



THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

Conserving rare breeds since 1977
Winter 2024 | Volume 41, Issue 1

*The National
Sebastopol Geese
Association
received one of the
2023 Microgrants.
Photo taken at
Melissa Kreuzer's
Tennessee Dream
Hayven Farm.*

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Cover photo by Karena Elliott



2023 MICROGRANT WINNERS

The Livestock Conservancy celebrates six years of Microgrants by awarding over \$16,000 to these nine 2023 grant recipients. More than \$100,000 has now funded rare breed projects throughout the United States thanks to the generosity of several partner donors.

Microgrants of up to \$2,000 each are presented in three categories: National Microgrants are for farmers, ranchers, and shepherds working with livestock and poultry breeds on the Conservation Priority List (CPL); Youth Microgrants help individuals ages 12-18 with projects for CPL-listed breeds; and Breed Association grants improve membership services and conservation of their endangered breed.

Several partner donors fund Microgrants including Louis Eubanks of Mathews, North Carolina; Robert O. "Bob" Gjerdingen of Watertown, South Dakota; Drs. Pam Hand and Will Hueston of Free Union, Virginia; and Pat Lusted of Rockmart, Georgia. Premier 1 Supplies of Washington, Iowa supports a fencing-related project each year. In 2023, a new Microgrant was awarded in memory of Edward S. and Charlotte Barben, funded by Susan and Gerald Harman of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, their daughter and son-in-law.

"Farming was a major part of Dad's life since he was 12 years old," explains Susan. "His parents operated a dairy farm in central Pennsylvania." Following service in World War II, the Penn State

graduate married Charlotte and continued dairy farming. He also worked as a farm manager for the state of Pennsylvania and eventually retired from the agriculture department at Penn State.

"Growing up on a farm was the best life I could have ever wished for," continues Susan. "But even as a child, I was aware of the many struggles associated with farm life. Struggles like the day the hay baler broke down before a rainstorm, or when the best-producing cow was injured or when the bill was due at the feed mill."

"My parents loved this country, loved their family and were proud to be involved in farming. I am grateful for the opportunity to honor them by supporting The Livestock Conservancy with this Microgrant. It is my hope that it could make things a little easier for a farmer or inspire a future farmer. Either



Edward S. and Charlotte Barben

National Sebastopol Geese Association members and their geese. All photos for this article provided by Microgrant donors and recipients.

of those things would make my parents very happy," concludes Susan. Susan's father, Edward, passed away in 2011 at the age of 88. Her mother, Charlotte, passed away in 2023 at the age of 92.

The Livestock Conservancy recognizes heritage breeders like the following Microgrant recipients are a good investment for conservation. Since the launch of the Microgrants program in 2018, dollars have been awarded to help every one of the 11 species served. About one-third of the 190-plus breeds on the CPL have received funding, yet, only about eight percent of microgrant projects can be funded each year. If you, your family or your business would like to sponsor a microgrant in 2024, please email kelliott@livestockconservancy.org or call the office at (919) 542-5704.

The Livestock Conservancy is proud to announce its 2023 Microgrant recipients profiled on the following pages. Congratulations to these outstanding Microgrant recipients.

Applications for the next round of Microgrants will open in May 2024; watch the Conservancy's website and social media channels for more information.

BREED ORGANIZATION MICROGRANTS



National Sebastopol Geese Association

The National Sebastopol Geese Association (NSGA) hopes to boost efforts to conserve this endangered breed by achieving Internal Revenue Service status as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization. A Livestock Conservancy Microgrant will aid the NSGA in this task. Once nonprofit status is granted, the NSGA can begin utilizing online resources to encourage individuals and organizations to donate both time and money. They can also begin applying for charitable solicitation licenses so they may accept monetary donations. The NSGA also hopes to improve its Board of Directors through the Cultivating Leadership training offered by the Conservancy. With stronger board leadership and tax-exempt status, the NSGA will be able to recruit both members and donors while encouraging more people to raise Sebastopols and show them in poultry events.

In 2020, 132 Sebastopol geese were shown at APA-sanctioned shows, but the number is steadily increasing. In 2021, 366 Sebastopols were shown and in 2022, 409 of these beautiful birds were exhibited. "Our mission and purpose is to advance the Sebastopol goose breed through education, mentorship, breeding and exhibiting in accordance with the American Poultry Association guidelines as outlined in the Standard of Perfection," says Laura Huey, NSGA President.

Sebastopol geese are ranked as Threatened on the CPL.

American Cotswold Record Association

"The American Cotswold Record Association (ACRA) is the oldest sheep breed association in the United States," explains Elizabeth "Beth" Ivankovic (pictured below), ACRA Vice President and Interim Secretary/Registrar. "Three years ago, a new board was elected to organize the association for the 21st century in hopes to ensure our Cotswolds are here for the 22nd century!" Two members of the board have completed all the Cultivating Leadership webinars offered by The Livestock Conservancy in the past year. A new set of bylaws has been developed and online Zoom "Shepherd's Chats" are improving connection and communication within the organization. The Association will use its 2023 Microgrant to modernize its breed registry, which has been recorded in paper form for nearly 20 years.

They plan to transfer data to an online spreadsheet for future integration with a computerized registry program and to ensure all data is backed up and safely kept. "There is only one, hand-written paper copy of the registry from 2006 through 2022, which is not correlated in any way," describes Ivankovic. "One typed copy of records from 1933 to 2005 is located in two binders." With the grant, the association will hire one or more interns to begin the process, resulting in the first digital studbook for Cotswold sheep in America.

ACRA is The Livestock Conservancy's first repeat microgrant winner. Their 2021 microgrant revamped the website, which was nearly 20 years out of date; resources continue to be added, including a



classified section and farm features. Members have worked diligently over the past three years to revitalize their organization and membership in ACRA has begun to grow.

Cotswold sheep are ranked as Threatened on the CPL.

NATIONAL MICROGRANTS



Russell Bailey: Mulefoot Hogs

The Mulefoot is an American hog breed named for its most distinctive feature, solid, non-cloven hooves similar to a mule's hooves. This farm project focuses on sustainable practices, community involvement and education through permaculture-related workshops. "Our efforts extend beyond the preservation of this endangered breed," describes Russell Bailey of Lewisville Permaculture Research Center Farm in Lewisville, NC. "Through our Resource Recovery Program, our hogs assist in processing over 200,000 lbs of pre-consumer fruit and vegetable scraps per year, showcasing the symbiotic relationship between conservation and community welfare." Their grant will enhance the farm's infrastructure with reliable water and electrical connections, ensuring hogs' well-being and breed sustainability.

This docile breed is excellent for beginners and the meat may be used for charcuterie, sausage, ground pork, roasts and ham. Mulefoot hogs are ranked as Critical on the CPL.



Susan Buchanan: Belgian d'Uccle Chickens

"I started with Belgian d'Uccles as pets only," wrote Susan. "As I learned more about the breed and what it takes to raise them according to the [American Poultry Association's] *Standard of Perfection*, my flock changed and grew." Today, the Meridianville, Alabama, resident is considered a leading breeder and exhibitor of the breed, which was just added to the CPL under Watch in 2023. She's also educating adults and mentoring junior exhibitors.

"The young poultry enthusiasts are the future of the breed!" exclaims the passionate advocate. "What better breed than the friendly, docile and beautiful Belgian d'Uccle to introduce them to!" Susan will use Microgrant funding to purchase a cabinet-style incubator for larger and more consistent hatches. She'll also create a larger grow-out pen, doubling the current size.



Kay Lytle: Cotswold Sheep – National Premier1 Grant

The Cotswold is a longwool sheep breed developed on the Cotswold Hills in western England. Sheep have been known in this region since the time

of the Roman conquest 2,000 years ago. Cotswold sheep are ranked as Threatened on the CPL.

With improved fencing from Premier1, Kay will grow her Cotswold Sheep flock and establish Open Door Farm as a reliable source of high-quality, mild-tasting, grass-fed lamb. The Shave 'Em to Save 'Em fiber provider will also build her Rare Fields Fiber sales and product line of Cotswold wool. "The environment in central Oklahoma is ripe for year-round grazing on planted forage crops," explains the Mustang, Oklahoma resident. The fencing will support better pasture management through rotation and ensure controlled breeding. Additionally, Kay will be able to manage multiple grazing cells as lambs are born. "My flock has the potential of winning more consumers over to put lamb on the dinner table, wool in the hands of fiber artists and spinners and spread the word about this wonderful breed."



Nicole Coston: Silver Appleyard Ducks

Nicole Coston "stumbled" upon raising fowl when an unexpected family illness resulted in her taking over 40 acres of a mature apple orchard. "We quickly began to see the need to amend our soil and management practices," she explains. "So began our journey in search of the perfect silvopasture system for our orchards."

After three years of trial and research, Nicole considers the Silver Appleyard duck the ideal multipurpose waterfowl for home and commercial applications. Her operation, Bearwallow Farms of Hendersonville, North Carolina, promotes soil and livestock biodiversity and sustainability by selecting, breeding and raising heritage breed poultry.

Their Microgrant will help purchase and renovate a "duck hut." The birds will be raised on a rotational orchard grazing pattern as an effective means to reduce pest and weed pressure, improve soil fertility and promote the sustainability of Silver Appleyards.

With productive egg-laying abilities, innate mothering skills, excellent foraging ability and gourmet roasting-quality meat, the Silver Appleyard is a multi-purpose duck that can fit into many farms and homesteads. Silver Appleyards are listed as a Watch breed on the CPL.

YOUTH MICROGRANTS



Brenna O'Bryan: Myotonic Goats

"In all honesty, I did not want a goat, at all, ever," admits Brenna's mom, Amanda O'Bryan. "However, Cyndi Lou Who, as she came to be known, quickly warmed my heart and made me a lover of this amazing breed."

Brenna began raising animals at a very young age, showing her first dairy cow at the age of five at their local county fair. "When I joined 4-H, I enrolled in the goat project and decided to use Cyndi for practice. That first year, I had the only Fainting Goat and was competing against kids who had spent hundreds of dollars on their Boer goats. Not only was Cyndi one of the most behaved goats there, she also won champion meat goat doe!"

Today, the FFA member is growing her purebred Myotonic/Tennessee Fainting Goat herd while improving both health and quality. She will purchase portable electric fencing for better hillside grazing, Premier1 heating lamps and straws of semen. Brenna wants to artificially inseminate seasoned does at her Shamrock Ranch in Lakeview,

Oregon, developing a skill she and her mother gained from a class they took together last summer. "In the last couple of years we have shown our goats, they have always been the center of attention and created quite a bit of discussion," the breed ambassador proudly claims. "By growing and improving the herd, I will be able to contribute to the genetics of the breed on the West Coast and hopefully nationally as well."

Myotonic goats are a Recovering breed on the CPL.



Stony Ground 4-H: Heritage poultry

The Stony Ground 4-H Club, based in Wappingers Falls, New York, will construct a mobile poultry coop to raise their heritage birds on pasture at the historic Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center where the club is based. "Currently we use small chicken tractors we made ourselves that we pull manually, but they are difficult to move and not a practical solution for growing and breeding to improve the genetics of our flocks," comment Pennock siblings Lyris and Tavin. Lyris is 13 years old and her brother Tavin is 11, both pictured with Crevecoeur chickens, a Watch listed breed on the CPL.

The junior American Poultry Association members raise Creve Coeur, Golden Sebright, Dominique and Auburn Java chickens and Bourbon Red turkeys at Stony Kill Farm, operated by Stony Kill Foundation and open to the public. The 4-H Club members work with the animals on-site and show them at the local Dutchess County Fair. 4-H Club members work with the animals on-site and show them at the local Dutchess County Fair. Club members enthusiastically share the importance of heritage breeds at numerous community events and have been recognized for their efforts as the farm has been steadily improving animal

and visitor experiences."

The poultry tractor will allow us to focus on breed standards and breed for the attributes these fantastic breeds were used for in the past," say the Pennock siblings. "It will also free space within the barn's coop facilities to separate birds for breeding and brooding and will allow us to increase egg production and sales."



Renae Clark: Lilac Rabbits

"I started raising rabbits 10-plus years ago when I was in kindergarten as part of my 4-H project," describes the Austin, Minnesota resident. "My main focus for

the past three years has been on my heritage breed Lilacs." Renae has been a member of her rabbit quiz bowl team for five years and served as youth livestock superintendent for the rabbit barn at her county fair.

Her Microgrant will improve the quality of her Lilac rabbit herd through breeding, nutrition and improving her barn's air quality. Fur and flesh condition is very important in the Lilac breed. A commercial dehumidifier will help control the barn's humidity levels and supplemental fans will keep the air moving for better circulation resulting in improvements in health, fly control and overall barn environment.

The family also raises Holland Lops, Champagne D'Argents, Creme D'Argents (a Threatened breed on the CPL) and Polish rabbits. "After I got my first Lilac and fell in love with the breed, I realized how difficult it is to find these rabbits in our area. I decided I wanted to do something about raising awareness for this fabulous rabbit breed and work on producing high-quality Lilacs not only for our area but for the breed as a whole. Lilac rabbits are a Watch listed breed on the CPL. ■

2021 MICROGRANT UPDATE

The Little Black Cow Dairy in Westminister, Massachusetts received a 2021 Livestock Conservancy National Microgrant to launch a seasonal, grass-based, raw milk dairy using Kerry cows. "The milk is tasty," reports owner Jody Jess, "and raw milk is gaining popularity in Massachusetts." Jess constructed a stationary parlor and mobile dairy for processing on a 22-foot trailer, working closely with her state dairy inspector.

Indigenous to Ireland and one of the oldest European breeds of cattle, Kerrys are a critically endangered heritage breed. Their ability to thrive and grow on meager forage under harsh conditions made them an important asset to poor farmers in the southwestern region of Ireland. They produce an average of 5,000 to 7,000 pounds of milk in a lactation period. The globules of butterfat in the milk are smaller than those from most dairy breeds, making the milk more easily digestible by people. Kerry milk is also



well suited for cheese, yogurt and ice cream production – longer-term goals for Jess.

In 2023, Jess received final USDA approval and the mobile dairy is now being used for milk sales. "I'm learning a lot about udder nutrition, vacuum lines, bulk tanks and chart readers," she reports. "The grant from The Livestock Conservancy gave me the initial push to begin this process."

THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY SEEKS NEW LEADER

The Livestock Conservancy is looking for its next executive director and beginning a nationwide search.

As chief operating officer for the Pittsboro, North Carolina-based not-for-profit, the executive director works with a team of 11 full-time professional staff, leads operational initiatives and supports a 19-member board of directors. Programming and development activities promote, preserve and protect more than 190 endangered heritage livestock and poultry breeds.

The Livestock Conservancy was founded in 1977 at a kitchen table in Vermont in an effort by dedicated livestock producers to save shrinking breed populations from extinction. Today, the organization has grown to more than 3,000 members, has a \$1 million annual budget and is responsible for the "Conservation Priority List," an annual report on efforts to protect threatened traditional livestock breeds across 11 agricultural species.

The organization's volunteer board of directors has formed a committee chaired by Gloria Basse to conduct a nationwide search for an executive director and expects to fill the position by mid-2024. Basse is a former Vice President for US Pork Business at Zoetis and served in marketing, sales, and leadership roles in Animal Health for 30 years. She is the Senior Executive Director for Tonisity International and also a Senior Associate at The Context Network. Former Livestock Conservancy board member and Rocky Mountain horse breeder Dr. Judy Brummer is serving as interim executive director until the transition is finalized.

Candidates should be seasoned and energetic leaders, familiar with not-for-profit operations, financing, fundraising and management as well as animal agriculture. Responsibilities of the executive director include providing visionary leadership, financial and staff management, programming, fundraising and member recruitment and retention.

Information on the position and the search and application process can be found on The Livestock Conservancy's website at <https://livestockconservancy.org/about-us/jobs/>. ■

OUR NEW COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Les O'Dell, an experienced non-profit leader and veteran journalist, has joined The Livestock Conservancy as the organization's Communications Manager. O'Dell will oversee all the organization's outreach efforts including the quarterly *Newsletter*, eNews, social media and online efforts, as well as work with

media to promote, protect and preserve heritage breeds.

"I am excited about telling the wonderful stories of heritage breeds and working with farmers, ranchers, shepherds, artisans and others with an interest in the conservation of these fantastic animals," he said.



Les O'Dell with Red Wattle hog from Roger Schutte's Big Muddy Hogs in Hurst, Illinois.

Les comes to the Conservancy from *The Southern Illinoisan*, a regional, daily newspaper, where he covered higher education, business, agriculture and non-profits, as well as wrote a weekly column. He has been an award-winning feature writer for *Illinois Country Living Magazine*, worked in communications



Jay H. "Jerry" Calvert, Vice President of The Livestock Conservancy Board of Directors, passed away unexpectedly in September. Jerry, a retired attorney, civic leader and owner of Dexter cattle, served on our Board since 2017. His wisdom and enthusiasm were inspiring to his colleagues and our staff. He is sorely missed.

David Day of Noblesville, IN has been appointed to fill the Vice President's position. David is an attorney, Lincoln shepherd, and had served as Treasurer of the Board. Keith Ohlinger, a member of the Finance Committee, will be the new Treasurer. Keith is a Woodbine, MD Dexter cattleman and has worked with The Livestock Conservancy for more than eight years.

for a regional health care conglomerate and co-founded a not-for-profit organization to serve foster families and the children in their care.

As a youth, Les spent weekdays in western Illinois, but summers and weekends found him on the family farm nearly 300 miles away in the south-central part of the state.

"Growing up as a 'weekend warrior' farmer gave me lots of options," Les recalls. "I was drawn to the rural side of things and I am thrilled to continue promoting farming, ranching and homesteading throughout America."

He holds degrees in agricultural communications and journalism from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Les and his wife Christine have five children and one new granddaughter. ■

WHAT HAPPENED TO 700 EXTINCT BREEDS?



A single statement on the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) website drives home a very simple, yet chilling fact: "The world's livestock diversity remains at risk."

If there is any doubt, one need simply look at the more than 190 breeds of heritage livestock and poultry featured on The Livestock Conservancy's Conservation Priority List (CPL), an annual scorecard across 11 traditional agricultural species. The goal of the CPL and the Livestock Conservancy's efforts to discover, secure and sustain those breeds is to keep them off another list: The FAO's Extinct Breeds List.

Sadly, nearly 700 breeds from around the world are included in this list – breeds that have been lost forever, never to return. More than a dozen years ago, Bruce Kalk, now dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Southern Connecticut State University, attributed the extinction of breeds to a variety of factors including cross-breeding, changes in consumer tastes and the decline of agriculture in certain geographic regions.

While the Extinct Breeds List covers the globe, 40 breeds with domestic ties have been lost. Yellow Dane cattle, the Curtis Victoria pig and Conestoga horses have all gone extinct.

According to Janice Brown on New Hampshire's History Blog, Yellow Dane cattle were the state's earliest cows.

"Capt. Mason introduced a large yellow breed from Denmark," writes Brown citing a letter dated August 6, 1634. But by 1685 the Mason herd from his Piscataqua Plantation was sold and dispersed, scattered throughout Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to be cross-bred into extinction by the earliest settlers of America.

According to Kalk, "Most of the documented cases of livestock extinction in North America involve swine breeds." One example is the Curtis Victoria pig, which originated in Lake County, Indiana, around 1850. F.D. Curtis of Saratoga, New York, crossed several existing varieties of pigs trying to conserve the best genetic qualities of each, but the resulting breed failed to catch on with American farmers. Although commonly mentioned in livestock manuals from the 1800s with registrations exceeding Hampshires, the Curtis Victoria hog was extinct by the beginning of the 20th century. By 1920, over 62% of U.S. swine were estimated to be one of two breeds: the Poland China or the Duroc-Jersey.

The Uncharted Lancaster blog wrote in 2019 that "Lancaster County had its own horse to pull the Conestoga Wagon – the aptly named Conestoga horse" bred by Pennsylvania German immigrants. First appearing in the early 1700s, "Conestoga horses, in general, were usually a bay or black, rather long of leg, muscular but not chunky, with a fairly small head

A hitch of extinct Conestoga horses.

and arched chest. It was well-mannered and it had enormous pulling strength. Its average height was 16.3 hands. Its average weight was 1,650 pounds." As boats and trains replaced freight hauled by wagon, the Conestoga horse disappeared by the early 20th century.

The complete FAO Extinct Breeds List includes 23 breeds of pigs, 11 sheep breeds, three cattle breeds, one extinct goat breed and five breeds of horses once found in the United States of America. It is available on the FAO website at www.fao.org.

Even though the number of domestic extinct breeds is relatively small in comparison to the more than 8,000 identified livestock breeds worldwide, Dr. Phil Sponenberg, a veterinarian who was instrumental in the establishment of The Livestock Conservancy and who continues to serve as the organization's technical adviser, said the loss of any breed can have long-term consequences.

"Each of these breeds is tailored for something specific," Sponenberg said. "We need all of these pieces because we don't know what we will be facing in the future." Specifically, he pointed to three distinct qualities that are lost when a breed goes extinct.

First, living and thriving breeds provide a sort of "genetic insurance policy," preserving not only breeds

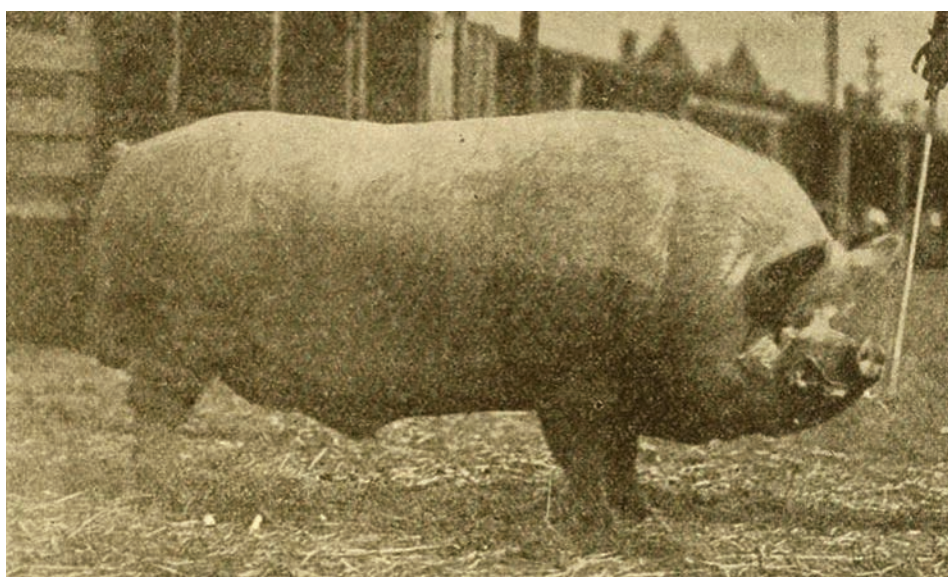
themselves but individual characteristics and traits that may be found only in those animals.

"A cultural connection" is a second factor, Sponenberg explained. "Our animals are who we are. It can be compared to saving a historic building, but this probably is even more compelling. When we lose these, we lose an element of who we are and we've already lost so many."

Finally, he said it is important to maintain these breeds simply because we, as a society, may discover a very dire or specific need for them again in the future. Just as agricultural production methods change, the desires of consumers or markets also transform. Heritage breeds may one day be used to handle evolving needs and situations, such as a changing climate, that we simply can't imagine today.

Even though the Extinct Breeds List was first developed more than two decades ago, the goal remains the same and was stated in the FAO's 2019 State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture report. Simply put, the document pointed to disappearing biodiversity among the earth's plants and animals, stressing the future of our food, livelihoods, health and environment.

"Less biodiversity means that plants and animals are more vulnerable to pests and diseases. Compounded by our reliance on fewer and fewer species to feed ourselves, the increasing loss of



Curtis Victoria pig, extinct c. 1900.

biodiversity for food and agriculture puts food security and nutrition at risk," said FAO Director-General Graziano da Silva.

To maintain biodiversity, Sponenberg pointed to the Conservation Priority List (CPL), a tool used by The Livestock Conservancy since 1986. "If people are interested in conservation, this is where to target your efforts," he said. That's why farmers, ranchers and shepherds across America turn to the CPL when they add livestock or poultry breeds to their backyards and operations. Thanks to them, no breed listed on the CPL has gone extinct in the past four decades.

The Livestock Conservancy updates the Conservation Priority List annually

and conducts a bird-by-bird count of heritage poultry and waterfowl every five years. The 2023 CPL is available online at www.livestockconservancy.org/heritage-breeds/conservation-priority-list and the 2024 List will be announced in the Spring Newsletter. ■

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS

The Livestock Conservancy thanks the following individuals who recently chose to support conservation programs by becoming Life Members:

Cackle Hatchery
Lebanon, MO

Marjie Findlay
Carlisle, MA

Miranda Howard
Kingston, MI

Rachel Killian
Trenton, FL

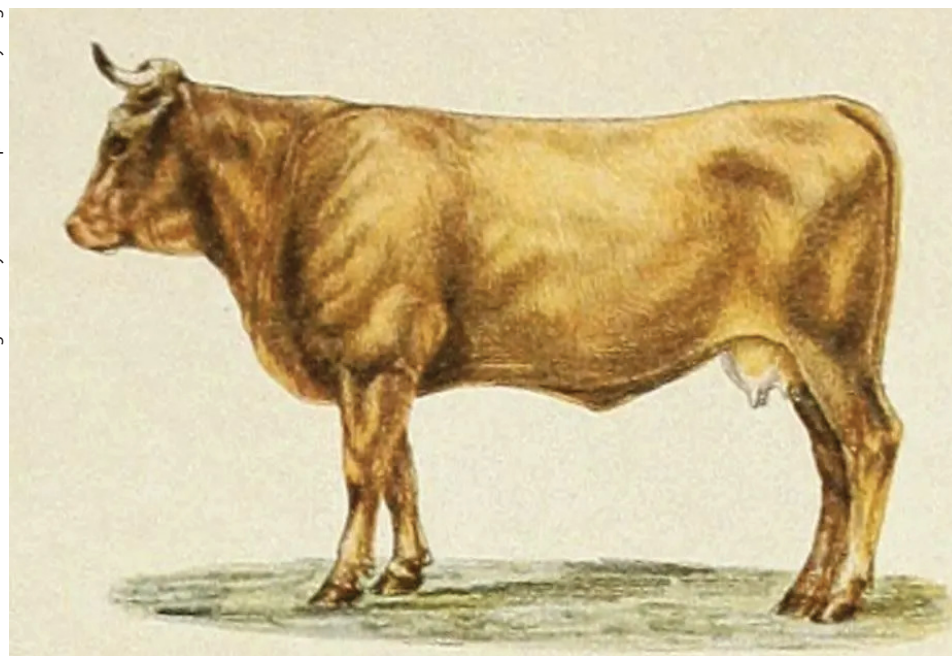
Mary Moix
Lathrup Village, MI

Keith Ohlinger
Woodbine, MD

Dennis and Teresa Smart
Grandview, TX

Kevin Sonney
Pittsboro, NC

To become a Life Member, contact Karena Elliott at 806-570-0874 or kelliott@livestockconservancy.org



Yellow Dane cow.

WHAT IS A BREED STANDARD?

What is a breed standard? How is one developed? What does it mean to conservation?

A breed standard is a formal description of the animals in a specific breed. Standards reflect the actual animals within the breed, while also being a target to aim for as breeders strive for excellence.

Each breed has its own unique “breed type,” which is the sum of all animal traits including appearance, performance, behavior, adaptation and production. Production traits may include growth, egg laying, milking, wool quality and so forth. The breed standard summarizes and describes the breed type, especially those aspects that are unique to the breed and distinguish it from other breeds.

There are two types of breed standards; one type occurs for standardized breeds and a second type is used for landrace breeds.

Standardized breeds tend to be uniform in type. Therefore, a “prescriptive” breed standard recommends the ideal animal of that breed and serves as a target for breeders to achieve. For example, the standard for Lincoln sheep outlines a very specific combination of head shape, carriage, color, leg conformation and placement, body size and style, and fleece characteristics.

Landrace breeds have been shaped more by natural selection than human selection. Because their type is more

variable, landrace breeds are better served by “descriptive” breed standards that document what the animals actually are rather than an ideal. For example, the matrix score sheet used by breeders of Colonial Spanish horses includes acceptable variations in head, leg and body characteristics. A range, rather than a specific single type, is appropriate for landrace breeds.

A good breed standard is an essential tool that helps breeders maintain and manage their animals as a genetic resource. It helps create a mental picture of breed type and should drive breeders’ selection decisions. Most breed standards emphasize external, easily observable traits. The more precise and breed-specific the standard is, the better it can guide breeders in maintaining the integrity of the breed.

Functional traits are as important as physical traits for breed utility and integrity. Therefore, breed standards can include behavior, parasite tolerance, fertility, breeding season, or longevity traits. In some horse breeds, gait is also an essential component of the breed standard. These functional traits may be essential to the character of the breed but can be quite challenging to describe in a breed standard.

Breed standards should be carefully constructed and rarely changed. When formal descriptions change, selection practices also change, which leads to changes in breed type. Drastic changes to the breed standard can change breeds so much that the original genetic package eventually disappears even though the name remains. For example, modern lean swine breeds are dramatically different from their lard-producing ancestors.

Well-constructed breed standards unite breeders in conservation with clearly defined goals. They ensure that breeds remain true to type and continue to serve the purposes for which they were developed. For more information about developing, maintaining, and changing breed standards, consult *Managing Breeds for a Secure Future*, available through The Livestock Conservancy’s online store. ■

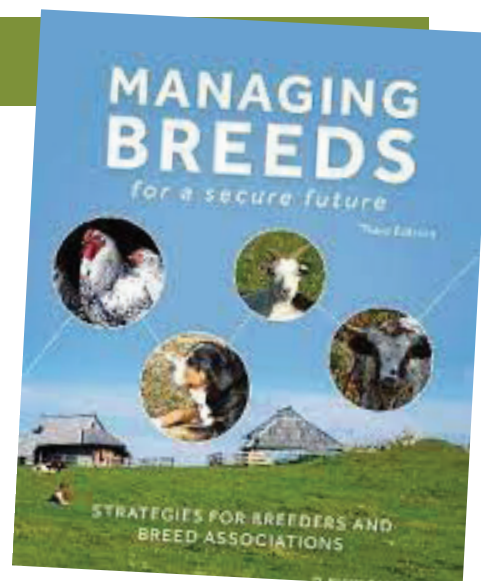


Photo by A. Martin



Photo by J. Beranger



Photo by D. Sponenberg



These three Choctaw horses show the variation that can be found within a single heritage breed.

Photo by J. Beranger



African geese have distinctive breed-type traits and cannot be confused with any other goose breed.

COLONIAL SPANISH HORSE BREED STANDARD

Many Colonial Spanish horses are landrace breeds developed for local purposes. Landraces tend to be more variable than more modern breeds, and this can be difficult for breeders to grapple with as they decide what should be included in the breed. The following table describes a range of traits from most typical to least typical.

Only a portion of the Breed Standard is shown; visit The Livestock Conservancy Members' Area of the website for the complete matrix.

A matrix of characteristics can be used to effectively evaluate horses for relative consistency with Spanish-type conformation. All horses vary, as do all populations. This matrix scores a variety

of conformational traits related to the Colonial Spanish Horse type. A score near 1 for each trait is most consistent with Iberian origin; those with a score near 5 are much less typical. Breeders should favor horses that are most typical and breed away from those that are not typical.

| Most Typical (score of 1-2) | Allowable, But Not Ideal (score of 3-4) | Not Typical (score of 4-5) |
|---|--|---|
| HEAD PROFILE | | |
| Either: 1. concave/flat on forehead and then convex from top of nasal area to top of upper lip (sub-convex) 2. uniformly slightly convex from poll to muzzle 3. straight with some convex "drop off" at nose | 1. moderately dished 2. straight with no "drop off" at nose | 1. dished as in Arabian. 2. markedly convex. |
| HEAD FROM FRONT VIEW | | |
| Wide between eyes (cranial portion) but tapering and "chiseled" in nasal/facial portion. This is a very important indicator and width between eyes with a sculpted taper to fine muzzle is very typical. | Straight and boxy from level of eyes to muzzle with no change of line or finely sculpted lines | Wide and fleshy throughout head from cranial portion to muzzle. |
| NOSTRILS | | |
| Small, thin, and crescent-shaped. Flare larger when excited or exerting. | Small but round instead of crescent-shaped | Large, round, and open at rest. |
| EARS | | |
| Small to medium length, with a distinctive notch or inward point at tips | Short, wide, and straight with no hook or notch at the tip | Long, straight, with no inward point at the tip. Thick, wide, or boxy. |
| EYES | | |
| Vary from large to small (pig eyes). Usually fairly high on head | Medium-sized, and lower on head. | Large and bold, low on the head. |
| MUZZLE PROFILE | | |
| Refined, usually with the top lip longer than the bottom lip | Straight and even with upper and lower lip the same length. | coarse and thick with lower lip loose, large, and projecting beyond the upper lip. |
| MUZZLE FRONT VIEW | | |
| Fine taper down face to nostrils, slight outward flare, and then inward delicate curve to small, fine muzzle that is narrower than region between nostrils. | Fine but rounded rather than tapering. | Coarse and rounded, or heavy and somewhat square as the Quarter Horses, rather than having the tapering curves of the typical muzzle. |
| NECK | | |
| Wide from the side, sometimes ewe-necked, attached low on the chest | Narrow but attached low on the chest. | Thin, long, and set high on the chest. |
| HEIGHT | | |
| 13 to 14.2 hands high. | | Under 12 or over 15 hands. |
| WITHERS | | |
| Pronounced and obvious. "sharp" | Moderately high but thick. | Low, thick, and meaty. |
| BACK | | |
| Short, strong. | Moderately long. | Long, weak, and plain. |
| CROUP PROFILE | | |
| Angled from top to tail. Usually a 30-degree slope, some are steeper | Thickly muscled and rounded, but still with an angle instead of flat. | Flat or high |

FIND THE FULL TABLE AT [HTTPS://LIVESTOCKCONSERVANCY.ORG/MEMBERS/](https://livestockconservancy.org/members/)



Photo courtesy Jeremy Engh

400 YEARS OF DEVON CATTLE

The year 2024 marks the 400th year cattle of British and European descent have been in America. From the beginning of colonization, settlers brought livestock and poultry to help establish new lives in the “new world.”

Devon cattle arrived in America with the Pilgrims in 1623. “On the ship *Charity* were three Devon heifers and a Devon bull sent to Edward Winslow, the agent for the Plymouth colony,” explains Jeremy Engh. “Cattle from Devonshire had long been recognized in England for their speed, intelligence, strength, willingness to work and ability to prosper on coarse forage in a wide range of climates.”

Devons were readily available near the English ports of departure. Their hardiness made the breed an obvious choice to meet the immediate needs of draft power, but also to provide milk and eventually meat. The breed moved down the Atlantic coast as far as Florida during the 1700s and later served as oxen on the Oregon Trail between 1840 and 1860.

In the 20th century, Devon cattle split into two breeds. The portion known

today as Red Devon was selected for beef production and has found a niche in grass-fed operations like Engh's Lakota Ranch. The other breed, known today as Milking Devon, remains a triple-purpose breed valued as oxen and for the production of both milk and meat.

By the mid-1970s, America was preparing for Bicentennial celebrations. Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, and the Plimoth Plantation in Plymouth, Massachusetts,

Red Devon cow and calf.

attempted to upgrade the authenticity of their agricultural interpretation by exhibiting appropriate breeds documented in their respective archives. Milking Devon cattle were one of those centerpiece historical breeds. However, their difficulty in finding animals became the inspiration for the creation of the first North American livestock conservation organization. In 1977, the non-profit which became The Livestock Conservancy was founded.

Every four years since 1980, Devon breeders from around the world have gathered together to celebrate the breed and visit premier Devon operations. When the event is held in the United States, the tour includes Milking Devon operations, because this triple-purpose remnant of the original cattle is now found only in America.

In 2024, Devon breeders from around the globe will gather in the United States for the World Devon Congress. The tour will reach more than a thousand farmers and ranchers from Florida to Maine,



culminating at Plimoth Plantation with the reenactment of the first animals' arrival at the Plymouth colony. Festivities stretch from April 20 through May 2 and additional details can be found at reddevonusa.com/World_Congress.

The Livestock Conservancy will also be celebrating the role Devon cattle have played in America's history throughout the year with in-depth articles, blogs and updates. Milking Devon's population numbers are close to improving their endangered status from Critical to Threatened on the Conservation Priority List. Join the 400th Anniversary celebration by adding them to your farm as a tribute to living history! ■

Engh has Red Devons at his Lakota Ranch in Remington, Virginia. He and his father, Dr. Gerard "Jerry" Engh, worked closely with The Livestock Conservancy to establish

the first breed association for Devon cattle in America. Today, the Engh family offers replacement stock, semen, embryos and consulting services. Certified Devon beef may be purchased through their Lakota Ranch Farm Store.

Photo courtesy Cait Barnett



Turner Farm Red Devon cattle.

THE AMERICAN HISTORY OF DEVON CATTLE

1624: 4 Devon cattle arrive in the Plymouth, MA colony with the Pilgrims aboard the *Charity*

1640s: William Pynchon becomes first meat packer in American history making corned beef from Devon stock

1817: First recorded exportation of purebred Devons to the American colonies from England

1851: Publication of John T. Davy's *Devon Herd Book* in England

1855: Publication of Horace Mills Sessions' first *American Devon Herd Book*

1884: American Devon Cattle Club records started

1916: Club was reorganized as the American Devon Cattle Club, Inc.

1952: American Milking Devon Association created for dairy cattle and triple-purpose stock

1971: Club name changed to Devon Cattle Association, Inc.

1980: World Devon Congress is launched

1990: Devon herdbook records transferred into a computer-based system

2005: Association name changed to The American Devon Cattle Association

2014: Red Devon USA is formed

2024: Celebration of 400 Years of Devon History in the US

Timeline based on article written by Jeremy Engh originally published in the Fall 2022 Devon USA magazine.

Photo by A. Martin



Milking Devon at Plimoth Plantation.

FROM THE SCIENCE DESK: SELECTION PERSPECTIVES

By D. P. Sponenberg

The selection of breeding stock was first based on what an animal looked like or could do (phenotype). This approach remains the easiest strategy for most smallholders. Phenotype is shaped by genetics, but the environment also has an important influence on performance. The best set of genetic instructions in the worst environment is unlikely to perform very well, while a mediocre genetic package in an ideal environment may do pretty well. Therefore, the results of phenotypic selection based on an individual animal's performance are only partially determined by genetics. Still, it is the mechanism by which many of today's successful breeds were developed. Progress may be gradual with this approach, but it does occur.

Breeders next began tailoring livestock and poultry for more intensive production. This selection strategy is useful for smallholders who are good at recordkeeping, adding population genetics components to the performance of individual animals. One good example is progeny testing where an animal's breeding potential is established by its performance and the performance of its offspring.

Robert Bakewell pioneered progeny testing with Leicester Longwool sheep in the 18th century. He leased out rams and observed their lambs in flocks he did not own. Bakewell would bring back rams that produced the best lambs for use in his flock. The key is he did not use ALL the rams, only the ones whose lamb production was deemed superior.

Dairy bull selection has used progeny selection for years because it is impossible to directly measure a bull's milk production. The specific method has evolved, getting closer and closer to an accurate measurement of genetic potential rather than waiting to see what

shows up in the milk bucket. Recent strategies relate genetic variants to production traits and use these numbers to select stock before individual production has been measured.

These techniques speed genetic selection because an animal can be heavily used even before its production (or that of daughters) can be measured. While this is an effective tool for achieving rapid genetic change, consider the following conservation aspects.

The role of animals in day-to-day environments - including their health and survival - is important to consider along with production potential. This became a point of lively discussion at the recent hemispheric conservation meeting in Veracruz, Mexico. Animals must survive in order to perform, and survival is extremely important in challenging environments. This is especially true where economic constraints drive husbandry methods and selection tools.

For example, in good years with rain and plentiful forage in Argentina, Angora goats yield much higher monetary returns than the Chivo Neuquino goat breed. In bad years with volcanic ash and drought, Angoras die in large numbers. However, the Chivo Neuquino maintains performance levels nearly equal to good years. As a result, many producers keep herds of both Angoras and Chivo

Neuquinos as an insurance policy for bad years. They know the bad years are coming, but they are so irregular it is difficult to plan long-term selection programs. Their strategy rewards survival and conserves this adapted resource "just in case."

Today, powerful new tools are unraveling animal genomes to use genetics for selection. Genes are the bits of information that pass from one generation to the next, shaping an animal's potential for the next generation. Therefore, genes are an ultimate target for animal breeders. And, genomic tools might eclipse many tools like phenotype, progeny testing and survival.

Effective conservation of adapted breeds is challenging; animal breeders like to make progress. A short generation interval (the time between birth and selection for breeding) speeds progress and is a goal of many breeding programs. Some newer genomic techniques do this exquisitely well. However, traits important to small-holders, like longevity, survival and lifetime production, take time to play out. Measuring these traits makes for a longer generation interval and slower genetic change.

Further difficulties arise in the real world. In the goat example, it may be necessary to sell an entire kid crop and part of the goat herd to ensure economic survival in a bad year. With little or no

retention of youngsters and no genetic selection, there would be no progress towards any genetic goal. A better strategy would identify top-performing goats during the bad years so that in good years their kids are saved. This takes longer than genomic selection, but this strategy can be much more secure for the breeds and their owners.

No single system of selection is optimal for all settings. Each one brings its challenges and needs. Breeders must select the system that fits their goals and their breed. ■

Photo by D. Sponenberg



Argentinian heritage breed Chivo Neuquino does.



CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP WEBINARS CONTINUE

In September of 2022, The Livestock Conservancy launched the Cultivating Leadership for Breed Organizations webinar series. The content is designed to educate organizations on methods to improve function, transparency and long-term success. Nine webinars were held and attended by nearly 200 participants representing more than 30 breed organizations. Webinar topics included Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, Risk Management, and Managing a Herd Book/Registry among others. Recorded webinars are available at livestockconservancy.teachable.com for \$35 each which includes access for the entire organization.

Cultivating Leadership has far-reaching effects on the groups and the animals they steward. A few comments from participants:

"Two of us brought back questions to the Board regarding the incorporation status of our breed organization and found it needed refiling and updating, thereby avoiding potential dissolution, which might have been costly. Understanding this problem led to Board discussion about developing a 'procedure manual' for each Board member's role and responsibilities."

"The modules are fantastic and highlight many holes we have in our by-laws and organization. I think we'll be back on track to really do something meaningful to preserve both our breed and

organization. Really appreciate you putting this together and offering it to everyone."

"These tools aren't only good for our breed organization but can work in farms and other aspects of professional life."

In the Fall of 2023, The Livestock Conservancy launched additional stand-alone Cultivating Leadership webinars on advanced topics such as

Navigating Difficult Conversations and Disputes, Strategic Planning, Fundraising, and Establishing Cryopreservation Programs. The next webinar, on Strategic Planning, will be held February 22, 2024. For more information, visit <https://livestockconservancy.org/get-involved/cultivating-leadership-initiative/>. ■



IMPROVE MARKETING SKILLS

The Livestock Conservancy partnered with Food Animal Concerns Trust to develop a series to help farmers and small business owners build audiences into communities while improving farm profitability. Heritage breeders like Frank Reese and John Metzger share first-hand knowledge from added-value products to agritourism and pricing to processors. Watch or download the free videos on YouTube by selecting Marketing Mondays under the Playlists option on The Livestock Conservancy channel.

MENTORING WITH AMERICAN BUFF GEESE

When Crystal Samano's family moved from the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area to rural Azle, Texas, she took it as an opportunity to homestead with some chickens and a "guard goose." It also gave her son Roman a chance to get involved with the poultry program of a local 4-H club, showing chickens and geese.

Roman took a liking to showing the birds, especially geese, and soon was looking to learn more about them. After connecting with American Buff geese breeder Kathy Hopkins, the 12-year-old found not only a provider of breeding stock but also a friend and mentor.

The Samanos began making regular trips to Hopkins' Silver Spring Waterfowl Farm, where the youngster worked side-by-side with the master breeder, gaining knowledge and an appreciation of the geese at every turn. "He's learned everything from her," Crystal explains. "We don't even go online anymore; all of our information comes directly from her."

Hopkins' passion for American Buff geese has rubbed off on her young apprentice, too. It has made him a sort of "ambassador" for the breed as well as other heritage breeds, especially as he continues to show geese competitively. "I really like telling people about the American Buff goose. That's something I like to do," he shares.

His mom says promoting the breed has become almost a mission for him. "Ever since he found out they're on the endangered list and how important it is to continue breeding them, he's got a kind of fire in his heart. It's given him a purpose. When we go to these shows, it's not about going to win, it's so people won't forget these geese."

Still, Roman is winning. In his first show, his American Buff was the only goose in the competition so he naturally won. Perhaps more importantly, however, he said he learned a lot about judging and showmanship.

He learned well. Roman won Junior Reserve Grand Champion and Junior Best of Variety at the recent Ohio National Poultry Show with his American Buff. "It was pretty much the best experience of my life," Roman recalls.

Hopkins is proud of her young student and her role in his newfound passion. "We don't have too many of these birds out there. As a breeder, you have to help people and the goal is really to help them succeed with their birds," she says. "It's great when they accomplish something, no matter how old they are." Spoken like a true mentor. ■



Kathy Hopkins mentoring Roman Samano.

Photos by Crystal Samano



Roman Samano, right, and his Junior Reserve Grand Champion American Buff goose.

AMERICAN BUFF GEESE

Continued from page 24

American Buff geese are one of three endangered goose breeds native to North America. Their name comes from the dark coloration of the birds' bodies and they were accepted into the American Poultry Association's *Standard of Perfection* in 1947. The breed was

developed from the wild Greylag goose of Europe and Northern Asia.

Useful as both meat birds and companion animals, American Buffs lay 10 to 25 large, white eggs each year. At maturity, some ganders can weigh up to 18 pounds while females usually average about 16 pounds. They thrive in most climates, making the breed well-suited for the average home flock.

Kathy adds that American Buff are beautiful, docile and make good pets.

"They require more social interaction than maintenance," she says. "They need attention and I don't think it's possible to handle them too much. They absolutely thrive on contact and love. Raising these geese has been as rewarding as anything else I've ever done and I highly recommend them." ■



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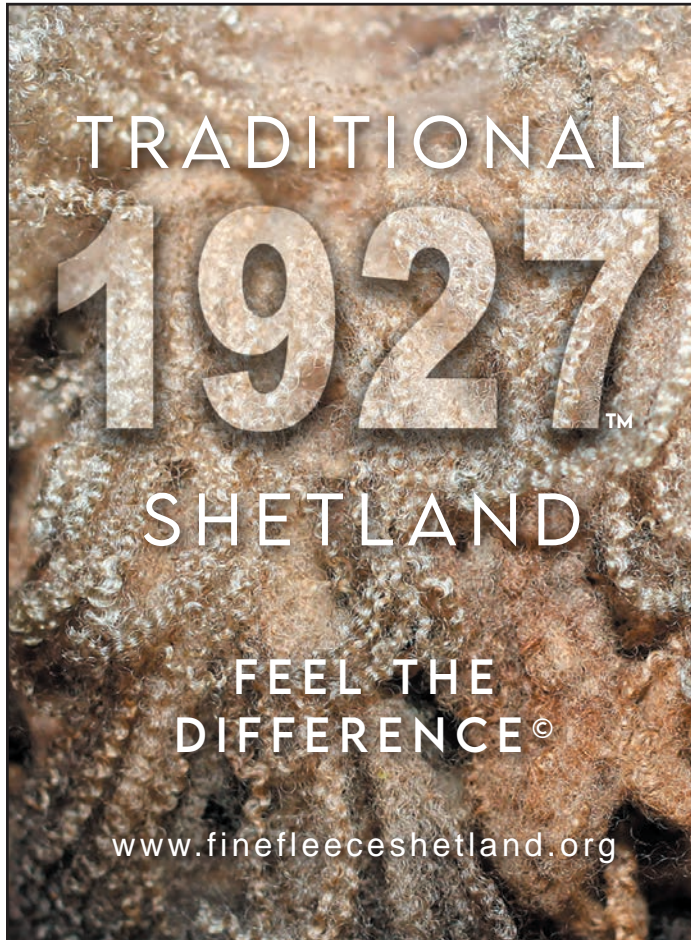

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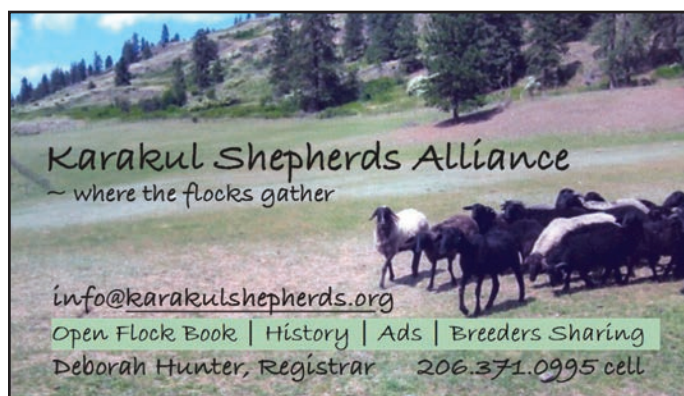
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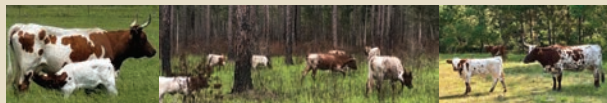
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RAISING AMERICAN BUFF GEES

Simply put, Kathy Hopkins is a fan of geese. Particularly the American Buff goose, designated Watch on the Conservation Priority List, “for their amazing individual personalities, their beauty, their intelligence, sociability and their exceptional parenting skills,” she shares without reserve.

She should know. Hopkins raises a flock of more than 100 on her Texas farm for exhibition and to provide stock for others wanting to also raise the heritage breed. “American Buffs are a good choice for someone new to geese because they aren’t aggressive and they bond well with people,” she explains. “They require more social interaction than maintenance. The breed is incredibly intelligent. If hand-raised from goslings, they are as good and fiercely loyal a friend as any family dog.”

But they have their quirks, she admits. “Geese are not like any other poultry. They know their names – but listen like cats, learn and follow simple commands, understand pointing and love interacting with the more intelligent species, like their people,” she explains. Hopkins adds the breed is not aggressive, except during breeding season and during their “teenage phase,” when they are discovering their place in the flock’s pecking order.

Additionally, she calls American Buffs “somewhat bigoted.”

“They do tend to treat other breeds and species as second-class citizens,

although if raised together and with sufficient space, they get along fine,” she notes. “These geese love to inspect and supervise. They ‘discuss’ matters and operate by committee. They don’t accept change well, so it is best approached gradually, if possible.”

She says when change is introduced, a few geese – usually the same ones time and again – will “file a formal grievance with management.”

Kathy explains: “Apparently they also understand the concept of a union, which I find highly amusing. If they have an issue with something new or different, you can bet that the stewards will address the management about it!”

To raise American Buffs, she said fresh, good-quality feed, pasture or hay is a must, as is protection from the elements. “They are cold-weather birds,” she adds. “Heat and high humidity are very hard on them. Southerners should ensure their birds have fresh, cool water at all times and wet down their sleeping areas to provide a damp, cool place for them to lie. Pay close attention to the heat index.”

She stresses good ventilation including the use of commercial fans designed for moist environments and said the birds’ water should be supplemented with vitamins and electrolytes. “It will help to keep them healthy. I use those



Photo by Kathy Hopkins

Kathy Hopkins’ American Buff goose.

in the winter, especially if the temperatures drop dramatically with little or no warning,” she says.

Where American Buffs’ personalities really shine, is in parenting. A goose will lay 10 to 20 eggs annually and incubate them for 24 to 28 days. Kathy says American Buff geese are “wired for parenthood.” Some will “steal” or adopt goslings from other breeds they believe are not doing a good job in raising their young. They even watch over human children, too, protecting them from harm.

“Ganders do most of the gosling rearing and are very much the heads of families,” she adds. “Although there is a good deal of instinct involved here, they do teach their young how to be good parents as well.”

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