



THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

Conserving rare breeds since 1977
Spring 2024 | Volume 41, Issue 2

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*A Hereford hog from the herd
at Berea College in Kentucky.
Herefords are a conservation
success story, graduating from the
Conservation Priority List in 2024.*



THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

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CHANGES IN THE CONSERVATION PRIORITY LIST FOR 2024



“It’s all about the CPL,” says Alison Martin, program director for The Livestock Conservancy. “Everything we do is based upon the Conservation Priority List.”

That’s why the annual release of the CPL is such a big deal for heritage breed conservation and it’s why hours and hours go into preparing the List. The Livestock Conservancy determines livestock conservation priorities based upon each breed’s annual number of registrations in the United States and its estimated global population, and poultry priorities are established by census every five years. The resulting CPL rankings help the organization target conservation efforts for more than 180 endangered livestock and poultry breeds. It also helps farmers, ranchers, shepherds, homesteaders and backyard enthusiasts across America answer the most common question asked of staff, “Which breed should I raise?”

Things are looking good for heritage breeds in 2024. Nearly all the changes on this year’s CPL are heading in a positive direction.

Meishan Pigs

Thanks to the hard work of an active breed association and dedicated breeders, Meishan pig conservation is a success story this year. The registry recorded the 1000th pig since its formation and registered a record 348 pigs in 2023. As a result, Meishan pigs move from Critical to Threatened. The consumer market for Meishan pork is growing rapidly and supports healthy growth of the breed’s population.

These small but prolific pigs are a super fit for small-scale pork production. First imported to America from China in 1989 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Illinois and Iowa State University for research on their large litter sizes, Meishan pigs were largely unknown to the public for the next two decades.

In 2013, Livestock Conservancy member Rico Silvera began to take an interest in these docile, fast-growing pigs. Silvera secured genetics, working with The Livestock Conservancy. Meishan pigs joined the CPL in 2018 when it became clear they were disappearing

Meishan sows like Pink Lady from Laura Jensen’s Meishan Preservation characteristically have litters of 14-16 piglets.

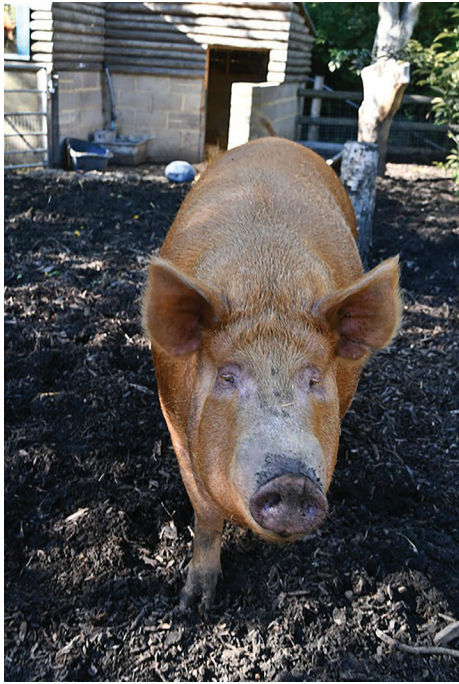
in their native China due to African Swine Fever control measures. These regulations resulted in great population losses of China’s village pigs.

Silvera passed the torch to Conservancy member Laura Jensen and Meishan Preservation in 2020. Interest from other farmers grew as potential for marketing the succulent, marbled Meishan pork became clear. Meishan pig breeders can now be found in more than half the states in the nation, further securing the breed. (For more on Silvera’s efforts, see Page 11.)

Tamworth Pigs

Another heritage pig making a comeback is the Tamworth. Registration numbers now exceed the Watch category, prompting a promotion to the Recovering classification.

Some breeders select for a “production” type of Tamworth popular on small farms and homesteads. Others



Tamworth thrive on pasture and in the woods. In 2024, the breed has moved to Recovering on the CPL.

breed “exhibition” type hogs, and Tamworths have become popular with youth exhibitors. Although numbers are on the rise in the U.S., the same has not been true for Tamworth pigs in the United Kingdom, their country of origin. This makes the U.S. population even more important for global conservation.

Centuries of selection for efficient foraging on pastures and in forests have given bright red Tamworth pigs long heads and strong snouts. Tamworths make excellent “rototillers” on rough pastures or woodland where they clear undergrowth and turn the soil. Long, sturdy legs and sound feet give Tamworth pigs the ability to walk considerable distances. Finer-boned than many pigs, an excellent carcass yields up to 70% due to the high meat-to-bone ratio. Tamworth meat is lean, with good marbling and flavor; the bacon is succulent, fine-grained and meaty, with ribbons of fat.

These hardy pigs are adaptable to a variety of climates. They remain an active breed and do not care to be confined in small areas. They do well in pastures, woodlots and low-input systems where hardiness and reproductive efficiency are desired. Tamworths are sociable and easy to handle. The breed is suitable for beginners and makes an excellent family pig.

Spanish Goats

Spanish goats improve from Threatened to Recovering, a success story for one of several regional American breeds on the CPL. Spanish goats have achieved a secure spot in profitable animal production. The breed is documented as a logical “best choice” for goat meat production through research done by Livestock Conservancy Board Member Dr. Richard Browning of Tennessee State University and others.

Expanding numbers of Spanish goats, especially bloodlines from the Texas Hill Country, make the breed increasingly secure. Large herds in that region have undergone decades of selection for fertility, growth rate and the ability to thrive on range forages. They are a strong reminder that localized herds and flocks, when given careful stewardship, can play an important role in securing a heritage breed.

Other portions of the Spanish goat breed include herds from the Rio Grande Valley and Brush Goats from the Southeast (including the Baylis bloodline and others). The extinction threat for these sub-populations is more precarious than the Texas Hill Country goats. Hopefully, these herds continue to benefit from targeted conservation and selection programs, assuring all bloodlines share in the breed’s success.

Rabbit Populations Multiplying

Dedicated breeders throughout America have been working to improve the conservation status of heritage rabbits on the CPL. Many breeders enjoy exhibiting their rabbits, while others raise rabbits primarily for meat and fur.

Rabbit exhibition counts are an important metric used in The Livestock



Crème D’Argent rabbits improved from Threatened to Watch on the CPL.



Giant Chinchilla rabbits fell from from Watch into the Threatened category.

Conservancy’s census estimates to evaluate breed populations. Although it took a few years for show numbers to bounce back from the COVID shutdown of 2020, last year’s show and registration numbers from the American Rabbit Breeders Association helped place several rabbit breeds into new categories on the CPL. With these changes, there will be NO rabbits in the Critical category in 2024!

Argente Brun, Checkered Giant and **Crème D’Argent** improve from Threatened to the Watch category. Joining them in Watch are **Beveren** rabbits, a fine choice for homestead meat production, which drops down from Recovering status last year. **Blanc de Hotot** and **Silver** rabbit numbers are climbing, moving these two breeds from Critical to Threatened. Silver rabbits date back at least 500 years and may have been developed even earlier. They come in three colors and are known for the silver-white hairs and hair-tips distributed evenly throughout their short coats.

Rhinelanders and **Silver Marten** rabbits have also gained in popularity and will move into Recovering. Rhinelanders have distinctive “calico” markings, large litters and a laid back personality. Silver Martens are making perhaps the biggest “jump” on the CPL, improving from Critical to the last category before graduation off the List. Consider adding this affectionate and docile breed to your home or farm and continue the momentum for this beautiful breed.

American and **Giant Chinchilla** rabbits need more breeders and exhibitors. Both breeds drop from Watch

2024 CONSERVATION PRIORITY LIVESTOCK BREEDS

Critical (C) Breeds with fewer than 200 annual registrations in the United States and an estimated global population less than 2,000. For rabbits, fewer than 50 annual registrations in the U.S., estimated global population less than 500, fewer than 150 recorded at rabbit shows in the previous 5 years, and 10 or fewer breeders.

Threatened (T) Breeds with fewer than 1,000 annual registrations in the U.S. and an estimated global population less than 5,000. For rabbits, fewer than 100 annual registrations in the U.S., and estimated global population less than 1,000, fewer than 300 recorded at rabbit shows in the previous 5 years, and 11-30 breeders.

Watch (W) Breeds that present genetic or numerical concerns or have a limited geographic distribution, with fewer than 2,500 annual registrations in the U.S. and an estimated global population less than 10,000. For rabbits, fewer than 200 annual registrations in the U.S., estimated global population less than 2,000, fewer than 500 recorded at rabbit shows in the previous 5 years, and 31-60 breeders.

Recovering (R) Breeds once listed in another category, but have exceeded Watch category numbers and still need monitoring. For rabbits, more than 500 recorded at rabbit shows in the last 5 years, and more than 60 breeders.



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NORTH AMERICAN BREEDS

CATTLE

American Yak (C)
Milking Devon (C)
Randall or
Randall Lineback (C)
Texas Longhorn - CTLR
(Cattleman's Texas
Longhorn Registry) (C)
Corriente (T)
Florida Cracker (T)
Pineywoods (T)

GOATS

San Clemente
Island (C)
Spanish (R)
Myotonic or
Tennessee
Fainting (R)

PIGS

Choctaw (C)
Mulefoot (C)
Ossabaw Island (C)
Guinea Hog (T)
Red Wattle (T)

RABBITS

American (T)
Giant Chinchilla (T)
American
Chinchilla (W)
Palomino (W)
Silver Fox (R)
Silver Marten (R)

SHEEP

Florida Cracker (C)
Gulf Coast or
Gulf Coast Native (C)
Hog Island (C)
Navajo-Churro (C)
Santa Cruz (C)
Jacob - American (T)
Karakul - American (T)
Romeldale / CVM (T)
Barbados Blackbelly (W)
St. Croix (W)
Tunis (W)

BREEDS IMPORTED BEFORE 1900

CATTLE

Dutch Belted (C)
Heritage Shorthorn - Native* (T)
Red Poll (T)
Guernsey (W)
Dexter (R)
Galloway (R)
Red Devon (R)

*Milking Shorthorns that qualify for the "Native" designation are identified as pure, old line, dual purpose Milking Shorthorns, by the AMSS office.

PIGS

Tamworth (R)

RABBITS

Beveren (W)
Belgian Hare (R)

SHEEP

Cotswold (T)
Dorset Horn (T)
Lincoln (T)
Oxford (W)
Shropshire (W)

BREEDS IMPORTED AFTER 1900

CATTLE

Kerry (C)
Lincoln Red (C)
Ancient White Park (T)
Belted Galloway (W)
Ankole-Watusi (R)

GOATS

Arapawa (C)
Oberhasli (R)

PIGS

Large Black (C)
Gloucestershire
Old Spots (T)
Meishan (T)

RABBITS

Blanc de Hotot (T)
Silver (T)
Standard Chinchilla (T)
Argente Brun (W)
Checked Giant (W)
Creme d'Argent (W)
Lilac (W)
Rhineland (R)

SHEEP

Teeswater (C)
Black Welsh
Mountain (T)
Clun Forest (T)
Leicester Longwool (T)
Soay - British (T)
Wiltshire Horn (W)
Shetland (R)

into the Threatened category. American rabbits come in blue and white varieties. With their large size they are an excellent choice for meat rabbits. The Giant Chinchilla features the same distinctive Chinchilla-like fur of the Standard Chinchilla and American Chinchilla rabbit breeds. Developer Edward Stahl named his ideal doe the “Million Dollar Princess.” Stahl was the first person to make a million dollars in rabbit breeding, and the breed came to be known as the Million Dollar Rabbit. Giant Chinchillas are fast growing and can produce a seven-pound fryer in two months.

Graduations

Endangered heritage breeds graduate from the CPL and are no longer in need of continuous monitoring if annual registrations exceed 5,000 or global numbers exceed 25,000. This success puts these breeds on par with other graduated livestock breeds like Percheron horses (2013) and Wyandotte chickens (2016). The Livestock Conservancy continues to observe these populations, but without the continuous monitoring devoted to CPL breeds.

Having a breed hit this benchmark is always an occasion for celebration because it means the dedication and hard work of breeders have paid off. We are pleased to announce two heritage breed graduations in 2024!

The **Hereford hog** (also pictured on the cover of this *Newsletter*) is prized for its eye-catching color, a deep red, with white trim, as well as its quiet, docile behavior. Beneath the surface of its attractive appearance and temperament lie all the characteristics that make the Hereford hog an increasingly popular



Gentle, attractive Hereford pigs are graduating off the CPL in 2024.



Southdown sheep are graduating off the CPL in 2024.

choice for small-scale production systems and youth projects.

An American breed, the Hereford hog was developed in the Midwest in the early 20th century, resembling Hereford cattle in color and marking. Following a shift away from using purebred hogs in commercial production, the Hereford became quite rare. Only 382 hogs were registered by the American Hereford Hog Record Association in 1982. Today, breeders and enthusiasts have restored the Hereford hog to secure numbers, with well over 5,000 registrations per year.

Herefords are excellent foragers, gaining weight quickly on grass without high grain inputs. They grow faster than most heritage hogs, reaching 200-250 pounds by their sixth month. They also produce high-quality, tasty pork. While this is a breed ideally suited for small family farms, the Hereford hog is adaptable enough to do well in confinement systems, too. Herefords are also a great choice for 4-H or FFA projects, bringing attractive conformation, gentle manners and striking appearance to the show ring.

As with every heritage breed, preserving the traditional functionality of the Hereford hog as a hardy, gentle, good-growing pasture pig remains important. Breeders can further secure the future of production-type Hereford hogs by collaborating with The Livestock Conservancy to cryopreserve tissue samples

with the USDA's National Animal Germplasm Program; email staff member Charlene Couch (page 2) for details. Even as a CPL graduate, these samples are an important long-term safety net, especially with the threat of African Swine Fever.

The conformation, temperament and adaptability of the Hereford hog and its growing appreciation by the public make it a 2024 conservation success story. Congratulations!

Southdown sheep also graduate from the CPL in 2024. As a Downs breed originating in England, they fill dual-purpose roles, providing both delicious lamb and mutton, as well as distinctive wool.

Southdown wool is an excellent choice for socks and mittens as it resists felting, when individual yarn fibers shrink, fuse together and thicken to form a single piece of cloth. The wool can be spun for lofty, warm sweaters and strong, long-lasting blankets. Southdown is one of the few wools from breeds on the CPL that is both machine washable and machine dryable.

Southdown sheep are an excellent choice for homesteads and small farm flocks. They are early maturing and prolific with a lambing rate of about 150 percent, meaning shepherds can typically anticipate a total of three lambs from two pregnancies. They adapt well to a variety of climates including wet regions. Naturally polled with calm and affectionate dispositions, Southdowns are also a popular breed for youth exhibition. This has significantly

2024 CONSERVATION PRIORITY EQUINE BREEDS

Critical (C) Breeds with fewer than 200 annual registrations in the United States and an estimated global population of less than 500.

Threatened (T) Breeds with fewer than 1,000 annual registrations in the U.S. and an estimated global population of less than 5,000.

Watch (W) Breeds that present genetic or numerical concerns or have a limited geographic distribution, with fewer than 2,500 annual registrations in the United States and an estimated global population less than 10,000.

Recovering (R) Breeds once listed in another category, but have exceeded Watch category numbers, and still need monitoring.



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NORTH AMERICAN BREEDS

DONKEYS



American Mammoth Jackstock **(C)**

¹ Each of these breeds has an independent, stand-alone registry and conservation program. Each has also contributed to the Colonial Spanish breed.

² Includes several different registries, each with somewhat different goals (SMR, SSMA, SBHA, AIHR, HOA). Under this umbrella some strains have independent conservation programs and are noted individually.



HORSES

American Cream **(C)**
 Banker¹ **(C)**
 Canadian **(C)**
 Colonial Spanish² * **(C)**
 Florida Cracker¹ **(C)**
 Galiceno¹ **(C)**
 Marsh Tacky¹ **(C)**
 Newfoundland Pony **(C)**
 Puerto Rican Paso Fino **(T)**
 Rocky Mountain/
 Mountain Pleasure **(T)**
 Belgian **(R)**

*Colonial Spanish Strains:
 Baca-Chica **(C)**
 Choctaw **(C)**
 Santa Cruz **(C)**
 Sulphur **(C)**
 Wilbur-Cruce **(C)**

BREEDS IMPORTED BEFORE 1900



HORSES

Cleveland Bay **(C)**
 Hackney Horse **(C)**
 Shire **(C)**
 Suffolk **(C)**
 Clydesdale **(T)**

BREEDS IMPORTED AFTER 1900

DONKEYS



Poitou **(C)**
 Miniature Donkey **(W)**



HORSES

Caspian **(C)**
 Dales Pony **(C)**
 Dartmoor **(C)**
 Exmoor **(C)**
 Fell Pony **(C)**
 Highland Pony **(C)**
 Akhal-Teke **(T)**
 Gotland **(T)**
 Irish Draught **(T)**
 Lipizzan **(T)**

contributed to the more than 5,000 annual registrations.

In the U.S., the conformation of “production” type sheep and “exhibition” type sheep is often different, as is their diet. Shepherds who buy sheep from farms and ranches having similar goals and husbandry practices to their own will have the best early success with Southdown sheep. The same holds true if you’re emphasizing wool production as a priority for your flock; purchase stock from a shepherd with a history of emphasizing wool quality.

The popularity of Southdowns has held steady over the last twenty years. The breed is now the sixth or seventh most popular sheep breed in the U.S. accounting for about 80% of the global population of Southdowns. Significant numbers of Southdowns are also found in England, Australia and France.

While “Old English” or “Babydoll” Southdown sheep are also very popular, they are only distantly related to the full-size Southdown heritage breed. Confusion between these breeds hasn’t held back the popularity of purebred Southdown sheep. Shepherds encourage buyer awareness and educate new breed enthusiasts to purchase only registered stock or wool from registered stock.

The graduation of Southdown sheep off the CPL is a perfect example of the impact of The Livestock Conservancy’s Shave ‘Em to Save ‘Em program. Launched five years ago, this fiber initiative pairs hundreds of heritage breed shepherds like Caroline Crouch of Whitney Hill Farm in New Hampton, New Hampshire with thousands of fiber artists throughout America. These wool purchases directly support heritage

sheep conservation and they are making a difference in saving breeds facing extinction. Southdowns are only the second sheep breed to graduate off the CPL and our first sheep breed to graduate in more than 10 years. Katahdin sheep, a hair breed that doesn’t require shearing, graduated in 2013.

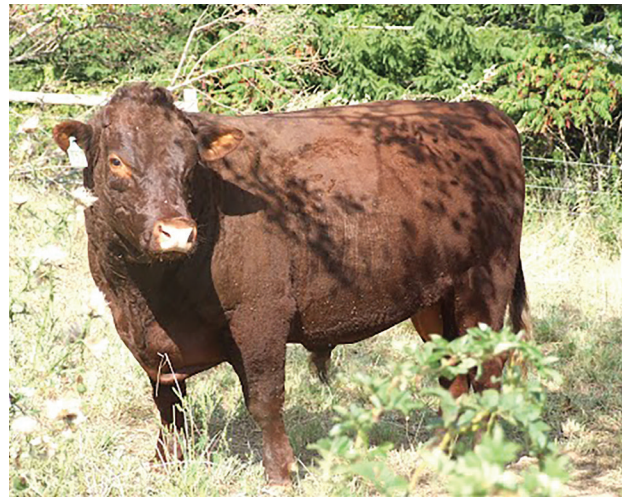
Congratulations to the more than 350 breeders of Southdown sheep in the U.S. on this conservation success. We salute the first wool breed of sheep to graduate from the CPL and sincerely thank enrolled Shave ‘Em to Save ‘Em fiber artists for playing a part in this important accomplishment.

On the Road to Graduation

A few CPL breeds hover on the point of graduation. These merit recognition because increased publicity, greater demand and more breed stewards may well nudge them off the CPL in the next few years.

Silver Fox rabbits, Red Devon cattle, and Myotonic (Tennessee Fainting) goats are well on the path towards secure populations. Each of these heritage breeds is approaching the graduation threshold and for different reasons. They provide strong examples of factors that can help breeds graduate including breeder collaboration, jobs on the farm and breed promotion.

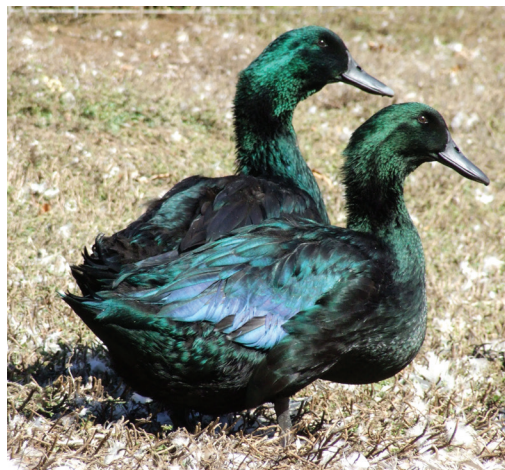
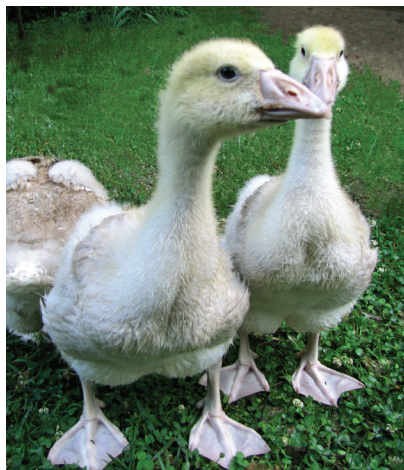
The **Silver Fox** rabbit breed is doing exceptionally well. The population is



Red Devon Cattle (CPL Status: Recovering) perform well on grass.

booming from a surge in interest in the breed for both show and meat production. A 2023 census found a breeding population of over 3,200 rabbits, and more than 700 Silver Fox rabbits have been shown in the past five years. (Learn more about the census on Page 24.) Silver Fox rabbits are an American breed, found nowhere else in the world. Breeders have emphasized selection for growth and body weight, as well as dense fur that characterizes the Silver Fox. Breed stewards are eager to introduce this fine rabbit to more homesteaders, farmers, youth and exhibitors. The Livestock Conservancy recognizes their teamwork and encourages new stewards to consider Silver Fox rabbits in 2024.

Red Devon cattle are an example of successful global heritage breed conservation. Significant populations exist in the U.K. (where they originated), Australia, Brazil and the United States. Each country has a population of roughly



CPL breeds: American Buff goslings (Watch), Cayuga ducks (Watch) and a Sumatra cockerel (Threatened).

2024 CONSERVATION PRIORITY POULTRY BREEDS

Critical (C) Fewer than 500 breeding birds in the United States, with five or fewer primary breeding flocks (50 birds or more), and an estimated global population less than 1,000.

Threatened (T) Fewer than 1,000 breeding birds in the U.S., with seven or fewer primary breeding flocks, and an estimated global population less than 5,000.

Watch (W) Fewer than 5,000 breeding birds in the U.S., with ten or fewer primary breeding flocks, and an estimated global population less than 10,000.

Also included are breeds that present genetic or numerical concerns or have a limited geographic distribution.

Recovering (R) Breeds once listed in another category, but have exceeded Watch category numbers, and still need monitoring.




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NORTH AMERICAN BREEDS

CHICKENS

Cubalaya (C) 
 Holland (C)
 Java (C)
 New Hampshire (T)
 Buckeye (W)
 Chantecler (W)
 Dominique (W)
 Rhode Island White (W)
 Delaware (R)
 Jersey Giant (R)


DUCKS

 Australian Spotted (C)
 Ancona (W)
 Cayuga (W)

GEESE

 Cotton Patch (T)
 Pilgrim (T)
 American Buff (W)

TURKEYS


 Beltsville Small White (T)
 White Holland (T)
 Black (W)
 Bourbon Red (W)
 Bronze (W)
 Narragansett (W)
 Royal Palm (W)
 Slate (W)
 All Other Varieties* (W)

*Varieties that are distinct, but not APA recognized include Chocolate, Jersey Buff, Lavender, Midget White, and other distinct color varieties. Does not include broad-breasted varieties because they are not endangered.

Breed identity in poultry is challenging. Breeders of all kinds, including exhibition, production, and hatchery, are diligent in breeding standard-bred birds. Other breeders sometimes resort to crossbreeding to achieve their goals and promote their birds as standard-bred. The Livestock Conservancy is unable to validate each breeding program, but buyers are encouraged to ask if birds are purebred and meet breed standards.

BREEDS IMPORTED BEFORE 1900


CHICKENS

 Booted Bantam (C)
 La Flèche (C)
 Malay (C)
 Redcap (C)
 White-Faced
 Black Spanish (C)
 Campine (T)
 Dorking (T)
 Hamburg (T)
 Houdan (T)


Langshan (T)
 Modern Game (T)
 Sultan (T)
 Sumatra (T)
 Ancona (W)
 Andalusian (W)
 Belgian Bearded d'Uccle (W)
 Cornish (W)
 Crèvecoeur (W)
 Minorca (W)
 Sebright (W)

Cochin (R)
 Leghorn -
 Non-Industrial (R)
 Polish (R)

DUCKS


 Aylesbury (C)
 Buff or Orpington (W)
 Rouen - Non-Industrial (W)

GEESE

 Pomeranian (C)
 Sebastopol (T)
 African (W)
 Chinese (W)
 Toulouse - Dewlap (W)


BREEDS IMPORTED AFTER 1900

CHICKENS


 Aseel (C)
 Catalana (C)
 Shamo (C)
 Buttercup (T)
 Icelandic (T)
 Japanese Bantam (T)
 Lakenvelder (T)
 Nankin (T)
 Russian Orloff (T)

Yokohama (T)
 Faverolles (W)
 Old English Game (W)
 Phoenix (W)
 Spitzhauben (W)
 Sussex (R)

DUCKS

 Dutch Hookbill (C)
 Magpie (T)
 Saxony (T)
 Campbell (W)
 Silver Appleyard (W)
 Swedish (W)
 Welsh Harlequin (W)
 Runner or
 Indian Runner (R)

GEESE

 Roman (C)
 Shetland (C)
 Steinbacher (C)

2,500–5,000 registered breeding animals, with smaller populations found in a handful of other countries. The global population of Red Devon cattle is now estimated to be 22,000–23,000, making the global threshold of 25,000 needed for graduation an achievable goal in coming years.

Good collaboration exists among breeders in different countries. Nothing highlights this healthy teamwork more clearly than this year's World Devon Congress, which will take place in the U.S. Held every four years since 1980, the World Devon Congress brings together breeders from all over the world to exchange information and visit premier Devon operations in the host country. This year's tour will reach hundreds of farmers and ranchers from Florida to Maine culminating at Plimoth Patuxet Museums with the reenactment of the first animals' arrival at the Plymouth colony. Festivities stretch from April 20 through May 2; additional details can be found at www.reddevonusa.com/World_Congress.

Publicity for this event will attract even more interest in the breed. Could they graduate from the CPL in time for the 2028 World Devon Congress? Plan a visit to a tour stop or the Museums and see if Red Devon cattle might be a fit for your farm, ranch or homestead. Collaboration among Devon cattle breeders extends to **American Milking Devons**. This sister breed now exists only in the U.S and remains at the Critical level on the CPL. The breed is extinct in the U.K., its country of origin. American Milking Devon breeders have participated in planning for the 2024 Congress and Milking Devon cattle breeders will participate



Myotonic (or Tennessee Fainting) goats move to Recovering on the CPL.

in the final celebration of Congress festivities on May 2. The American Milking Devon Cattle Association hopes to attract more breeders in the next few years, because annual registrations are right on the threshold for moving from Critical to Threatened. If you're looking for a tri-purpose cattle breed to provide milk, oxen power and meat, consider this beautiful breed with one of the longest pedigrees in America – 400 years and counting.

Myotonic goats are also known as Tennessee Fainting goats. With more than 4,200 kids registered per year, this heritage breed is well on its way to graduation off the CPL. This sturdy landrace meat goat is characterized by myotonia, a genetic trait that causes their muscles to stiffen when the goats are startled. Myotonia stimulates muscle development, so Myotonic goats have a higher meat to bone ratio than other breeds of meat goats, even though their growth rate is somewhat slower.

Myotonic goats come in a variety of colors, adding interest and beauty to grazing flocks. They also have a reputation for being easier to manage than other meat goat breeds. Multiple registries serve this breed, and reputable breeders emphasize the importance of registering breeding animals.

If you're interested in adding Silver Fox rabbits, Red Devon cattle, or Myotonic goats to your livestock, start with The Livestock Conservancy's online or printed *Directory: Rare Breeds and Products Resource Guide* to locate breeding stock. If you raise these breeds already, keeping your animal information up to date helps potential buyers find your livestock and poultry quickly and easily.

The key for breeds approaching graduation is to "expand the habitat." Just as conservation of endangered species such as native plants, birds and apex predators depends on conserving and expanding the habitats where they thrive, the same is true for the conservation of rare farm animal breeds.

The habitat for livestock and poultry can be a farm, ranch, homestead or backyard. People keeping more animals in more places expands the habitat for an endangered breed. It also spreads the genetics out geographically so breed populations have a larger safety net in the case of disease challenges and natural disasters. These steps enable breed populations to grow and genetic diversity to improve. As a result, heritage breeds become less endangered so they no longer need continuous monitoring and can graduate from the CPL. What can you do to promote or raise a Recovering breed and help them graduate from the CPL?

Every animal needs a job, whether for sport, fiber, companionship, meat, milk, work or even conservation grazing. Giving heritage breeds a purpose, mentoring new breeders, managing populations and promoting the unique strengths of CPL livestock and poultry are the keys to successful conservation efforts for rare and endangered livestock. Active, engaged breeders and breed associations are The Livestock Conservancy's most important partners in this mission. We salute their work and celebrate the successes found in the 2024 Conservation Priority List. ■



CPL breeds: American Mammoth Jackstock donkey (Critical); Narragansett turkey (Watch).

MEISHANS: THE ANCIENT PIGS OF CHINA

“I’ve traveled the world and seen many different varieties of pigs but nothing quite prepared me for the first meeting I had with the Meishan,” explains Jeannette Beranger, senior program manager for The Livestock Conservancy. “They are what The Livestock Conservancy would call an ‘extreme phenotype’ meaning they really look different from anything else in the pig world.” The distinctive wrinkles and floppy ears can never be confused with any other breed in the U.S.

The Meishan story begins in the northern Shanghai province of China where swine have been domesticated for over 5,000 years. They are part of a group of pig breeds locally known as “Taihu,” named after a lake in the region. Meishan have been valued for their meat and lard for millennia but their most coveted production trait is their ability to produce enormous litters of piglets. When sows fully mature they can produce 14-16 piglets per litter; it was not uncommon to deliver litters of 20 or more in well-bred stock.

Subsequently, breeds like the Meishan were sought to influence and improve some European breeds including the Large Black. The floppy ears and large litter sizes of the Large Black clearly show the influence of early improvement from what was called “Oriental” pigs such as the Meishan.

Meishans stand out among pig breeds in another way. They become sexually mature as early as three or four months of age whereas most pigs mature around six months of age. Because of the rapid maturity, it’s important to separate the sexes early to ensure accidental breedings don’t occur. Even though they can become pregnant at an early age, it’s best to wait a bit longer until sows are larger and better able to reach their full reproductive potential.

“Some may think they are not the most beautiful pig in the world,” continues Beranger. “But Rico Silvera of God’s Blessing Farm in Sweetwater, Tennessee argues that once you appreciate the gentle temperament, manageable size and production potential you will soon become hooked



Rico Silvera of Sweetwater, Tennessee was instrumental in saving the genetics of the Meishan hog breed.

as he did years ago. Rico was kind enough to provide my first introduction to the Meishan pig.”

“They are a great pig for people afraid of pigs. They are extremely gentle and prefer a peaceful lifestyle,” he explains. “Meishans were first imported to the U.S. in 1989 after 10 years of negotiations with China. They were brought in as part of a joint study between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Iowa State University and the University of Illinois. Only 99 Meishan pigs were imported and they were equally divided (both by sex and genetic profile) between the three participating research facilities. This marked the third, final, and largest exportation of Meishans allowed by China in modern times.”

Today, Meishan research has ended in all three facilities. And breeding stock is held by private farmers throughout America.

Silvera found the last of the purebred Meishans that remained from Chinese imports. He started a conservation breeding program and developed a network of breeders to steward the breed. Through his work, The American Meishan Breeders Association was incorporated in 2016 and a herdbook was developed with the help of Mountain Niche Web services.

Meishans have existed for millennia but, beginning in 2018, African Swine Fever devastated the breed population in China. Today, however, their fate is more promising.

“Fewer than 2,000 verifiably pure Meishans were in the world just a few years ago,” explains Beranger. Just seven years after being designated for “Study” by The Livestock Conservancy, Meishan pigs are improving from “Critical” to “Threatened” on the Conservation Priority List.

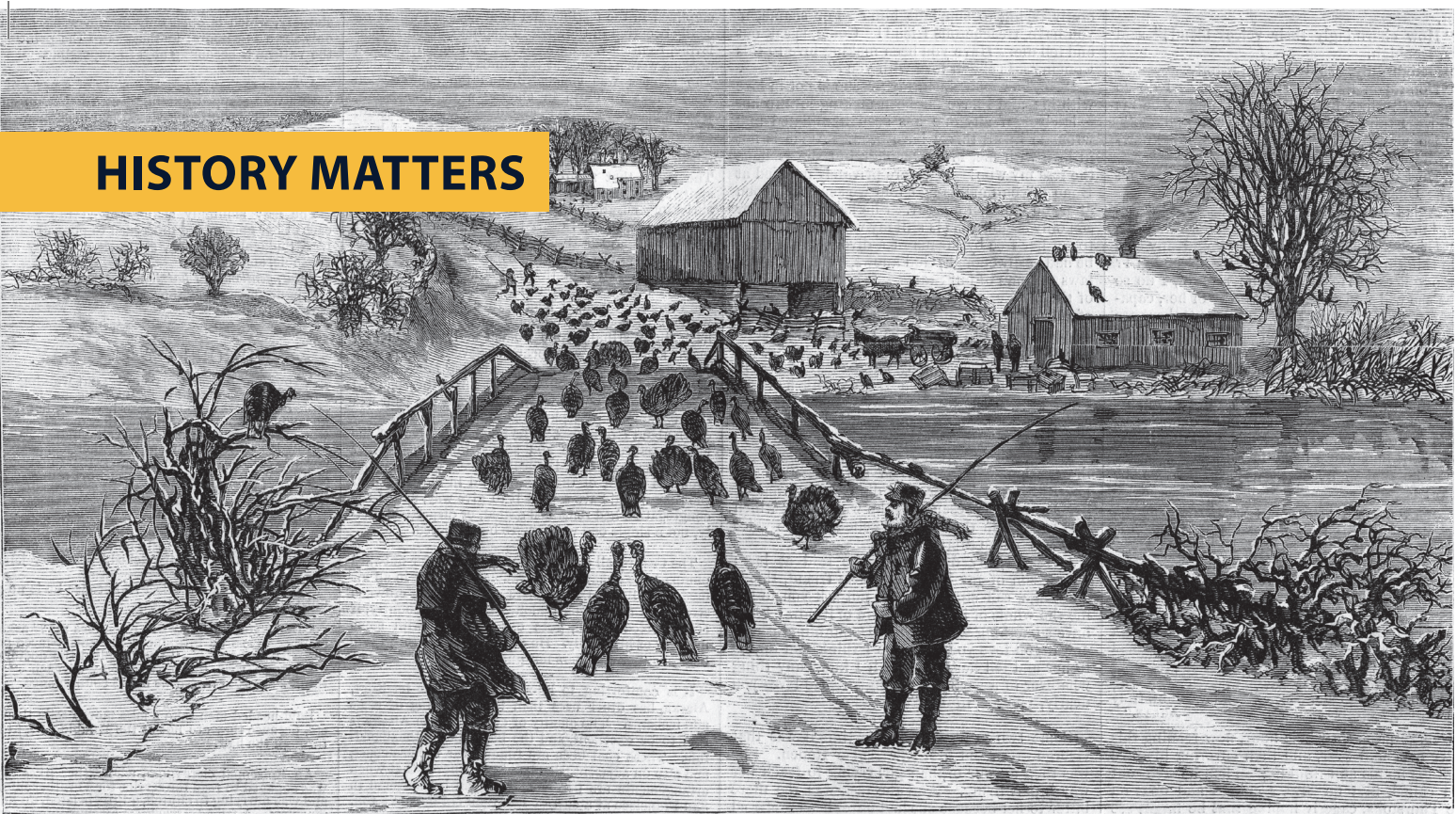
Laura Jensen of Loganville, Georgia has played a key role in promoting the Meishan breed since Silvera dispersed his herd, mainly to her. Jensen Reserve Farm focuses on breeding stock, as well as marketing pasture-raised Meishan pork products. “The new name in premium cuts, the Meishan is making a huge splash in the culinary world,” she says. Visit www.jensenreserve.com to sample bacon, sausage, chops, prosciutto, pancetta and more from this heritage breed.

A 2020 Livestock Conservancy microgrant recipient, Jensen and her husband Bill improved fencing and pig grow-out areas with their grant, increasing the number of breeding pigs on their farm. She has also appeared as a guest on our Marketing Monday video series; view the episode for free on our YouTube channel at <https://bit.ly/YouTube-Jensen>.

“With Meishans you can do more with fewer pigs,” Silvera knows. “That’s great if you don’t have the space for a large herd of breeding animals.” He also is a firm believer that “small farms are the most effective reservoir for protecting rare genetics.”

Dedicated breeders like Jensen continue conserving the ancient Meishan breed for today’s homesteaders and culinary fans. The Livestock Conservancy salutes and thanks these master breeders as we celebrate their hard work and conservation success reflected on the 2024 Conservation Priority List. ■

HISTORY MATTERS



DRIVING TURKEYS TO THE PICKING-HOUSE.

Why is history an important part of conservation? Understanding our past helps us understand change. We explore diverse perspectives, learn from mistakes, and find inspiration for charting our future.

Historians were a key part of the group that came together in the mid-1970s with a common concern for the fate of America's traditional livestock breeds. Those partnerships continue today with Plimoth Patuxet Museums, Grassmere Farm, Conner Prairie, and George Washington's Mount Vernon because heritage breeds help tell the stories of these places and the people who lived there. Heritage breeds are living history people who may have never set foot upon a farm or ranch can see, touch, and experience first-hand.

The livestock we now know as heritage breeds were instrumental to change in America. When we study the lives and struggles of colonists, pioneers, native communities, and trailblazers, we witness the vital role heritage breeds played. These livestock and poultry shaped our past and we're working hard to ensure they are also a key part of our future.

The Livestock Conservancy defines heritage breeds as those traditional livestock and poultry breeds raised by our ancestors; most have deep histories in the United States and are in danger of extinction. These are the animals many of

Picture cattle drives – a key element in many Western and cowboy movies – but replace the steers with turkeys and supplant the cowboys with farmers. Sound far-fetched? It's not. Turkey drives were common in the early 1800s.

To get their birds to market in the days before truck transportation, farmers would walk their turkeys dozens, if not hundreds, of miles to railheads or other facilities. For these trips, drovers put bells around the necks of the more dominant birds to aid in herding the turkeys.

At the end of the day, they would drive the bell-wearing dominant birds into the trees to perch for the night. The rest of the flock followed suit. After a night of sleep, the dominant birds would be the first to get out of trees, the bells alerting the drovers that the flock was ready to continue their journey.

Below, a turkey bell.

us would find on our great-grandparents' farms. Unfortunately, most heritage breeds also are endangered because the industrialization of agriculture and the urbanization of society means fewer people are raising heritage livestock and poultry today. Sadly, the uniformity of popular breeds is increasing, especially at the genetic level.

For heritage breeds, history shapes their identity. Many heritage breeds, like Akhal-Teke horses and Navajo-Churro sheep, have played vital roles in both international and domestic human cultures. Today, these breed histories provide a strong foundation for a thriving community of farmers, ranchers, shepherds, homesteaders and backyard enthusiasts devoted to their care.

"The Livestock Conservancy takes our role as curator of breed histories very



seriously,” says Alison Martin, program director. “That’s why we explore, research, analyze, partner, and emphasize breed histories.” Archives, books, artwork, photographs, oral histories from master breeders and even artifacts are just a few of our tools. “We know the value of history as it supports and expands science-based conservation efforts.”

Different breeds have different historical influences.

Landraces are local populations of animals consistent enough to be considered breeds while still displaying varieties in appearance. “Individual landrace breeds are unique due to founder effect, isolation, and environmental adaptation,” explains D. Philip Sponenberg, technical advisor.

Founder effects are the result of the specific group of animals that moved with humans to a new area. These “founder” animals provide the entire genetic base of the descendant population. Sponenberg adds, “One example is how Texas Longhorn, Florida Cracker, and Pineywoods cattle all descend from a few hundred Spanish cattle brought to the New World beginning in 1493.” Today, because of founder effects and geographic separation, the genetics of the three breeds are distinct. The diversity in appearance of these breeds is also breathtaking. Understanding the history of Spanish colonization along with the farmers and ranchers who followed is an important part of each breed’s history.



A Texas cattle herd fords a stream in this image from an 1867 Harper’s Weekly.



“Molly Moggs and the Vicar,” a 19th century work by British painter Thomas Rowlandson features a barnyard scene.

Breeds once considered feral also appear on the Conservation Priority List today.

“Domestic animals that escaped or were released into the wild reproduced and adapted to local environments,” explains Martin. “Their histories include decades of isolation which allowed them to thrive uniquely without human management.” Ossabaw Island swine and San Clemente Island goats are two examples. Knowing the history of their environments and the lack of human intervention helps define these populations as heritage breeds.

Knowing donkeys evolved in the deserts of the Middle East and North Africa helps us understand why their hardiness today far exceeds most other domestic species. Knowing geese were historically used as weeders in cotton fields and orchards help The Livestock Conservancy promote breeds like the Cotton Patch goose for today’s farmers.

History can also be a useful asset for marketing a heritage breed for consumers. Spanish goats are providing meat for ethnic urban markets. Delaware chickens, Bourbon Red turkeys, and Pilgrim geese have unique geographic appeal based on the history of their development in specific areas of the United States. “Breeds like these that are unique to North America are our highest conservation priorities,” notes Sponenberg.

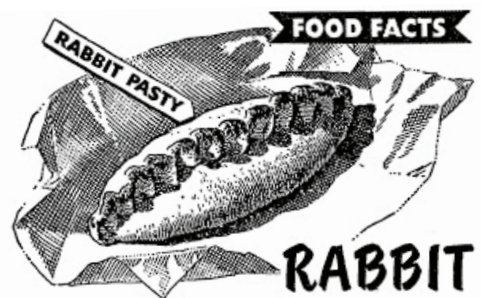
“In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand only what we have been taught.”

— Baba Dioum, a Senegalese conservationist quoted in E. O. Wilson’s *The Diversity of Life*.

The knowledge of a breed’s geographic history is also vital for the success of conservation breeders. Regional and climate adaptations make heritage breeds uniquely suitable for sustainable forage-based production systems. Many breeds have spent hundreds of years adapting to the heat, humidity and parasites of challenging climates. The result? Amazing hardiness with pedigrees that stretches back centuries.

Sometimes history even makes us chuckle. Which CPL rabbit breed was named from suggestions dropped into a coffee can during the 1952 American Rabbit Breeders Association convention? Hint: it’s golden in color. And which German-named CPL rabbit breed used a Japanese buck for development? You’ll find the answers when you explore the rabbit breed abstracts on The Livestock Conservancy’s website at www.livestockconservancy.org.

History matters, especially in heritage livestock and poultry conservation. These breeds are part of America’s common memory. What can you do to make sure they are here for the America 250 celebration in 2026 and beyond? ■



solves the packed lunch problem

An advertisement promoting rabbit as a great meat choice during World War II.

VOTE NOW: BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

The Livestock Conservancy operates under the authority of a volunteer board of directors, selected by members of the organization, as an Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 not-for-profit entity. Board members are charged with oversight of The Livestock Conservancy. They are required to participate in several virtual and in-person meetings during the year. They also guide the organization in strategic planning, review budgets and financial matters, support fundraising and monitor programs and operations.

Candidates are nominated by the Governance Committee and elected by the voting membership to serve three-year terms with the option to be re-elected for a second term.

Voting members must be in good standing for at least six months prior to the vote. At least 60 voting members are required for a valid vote. Each voting member should cast their vote for or against each candidate individually; if the number of votes for the candidate exceeds the number against, the candidate is elected.

Members may choose to cast their ballot electronically or by submitting a paper ballot via the U.S. Postal Service. Instructions for both options follow.

Members who would like to suggest a Livestock Conservancy member to serve on the board of directors in the future can email info@livestockconservancy.org or phone 919-542-5704.

2024 DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

Board members make a significant impact on the conservation of heritage livestock and poultry. Member votes each year also play a vital role in saving endangered breeds and in the future of the organization.

In 2024, the following three members are nominated to fill three seats on the board. All are seeking their first term on the board. Please learn more about the candidates and vote for individuals who will help lead The Livestock Conservancy for the next three years. ■



Derrick Coble, Ph.D.

Derrick Coble, Ph.D. is the swine specialist and geneticist at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. His research characterizes the effects of microbial and environmental stressors on gene expression in pigs. He is interested in the impacts of alternative finishing diets on production traits, and is currently studying the effects of heat stress on Berkshire pigs grown in hoop house systems vs. indoor production. He has also launched a "Swine School" to help tobacco farmers improve the profitability of their farms by transitioning to breeding and raising Berkshire pigs in hoop houses or on pasture.

Coble heads the NC A&T swine group. He works closely with the North Carolina Pork Council and the National Pork Board to serve the pork producers, both large scale and small scale. He serves as the co-lead for Training and Research for the Real Pork Trust Consortium of the National Pork Board, to conduct research and connect farmers and consumers with science-based knowledge about raising pigs, consuming pork, and caring for the planet. Coble earned his doctorate in genetics from Iowa State University, where he conducted research on immune responses in chickens.



Emily Hayes

Emily Hayes is a research associate at Tennessee State University. She works alongside Professor Richard Browning Jr. analyzing performance traits in goats that are raised for meat. Hayes also focuses on the study of heat-tolerant genetics in small-framed cattle. Though she did not come from a traditional farming background, she discovered a passion for working with livestock during high school where she was a member of FFA. Hayes holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Tennessee Martin and a master's degree in animal science from TSU, where she wrote her thesis on the "Influence of Creep Feeding on Kid Growth and Dam Health in Multiple Meat Goat Breeds and Their Crosses."

Hayes has many years of experience with Spanish and Myotonic goats as well as Dexter cattle. She also enjoys assisting livestock producers through university extension programs and conducting genetics research with a variety of livestock species.

A lifelong Murfreesboro, Tennessee resident, Hayes lives with her husband, John (better known as Slugger), her infant son, Jensen, and a Stephens Cur-Black Labrador mix dog named Chata Ofi, in honor of the Choctaw Nation Reservation, where she found him while on a research trip gathering DNA from Choctaw hogs.



Jan Southers, DVM

Jan Southers, her husband and two daughters raise Gulf Coast sheep on their farm in Georgia. She says she grew up as something of a gypsy living in nine different states and more than 16 different cities, some of them more than once. Southers also spent three years in Egypt before settling in Georgia 21 years ago. She earned her doctorate in veterinary medicine at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. After, she completed a residency in primate medicine at the University of California-Davis. She served as an officer in the Public Health Service of the National Institutes of Health. Marriage, children and living outside the country changed her career direction, leading her to become a self-described "homeschool mom, farm wife and flock mistress."

Southers began working in fiber arts as a result of being a shepherd. She and her husband, who is also the flock's shearer, have selected breeding stock for the best wool the Gulf Coast sheep can offer. They are also pursuing color in their flock. Their farm includes a few Nubian dairy goats, a couple of horses, half a dozen Muscovy ducks and a few Guinea fowl. They recently added Blue Australorp chickens to the egg-laying flock. Southers serves on the board of the Georgia Sheep and Wool Growers Association. She is a member of the wool marketing committee for the Gulf Coast Sheep Breeders Association and is a member of the National Ladies Homestead Gathering.

BALLOT

Eligible members of The Livestock Conservancy may cast one ballot per membership, for or against each board candidate. Members may cast a ballot for up to three candidates.

Vote in one of two ways. Return this mail-in ballot to our Pittsboro, North Carolina office with a postmark no later than **May 15, 2024**. Or vote online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TLCVote2024>. You may also navigate to online voting by scanning the QR code below with your smartphone.

Name: _____

I attest that I have been a member of The Livestock Conservancy for 6 months or more and I would like to vote for the following people to fill open seats on the Board of Directors:

DERRICK COBLE

___ For ___ Against ___ Abstain

EMILY HAYES

___ For ___ Against ___ Abstain

JAN SOUTHERS

___ For ___ Against ___ Abstain



Mail paper ballots to
The Livestock Conservancy, PO Box 477,
Pittsboro, NC 27312 no later than **May 15, 2024**.

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MAKING IT COUNT: SILVER FOX RABBIT CENSUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

with rabbit registration and show numbers provided by ARBA, the 2023 Silver Fox Census clearly demonstrated the breed is truly growing toward graduation from the CPL.

When a breed is in the Recovering category, like Silver Fox rabbits, breed clubs and associations can play a significant role by developing a promotional plan to attract more breeders and taking steps to educate new breeders about conservation breeding. Other steps may be useful to some breeds, such as assessment of genetic relatedness. This may be accomplished by herdbook analysis for pedigreed animals or a DNA study for unpedigreed animals.

The goal is to have lots of carefully bred, thriving flocks with well-distributed genetic diversity.

“When it comes to conservation breeding, often it’s the long-time breeders who know their breed the best. Finding ways to share the hard-won knowledge of decades of breeding helps keep new breeders from getting discouraged and maintains the genetic integrity of the breed,” explains Alison Martin, program director for The Livestock Conservancy.

Brown and the National Silver Fox Rabbit Club are committed to promotion and mentorship; it should take just

The Silver Fox is truly a multi-purpose breed, a great fit for homesteaders or urban farmers raising rabbits for meat and fur or for those who enjoy perfecting their rabbits for the show table. Silver Fox rabbits are known for their docile and gentle nature. The young are born either solid black or blue and begin to show silvering of their fur at about 4 weeks. The silvering process takes four months to complete. The fur is one of the most attractive and unusual features of the breed. It is extremely dense and 1 1/2 to 2 inches in length. When the fur is stroked from tail to head, it will stand straight up until stroked in the opposite direction. This trait is found in no other breed and greatly resembles the pelt of the silver fox of the Arctic.



a little more push from producers and exhibitors to bump up Silver Fox numbers so the breed will no longer be endangered.

“Vernon Brown’s efforts illustrate the impact just one person can have on building and encouraging an active community of fellow breeders to collaborate to save a breed,” notes The Livestock Conservancy’s Senior Program Manager Charlene Couch. “Just imagine if every breed organization on the Conservation Priority List had a Vernon Brown in their ranks! His leadership and spirited efforts are something we can all strive to emulate.”

Because of this work, The Livestock Conservancy is now establishing new criteria for graduation of heritage rabbit breeds OFF the Conservation Priority List. Brown’s involvement will continue as he and the club will be working closely with Conservancy staff to develop next steps for the Silver Fox rabbit.

“Silver Fox rabbits may very soon be removed from the list as a rare breed, but they should never stop being cherished and stewarded as a precious Heritage Breed,” says Brown. ■

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www.frontiermuseum.org

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Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo

Bridgeport, CT
www.beardsleyzoo.org

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Florida Agricultural Museum

Palm Coast, FL
www.floridaagmuseum.org

Heritage Breeds including Florida Cracker cattle, Florida Cracker sheep and Florida Cracker horses



Philadelphia Zoo

Philadelphia, PA
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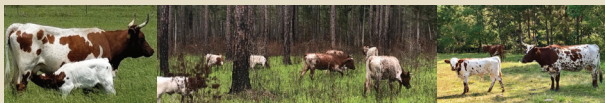
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Livestock Conservancy Microgrants support the efforts of farmers, ranchers, breed clubs and associations who are working with any of the breeds on the Conservation Priority List to preserve genetic diversity in endangered breeds. See livestockconservancy.org/resources/micro-grant-program.



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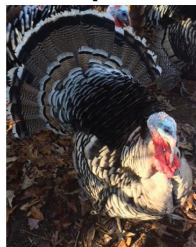
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DATED MATERIAL

MAKING IT COUNT: SILVER FOX RABBIT CENSUS

Longtime Livestock Conservancy member and Silver Fox rabbit breeder Vernon Brown exemplifies the passion of rare breed stewards. Brown also shows the impact just one person can have on heritage breed conservation.

He operates Brownie's Bunnies in Kingsville, Maryland and is an elected National Silver Fox Rabbit Club board member. Involved with The Livestock Conservancy and heritage breed conservation for more than 20 years, Brown is passionate about building community among rabbit enthusiasts. He shared his enthusiasm as a 2021 guest on the organization's "Rabbit Chat," a YouTube program (available at bit.ly/Silver-Fox-Rabbit-Chat) and continues to promote the breed as administrator of the Mid-Atlantic Silver Fox Breeders Facebook group. Through social media he enthusiastically promotes Silver Fox rabbits and mentors newer breeders of the rabbits, listed as Recovering on the Conservation Priority List.

Because he noted the growth in numbers of Silver Fox rabbits at shows over the last few years, Brown and his fellow breeders were eager to see just how close the Silver Fox might be to graduation, and what additional steps they could take to achieve this



Vernon Brown

milestone. Brown decided to conduct a census of Silver Fox rabbits. These animal-by-animal counts are priceless for heritage breed conservation, but, due to the significant time required, they are often only conducted at critical points in a breed's history. The last official numbers The Livestock Conservancy had for Silver Fox were from 2019.

Following advice from The Livestock

Conservancy, and using a short online video encouraging breeders to participate, Brown launched a Silver Fox census. More than 270 breed stewards championed the census, reporting data including:

- Number of breeding bucks and does
- Number of offspring per year
- Average flock size
- Membership in the Silver Fox Rabbit Club, American Rabbit Breeders Club and The Livestock Conservancy
- Whether breeders are maintaining breeding records
- Flock purpose including exhibition, meat and fur

- Whether breeders consume or sell meat from their rabbits
- Number of Silver Fox breeders who responded to the survey

Brown discovered survey participants had produced a whopping 16,000 Silver Fox kits in the previous twelve months! More importantly, he documented more than 3300 breeding rabbits across the U.S., breeding rabbits for a variety of purposes. The data expanded The Livestock Conservancy's population estimates with highly accurate detail. Combined



Silver Fox rabbits move to Recovering on the CPL thanks to efforts including an extensive breed census.

Continued on page 16

Discover, Secure and Sustain: Three Steps to Save a Breed

Saving heritage breeds requires multiple steps summarized as discover, secure and sustain. Failure in any one of them increases the threat of extinction. The Livestock Conservancy has found these steps useful in breed rescue and conservation. Each step has specific tasks and specific pitfalls that must be avoided for successful conservation.

Discover is the first important link in the chain. “Discover” means finding rare breeds in the fields, woods, barns and ranches where they have quietly survived for generations. Discovery is most dramatic, and most essential, for landraces and feral populations. Sometimes they just pop up, walking out of the woods or waiting patiently along a fence row. Other times they are noticed as part of a system using more recognizable rare breeds. Frequently they are discovered when someone mentions “the old guy down the road with some interesting animals.”

After Discovery comes assessment. It takes research to determine if the newly discovered animals might in fact “be something.” The assessment depends on context, the place and history of both people and the animals involved. Assessment also requires a good visual inspection. Does the herd or flock reflect the history of origin? Is there a consistency of breed type across all the animals? Does the history fit what is seen in the animals, and does it fit the area? Do the animals fit the biological definition of a breed?

Answers to these basic questions determine if a new breed has indeed

been *discovered*; this happens very, very rarely. Often, a previously unknown herd or flock of a rare breed has instead surfaced. While this is also a rare occurrence, it’s more common than discovering an overlooked breed. A census and documentation of characteristics occurs at this stage, too. Obvious external features and subtle adaptive traits are included. These elements can mean the difference between surviving in compromised environments or not. At this stage, DNA analysis helps assess the significance of a newly discovered population.

The **Secure** step requires science, politics, collaboration and a hefty portion of luck. The goal of the “secure” link in the chain is to prevent further genetic erosion. Setting up a plan encourages breeders to conserve all the genetic diversity found within the breed. Determining the breed population structure is the first step. How is each herd or flock related to the others? How are the animals related to each other? Oral history and human movement answer these questions.

Pedigrees, when kept, contribute significantly to understanding breed structure. Molecular or DNA analysis can help in the Secure phase, as well as in the Discovery phase. Breed strategies are devised that maintain bloodlines but protect against the loss of health from inbreeding.

Securing a population requires people to work together. Breeders may come together by tradition but also by excitement and novelty. To be successful, breeders must work together to save the animals in the same environment and culture where they were developed. Sometimes collaboration is possible sometimes it is not. Breed associations, registries, promotion and marketing all result from this human collaboration.

Sustain, the third link in the chain is where a breed can take off and succeed. The breed has been secured genetically population structure and genetic variation has been stabilized. With smart thinking, patience, and

respectful cooperation, breeds can grow into valued components of our agricultural and food systems.

During the “Sustain” step, we see new people become interested in the breed. They need to be educated in husbandry, breeding, and genetic resource management to manage the breed’s secure future. They need information about navigating regulatory issues of converting living animals to human food and help learning to market their products. New stewards often bring enthusiasm and fresh ideas to this critical but potentially troublesome aspect of breed promotion.

Both new and seasoned breeders need help at this stage planning all the stages a breeder goes through in a lifetime working with a breed. Strategies for herd reduction or liquidation are frequently overlooked. Planning helps ensure the breed doesn’t slip back into the perilous stage before “Discover” and “Secure” brought it from the brink of an obscure slide into extinction.

The Livestock Conservancy has used these three steps for more than 45 years to help breeders save endangered breeds of livestock and poultry. And they work. In more than four decades, no breed listed on the Conservation Priority List has gone extinct.

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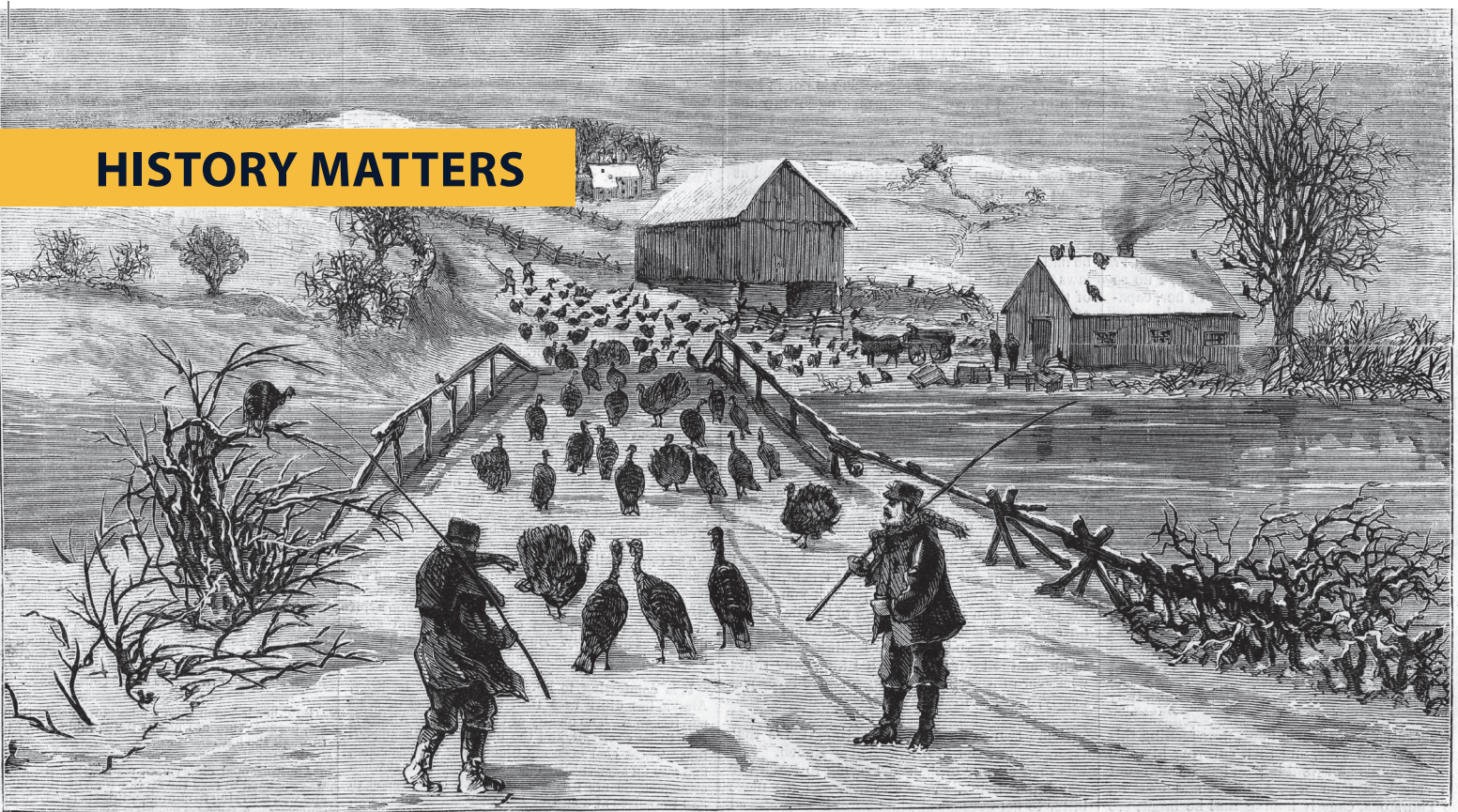
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HISTORY MATTERS



DRIVING TURKEYS TO THE PICKING-HOUSE.

Why is history an important part of conservation? Understanding our past helps us understand change. We explore diverse perspectives, learn from mistakes, and find inspiration for charting our future.

Historians were a key part of the group that came together in the mid-1970s with a common concern for the fate of America's traditional livestock breeds. Those partnerships continue today with Plimoth Patuxet Museums, Grassmere Farm, Conner Prairie, and George Washington's Mount Vernon because heritage breeds help tell the stories of these places and the people who lived there. Heritage breeds are living history people who may have never set foot upon a farm or ranch can see, touch, and experience first-hand.

The livestock we now know as heritage breeds were instrumental to change in America. When we study the lives and struggles of colonists, pioneers, native communities, and trailblazers, we witness the vital role heritage breeds played. These livestock and poultry shaped our past and we're working hard to ensure they are also a key part of our future.

The Livestock Conservancy defines heritage breeds as those traditional livestock and poultry breeds raised by our ancestors; most have deep histories in the United States and are in danger of extinction. These are the animals

Picture cattle drives – a key element in many Western and cowboy movies – but replace the steers with turkeys and supplant the cowboys with farmers. Sound far-fetched? It's not. Turkey drives were common in the early 1800s.

To get their birds to market in the days before truck transportation, farmers would walk their turkeys dozens, if not hundreds, of miles to railheads or other facilities. For these trips, drovers put bells around the necks of the more dominant birds to aid in herding the turkeys.

At the end of the day, they would drive the bell-wearing dominant birds into the trees to perch for the night. The rest of the flock followed suit. After a night of sleep, the dominant birds would be the first to get out of trees, the bells alerting the drovers that the flock was ready to continue their journey.



many of us would find on our great-grandparents' farms. Unfortunately, most heritage breeds also are endangered because the industrialization of agriculture and the urbanization of society means fewer people are raising heritage livestock and poultry today. Sadly, the uniformity of popular breeds is increasing, especially at the genetic level.

For heritage breeds, history shapes their identity. Many heritage breeds, like Akhal-Teke horses and Navajo-Churro

sheep, have played vital roles in both international and domestic human cultures. Today, these breed histories provide a strong foundation for a thriving community of farmers, ranchers, shepherds, homesteaders and backyard enthusiasts devoted to their care.

"The Livestock Conservancy takes our role as curator of breed histories very