



THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

Conserving rare breeds since 1977
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Remembering your breed's history is important when thinking about the best ways to finish them before processing. This photo, courtesy of the USDA, shows two boys holding Rhode Island Red chickens in 1923. A hardy, dual-purpose breed, Rhode Island Reds were once considered to have the finest flavor among heritage breeds on small farms.

THE FINISHING TOUCH FOR CHICKENS

By Jeannette Beranger

One of the greatest rewards of raising your own food is seeing the finished product on the table. Months and sometimes years go into growing a heritage breed animal to perfection. To some farmers, it is an art that involves a keen understanding of the life cycle of the animal along with taking cues from Mother Nature to know when it's "ready." Without a well-experienced mentor, this can be a frustrating process for newbies, and one bad decision can lead to poor quality product.

This article is the first in a series dedicated to the art of finishing heritage breeds for the table. In this first segment, we will cover the basics of producing young chickens. Along with my own experiences in raising and cooking poultry, I have enlisted a number of "poultry aficionados" to help explain what kind of product to aim for and

how to reach that goal: Ariane Daguin of D'Artagnon Foods, Frank Reese, Jr. of The Good Shepherd Ranch, Dr. Julie Gauthier of Chickcharney Farm, and Douglas Hayes of the Preservation Sanctuary Learning Center. They each have different approaches and, in the end, produce some of the finest fowl in the country.

FLAVOR IS THE WORD

The thing I love most about raising heritage chickens is the outstanding flavor of homegrown meat. I wish I were a poet so I could more accurately describe the experience of eating a well-grown, well-finished heritage bird. It's almost a religious experience for my inner foodie.

The slower growth of heritage breeds allows more time for the birds to incorporate the "terroir" of the food they eat. These birds naturally love to range and forage on a variety of food items if given the chance. This creates a diverse

and sometimes intense flavor profile of their meat that creates an amazing culinary experience. According to my band of foodie friends, even young birds and eggs fresh from the farm hold up well. Commercial meats simply don't measure up.

CHICKEN AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

The Chicken of Tomorrow competition of the mid-20th century led to the abandoning of many age-old breeds and the rise of commercial crosses of fast-growing chickens. These birds are now butchered at 6-8 weeks of age. That's the end of the story for most birds today, but not historically. Harvesting chicken was approached in a very different manner and based on a range of ages, with butchering dependent on the product desired, how much you could afford to feed your flock, or how many people you wanted to feed with the bird.

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under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-974-5534.

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This 18-week Jersey Giant chicken was quite tender when roasted, even if it appeared a bit bony. Historically, birds like this are caponized or castrated at 4-8 months and finished at around a year old. Capons produce more tender white meat and have a higher fat content that results in great flavor. Butchering at a more mature age helps ensure a nice table bird. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

You have to know your birds to make good choices. Frank Reese, Jr. stresses that it is crucial to know the expected performance of your particular line of birds to calculate the appropriate time to butcher. For example, I knew when my line of Buckeyes was processed at 16 weeks that my cockerels would average about 6 lbs. live weight and my pullets would average around 4 ½ lbs. My Crèvecœur chickens, however, grow much slower. At 16 weeks, the cockerels average approximately 4 lbs. and the pullets 3 lbs. I have to work around their growth-rate to get the product I'm looking for on my plate.

PLAN FOR MOLTING

A chicken has its first official molt at 6-8 days when it loses its down feathers. The birds will experience their second juvenile molt at 8-12 weeks and their first adult molt at approximately 16 months. Depending on where you live, the timing of adult molting varies by daylight hours. Typically, molts happen in late summer and would not be the best time to butcher older chickens if you hope to have a nice carcass for the table. However, late summer would be fine to butcher young birds that have finished their second juvenile molt.

SPRING CHICKEN

There are a wide range of products

each with its own special method of cooking to make chicken a delight on the table. The earliest product is poussin or "spring chicken." Traditionally this is a young animal about 3-4 weeks old, weighing about 1 lb. live weight. Ariane Daguin at D'Artagnon prepares poussin as a single serving. She stressed that these birds can be challenging to process because of their small size, so she enlists a specialist in quail and squab for the job. The birds cook relatively quickly and are often browned on the stove top and transferred to the oven to finish on high heat. Spring Chickens make an elegant presentation for a dinner plate, much like other birds of their size.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Butchering a small bird takes talent, patience, and small hands. When you don't have the latter, a carcass can be ruined if you tear a gall bladder or contaminate it with matter from the intestines. I recently discovered the old technique of spatchcocking birds to make things easier when I process my Crèvecœur chickens. The 17th century term was short for "dispatching the cock" and involves removing the backbone and flattening the whole bird out before cooking it. Normally, this method is used on an already cleaned bird, but I wondered if I could do this on a bird yet to be eviscerated. After several attempts

I mastered the technique, and cleaning out organs became nearly effortless. Spatchcocked chickens cook faster and more evenly, coming out of the oven tender with very crispy skin all over. We will never process young birds any other way at my house.

BROILER/FRYERS

If butchered a little older, at 6-10 weeks, you have a "broiler" or "fryer," according to the USDA. These young, tender chickens can be cooked using high heat methods, as their names suggest. While the terms are often interchangeable, Broilers are technically younger birds and Fryers are older birds. Most heritage chickens at that age will be 2-2 1/2 lbs. live weight depending on the breed and feed. Slower growing birds may take longer.

Frank Reese, Jr. remembered the times when his family most depended on Leghorn roosters at the 2 ½ lb. size for dinner. They were purchased as chicks for a penny apiece from the local feed store, if you bought grain there first. His grandmother used to say, "You have to fry a chicken before the rooster crows." She thought the hormones associated with maturity would cause the texture of the meat to change. She would put the birds on a diet of corn soaked in buttermilk to fatten them up for the last two weeks before butchering. Frank uses

a more modern custom feed blend for his flocks with increased fat and fiber, and less protein to finish his birds today.

Douglas, Julie, Frank, and I butcher what we unofficially call broilers/fryers between 14-18 weeks of age, or after the second juvenile molt. Our slower-growing heritage birds are still tender at that age, but are now about 3-3 ½ lbs. live weight.

Julie pointed out that she considered the birds ready at this age when the fleshing of the breasts reached the very tip of the keel or breast bone. The muscle should not be concave and the tip of the keel should not feel bony. Julie thought from a financial perspective it was not worth growing a bird to a bigger size since the additional feed costs deeply cut into the profitability from the birds.

Julie also finishes her birds on a higher fat diet, but also added the farm's own "terroir" to the meats by allowing her birds to range into the local woods for the last month. They forage on bugs and plants that add depth to the flavor profile of the final product.

HISTORY CAN TELL YOU A LOT

It's also important to understand a bit about the history of your breed and how it was managed historically. I raise Crèvecœur chickens that were once the top table bird in France. They were fattened through "gaver" or "cramming," much like a fois gras goose. For the last month of their lives, they were fed a mash of feed softened with whey from local cheese dairies in Normandy. While I am not inclined to cram my birds, this bit of history inspired me to think about other ways to finish my birds. I opted to provide a wet mash they could eat on their own. This was a game changer for my flocks and a bonus for me because it got my husband into cheese making! We freeze the leftover whey from the cheese and use it to finish the birds during the last month. They eat the mash like candy and the result is a beautiful and flavorful chicken for dinner.

Large breeds, such as the Jersey Giant, are very slow growing. At a 6-6 ½ lb. live weight they can be butchered and still be very tender. I once had a Jersey Giant butchered at 18 weeks and although tender, it was a very bony looking bird for the table. The farmer didn't understand that historically the breed was often



A spatchcocked Crèvecœur chicken, roasted in the oven. Photo by Jeannette Beranger.

caponized to create the ideal meal. (A capon is a male chicken castrated at 4-8 months old.) When finished at around one year of age, a Jersey Giant capon weighs about 9 lbs. live weight. Capons produce more tender white meat and have a higher fat content that results in great flavor. Most people today would not resort to caponizing their birds but, taking history into account helps producers understand that patience is a virtue for the Jersey Giant. Butchering at an age of 10 months or more will help ensure a nice table bird.

UP NEXT ...

In the next installment of this series we'll discuss what to do with older birds, covering everything from pouleades to old roosters, that will take flavor to the next level.

Jeannette Beranger, Senior Program Manager at The Livestock Conservancy, has more than 30 years of experience working as an animal professional in zoological and non-profit institutions. She is an active lecturer, writer, and photographer. At home she practices what she preaches, maintaining a heritage breed farm with a focus on critically endangered Crèvecœur chickens.

SPATCHCOCK CHICKEN RECIPE

4 lb. whole chicken
Salt & Extra-virgin olive oil

The day before you plan to cook the chicken, spatchcock it. Use heavy-duty kitchen shears to snip down along both sides of the spine to remove it. Then remove the wing tips.

Lay the chicken on the cutting board, breast side up. Push down on the breastbone until you hear the cartilage pop and the bird lies flat. Generously season with salt on both sides. Place breast side up into a shallow roasting dish and refrigerate, uncovered, overnight.

Pull the bird out of the fridge an hour before you cook it. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees, with a rack positioned in the upper third.

Heat a 10-12 inch cast iron pan or other skillet over medium-high heat. Add just enough olive oil to coat the bottom of the pan. As soon as the oil shimmers, place the chicken in the pan, breast side down, and brown for 6-8 minutes, until golden. It's fine if the bird doesn't lie completely flat as long as the breast is in contact with the pan. Flip the bird over and slide the entire cast iron pan into the oven on the prepared rack. Push the pan all the way to the back of the oven, with the handle of the pan facing left.

After about 20 minutes, carefully use an oven mitt to rotate the pan 180 degrees so the handle faces right and return it to the back of the oven.

Cook until the chicken is brown all over and the juices run clear when you cut between the leg and the thigh, about 45 minutes.

Let rest 10 minutes before carving. Serve warm or room temperature.

Recipe from the book *Salt Fat Acid Heat* by Samin Nosrat.



HOW TO USE EXTRA EGGS

This Overnight Egg casserole dish is easy and fun to prepare with youngsters and novice cooks. If you've got leftovers, pop it into the oven the next day for a terrific brunch or dinner.

Unless otherwise indicated, the eggs in this recipe refer to large 2 ounce chicken eggs. The classic cook book, *The Joy of Cooking* by Romauer and Becker 1975 edition, provides these guidelines:

- A large chicken egg is 2 ounces
- A duck egg is 3 ounces
- A goose egg is 8 to 10 ounces

I like using duck eggs in recipes, and the easy substitution is 2 duck eggs for 3 chicken eggs. For this recipe, I like it a bit eggy, so I used 5 duck eggs when the recipe called for 6 chicken eggs. Finally I skip the ham and double the green chilies for any ovo-lac-to-vegetarian guests. Ham, bacon or sausage are on the side, so all are accommodated.

OVERNIGHT EGG CASSEROLE

- 4 cups frozen shredded hash brown potatoes, thawed
½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
½ cup shredded Cheddar cheese
6 eggs
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup cubed full cooked ham
1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies
1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk

Salsa, optional

In one 8 inch square baking dish, layer the hash browns, ham, chilies, and cheeses. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, milk, and pepper, and then pour over the cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the dish stand for 5-10 minutes to cool before serving. Serve with salsa, if desired. This recipe yields 9 servings, and can easily be doubled for a large party.

Recipe submitted by Gabrielle Gordon from the 2008 Hickory Creek Hunt recipe booklet. Photo of eggs above courtesy of Chad McCarthy. Photo of completed recipe courtesy of Gabrielle Gordon.



The Livestock Conservancy
MEMBER

ANNUAL MEETING

We hope you will join us for the 2021 Livestock Conservancy Members Meeting on

**Wednesday, December 8
at 7 pm EST**

Listen in by phone or through your computer or mobile device's speakers. Slides will be shared online during the meeting.

If you wish to participate in the Q&A part of the meeting and you, you will need to have a working microphone enabled.

To join by phone, call 240-591-0270 and use the access code 202919#.

To join by computer, use the link:
<https://join.freeconferencecall.com/livestockconservancy>.

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:

Mary Ellenberger
Villa Ridge, MO

Charles and Jacquette Lewis
Edina, MN

Angela White
Madrid, IA

For more information about becoming a Life Member, contact Karena Elliott at 806-570-0874 or kelliott@livestockconservancy.org

A MICROGRANT FOR MACRO GROWTH

By Steve Edwards

About seven years ago my wife and I purchased a mostly-wooded 19 acre lot adjacent to our horse lot for the use of our Mill Swamp Indian Horses conservation efforts for Colonial Spanish Horses, primarily of the Corolla, Shackleford, and Choctaw strains.

With the help of the volunteers who do all of the work in our program, we used poles cut from the land to construct a pole fence around the exterior. The large pasture was filled with horses, Spanish goats, and Hog Island sheep. For the next three years, we continued to clear the land and, as our pole fence wore out, we replaced it with wire and modern fence poles.

The livestock helped keep the brush down and we began rolling out hay bales, which improved the quality of the soil immensely. We do not use any modern fertilizers or herbicides; instead we practice microbial pasture development and vermicomposting.

The next step in our plan was to divide the pasture into five paddocks with an eye toward rotational grazing. The microgrant we received from The Livestock Conservancy paid for most of the wire we needed to divide the pasture into those paddocks.

Our rotational grazing plans were right on schedule, but then COVID-19 became part of American life. To fully institute the rotational grazing system we envisioned, we were clearing 15 acres of mature mixed forest land to take our horses off the new paddocks as the early summer grass grew in. We worked hard clearing that land, but were unable to finish in time to keep all of the horses off of the new paddocks. So we did what we have done for the past 15 years. When things get complicated, we pivot, postpone, and plow on.

During the summer, we could not yet use the newly fenced paddocks for rotational grazing, but were able to use the area to raise a wonderful Choctaw foal sired by Big Muddy Miracle. Our Spanish goats, Hog Island sheep, and Leicester sheep also found wonderful forage on the new paddocks. We are even able to use one of the larger



Steve Edwards on the farm with Highland cattle (top). Their bull, Seven Leagues, pulled poles from the back side of the pasture as part of the improvement project. Choctaw foals (below) played and foraged in the new paddocks. Photos courtesy of Steve Edwards.



paddocks for riding lessons when hunting season keeps our riders out of the woods.

Now we are taking advantage of cooler weather to complete the conversion of the 15 acre tract into productive silvopasture. With hopes that the virus will wane and the vaccine will help life return to normal, we plan to have our rotational grazing system in gear soon.

The Livestock Conservancy's National Microgrant provided money for fencing and so much more. The grant made it possible for us to teach regenerative agriculture on a much larger scale, and helped us to grow in directions that I never imagined. The additional fencing also gives us a beautiful showcase for all of our heritage livestock.

When he's not on the farm, Steve Edwards serves as a prosecutor in Smithfield, Virginia. In his boots and blue jeans life, Steve serves as the Executive Director of Gwaltney Frontier Farm, Inc., a nonprofit breed conservation organization administering the Mill Swamp Indian Horses program. On the farm, Steve and his wife Beth raise mustangs, including Corolla, Marsh Tacky, Shackleford, Grand Canyon, Brislawn, Galiceno, and Choctaw, comprising one of the largest and most diverse herds of Colonial Spanish horses in the world. He also teaches natural horsemanship, history, heritage livestock breed conservation, soil and water conservation, and Americana music.



SEEDING THE FUTURE OF BACA CHICA HORSES

Stephanie Hayes holds BC Santino Adelmo, a Baca Chica Colonial Spanish stallion. Santino was collected and his semen tested and stored as part of her 2019 Microgrant to strengthen the gene pool of this Threatened breed.

By Stephanie Hayes

Semen collection, testing, and storage is paramount to ensure the future of the Baca Chica Colonial Spanish strain. With only ten mares and two stallions available for breeding, this strain is perilously close to extinction. Such a small gene pool means we must secure breeding-quality stallions for collecting, testing, and freezing semen.

The Center for America's First Horse in Johnson, Vermont, received a Livestock Conservancy National Microgrant to collect, test and freeze semen on a promising three-year-old, black stallion named BC Santino Adelmo. Santino, as he is called, was bred at Blue Oaks Center in California, now the main preservation facility for Baca Chica horses, and sent to The Center for America's First Horse in 2018. He was collected five times under the expertise of Reproduction Specialist Sherry Siebenaler of Morgan Hill Farm in North Hero, Vermont.

Each of Santino's collections gained 15-36 semen straws. To date, there are 78 frozen straws, with 10 straws stored at a different location for safety in the event of storage tank malfunction.

Santino proved that his future as a breeding stallion is bright. The quality of his straws is considered exceptional with

a 55% average mobility pre-freezing and a 40% average mobility post-thaw.

Not only has Santino outdone himself with the success of his collections, he is a true gentleman for the process. Each collection used ovulating mares with breeding experience so she did not show aggression when mounted. Always obedient and attentive, Santino acted as a prime example of the good natured disposition of Colonial Spanish horses. Those assisting in the process remarked on how well behaved he was for such a young, vibrant stallion.

The Microgrant will have an important impact on the future of the Baca Chica herd. With such a small gene pool and breeding stock almost 3,000 miles across the country, we now have semen to ship for the next generations of horses. The ultimate goal is to create satellite breeding programs within the U.S. With a substantial amount of breeding doses, this is now a viable option.

Santino is a critical part of the long term breeding program. In five years he can be bred back to the offspring already produced, strengthening the gene pool and giving us more options for breeding. While increasing the population of Baca Chica horses is important, more important is that each individual horse meets the standards set for this

particular strain. Santino shows the classic conformation, temperament and trainability that are inherit to this strain. It is now possible to share these qualities with qualified mares.

In July 2019, at Santino's first collection visit, we used fresh semen and inseminated an 18-year-old Colonial Spanish mare who previously foaled in 2012. Given her age and the time between breedings, we weren't sure she would take on the first try. With his high mobility count and good luck, Maya took on one try and gave birth to a healthy filly on June 23, 2020. Santino's first foal inherited his calm and friendly character, as well as his elegant conformation.

Stephanie Hayes is the founder of the Center for America's First Horse in rural Vermont. Nestled in the Green Mountains, the facility sits on 70 acres and provides a relaxed, professional setting for all ages and levels of horsemanship. The Center for America's First Horse is also home to one of the largest and most diverse group of Spanish mustangs in the eastern U.S., including equine celebrity "Oscar," best known for his role in Disney's epic adventure movie, Hidalgo.

A GLOUCESTERSHIRE OLD SPOTS ADVENTURE

By Loretta Heath

I love Gloucestershire Old Spots (GOS) pigs. Without this affection I would not, as a novice, have pursued breeding them. Without the desire to improve the genetics of my herd, I would not have imported more females from the United Kingdom. Without the support of the Gloucestershire Old Spots of America organization (GOSA), I would not have trekked across the country to spread these new British genetics to other GOS pig devotees.

On a late October morning, we headed south on 101 from our Northern California ranch. We bounced around in an old model Dodge diesel truck, pulling an even older model livestock trailer, whose straw-filled interior held our precious cargo. The 34 GOS piglets, from 6 different maternal lines, ranged in age from 3 to 6 months and were closely situated with little room for socializing.

Our nine-day journey took us through 15 states with stops in seven, for a total of 7,000 miles. We successfully dropped off our precious cargo at the farms of GOSA members, who generously offered their barns, pens, and fields, to serve as hospitality hubs, giving room and board to more than their own pigs until all the new owners could come to pick up their piglets from neighboring locations.

Throughout our journey, we were lavishly supplied with food specialties from the different farms, and from the hearts of the farmers themselves. COVID was rampant, so we could not socialize in close quarters for long, but I feel I absolutely must describe the kindness, friendship, and generosity given by the hub farms.

Grandma's pumpkin bars, warm, moist, spicily fragrant, and graciously baked in the wee hours of the morning so they were perfectly fresh, were washed down with home roasted and ground coffee kept hot in a take-home thermos.

Thick, hot, and savory vegetable stew was packed in canning jars, followed by a king-sized bag of incredible lard-popped popcorn sprinkled with aromatic herbs and spices.

A home-grown dinner of smoked pork roast, fresh garden greens, and sweet potatoes was followed by a goody bag



Gloucestershire Old Spots piglets and sow courtesy of Jeannette Beranger.

for the road packed with home-made goat cheese and a huge loaf of banana bread that we savagely pulled off and eaten in chunks until it disappeared.

Sandwiches on thick slices of home baked bread with an even thicker layer of pimento cheese inside, served to educate us on that Southern staple, which I had only ever heard of, but never had the pleasure to eat.

A parcel of snacks, suspiciously and hilariously enclosed in a Victoria's Secret bag, contained all manner of edibles; the most memorable was a home-made cheese and strawberry jelly. A large bottle of vodka was also properly enjoyed upon returning home in celebration of the successful journey.

It took our old, arthritic bones about a week to recover from our odyssey in the diesel truck with the rust-bucket trailer. We will never forget our adventure and hope that the GOS pigs, now recovered from their long shipment, will be fruitful

for their new owners.

It is vital to the survival of the breed in the United States that we keep Gloucestershire Old Spots genetics as diverse as possible. There are now more imported GOS maternal lines in the U.S., but they are still in need of proliferation.

Now, I must start thinking about how I can host and what I can cook for those who may travel from near or far to our farm to drop off piglets, so they also have a memory that lasts a lifetime.

After working in the computer chip manufacturing business for 35 years, Loretta Heath retired to spend her time doing 'fun' stuff like taking Horticulture classes and caring for her beloved Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs. Loretta also serves as the Secretary for Gloucestershire Old Spots of America, Inc.



REGENERATIVE FARMING WITH RED WATTLES

Ross Mathison, a USMC veteran and farmer, calls a Red Wattle piglet at OutHome Farm in Texas. Photo courtesy of Katie Gage.

By Katie Gage

OutHome Farm is a veteran owned and operated small-scale farm and ranch in Texas. As stewards of the land, our goal is to produce the healthiest, highest quality products possible while conserving the land for future generations. Combining our passion for animals, conscious-living and high-quality food, we are committed to happy and healthy animals, holistic land management, and offering high-quality, nutrition-dense, chemical-free products to our customers.

In our pig operation, Red Wattle hogs are our breed of choice. We love this breed because of their heat resilience and meat marbling, which gives excellent flavor. We've eaten the best pork of our lives from our own pasture.

Red Wattles are also a great breed for pasture-raising because they love to forage. Around here, people joke that we're those crazy people raising pigs in our front yard. Pasture-raising pigs comes with rewards and challenges. The pigs can do significant damage to pasture if they aren't managed properly. They also help enhance the overall health and diversity of the soil and pasture when a solid plan is implemented, including

rotating the pigs through paddocks, allowing the pasture to rest, and seeding for recovery and restoration.

One of the best surprises we had in this journey is something we lovingly call the #FruitsofthePoops. We feed our pigs vegetarian table scraps, local crops like squash and watermelon in the summer, and pumpkins and pears in the fall, in addition to a nutrient-dense daily feed rations. As a result, we often find surprise crops growing in our formerly inhabited paddocks. This year we harvested bags full of squash, pumpkins and watermelons "grown" by our pigs. We happily shared our #FruitsofthePoops with family and friends and used them as table decorations throughout the year.

Every farmer makes different decisions based on what works for them. One of the decisions we made early on was to take a hands-off approach to farrowing. We allow our gilts to farrow in a wooded area with bales of hay. For this method to be effective, we learned we must be very selective with our gilts, and only allow them to breed from 8-12 months of age. Beyond that age, farrowing is less successful outside of farrowing crates because of their size.

As our farm grows in maturity, our goal

is to continue improving the quality of our hogs by selectively breeding gilts based on their demeanor, mother's farrowing success, and our boar's genetics to ensure our stewardship of this breed produces the best genetics possible into the future.

One of our favorite parts of farming is the relationships we build, like sharing high-quality products with others, working with local restaurants, and creating partnerships with local chefs. Recently, we cut Red Wattle "lollichops" for one of our partners, Voncille's "Dinner under the Oaks" series, and loved how he cooked them over the fire.

For anyone interested in raising Red Wattle hogs, they are a really special breed and we are thrilled with our choice. We love educating our customers about the benefits of heritage breeds and Red Wattles specifically. We often receive great feedback on the quality of the products we sell from those who haven't had exposure to Red Wattle hogs in the past.

Katie Gage and Ross Mathison raise Red Wattle hogs, cattle and chickens on their farm in Freestone County, Texas.

CERTIFYING A MARKET FOR HERITAGE SHORTHORN BEEF

By Joe Schallberger

Shorthorns trace their ancestry to the Tees River Valley in England, and were formalized as a breed in 1822 with the Coates Herd Book, which was the first documented registry for any type of cattle world-wide. From this modest genesis they became the most popular cattle breed in the world for more than a century. There were two main reasons this happened: they were adaptable to any environment, and they produced both milk and beef that were superior in quality to all other cattle breeds.

Shorthorns became known as the "family cow" because of their ability to fill the pail and the pan, and work as oxen. As more emphasis was placed on specific breeds for milk (Holsteins) and meat (Angus), the generalized allure of Shorthorns started to wane. To compensate for this decline in the appeal of Shorthorns, the main breed associations introduced cross breeding (Red and White Holsteins in Milking Shorthorns and Maine Anjou in Beef Shorthorns). Unfortunately cross breeding diluted Shorthorn genetics, except for Heritage Shorthorns which have maintained their purity by tracing all parentage to the original 1822 Coates Shorthorn Herd Book.

In 2018, the Heritage Shorthorn Society was formed to help Heritage Shorthorn breeders preserve, promote, and produce traditional pure Shorthorns that embraced the traits that made the breed popular for so many years. As a heritage breed, it became apparent that Heritage Shorthorns needed to move beyond simply touting their virtues to developing promotional programs that created new opportunities for breeders to sell their cattle and for new herds to be started. Simply maintaining the status quo was never going to preserve the valuable genetics that make up Heritage Shorthorns nor was it going to move them off the endangered list.

For any heritage breed the measure of success should not be simply preservation. It should be finding a way to increase both numbers and breeders so that over time the breed has a meaningful role to play. Without surmounting the barriers to increasing



Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef *Farm Raised. Nutritious. Local.*

Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef website <https://www.heritageshorthornbeef.com/>. A website is essential when promoting your heritage breed to potential customers.

What Makes Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef Special ?

- 1. Great Taste & Natural Marbling**
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All of the beef sold under this program comes from Shorthorn cattle raised "start to finish" on family farms and ranches—it is not produced by a commercial feedlot. Buying locally supports your neighbors and helps to foster the next generation of farmers & ranchers.
- 3. Better for the Environment**
Heritage Shorthorn cattle, when tested against other cattle breeds in the 1960's and 1980's in trials by the USDA, consistently placed at the top in feed efficiency (needing less total feed to produce each pound of beef). Because of their natural feed efficiency, Heritage Shorthorns do not require artificial growth additives or extra resources to produce quality beef.
Local family farms and ranches are committed to caring for their livestock and protecting their land. They contribute to the viability of the communities where they live and work.
- 4. Nutritious and Free of hormones or other additives**
The cattle in the HSCB program are never given artificial growth promoting additives, hormones, or implants. This is the same beef that individual farming or ranching families sit down to eat at their own dinner table.
- 5. Promotes the Breeding & Preservation of Heritage Shorthorn Cattle**
Modern commercial beef cattle are typically a mix of breeds. In contrast, heritage breeds including Heritage Shorthorns are the direct descendants from distinct breeds developed to thrive on family farms. By buying Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef you will be encouraging breeders to preserve these increasingly rare traditional breeds. In addition, with Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef you will be getting top-quality, tender, flavorful meat to share with your family and friends.

For more info, including recipes, visit: HeritageShorthornBeef.com

Contact Information

Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef promotional flyers, courtesy of Joe Schallberger. When marketing your heritage breed products, it's important to demonstrate how your product is different or stands out from other products and how to purchase those products.



Certified Heritage Shorthorn beef cattle at Whispering Hills Farm in Oregon. Photo courtesy of Joe Schallberger.

both numbers and breeders Heritage breeds become just vestiges of the past. With all this in mind, in addition to having an extensive website, a decision was made to investigate the possibility of obtaining an official U.S. Registered Trademark for "Heritage Shorthorn Certified Beef" (HSCB).

The initial process meant going to the U.S. Patent and Trademark (USPTO) website (uspto.com) and doing a search to see if there were any already-established Trademarks that would prevent the HSCB Trademark from becoming registrable. This can be a grey area that is open to legal interpretation, and can be both confusing and discouraging. It was decided that there was a reasonable chance that a Trademark for HSCB was obtainable so the decision was made to proceed.

Under the Trademark section of the USPTO website there is a wealth of information about the procedure to obtain a Registered Trademark. Because of the cost factor it was decided to attempt to obtain a Registered Trademark for HSCB without the services of a Patent Attorney. It is extremely important to have a well designed, distinctive Trademark that will separate itself from all other Trademarks that could possibly relate to it. One of the main hurdles we encountered was mastering the legalese necessary to describe the Trademark to the satisfaction of the examining Patent

Attorney from the USPTO.

While we were able to navigate the process without hiring an attorney, you may find it easier to use an experienced patent attorney as an adjunct during the application and review process. Based on our experience, there will be a lot of these attorneys "knocking on your door" once they are aware a Trademark application is in development.

The process took approximately a year to "jump through all the hoops" with several setbacks, which included word definitions and questions about the actual design of the logo. It was also necessary to provide additional supporting explanations about the logo wording. The fine detail of the logo drawing and design itself eventually had to be slightly refined. After several information exchanges with the USPTO case attorney, the HSCB Registered Trademark was finally granted.

A registered trademark opens up tremendous opportunities for Heritage Shorthorn breeders to advertise their beef as a premium product at a premium price. The recent addition of the HSCB website (heritageshorthornbeef.com) also provides nationwide exposure for this heritage breed, allowing consumers to read about Heritage Shorthorn Beef and find out where they might purchase it. With time, as more Heritage Shorthorn breeders participate, Heritage Shorthorns will generate more interest and find a viable niche in both the cattle

industry and in local beef markets.

To be successful, small farms that embrace the principles of breed conservation must have products that are both in demand and profitable. Heritage Shorthorns certainly meet that criteria because they have an increasing visibility due to a breed association website and now a Trademarked product to sell. Opportunities abound for Heritage Shorthorns to become a valuable participant in the burgeoning Heritage Livestock movement, and breeders of other heritage livestock should consider applying for a trademarked logo as well as thinking about additional ways to promote what distinct qualities their animals have to offer to potential markets.

Joseph and Susan Schallberger started the Heritage Shorthorn Society (HSS) in January 2018 to help preserve, promote, and expand the utilization of Heritage Shorthorn cattle in today's livestock environment. The extensive HSS website, www.heritageshorthorn.org, is the product not only of their own dedication, time and effort, but it also that of other members of the Heritage Shorthorn Society. The Schallbergers currently own Whispering Hills Farm in Oregon, where they raise Heritage Shorthorn cattle. Joe grew up on a dairy farm and is a retired Veterinarian. Sue is a semi-retired Veterinary Radiologist.

This spread featuring Lilac rabbits, listed as Watch on the Conservation Priority List, first appeared in the January/February 2021 issue of Domestic Rabbits Magazine, produced by the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Provided for reprint courtesy of Eric Stewart.

Lilacs

The Breed in Bloom

Maddie Pratt & Adam Schuller, ARBA Judges & Co-Breeders of *Syringa Lilacs*

Like many breeds, the Lilac can trace its roots back to Europe. Mr. C.H. Spruyt of The Netherlands is credited with having created the first 'Lilac-esque' breed of rabbit in 1917, coined 'Gouda'. Meanwhile in England, the famous geneticist R.C. Punnet bred the first Lilacs in 1922. He crossed blue Beverens (dilute black) with Havanas (recessive chocolate). By combining these characters, the Cambridge Blue (dilute chocolate) was created. The British Rabbit Club recognized this rabbit as a new breed and called them Lilacs.





Across the pond in America, the Lilac breed was further developed by the influence of both English and Continental European imports. There was great interest in Lilacs during the 1920's and many shipments were sent to the United States. The 1928 American Standard of Perfection states that "Lilacs were quite popular on the West Coast and were spreading into the rest of the country." The English standard was adopted by American fanciers, through 1939-1944 no changes were made to the standard and a National Lilac Club was formed.

Structure Characteristics

The Lilac rabbit is described as possessing a body that is "*compact, with enough length to carry required weight, well rounded, and balanced throughout*" and a topline that peaks in the center of the hips.

Accordingly, the Lilac breed is unique in its specification of a loin that is "*as deep as possible*" highlighting its utility for meat



*A young litter of lilacs shortly after birth.
Very consistent in color at this age.*



At one week of age, the rabbits still appear to be very consistent in color. These babies demonstrate nearly ideal medium dove gray color with a delicate pink tint to the surface.



At 10 days, we can see variability between some kits of different litters. One that is decidedly too dark on the left, ideal color in the middle, and extremely light on the right.

Two litters at 12 days old where there is distinct variability between the two but little variability within the litter.



producing purposes. The head is to be short, well filled, and in proportion to the body. This trait is often broader in bucks than does and tends to become more masculine with age.

Ears are to be moderately short, in proportion to the body, well furred and carried erect. The feet and legs are to be short, straight and display medium bone. Taken together, these descriptions suggest selecting against racy, gracile specimens that fail to carry the ability to balance desired traits and body weight.

Unique Rollback Fur

The Lilac should exhibit a coat that is 1 inch in length, very dense and that has sufficient resistance to resume a smooth groomed appearance when stroked in any direction. Additionally, the coat will ideally be soft to the touch and not harsh, silky or wooly.

Commonly, bucks will present with a harsher texture as they consistently possess guard hairs with a thicker diameter to the hair shaft than does. Some animals will also demonstrate a greater disparity between the length of the guard hair and that of the undercoat which distorts the ideal feel of the coat. When focusing on the length and refinement of guard hairs so as to improve the texture of the offspring, one may find that the density will suffer and result in progeny with thinner coats that possess too quick of a return when stroked in any direction. The ultimate challenge in rearing lilac rabbits is to find balance between the length, density, and texture of the coat while maintaining

uniformity over the entire body of the animal.

The Perfect Color

The Lilac's most hotly disputed attribute is its color. Though it is the hallmark of the breed, this trait varies widely between specimens and is inconsistently interpreted by fanciers in the U.S. compared to those abroad. The Lilac is described as possessing medium dove gray color with a delicate pink tint on the surface. This is very difficult to attain and even more challenging to assess at shows where lighting conditions are highly variable. To make things even more complex, the color is desired to be uniform over the entire body of the rabbit and carried well down the hair shaft towards the skin. This can be distorted by any animal that is not actively prime in condition and manifests as patches of rust, uneven surface color (where any one section is decidedly dark or extremely light), or mealiness. Additionally, some specimens may present with white spots (commonly overlooked in the elbow or groin) or even a conspicuous showing of white hairs or silver tipping. These latter traits are especially distracting from the overall appearance of the Lilac rabbit and should be disqualified as a result.



Two rabbits at 8 weeks old demonstrating decidedly too dark color (left) and nearly ideal color (right). Note the delicate pink tint to the surface color on the animal on the right.



The coats of two rabbits opened up to demonstrate differences in depth of color down the hair shaft. This is extremely difficult to breed for and even more challenging to adequately assess in a photo.

The top animal demonstrates what happens when there is a greater disparity in length between the guard hairs and the undercoat.

At the bottom, we see much more evenness in the depth of color down the hair shaft as well as more evenness in the balance of length between the guard hair and undercoat.



Too Light

A rabbit at 10 weeks of age. Extremely light in overall surface color.
This is a fault.

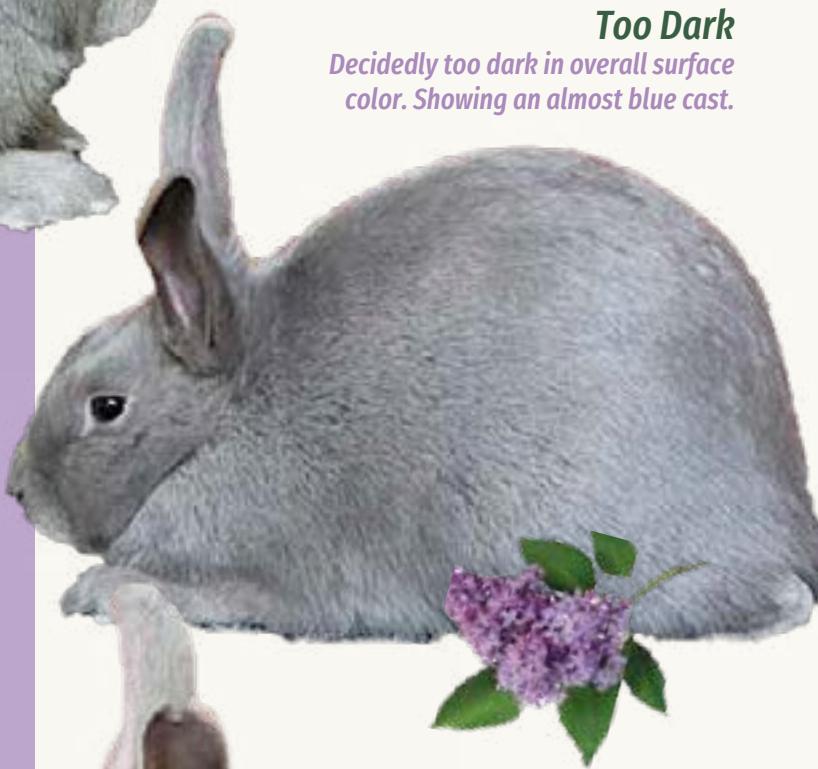


Point Distribution

When assessing Lilac rabbits, one of the most challenging facets can be in balancing allotment of points given that there is significant weight placed on many attributes of the breed. However, when consulting the schedule of points in the standard, it is very clear that the primary focus is general type, and more specifically body. This is followed by color, then fur.

Too Dark

Decidedly too dark in overall surface color. Showing an almost blue cast.



Close to Ideal

More ideal surface color - medium dove gray. Fails to show a delicate pink tint due to the harsh LED lighting in the barn. The most ideal time to observe the delicate pink tint is outside on an overcast day.



While many may consider the color of the lilac to be its defining characteristic, the breed possesses a unique body type and frame considering its classification as a compact, 4-class rabbit with relatively high weight ranges.

That said, the fur and color are also very important and should be regarded appropriately when determining placements in a given class.



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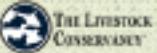
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CHICKS IN THE CLASSROOM

NC Agriculture Extension Agents Ginger Cunningham and Liz Mauney used 8 dozen Crèvecœur and 3 dozen Dominique hatching eggs for the 2021 Chicks in the Classroom project that taught embryology and biodiversity to elementary school kids in Chatham County. Last year's program was conducted virtually through YouTube (<https://bit.ly/ChickVideosYouTube>), but this year we were excited to be back in classrooms once again. The hands-on aspect of the program is one of the highlights of the year for kids in the program.

"The kids were enthused to come into the classroom for this program, and so were the parents. I think it's just a testament to the program itself and the partnership we have with The Livestock Conservancy. Having chicks in the classroom really enriches the 4-H embryology program," Cunningham said.

"A lot of the kids have been stuck at home and they haven't had the experiences of being back in the classroom, and so to have this experience was so important to them," Mauney said. "The last day was so sad because it's pick-up day. But, today was End Of Grade testing with the schools and I think that by having the chicks in the classroom, it really took some of the pressure off the school kids during testing, so that was nice."

This marks year 8 in our partnership with NC Extension. Once hatched, the chicks were returned to the farms providing eggs.

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