised them in large range band flocks in northern California and sold each year's wool clip to Pendleton Mill.

Romeldales have a high rate of twinning, are excellent mothers, and are non-seasonal breeders. Their wool is a fine fiber with a breed standard micron range of 20-25. A full fleece can yield six to twelve pounds of wool with a staple length of three to six inches. As a dual-purpose breed, Romeldale also produce a mild-flavored meat.

Originally raised as white sheep, during the 1970s naturally colored lambs were born in the Romeldale flocks. Family friend Glen Eidman began working with these sheep to develop a range of colors. At the time, he saw potential for the breed within the developing fiber arts community. Due to his foresight, the California Variegated Mutant (CVM) portion of the breed was developed. Today there is a range of both natural and variegated color that includes grays, browns, and blacks.

Once raised in large numbers, most



Fewer than 500 new Romeldale/CVM sheep are registered each year, putting them in The Livestock Conservancy's "Critically endangered" category.

Romeldale CVM flocks now average less than 30. Fewer than 500 new sheep are registered each year. These numbers have earned the breed "Critical" status on the *Conservation Priority List* managed by The Livestock Conservancy.

Patti Sexton and her brother Dick Sexton continue to raise Romeldale CVM sheep. Although their work is on a different scale, their flocks remain as an important legacy for breeders. Their knowledge and background are an unparalleled resource for those of us working to conserve this beautiful breed. Recently, Patti graciously gave of her time to offer a glimpse into her family's fostering of the Romeldale and their friend's development of the California Variegated Mutant.

Patti, thank you for joining us to answer some questions and offer insight into the Romeldale CVM breed.

Do you have any comments on the history of the breed? What would you like us to know from the perspective of having raised Romeldales in large range band flocks?

A.T. Spencer had a very clear vision on developing the Romeldale breed. He knew there was a great need for a dual-purpose breed specifically suited to the unique challenges of the Sacramento Valley of California. It needed to be able to tolerate the hot, dry, dusty summers and the wet, cold winters. It needed to thrive on the feeds available. It needed to be hoof-rot

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Heritage Breed Meats Named 2018 Top Food Trend

Our news release about this:

The National Restaurant Association has ranked Heritage breed meats among the top food trends for 2018 after completion of its annual survey of 700 professional chefs – members of the American Culinary Federation. The annual “What’s Hot” list gives a peek into which food, beverage and culinary concepts will be the new items on restaurant menus that everyone is talking about in 2018.

Heritage breed meats ranked 13th overall as a hot trend with 60% of chefs indicating them as such. Topping the list at 69% was “New cuts of meat” (e.g. shoulder tender, oyster steak, Vegas Strip Steak, Merlot Cut). The Association surveyed chefs in October and November 2017, asking them to rate 161 items as a “hot trend,” “yesterday’s news,” or “perennial favorite” on menus in 2018. “We’re thrilled to have Heritage breed meats ranked as a hot trend for 2018. We’re now working to ensure they become a perennial favorite” said Alison Martin, Executive Director for The Livestock Conservancy, the organization that tracks Heritage breed livestock populations, works to promote them, and published the first Heritage breed defini-



tion for the marketplace more than a decade ago.

Martin says Heritage breeds have a long-established history in American agriculture and represent the breeds that were once common before industrial agriculture became mainstream. “The diversity of flavors offered by Heritage breeds is the missing ingredient in today’s kitchens, reminding us of what we have sacrificed for uniformity in our food” she said. With the resurgence of interest in Heritage breeds, chefs and consumers across the country are rediscovering the breeds that produce the most flavorful meats possible. “Enjoy a dinner at many of the country’s finest restaurants and you’ll likely find Heritage meats on the menu” said Martin.

Along with high-quality meats, consumers and chefs are looking to add more vegetables to their menu. “Local, vegetable-forward, and ethnic-inspired menu items will reign supreme in the upcoming year” said Hudson Riehle, Senior

Vice President of Research at the National Restaurant Association. Families looking to fill their plates with more vegetables are turning to higher quality, sustainably raised Heritage breed meats to fill their protein needs. “The public is

beginning to realize that eating less meat overall means that when they do eat it, they can choose the best quality meat they can find” says Martin. “Heritage breed meats fit that model perfectly – the flavor is proof.”❖

Member Alert: Online Harassment

We have received a report of an online animal rights activist using contact information from our directory and/or classifieds to harass members who sell animals and products. If you receive communications from this person, please let Ryan Walker know at rwalker@LivestockConservancy.org or 919-542-5704, ext. 102. If you receive an email, please forward it to us, as we may be able to identify the user and block access.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



The Ecology of Everything

By Alison Martin

One of the perks of working with Heritage breeds is the food.

Most of you know that heritage livestock and poultry, raised on pasture, yields amazing flavor in food, a fact I've had opportunity to ponder recently. I'm especially struck by the talented curemasters, cheesemakers, and chefs who take these precious starting ingredients and make them shine.

For example, each year at the Heritage Livestock Conference, heritage products are featured in as many meals as possible. Often this is the first time for a chef to work with heritage meats, and they become inspired. This year one of the highlights was Eggs Benedict with Hollandaise sauce – made from Cayuga and Silver Appleyard duck eggs raised by Blue Mojo Farms in Virginia. No one who was there could forget the amazing chef at the 2014 conference in Austin, who took Lucky George's Large Black hog and turned her into one delicacy after another, at every meal for two days. Or the mounds of rabbit pâté that Rare Hare Barn provided at the 2011 conference in Wichita.

Experienced artisans can really make heritage products shine. The Milking Dev-

on cheese from Bunten Farm was a smash at a Montpelier Race dinner hosted by The Livestock Conservancy in 2012, themed "Foods of James Madison's Time." A recent themed event was the 2017 "Flavors of the American West" two-part series at the Autry Museum in California. The Autry chefs gave traditional ingredients, techniques, and foods a slightly modern spin, featuring Spanish goat tostadas, wood fire-grilled Texas Longhorn tri-tip, and Bronze turkey mole with fig and mesquite empanaditas. Don't even get me started on the wonders of cured meats from top curemasters and chefs, ranging from Tamworth bacon to crispy pigs ears, to prosciutto, to chorizo, all made from heritage pigs.

Sometimes simple is best. An early introduction to heritage meats for me came on a visit to Albaugh Ranch – lunch was Greek meatloaf made from Native Milking Shorthorn beef. This savory dish soon made an appearance in my own kitchen. The memory still lingers of an outdoor summer lunch with the Hund family – beets from the garden and heritage beef became a hearty borscht, prepared by one of the older Hund girls and served with friendship to this humble visitor. And last winter, anxious to eat a Beltsville Small White turkey from my freezer, I popped it unadorned and unspiced into the oven at 300 degrees. Later we sat down to enjoy this tender and richly-flavored bird with an assortment of home grown and farmers market vegetables.

What ties all of this together, besides some extraordinary flavor memories, is the

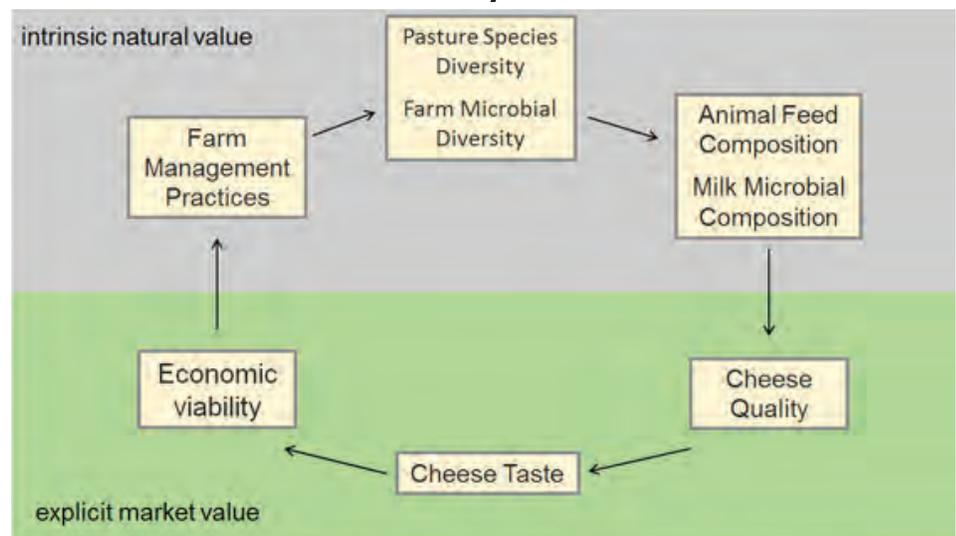
concept that the authors of *Reinventing the Wheel* call "The Ecology of Everything." Their book illustrates remarkably the relationship between the farming system, the production system, and the flavor of the final product (see figure below). Biodiversity encompasses the animal, the pasture, the natural microbial composition of all that the animal comes in contact with, and those who lovingly convert raw product to finished product. Every decision made along this chain affects the flavor of the product. It's not coincidental that those decisions both affect and are affected by biodiversity.

The Ecology of Everything fits what you as members believe in. It means matching the right breed to the ecosystem where it is adapted, especially on marginal lands. It means managing livestock to restore soil structure, and biodiversity of plants, insects, and microbes. It's about developing the products that each breed is best suited to produce – not trying to turn an animal into something it is not – and learning to manage animals to optimize those products. It's about the decisions of chefs and butchers and cheesemakers and spinners, and the feedback they provide to farmers. All of these honor and restore biodiversity at every step of the chain, right down to the diversity on the plate. And every decision made in the chain affects the flavor of the final product.

Further evidence for the impact of biodiversity on flavor comes from the work of Dr. Henry Buller (2007). In stud-

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The Cheese Biodiversity Chain



Adapted from Buller, Henry et al (2007). Eating Biodiversity: An Investigation of the Links between Quality Food Production and Biodiversity Production: Full Research Report; ESRC End of Award Report, RES-224-25-0041. Swindon: ESRC

Conserving Romeldale CVM Sheep

Continued from page 1

resistant as well as clean faced and clean legged to deal with the problem of wool blindness and with the abundance of stick-ers.

My grandfather (Ken Sexton) set out to improve upon Mr. Spencer's vision with the use of a very intensive replacement program that focused on wool quality and uniformity and on the rate of gain (in the lambs), rather than just overall size. He also put great emphasis on twinning ability.

On my family's ranch, we ran 5000 head of ewes. They were split into two groups based on quality. Only those ewes in the top group – those of the better quality – were bred to Romeldale rams. From this group, the ewe lambs that were to be considered for replacements were selected. As the second group was of a little lower quality, they were not a part of our breeding program and were bred to Suffolk rams to produce a superior market lamb.

Our replacement rams were chosen



The Romeldale/CVM breed's fleece quality and performance characteristics make them useful for many production systems and valuable to hand-spinners and other fiber artists. Photo courtesy of Patti Sexton.

from just the very best five percent of our ewes. The final selection of the replacements was done the following year after they were shorn as yearlings, at which time we had enough data compiled on them to enable us to fairly judge their qualities. This final selection admitted only a quarter of those originally selected as lambs back into our breeding program. Even though we ran a large number of ewes, the actual group from which we chose our replacements was relatively small, as those we deemed were of good enough quality to be retained in our flock.

What would you consider to be the ideal Romeldale? Can you share with us primary considerations in regards to conformation that would have been taken into account by both the Spencer and Sexton families?

My family's ranch was quite large, so it was imperative that the sheep have good strong legs and also that they not have low-hanging, misshaped udders that would hinder their movement; however, we were working hard to continually produce the best quality market lambs possible, making overall conformation of the greatest importance.

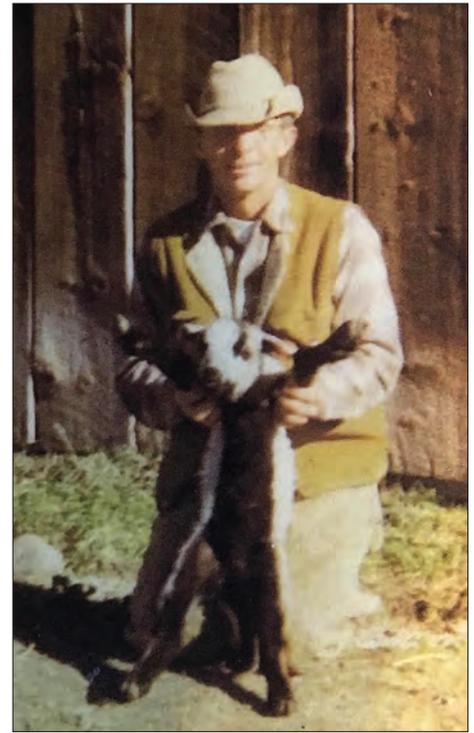
The ideal Romeldale is a medium sized sheep with ewes weighing 150-170 lbs. and rams 200-250 lbs. It has an alert, intelligent eye and expression, ears that come straight out of the head and point a little forward and a well-placed, graceful neck, creating a head carriage where the chin is on a level with the tail.

The Romeldale should be deep bodied with a broad, strong medium length back, sturdy straight legs well-placed under the body, and a slightly low tail set. Looking at a sheep from behind, you should see the depth of body in the distance from tail to scrotum or udder, and good muscling on the inside of the hind legs. The ewes need to have a well-placed, well-formed udder.

The pigment of nose, around eyes, and of the hooves can be either black or pink, with a black spot being acceptable on the hair of the sheep's face, ears, or legs only.

The Romeldale should have a face with a visual score of 4 or 5 – meaning it should be open faced, with clean legs. It should have low amount of belly wool and be free of wrinkles on the body. The wool must be within the 60s to 64s grade, with no less than three-inch staple length and with no black spots in the fleece.

However, there are a number of other



Patti's father holds the first CVM lamb ever, born in 1970. Photo courtesy of Patti Sexton.

considerations that are of equal, if not greater importance. A ewe may be an excellent physical representative of the breed. But, she must produce a lamb every year. It must be a lamb that thrives, and she must be a good mother and produce ample milk for her babies to grow well. Along with producing and raising a lamb, she needs to produce a quality fleece, as well. If a ewe cannot do these things, it doesn't matter how good her other qualities might be, she doesn't belong in my breeding program.

With the status of the breed listed as "Critical" on The Livestock Conservancy Conservation Priority List, we have a small population of Romeldale CVM sheep available as breeding stock. With this in mind, do you have any conformation points that are non-negotiable and must be met for an animal to be included in your breeding program?

For me to keep a sheep in my breeding program, its qualities really need to fall within the guideline averages of the breed. It would be a very difficult task to have accepted truly undesirable traits into a flock – and then try to breed them out.

A small number of quality sheep are of more value to the CVM breed than a large number of mediocre ones.

In the 1970s, Glen Eidman began his work to develop the California Variegated

Mutant (CVM) part of the breed. Did Glen make any allowances in conformation, or changes to his breeding practices regarding selection, in order to pursue the varied color possibilities within the breed?

The first CVM lamb was born in 1970. It was a twin to a white lamb. My dad thought its markings so unusual that he had my grandmother take a photo of it. Over the next few years, more of these oddly marked lambs showed up in our flock. We didn't keep any of them as we couldn't chance our white wool clip becoming contaminated by the colored wool.

At the time, it wasn't known for sure whether or not the CVMs would breed true for color and the distinctive badger face markings, but Glen Eidman suspected that they would and he felt sure that if they would reliably pass on these traits, that the color and quality of the wool would be of great interest to the hand spinners.

Once Glen had decided to go forward with a CVM breeding program, we began saving the CVM lambs for him to choose his foundation stock from. At weaning time Glen would carefully go through them – checking them over for color, markings, wool quality, and conformation. He selected for his breeding program only the best of the CVM lambs that we produced each year.

One year, after Glen had picked out his lambs and a few of us stood visiting with him, his attention kept going back to one ewe lamb he'd picked out. She was a beautiful lamb, but there was some small thing that he didn't like about her. Finally he turned her back out – she didn't make the grade. Glen knew that to have a quality breed, you have to start with quality stock.

Glen and my grandfather were business partners. My grandfather was very involved in the intense process we went through in selecting our breeding stock. He, more than anyone, was responsible for instilling in my siblings and me the importance of following a very strict selection and culling process.

There appears to be some variation in the fleece between white Romeldales and the recessively colored CVM. Can you talk more about the types of fleece acceptable within the breed?

It was very noticeable in the early CVMs that the sheep themselves were more wild than their white counterparts. They have also tended to have less lanolin in their wool and to be more britchy than



Romeldale/CVM rams are active breeders and the ewes are excellent mothers, prolific and long-lived. Twinning and ease of lambing are considered important breed attributes. Photo courtesy of Patti Sexton.

the Romeldales.

But the qualities that I look for in my breeding stock are the same regardless: 60s to 64s wool grade, a soft fleece with at least three -inch staple length, and strong fibers with a fine, even crimp and a lot of elasticity and memory. The fleece should be dense with a fair amount of lanolin which helps to protect the fine fibers and to keep the dirt out.

The length of the staple and the grade should be uniform throughout the fleece with as little britch and belly wool as possible. A fleece should never be cotted, dry, full of dirt or contain any kemp. The ewe fleece should weigh six to ten pounds and the ram fleece ten to twelve pounds.

The history of the Romeldale CVM breed reads as a great collaborative effort among a close group of family and friends who were passionate about the sheep and their fiber. Conservation breeding programs rely heavily upon the same effective collaboration between breeders who are now scattered great distances from each other. Can you share with us your hopes for the future of the breed and those working as conservation breeders across the country?

Breeders need to have a very clear idea of what they want to accomplish with their breeding programs and a solid plan of how they are going to achieve that goal.

In the breeding of livestock, there is always something more to be learned. Those who are truly passionate about the continuation and quality of something are usually happy to share information and

ideas with others. Making those connections with like-minded people will often lead to conversations that bring up ideas a person may never have considered on their own. Breeders, especially in this day and age of the internet, don't need to be next-door neighbors to be of great value to one another.

Over the years there have been different breeds of all types of livestock that have changed to better supply market demands. But the traits, the qualities, on which the Romeldale breed was founded 100 years ago, do – I believe – still hold great value in today's market.

We are appreciative of your time! Breeders do not always have the chance to hear from someone with your unique perspective and experience. If there is anything else you would like us to know, what might that be?

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on this breed which has been such a big part of my life.

I would like to let everyone know that I am currently working on a book – the history of the Romeldale/CVM breed, the people who had a hand in forming it, and the improvement programs used to ensure its continued quality. I hope to have the book completed and available by this time next year. ❖

To learn more about Romeldale/CVM sheep, visit The Livestock Conservancy website or contact the National Romeldale CVM Conservancy at www.nationalcvm-conservancy.org, 570-490-4759, or info@nationalcvmconservancy.org.

The Ecology of Everything

Continued from previous page

ies in England, fat from sheep grazed on biodiverse pastures had lower levels of a compound that produces some of the odor and flavor that some consumers find offensive. Furthermore, taste comparisons of English Longhorn vs. Charolais, both grazed on biodiverse pasture, found the English Longhorn beef more tender and flavor-intense. Both breed and management *do* make a difference.

For those who already use heritage meat, eggs, and dairy products in their kitchen, next consider mutton. In 2015, Bob and Carolyn Kennard addressed attendees at the Heritage Livestock Conference in Santa Rosa, California. Earlier the crowd had enjoyed Mutton Massala made from Black Welsh Mountain sheep from Desert Weyr Ranch. The previous day, they had tasted various cuts from an eight-year-old Shropshire ram, skillfully prepared by master butcher Adam Danforth. The Kennards captivated the audience with a combination of historic quotes lauding the merits of good mutton well prepared, and excerpts from Kennard's book *Much Ado About Mutton*. Publication of the book launched the mutton renaissance in the United Kingdom, under the patronage of Prince Charles himself. The secret to good mutton? Choose the right breed, raise it on pasture, especially biodiverse pasture, recognize a properly finished animal, and hang the meat for at least ten days. The slow cooker is ideal for preparing mutton, as are traditional recipes using poaching, braising, or stewing.

Will the first person to try sous vide cooking with mutton please write and send us your recipe? ❖

Notes

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Remembering Barbara Corey

We have received word that the Conservancy's first executive secretary, Barbara Corey, passed away on December 14th. From the Conservancy's first executive director, Libby Henson: "*Barbara was a fabulous woman and a joy to work with. Barbara was the first administrative assistant for the Conservancy, and ran it from her kitchen table. She worked closely with Ridge Shinn and then opened her home to me when I first arrived in the United States. I lived with the family for my first six months. Nothing was ever too much trouble, and her enthusiasm and positive approach to life were infectious. I feel very privileged to have known her and the Conservancy is lucky to have had such a warm and kind person on the team in those early years.*"



Barbara Ann (Cunningham) Corey, 90, was an avid gardener, conservationist, and community patron who was committed to being a well-informed citizen. She had an idyllic childhood in Cohasset, Massachusetts swimming in the sea and playing tennis as well as tending the 96 tomato plants in the family garden. She graduated from Thayer Academy, in Braintree, in 1945, and in the last few years she enjoyed attending her grandchildren's events at her alma mater.

In 1953, Barbara married Roger Lyman Corey, with whom she raised a family in Medway and Petersham, Massachusetts. They worked together to care for their town, their family, and their beautiful gardens. They were married for 50 years before Roger passed away in 2003.

Barbara earned bachelor's and master's degrees in health education from Worcester State College while working as a reading tutor at Mahar Regional High School in Orange. She was a nighttime volunteer at a suicide hotline in Worcester and executive secretary of the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, where she discovered her favorite minor breed, the colorfully named Mulefoot hog.

For many years, until retirement in 1998, Barbara was the inaugural coordinator of the North Quabbin Community Coalition. In 1994 the local Chamber of Commerce awarded "Citizen of the Year" to Barbara. In tribute to her tireless advocacy and can-do spirit, the annual Barbara Corey Award was established, to honor someone from the North Quabbin community who exhibits "her passion for life, values and love for the citizens of our region."

In addition to this work Barbara was an early member of the Our Daily Bread Food Coop and both an active volunteer and board member of the Petersham Conservation Commission, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the Petersham Arts Center, and the First Parish Church, Unitarian among other organizations.

Barbara passed away serenely at home with family by her side. She leaves three children, Roger, Jr. of Copenhagen, Denmark, William of Durham, North Carolina, and Sarah of Hingham, their spouses and children, many nieces and nephews scattered around the world, and friends too numerous to count who care about their world, the environment, and giving back to their community.



My Experience at the Heritage Livestock Conference

By Amye Gulezian

The Heritage Livestock Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia was an amazing opportunity and experience! I was so thrilled to find out that I would be able to attend in 2017 even though it was about a 12-hour drive from Hampshire College. I became interested in attending after being involved last year when the conference was hosted at Hampshire. This year the conference had a packed schedule from fibers to cheese and soap products, with workshops and booths around the conference, and digging into the challenges and benefits of breed associations and value-added products. And talks about Dutch Belted cattle and urban agriculture!

On Friday I learned about making natural dairy products in the home. I had lots of questions about cheese making and aging! I am excited to convert a mini fridge into a “mini cave” to age cheese and try it out. We also learned about selecting the right animal and breed to start your own home dairy.

After that, I sat in on a talk/conver-

sation about breed associations, which covered not only the challenges they are facing currently but also the benefits they can bring to saving a rare breed. I see the largest challenge is with humans cooperating or not, getting in the way of moving forward for a breed’s conservation and record keeping.

After a lovely dinner of heritage breed sausage, hamburgers, and chicken, and a word from George Washington himself about his rare breeds, the silent auction ended, and unfortunately, I went home empty handed. There were so many fun things at the auction, from needle felting kits (that I really wanted), to stained glass animals, as well as a Temple Grandin book and small gold charms. Even a real live heifer was up for silent auction!

Saturday was a jam-packed day with experts, knowledge, and wonderful conversation! We began at breakfast learning about the early days of the Livestock Conservancy from Libby Henson. Her talk was awe-inspiring, fascinating, and emotional. She spoke about pulling together a list of

Clockwise from top left: • Libby Henson presents John Wilkes with a Shepherds Crook as he became the 2018 RBST North American Ambassador. • Attendees learn about a Leicester Longwool sheep’s teeth during the sheep card-grading workshop. • Attendees visit Ossabaw Island Hogs during their time at Mill Swamp Indian Horses. • Dr. Sponenberg thanks Karen Thornton for her service to The Livestock Conservancy. All conference photos by Paul Henningson.

people who may have had rare breeds and then driving around the country to meet them, make official herd books, and take a census of all the remaining rare breeds in the country she could find. This was the very beginning of The Livestock Conservancy. It was a pleasure to hear her story and see her speak, and I was thoroughly inspired to continue doing the work I am doing with Dutch Belted cattle and in conserving and raising awareness about all heritage livestock breeds.

I was excited to finally meet Winifred and Martha Hoffman, who breed and raise

continued on next page



Top: Gabrielle Gordon explains how to measure horses using a Colonial Williamsburg Cleveland Bay during the card-grading clinic. • Alison Martin presents Mary McConnell with an award for service on the Board. • Carriage rides were a popular attraction at Colonial Williamsburg. Middle: • Children enjoy live music at the horse workshop at Mill Swamp Indian Horses. • Colonial Williamsburg provided entertainment for many attendees at the Heritage Livestock Conference. Bottom: Elaine Shirley and Dorothy Hammett pause for a photo during setup. • John Metzger teaches attendees about waterfowl.

Conference

Continued from previous page

Dutch Belted cattle. We learned all about the history of the breed and the importance of saving them, as well as the history of the Hoffman's herd and important management strategies for the Dutch Belted. There was even talk about the Dutch Belted breeding-up program in order to increase genetic diversity and to ensure that Dutch Belted continue being registered. I was able to take a look at old bulletins that have different historical accounts of the Dutch Belted as well as information about the breed at different points. Thank you so much to Martha and Winifred for coming

all that way and making such a fantastic presentation!

Next I went to Jeremy Engh's talk, "The Importance of Grass-Based Heritage Cattle Genetics." He raises Devons on grass and focused on bull selection to have successful growth on grass. He touched on why grass-fed can be a good choice. He also spoke about the importance of forages, genetics and management, and how they all have to work together to raise cattle on grass successfully. He spoke about how he values good disposition at the foremost in offspring as well as efficiency, fertility, and longevity. He also discussed some major historical moments in the beef industry and how those have affected

where we are today. And he spoke about his selection process on his farm using the Lakota Bull Test, which evaluates bulls for temperament, foraging ability, fertility, structural correctness, and more!

Another session, "Five Strategies to Protect Your Favorite Breed for the Future," focused on the creation of the American Guinea Hog Association and the American Guinea Hog Historic Herds Network, discussing the starting points and process of beginning to conserve a rare breed. Their main points included speaking with elders, communication and networking, working with a breed association or whatever registry may have existed, assuring outcross for the animals, and



Top: Chef Ivey Boyd serves Marie Minnich at the kickoff banquet. Bottom: John Metzger enjoys dinner at the Heritage Livestock Conference.

2017 Heritage Livestock Conference Menu

Thursday Reception

Dorset Horn lamb fajitas

Served with peppers and onions on a flour tortilla

Lamb donated by Seth and Sarah Mackay-Smith, Cullenstone Farm

Friday Dinner

Roasted Plymouth Rock chickens

Red Devon beef burgundy

Shepherd's Pie made with Dorset Horn lamb

Donated by Jamie Duckworth, Sandy Flat Farms (chickens), Jeremy Engh, Lakota Ranch (beef), and Seth and Sarah Mackay-Smith, Cullenstone Farm (lamb)

Saturday Breakfast

Eggs Benedict

made with Cayuga & Silver Appleyard duck eggs

Donated by Jill & Eddie Beuerlein, Blue Mojo Farm (Cayuga) and Seth and Sarah Mackay-Smith, Cullenstone Farm (Silver Appleyard)

Saturday Lunch

Leicester Longwool lamb sliders with mint chutney,

Guinea Hog pork sausage with peppers and onions

Chopped Slate turkey sandwiches with stuffing and cranberry sauce

Donated by Mary Longhill, Hidden Spring Farm (lamb) and Jim & Jacqueline Moyer, Old Crowe Farm (sausage)

carefully selecting breeding animals and buyers.

Next I attended "Green Picket Fences: Forwarding Urban Agriculture" with Kay Grim and Sue Spicer. They talked about the Green Shepherd Project, which puts a small herd of Jacob sheep to work keeping abandoned properties maintained in Indianapolis's Willard Park neighborhood. They also discussed ways they have grown and distributed fresh produce in their local urban neighborhood. [For more information, visit facebook.com/GreenShepherdProject or see the article in Volume 30, Issue I (2013) of the Conservancy's newsletter.]

The last workshop I attended on Saturday was "Value-Added Meat Goat Production" with Renard Turner. He is the owner and manager of Vanguard Ranch in Charlottesville, Virginia – and its goat burger truck. He shared his experience of selling his goat meat from a truck at festivals, and how he ended up bringing the festival to his farm by building a stage and kitchen on the farm where he could host several

concerts a year and sell goat burgers right from his own property!

The day came to a close with cowboy poetry performed by Stephen Monroe. He not only told fantastic stories in rhyme about life on the ranch, but he also gave a history lesson on the Florida Cracker cattle. His poetry had the audience laughing and relating to the stories he told.

And finally, on Sunday morning, after some delicious Williamsburg pancakes, I went to the card grading workshop at Colonial Williamsburg's farm. We looked at several Milking Devon cows and heifers, comparing them and giving them cards based on how well they fit the breed standard. Milking Devons are tri-purpose, and it was very interesting to hear from three judges who all focus on a different purpose with the breed; beef, dairy, and oxen. They all had small differences in preferences for their ideals, and reasons as to why they all kept within the breed standard.

I had a fantastic time at the Heritage

Livestock Conference. It was amazing to be surrounded by others who are just as passionate as I am about conserving rare breeds. I learned so much and am excited to continue working with The Livestock Conservancy and the individuals I met while at the conference. I believe the Conservancy's mission is crucial to agriculture moving forward. I have already told so many of my classmates about this wonderful opportunity and hope that they will be able to attend in the future, in order to continue their education in agriculture and rare breeds! ❖

Amye Gulezian is a student at Hampshire College. She raises Dutch Belted cattle on the school's farm and first became involved with the Conservancy when volunteering at the 2016 Heritage Livestock Conference.

Ancient Origins of Karakul Sheep

By Carole George

To our knowledge, there is no book written entirely about the Karakul sheep. We are pleased to mention that The Lambs, which features a flock of pet Karakuls, is forthcoming from St. Martin's Press in spring 2018. While the book is a memoir, it contains historical background about this fascinating heritage breed from Central Asia. A sampling is offered here. In the next issue we'll include an additional excerpt from The Lambs describing the Karakul breed's journey to the United States.

Sheep are said to be one of the most ancient species of animal, having survived since the early Ice Age. What is interesting in considering the history of the Karakul breed is that according to Richard Lydekker in *The Sheep and Its Cousins*, the word *sheep* is of ancient Sanskrit derivation, which points to the possibility that sheep originated in the East. (*Sheep* comes from the Sanskrit *avi*, which is a modification of the root *av* that means to keep or to guard.)

Moreover, it has been asserted that the Karakul is one of the earliest breeds of sheep. In summarizing his travels through Arabia in the fifth century B.C., Herodotus, the Father of History, noted



Karakul sheep are an ancient breed from Central Asia, currently listed as Threatened on The Livestock Conservancy's priority list. Photo courtesy of Carole George.

the "remarkable sheep who had flat tails, eighteen inches broad." This fat tail, although not exclusive to the Karakul, is a distinguishing trait of Eastern sheep. The "two great cushions divided by a median cleft" (Lydekker) was considered the "butter of Central Asia." It covers the animal's entire rump and can weigh as much as 30 pounds.

The other notable physical characteristic of the Karakuls is their very lean, typically black, legs.

But what truly distinguishes the Kara-

kul sheep is its definition as a fur-bearing sheep. This is the breed from which the fur known as Persian lamb is derived, and this has contributed to their role in the colorful commercial history of the area of the world now known as Central Asia.

It is difficult to imagine a more exotic birthplace for a breed of farm animals. The very mention of ancient Persia immediately conjures up beautiful parks, everything to delight in, the perfect accuracy with which lovely trees have been planted in straight lines, the exquisite scents that mingle in the air, women as slim as cypresses, and poetry recited in voices that are barely audible.

Any exploration of ancient Persia will include the exploits of Alexander the Great, who crossed into Asia Minor in 334 B.C., burned King Darius's symbol of magnificent kingship – his sprawling palace at Persepolis – and plunged all the way across Persia into the far northeastern kingdom of Sogdiana, where the Karakul sheep would have been grazing.

The poor windswept village of Karakul – which provides the name for this breed – is located in the valley of the famous Amu Darya (once called the Oxus) River. Legend has it that the famous tight curls on the pelts of lambs born here were due to a diet of wild wheat. The mountainous deserts with elevations up to 8,000 feet, sparse food supplies, long distances to water, and a generally hard life, produced the extremely hardy Karakuls.



Young Karakul sheep, as depicted in the upcoming book *The Lambs*. Photo courtesy of Carole George.

It is not surprising that people in this area are now phenomenally enterprising, now that they are relieved of Soviet restrictions. The Sogdians whom Alexander the Great encountered were not warriors like their neighbors. They were famous as deal-makers and were the undisputed masters of the trade routes (later known as the Silk Road) for 700 years. From the age of five, Sogdian boys were prepared for a life of trading: they were taught Arabic, Greek, Chinese, Turkic, and Tibetan, and as soon as they were old enough to leave home, they went out to sell the lush fruits and flowers that grew in the river valleys, the expensive silk fabrics, and the treasured skins of newborn Karakul lambs.

Within this area was the former khanate of Bokhara, the richest emirate in Central Asia. It is now roughly the territory occupied by the Republic of Uzbekistan. Its capital was the great caravan city of Bokhara, which is situated on an oasis and was a natural stop on the long trade routes. Although silk, with its lustrous sheen and high tensile strength, symbolized the romance of the network, the pelts of the Karakul lambs were an extremely important component of the trading scheme.

In the old town of Bokhara was the fabled Karakul bazaar. It had a premier location near the city's principal building, the

For More Reading

If you are interested in additional reading about the area of the world from which the Karakuls have come to us, we offer the following suggestions:

Glazebrook, Philip. *Journey to Khiva, A Writer's Search for Central Asia*. New York, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International Ltd., 1996.

Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game, The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. New York, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International Ltd., 1994.

Krist, Gustav. *Alone Through the Forbidden Land, Journey in Disguise through Soviet Central Asia*. Translated by E. O. Lorimer. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938.

Lane Fox, Robin. *The Search for Alexander*. Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.

Vambéry, Arminius. *History of Bokhara, Travels in Central Asia*. New York: Praeger, 1970. (Originally published London: H. S. King & Co., 1873.)

Citadel, which was the fortress of the final emirs. People from all corners of the world were attracted to this constellation of covered bazaars. There were separate bazaars for products ranging from books and gold to booths for butchers and teashops.

Even when the advent of shipping forced the old camel caravan routes into gentle decline, and many Persian lambskins were sent to the fur market at Nishni Novgorod on the east side of the Caspian Sea—or still later when Leipzig fur specialists improved the treatment for the hides and the principal market shifted to the other side of the Caspian – the pastoralist nomads maintained their valuable flocks and continued to deliver the

black lambskins to Bokhara. Despite its dilapidated state, the famous old Karakul bazaar continued to attract international fur buyers who wanted to purchase at the source. ❖



Student Memberships

Do you know a student who would be interested in heritage breed conservation? Get them a student membership! For just \$25, students will receive all of the perks of the Basic membership with the exception of receiving *The Livestock Conservancy News* and the *Breeders and Products Directory* only online. Students from pre-K through college are eligible for the student membership. To sign a student up, visit www.livestockconservancy.org or send the student's name, contact information, and the name of the school they currently attend with payment to The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312. Cash, checks, money orders, or credit cards (VISA, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover) are accepted. Students must be currently enrolled or between semesters in an academic program at the time membership is purchased.



Go, Pigs!

All-Alaskan Racing Pigs brought their team of Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs, bred by a Livestock Conservancy member, to CenturyLink Field in November to compete during halftime of the Seattle Seahawks vs. Washington Redskins game. The piglets spent six weeks training for the race, a 40-yard straight track that included two hurdles. As part of the festivities and to show support for conservation, the Seahawks made a donation to The Livestock Conservancy and Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders United in honor of the winning piglet.

When Disaster Strikes

By Ryan Walker

There is a vast array of threats that could upend the lives of residents in our different regions of the United States – and we have certainly seen the impact of many of them over the past year. With a changing climate, more severe events are likely to affect our country in coming years. As a matter of fact, as I sat down to write this article, I received an alert about another wildfire out west. Whether you live on a fault line, near a levy or the coast, or in an area prone to any major weather-related disasters, being prepared is an activity that takes relatively little time to plan, but can save your life in the event of a disaster. If you own animals, you're not only responsible for your own and your family's lives; you're responsible for animal lives too. And in the case of rare breeds, you may additionally be responsible for safeguarding very rare and valuable genetics.

In some unfortunate circumstances, tragedy is unavoidable. In the event of a large-scale disaster, fatalities of humans and animals become much more likely. But as my high school ag teacher used to always say "Follow the six P's – Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance." In other words, take time now to prepare for the worst so that if it does happen, you have a greater chance of preserving life and property.

Our rare livestock breeds are living, breathing, genetic containers of hundreds or in some cases thousands of years of selection. They are survivors. We often refer to them as "genetic treasures," and as stewards, we should treat them as such. While we can (and should) use liquid nitrogen safety deposit boxes to cryopreserve some of these treasures, putting these breeds to work in on-the-ground use in agriculture is what they were designed for.

Attend any class for emergency preparation and you'll receive a recommendation to assess your home and prepare an escape route. For people, this often means knowing how to exit your home and find shelter – either in an on-site shelter or in many cases at a distant location designated as safe. I grew up in "tornado alley" where storm shelters are common and nearly



Wildfires in California this year were fast-moving disasters affecting large acreages. Photo from www.ccad.org/disaster-preparedness-for-livestockpoultry.html, a site which includes many good preparedness recommendations.

everyone is familiar with how to monitor alerts and conditions on severe weather days and find shelter if needed. But with livestock – especially large animals, what can be done in a sudden event like a tornado?

Unfortunately not much, but we should look at the breeds we raise in a broader context and remember that protecting every animal isn't always necessary for purposes of conservation. If you raise rare rabbits, poultry, or *maybe* sheep or goats, and keep them very close to your home, you may be able to grab a few on the way to a storm shelter if you're lucky. If you're raising them on a significant scale, you likely will not be able to save all or even most of your animals, but you may be able to take a few very genetically important animals with you to shelter – perhaps those from a rare bloodline or a representative from multiple bloodlines. The same goes for other situations like flash floods or wildfires where you don't have much prep time if you are forced to evacuate.

Events like hurricanes provide slightly more time to prepare, but often only by a matter of hours or, at the most, days. Residents of Key West, Florida evacuating before Hurricane Irma made national news with their wrapped up, live "Rooster burritos" in the back seat of their vehicle (pictured to right). While this method probably did work in a pinch, a little more preparation could have made the trip more comfortable for the birds and a little less likely to damage property. (Think of the claws on those leather seats!)

The Livestock Conservancy has created a section in our online classifieds where members can post offers to house animals during evacuations. This service was used with hurricanes and wildfires in 2017. Offers can be posted for up to a year at a time if you would like to list your information well in advance of extreme events. If you have the space and facilities, I encourage you to consider offering space for evacuees during disasters.

In the event that you're not able to evacuate your animals, working with breeders in other geographic locations to spread genetics around via your breeding practices could be just as beneficial. One of the main threats to rare breeds is regional isolation. If an entire breed or bloodline exists in only one small geographic area, a natural disaster or disease outbreak could wipe the entire breed or bloodline out of existence. Several rare breeds have suffered losses due to this kind of isolation over the past few years.

If you raise large animals like cattle or equines, depending on the number and how imminent the threat is, you may not be able to evacuate all of them. Fortunately, heritage breeds are extremely hardy and resilient, but even so, some circumstances are beyond their ability to escape. If you are personally forced to evacuate and must leave animals to fend for themselves, opening gates or stalls to allow them more space to reach safety from threats may be helpful. In some instances, cutting fences may be necessary and having wire cutters, a bolt cutter, or other necessary tools

handy will save time.

If you have a trailer you would plan to use to transport animals, training your animals to load up into it can save critical time when disaster is imminent. Many people train livestock to voluntarily load into trailers by feeding them inside so they become used to loading up. This can be a good practice for loading in general, regardless of what the trip is for. Keeping your trailer in good working condition is a given. Even a measure like making sure your trailer lights work could prove invaluable in a situation where you're forced to drive through thick smoke. For those who don't have trailers, having a plan to borrow one or make arrangements are good to do in advance. Perhaps a truck bed cage, camper, or portable crates could be used.

After Hurricane Katrina, FEMA increased efforts to coordinate with shelters to accept pets. However many shelters still cannot accommodate animals, and those that do may have restrictions on types of animals permitted. I checked with my local emergency management officials and found out that here we do have designated space for rabbits and poultry that can fit in crates, but space is limited and people are advised to bring their own crates, feed, and bedding. Although nonprofits and relief agencies often do good work at mobilizing feed and supplies for animals in emergencies, those supplies often do not arrive immediately or there are simply not enough to go around.

For those who live in fire-prone areas, taking preventative steps to curb the spread of fires is a good recommendation. Regular brush control and keeping gutters on homes and barns clean are just a couple of examples or preventative measures that can be taken well in advance. If you have a tractor that can be used to plow a firebreak, keeping it fueled up and ready to go is a good practice. When I was a child, a plowed firebreak helped stop a wildfire that reached to just across the road from our house, after burning several hundred acres and claiming one of our town's fire-trucks as the wind drove the fire in a circle around it. Turning off the gas to buildings could also be a good measure to take if fire is headed in your direction.

Many emergency officials also recommend having an emergency kit or "bug-out bag" of supplies to help you survive for a few days on hand. Creating a similar kit for your livestock can be quite helpful. If you have a trailer with a storage compartment, perhaps this means keeping some shavings, feed, and supplies in it. If you don't use it, you can swap out feed occasionally to keep it fresh. Hay, stored properly, should last for years. If you anticipate crossing state lines, health papers, registration papers, or other documentation are good to keep handy as well. Depending on the extent of the disaster, these documents could be destroyed if left at home. For smaller animals, supplies may be kept in sealed buckets that are easy to

grab in a hurry. Disasters often bring non-life threatening injuries for animals and including supplies to treat minor injuries (and knowing how to treat them) is also important.

Additionally, keeping a list of animal-related contacts (veterinarians, nearby farmers, etc.) is essential. If your vet's phone number is only stored on a refrigerator magnet, are you going to remember to grab it in an emergency? It's easy to say "I'll just look it up later on my phone," but disasters are notorious for affecting phone service – either because infrastructure is destroyed or because service is jammed by everyone else trying to make calls in or out. If you're without power and your phone is dead, it isn't going to be much help anyway. I keep a couple of small, portable solar panels with my emergency supplies to charge devices if this were to happen.

Man-made disasters can also impact farming operations. If you live in an area bordering railroad tracks or roads, it is possible although highly unlikely that a derailment or wreck involving hazardous materials could impact your property or the air or water around it. Tossed cigarettes from motorists are common fire threats, especially in low-traffic, rural areas where a fire could go unnoticed for a good deal of time before someone is around to put it out or call for help. Underground transport of hazardous materials like oil and gas could also pose a threat to the land or water surrounding your property. If you live near a facility like a refinery, factory, or nuclear power plant that handles toxic chemicals or waste, the air, water, or ground could become contaminated if a spill were to occur. Knowing where these threats are ahead of time and knowing if you are uphill, downhill, upwind, or downwind of them can help you prepare your evacuation plan. Do not head toward the source of the disaster!

While this article is by no means comprehensive and not intended to alarm anyone, hopefully it brings some preparation procedures to mind that you can implement for yourselves and/or your animals. Remember, we are stewards of these rare breeds and their genetics. Taking steps ahead of time to prepare for the worst – even if it never happens – is our responsibility, and doing so will help ensure our breeds survive for future generations. ❖



These chickens were evacuated "burrito-style" from Key West, Florida before Hurricane Irma. Photo by Key West Finest via Facebook.

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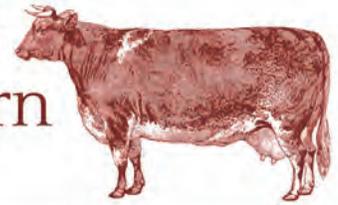
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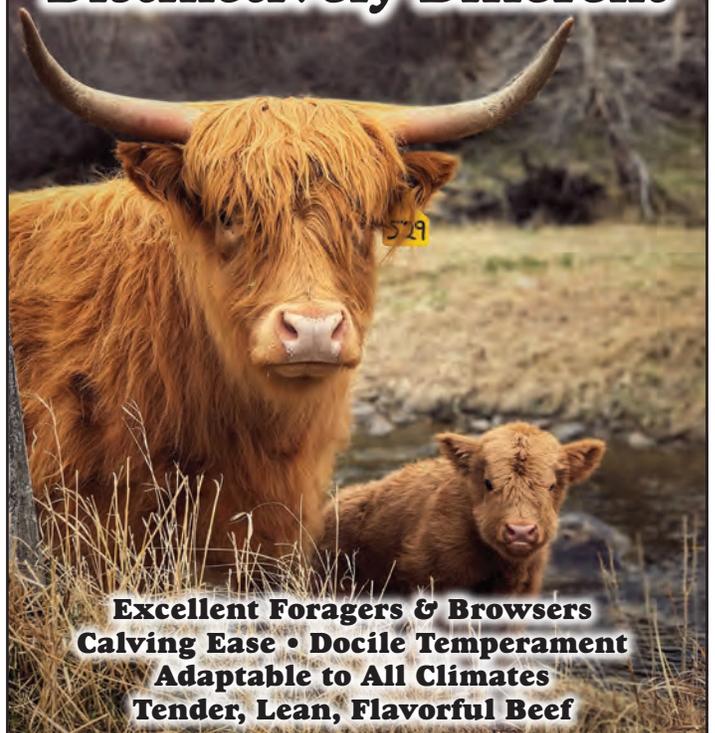
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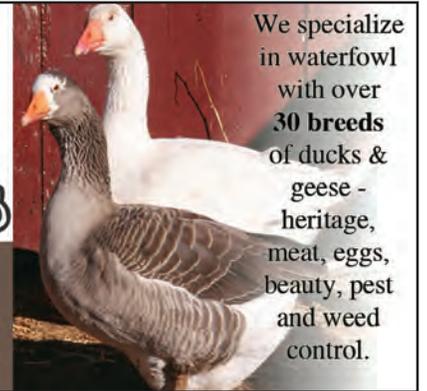
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DATED MATERIAL

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@livestock-conservancy.org or mail to PO Box 477,

January.

January 30-February 1 – The Grazing Conference “Covering All Ground” will be held in Wisconsin Dells, WI. Landowners, farmers, graziers, and agency staff will gather to discuss beef, dairy, sheep, goats, rabbits, poultry, and more. Visit www.grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference/ for more information.

January 30 - February 3 – The American Sheep Industry Association Convention will be held in Denver, CO. Visit www.sheepusa.org/Events_2018Convention for more information.

February

February 7-10 – The 27th Annual Farming for the Future Conference will be held at Penn Stater Conference

Center in State College, PA. Visit www.pasafarming.org/conference or call 814-349-9856 for more information.

February 15-17 – The 39th Annual Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) Conference “A Taste for Change” will be held in Dayton, OH. Sustainable food and farming workshops, a trade show, from-scratch meals, a kids’ conference, childcare, and keynote speakers. Visit www.oeffa.org/conference2018 for more information.

★ **February 17-18 – The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in Belton, TX. This family-oriented, sustainable lifestyle event features dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations and workshops on everything from beekeeping to using solar electricity. Visit www.motherearthnewsfair.com for more information.

March

March 6 – The Organic Commodities

and Livestock Conference will be held in Mount Olive, NC. For more information, visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org/oclc/ or call 919-542-2402.

May

★ **May 6-7 - The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in Asheville, NC. This family-oriented sustainable lifestyle event features dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations and workshops on everything from beekeeping to using solar electricity. Visit www.motherearthnewsfair.com for more information.

August

★ **August 4-5 - The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in Albany, OR. This family-oriented sustainable lifestyle event features dozens of practical, hands-on demonstrations and workshops on everything from beekeeping to using solar electricity. Visit www.motherearthnewsfair.com for more information.

November

★ ★ **November 8-11 - The Heritage Livestock Conference** will be held at Conner Prairie Interactive History Park in Fishers, IN.

