

# Red Wattle Hog Association Newsletter

winter 2014

Enclosed with our newsletter is a membership voting ballot to amend the RWHA by-laws that will change our annual enrollment date from Jan. 01 to March 31 and with no grace period. Your RWHA Board of Directors feels this change may make it easier on those wanting to renew, but at a difficult financial time coming right out of the holidays. The board made the temporary decision to allow membership renewals for 2014 until March 31 however to make the change permanent it requires our membership participation and vote. This means that everyone currently on the roll as a member will remain a member until March 31. That's 3 free months for everyone. Please mark your ballot and mail it in. We've made it easy for you by even providing the postage. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact any board member. Membership gives you updates on the RWHA progress, gives you an avenue to voice your opinions, provides information on the swine community in general, allows you to advertise your products and gives access to contact information on other breeders along with lots of other benefits. All members are urged to participate and to use what your membership entitles you to. The deadline for The Livestock Conservancy to receive your vote is **Feb. 28, 2014**. Votes received after that date will not be counted.

As an added bonus there will be a drawing from all ballots returned and the lucky winner will receive a personalized jacket from Café Press. There's a signature line at the bottom of the ballot so be sure to sign so we can tell who the lucky winner is. Vote, sign the ballot and put it in the mail. These ballots will be also be kept for possible future drawings that could be jackets, shirts, caps, RWHA badges, books, or something we know that our membership will enjoy or learn from.

Our badge or patch program is now up and running. You'll find order forms on our website in the section where all our forms are located. These are great for caps, shirts, jeans pockets, jackets, or wherever you want to show your Red Wattle pride. After expenses for materials and mailing, all profit will go to the new RWHA Scholarship program that will be awarded each year to help someone continue their education in an agricultural field. If you need order forms sent to you by snail mail, please let me or any board member know. We hope this is only the first of several fund raising projects for the future that will help the RWHA and all our members in different ways and will set higher standards for other associations as an example of good stewardship of the breed and the members.

Rules for the scholarship program can now be found on the RWHA website in the forum section. Click on RWHA News. Scroll down and click on 11/16/2013 Board of Directors Meeting. Click to open. The rules will also be placed as a tab on our home page for easier viewing. The Board of Directors is now accepting essays and we hope to hear from many applicants as future agriculture professionals. Please send your essays to any board member. All board members will review the essays and vote on the winner.

Last year the RWHA membership voted to support the Livestock Conservancy in their efforts to help recover the Choctaw Hog by making a financial donation. There were only 100-150 true Choctaw hogs known to exist. The recovery project is located on a small farm in Antlers, OK. Projects are now underway to dig ponds, build fences, shelters, and feeding and grazing areas. The RWHA membership should be proud that we all took part in this effort. Not long ago our Red Wattle was in the same situation and it's with determination, hard work, difficult decisions, and team support that Red Wattles are now coming back and reaching a healthy population. It's with proper stewardship that our breed is becoming more successful and we've all done our part to make it happen.

**Our hog population has now reached 2143 registered. That's an amazing accomplishment in just a few short years. And with wise breeding practices those registered hogs produce more registered offspring but more importantly they produce many more feeder/weaners/ or meat hogs. As we all know, these hogs are not pets no matter how much we grow attached to them. If they're not eaten the breed will not survive. There are many stories from successful Red Wattle pork producers. It's hard work and a different mindset but it can be done. In order to succeed, every breeder should develop a marketing strategy not only for registered hogs, but especially for pork production. Keeping livestock is expensive and no one will ever be able to make their program pay for itself by only selling registered hogs. The financial gain is in the pork. Making and keeping the breed as it should be is in the proper selection and registration. Everyone should begin by contacting their county extension agency to learn what the requirements are in their own state for selling pork products.**

**Our membership is currently at 158. That's also much more than the RWHA has ever had and we're continuing to grow. It's with all your support, dedication, participation, understanding, patience, and hard work that the Red Wattle breed and the RWHA are succeeding.**

**Our hog registration population has increased dramatically in just a few short years and growing more each day. The Livestock Conservancy has Red Wattles listed now as critical rather than endangered. That's a step up and we're not far away from the next step up. They determine our population by our registration numbers. However everyone also knows there are many hundreds more in our feeder/meat population, and many breeders who are not and have never been RWHA members and have never registered any hogs because their program is geared toward pork only. Those numbers are never counted. Everyone agrees our registered population is very important. However we all must be mindful that it's increased responsibly with exceptional Red Wattle hogs. Those are the ones that the public will see and remember and want for their own herds.**

**If you've received a new registration or transfer from the RWHA registry office since the last of November, 2013, you should have noticed that they are now embossed with a RWHA seal. This is being done to assure the registry office, owners, sellers, and buyers that they have an official RWHA registration. The registrations have always been an important part of ownership and they should be stored in a safe place. It's the member's responsibility to keep up with them. Transfer requests completed after late November, 2013, starting with registration number #4021, must have the emboss seal applied or they will not be honored. Original registrations must be turned in to the registry office for any transfer of ownership. This is being done for owner/seller/buyer protection and to assure they are selling or buying a registered red wattle hog. It's a good thing for all our members and future members, and will also help protect the integrity of the registration and transfer process. Any registrations or transfers completed prior to late November, 2013 are still valid and will be honored.**

**For registrations and transfers please send your requests and payment to: Mountain Niche Registry 397 Deep Creek Rd. Chehalis, WA. 98532. Payment should be made to Mountain Niche Registry- RWHA. For RWHA membership please send your requests and dues to: Kathy Bottorff, RWHA, 41 Jones Rd. Horse Cave, KY. 42749. Payment should be made to RWHA. The RWHA registry office can answer questions regarding our website but can-not give you help in any other area. It is a registry office that maintains our registry and website. For any other questions or concerns please feel free to contact any board member for assistance.**

The animal section of the RWHA website will soon begin to show previous owners of hogs. This is a task for our webmaster to complete and must be done on his time schedule as he has the time to devote to it since it will take several hours to complete. It will be completed very soon. As an example currently: You bred a boar or sow and it's registered and shows your name as the breeder and the owner. You sell that boar or sow to another member. Your name disappears as the owner and the new owner now shows up. Maybe that new owner sells the boar or sow again so that name disappears too. The pedigree on line will be amended now to show all owners of that boar, or sow. It can be important to gather as much information as possible when someone is considering adding a hog to the herd. Having all contacts listed will help gather that information.

Last summer ALBC, (American Livestock Breed Conservancy) changed their name to: The Livestock Conservancy. This was done to make doing business easier for everyone. If you haven't been to their website please check them out. They've made recent changes to their site to stay updated and make it easy to navigate. The site is full of helpful information for everyone.

Please remember to notify any board member if you have a registered hog that is no longer in production. (breeding to produce offspring). This could be because they are retired, injured, or deceased. They are never removed from the registry. Their information is needed for all pedigrees and for all breeders. Internally flagging their number helps the RWHA know how many registered hogs are still producing and helps to keep our population number more accurate.

Don't forget about the Red Wattle Hog Association face book, monitored by Theresa Schieffelbein and Cindy Huggins. It's a comfortable site for red wattle breeders to ask questions, share experiences, brag, browse, learn or teach. Please also feel free to ask questions or make comments about breed standards, rules, or anything related to the RWHA. Any board member will do their best to answer publically, however if the question or comment requires a lengthy or in depth reply, we may need to contact you personally so there's no interference with the normal flow of other conversations. We hope you all will take advantage of face book. It's another great tool for you to use. Also remember your board of directors is here to help you. You can contact any board member at any time by email or phone. The contact information is listed on our website in the forum section.

For those of you that don't use the Red Wattle Hog Association face-book and don't know of this yet, please google **Fund A Farmer.org**. They are offering a grant of up to \$2,500 for farm/animal improvement. This can be used in several different ways. Improving pasture, fencing, shelters just to name a few. The grant is for improving your farm to improve the lives of your livestock. It's free money and the application looks easy to do. If you don't use the computer, please contact me or any board member and we'll make sure you get a copy of the application and help as much as possible. The deadline is May 1, 2014 and grants will be awarded by mid-August, 2014.

Bon Appetit magazine also ran articles in their Jan. '14 edition highlighting heirloom pork, pasture raised chicken and grass fed beef. No particular breed was mentioned but they made very good points that we all should know and use in our pork selling strategies. If you haven't seen the article, please feel free to contact any board member and we'll make sure you get a copy.



## **Bloodlines With-in Breeds**

written by **D. P. Sponenberg** 1/10/2014

Breed conservation is not just about the numbers. The numbers happen to be the easiest single measure of endangerment of any breed, or the relative risk of losing it, but the numbers are really just the tip of the iceberg. It is important to realize this point if breed conservation is to succeed in the long haul. In addition to numbers, several other aspects of population dynamics within breeds are important, and are notoriously difficult to reduce down to a number. One of these is how the population is made up of strains and bloodlines, and just how these subunits interact with one another under the care of their owners.

The closer that strains and bloodlines are considered, the more difficult they can become. Concepts such as bloodlines, strains, and families within a breed are extremely important. They assure that the population is subdivided usefully into little pockets that are somewhat distantly related, and this can assure that all members of the breed have potential breeding partners that will not lead to inbred offspring. This can very much contribute to long-term survival of a breed.

Defining concepts like “bloodline” or “Strain” can itself be strain! The key idea is that within breeds, there are subfamilies that share few or no ancestors. These are almost “sub-breeds” in a sense, but breed type and identity are shared among them. So, while they are somewhat different from one another, they should all be easily recognizable as the same breed. A bloodline or strain is a subgroup of a breed, in which the animals all share some level of relationship that is close and more obvious than it is to the breed as a whole. To achieve this, a herd needs to have been kept in isolation for several generations (likely at least three or four), without introductions of outside breeding stock.

While isolation is essential to making a distinct bloodline, there is more to breeds than bloodlines! There is absolutely nothing wrong with the strategy of a genetically open herd, the only point here is that it does not lead to a distinct bloodline.

Most bloodlines bear the stamp of an individual breeder. Every breeder is going to shape the general look and finer points of type within the larger umbrella of the overall breed type. The selection decisions that a breeder makes do this shaping, and each breeder is going to emphasize slightly different characteristics, with the result that the final product is ever so slightly different.

The detail of bloodline definition can get tricky. Years ago my college roommate and I had a herd of Texas Longhorn cattle. We were working with one strain (Yates cattle), and even within that overall family descended from a single breeder, were other sub-strains that had been tended by yet other breeders who had bought foundation animals from the original Yates herd. One of these was the Schaleben line, and these were incredibly distinctive, to the point that a Schaleben cow could easily be identified out of a herd of Texas Longhorns, even if they were all Yates Longhorns. The strain uniqueness in this case, and in most cases, came from a combination of foundation effect as well as the selection pressures put on the animals. The first question then is, “is there a bloodline involved at all?” The answer is “yes” if there is a history of four generations of closed breeding. This is much more involved than just saying a bloodline is animals “produced by such and such a breeder”. Many breeders that have more open herds produce excellent and useful animals, but they are not a bloodline in the sense that is being dealt with here.

Bloodlines can be “lost” in two ways. One is that they can be crossed onto other lines, and then lose their distinctive isolation. In a way, this really isn’t “lost” to the breed because the genetics are still there, just not in the original distinct package.

The second way is that the breeder quits, and the animals have not been used by others. In some situations it is because a breeder simply refused to make them available to others. In this case, the potential genetic contribution of the bloodline to the breed is indeed lost to the breed. Rare or otherwise overlooked bloodlines can succumb to this fate, and breed associations should be alert to these situations so that they don't result in losses to the breed.

The second question is "Is the bloodline at risk of being lost?" If it has been widely used within the breed, then its contribution is not at risk of being lost, and nothing needs to be done to assure its survival. In contrast, if it has not been used widely, if it risks being lost, it may well be worth the effort to assure its survival so that it can be used within the breed in the future.

To save a bloodline, the goal should be to generate some animals that go back at least 75% to that bloodline. This can be done by carefully planning mating of the last of a bloodline. A serious threat occurs when a rare bloodline is encountered and might get swallowed up if just bred back willy-nilly into the breed without a specific plan. This is where line-breeding can help to salvage the genetics of the animals of the bloodline as a distinct group. One situation that faces local or landrace breeds is that occasionally breeders encounter pockets of unregistered animals that have escaped previous notice of the breed association. These are likely to be fairly unique, and when truly of the breed in question they offer a great deal to the breed. It is essential though, to focus in on the question of whether these are truly of the breed or not. In order to be included in the breed, they should (generally) have good, strong breed type. That is, they should not "look" like something else! The only reason for bringing them in would be to enhance the breed, and if the type on the animals is not right, then they do not do that, but instead do the opposite.

One reason for making sure breeds have various bloodlines is to assure that genetic variation is available to breeders needing to make decisions on which animals to use. It makes a huge difference, especially to rare breeds, if all of the replacement males are coming from a single herd, as opposed to the situation in which all herds are providing males for the next generation. In the first situation, the single popular herd will eventually overwhelm the breed and make it into that one image. In the second, the breed's genetic diversity is much more likely to be adequately maintained.

If animals are selected strictly on the basis of genetic merit for production without any regard for how they fit into the overall population, they very well may be out of a single or a few strains. Picking out the high performers for several generations in a row, and then using these extensively throughout the entire breed, leaves the breed with everything related to these few because all animals are related to the few high performers. At that point the breeders have truly boxed the breed in on itself because no unrelated matings are possible. A most powerful example of this is the Holstein dairy cattle breed which was exquisitely selected for production. This breed has an international population of millions, but curiously has an effective population size (think of this as the number of genetic individuals in the population) of only 25 or so because everything is so closely related. Every time related animals mated, that effective population size goes down. So when everything is related to everything else, the effective population size can plummet rapidly, and with that goes at least some option for future selection of the breed as well as its long-term viability.

The "fix" for this situation is somewhat different for rare breeds than common ones. In both types of breeds the issue of population structure demands that attention be paid to how animals are related. Selection for performance must be done, but with consideration for family structure. So for example in my own goat herd it is important for me to select the best son from each buck I use (six per year) rather than the best six bucklings. If I use the latter strategy I would likely end up with one or two sets of three half-brothers and four or five of the bucks will not have provided replacements for the next generation. That can go on for a short while but eventually it will take the herd down the path of obligatory inbreeding, and the performance and reproductive deterioration that goes with it.

In this example, the different buck line become similar to 'strains' (and in my herd they actually are), and assuring replacement animals from each of them also assures that the herd remains genetically diverse. The end result is that the offspring of one buck can generally be used to pair up with the offspring of one of the others with little resultant inbreeding. That's good for the goats and good for the breed.

I don't know if Wenglar, Timberline, or Prentice were distinct from other Red Wattles because I just don't know the individuals involved or the hogs involved. I realize that this gets confusing but some folks consider a bloodline to be whatever hogs someone owns. If that person is constantly trading hogs around, then they don't really have a "bloodline" in the sense that it is all that distinct from everyone else's hogs.

In the case of "found" hogs, you do need to be careful. Some of these may well be genuine Red Wattle hogs. Usually there will be some sort of history of the herd that suggests this. And importantly, the type of the hog will be right. There is no sense in bringing in "found" hogs that don't have the usual Red Wattle type. Basically they have to be more than red and wattled to be a Red Wattle hog!

Written by D. P. Sponenberg at the request of Kathy Bottorff, RWHA sec./tres.

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## [Making it work on Golden Valley](#)



By: Charlie & Jenifer Kraus

Larry Sorrell has always said in order to save the Red Wattle breed we have to eat them. I purchased my first Red Wattle from Larry and Madonna Sorell as a bred gilt in the spring of 2010. She farrowed 11 piglets. Out of those piglets I registered 1 gilt and she had to go through the recovery program. The rest were sold as pastured red wattle hogs and 3 were sold as unregistered gilts for a commercial grower.

The most important part of raising my red wattles is raising good quality meat from sound animals. Good litters from good, sound sows that don't go to pieces after a few litters is what we are after. We need hearty stock that can live in simple shelters and go out to graze in all kinds of weather. Calm temperament and gentleness allow us to get by without elaborate facilities.

These are the sort of hogs that make money for us, so only hogs with all these traits are the ones we register. In almost 5 years I have only sold two registered animals off of my property. Most everyone that is interested in the hogs is not interested in the papers, but in how well they work on a real farm and how well they eat on the plate. I still want to keep my stock as registered but it has not been a huge importance to me to register piglets as it has been to produce pastured pork for customers that want the super delicious meat we brag about.

## Teaching picture: Uneven teats, blind teats.



This is a picture of poor teat confirmation. Notice a few teats are close together, and smaller. Good teats are spaced evenly to give room in the glands for the milk, and also room for the piglets to nurse. Besides being too close, the smaller teats are not formed well and probably would not function. Those teats are commonly called blind teats.

Every breeder is going to see something like this and it's why we all should check. It's not just about numbers. Picture your litter of 9 to 12 trying to nurse here and you'll see that some of them are going to be left out and not get good nourishment to grow or even survive.

Teat confirmation doesn't affect the taste and this one will grow up to taste great but it's not one anyone would want to keep as breeding stock.

Teat count can be hereditary and may be a factor to consider breeding toward. It also means that both gilts and boar teats are important even though boars don't provide milk. Don't get unrealistic and keep in mind the average number of Red Wattle piglets. A higher teat count does not mean you'll get larger litters.

Everyone will get piglets with odd teats. Odd numbers or odd placement, and even non-functioning. Just remember they still taste great and move on. It's not the end of the world. Choose your best using all the breed standards and watch them grow if you're thinking about registration. All piglets change dramatically as they grow. Some get even better, and some crash as they grow.

The board will be placing educational pictures on the RWA website to assist everyone and work in conjunction with the breed standards and card grading system. They will be on the same tab with the breed standards to make reading and comparisons easier. Please think about sending in pictures to help with this project.





This picture goes with the article written by Alison Martin in the Livestock Conservancy newsletter. Although the article is written about the importance of registration, the sow shown in this picture would not be eligible for registration due to lack of wattles, which are a requirement.



## Why Registration Matters

By Alison Martin

A recent question from a Livestock Conservancy member raised an important point that may resonate with many of you. “The Guinea Hogs that we have are all unregistered; registration, correct me if I’m missing some important aspect, seems more important if one is wanting to sell breeding stock instead of pork products,” writes a member in North Carolina.

Some of you will empathize with him – he’s raising pigs for his own freezer, selling to family and friends, and hoping to build a side market for charcuterie, as so many are now doing with Guinea Hogs. Why pay the extra money for registered stock? After all, the folks who raised these pigs 150 years ago on homesteads across the South sure didn’t register their pigs. Such a process didn’t even exist. And another thing, some breed registries take so long to get the paperwork back, is it really worth the hassle?

Others among you will feel quite differently – you may have spent years working to conserve your own breeds and build their numbers, using breed registration and promotion as tools to encourage interest and value in the breed. Maybe you’re the breed registrar and have dedicated hours, months, and years to making sure everyone gets their registration papers and helping folks use the pedigrees to make breeding decisions.

But why does registration really matter?

\* 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. The Livestock Conservancy calls this “crossbreeding 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, and to keep up with registrations. Breed registries are also the Conservancy’s main source of information to prioritize breed conservation – if animals aren’t registered, then it becomes very challenging to track improvements or declines in breed conservation status.

\* Breed promotion. Maintaining and selecting for breed characteristics, ensures that the same things that attracted 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, or, who knows what the future will bring. Let's look at theoretical breeder Ms. Suarez, who raises pigs – let's call them the Super Heritage Breed. She is successful building a market for her animals, is able to increase the size of her herd, and naturally she keeps her best gilts for breeding. As Ms. Suarez learns what her customers want, she selects the gilts who can pass those characteristics to their offspring and who also developed into great mothers. Not only does her herd get bigger, they get better. In fact, in five years Ms. Suarez has a reputation for having really good quality breeding stock, and other breeders approach her wanting to buy a boar. But she never anticipated selling breeding stock, so none of her pigs are registered. Wanting to make extra money by selling registered breeding stock, she asks the Super Heritage registry for the procedure, only to be told that they have a closed herdbook and that her wonderful breeding stock cannot be registered. By not planning ahead, Ms. Suarez can't take advantage of the market for purebred breeding stock, even as a sideline to her meat business. She has also inadvertently removed her stock from the gene pool, and the improvements she has made to her stock are lost to the breed rather than providing a lasting contribution.

If your current breeding stock is registered, thank you for contributing to the future of the breed! If not, consider getting your registrations up to date or adding some registered breeding animals to your herd over time. Doing so will help ensure that your herd's legacy will influence the breed for generations to come.

Alison Martin is the Program Director for The Livestock Conservancy. She can be reached at [amartin@albc-usa.org](mailto:amartin@albc-usa.org).

Photo Caption: The Livestock Conservancy depends on breed registries as its main source of information to prioritize breed conservation. Pictured are a Red Wattle sow and piglets owned by Josh Wendland in Barnes, Kansas.

The Livestock Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect nearly 200 breeds of livestock and poultry from extinction. Included are sheep, donkeys, cattle, goats, horses, pigs, rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. Founded in 1977, The Livestock Conservancy is America's leading organization working to conserve historic breeds and genetic diversity in livestock. To learn more about the Conservancy's work and to become a member, visit [www.livestockconservancy.org](http://www.livestockconservancy.org).

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