



THE LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY™

Conserving rare breeds since 1977

Autumn 2026 | Volume 43, Issue 4





CONTACT US

The Livestock Conservancy
PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312
www.livestockconservancy.org
info@livestockconservancy.org
919-542-5704

The Livestock Conservancy News (ISSN 1064-1599) is published quarterly by The Livestock Conservancy, a nonprofit tax-exempt corporation established to conserve endangered livestock and poultry breeds. The Livestock Conservancy is a membership organization researching, educating and communicating this purpose.
© The Livestock Conservancy 2026

SOLICITATION DISCLOSURES

Colorado: Residents may obtain copies of registration and financial documents from the office of the Secretary of State, 303-894-2860, www.sos.state.co.us/ re: Reg No. 20133007164.

Florida: Registration #CH37293. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

Maryland: A copy of the current financial statement of The Livestock Conservancy is available by writing PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-974-5534.

North Carolina: Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989. The license is not endorsed by the state.

Virginia: A financial statement is available from the State office of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services upon request.

Washington: For additional information regarding the organization's activities or financial information, The Livestock Conservancy is registered with the Washington State Charities Program as required by law and information may be obtained by calling 1-800-332-4483 or 360-725-0378.

LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY STAFF

Allison Kincaid
Executive Director
akincaid@livestockconservancy.org

Jeannette Beranger
Senior Program Manager
jberanger@livestockconservancy.org

Charlene Couch, Ph.D.
Senior Program Manager
ccouch@livestockconservancy.org

Jeremy Cowan, Ph.D.
Lead Senior Program Manager
jcowan@livestockconservancy.org

Wendy Jennings
Administrative Assistant
wjennings@livestockconservancy.org

Angelique Needham
Senior Operations Director
athompson@livestockconservancy.org

Ashley Keatley
Education and Outreach Coordinator
akeatley@livestockconservancy.org

Les O'Dell
Communications Manager
lodell@livestockconservancy.org

Jaye Ray
Programs Assistant
jray@livestockconservancy.org

Amanda Skidmore, Ph.D.
Outreach Coordinator
askidmore@livestockconservancy.org

TECHNICAL ADVISOR

D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, Ph.D.

LIVESTOCK CONSERVANCY BOARD MEMBERS

David Day, J.D., President
Creek Road Farms
Noblesville, Indiana

Dennis Bires, J.D., Vice President
Claremore, Oklahoma

Emily Hayes, Secretary
Tennessee State University
Nashville, Tennessee

Derrick Coble, Ph.D., Treasurer
North Carolina A&T State University
Greensboro, North Carolina

Carrie Balkcom
American Grassfed Association
Denver, Colorado

Judy Brummer, M.D.
EMDee Farm
Shumway, Illinois

Cynthia Capers
Heniscity Farm
Ashland City, Tennessee

Therese Couchier
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Zaira Estrada-Reyes
Prairie View A&M University
Prairie View, Texas

John Metzger
Metzger Farms
Gonzales, California

Marie Minnich, M.D.
Marushka Farms
Danville, Pennsylvania

Stephanie Niswonger
Conner Prairie
Lebanon, Indiana

Callene Rapp
Rare Hare Barn
Leon, Kansas

Gregg Rentfrow, Ph.D.
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky

Max F. Rothschild, Ph.D.
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

Stephanie Wetter
National Pork Board
Lake City, Iowa

Marston White
Honey's Acres Farm
Alvarado, Texas

On the cover:

An Ossabaw Island barrow at Conner Prairie in Fishers, Indiana. Ossabaw Island pigs are listed as Critical on the Conservation Priority List. Photo by Emily Pennington.

IN THIS ISSUE

Homesteading: Building a Resilient Future.....	3
Giving to the Conservancy.....	6
Member Survey Results	7
The Most Historic Chicken You Never Heard Of	8
Considerations for the Heritage Hog Breeder	9
2026 Heritage Rabbit Census	10
Our Story: Heritage Sheep & Fiber Traditions	11
Brush Goats – Spanish Goats in the Southeast.....	13
The Breeder's Dozen: Alison Martin.....	15
2026 Holiday Gift Guide.....	16

HOMESTEADING: BUILDING A RESILIENT FUTURE

By Judy Brummer

When many of us hear the words “modern homesteading,” we picture backyard chickens, home food preservation, pasture-raised animals and the vibrant “back-to-the-land” culture popularly portrayed on social media. This perception likely aligns with what comes to mind for endangered heritage breed conservation. Celebrated for their hardiness, multifunctional uses and ability to reproduce naturally, these livestock and poultry breeds are known for producing high-quality foods and fibers on small farms, making them particularly suitable for homesteaders. The two visions go together quite nicely.

Half a Century of Homesteading

The modern homesteading movement has evolved significantly since its beginnings in the 1970s. Originally an alternative to mainstream consumerism, individuals moved to rural areas to pursue self-sufficiency, motivated by a growing awareness of the social and environmental impacts of industrialization. In that era, homesteaders typically raised limited numbers of livestock or poultry mainly for personal use, rather than for income.

Although interest in homesteading waned during the 1980s and 1990s, dedicated local networks of enthusiasts kept the spirit alive. Long before modern homesteading expositions and events were established, experienced mentors shared valuable knowledge of traditional farming and lifestyle practices at local agricultural fairs, small-farm conferences and field days organized by cooperative extension services or land-grant universities. The enduring desire for self-sufficiency in food and household goods attracted attendees and helped maintain the movement’s foundation.

As we entered the 21st century, advances in technology and regenerative farming practices made homesteading more efficient and adaptable, allowing it to thrive not only in rural areas but also in suburban and even urban settings. Over the past two decades, interest in self-sufficiency, food security and environmental concerns has surged. Additionally, supply chain disruptions

and the shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the appeal of traditional homesteading practices.

While online resources can spark interest and provide basic information, many essential homesteading skills are best learned through in-person experiences, where individuals can observe, ask questions and receive direct guidance from mentors. Modern homesteading expos began to appear around 2010. An online search revealed 22 major homesteading-focused events planned for 2026 across the United States. These events are designed to assist a diverse range of participants, from beginner and suburban gardeners to small-scale market farmers. They offer seminars and demonstrations on a wide variety of topics, combining traditional wisdom with environmental considerations for raising crops and animals.

Smaller, local events organized by community-based agricultural groups have expanded to include farm museums, land trusts, seed-saving groups, local nonprofits and homesteading networks. These gatherings typically focus on topics relevant to the local community, reflecting diverse perspectives, regional expertise and a strong demand for practical learning among homesteaders.

Cheryl Franklin, a homesteader and founder of the annual Ozarks Homesteading Expo in Missouri, brings more than 40 years of experience in homesteading to her work. Over the years, she has seen changes in practices, tools and community dynamics. However, she notes one aspect has remained constant: the essential value of building a supportive network. Through the Expo, she strives to create a space to share knowledge, skills and experiences, ensuring the wisdom of past generations



MacIntyre Lennon with a *Arapawa* goat kid (*Critical on the CPL*) at his family's Indiana homestead.

is passed down and enriched for current and future homesteaders. Events like the Expo not only foster a sense of community but also promote best practices and innovations that contribute to ongoing success.

Many people interested in homesteading not only seek instruction at these events but are also eager to connect with peers and mentors. They often find a sense of belonging that can be challenging to replicate through social media groups or online webinars. Amy Fewell, owner of The Fewell Homestead, has been a homesteader for about 16 years and founded Homesteaders of America 10 years ago. She says that the various aspects of homesteading can feel overwhelming, and developing a supportive community can be crucial for the success of new or expanding homesteaders.

Fewell's organization recently surveyed HOA members in all facets of homesteading, from balcony gardens to diversified small farms. The results indicate homesteaders represent a growing, largely first-generation, small-

Leslie Frazier Lennon

acreage movement focused on health, food security, family life and practical self-reliance.

By gathering knowledge from online resources, local and national networks and attendance at major homesteading events, new generations of homesteaders have been able to maintain their lifestyles, some while creating small businesses that cater to the needs of other homesteaders and meet the general public's growing demand for farm-to-table foods and direct-to-consumer products. These businesses reflect a further commitment to sustainable living and community engagement, blending tradition with innovation for a stronger future.

Heritage Breeds and Homesteaders

Homesteaders interested in raising livestock or poultry often find heritage breeds particularly well-suited to forage-based farming using regenerative practices. Lessie Frazier Lennon, owner of Celtic Glen Heritage Livestock homestead, emphasizes the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of various heritage breeds. Soay sheep, Arapawa goats, Irish Dexter cattle and American rabbits are among the animals on her family's Indiana homestead. She recommends homesteaders match these traits with the specific ecology of their local climate and environmental conditions to select the appropriate breeds for their farms.

"With more than 150 breeds to choose from, there truly is a heritage breed for every homesteading need," explains Charlene Couch, senior program manager with The Livestock Conservancy. "These are the breeds our grandparents knew – hardy, with good survival skills. Heritage breeds once nourished the nation, and they retain many essential traits for the homestead, such as maternal traits, foraging ability, parasite resistance and hardiness. Safeguarding the biodiversity of these breeds is essential for the long-term security of our food systems."

Factors such as varying forage availability (including mixed pasture, mast, browse and crop residue), weather patterns, environmental conditions and specific local challenges can significantly influence which breeds thrive on a particular homestead and can vary by region. That is one reason



Courtesy Homesteaders of America.

Events and conferences are popular places to learn about all things homesteading, including heritage breeds. Amy Fewell recently spoke at a Homesteaders of America gathering.

why Frazier Lennon encourages aspiring homesteaders to connect with other heritage breed owners, especially those in their local area, as they can provide valuable insights and practical advice based on firsthand experience.

The benefits to homesteading with heritage breeds can be significant. Franklin emphasizes that while many

heritage breeds can produce high-quality meat and fiber solely from forage and significantly enhance soil fertility, they must also fit into the broader economics of creating a sustainable homestead. To that end, rare breed animals can provide everything from meat, eggs and fiber to serve as the basis for agritourism businesses. Additionally, heritage breeds give homesteaders a significant role in conservation efforts, something that many individuals and families find attractive.

A Shared Goal

Over the past 50 years, homesteading and the conservation of heritage breeds of livestock and poultry have developed with a shared common goal: creating a sustainable agricultural future. As homesteaders have increasingly adopted regenerative farming methods, many have recognized the important role that heritage breeds can play in restoring and maintaining soil health, enhancing biodiversity and supporting perennial polycultures.

The combined efforts of homesteaders and conservationists are contributing to the development of more resilient and diverse agricultural systems that support a more sustainable future for everyone. ■

Judy Brummer is a member of The Livestock Conservancy Board of Directors.



Courtesy Cheryl Franklin

A pair of Texas Longhorns in the exhibit hall at the Ozarks Homesteading event in 2025. The Cattleman's Texas Longhorn Registry line of Longhorns are listed as Critically endangered.

NEWS & NOTES

Annual Meeting Set for Dec. 2

The Livestock Conservancy's Annual Members' meeting will be at 1:30 p.m. EST (12:30 p.m. CST; 11:30 a.m. MST; 10:30 a.m. PST) via Zoom. During the meeting, The Livestock Conservancy's executive director, board and science and technical adviser will report on the past year's activities and plans for 2027. All current members of The Livestock Conservancy are encouraged to participate. A Zoom link will be emailed to members prior to the meeting.

Keatley Joins Programs Staff

Ashley Keatley, an experienced agricultural educator, has joined The Livestock Conservancy staff as education and outreach coordinator.



With more than 15 years of teaching experience, she holds degrees from the State University of New York at Cobleskill, State University of New York – Schenectady and Greensboro College. A former agriculture agent with Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Keatley brings a wide range of livestock and education experience. She has raised several heritage breeds, including Oberhasli goats, Jersey Giant chickens and Sebastopol geese and has worked with Tamworth pigs.

She will be responsible for the development of Livestock Conservancy programs, events and initiatives to assist members with rare breed production, coordinate public education campaigns and serve as the point of contact for the organization's popular Shave 'Em to Save 'Em program, an effort to introduce fiber artists to heritage breed wools.

2027 Directory Deadline is Dec. 31

The annual *Directory: Rare Breeds and Products Resource Guide* is an excellent reference and networking resource for heritage breeds. It can help you find and advertise breeding stock, fiber, ranchers raising rare breeds, eggs, meat, milk and more. It also includes informative articles, a color copy of the CPL and breed association contact information.

One of the most-valuable parts of the directory is the listings of members who raise particular breeds or have specific products available for purchase. To ensure your listing is correct, make certain your membership information is up to date. Visit <https://livestockconservancy.org/account-update-form/> or call our office at (919) 542-5704 for assistance. The deadline for updates is Dec. 31, 2026.

Directory listings also populate our online Directory. This valuable tool for finding individual animals, herds, flocks, fiber, products and more is available to the public 365 days a year. More than 500,000 individuals visit our website annually.

Advertisers also find that the Directory is a great way to reach potential customers. Full-color business card-sized ads start at just \$94. Email lodell@livestockconservancy.org for more information.

New Webinar Offerings

To help members and those interested in rare breeds gain useful information and skills, The Livestock Conservancy has launched a monthly webinar series, spanning a wide variety of topics. The new series launched in August with *Choosing the Right Heritage Breed for Your Farm* and continued in September with *Understanding Conservation Genetics*. Future topics for the free webinars include farm financial efficiencies, conservation success stories and on-farm steps producers can take to keep animals healthy and safe.

To make certain you are aware of upcoming webinars, subscribe to The Livestock Conservancy's monthly eNews (sign up at www.livestockconservancy.org/enews) or follow The Livestock Conservancy on social media. Recordings of previous webinars can be found on our website at www.livestockconservancy.org/learn.

Additionally, a series of monthly by-invitation-only online roundtables for leaders of breed organizations was launched in August. These monthly gatherings give breed association staff and volunteers an opportunity to share challenges and successes with one

another. Links for these gatherings are shared with breed association officers and leaders.

Remembering Nancy Kassebaum

Nancy Kassebaum of Council Grove, Kansas, passed away Aug. 23.

A former U.S. Senator, Kassebaum joined The Livestock Conservancy in 1982 and served as a board member from 1986 to 1993. She wrote a letter of support on behalf of our organization (then known as the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy) for the 1991 exhibit, "The Art of American Livestock Breeding," at the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Library.

Former executive director of The Livestock Conservancy Don Bixby recalls working with Kassebaum. "She provided our young organization with a presence. She was always kind and gracious and provided the organization connections to the USDA that helped us promote the role and conservation of historic breeds," he says.

Our condolences to her family, friends and constituents.

Updates to Shave 'Em to Save 'Em Rules

To reflect updates to the Conservation Priority List and the Shave 'Em to Save 'Em Passport, the program rules for fiber providers and artists have been updated.

There are no changes to the requirements, costs or benefits for the program. Changes add clarity to rules regarding multi-breed projects and the program's contact address. The new rules can be found at www.livestockconservancy.org/se2-rules or through the QR code. The program's new email address is SE2SE@livestockconservancy.org.



Turkey Manuals Available for Free Downloads

Two of The Livestock Conservancy's best resources are now available for free downloads! *Breeding Better Turkeys: A Guide to Choosing Your Best Birds*, which features an all-new chapter on

GIVING TO THE CONSERVANCY

By Max Rothschild and Dennis Bires

Have you ever considered what a gift to The Livestock Conservancy means? Donations to Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, for instance The Livestock Conservancy, benefit not just the Livestock Conservancy, but generally the Donor as well. Donors should be well-versed in the various types of gifts and the associated tax benefits.

Cash gifts: These are gifts of money. They include currency, checks, credit card payments, debit card payments, Automated Clearing House (ACH) electronic transfers, and wire transfers. Gifts of cash are fully deductible by the Donor on his or her Federal Income Tax Return (Form 1040), and usually for State Income Tax if the Donor's state has an Income Tax.

NEWS & NOTES *continued*

turkey feather color, is available as a downloadable PDF file.

How to Raise Heritage Turkeys on Pasture offers insight into production from poult to processing, and marketing from packaging to distribution, especially for rare-breed turkeys. It is available both as a free download and for purchase as a printed version.

For downloads and purchase information visit www.livestockconservancy.org/turkey-manual or scan the QR code. ■



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS

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

Alison Martin, Ph.D.
Apex, North Carolina

Sarah Ward
Bishop, Georgia

To become a Life Member, contact contact Allison Kincaid at akincaid@livestockconservancy.org or (984) 208-9780.

Gifts of Appreciated Property: An especially attractive form of donation for tax purposes is a gift of appreciated property. This is usually made using shares of stock or a mutual fund. "Appreciated" refers to the increase in value since the Donor's purchase of the item, possibly many years earlier. If our Donor were to sell an item at its current (appreciated) value instead of donating it, the seller would have to pay income tax on the "capital gain" on the sale – a tax on the amount by which the cash proceeds of sale exceed the owner's original cost for the item, i.e. a tax on the "appreciation" in value. The person donating gets to count the entire donation and their overall taxes decrease only if donated prior to its sale. The Livestock Conservancy can sell the donated property to raise cash at any time, without itself incurring capital gains tax, because The Livestock Conservancy is a Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Qualified Charitable Distributions from Traditional IRAs: Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners over 70 ½ years of age may direct their IRA trustee (usually a bank or brokerage firm) to distribute money from their account directly to one or more Section 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, ideally to The Livestock Conservancy. These Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) do not pass through the IRA owner's hands, instead passing directly from the IRA to the charity. Unlike funds taken from the IRA which the owner must pay taxes on, a qualified charitable distribution directly to the 501(c)(3) incurs no tax obligation to either the owner of the IRA or the charity. When the IRA owner reaches 73 ½ the owner is required to take a minimum distribution so reducing tax consequences may be important.

Donor Advised Fund (DAF): This is a tax-advantaged charitable giving account. It might be thought of as a 401(k) Plan for charitable savings. Numerous brokerage firms have formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliates as DAF providers, to administer individuals' Donor Advised Funds. An individual can open a DAF account with any DAF provider, making one or more

contributions to the account. Each contribution is eligible for the charitable gift deduction on the Donor's Income Tax return. That is because every DAF provider entity must itself be a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. The provider's express "exempt purposes" include making donations to other 501(c)(3) organizations. Each client's DAF account is maintained separately by the provider. The Donor selects from a variety of mutual funds for investment of the account. The provider may regularly takes a fee from the DAF account, generally based on the size of the account. At any time after funding the DAF account, the Donor can recommend that the DAF provider make specified dollar amount distributions from the account to any other 501(c)(3) exempt organization(s) chosen by the Donor. The Donor may add funds to the account at any time in any year. Each addition is another tax-deductible charitable gift by the Donor to the tax-exempt provider.

Remember please that anyone interested in these approaches to reducing their taxes and making a gift can discuss these options with staff from the Livestock Conservancy and their own tax advisors.

Thank you for considering these approaches to supporting the mission of the Livestock Conservancy. ■

Max Rothschild and Dennis Bires are members of The Livestock Conservancy Development Committee.



Tax-deductible gifts to The Livestock Conservancy support livestock and poultry conservation efforts to promote and protect breeds like these Gulf Coast sheep.

The Livestock Conservancy File Photo

MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

In his classic work, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey stresses an important principle: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Leaders of The Livestock Conservancy take this charge very seriously and realized earlier this year that, when it comes to serving rare breed stewards, conservationists, farmers, ranchers, shepherds, historians and artists, understanding comes from discovering members' wants and needs.

In that vein, members were surveyed in early 2026 to better understand why they belong to The Livestock Conservancy, what they value most about their membership and what they hope to see from the organization in the future. Here is some of what we learned:

Our members are a diverse lot: 57% of respondents are active producers of livestock and poultry, and half of all members report that their animals include one or more breeds on the Conservation Priority List. Additionally, more than 65% of our members raise livestock and poultry for personal or family use.

More specifically, 59% raise chickens, 41% have sheep, 24.5% raise goats and 19% have ducks on their farm or homestead.

Additionally, more than 22% of respondents work professionally in agriculture, education or conservation.

Of those with livestock and poultry, 70% are raising breeding stock, nearly 65% are producing meat, fiber or other products, and 65% are also raising animals for personal or family use. Slightly more than 21% are involved in education or agritourism with their heritage breeds, and 36% consider their animals a hobby.

The connection between breed organizations and The Livestock Conservancy was apparent in the survey results, with nearly 60% of those responding reporting that they also maintain membership in one or more breed associations.

"What stood out to me is just how varied our members are," says Allison Kincaid, executive director of The Livestock Conservancy. "They come to

this work in different ways, but they share a belief that these breeds — and the genetic diversity they represent — are worth saving."

The reasons behind membership in The Livestock Conservancy is as diverse as the members themselves, with one common bond: 94% indicated that the primary value of their participation in The Livestock Conservancy is to support the conservation of rare and heritage breeds. Other factors prompting membership include access to the Breeders Directory and online classified listings (45%), staying informed through publications and emails (43%), access to trusted information on breeds and animal husbandry (37%) and the feeling of connection to a mission-driven community (37%).

Breed conservation information and the Conservation Priority List top the organization's programs and benefits for members, with nearly 75% saying these resources are key. Other top answers include the annual Breeders Directory, the monthly eNews and other emails, the quarterly magazine and content available on the organization's website at www.livestockconservancy.org.

Behind the Numbers

Beyond gathering statistics about members of The Livestock Conservancy, one goal of the member survey was to learn from members what they value and want through membership. Nearly 60% of survey respondents say they are "very satisfied" with their membership and 35% reported "satisfied." More than 60% indicated they are likely to recommend membership to others interested in heritage breeds.

Survey tallies showed that members are dedicated not only to their animals and conservation, but also to others who support the efforts. In fact, 93% of respondents indicated they are more likely to purchase products and services from companies that support The Livestock Conservancy.

Additionally, more than 60% reported reading every issue of *The Livestock Conservancy Newsletter*, and many suggested future content. Members also reported how they use the annual directory as buyers, sellers or both, and



The Livestock Conservancy File Photo

In the member survey, nearly 25% of respondents indicated that they raise ducks like this Campbell drake (CPL status: Watch) on their farm, ranch or homestead.

shared what information they would like to see in future member-exclusive emails.

"We asked these questions because we genuinely wanted to know what our members value and where they want more from us," Kincaid says. "We heard a clear desire for more education, more opportunities to connect and more practical information that helps people succeed with heritage breeds. We're already taking steps to respond to that feedback."

Kincaid says The Livestock Conservancy's new offerings include webinars on a range of topics, from basic breed selection guidelines to advanced topics, with other formats and subjects now in the planning stages. She adds that one goal is to give rare breed producers and stewards ways to connect with one another and with experts. The organization is also looking to build relationships with breed organizations to support and strengthen them.

"Our members are at the heart of this work," Kincaid says. "The better we understand what they need, the better we can support them in the work they're doing every day to conserve these breeds. This survey gave us a clearer picture of where we're doing well, where we can do better and where our members want us to go next." ■

THE MOST HISTORIC CHICKEN YOU NEVER HEARD OF

By Jeannette Beranger

The Crèvecoeur chicken (classified as Watch on the Conservation Priority List) is among the oldest of the standard-bred fowls of France and the longest known French breed in the United Kingdom. The breed gets its name from the village of Crèvecoeur en Auge in Normandy, France. “Crève Cœur” translates literally as “broken heart.”

Local history holds that the name derives from the land in this region being less fertile than farmers moving into the area had hoped, breaking the hearts of the peasants. Little is known of the breed’s origins other than that it was developed in Normandy and existed there for a very long time.

By the 18th century, the Crèvecoeur (or Crèvecoeur in American English) capon was a preferred meat among the upper-middle class in Paris. More than 150,000 were produced for this market annually. French poultry author Charles Jacque wrote in his 1858 book, *Le Poulailier*, “This admirable race produces certainly the most excellent fowls that appear in the markets of France. Its bones are even lighter than those of the Houdan; its flesh is fine, short, whiter and it takes more easily to the fattening process.”

The Crèvecoeur remained popular in France until the early 20th century. Poultry author Willis Grant Johnson wrote in 1909, “When staying in St. Servan, Dinan and St. Malo a few years since, I noticed that the Crèvecoeur was the principal fowl offered for sale in the market, where they were mostly bought alive, and if unsold, carried home, to possibly reappear on a future day.” His writing also mentions the value of capons (neutered males): “In Paris, the finest of the ‘Crèves’ realize as much as from 20 to 25 francs each, while \$3 to \$5 is not an uncommon price in New York. The French capon, when really good, is in its way the perfection of poultry.” To put things in perspective, in today’s currency, that price is equivalent to \$100-\$125 per bird if you had wanted one for your table!

The importance of the Crèvecoeur was obvious at the first World’s Fair held in Paris in 1889. Organizers offered two



Crèvecoeur chickens (Watch on the Conservation Priority List) have a rich history, yet they are relatively unknown.

sets of awards for poultry: one reserved for the Crèvecoeur and the second for all the other chicken breeds at the exposition. In 1891, a poultry journalist wrote about Crèvecoeurs in his coverage of an annual French agricultural competition, remarking that “It was only she who was deemed worthy of the aviary of honor.”

In the Air and On the Sea

Aside from its culinary and competitive accolades, the Crèvecoeur came to play an unknowing part in early aviation history. According to the British Balloon Museum and Library, Frenchman Etienne Montgolfier launched the very first untethered hot-air balloon on September 19, 1883. Because of unknown dangers of flight, “passengers” for the maiden voyage were a Berichon sheep named Montauciel (“Climb-to-the-sky”), a Challans duck and a Crèvecoeur cockerel.

The flight only lasted about 15 minutes before the balloon came to the ground. All three animal passengers survived, becoming a little-known part of aviation history and paving the way for human passengers to take flight later that year.

It is believed that Crèvecoeurs were on board the Titanic on its fateful voyage in 1912. Passengers on the infamous

White Star Line vessel included Ella Holmes White, who survived the sinking, taking with her four “fancy French fowl,” according to historic accounts and records. While Holmes White survived the sinking, the chickens did not. There are several accounts of passengers hearing the roosters crowing through the walls of stowage as the ship went down.

The loss prompted White Holmes to file a \$207.87 insurance claim (equal to more than \$6,500 today) with White Star Lines for the two roosters and two hens. In the claim, Holmes White indicated that she purchased the birds at “Jardin d’Agriculture.” Since no such place is known to have existed, some believe it is likely that she meant to say “Jardin d’Acclimation,” a Parisian enterprise focused on producing novel plants and animals from around the globe. The animals and plants there were “acclimatized” to the local land and climate and then judged to see if they would be useful for agriculture. The facility then sold the applicable plants and animals to the public. It is well documented that among the domestic animals produced at Jardin d’Acclimation were Crèvecoeurs. Additionally, France had few other chicken breeds with much notoriety, reputation as a table bird and value as Crèvecoeurs.

Sadly, the breed was nearly wiped out in France during World War II. Numbers never recovered, and today the Crèvecoeur is considered critically endangered in the European nation. Few exist in France, but there is a farmers’ movement in Normandy to bring them back from the edge of extinction.

In the United States, the Crèvecoeur has remained since 1852, when the first imports were made. This population is also considered at risk of extinction, but numbers have grown considerably in the past 10 years. There is a resurgence of interest in the breed as an exhibition fowl. More importantly, the birds are finding their way back to the tables of discerning epicureans lucky enough to experience the culinary delight of enjoying a Crèvecoeur for dinner. ■

Jeannette Beranger is a senior program manager for The Livestock Conservancy and an avid breeder of Crèvecoeurs.

The Livestock Conservancy File Photo

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HERITAGE HOG

By Alison Martin and Jeannette Beranger

Heritage hogs have enjoyed recent popularity largely due to numerous chefs discovering the fabulous flavor of how pork is supposed to taste. There is nothing like the flavor of old-fashioned hogs raised on pasture and in a natural environment. All of the pig breeds on the Livestock Conservancy's Conservation Priority List are considered Heritage breeds.

Popularity, however, can be a challenge for rare breeds, including all of the pig breeds on the CPL, especially when many producers are tempted by quick profits and high returns. When advising newcomers about how to get involved with Heritage hogs, we always stress three key points that can make or break success: 1. Know what you are buying, 2. Not every animal is breeding quality and 3. Make sure your investment in breeding stock is registered.

Know what you are buying when it comes to Heritage hogs. There are many folks out to make a quick buck because buyers don't have a complete understanding of how the pigs should look and how they should perform.

Part of the reason that the flavor of these animals is so intense is due to slower growth. For producers, this does translate into higher feed costs to get them to market. Many have chosen to introduce commercial genetics into herds to improve growth rates and produce leaner, larger carcasses in a shorter period of time. The downside to this is that these pigs are often sold as purebred at high prices to an unsuspecting new pig owner.

One of the most striking and egregious form of crossbreeding is when Pietrain genetics are crossed into a breed. This is particularly problematic with Tamworth, Berkshire, and Hereford hog populations today. The Pietrain pig, a popular Belgian breed, is distinctive with its long body and "double muscled" legs. When crossed into a heritage breed, the cross will produce fast growing pigs with that long lean body supported by heavily muscled legs. As early as one month of age these piglets will already begin to show heavy muscling. Unfortunately, the show ring favors this body type over the



Looking to add pigs to your farm or homestead? Be sure to consider several key factors before adding hogs such as the Large Black (Critical on the CPL). Photo by Emily Pennington.

traditional "dirt hog" of days past so they are becoming more commonplace and are a threat to preserving the historic breed genetics.

Another common cross that has shown up in recent years is of Kune Kune pigs and Guinea Hogs. Guineas are a small traditional farmstead hog and that is enjoying popularity with

homesteaders and hobby farmers.

Because of their rarity, some producers faced with lack of diversity in their herds turned to the cross to produce "Guineas" in colors not normal for the breed. Many are sandy with black spots - a common color in Kune Kune hogs but non-existent in purebred Guinea Hogs. From a genetic standpoint, the crosses may look similar but are *not* the original breed and should not be sold as such.

One immediate telltale sign of crossbreeding is stripes on piglets. None of the breeds on the CPL produce piglets with stripes. Often stripes indicate crossbreeding with feral hogs.

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

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



The Livestock Conservancy/Jeanette Beranger

Tamworth pigs (Recovering) are worth considering as an addition to any farm, be sure to know what you are buying.

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

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

Conserving rare breeds. All of us who raise rare breeds and work to conserve them do so because of the unique characteristics of that breed. Each has just the right adaptation, personality, performance, or appearance that makes it a breed. Conserving these characteristics means mating only within the breed; too many breeds have been

lost when the purebreds used to create value in crossing weren't maintained and "crossbred out of existence." One of the easiest ways to make sure that you and others are keeping the breed true to its own character is to use only registered purebred breeding stock.

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

Raising the value of your animals can be a direct result of registering your animals. To the educated buyer, registration

helps to ensure they are buying the "real deal" and it shows the commitment of the producer to their breed.

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

There's a bright future for Heritage pigs, but it's our duty to be their stewards and not change them into commercial hogs. It would be tragic to lose centuries-old breeds for the sake of easier profits in today's markets. For more information on Heritage hog breeds and what it takes to work with them please visit www.livestockconservancy.org. ■

Jeannette Beranger is a senior program manager for The Livestock Conservancy and Alison Martin recently retired as program director.

2026 HERITAGE RABBIT CENSUS

A first-ever comprehensive census of rare breed rabbits in the United States is underway, and the results will shape future rabbit conservation efforts.

The Livestock Conservancy's 2026 Heritage Rabbit Census is a comprehensive census of breeding populations for all rabbit breeds included on the Conservation Priority List.

"Rabbit breeds represent generations of hard work selecting for size, growth rate, maternal ability, temperament, adaptability and fur, fiber and meat production and quality," explains Jeremy Cowan, lead senior program manager with The Livestock Conservancy. "Many breeds have important agricultural and cultural histories. When populations become too small, the loss of a single breeding program can have an outsized effect on the genetic diversity and long-term security of a breed."

Cowan says the census will help The Livestock Conservancy better understand the status and distribution of rare and endangered heritage rabbit breeds across the country and provide important information for future conservation efforts as well as upcoming

revisions to the Conservation Priority List. Unlike poultry, for which The Livestock Conservancy conducts a national census every five years, this effort will establish a new and much-needed baseline for heritage rabbit populations.

"We extend our deep gratitude to the American Rabbit Breeders Association for its vital contribution to this work through annual registration and exhibition data. These numbers provide valuable information about breed activity and trends, but they capture only part of the population," Cowan explains, adding that many breeding rabbits are never registered or exhibited, and some breeders never participate in organized shows. The rabbit census will help fill those gaps by reaching breeders directly and documenting breeding animals that might otherwise remain uncounted.

Anyone who breeds rabbits listed on the Conservation Priority List is encouraged to participate, whether they keep just a few breeding animals or a large herd. The more people participate, the more accurate our picture of heritage rabbit populations will be. Responses will be kept anonymous, with the option



Silver rabbit (Watch on the CPL)

of sharing contact information with The Livestock Conservancy. This will help us identify breeders and herds of particular conservation importance and strengthen connections within endangered breed communities.

The 2026 Heritage Rabbit Census will remain open through the late winter, giving breeders plenty of time to participate. A detailed summary of the results will be shared at the conclusion of the census.

If you raise a CPL rabbit breed, help us make sure your animals are counted.

Scan the QR code or visit <https://livestockconservancy.org/heritage-breeds/2026-rabbit-census/> to participate

in the 2026 Heritage Rabbit Census. ■



OUR STORY: HERITAGE SHEEP & FIBER TRADITIONS

By Katie Abbott, Rainbow Meadow's Farm,
Camp Douglas, Wisconsin

For us, conservation is not an abstract idea. It is present in the morning chores, in the careful choice of breeding stock, in the handling of each fleece and in the quiet satisfaction of seeing heritage sheep thrive in the landscape they were meant to inhabit. We're a mother and daughter, Kathi and Katie Abbott, raising Jacob and Shetland sheep and carrying forward the lessons learned from our recently sold flock of Icelandic sheep, connecting people to fiber through our mini wool processing mill. We love learning about new breeds and all the amazing ways to perfect our processes through each wool type and its differences. Wool is like your fingerprint; each fleece changes from one animal to the next and can even change year by year.

We have farmed the land for as long as I can remember, always thinking about how to better protect it and conserve our farming heritage. For years, we raised goats, then we bought our first Angora goats around 2011 or 2012. What an experience! We continued farming our dairy goats until 2018, when we began considering selling all our animals and moving from our 19-acre farm.

In late July of 2021, we changed our minds and decided to stay on our farm and build our business first. Then, when the time was right, we could move. So, I started shopping for new livestock. We were looking for Dexter cattle and a few dairy goats. I found someone who was willing to bring us two of what he said were Dexter cows. Turns out they were Corriente cows!

During delivery of the cattle, he noticed how overgrown our pastures were and asked if he could bring around 30 rams to feed on our grass for the rest of the year. We said "Sure!" And from the time the very first four-horn beauties (Jacob rams) stepped off the trailer, we were sold! A few days later, he brought over a few more ram lambs and 10 ewe lambs...the very first sheep we'd ever owned.

For the first two years, we rented a ram from him, and from then on, we



Courtesy Katie Abbott

Katie Abbott shares her experiences raising heritage breed cattle and sheep as well as starting a mini mill to process wool.

focused on improving and growing the flock. With the help of so many other great breeders, we have built our Jacob and Shetland flocks, turning our attention away from cattle and concentrating on sheep and fiber.

We realize that heritage breeds were shaped over generations by farmers who needed animals that could forage, reproduce naturally, mother well, resist disease and adapt to local conditions. These traits are more than nostalgic reminders of the past. They are practical strengths that can help build a more resilient agricultural future. For us, Jacob and Shetland sheep represent that living connection between biodiversity, useful farm animals and fiber traditions worth preserving. They excel in the freezing Wisconsin winters and the baking hot summers. And they still come through each season with gorgeous fleeces we can provide for our customers across the country.

We see Rainbow Meadow's Farm as a small but meaningful part of a much larger conservation network. Our goal is to raise healthy, productive Jacob and Shetland sheep while preserving the qualities that make each breed distinct. That means choosing breeding pairs

thoughtfully, maintaining useful records, observing temperament and maternal ability and making decisions that serve the breed – not just the next season's needs.

Since we began, we have learned that conservation farming requires patience. Rare and traditional breeds often do not fit the pace or uniformity of industrial agriculture, but that is exactly why they are valuable. Jacob sheep bring distinctive spotted fleeces, multiple horns, hardiness and strong visual appeal, while Shetland sheep are valued for their small size, resilience, range of natural colors and versatile wool. Although we have recently sold our Icelandic sheep flock, the experience deepened our appreciation for hardy northern sheep and the importance of thoughtful flock transitions and breeding practices.

The daily work of caring for heritage sheep is both ordinary and deeply purposeful. Feeding, watering, rotating pasture, monitoring health, preparing for lambing and watching young stock develop all become part of a conservation practice. We learn from the sheep as much as we manage them. Their instincts, hardiness, fleece quality

and behavior tell us what they need and what traits deserve to be carried forward.

My mom's dream has always been to process fiber into yarn and then into products. The personal role in what you eat, drink, wear and use means a lot to us, so we started processing wool. We soon realized that other people needed to know that even their worst-appearing fleeces can be saved and used. We also wanted to process wool for others who care for their animals individually, not just as a number or a contributor to a giant bag of fleece.

Last year, we took in our very first wool customer as a mini mill. Now, just one year later, we are upgrading with new mini mill equipment. We love processing wool, and sharing our joy with others is a pleasure. It's also a great feeling to help the worst of fleeces shine through, showing off the hidden beauty hiding amongst the hay chaff and dirty grime.

Good stewardship also means accepting responsibility for the story behind the wool. Our mini wool processing mill allows us to follow fiber from raw fleece to finished projects – or anything in between. By washing, picking, carding, hand combing, spinning, preparation and other fiber services on a small scale, we help shepherd wool through each stage with care. That connection between sheep, shepherd, fleece and finished product gives people a tangible way to understand why breed diversity matters and why quality matters more than quantity. We love this land and our flocks, and conservation paired with good stewardship really helps protect the



One of the Jacob sheep at Rainbow Meadow's Farm.

history and future of this great country.

One of the most important things a small farm/mill can do is help people connect conservation to everyday choices. Many people have never heard of the sheep breeds that once filled barnyards and pastures, and many have never seen how raw wool becomes roving, yarn, felt or a finished project. When they meet the animals, handle the fiber, hear the breed's histories or work with wool raised and processed with care, conservation becomes tangible and impactful.

We hope Rainbow Meadow's Farm encourages others to ask questions: Which breeds are endangered? What traits are worth saving? What can fiber artists, consumers, breeders and communities do to support rare and traditional sheep? Every conversation matters. Awareness creates markets; markets support breeders and mills; breeders keep rare animals on the land; and those opportunities keep small farms like ours alive. We appreciate our customers' honesty and often ask what would help improve our system and how we can better serve them. And most importantly, we don't just ask these questions; we listen and improve.

My mother and I realize the work of conserving heritage sheep and fiber traditions is measured in generations. It asks us to think beyond immediate convenience and to consider what kind of agricultural inheritance we want to leave behind. At Rainbow Meadow's Farm, that inheritance begins with healthy sheep, careful breeding, respectful flock management, hands-on wool processing, honest education and a commitment to keeping rare and traditional breeds visible, useful and viable.

Conserving heritage breeds is not simply about saving the past. It is about protecting choices for the future – on our farms, in our fiber sheds, in our food and textile systems and in the



Courtesy Katie Abbott

Katie and Kathi Abbott are expanding the small fiber mill on their farm near Camp Douglas, Wisconsin.

genetic legacy of American agriculture. We started raising sheep in 2021 and have been in love with them ever since.

We've outgrown our little processing shed, and we're now expanding our facilities and adding new equipment, but we're still very small and very personal. We're looking forward to continuing to grow and expand our operations here on our small but effectively conservation-focused farm. ■



Courtesy Katie Abbott

A new carding machine at Rainbow Meadow's Farm as the Abbotts expand their fiber milling operation.

BRUSH GOATS – SPANISH GOATS IN THE SOUTHEAST

By D. Phillip Sponenberg, D.V.M., Ph.D.

We are fortunate in the United States to have a host of local landrace breeds that have persisted in various regions for centuries. This is somewhat surprising, because prior to the arrival of Europeans, it is believed that the only domesticated animals in North America were dogs and turkeys. The local breeds that have developed here over the centuries since European contact are gems that mainstream agriculture has generally overlooked. This is unfortunate because they offer a great deal for agriculture in both adaptation and productive potential.

One of these treasures is the local Spanish goat of the Southeast. This long-term local goat breed goes by various names: Brush, Ball Field, Scrub, Native and Low Country. Whatever they are called, they hail back to the earliest Spanish influences in the region. Their long residence in the Southeast has contributed to their superb adaptation to warm and humid conditions – one of the most challenging environments for goats. This is significant for past, present and future goat production because this adaptation leads to parasite resistance, which is a huge benefit to goat producers in the region.

A detractor, in the eyes of some, is the relatively small size of the goats. Of course, a live small goat is always better than a dead big one! These goats are survivors, and they have tended to persist in small, isolated herds with minimal attention to selection for size and growth. That makes them a tough challenge for conservationists interested in saving as much of this landrace as possible. The old traditional herds are usually under the care and ownership of elderly traditionalists, so a transition to future stewards is by no means assured. Some examples of the breed persist on coastal islands, surviving without human care or intervention and assured of genetic isolation due to their island home and a goat's distaste for swimming (or even getting their feet wet!).

The island herds are interesting. The ones from South Carolina are often called "Low Country," and at least three or four

groups have been located. The Livestock Conservancy was key in securing those from one island, and these are now in the care of the Lowcountry Zoo at Brookgreen Gardens near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as well as Donna Askew and others. A second island population has been secured by Nathan Hollinger and Ken McClellan. The goats are wary of humans, but 10 or so have been captured and relocated to Hollinger's farm. Others, with strong Spanish type, also persist in the region.

Other islands from the region likewise have candidate populations. A few have been noted in Louisiana, North Carolina and Florida. These all have great potential to increase the chances of success in saving this local resource and using it for present and future goat production. Each of these needs to be evaluated for persistence of the traditional type, free of influence from later introductions.

A few of the older herds, not from islands, have been under human care for all of their history. These herds have important lessons for conservation because they match adaptation with production. One example is the goats from the Partin ranch. These once numbered in the hundreds, but their

numbers were rapidly and drastically reduced due to changes in ranching philosophy and goals. At the end, only seven nannies remained, in kid to the last billy. This situation, while drastic, offers a great deal of hope because the sudden collapse to a handful suggests that the "handful" may not be closely related. In this situation, a rapid expansion of numbers can reduce genetic loss. This is not possible for small herds with a longer history of isolated, limited numbers because that situation diminishes genetic variation at every generation. The take-home lesson is that conditions for a population rescue are always more complicated than simply looking at numbers. Fortunately, the Partin goats are now under the care of Nathan Hollinger, and numbers are increasing to the point that the bloodline is now much more secure than it once was.

Shan Norman has multiple lines of goats in his operation in Alabama. One of these is his own family's old line. A second line is the Jericho goats, also from Alabama. Betty Jo Rudder had long stewarded these goats on her family's farm, having obtained them from one of their laborers long ago. These goats reflect the effects of a population that is closed to introductions over many



A Spanish goat (Recovering on the Conservation Priority List)

Phil Sponenberg/The Livestock Conservancy

generations. They do not vary much in color and retain the adaptation and hardiness expected of a local breed. Her selection practices have produced attractive, adapted and productive goats. The Norman and Jericho goats are good examples of local resources that have been selected for productivity, have increased in number and are now more secure than in the past. Baylis goats from Mississippi are a similar example, as are the Drummond goats from Georgia and the Shaw goats from Mississippi.

Several other leads on undocumented herds are yet to be investigated. For each of these, a sound investigation process is needed to ensure conservation is based on the presence of a legitimate isolated gene pool. This can be done by examining and evaluating the external type of the goats. Several candidate herds are in private hands, including the intriguing lead of "the junkyard goats from Poplarville, Mississippi," which has come up in the memories of several different individuals.

These Southeast goats offer real opportunities for breed conservation, but along with opportunities come

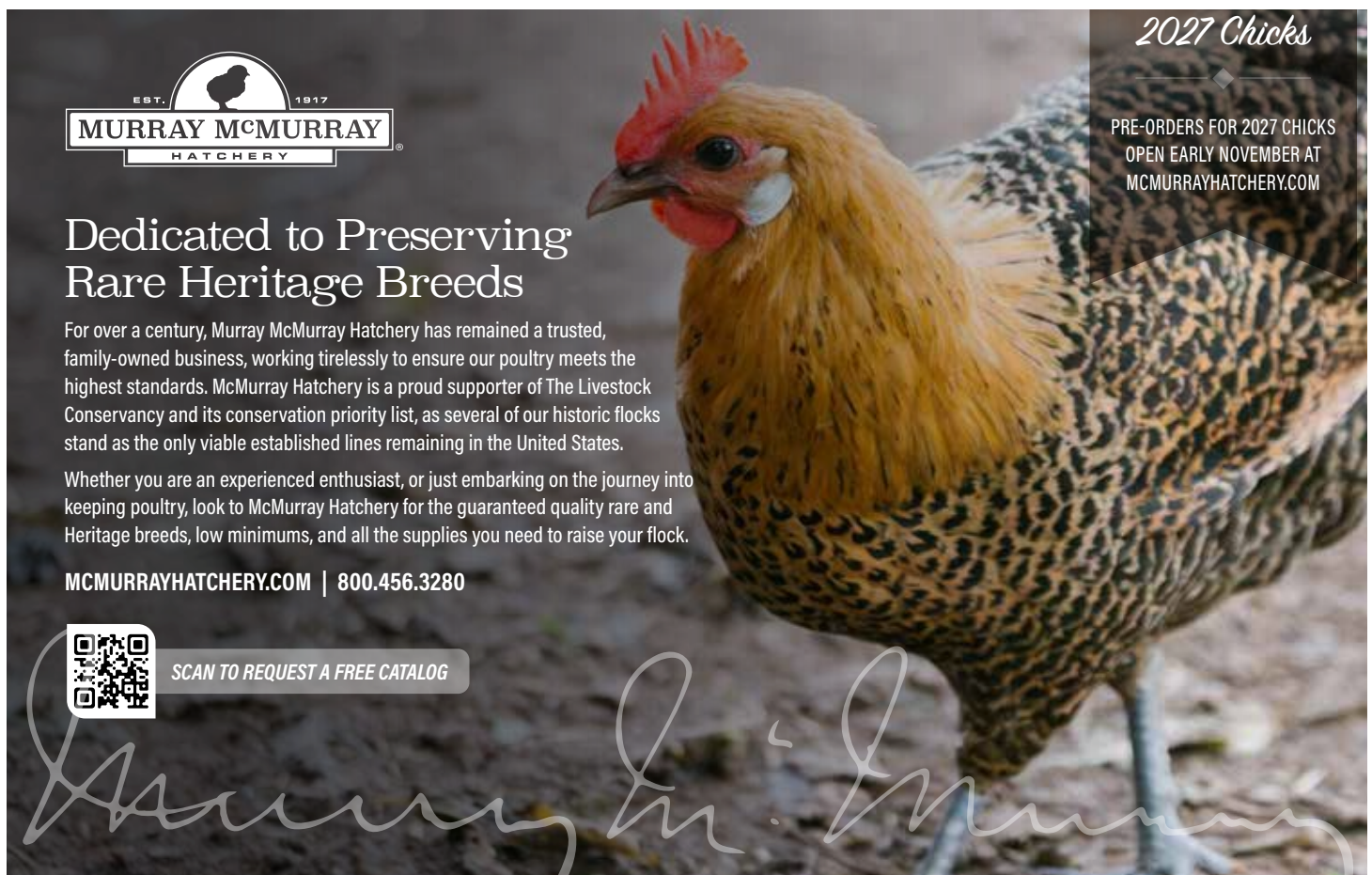
challenges. One challenge is the obvious need to locate and evaluate the candidate herds. This task is likely to continue well into the future. A second challenge stems from the recent organization of Spanish goat breeders into multiple registries and associations. As is all too common, some of these have now decided that the work of discovery is complete, and that the only pure Spanish goats are the ones currently in their registry system. This approach ignores other long-term herds that have been overlooked but that have the external type, history, heritage and genetics typical of this important resource.

Another challenge is just exactly where to draw the boundary around any local breed. If Spanish goats in the U.S. are considered broadly, this is a complicated question. These goats include a few distinct regions and types: Brush goats (Southeast), Texas Hill Country (the majority of the Spanish goats), Rio Grande Valley (including many with strikingly Spanish type) and the Pacific Islands (with a slightly different type). These could be grouped

together, or each could be pulled out for separate conservation. That second option has one distinct advantage – the maintenance of the unique adaptation of each group as forged by each very distinct environment.

A first step is to identify and define the resource. This "discovery" step is far from over. Linked to that is the "secure" step, which ensures the resource does not undergo further loss beyond what has already occurred. The final step, "sustain," is best accomplished by assuring commercial utility. That will take some selection and documentation, but without the first two steps it cannot occur. Many people are impatient, wanting a "finished product" rather than a "work in progress." Those "works in progress", though, are where the real challenges and opportunities in breed conservation reside. ■

Phil Spontenberg is science and technical adviser to The Livestock Conservancy. One of the founders of the organization, he also is a Professor Emeritus at Virginia Tech University.



MURRAY McMURRAY
HATCHERY

EST. 1917

Dedicated to Preserving Rare Heritage Breeds

For over a century, Murray McMurray Hatchery has remained a trusted, family-owned business, working tirelessly to ensure our poultry meets the highest standards. McMurray Hatchery is a proud supporter of The Livestock Conservancy and its conservation priority list, as several of our historic flocks stand as the only viable established lines remaining in the United States.

Whether you are an experienced enthusiast, or just embarking on the journey into keeping poultry, look to McMurray Hatchery for the guaranteed quality rare and Heritage breeds, low minimums, and all the supplies you need to raise your flock.

MCMURRAYHATCHERY.COM | 800.456.3280

SCAN TO REQUEST A FREE CATALOG

2027 Chicks

PRE-ORDERS FOR 2027 CHICKS
OPEN EARLY NOVEMBER AT
MCMURRAYHATCHERY.COM

THE BREEDER'S DOZEN: ALISON MARTIN

Alison Martin retired in May after nearly 15 years with The Livestock Conservancy, serving the organization in a variety of roles and positions. We wanted to take advantage of Alison's deep knowledge and experience – and hear some of her favorite memories – so Newsletter editor Les O'Dell sat down with her for 13 questions about her time with the organization.

You retired just a few months ago. What have you been up to since then, and what are your plans?

I've been doing a little traveling and spending some time with family and friends. The thing that I'm enjoying is the change of pace – not having a constant flow of new problems to solve but being able to tackle things a little more slowly and one at a time.

Let's go back 15 years or so; how was it that you came to work for The Livestock Conservancy?

I was working in North Carolina in the animal health field, developing vaccines and treatments for livestock and poultry, and the company that I was working with at that time was moving my division to Michigan. I separated from the company and then was looking for new opportunities. I'd known about The Livestock Conservancy since the '80s, when they conducted their first census of poultry. At that time, I was in poultry science, studying poultry genetics. In 2011, I saw an opportunity with The Livestock Conservancy, and I thought, 'I need to see what this organization is up to today.' I found it really, really compelling. During and before my interview, I talked with people at the organization, and I was still very, very interested, and the interview went really well. So, that's how I ended up joining The Livestock Conservancy.

What were those first few years like?

When I first came on board, we had a grant to look at how to improve the economics- how to attract more farmers to raising heritage poultry in the state of North Carolina. That was a really good project where I learned a lot about the economics of raising heritage breeds. It's not an easy pathway; heritage breeds are

slower growing than most commercial breeds, which means that, to make a living, the type of farming that works for heritage breeds is a little different than with commercial breeds. That was a good learning experience for me.

Over your entire career with The Livestock Conservancy, what else stands out as something you came away with?

One of the things I took away from my time at The Livestock Conservancy was real hope for the future of American farming. It's not an easy life, but many of the people The Livestock Conservancy works with didn't grow up on farms and are coming to it as a second career and a life choice. They have a passion, and they're making a go of it. They are selling food to their neighbors; they're raising food for their families. It's a different kind of farming, and it seems to have continued to grow over the last 15 years. That's encouraging for us, in terms of being able to continue to feed the country.

As you look back on the 15 years with the organization, are there highlights that stand out to you?

We were really successful over the years in growing the visibility for The Livestock Conservancy and, therefore, for heritage breeds. We were able to get out to national events, and now, of course, we do a lot more of this virtually, but we were able to bring attention to our work and the importance of heritage breeds.

I think we've done a really fantastic job with some of the programs that we introduced. For example, Shave 'Em to Save 'Em expanded the market for heritage breed wools. And Microgrants have been very successful at reaching individual farms that are not necessarily at the beginning of their journeys and helping them take their next steps. I'm really proud of programs like that, and I'm proud of how we continued to do the work that we were known for previously, which included helping and supporting the breed associations and individual farmers as well as doing research on individual breeds so that people would have the knowledge about



Alison Martin with an American Mammoth Jackstock donkey.

those individual breeds that would help them do an even better job of raising and marketing those animals and their products.

What are you most proud of?

Among other things, I'm really proud of the people within the organization and what they've done as individuals. The Livestock Conservancy has a strong culture of supporting each other. I'm proud to have been part of that and to have stewarded it for 15 years.

Are there other successes?

I'm proud of how we continued to expand our connections with other organizations and partner organizations as well as the fundraising that we did during those years that helped us grow. We grew the budget, and that made it possible to do even more for small farms and farmers.

How have you seen rare breed conservation change or evolve during your career?

Partly because of COVID, we're much more virtual now, and that makes it possible to reach a lot more people. When I started, it really was one-on-one by phone and email. We reached larger groups by traveling to events and giving talks and things like that. Well, now we can do an event online, and it can stay there for years to come. We can reach so

many more people that way than was possible before.

The Livestock Conservancy has also continued to develop ways to assess the needs of each individual breed and organization so we can focus on particular needs. For example, we've recognized in recent years that some breeds in the "Recovering" classification are really primed for graduation, so we work with those breed organizations to help promote their breeds.

So, livestock and poultry conservation requires work on both ends of the spectrum?

Yes. We often think of conservation at the scary end, where breeds are going to slip away, and that's very, very important. We also have breeds that, with just a few more farm starts and a few more herd expansions, will be on stable ground.

You mentioned breed groups and breed associations. How important is their partnership from your perspective?

Super important, because they are the boots on the ground, if you will. They're the leading edge – the first point of contact with farmers and breeders themselves who are actually raising the animals. Breeders and farmers are

coming to their breed associations more often and sooner than they're coming to The Livestock Conservancy, and that's as it should be. Helping those organizations to do a really good job is a key part of how a small organization like The Livestock Conservancy can support more than 180 different endangered breeds.

How does The Livestock Conservancy help?

One way we have partnered with breeder organizations over the last several years is by acknowledging their need for support in better organizing and managing themselves. That's why The Livestock Conservancy developed training materials (the Cultivating Leadership for Breed Organizations online series) so breeders' associations can take those next steps and bootstrap themselves to further success.

If you were to have to give a "State of the Union"-type speech about conservation right now, what's your point of emphasis?

I think we're in a very good place; we've had a lot of successes. And the opportunities are still very positive, and there's hope to continue to graduate breeds. I think we always have to be a

little cautious in conservation: we have to make sure the purebreds are replacing themselves; otherwise, you don't have the resources in the bank anymore if you lose those purebred animals. I think that there are plenty of opportunities there.

The other danger I see sometimes is that there's always kind of passion among people for the new and the exotic. And so, sometimes people are more interested in importing rare breeds from other countries than in working with the ones we've already got here. I would hate to see our own breeds forgotten. But, overall, I think everything is very good in conservation, and I'm very confident in The Livestock Conservancy's ability to continue this work.

So, what's next for Alison Martin?

That's a good question. I'm just going to take it slowly and see what evolves. I just got back from vacation at the world's largest air show, and I've made friends there over the last 40 years. I hope to spend more time with family and friends, and after that, we'll see where life takes me. I'm sure there'll be new adventures on the horizon. ■

2026 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Looking for the perfect gift this year? Here are some gift ideas from our annual Holiday Gift Guide. These items are perfect as presents for a loved one (or yourself), and they support members of The Livestock Conservancy and the heritage breeds they raise.

Handcrafted Leicester Longwool Dryer Balls

Happy Heritage Farm, Abingdon, Maryland

Set of 3 handcrafted 100% wool dryer balls made from the wool of our rare Leicester Longwool heritage breed sheep.

Dryer balls reduce drying time, help you eliminate chemical-based dryer sheets, and reduce static. This is a great way to support this rare heritage breed of sheep, save money and help the environment. The dryer balls will last for years and years.

<https://happyheritagefarm.etsy.com>



Buttons Handcrafted from Suffolk Punch-Harvested Wood

Haulin' Hoof Farm Store, New Marshfield, Ohio

Suffolk Punch horsepower allows this family business to access dead and dying trees with little disruption to the forest floor and begin the process of turning nature's waste into a variety of wood items including these unique artisanal buttons.

www.haulinhooffarm.com



Shetland Wool Knitting Kit: Corina Newsome Hat and Muffatees

Five Sisters Farm, Plainfield New Hampshire

A perfect gift for the knitter in your life, this eye-catching hat and mitt set from Five Sisters Farm in Plainfield, New Hampshire, will turn heads. Designed exclusively by Mona Zillah (BunnyMuff Designs), the kit includes a pattern and soft fine fingering Shetland yarn (4 oz. undyed and 1 oz. hand-dyed cardinal red).
<https://www.nh5sistersfarm.com>



Hand-sewn Felt Yule Goats and More

The Liminal Farmstead (formerly EB Ranch Farmstead), Ridgeland, Wisconsin

These handmade gift goodies are inspired by the fabulous San Clemente Island goat breed. They utilize and showcase the fiber and bone of this critically endangered breed. In addition to the Yule Goats, several other items are available online.
www.theliminalfarmstead.com/shop



Wool Wreaths

Sheepcote Farms, Danielsville, Georgia

Add a touch of natural warmth and American history to your home with these one-of-a-kind wool wreaths. We hand felt our Tunis wool onto a wire frame to create a lightweight, soft and textural element to hang on your wall. A perfect gift for the holidays, a unique addition to the nursery, or simply a handcrafted design element to bring rich, neutral-colored fibers into the home.
www.sheepcotefarms.com



Fainting Goat Items

Solios Occasus Villa, Gasburg, Virginia

Solios Occasus Villa showcases the wonderful Myotonic (Tennessee Fainting) goat breed with a variety of items including embroidered items, custom-designed handstamped jewelry and stained glass.
www.solisoccasusvilla.com



Diné Motif Sweater Kit

Gothfarm Yarn, Austin, Texas

This kit includes the 100% Navajo-Churro yarn and motif charts needed to create the Diné Motif sweater. This sweater is a variation of the Rug Sweater, but in this design, the motif charts have been replaced incorporating traditional Navajo weaving motifs. The sweater is knit top-down and is a one-size-fits-all, poncho-style design.
www.gothfarmyarn.com

Romeldale / CVM Sheep Yarn, Roving, Batting and Fleeces

Black Acre Farm, Pearce, Arizona

From a conservation-focused farm at the base of the Chiricahua Mountains in Arizona comes small-batch yarn, roving, batting and fleeces from Romeldale CVM Sheep, known for their wonderful, soft, easy-to-spin fiber.
<https://www.etsy.com/shop/BlackAcreFarms>



Thank you to members and advertisers for supporting the production of this *Newsletter*. To advertise in this publication, call 984-308-5704 or email lodell@livestockconservancy.org.



Karakul Shepherds Alliance
~ where the flocks gather

info@karakulshepherds.org
Open Flock Book | History | Ads | Breeders Sharing
Deborah Hunter, Registrar 206.371.0995 cell



**HERITAGE SHEEP
REPRODUCTION**

Deb Nelson Gourley, B.S., M.S. • gourleydeb@gmail.com
602 3rd Ave SW, Waukon, IA 52172 • (563) 568-6229
www.heritagesheepreproduction.com

Your #1 source of
imported (UK to USA)
frozen ram semen
& frozen sheep embryos
from England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland (20+ breeds)



BARBADOS BLACKBELLY
Sheep Association International

**Raise sheep
the EASY way!**

Adaptable hair sheep:
Natural parasite resistance
Prolific non-seasonal breeders

 Learn more at blackbellysheep.org



Let us introduce you to the rarest of the rare breeds of sheep in the US today ...

CVM/Romeldales

They provide fabulous fleece and roving in a palette of colors including greys, black, white, and many shades of brown from oatmeal to dark chocolate to reddish brown and rose grey.

Contact us for breeding stock, fiber, or yarns at
www.MarushkaFarms.com



**YOUR NEW
LIVESTOCK
MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM**

Open source & free
Mobile & desktop friendly
No internet connection required
Data privacy & safety
EID reader compatible
Optional pre-loaded hardware
Optional registry support
Multi-species & multi-breed support
Real farm testing

WWW.ANIMALTRAKKER.COM

**ANIMAL
TRAKKER**





**American Black Welsh Mountain
Sheep Association**

Black Welsh Mountain Sheep
are hardy, easy to handle, good mothers,
efficient grazers, have distinctive wool for spinning,
weaving and knitting, lean mild tender meat,
and are the perfect small farm sheep.

For more information visit
www.blackwelsh.org or

 SCAN ME

Support our advertisers! Their ads support the production of this Newsletter.

NAVAJO-CHURRO SHEEP ASSOCIATION
Established 1986
Website: www.navajo-churrosheep.com

Registrars:
- Kim Kewley
P.O. Box 1497
Castle Rock, W.A. 98611
kimkewley@earthlink.com

Business Office:
- Co. Bonnie Marcus
P.O. Box 190840
Bellevue, ID 83719-0840
spindlemarcus@gmail.com



America's oldest domestic sheep breed Great mothers, easy lambing, hardy
Lustrous double coated fleece



JACOB SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to conserving Jacob sheep through registration and education.

Discover this majestic, heritage breed!

www.jsba.org

Preserving the True Genetic Heritage
for over 35 years



- The model of parasite resistance
- Superior maternal traits
- Excellent gains on pasture
- Docile temperament
- Low input management



ST. CROIX
HAIR SHEEP BREEDERS

Digital Registry
Member Support
Virtual Marketplace

740-234-4440

secretary@stcroixsheep.org

@SCHSBinc

www.stcroixsheep.org

Heritage Shorthorns
Red, White, or Roan





Heritage Shorthorns have the versatility to be productive in any small farm setting, from functioning as the family milk cow to producing grass-fed beef.

Visit www.HeritageShorthorn.org to explore the possibilities that exist in owning these eye catching & calm cattle, to read about their amazing history, and to find breeders near you.



Heritage Shorthorns Bring the Past & Future Together

Email: office@heritageshorthorn.org

UNBEATABLE PRICES

YOUR FAVORITE SUPPLIES AT THE BEST PRICES IN TOWN




SHOP ALL OUR UNBEATABLE PRICES

Prices and product selection may vary by store and online.
Subject to Tractor Supply's Price Match Policy.

The Dutch Belted Cattle Association of America has the original and only herdbook for Dutch Belted Dairy Cattle

Since 1886 the DBCAA has been continuously recording the royal lineage of this noble breed, preserving and carrying it forward from its origin in the pastures of the Netherlands to the pastures of America's dairymen.

THE SOURCE OF THE BELTED GENETICS FOR ALL OTHER BELTED CATTLE



1939: Grace
4-6: Record 14,220 lb. 2700
From the D.A. Wilson herd, Brunswick, ME

Cornell D. Upson, President
3724 County Hwy 33
Cherry Valley, NY 13320-3021
607-264-3108

www.DutchBelted.com



2011: Bella Rose
4-6: 2010 14,220 lb. 2700 1210 3,900 4750
5-10: 1210 14,220 lb. 2700 1210 3,900 4750
Bred by DutchBelted.com, owned by Buhner

Rural Heritage

*A Bi-Monthly Magazine
Borrowing From Yesterday To
Do The Work Of Today*

In support of small farmers and loggers who use draft
horse, mule and ox power.

In print since 1976, online since 1997.

One year (six issues) \$34.95

PO Box 2067, Cedar Rapids IA 52406
(319) 362-3027 • www.ruralheritage.com



**Metzer
Farms**

A Family Hatchery.

YOUR WATERFOWL EXPERTS

Hatching over 50 breeds
of ducks, geese, chickens,
guineas, and turkeys.

AUSTRALIAN
SPOTTED DUCKS



BUFF GEES



HERITAGE TURKEYS



www.metzerfarms.com

831.679.2355

metzinfo@metzerfarms.com



Peacock Hill Farm



**Kangal
Livestock Guardian
Dog
Puppies &
Stud Service**

**Low Country Goats
Bucklings for sale
(Picture of Sire)**



**Heritage
Turkeys**



Eleanor 770-860-8989



Easy Lambing
Frequent Twins
Excellent Mothering
Hardy
Quiet Temperament
Ability to Flock
Fine Fiber with a Variety of Natural
Colors
Fast Growing Lambs



WWW.NATIONALCVMCONSERVANCY.ORG

Thank you to members and advertisers for supporting the production of this *Newsletter*. To advertise in this publication, call 984-308-5704 or email lodell@livestockconservancy.org.

EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE LEICESTER LONGWOOL



*Dedicating efforts to
preserve a rare and
historic breed.*

LEICESTERLONGWOOL.ORG

UPDATE YOUR LIVESTOCK LISTINGS

The 2027 *Directory: Rare Breeds
and Products Resource Guide*
mails to members soon. Make
sure your livestock and poultry
breeds and products are
up-to-date. Visit

www.livestockconservancy.org/account-update-form/



AMERICAN MULEFOOT HOG ALLIANCE

The American Mulefoot Hog Alliance (AMHA) is a farmer-led conservation organization dedicated to preserving the genetic integrity and long-term viability of the critically endangered American Mulefoot hog.

- ✓ Transparent Registry
- ✓ Pedigree Tracking
- ✓ Data-Driven Stewardship

www.MulefootHogRegistry.com

AMERICAN GUINEA HOGS



Mid-Sized
Flavorful Pork
Easily Managed
Hardy in all Climates
American Guinea Hog Association
www.guineahogs.org



28 YEARS OF
BREEDING
EXPERIENCE

PERFORMANCE
RECORDED WITH THE
NSIP

CERTIFIED SCRAPIE
AND OPP FREE

BREEDING SHEEP
AVAILABLE NOW

WE HAVE WHITE
WELSH!



DESERT
WEYR

Black
Welsh
Mountain
Sheep



www.desertweyr.com

NATIONAL
WESTERN[®]
Stock Show

38TH
ANNUAL

American
Highland
Cattle
Association



NATIONAL
SHOW & SALE

THURSDAY JAN. 21

National Junior Show,
Highland Hangout Social &
Junior Awards Presentation

FRIDAY JAN. 22

National Show & PRCA Rodeo

SATURDAY JAN. 23

National Sale & Awards Banquet

Entry Deadline Nov. 10th | No late entries accepted
Check out highlandcattleusa.org this fall for full details.

Pineywoods Cattle Registry & Breeders Association

~ Founded 1999 ~



PCRBA holds ground to this Cornerstone of Excellence

Preserve and Promote Pineywoods Cattle and assist breeders with Production and Profitability with Purpose

- Landrace cattle bred to thrive in hot, humid, and harsh environments
- Natural selection has developed these hardy, long lived, low input and thrifty foragers & browsers
- Multi-purpose Pineywoods cattle make your goals a reality!
- Pineywoods still produce the finest Beef and Oxen just as they have for centuries
- Low impact & excellent calving rates make these high milking Momma Cows an ideal choice for restoring & regenerating native ranges



Product of USA

183 Sebron Ladner Place • Poplarville, Mississippi 39470 • 601-795-4672 • PCRBA.org



SAFE FOR USE ON AND AROUND ANIMALS, AND ON SURFACES LIKE PICNIC TABLES, TENTS, AND PORCHES.

Ingredients: a proprietary blend of Neem Oil, Natural Juices, Herbs, and Oils in a stabilizing agent.

Available in 3 convenient ready-to-use sizes:
4 oz. • 32 oz. • 1 gallon

We Ship Nationwide • Dealer Inquiries Welcome



649 N CR 125 E
Arthur, IL 61911

Phone: 217-543-2288
Email: trailsidefarmarthur@gmail.com

NASSA

North American Shetland Sheepbreeders Association
<http://www.shetland-sheep.org>



Discover the delight of raising Shetland sheep:

- A Hardy, Heritage Breed
- Supportive Breed Organization
- Newborn Vigor & Great Mothers
- 11 Natural Colors of Soft Wool
- Existing Demand for Wool & Breeding Stock



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE

American Rabbit Breeders Assn.
Foggy Hollow Ranch
KW Cages
Sheepwalk Ranch

PARTNER

Metzer Farms
Murray McMurray Hatchery

STEWARDSHIP

Bauman's Fiber Farm
Bleak Hill Lincoln Longwools



American Cream Draft Horse Association



Find out for yourself why American Cream Drafts are so well known for their versatility, beauty and charm, and lovable temperament.

Contact us about how you can become part of their survival.

www.ACDHA.org
ACDHAwebsite@gmail.com



The "Cream" of Drafts, America's only native draft horse.

Support our advertisers! Their ads support the production of this Newsletter.



BRENDA ANDERSON
25743 CARROLL CREEK RD
CUSTER, SD 57730-9125
CELL: (605)440-0316
BusyEweFarm@gmail.com

- LAMB • RAW FLEECE
- COLORED FIBER • LOCKS
- YARNS AND MORE

@BUSYEWE

Find us on facebook!

It's all about the beef!

**Raise and Eat
The Best.**

www.lincolnred.org



Bleak Hill Lincoln Longwools

Registered Breeding Stock



Woolery * Blankets * Roving

15198 Bleak Hill Rd. Culpeper, VA 20190

WWW.BleakHillLincolnLongwools.com



**American
Romeldale/
CVM
Association**



Protecting the integrity of the Romeldale/CVM breed through registration, education, research, conservation and advancement of public awareness.

www.americanromeldale.org

americanromeldale@gmail.com

PRESERVING THE WORLD'S RAREST BREEDS



Spitzhauben

**PROTECT THE
FUTURE OF
POULTRY AT**

greenfirefarms.com

*Elegant and hardy
Swiss breed*

Order your spring chicks today.
Hatching eggs ship year-round.

call us: 866-954-2968

text us: 850-900-6355

@greenfirefarms