



Conserving rare breeds since 1977

The Large Black Hog Association: Partnering with The Livestock Conservancy for a Better Census

By Cathy Payne and Charlene Couch

The Large Black hog is a solid black, deep-bodied swine with lop ears that cover its eyes. The breed is known for its highly docile nature and superior mothering abilities. The breed dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Large Black pigs of today are distinguished by their ability to free range and adapt to pastured living in a variety of climates. They have been successfully exported to over 30 countries outside the United Kingdom. Despite this seemingly wide distribution, the Large Black is in danger of extinction, with a global population estimated at fewer than 5,000.

In the United States, the Large Black Hog population is monitored by the Large Black Hog Association (LBHA). To effectively conserve this Threatened breed of pigs, the LBHA knew they needed further information about the nation's Large Black hog population to develop an effective conservation program. The LBHA wanted to understand more than just the basics of the breed's annual registration numbers – they needed up-to-date details, like how many farms are actively breeding and registering pigs with the LBHA, what bloodlines are maintained by each farm, and how many live, LBHA-registered pigs exist in the United States.

Amy McKamey, co-President of the LBHA, shared, “We knew that the numbers were way lower than what our books showed and feared that we were most likely in the critical stages, but needed to confirm this with a full, detailed census so we knew what we were working with and where our attention needed to go first. So I reached out to Charlene Couch at The Livestock Conservancy to team up with us



The Large Black Hog is listed as a ‘Threatened’ breed by The Livestock Conservancy. Fewer than 1,000 Large Blacks are registered in the United States each year.

to do just that.”

Counting the animals may sound like a simple task, but keeping a current and accurate census is a significant challenge for most breed associations. Even with good record-keeping, breed associations may easily over- or underestimate the population size of their breed. This is because litter registration numbers often fail to account for the number of actual breeding stock later registered or bred, and deceased animals are rarely reported back to the Registrar for updates.

Author and historian Dr. Cathy Payne was contracted to help carry out the census. Working from a master list of 953 farms, Cathy used a combination of

emails, telephone calls, voicemail messages, text messages, social media and farm websites to contact the farmers. Her exhaustive survey revealed the following information about the LBHA membership:

1) There are currently 65 members in good standing with the Large Black Hog Association. Several are lifetime members.

2) Fifty breeders are actively breeding Large Blacks, though not all register their stock.

3) Sixteen farms registered litters with the LBHA in January-October of 2019.

4) Breeders and owners are widely distributed across much of the U.S. and southern Canada.

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New Marketing and Communications Manger Joins The Livestock Conservancy

The Livestock Conservancy is excited to welcome Brittany Sweeney as its new marketing and communications manager. Her first day at the Conservancy was March 16.

A skilled marketer with a background in communications, Sweeney will handle our PR, social media, and editor duties for *The Livestock Conservancy News*, *E-News*, *Breeders and Products Directory*, and much more.

Before joining The Livestock Conservancy, Sweeney spent seven years as a communications specialist at North Carolina State University. During her time with the College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Natural Resources, she helped expand the digital presence of each college and increased their digital footprint and audience engagement across their web and social platforms. Sweeney graduated from Elon University with a degree and

journalism and began her career as a page designer and music writer. After discovering a love for web design and digital marketing, she's never looked back and is excited to combine a knack for strategic thinking with a passion for conservation.

A fondness for food and animals means that Sweeney spends her free time cooking, fostering shelter dogs and chasing after her own five cats, dog, and backyard chickens. ❖

You can reach Brittany by email at bsweeney@livestockconservancy.org or by phone at 919-542-5704.



Brittany Sweeney holds kids at a farm in Bahama, NC. Brittany is our new marketing and communications manager.

Thanks for Your Service!

The Livestock Conservancy would like to thank our outgoing board members for their leadership and continued support of our organization and its mission.

Gabrielle Gordon – Keller, TX
Elaine Shirley – Williamsburg, VA

Beth Tillman – Mystic, CT
Judy Wollen – Mansfield Center, CT

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The Livestock Conservancy News (ISSN 1064-1599) is published quarterly by The Livestock Conservancy. © The Livestock Conservancy 2020.



The Livestock Conservancy is a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation established to conserve and promote endangered breeds of livestock and poultry. The Conservancy

is a membership organization that engages in research, education, and communication to promote these purposes.

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

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FROM THE SCIENCE — DESK —

A Bovine Lesson in Why We Save Rare Breeds

By **D.P. Sponenberg**

One compelling reason to save rare breeds (and there are many!) was recently emphasized by the results of the DNA testing of cattle breeds accomplished by a large group and coordinated by the University of Córdoba in Spain. Our own Texas Longhorn, Florida Cracker, Pineywoods, and Chihuahua Criollo cattle took part in the study, through the generosity and hard work of many owners and breeders. Taking these samples always sounds easy, until you are the one doing it!

As with much of science, the devil is in the details, and the details can be tricky. About 100 breeds were evaluated from all over the globe, with an emphasis on breeds from North and South America that were purported to have an Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) origin. A simplistic view would be that these breeds should basically be a subset of what is left in Spain and Portugal today. “That, in turn, would alert us that the real priorities for conservation would still be there in Spain and Portugal.

The surprising result came when the breeds were evaluated against a supposition that there are only seven basic types

of cattle in the world. It is possible to measure the influence of each of those seven in today’s breeds. Those seven are: Asia (think cattle with humps), Africa, Spain, Portugal, Continental Europe, Britain, and then “Criollo” for whatever might be unique to the Americas.

The results came back that most breeds do have at least a little bit of some other influence in them. This does not mean they are not “purebred;” it just means that history is complicated and is reflected in the genetics of breeds. In general, Asian breeds are indeed Asian, and African breeds are indeed African, though some of them have considerable Asian influence from past monsoon-based trade. Continental European breeds tend to have quite a bit of local and British influence, and that might be coming from past Shorthorn influence as modern breeds were developed. British breeds are generally British, with the exception of Jersey cattle, which should come as no surprise because they do indeed look different!

Portuguese breeds tend to be fairly distinct. Spanish breeds tend to sort out into one group that is Spanish, and one group (from the north) that is influenced by Continental breeds. This is no surprise, given the history of the development of the breeds and their geographic location.

The big surprise comes in the American Criollo breeds. Many of them have a strong influence that is very rare throughout all of the breeds in the “Old World,” with the perplexing exception of a moderate presence in Portuguese Fighting Cattle. Our own Texas Longhorns and Florida Cracker cattle have a strong influence from this “Criollo” origin, as do the Chihuahua Criollo cattle that now reside in the USA.

While this story is complicated, the summary might be that “something rare” in Europe was brought over to the Americas. Then, for whatever reason, it has become predominant and important in our breeds. This, in turn, means that if we lose our uniquely American breeds (North and South), we will be losing something unique that contributes strongly to global biodiversity of cattle. Conserving rare breeds does indeed save something unique, and if we don’t save them, we might have no idea what we are losing! ❖

D.P. Sponenberg, DVM, Ph.D. serves as The Livestock Conservancy’s Technical Advisor and has been actively involved with the organization for more than 40



Criollo (Study)



Pineywoods (Threatened)



Texas Longhorn – CTRLR (Critical)



Florida Cracker (Threatened)

Photos by Jeannette Beranger (Criollo, Pineywoods, and Texas Longhorn) and Stephen Monroe (Florida Cracker)

years. He is a Professor of Pathology and Genetics at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia and can be reached at dpsponen@vt.edu.

Large Black Hogs

Continued from page 1

Cathy also obtained details about the LBHA's registered pig population:

1) Only 323 live, LBHA-registered Large Black pigs were documented by the 2019 census.

2) Of these, 104 pigs were registered in 2019, and 27 litter certificates were issued.

3) Some bloodlines are more highly represented than others in the population. Figures 2 and 3 below summarize the numbers of each boar and sow bloodline in the LBHA's Large Black population.

The LBHA's comprehensive census revealed far fewer breeders and live pigs than expected, based on the association's membership and registration records. From Cathy's research, the LBHA learned that a large percentage of farms had closed in recent years. Many farms that registered litters had used those litters for meat, so hundreds of pigs in the database had never bred and reproduced. The LBHA co-President points out, "We knew the numbers were falling and many were not taking the time to register hogs anymore. Many don't understand how important those papers are. When you don't register the pigs there is no turning back. With no records those genetics are then lost from the books forever."

By taking the initiative to conduct a detailed census, the LBHA now has a clearer understanding of its current membership and pig population. They are prepared to



Figure 1. Geographic distribution of Large Black hog breeders. Access to an interactive map is available from the association. Each farm's clickable point shows which boar and sow bloodlines are held by each farm.

use this information to make informed breeding and management decisions to insure the breed's future. Some plans are already in place to improve the odds for the Large Blacks, including scientific research on reproduction and growth, and supplementation of U.S. genetics with imported bloodlines from Great Britain. However, conservation breeding decisions for the breed and ongoing educational efforts to support the membership, will be crucial for the survival of the Large Black. "Saving these rare hogs is very important to us," says McKamey. "We need to get the breed out there in the hands of more people and create a market for the products these hogs produce. We hope that we can make improvements in many areas and grow their numbers in the years to come. We simply can't let these animals slip through our fingers and disappear."

Every breeder of endangered livestock or poultry has a vital role to play in helping to move their breed forward, one registration at a time. Accurate registration numbers enable breed associations to man-

age and breed their animals for the greatest possibility of success. Registration of breeding stock is fundamental to the genetic security of a breed, as is regular exchange of information between breeders and their associations. Annual surveys of membership, registrations, and ownership can support better management of all endangered breeds.

Members of the Large Black Hog Association can take pride in knowing that their membership supports critical conservation efforts for the breed, including completion of a detailed census and participation in research activities. Based on current census information, the LBHA can now take steps to improve conservation of the Large Black Hog through specific decision-making, policies, and deliberate actions to sustain and grow the nation's herd. Their initiative can serve as a model for all breed associations that wish to better manage their herds. ❖

Figure 2. Number of LBHA-Registered Boars in 2019 by Paternal Bloodline (n=101)

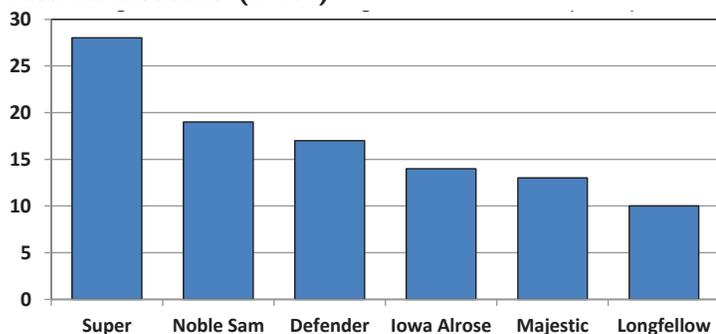
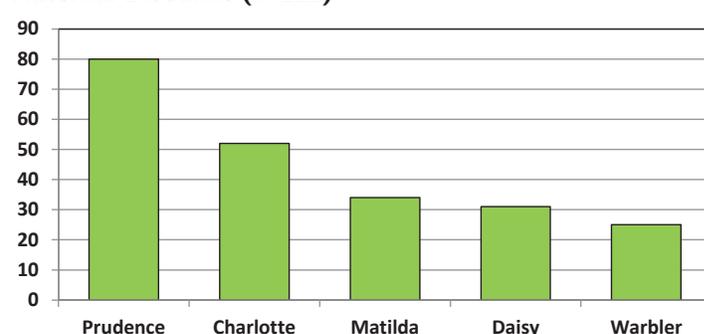


Figure 3. Number of LBHA-Registered Sows in 2019 by Maternal Bloodline (n=222)



What's the Worst that Can Happen? Succession Planning for Rare Breed Livestock Stewards

By Julie Gauthier

For many farm families, someone needs to work off the farm to make ends meet. I'm that person for my family, fighting commuter traffic every day to bring home a paycheck that keeps us afloat, provides healthcare benefits, and sends the kids to college. Two years ago, my off-the-farm job duties changed abruptly with increased travel and many nights away from home. After months of slogging through the new normal, I was exhausted, falling further behind on farm chores, and starting to feel something must give; the situation was not sustainable. When my two children (my most enthusiastic farm workers) left home to attend college and residential high school, I reluctantly began to downsize the farm business.

My epiphany of unsustainability occurred after a decade of work had gone into building flocks of show-quality, critically endangered, heritage breed chickens, ducks, turkeys, and geese. The business of distributing hatching eggs and baby poultry across North America for other rare breed enthusiasts to start or build their flocks was doubling each year. A hasty "fire sale" exit from farming, such as taking the birds to auction or processing them for meat, would have been a shame and a setback to conservation efforts. I developed a year-long plan to find and place the flocks with stewards who intended to breed the birds and provide them for other people to enjoy and hopefully propagate.

The Livestock Conservancy staff were my most important resource for executing the plan. They gave me contacts of people who had expressed interest in my breeds or were current breeders, and they spread the word that I was looking for dedicated breed stewards to take over for me. My network, including breed associations, poultry show contacts, and social media, was also important for finding new stewards for my birds.

To set the new caretakers up for success, I carefully selected birds and pruned the flocks to contain only ideal breeding animals. I didn't want to hand over known problems. If the new caretaker was willing, I mentored them in the breed standards, my breeder bird selection criteria, flock management tips, and the market-



Julie Gauthier with one of her Delaware roosters. Photo courtesy of Julie Gauthier.

ing techniques that had worked for me. After the birds went to their new homes, I referred my returning customers and new inquiries to the new flock owners. I also made myself available by answering questions and providing advice when requested.

I'm still sad about my transition out of farming, especially when I mow the empty pastures. But the process was necessary for the health of my birds, my family, and me. I know it went as well as it could.

Hopefully, my flocks benefited from my having time to plan and take a thoughtful approach to stewardship succession. As a board member of The Livestock Conservancy, I'm aware my luxuries of time and choice are often not available to farmers who suddenly experience a life-changing event. For any one of us rare breed stewards, our flocks and herds can be threatened by events beyond our control such as loss of a job, loss of leased farmland, illness or death of a family member, or a natural disaster.

I encourage everyone who cherishes a rare breed flock or herd to consider, "What's the worst that can happen?" Then think about what you could do now

to mitigate the effects of those imagined disasters. Do you have a back-up plan for farm labor or housing your animals if current arrangements suddenly fall through? What's your plan for evacuating or sheltering-in-place? Have you identified someone who cares about what you do, to inherit your farming legacy? Some of my poultry show friends have written specific instructions in their wills, gifting treasured lines or breeding projects to a fellow poultry fancier.

Everyday good flock and herd management practices can buffer some of the impacts of unfortunate events.

- Keep veterinary and breeding records up to date, so information isn't lost and can be handed down.
- Maintain healthy breeding populations by regularly culling poor specimens of the breed.

- Establish biosecurity practices and turn them into unbreakable habits.

- Obsess over preventive health care. Learn to perform most preventive health care practices for your animals, such as monitoring body condition, vaccinating, managing parasites, or controlling pests.

- Make sure you know who you can contact if things get out of hand. In an emergency, quickly locating expert veterinary, diagnostic, or farm management advice for your species of livestock can be challenging, or futile, in some geographic areas.

I wish you the best and hope you never need to face the worst-case scenario in your heritage breed farming endeavors. Members and staff of The Livestock Conservancy form an essential community of support. We are here to help each other survive the storms of fate that threaten endangered livestock breeds. ❖

Julie Gauthier serves as Assistant Director for Avian Health Programs for the USDA. Her family's Chickcharney Farm is located in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Gauthier has been a member of The Livestock Conservancy Board of Directors for five years. If you have questions or suggestions about building resiliency in our community, please contact her at Julie.gauthier@aya.yale.edu or reach out to The Livestock Conservancy staff.

What Should be Included in a Breed?

By D. P. Spenberg, D.V.M, Ph.D.,
Technical Advisor, The Livestock Conservancy

What animals to include within a breed population is an interesting and thorny problem that faces local breeds much more than standardized breeds. The dilemma especially plagues rare breeds of conservation interest. Decision-makers balance including animals that meet the breed standard with excluding crossbred, non-typical animals.

The discovery, identification, rescue, and documentation of rare and endangered livestock breeds is part of our mission. The Livestock Conservancy staff puts boots on the ground at farms and ranches throughout the United States each year to help save more than 150 breeds across eleven species from the threat of extinction.

The three most useful tools we use to evaluate animals for a breed are phenotype, history, and genetic analysis. Any of the three, if used alone, can lead to a wrong conclusion. But, when all three are used together, it is rare to misclassify animals.

Phenotype

Phenotype is simply how an animal looks. All members of a breed should consistently reflect breed type and conformation, apart from certain superficial,

cosmetic characteristics. The external indicators are not trivial, for they mirror the underlying genetic package.

Phenotype can be misleading for individual animals, but is rarely wrong when considering entire populations. For example, an individual goat presented as a Spanish goat is much more difficult to assess than a herd of 100 goats. It is easier to find any deviation from the breed description among 100 animals than when evaluating a single, selected individual.

One tool that is very useful when undertaking phenotypic evaluation is a score sheet for evaluating breed type. This allows greater objectivity, especially for local, American landrace breeds. A score sheet focuses on important physical characteristics typical of the breed, and tries to note any characteristics that could have been introduced from crossbreeding.

How an animal looks is usually the most economical and easy-to-use tool. Therefore, it's generally used first as a quick decision for breed membership.

History

The history of candidate animals or populations is usually explored after the visual or phenotypic evaluation. History is important because most breeds originate from a limited area or a limited genetic influence.

Colonial Spanish horses such as Spanish Mustangs and Barbs provide a good example, as feral herds with appropriate phenotype continue being discovered. The history of these herds helps identify known or suspected introductions of outside equine genetics.

Sometimes, historical investigation can be quite difficult because the people

Breeds are repeatable genetic packages developed within specific human culture and use.

involved have a vested interest in the results. Calling on a neutral, well-respected outside mediator such as The Livestock Conservancy can often help bridge this divide. Weighing the animal's or herd's history against the external phenotype (how they look) can help make an accurate conclusion for breed membership.

Genetic Analysis

Wherever possible, animals and populations that pass both the phenotypic and historical evaluations should also be investigated genetically. For most breed populations, this means analysis of DNA.

Today's DNA tests provide great accuracy for parentage verification. Confirming an animal's parents is a key step in determining breed membership, especially if you identify registration paperwork for one or both parents.

When determining if an animal should be included in a breed, use phenotypic evaluation, the animal's history, and genetic analysis. If possible, make use of at least two, if not all three assessments. These tools will help you and your fellow heritage breeders make better decisions to save the endangered breed you love. ❖

For more details about evaluating animals for breed membership, read Chapter Four in Managing Breeds for a Secure Future, available from The Livestock Conservancy at LivestockConservancy.org.



Member Cheri Wolfe with her herd of Spanish Goats. Photo courtesy of Cheri Wolfe.



A Florida Cracker mare and foal. Photo by Alison Martin.

Rare Breed Specialty Shows Promote Rabbit Conservation

The Livestock Conservancy proudly counts rabbits as one of the eleven livestock species we serve and is excited to announce a growing partnership with the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) that will help preserve 16 rare breeds of rabbits. Rabbit ownership continues to grow in popularity, and they are an important presence on many small farms and homesteads throughout America today.

The Livestock Conservancy is the leading umbrella organization for rare and endangered livestock and poultry in the United States. ARBA has been dedicated to the promotion, development, and improvement of domestic rabbits since 1921, with membership totaling more than 20,000.

“ARBA may be among the most diverse registries that support the endangered farm animals we work with,” says Alison Martin, Ph.D., Executive Director of The Livestock Conservancy. “In addition to meat and pelt production, rabbit breeders also enjoy sporting and companionship aspects of rabbit ownership.”

Beginning in 2020, ARBA will sanction Rare Breed Specialty shows for the first time in the organization’s 99-year history.

“Rare Breed Specialty shows will be a wonderful opportunity for our members to showcase their rare breeds and market these animals to individuals sharing a similar passion for breed conservation,” shared Eric Stewart, Executive Director of ARBA. “Just as popular meat, fur, fiber, or fancy breeds appeal to particular demographics, rare breeds also appeal to a specific population who are seeking the chance to be a part of breed conservation.”

Unlike other livestock species, rabbits are not registered by litter or parentage. Instead, rabbits must be inspected individually to ensure each ani-

mal meets or exceeds the breed standard prior to registration. Therefore, although annual registrations are an accurate assessment of population size for endangered species such as cattle and sheep, the two non-profit organizations developed new parameters to evaluate America’s rare rabbit breeds more accurately – a critically important step for conservation.

“Our new formula incorporates rabbit show numbers from the ARBA National Convention and the National Breed Clubs,” explains Martin. “Combined with registration data, the results are more representative of the breed populations nationwide.”

Based on these new parameters, the following breeds will appear on the Conservancy’s 2020 Conservation Priority List (CPL), and thereby will be sanctioned for the new ARBA Rare Breed Specialty shows:

Critically Endangered breeds include Blanc de Hotot, Silver Marten, and Silver

rabbits. These breeds have fewer than 50 annual registrations in the United States each year. Fewer than 150 animals have been shown in the past five years in the U.S., and the estimated global population is below 500.

Threatened breeds are the Checkered Giant, Argente Brun, Standard Chinchilla, and Crème d’Argente. With fewer than 100 annual registrations and 300 animals shown in the U.S. annually, these breeds are at risk to become critically endangered. No more than 1,000 animals are believed to be alive throughout the world.

The *Watch* category includes rabbit breeds with fewer than 200 annual registrations and 500 animals shown in the U.S. each year, and a global population that doesn’t exceed 2,000. Breeds that present genetic or numerical concerns or have a limited geographic distribution are also included in this category. In 2020, the American rabbit, American Chinchilla, Giant Chinchilla, Lilac, Rhinelander, and Palomino breeds will be closely monitored in this category.

Thanks to dedicated heritage breeders, three rabbit breeds have made great progress to avoid extinction and will be recognized in the *Recovering* category. Belgian Hare, Beveren, and Silver Fox rabbits were once far more threatened. Now, their populations have outgrown the *Watch* category parameters; the Conservancy will monitor their numbers with hopes of graduating them entirely off the CPL in the future.

For additional information about participating in ARBA’s Rare Breeds Specialty shows, please visit <https://arba.net/show-search/>.

“Breed and bloodline preservation is important to both ARBA and the Conservancy. This partnership supports our mutually beneficial goals,” concludes Stewart. “Working together, The Livestock Conservancy is better able to monitor rabbit breed numbers for accurate statistics and Rare Breed Specialty shows promote the conservation of endangered breeds to avoid extinction.” ❖

INTRODUCING

Rare Breeds Specialty Show Sanction

Available to local and youth clubs

For complete details visit The Show Secretary Central section of the ARBA Website

Below is the list of breeds eligible for inclusion in the Rare Breed Specialty sanction beginning 1/1/20.

Blanc de Hotot	American	Standard Chinchilla
Silver Marten	American Chinchilla	Palomino
Silver	Giant Chinchilla	Belgian Hare
Checkered Giant	Lilac	Beveren
Crème D’Argent	Rhinelander	Silver Fox

BREED NOTES

Choctaw Foals from Rare Bloodline

Breed conservation is often a balancing act between various rare threads that persist in a breed. The Choctaw Horse conservation herd of Mary McConnell recently had the great news of a few foals born from a young stallion that was thought to be lost to the effort. Montana is a young stallion that was produced from two elderly parents that each hailed from different (and rare!) portions of the breed. The birth of three of his foals, including some to similarly “rare bloodline” mares is good news indeed for this rare breed.



Willow, one of Montana's foals, with Kyndal Wain. Photo by Mary McConnell.

Randall Lineback Cattle DNA

Randall Lineback cattle have been the target of a recent genetic study, based on microsatellites. The goal of this was to validate pedigrees as well as to tease out the overall variability in the breed. This is an interesting local breed from Vermont, and is the only remaining strain of Lineback cattle. The breed was rescued by Cynthia Creech back in the 1980s, from a start of only a dozen animals.

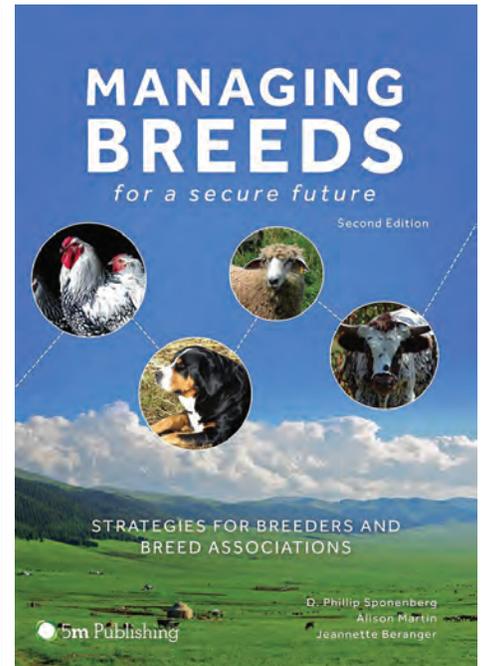
The DNA results validated the history



of the breed, with relatively low levels of variation at any one genetic address. This is in agreement with the long history of the breed in one herd managed by one owner. A handful of crossbreeds were also included, and these stick out like sore thumbs by the genetic results. This means that purebred Randall Linebacks can easily be distinguished from cattle that are not purebred, which provides a tool for moving forward with cattle of uncertain pedigree.

A final interesting finding is that some of the rare genetic variants are present

in only one herd, rather than across the entire breed. This happens as breeds become split into different herds, and highlights the importance of having many herds of a breed, because each is then an opportunity for saving pieces of the original mix that might be missing in other herds. ❖



Managing Breeds Book Popular with Dog Breeders

In his presentation at the AKC Canine Health Foundation 2019 National Parent Club Canine Health Conference, Dr. Jerold S. Bell DVM of Tufts University gave a talk titled “Understanding Breeds as Populations.” A dog-breeder friend who attended this conference contacted us and was very excited to let us know that Dr. Bell frequently referred to The Livestock Conservancy’s book “Managing Breeds for a Secure Future” and recommended that the attendees read it. This breeder is the president of her breed club’s Health Foundation, and has invited Dr. Bell to speak at their National Specialty in 2020 because she wants to share what he presented with other breeders.

This book, which was expanded in the second edition to include dogs, is finding its way onto the reference bookshelves of dog breeders and canine health researchers around the country. Some canine organizations are using it as the textbook for various courses they offer to their members. With the advent of genetic testing, dog breeders (like livestock breeders) need to understand how to breed the animals that they have in order to preserve diversity in the gene pool, keeping some imperfect but genetically important animals in their breeding programs. ❖

Considerations for the Heritage Hog Breeder

By Alison Martin & Jeannette Beranger

The popularity of heritage hogs has skyrocketed in recent years, largely due to numerous chefs discovering the fabulous flavor of what pork is meant to taste like. There is nothing like the flavor of old fashioned hogs raised on pasture and in a natural environment. Popularity however can be a challenge for a rare breed, especially when many are tempted by quick profits and high returns. When advising newcomers about how to get involved with heritage hogs, we always stress three key points that can make or break success:

1. Know what you are buying
2. Not every animal is breeding quality
3. Make sure your investment in breeding stock is registered.

Know what you are buying when it comes to heritage hogs. There are many folks out to make a quick buck because buyers don't have a complete understanding of how the pigs should look and how they should perform. Part of the reason that the flavor of these animals is so intense is due to slower growth. For producers this does translate into higher feed costs to get them to market. Many have chosen to introduce commercial genetics into herds to improve growth rates and produce leaner, larger carcasses in a shorter period of time. The downside to this is



Purebred Kune Kune hog. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

that these pigs are often sold as purebred at high prices to an unsuspecting new pig owner. One of the most striking and common telltale signs of crossbreeding is when genetics from the Pietrain breed are crossed into a breed. This is particularly problematic with Tamworth, Berkshire, and Hereford hog populations today. The Pietrain pig is distinctive, with its long body and "double muscled" legs. When crossed into a heritage breed, the cross will produce fast growing pigs with that long lean body supported by heavily muscled legs. At as early as one month of age, these piglets will already begin to show heavy muscling. Unfortunately the show ring favors this body type over the traditional "dirt hog" of days past so they are becoming

more commonplace and are a threat to preserving the historic breed genetics.

Another cross cropping up recently is with Kune Kune and Guinea Hogs. Guineas are a small, traditional farmstead hog that is enjoying new popularity with homesteaders and hobby farmers. Because of their rarity, some producers faced with lack of diversity in their herds turned to the cross to produce "Guineas" in colors not normal for the breed. Many are sandy with black spots – a common color in Kune Kune hogs but non-existent in purebred Guineas. From a genetic standpoint the crosses may look similar but are *not* the original breed and should not be sold as such.

To avoid purchasing crossbred hogs know your breed standards, talk to reputable breeders, and educate yourself before you purchase animals. When you can expect to pay up to \$500 for breeding stock, it's time well spent.

Not every animal is breeding quality! Typically only the top 10% of a population is good enough for breeding. You cannot be certain that a pig will be of breeding quality until it has matured a bit and is at least six months of age. This poses a challenge for breeders that may not have the resources to keep piglets around that long. They may have no choice but to sell only young piglets. Most reputable breeders will guarantee their pigs should they prove infertile or develop a genetic problem that disqualifies the pig from being breeding

continued on next page



Kune Kune and Guinea Hog crosses. Photo by Laura Dykstra.

Considerations for the Heritage Hog Breeder

Continued from previous page

stock. The other side of the coin is that you have to expect to pay more for quality stock. It's worth it if you are buying the guarantee and the years of selective breeding put into producing good productive representatives of the breed.

Make sure your investment in breeding stock is registered. Our office gets many calls from people that bought "registerable" animals only to find the parent stock was never registered. This can be very frustrating for the beginner that wants to do right by their breed. See the parent's papers or confirm with the breed registrar before buying! But why does this *really* matter?

• *Conserving rare breeds.* All of us who raise rare breeds and work to conserve them do so because of the unique charac-



Purebred Kune Kune. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

teristics of that breed. Each has just the right adaptation, personality, performance, or appearance that makes it a breed. Conserving these characteristics means mating only within the breed; too many breeds have been lost when the purebreds used to create value in crossing weren't maintained and "crossbred out of existence." One of the easiest ways to make sure that you and others are keeping the breed true to its own character is to use only registered purebred breeding stock

• *Breed promotion.* Maintaining and selecting for breed characteristics, ensures that the same things that attracted one breeder will attract new breeders. This is important even to those who are raising their animals for market products. Breeders who work together through the breed association raise the level of awareness for both products and breeding stock. One needs to look no further than the highly successful marketing program for Angus beef. By registering animals, we support breed associations and their breed promotion efforts, which benefit all who raise the breed.

• *Raising the value of your animals* can be a direct result of registering your animals. To the educated buyer, registration helps to ensure they are buying the "real deal" and it shows the commitment of the producer to their breed.

• *Protection from feral hog legislation,*

if nothing else, may be the most valuable reason for registering your animals. In states that are aggressively trying to control this major problem, it may be a challenge for wildlife service personnel to know the difference between a heritage breed hog and a feral hog. That piece of paper could prove to be quite handy!

There's a bright future for heritage pigs but it's our duty to be their stewards and not change them into commercial hogs. It would be tragic to lose century's old breeds for the sake of easier profits in today's markets. ❖

For more information on heritage hog breeds and what it takes to work with them please visit www.LivestockConservancy.org.

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 us and our conservation programs by becoming life members. For more information on becoming a life member, please contact Karena Elliott at (806) 570-0874 or kelliott@LivestockConservancy.org.

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Working with Karakul Wool

By Letty Klein

Karakul fiber comes in many colors; it is a coarse, strong, double-coated rug wool that felts in the blink of an eye! In fact, I think this fast-felting trait is half the problem people have when washing a raw Karakul fleece.

It is not next-to-skin soft, and it's not meant for use in a blanket, unless a saddle blanket. Karakul is rug wool from perhaps the oldest breed of sheep – think Persian carpets. They have worn well for hundreds of years.

Braiding a rug from the roving is the best use of the fiber.

To spin from roving just draft a bit, treadle slowly, don't over-spin, and practice your long draw!

There are so many possibilities to cherish – work with the color variations, don't hide them.

To spin in-the-grease, which is my favorite, tease the raw locks apart with your fingers. Just fluff it, and let the wheel pull the fibers in as they come.

If you are spinning a lamb fleece, just leave the little birth-curls on the ends of the locks to stick out, adding a unique texture and color variation to the yarn. If the wool seems a little sticky, a few seconds in the microwave will soften the grease, a tip told me by the late Glen Eidman.

Washing a raw fleece: Be careful! No agitation and no water temperature changes! For a small amount, just lay the locks in a salad spinner or strainer, immerse in hot soapy water for a few minutes. Then, spin out the soapy water and move the basket to rinse water of the same temperature, spin again, and dump onto a towel to dry. ❖

Letty Klein has been raising Karakul sheep for almost 40 years and offers her advice on working with this rare wool.



The yarn on the left has orange noils carded into the roving; this was used as the weft in an award-winning woven rug. Photo by Letty Klein.



Spinning "in-the-grease." Photo by Letty Klein.

Conservation for Kids puzzles

Below are the solutions to the puzzles on page 13.



Picture the Difference answers: shadow on tail, extra spot on rear leg, extra nostril, ear notch, center of flower

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Conference Reflections

By Hannah Baljeu

I had an amazing experience at the 2019 Heritage Livestock Conference. This was the first Heritage Livestock Conference I attended, and this year's topic was "All Things Sheep!" I have been raising sheep since 2008 and heritage sheep since 2014 so this conference had great seminars for me to attend. They did a wonderful job incorporating information for new shepherds as well as for those who are more experienced.

In the pre-conference clinics and tours, I experienced a more hands-on approach learning about targeted grazing and natural wool dyeing. The targeted grazing clinic was better than I expected. They had multiple speakers talk about different management practices that will help tailor to your specific needs as well as integrating technology for digitalized record keeping. I also went to a clinic about natural wool dyeing, which was new for me, and I learned a lot.

During the conference, I had the pleasure of hearing a couple of different panels where a wide variety of people in the industry shared their experiences raising sheep and selling their products. It was interesting also to hear what other people do with sheep, from making pillows out of



Hannah Baljeu (left) and her mother, Lashell, enjoy the conference reception. Photo by Paul Henningson.

hides to traditional Navajo blankets. I also got to sit in a couple of different breakout sessions. At one of these I learned how to market my wool and sheep through social media and websites. Deborah Niemann did an excellent job highlighting what platforms and techniques were most effective to get your name out to others. Another breakout session I went to was about processing wool. It is fascinating how many different styles and products you can make out of wool and to get the best out of the fleece you have.

This conference inspired me to not only take the next step in improving my business but also to start knitting! It was one of the first things I did when I got back

from my trip.

Overall I had a wonderful time at this year's conference. It was great to network with other people in the industry and hear their stories. Thank you SO much for choosing me as a scholarship recipient to go on this trip. I learned so much and had a great time! ❖

Conference scholarships are made possible through the continued generosity of the Gordon Family Foundation, other private donors and board members. Applicants must submit an application and agree to provide a written summary of their experience after the event. More information can be found at www.LivestockConference.org.

Recipe for Extra Eggs

Spring has arrived and with increasing day-length, hens are laying well. Does your family favor scrambled eggs? Break out eggs in family-sized batches, scramble well, and freeze. Or, for a fresh way to use up some of those extra eggs, try this recipe for New Orleans Bread Pudding. Sprinkle with sliced almonds before baking and add a delicious Amaretto Sauce for guests, or skip the sauce to save on calories.

New Orleans Bread Pudding

1 quart milk
1/2 cup sugar
2 Tbsp. Amaretto liqueur
1 cup raisins
1 Tbsp. vanilla
6 heritage chicken eggs
1 loaf french bread, cubed
Heat oven to 375(degree symbol). Grease

a 9" x 13" pan. In a large bowl, pour milk over bread cubes. Cover and let soak for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk the eggs until evenly mixed, then whisk in the sugar, amaretto, and vanilla. Pour egg mixture over bread cubes. Add raisins and stir until evenly mixed. Spoon evenly into pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Top with sliced almonds if desired. Bake at 375 for 45-60 minutes, until a knife inserted comes out clean. To serve, sprinkle with powdered sugar, top with icing, or make up some Amaretto sauce

Amaretto Sauce

1 stick unsalted butter (1/2 c)
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 heritage chicken egg, well beaten
1/3 cup Amaretto liqueur
In a saucepan over gentle heat, or in



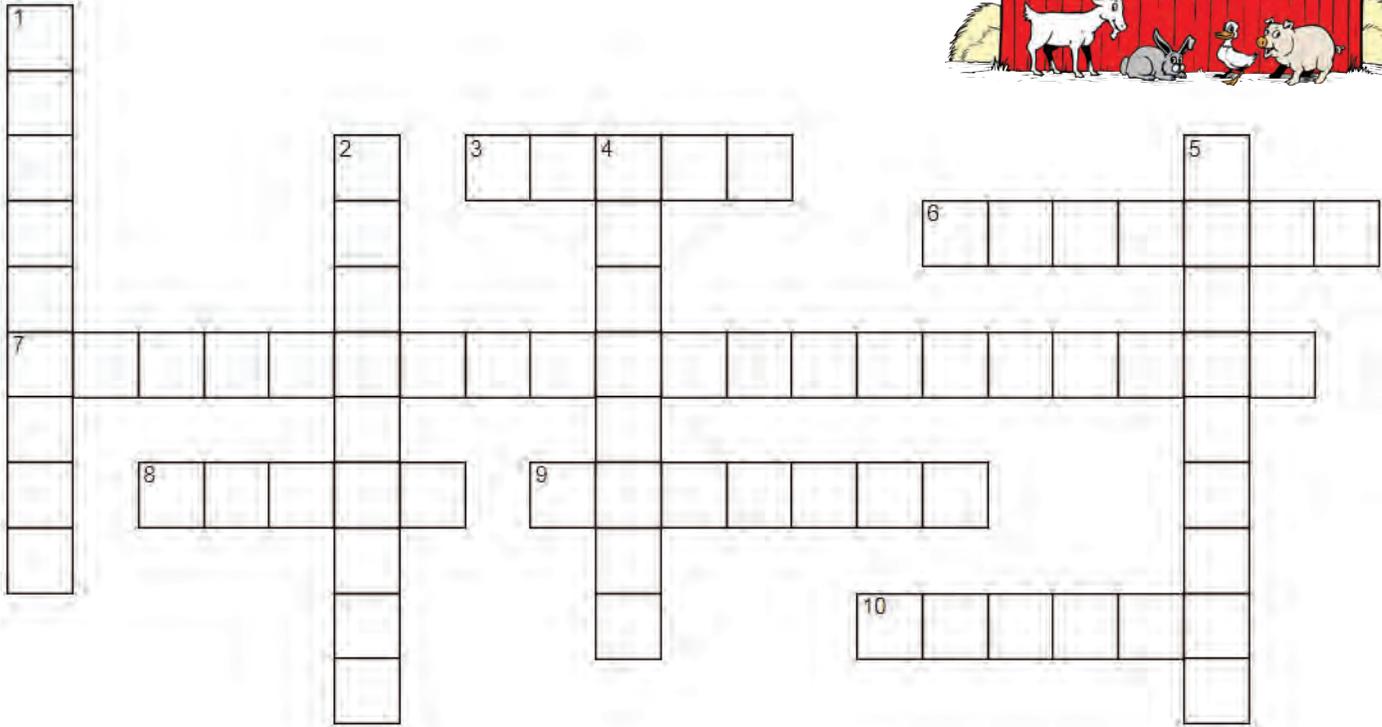
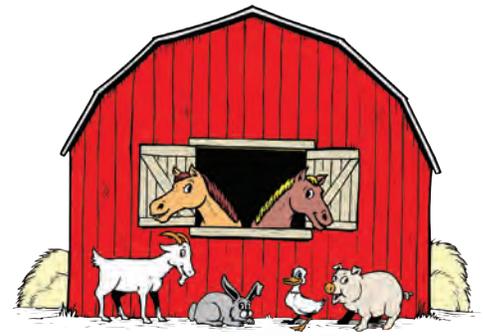
the top of a double boiler, melt butter. Add sugar, stir constantly until sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat. Whisk the egg into the butter mixture until smooth. Add the amaretto liqueur.

Note: The heat of the butter mixture will slightly cook the egg. If using a farm-fresh egg, wash this egg thoroughly, scrubbing lightly, and dry with a paper towel before cracking it. ❖

Submitted by Alison Martin

Conservation for Kids

This section includes some fun activities for our young conservationists. If you would like to contribute content to this section for future issues, please email it to bsweeney@livestockconservancy.org.



ACROSS

- 3 Goose from Italy with a tuft on its head
- 6 Goat breed from New Zealand with connections to Captain Cook
- 7 Compact turkey variety named after a town in Maryland
- 8 Ancient black dairy cattle from Ireland
- 9 American chicken breed named for a country known for its windmills.
- 10 French donkey known for its dreadlocks

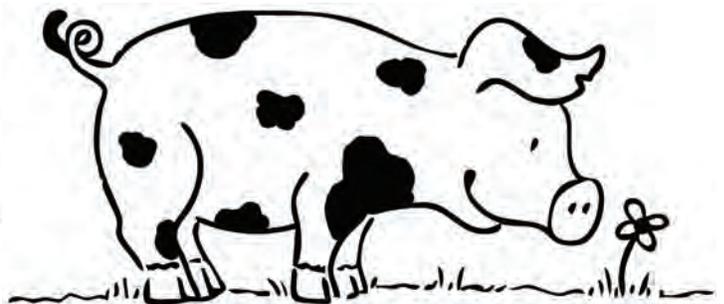
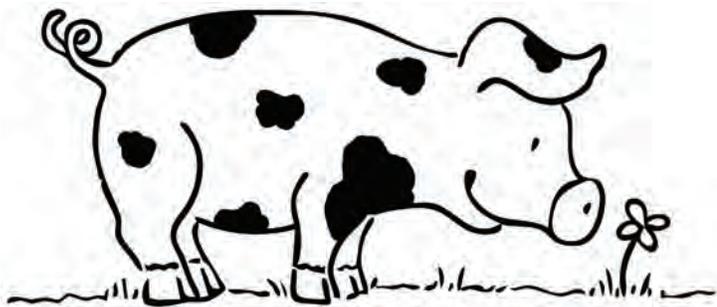
DOWN

- 1 English duck with white skin and a pink bill
- 2 Rabbit with fur that resembles that of an Arctic mammal with the same name
- 4 American hog breed named for its non-cloven hoof
- 5 Sheep breed from California's Channel Islands

Hint: All answers are breeds on the Conservation Priority List.

Picture the Difference

Compare the two Gloucestershire Old Spots pig pictures to determine the five differences between them..



Answers on page 11.

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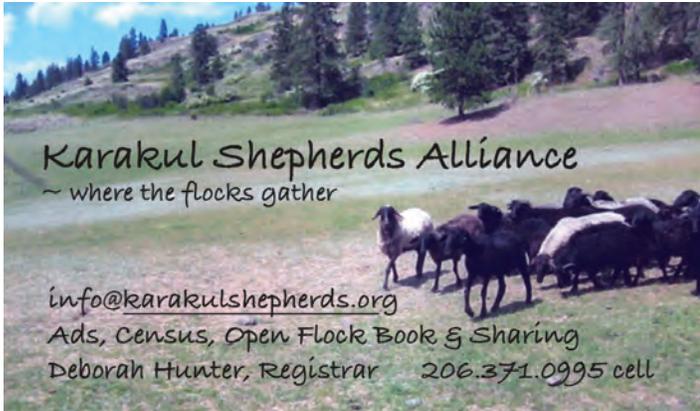


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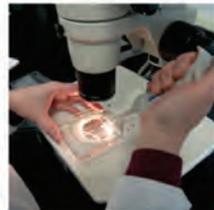
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CALENDAR

★★ denotes Livestock Conservancy event
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Browse The Livestock 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.

Please be aware that many events are being modified or canceled due to COVID-19. Check event websites or with event organizers for the latest updates before making plans to attend.

April

April 11 – The Nebraska Tower on the Plains Rabbit Breeders Association Spring Show in Lincoln, NE. The show will include a Rare Breeds Specialty Show Sanction. More information can be found at www.facebook.com/events/6151663-45884330/. **Canceled**

May

May 1-2 – The Blackland Prairie Rabbit Breeders Association Triple Open and Youth Show will be held in Alvarado, TX. Friday night includes a rare breed specialty show. Visit www.facebook.com/events/2628520877232607/ for more information. **Canceled**

May 9 – The Northwest Arkansas Rabbit Enthusiasts' First Annual May Flowers Show will be held in Bentonville, AR. A Youth and Rare Breed Beveren Show are Sanctioned. Visit www.facebook.com/events/528991454560095/ for more information. **Canceled**

★ **May 16-17 – The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held in Nashville, TN. 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. **Canceled**

★★ **May 17-23 – International Heritage Breeds Week** will be held worldwide to raise awareness of endangered heritage breeds of livestock and poultry. Heritage breed farmers and the public are encouraged to spread the word throughout their networks. The week of awareness culminates with Heritage Breeds Day, on which many farms, ranches, and organizations will hold local events such as farm tours, workshops, or lectures to raise awareness in their communities. Visit www.HeritageBreedsWeek.org to learn more.

June

June 6 – The SVF Annual Visitors Day will be held in Newport, RI. Take free, self-guided tours through the historic Swiss Village; peek into the state-of-the-art facilities and meet the SVF laboratory, veterinary, and animal care staff; visit Chip, a rare Tennessee Fainting goat born from a frozen embryo; attend live cryogenics and sheep shearing demonstrations;

and shop SVF's selection of farm products and Heritage breed meat. Visit www.svf-foundation.org/news/2020-annual-visitors-day/ for more information.

June 15-20 – The Sheep is Life Festival will be held in Shiprock, NM. Visit <http://navajolifeway.org> for more information.

July

July 10-12 – The American Cream Draft Horse Association Annual Meeting will be held in Spokane, WA. Details will be posted at www.acdha.org.

July 5-7 – The Black Sheep Gathering will be held in Albany, OR. Visit www.blacksheepgathering.org for more information.

★ **July 17-18 – The Mother Earth News Fair** will be held at Polyface Farm in Swoope, VA. 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 28-30 – The Heritage Livestock Conference** will take place August 28-30, 2020 at the Southeastern Ag Center in Lumberton, NC in partnership with the Everything Equine Expo, the largest equestrian expo in the southeastern United States. More information can be found at www.LivestockConference.org.