



2025 Livestock Conservancy Annual Report

The Livestock Conservancy focuses our efforts on America's 180+ most critically endangered farm animal breeds. A small staff and a large network of 4,500+ volunteer farmers, ranchers, shepherds, and homesteaders safeguard a precious genetic resource developed over hundreds of years. Included in our mission are heritage breeds of donkeys, cattle, goats, horses, sheep, pigs, rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys.

Since 1986, we've researched, published, and promoted our annual Conservation Priority List (CPL) to call attention to heritage breeds at risk of extinction. And we've become America's leading organization working to protect rare livestock and poultry; *no one else is doing the work we do*. But, more importantly, no breed listed on the CPL has ever been lost to extinction. In fact, 14 heritage breeds have graduated OFF of the CPL in the past 12 years, including **Percheron horses**, **Highland cattle**, and **Plymouth Rock chickens**. You can view the full list [here](#).



Southdown sheep and **Hereford hogs** graduated in 2024, and the conservation status improved for ten additional breeds. In 1982, only 382 hogs were registered by the American Hereford Hog Record Association; today, more than 5,000 hogs are registered each year.



Livestock Conservancy staff work on the CPL throughout the year, monitoring opportunities, threats, and new successes. Last year, we conducted an animal-by-animal count of **Gulf Coast sheep**, and for the first time in our non-profit's history, we're developing criteria for graduating rabbit breeds off the CPL. A census conducted by an

Silver Fox breeder documented an American breeding population of over 3,200 rabbits. This recovering breed is well on its way to graduation.

While the CPL is the heart of our 48-year-old mission, it's not the only tool in our conservation toolbox thanks to generous donors, partners, members, and friends like you.

Microgrant applications closed in 2024 with a record high of 189 proposals reflecting growing interest in our conservation mission. Judging is conducted by 60 animal science professionals and volunteers, and Microgrants have now been awarded in two-thirds of the states in America. We are especially proud that, since the program's launch in 2018, over one-third of our microgrants have supported youth - like Tilly Donohoe (pictured) - who are working with heritage breeds. That's a vital investment in the heritage breed stewards of tomorrow.



The Livestock Conservancy now manages 11 registries and herdbooks, offering an essential conservation tool for thousands of animals across the U.S. Over the past year, we have launched a fully online registration system that increases efficiency and gives owners remote access. This improved accessibility has led to more heritage breed animals being registered, strengthening their value within breeding populations. *In one 18-month period alone, our staff processed 5,447 transactions—an average of over 300 per month.*



Cryopreservation is another key conservation tool, and creating a genetic safety net remains an important goal for many of our heritage breeds. The Livestock Conservancy collected **Tunis** and **Horned Dorset sheep** (pictured) DNA in Vermont. The growing threat of avian influenza has also accelerated germplasm collection efforts for chicken varieties on the CPL. Cryopreservation of breeds found only in North America is important because if they are lost here, they are gone for good from the world. These breeds include **Milking Devon cattle**, **Hog Island**, and **Leicester Longwool sheep**. Our goal is to amass a cryopreserved collection of 60 unrelated animals representing all

bloodlines to fully secure a breed. Of the 56 breeds of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs on our livestock CPL, only 10 have reached this goal and stored adequate samples to reconstitute the population if needed. Only one of the 48 chicken breeds is well-represented.

Unfortunately, today's disease threats are not limited to poultry.

More than half of the pig breeds on the CPL are found only in the US. The Livestock Conservancy received a grant last fall to secure heritage pig genetics against the anticipated arrival of African Swine Fever within the continental United States. The grant will preserve samples from American pig breeds, including **Mulefoot**, **American Guinea hog**, **Red Wattle**, and **Ossabaw Island** (pictured). Very few samples from these heritage pigs are currently held by the USDA's National Animal Germplasm Program (NAGP), our cryopreservation storage partner.



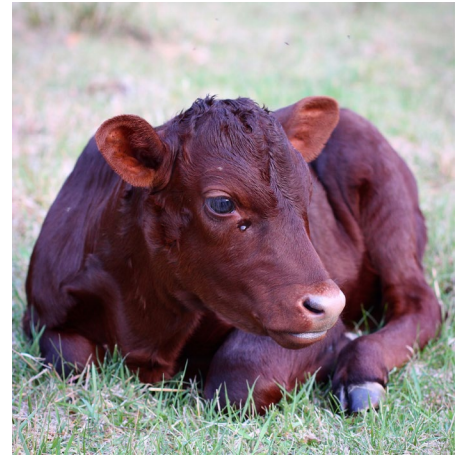
History also plays an important role in heritage breed conservation, and The Livestock Conservancy continues to support research at the University of Oklahoma of the ancestral DNA of the **Choctaw hog**. This project assesses how Choctaw communities incorporated pigs into their society in the mid-18th century. We hope to learn more about indigenous domestication practices and the impact of early colonial interactions on the origins and genetic history of this critically endangered breed. Outcomes will also promote the food security of today's indigenous peoples of Oklahoma and their neighbors.



A pilot project to restore heritage turkeys to the Southeastern states partnered with the American Turkey Association and the TN Valley Poultry Club. We focused on “training the trainers” by educating county extension agents so they could share resources and educational materials with local farmers. Our book *Selecting Your Best Turkeys for Breeding* serves as the primary teaching material. Heritage turkeys, such as the **Bourbon Red**,

can provide a great income stream for producers of all sizes of flocks with the guaranteed holiday market.

Devon cattle celebrated their 400th anniversary in North America in 2024, at the World Devon Congress celebration at Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. These cattle played key roles in American history and is represented on the CPL by both **Red Devon** and **Milking Devon** breeds. Small farmers today continue to raise both breeds. Red Devon cattle have found a home with niche producers of grassfed beef and Milking Devon cattle remain true to their all-rounder origins with families raised for oxen, dairy, and meat.

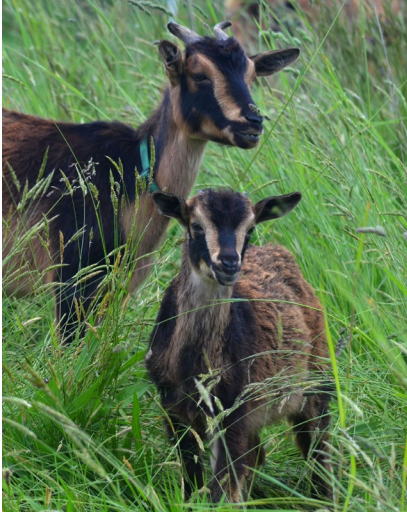


Plans are also underway for celebrating America’s semi-quincentennial in 2026, followed the next year with celebration of the 50th anniversary of The Livestock Conservancy in 2027. From Coronado’s Spanish Army marching into New Mexico in 1540 to the colonists aboard the Mayflower in 1623 and from the hearty souls who squeezed through the Cumberland Gap in the 1700s to the thousands of Oregon Trail pioneers in the 1800s, and the indigenous people who met them, heritage livestock and poultry accompanied every single one of these explorations and changed the lives of all of our ancestors.



Heritage breeds like **Cotton Patch geese** were raised by our ancestors and were part of most key turning points in American history. And they were certainly part of daily life, providing meat, milk, eggs, fiber, pelts, leather, and draft power in villages and on farms and homesteads for hundreds of years. We’re excited about how the America 250! celebrations will

provide the opportunity to tell these stories of the past alongside the vital role these animals can continue to play in tomorrow’s food and fiber systems.



More than 200 breed associations and clubs representing CPL breeds like the **San Clemente Island goat** are important partners in our outreach efforts. Maintaining strong personal relationships with each one allows us to collect vital breed registration data and amplify the effectiveness of our joint efforts to save the breeds we love.

Saving animals requires people. Investing in the volunteer leaders of these breed associations and clubs is another key tool for preventing extinctions.

Twelve *Cultivating Leadership for Breed Organizations (CLBO)* webinars are now available to support and guide breed associations in their growth and skill development. Today, 51% of breed organizations supporting livestock and poultry breeds on the CPL have attended at least one of the CLBO webinars developed by The Livestock Conservancy with funding from generous friends like you.

Organizations like the American Meishan Breeders Association (AMBA) play a vital role in conservation efforts. AMBA members have been instrumental in moving the **Meishan pig** from Critical to Threatened status over the past six years. They are essential to achieving conservation success!



They also remind us that raising heritage breeds must be more than a charitable or “feel-good” effort. To be truly sustainable, these animals must contribute to the financial success of the farmers and ranchers who steward them. That’s why The Livestock Conservancy develops innovative programs to support market growth for CPL breeds and their products.

Shave ‘Em to Save ‘Em (SE2SE) shepherds continue to report excellent wool sales through this unique Livestock Conservancy initiative. The SE2SE Facebook group is an ever-expanding community of over 11,000 fiber enthusiasts. It also provides an excellent platform for fiber producers to showcase wool and fleeces from endangered breeds like **Florida Cracker sheep**.



These efforts - and many others - are grounded in The Livestock Conservancy’s Strategic Plan, developed in partnership with our volunteer board of directors and staff who bring more than 175 years of combined experience in heritage breed conservation. This roadmap ensures that every program and initiative advances both operational excellence and meaningful conservation outcomes.

Few charitable investments have the potential to benefit so many individual animals, farmers, and breed associations across the nation. Thanks to generous supporters like you, we’re safeguarding irreplaceable genetic diversity and helping heritage breeds continue to play a vital role in America’s farms, ranches, and communities for generations to come.