



WINTER 2022

# RED WATTLE HOG ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Image courtesy of Mollie Steffy-Smith

## Open Member Meeting Discussing Breed Standards

The new board has been working only 2 ½ months but it has been a busy time.

There was an email invitation sent out to members about a zoom meeting addressing breed standards. This board is very appreciative of the members that took the time to make their voices and ideas heard. Members Jonathan Mast, Jim Brickson, Ryan Kolodziej, Amanda McCabe, Angela Briltz, Becky Burkheart, Brad Kahler, Dustin Rice, Kristal Burdick, Shelly Robb, Troy Bassett, Mollie Steffy-Smith and all members of the board attended. There were a few members that chose to listen and not sign in so their names are not listed. It was very much appreciated by the members of the board that people were willing to put their ideas up for discussion! We got quite a few very good ideas and will work hard to take them all into consideration and get a proposal written up for membership review before the members meeting.

This meeting was called to order on 01-07-2022 at 7:03pm CDT by President Joe McCabe.

The minutes and the treasurers report were read (you will find them printed below)

The members then took turns speaking. After all members had the chance to speak the meeting was adjourned at 7:50PM. We hope to have more of these meetings for member input in the future so watch your emails!

### REMINDER

**ALL MEMBERSHIP DUES NEED TO BE  
RECEIVED BY MARCH 31ST!**

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## The board meeting on December 29th 2021:

This board voted to work with a lawyer to clarify our legal rights and responsibilities regarding our by-laws, complaints and obtaining our legal status. These meetings were beneficial in pointing us in the right direction as far as our legal status goes. This meeting saved us time in the long run because we will not have to do the research or pursue the wrong paths before finding the right ones. We are applying for a 501: C-5 exemption as a non-profit. This is an ag exemption that covers the preservation and support of a rare breed. This legal exemption will help us with liability in several areas that we are now lacking safeguards.

There has been some concern that crossbred animals were being registered. There is no actual proof that this is happening. No buyers came forward stating that the animals didn't meet the minimum registration standards. We are happy to look into things further if a member comes forward with proof. We cannot move forward with only rumors to go on. Animals cannot be registered before aged 8 weeks. This is true however there is no rule that they cannot be sold before that. The animals in question were sold at 6 weeks and registered at 8 weeks. No actual rule was broken. We cannot make up rules as we go. We must go with the rules that are currently in place.



## The board meeting on December 29th 2021 (continued):

It has also been brought up that your current secretary/treasurer has stolen association funds. The truth of it is that on an especially busy day, Theresa Schieffelbein got off of work, and had to travel to a town about an hour away to get the labels for the newsletters and then get to the printer to pick up the newsletters before the printer closed. In her hurry to get it all done, she stopped by her house after work to change, grab the association debit card out of the file and ran out the door. In doing this, she left her own wallet with her personal debit card and cash on the counter. While in the office supply store, she put the labels and a Classic Coke on the not thinking about the method of payment. As soon as she read the receipt, she noticed the mistake and the very next day sent the money for the Coke to the bank in a deposit and made note of it in the association banking register. The sitting board of the time was told of the mistake and no action was taken. When the issue was brought up again, the board was given copies of the receipt for the Coke (2.39) and the deposit dated

**Farming is a  
profession of hope**

BRIAN BRENT

the following day for \$2.50. The board was able to review the receipt, banking statements and the spreadsheets, and no money was found to be missing. Theresa Schieffelbein extended her apologies and the board voted it as resolved. Theresa Schieffelbein abstained from voting. The process of complaints was brought up. The lawyer that we reviewed the process with us and stated that although the complaint processes are not criminal proceedings, the accused member has a fundamental right to the presumption of innocence and has the right to confront their accuser. While the process for complaints will no doubt be updated and clarified, the board will not be able to guarantee a complainant's anonymity. A member wishing to file a complaint will not only have to come forward but do so with proof of wrongdoing. We can only serve to verify facts brought before us. We cannot search for proof of rumors brought before us. We want all our members to be assured of a fair process.

As always, questions, concerns or ideas can be brought before the board by contacting any of the board members.





Image courtesy of Nick Miller

*This was written by a long time Large Black breeder....but it applies to any breed of hog. Mr. Work spent over 20 years teaching and longer raising pigs. Mr. Work has been gone for a number of years but this writing was generously shared with us by his family. Marc Howe gets a big thank you for finding this article and bringing it to our attention.*

## A Simple Lesson in Genetics

As I've read the on-going discussion dealing with purebred, crossbred pigs and inbreeding coefficients I have decided to add my bit of knowledge. This is basic genetics as taught to me in college and a lifetime of experience, observation, trial and error. All living plants and animals reproduce and pass on their characteristics by genetics. For simplicity's sake, we will not break this down to alleles, DNA, etc. Each species has its own set of genetics, called a gene pool. For example, all the pigs in the world share one gene pool. There can be no other genes ever added to this pig gene pool, unless there is a mutation, which is rare, or through genetic manipulation such as a what most call a GMO (genetically modified organism). We will leave those issues aside. Within this gene pool of pigs are different breeds. These breeds were developed by individuals over time in the quest to breed what they saw as their perfect pig. Each of these breeds then inherently became a gene pool in and of itself, for example, the Large Black breed. Unless someone brings in new genes through an outside breed, which is against breed by-laws (and a cheap and ineffective shortcut to quasi improvement), there are only going to be genes from the original Large Black gene pool.



## Suggestions?

The following articles were sent to us by members. We are incredibly grateful to them for their submissions. These articles are not necessarily endorsed by the board but they are ideas worth sharing with you.

If any of our members have any articles that they wish to share, or ideas for articles that you would like to see please forward them to me at [redwattles@hotmail.com](mailto:redwattles@hotmail.com)!



## A Simple Lesson in Genetics (continued):

You cannot make new genes, just select for characteristics that show up when specific genes come together and express themselves. We know that half the genes of the newborn offspring come from the boar and half from the sow, always. Each of those halves is a random half of the genes available from each parent. They come together and become the genes of the new offspring. Each family has its own gene pool (for example, Majestic, Super, Noble Sam, etc. have their own gene pool), and should show similarities of the breed. They should also show differences, which are good for the breed. Why do we select at all? It is a random half from each parent. With purebred animals we try to match these matings to what we think will produce better offspring than their parents. Since we cannot see the actual genes, otherwise known as the genotype of an animal, we have to go by the phenotype (genotype + environment affects), which is the characteristics of the animal that we can physically see such as muscling, structure, nipple count, etc., and expressed as growth rate, instinct, disposition, mothering ability, etc. Why do we not always get the results we expect?

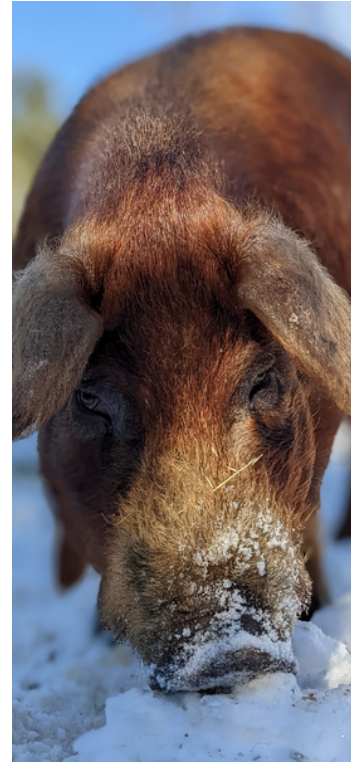
First, most physical traits are affected by more than one set of genes, called an additive effect. Second, depending on the random  $\frac{1}{2}$  from each parent, we get good or great results. It is fairly simple to guess the color the purebred will be, especially if it is a red, white, or black breed, even then, you may see some variation in color tones of say red or black. And, the first initial cross of two purebred breeds is relatively predictable, more so than resulting crosses of this F1 generation. Many other characteristics are less observable and also affected by the environment. How do we have more predictable results? Pick offspring that are more like each other, usually relatives. Why, because within a family there is more likelihood that many of the genes are already similar. This is good if they are characteristics that are beneficial to the breed. This, called line-breeding, tends to concentrate genes into a smaller variable gene pool, thus there are fewer genetic variations, so they are more predictable, called prepotent. The offspring of these prepotent animals are more predictable. Why the bad rap on line-breeding? First, many have never learned their genetics.



## A Simple Lesson in Genetics (continued):

Second, it is like fire, it can warm your house or burn it down. The smaller gene pool can be very good if it is superior genetics. If not, you get more mediocre animals, and you can concentrate recessive genes that show up as genetic defects, such as scrotal hernias, feet and leg malfunctions, etc. They are still there in the non-line-bred animal, just less likely chance for them to show up, because the genes are less related, but they are still there. I myself use line-breeding to hopefully line up the superior genetics within a family. Sometimes I get junk. I know that it exists, rather than randomly being out there to show up even in an out-cross or crossbred at a later time. With line-breeding and intensive selection, breeding better to better still must be practiced here, even more so. But, I hope to end up with predictable genetics and all the pigs in a litter are quite similar, meaning I have found the better genetics. All truly famous and prepotent animals are most likely line-bred animals. What about inbreeding coefficient, CI's? Low or high, good or bad? If you want more predictable animals you would want a higher CI. If you want more diversity, less predictability of a mating, you want a lower CI. To make a breed better, you would recognize superior animals within families and line-breed them to make them predictable. You are not then reducing your overall gene pool across the breed, just concentrating it within families, which can then be out-crossed as needed. Proper line-breeding will not cause junk, only expose it and allow us to eliminate it. Line-breeding done properly should not affect performance if done in planned manner. Crossbreeding is the opposite effect again, allowing for more random expression of genetic variation. Granted, there is some inherent hybrid vigor in the initial pure-breed 1 x pure-breed 2, but that diminishes too, if the resulting crosses are crossed over and over, as does predictability. Unfortunately, many base a breeding program on the trend of the day, what's new and could be the next big hit, or just get their sows bred. That is all okay if you are happy with the results, but within a rare heritage breed that does not allow for optimum selection and improvement of the breed. What is needed, is continuing education and a controlled breeding program. But, the really great news! It is your herd, your pigs, you can do just as you desire.

Harvey Work  
LBHA Board Member 20+ years Vocational Agriculture Instructor



*Image courtesy of Helena Kopczynski*

# A Chip On the 'Ole Pig

BY BECKY BURKHEART

Even if you aren't raising registered stock, there are benefits to being able to identify individual animals, and that can be difficult when they are all similar in age and appearance. Aside from tracking ancestry and descendants, health, and genetic traits, there are times when someone else may need to identify individuals in your herd.

Historically, pigs have had their ears notched before they were old enough to mingle away from mom. Aside from the initial stress and bloodbath, you're chancing infection and banking on the skill of the farmer notching, their record keeping skills, and the ability of someone in the future to be able to read the notches. Tagging can be kinder initially, but tags are generally too large for tiny week-old ears, are also dependent on record keeping and frequently don't stay on for the life of the pig.

All that said, we turned to micro-chipping our purebred, registered and registerable stock. Buying in bulk from BuddyID.com, we found the chips as low as \$6.00 each, preloaded in the syringe. While I've used BuddyID for years with my dogs, I didn't have a reader and so selected a kit with 25 chips and a universal reader. A simple pinch on the neck behind the ear of a 3-day old piglet, a tiny stick to insert the chip (smaller than a grain of rice), and we're done. Although there is still some record keeping involved, anyone with a reader can easily and quickly verify the hogs identity. As long as notes were taken with the litter information and chip numbers, you have permanent record and your registered stock will have permanent ID with the registry.

Sidebar: Please check with your state and local authorities for identification regulations for animals on-farm or traveling as these vary by location.

## SIDEBAR

Please check with your state and local authorities for identification regulations for animals on-farm or traveling as these vary by location. Sidebar: I've used BuddyID.com for years for my dogs and have found them to be competitive price-wise and to have great customer service. I recommend including them in your own research as you look for the best match for your own needs.

## Buy SMART and Sell SMART! BY THERESA SCHIEFFELBEIN

For most of us, when we buy new stock, it will be from a breeder that we don't really know. There will have been emails, facebook messages and probably phone calls but when it comes right down to it, you will have to rely on the breeder's honesty and desire to preserve the breed to not get stuck with less than quality breeding stock.

There are ways to reduce your chances of not getting the best available animals for your herd.

Get a lot of pictures!! Get pictures of the underline, topline, each side (especially the feet) and video of the animal moving around in a normal manner. No good breeder will be reluctant in sending you as many pictures as you need. Make sure that you get pictures of the tag/notches so that you can keep track of which one you are interested in. You would be surprised as to how fast they can change! Piglets, like human children, change rapidly and not always uniformly (picture a 11-13 year old child...all arms and legs). This means that a piglet that comes to you looking like a blue-ribbon winner can grow up to be something totally different so you must constantly be re-evaluating your stock. Buying a fully grown, proven animal will help to alleviate some of this, but constant evaluation will keep your breeding program at the top of its game.

How many pigs does the breeder register in total? If your breeder is registering more than 10% of his litter, you might want to consider that most of the more experienced breeders will register 10% or less. They will only register the best of the best of the litter. They want to make sure that the buyers have the best chance at getting a great breeder. Most are even pickier when it comes to the boars as they know that a boar is more than 80% of your total herd. Breeders like this may have a waiting list but stock from that breeder would be worth the wait.

How does your prospective breeder raise his pigs? There are breeders who raise them in barns in separate pens, in herds altogether and a combination of both. None of these methods is wrong and breeders do what works for them, however each of these systems comes with unique management requirements. If raised in a herd, how do they mark each animal to prove parentage? I raised all of mine in a herd and I have pulled hour old piglets out of a cornfield fairly far away from the sow.....piglets that were still pulling the umbilical cord! Piglets have a way of finding any milking sow that will lay down. This means that there is no way to guarantee that this piglet came from this particular sow unless it is notched/tagged etc immediately after farrowing. I used DNA to prove to the buyer that this pig's lineage was correct and more than once I was surprised to find out the real sire/dam. I know of others that do the same. Some breeders will only farrow one sow at a time to make sure that they can keep them straight and tag/notch before the next litter comes along. You will never know for sure unless you ask and verify. There is no harm in asking for copies of breeding records, DNA certificates, vet records etc. Any good breeder will show you those.



## Buy SMART and Sell SMART! (continued)

Find the breeders Facebook farm page and look at pictures and read their posts! You will find a lot of information there about their management styles. Find the groups that they belong to and check out their posts there as well. You can learn a lot about how a breeder does business by reading what they write. Research is invaluable!

Go to the breeders' section of the RWHA website. If you click on the "animals" tab, and type in the name of the breeder you are considering, you will find a list of the people that own the hogs that were bred by the same breeder. Call them to ask if they are happy. Ask them for pictures of their animal purchased from that breeder. Do you like what you see? Is the hog walking on broken down feet? How does the underline look to you? How does their pig compare to the standards that are required for registration? Ask about litters that have been farrowed or sired by the breeder's hog. If they are happy, that is a great start. Hogs that are registered that do not meet standards should be a big red flag! It should tell you that the intent of the breeder is to make money regardless as to who he hurts in the process. These breeders are few and far between but they do exist so you must look for the signs. Not every smooth talking breeder is a good breeder....think PT Barnum (you younger breeder members can look him up ).

Do not be disheartened if the breeder will not let you visit his farm. Disease travels on other people's vehicles, boots, shoes, clothing etc. Biosecurity is a valid way to guard against those things effecting your herd. This is actually a sign that your intended breeder is doing whatever it takes to protect his herd and your future breeder!

Remember that the final say is yours! There is no shame in driving away with an empty trailer either. If you get to your destination and see that the animal is not exactly what you wanted, you have the opportunity to drive away. Once you have purchased an animal it is yours and the responsibility of choosing that animal falls on you. It is not the breeder's fault if you later decide you are unhappy with your choice. Most of us are small breeders, just a couple of animals. The impact of a substandard animal on your breeding program will have a longer lasting effect as it will be harder to "water down" bad genetics than to make a best effort to start with exceptional animals. Can it be done? Absolutely but it is a long, hard process that can get frustrating.

If you end up with an animal that you decide is not up to standard, or has a questionable history, they all taste great! Put it down to a lesson learned and start your search for better stock. The integrity of your farm's name, your name, your reputation as a breeder all depends on your breeding stock and how well you choose the animals that you register. Choose your breeder well!

## Buy SMART and Sell SMART! (continued)

Last of all, be aware of the health certificates that you need to have to get your animal. It doesn't matter if you pick the animal up or the breeder delivers, you will need a health certificate for most states. You can find out what is required by calling your state. They will forward your call to the proper department. If you get caught without one, the fine is pretty substantial.



The opinions expressed in the member contributed articles of this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the RWHHA board.