

Slide 1



Slide 2



Questions to get started: How many of you have heard of the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy? How many of you have heard of heritage breeds? If you haven't heard of either, you are in luck. If you have heard of us, or have heard of heritage breeds – I hope this presentation will help you to delve deeper into the organization and into the topic of heritage breed conservation.

Slide 3



So WHO is ALBC?

Slide 4

Who is ALBC?

- ALBC = American Livestock Breeds Conservancy
- National non-profit (501-C3)
- Membership organization
- Protects 189 livestock and poultry breeds from extinction
- Focuses on genetic conservation
- Works with farmers and others around the country to preserve heritage breeds
- Established in 1977 (35 years of conservation success)
- Headquartered in Pittsboro, NC



ALBC has members across the country and internationally. The highest rates for membership are in the Southeast.



The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect over **180 breeds of livestock and poultry from extinction**. ALBC works with farmers, chefs, historians, consumers, and others around the nation to protect genetic diversity in agriculture. Founded in 1977, ALBC is the pioneer organization in the U.S. working to conserve historic breeds and genetic diversity in livestock. ALBC’s national office is located in Pittsboro, NC.

Slide 5

ALBC’s Mission

- Strengthening the future of agriculture through the genetic conservation and promotion of **endangered breeds** of livestock and poultry.




Donkeys Cattle Goats Horses Sheep

Pigs Rabbits Chickens Ducks Geese

ALBC’s mission is pretty straightforward – the mission is the genetic conservation and promotion of heritage breeds. However, implementing this mission is anything but straightforward. ALBC works with both livestock and poultry breeds. Included in ALBC’s work are donkeys, cattle, goats, horses, sheep, pigs, rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys.

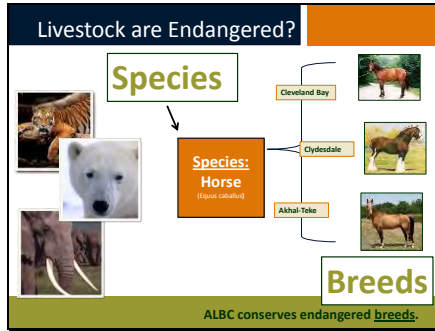
Slide 6

Endangered Livestock & Poultry



If you didn’t answer that you are familiar with heritage breeds, or ALBC, you might be scratching your head and thinking – “Cows and chickens are endangered? I see them all the time.”

Slide 7



You've probably heard of endangered species such as pandas, tigers, and elephants – but there are also endangered BREEDS. Specifically, 21% of the world's 8,000 livestock breeds are in danger of extinction. ALBC works with **breeds** of livestock that are endangered. (Another way of looking at it is that dogs aren't endangered, but specific breeds may be threatened because of loss of popularity or decline in numbers.)

Slide 8

Why are breeds endangered?

- Modern agriculture favors the use of a few specialized breeds.
- Breeds that don't "fit the mold" are being lost.
- Breeds that are being lost contain valuable traits and genetics that may be needed in the future.
- Breeds = **GENETIC DIVERSITY!**
- Loss of Breeds = Loss of Genetic Diversity.

One breed


Out of many

Today, modern agriculture favors the use of a few highly specialized breeds selected for maximum output. This is how agriculture is able to feed the world! However, this selection is leading to a decline in numbers of a large variety of traditional breeds. These breeds once nourished the nation, and they retain many valuable traits such as fertility, survivability, foraging abilities, parasite resistance, and more. These unique breeds are a reflection of genetic diversity. Losing breeds means losing genetic diversity.

Slide 9

Why does genetic diversity matter?

- Agriculture is like a stock portfolio – **diversifying secures our assets.**
- **Genetic diversity = Agriculture's Security and Future**
- **Example of not diversifying:** Irish Potato Famine (1840s) – The crop was all one variety of potato. Blight hit the one variety and the entire crop was lost. Nearly a million people died of starvation.



The slide features a pie chart titled "A Diversified Beef Breeds Portfolio" with segments for Angus, Hereford, Simmental, Charolais, Gelbvieh, and Limousin. Below the chart is a photograph of hands holding several potatoes of different varieties.

You might ask, “So why does genetic diversity matter?” In any biological system – genetic diversity helps maintain balance and security. Imagine our agricultural system as a stock portfolio. If we invest all our currency in a limited number of breeds, we are at risk of losing all our investments. If we embrace diversifying our agricultural portfolio through rare breed conservation, our assets are diversified. We need only look to history for the consequences of monocultures. The Great Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s killed nearly 1 million people. The Irish had planted one variety of potato, the Lumper, which was specifically hit by this blight. Without diversity, they lost EVERYTHING!

Slide 10

How does ALBC conserve heritage breeds?



The diagram consists of six circular icons arranged in a circle, connected by lines. The icons represent: Research (microscope), Outreach & Promotion (person with sign), Rescues (animal in cage), Learning & Documenting (person with book), Assisting with Gene Banks & DNA Collection (DNA helix), and Education (person with book). The background of the slide is a collage of various heritage livestock and poultry breeds.

So how does ALBC ensure that heritage breeds of livestock and poultry don't go extinct? ALBC serves as a “clearinghouse” for everything “heritage breed.” ALBC provides educational materials, information, resources, training, consultation, promotional support, research, and more to equip farmers with the tools necessary to successfully raise and market these breeds.

Slide 11

Current Projects

South Carolina Goat Rescue

- Discovered an isolated and unique population of Spanish goats in SC.
- Researched history and documented phenotype
- Removed select goats from island and placed in a breeding program.
- Breeding program has produced offspring, now going to farms.

Research

Rescues

South Carolina Goat Rescue – Through its vast networks, ALBC discovered an isolated population of Spanish goats on an island in South Carolina. The population had been isolated for more than 40 years. ALBC researched the history of the population and documented the phenotype of the animals on the island. ALBC worked with technical advisor Phil Sponenberg to determine the priority goats to remove from the island. (All of the babies were being predated by alligators and wild hogs, making removal the only way for the population to survive.) ALBC removed several of the goats from the island and placed them in a breeding program at Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina. Two generations have been born off-island. Goats are now being transferred from the breeding program to farms in the Southeast. This particular strain of goats is very important because it’s one of only two known Southern strains of Spanish goats – making them superbly adapted to the South.

Slide 12

Current Projects

Master Breeder Program

- Through our vast network of national contacts, ALBC has identified old-time breeders who are experts in their fields.
- ALBC interviews and records first-hand information from these individuals, documenting information for the next generation.
- ALBC publishes the information obtained from Master Breeders, and teaches workshops and clinics to share the information.

Research

Learning & Documenting

Education

This program is based on the fundamental premise that the existence and continuity of “old-time” (Master) breeders’ knowledge is critical to conservation. There is an emerging group of interested and capable future stewards who would benefit by having access to the knowledge and experience of current Master Breeders to ensure continued conservation. This project includes in-the-field interviews with recognized Master Breeders, documentation of their methods, and publication of the findings. This

program also includes the development of breed profiles, which provide concise information about individual breeds, and workshops to disseminate the information gleaned through the Master Breeder interviews. ALBC has already published materials obtained from Master Breeders of chickens and turkeys, and is nearly finished with the same for waterfowl. Investigative research for swine, cattle, and rabbits is well underway.

Slide 13

Current Projects

Marketing, Outreach, and Promotion

- ALBC is working with partners to define "Heritage" as a marketing term for each species of livestock and poultry
- ALBC travels to multiple fairs and shows each year. At each event, ALBC provides lectures and educational seminars on heritage breeds.
- ALBC provides free materials and resources to help members and heritage breed producers to market their products.

Outreach & Promotion

Education

The demand for ALBC's knowledge and services is growing exponentially. ALBC takes its expertise and services to those people around the country who are eager to hear about heritage breeds. In 2012, this initiative will take ALBC's technical programs staff to a variety of national conferences where they do presentations on rare breeds. This program will also include ALBC-sponsored workshops and lectures across the country. ALBC also provides marketing assistance to heritage breed farmers through its newsletter, directory, and online resources. Providing educational lectures and workshop is a key component of our outreach initiative.

Slide 14



Current Projects

Saving Endangered Hog Breeds

- ALBC is currently working on a national swine project with several university partners.
- Education, research, carcass evaluations, training, and DNA analysis are all part of the project.
- The three-year initiative will produce materials that heritage breed swine producers can use to raise, breed, market, and sell heritage pork to consumers.

Outreach & Promotion

Education

Research

DNA Collection

Learning & Documenting

The goal of this project is to ultimately make Heritage Pork production an economically viable enterprise for small and mid-scale farmers, to increase endangered breed swine populations so that they are numerically and genetically secure, and to develop models for pastured, heritage swine production that can be applied nationally. ALBC has received funding from the USDA to complete bloodline identification, breeding strategies, and carcass evaluations for the heritage hog breeds identified on the ALBC *Conservation Priority List*.

Slide 15



Securing Heritage Breeds

- ✓ Protects our food system;
- ✓ Ensures genetic diversity for the evolution of agriculture;
- ✓ Conserves valuable genetic traits
- ✓ Captures our heritage, history, and culture;
- ✓ Maintains breeds of animals that are well-suited for sustainable agriculture;
- ✓ Gives small family farms a competitive edge.

Through these projects and by working to conserve heritage or traditional breeds of livestock and poultry – ALBC

- Protects our food system by securing genetic resources
- Ensures broad genetic diversity for the evolution of agriculture
- Conserves valuable genetic traits such as disease resistance, survival, self-sufficiency, fertility, longevity, foraging ability, maternal instincts
- Captures our heritage, history, and culture;
- Maintains breeds of animals that are well-suited for sustainable, grass-based and organic systems; and
- Gives small family farms raising heritage breeds a competitive edge

Slide 16

How can I help?

- Become a member of ALBC
- Use rare breed products (eggs, meat, fibers, etc.)
- Visit a rare breed farm to get an up-close view of what raising these breeds is all about
- Educate yourself about heritage breeds and their importance
- Support businesses that use heritage breeds (restaurants, fiber artists, etc.)




Want to help conserve heritage breeds? You don't have to be a farmer, or own land. There is a role for each of us in helping conserve these breeds for future generations. Become a member of ALBC and learn more about heritage breeds. Your membership helps support heritage breed conservation, and you'll learn more about heritage breeds through the membership benefits.

Use ALBC's online directory to get acquainted with farmers that raise heritage breeds in your area. Buy their products – eggs, meats, fleeces, etc. This helps the farmers to stay in business and continue raising these breeds. Visit a rare breed farm to learn more about the enterprise and the farmers that raise these breeds. Support businesses that use heritage breeds.

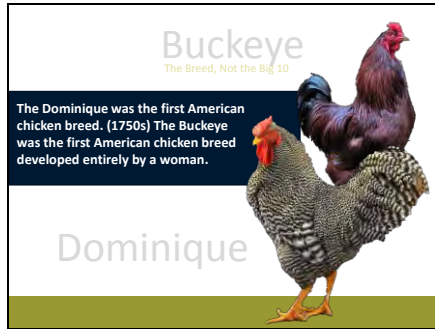
Slide 17

Meet the Breeds



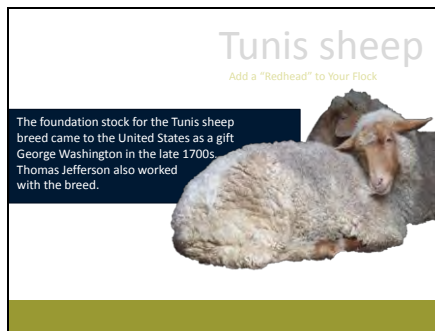
Now you know a bit more about ALBC and why breeds of livestock need to be conserved – let's meet some of the specific breeds and learn about their unique stories and histories. ALBC works with over 189 breeds of livestock and poultry.

Slide 18



The Dominique chicken is credited as being the first chicken breed developed in America. Today, there are fewer than 5,000 breeding Dominiques in the US. Although categorized as a dual-purpose breed, Dominiques are first and foremost egg producers with hens historically averaging 230-275 small- to medium-sized brown eggs. The Buckeye is the only American breed of chicken developed entirely by a woman, Ms. Nettie Metcalf of Ohio. The Buckeye, which takes its name from the Buckeye state, is a dual-purpose breed of chicken with a deep, lustrous red color of plumage.

Slide 19



The foundation stock for the Tunis sheep breed was imported to the United States as a gift by the Bey of Tunis by George Washington in the late 1700s. (fat-tailed sheep formed part of the foundation stock). References to these sheep appear in letters, journals, and farm records of some of the leading agriculturists and citizens of the day, including John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Peters, Charles Roundtree, and George Washington Curtis. Tunis sheep have striking red faces and legs, affectionately earning them the "redhead" nickname. The Tunis is a very docile dual purpose breed that has been selected primarily for meat production.

Slide 20



A true American original, the American rabbit is one of only six rabbit breeds developed in the United States. It was first exhibited in 1917 by Mr. Lewis H. Salsbury of Pasadena, California. The American is a large breed with mature bucks weighing 9 to 11 pounds and does weighing 10 to 12 pounds. Americans are recognized in both blue and white varieties. The breed is an ideal choice for anyone looking for food, fur, or fancy.

Slide 21



During the American Revolution, Marsh Tackies were used by many of the troops of the famous “Swamp Fox”, Francis Marion. Known as the “Father of American Guerrilla Warfare,” Marion not only was a great tactician but his troops inadvertently had the additional technical advantage of being mounted on horses superbly adapted to the rough and swampy terrain of the region. Marion and his men likely used the Tackies as dragoon horses- meaning they would ride them to the site of the battle, get off the horse to fight, and then get back on the horse to take them to the next battle. Although the exact origin of the Marsh Tacky horse is unclear, it can be attributed to Spanish stock that arrived on the coast and islands of South Carolina as “drop offs” by Spanish explorers, and stock brought over by Spanish settlers in the 1500’s. The Marsh Tacky is a sturdy, well-balanced, and easy-keeping horse ranging from 13.5 to 15 hands.

Slide 22



Once commonplace on farms in the southeastern United States, Cotton Patch geese were used to weed cotton and corn fields up until the 1950s. Cotton Patch geese are remembered in the rural south for helping many farmer families survive the Great Depression by providing a regular source of meat, eggs, and grease. The breed is a light-to medium-sized goose. Because of their smaller size, they have the ability to adjust to hot weather better than most larger breeds of geese.

Slide 23



This breed became well-established in colonial America, spreading as far down the coast as far as Florida. Devon oxen were the draft animals of choice for pioneers on the Oregon Trail. By the 1950s, however, the Devon breed was nearly extinct due to the increasing market for beef cattle. The breeders who continued to select their animals for the traditional purposes of milk, meat, and draft helped give rise to today's American Milking Devon cattle breed. There is also a Devon cattle breed which retains more beef characteristics. Milking Devon cattle are ruby red with black-tipped white horns. Cows average 1,100 pounds and bulls 1,600 pounds. Today, the Milking Devon is prized by artisan cheese and butter makers for its high butter-fat milk.

Slide 24



Spanish goats are hardy and rugged, thriving on rough forage and in difficult environments. They have excellent resistance to internal parasites. Goats range in weight from 50–200 pounds, with the largest animals representing strains that have been selected over many decades for meat production. Spanish goats are usually horned. Spanish goats can be any color that is found in goats, and color variation, even in single herds, can be dazzling.

Slide 25



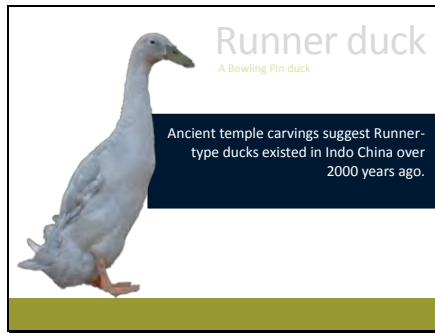
The Bourbon Red is an attractive bird for either exhibition or just for the backyard. They are active foragers and do well in pastured production systems. Weights range from 14 pounds for young hens to 23 pounds for young toms. They make great Heritage Turkeys for Thanksgiving!

Slide 26



An English breed, Gloucestershire Old Spot pigs, were often found on small farms where they were the "pig-of-all-trades" used for cleaning excess whey from cheesemaking, harvesting windfall apples from the orchards, and gleaning the residue from the cider press. The breed's reputation as an excellent grazer and forager earned it the nicknames "cottage pig" and "orchard pig." British legend suggests that the beloved "orchard pig's" spots are nothing more than bruises caused by falling apples in the orchard.

Slide 27



The Runner, also known as the "Indian Runner," has a long history as a multi-purpose breed. The Runner duck is a prolific layer, producing over 200 white eggs a year. On the farmstead, the Runner is great for pest control.

Slide 28



The primary function of this breed has always been to produce draft mules. Mammoth Jacks are sturdy and tall, with massive legs and large, well-made heads. Their ears are especially long, often measuring 33" from tip to tip. Weights range between 900 and 1,200 pounds.

Slide 29

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Questions and Sharing



The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy