

# Canadian Heritage Breeds Newsletter

Summer 2021

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As members of CHB, it's pretty safe to assume there's a common thread that links us all...an interest in heritage breeds. But within this little fan club of ours, there are dozens of different reasons why we keep them or raise them, and how we choose to use and enjoy them. The CHB board tries to keep this in mind as we are gathering material for the newsletters. We try to touch on a variety of topics that will appeal to as many of our members as possible. (And, we REALLY APPRECIATE your feedback to help us gauge how well we are doing in that regard!) Anyway...we've managed to hit on a number of different interest areas in this issue!

First of all, there's a very exciting announcement for anyone with an interest in raising or showing standard-bred poultry...**CHB will be hosting a summer poultry show in August!** We are feeling confident that provincial health guidelines will allow us to plan for a lawn show-style event at Lacombe. We hope you can bring the family and join the fun on August 14<sup>th</sup>. All the details, and entry instructions will be shared as they become available, so check the CHB website and Facebook group often.

For those who are inspired by the more practical aspects of poultry breeding, you have some informative reading ahead! We feel privileged that Don Schrider has provided us with an excellent article on breeding productive birds. I'm sure you'll find great value in his wisdom and experience on this topic.

What some of us find most rewarding are the simple joys and pleasures the animals and birds bring to our lives, and to the lives of others. We are pleased to share stories in this issue that beautifully illustrate the miracle of new life, and the wonder and delight of small children being given the opportunity to touch and hold chickens.

The past few months have been a struggle for us all. But this newsletter is about hope, optimism and inspiration. Set aside some time for yourself to sit back, enjoy the articles and photos, and be reminded of the many wonderful reasons why we've chosen to do this work we do.

Until next time,

Kathy Stevenson, Secretary, CHB

Photo: Dominique cock by Irene Wiggins



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# About CHB

## What We Do

Our mandate is "Conservation through Education". Shows: Every year CHB organizes at least two poultry shows and has more recently begun to host dairy goat shows. Poultry and livestock shows are an excellent public forum to showcase and promote the dazzling and diverse assortment of chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks, as well as several breeds of goats. These exhibits also provide opportunities for people interested in breeding to connect one-on-one with top breeders.

**Information:** We compile and distribute quarterly newsletters to inform and inspire members. We conduct interviews with successful breeders to facilitate the sharing of their valuable knowledge and the insights they have gained through experience. CHB offers social media resources and networking opportunities to anyone interested in learning more and connecting with others in the world of heritage livestock.

**Support:** CHB strives to encourage and support heritage breed advocates through educational seminars and hands-on workshops. Our members provide youth and family mentoring, and we partner with other organizations such as agricultural societies and 4-H to lend our support to their members and programs.

**Promotion:** We present displays of animals and printed materials at public venues to demonstrate the diversity of heritage breeds to both urban and rural people.



## Why Is This Important?

- \* Heritage livestock and poultry are the perfect alternative for non-commercial farmers and families interested in self-sustainable alternatives
- \* These animals allow producers to capitalize on unique and niche markets
- \* Protecting genetic resources and survival traits is a crucial strategy for ensuring future food supplies
- \* Heritage breeds are a living link to our agricultural history and culture
- \* Traditional livestock breeds are rapidly disappearing from the rural North American landscape, but keeping a current census of numbers is difficult. Some are on the verge of Fall extinction, and are in desperate need of saving.

### Become a Member

- Quarterly Newsletters and access to the Members Only area of the website
- Discounts or free access to select CHB Events
- Advertising opportunities
- The satisfaction of contributing to a great organization with lots of opportunities to become involved!

[Register online today!](#) Canadian Heritage Breeds is a Registered Non-Profit Society.

# Advertise With CHB!

Canadian Heritage Breeds welcomes advertisers! High visibility, home page advertising is now available on the CHB website. Right now, as a bonus, if your farm, business, or club purchases one year of ad space on the CHB website, the ad will also be included in 4 quarterly newsletters at no extra charge!

## CHB Advertising Rates and Specs

### WEBSITE DISPLAY AD

Ad area, max. 300 x 250 pixels, hyperlinked to your website or social media page. May contain a combination of still images and text. Ad size shown below.

**Standard Website Rate:** Appears on "Our Supporters" page.

\$8.50 per month, or \$100 per year.  
(minimum 3 months)

### Home Page Rate:

Please see the bottom row of photos on Home (landing) page:  
[www.canadianheritagebreeds.ca](http://www.canadianheritagebreeds.ca)  
Your ad would replace one of the 3 photos in bottom row of pictures.

\$13.50 per month (minimum 3 months), or \$160 per year.

Full banner, spanning page bottom is also available at this time. Please inquire for pricing.

**1 year of website advertising also includes 1 year of the same ad appearing in our newsletters for free. CHB**

**newsletters are distributed via email to all paid CHB members in good standing, four times per year.**



## CHB NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING

### Newsletter Only ads:

Full page (8.5 x 11) - \$40 per issue.  
business card, or up to ¼ page - \$20 per issue.

*\*Note: All advertisement requests are subject to CHB board approval, and must meet CHB specifications for content and design*

# CHB Lawn Show Announcement

**CHB**  
CANADIAN HERITAGE BREEDS

**Welcome!**  
to the  
**Poultry Show!**

**Saturday, August 14th, 2021**  
**Lacombe Ag Grounds,**  
**Lacombe Alberta**

**APA**  
**Sanctioned**  
• Junior Show  
• Family Fun

**Save the date!**  
More info & entry form will be  
available on the CHB website:  
[www.canadianheritagebreeds.ca](http://www.canadianheritagebreeds.ca)

# CHB Fun Fact Friday

If you are a follower of the CHB Facebook group you might be seeing the posts for our new social media campaign – **Fun Fact Friday**. Each week we publish a new and interesting bit of information about a specific breed, or maybe just something relevant to raising purebred livestock and poultry. This is a great way to help raise awareness about the wonderful and varied breeds CHB members are raising, and the unique qualities, history or attributes of these breeds. We'd love to feature yours! Send a good quality photo of your bird or animal, and a cool bit of info to go along with it to the CHB address: [canadianheritagebreeds@gmail.com](mailto:canadianheritagebreeds@gmail.com). We will be sure to credit you with the photo.

And please remember to like 👍 and share CHB posts! Our group page is active and growing, thanks to you! ✨



# CHB Lessons in the Classroom

By: Becky Haffner

With the arrival of spring comes new beginnings. The Earth wakes up from its winter slumber and everything comes to life once again. As a playschool teacher at both the Reed Ranch Playschool, east of Olds, and the Torrington-Wimborne Playschool, I love to take this time of year as an opportunity to teach my students about change. We talk about the change in weather, re-growth of plants and also include a lesson on new life and baby animals.

With teaching in rural communities, my students already have a love and appreciation for these topics. Having livestock of their own, they enjoy being able to share their stories about their animals and their experiences. This also allows me to be able to share with them.

As part of our lesson, we talk about the life cycle of a chicken and included a visit with some of my birds. A white bantam Wyandotte hen, a leghorn pullet and also some Wyandotte chicks at a later date. We look some time to talk about the similarities and differences in the birds and the way they grow and change. The kids all seemed to really enjoy their time with the birds. This is something that I plan to continue to do with my future classes, in hopes to promote and educate on the importance of the amazing animals.



# Are Your Birds Productive?

By: Don Schrider

American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

Exhibition poultry has done much, since the split with the commercial industry, to conserve many breeds of chicken that otherwise would have been abandoned. Where would Minorcas, Wyandottes, Spanish, Faverolles, Houdans, and others be without an organized effort to preserve their good body structures? This effort to maintain quality structures, by exhibition against a well thought-out standard, has given owners something to do with the birds and it has given a place to compare and trade breeding stock.



Faverolle, Steven Vincent

But, and this will take a bit of hard consideration, has the exhibition industry preserved the productive traits of these breeds? When someone contacts you for New Hampshires, do your birds grow quickly (16 weeks or less to maturity)? Do they lay well (200+/- eggs per year)? Are they fecund (80-90% fertility, 90+% hatchability)? Are they pets or livestock?

If rare breeds of poultry are to be used productively again, and if the years of conserving them are to count for something, they must be productive when they are needed. All it takes is for a few people to be dissatisfied with your stock and the whole breed may suffer by being passed by, again. Now is the time to start looking over your flock and start selecting for productivity as well as for exhibition qualities.

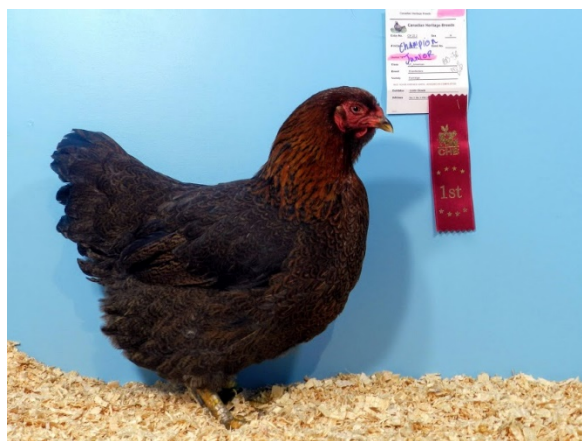


Naked Neck, CHB Photo

All breeds have histories of use and have, historically, excelled at particular jobs under particular conditions. Dominiques were noted for being a dual-purpose breed (laying a little better than producing meat) that was a master at rustling-up a large portion of their own feed when allowed to range. Javas were once considered THE eating chicken, laying fairly well, and also rustling much of their own feed. (In fact, most of the older chicken breeds, pre 1835, are noted for maintaining a breed type, with distinct characteristics, and fending for themselves.) Jersey Giants were once very well gifted at producing meat and eggs, though with a little more management than the first two mentioned breeds. New Hampshires were developed from Rhode Island Reds, but were selected for faster feathering and faster growth. Their descendant, the Delaware, was the premiere broiler breed on the Delmarva Peninsula until the Cornish/Rock replaced them in the 1950s. Minorcas are known for laying the largest white eggs,

and plenty of them, and for their ability to range open pastures. Buckeyes were known to produce surprisingly meaty bodies with extra large thighs and wings, and did so even in the coldest of climates.

Chanteclers also were bred to tolerate cold well, laying a large number of eggs. Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks, and Rhode Islands all dominated the pre-industrialized American chicken industry, with a reasonable amount of care. Let's not forget the Leghorns and Anconas, two breeds noted for the highest of egg-laying ability combined with vigor that was unsurpassed. And finally the Naked Neck, a breed of chicken that is as close as they come to being immune to most diseases.



Partridge Chantecler by Skeels Family

There are other examples, but the point is to look at what you are breeding and ask yourself if you are preserving the productive traits associated with this breed. Sometimes these characteristics cannot be seen by looking at the shape alone; the caretaker must observe them over time. If you are not preserving the main productive traits of the breed you may well be washing away a century (or more) of selection.

So what can you do? To start with you should research the breed you are interested in and find out as much about it as you can. How was it used? What was it noted for? Then go back to your stock and observe. Do all of your birds behave as noted for the

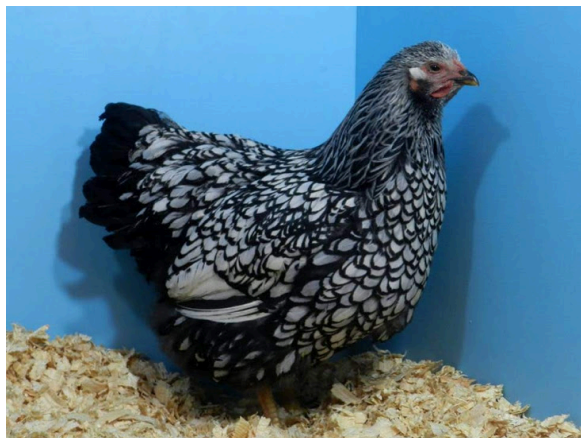
breed? How well do they lay or how fast do they grow? What do you need to improve, and do any of your birds have it?

The next step is to improve your flock's productive traits. There are a number of productive indicators that you can use to improve your flock. Some you may be familiar with, others may be new to you. Please take the time consider all of them and how you can improve your flock by using them. It would be a mistake to think that your birds are already as productive as they can be – try to take them a step further.

What are these productive indicators? For the commercial industry, primary traits of productivity would include: rate of growth, feed conversion, rate of lay, consistency, and fecundity (both fertility and hatchability). For your purpose we should add: vigor, longevity, disease resistance, survivability/intelligence, breed character, and flavor of meat and/or eggs. All of these traits are important, but the level of importance will vary according to breed.

Rate of growth and feed conversion. How long does it take your young birds to grow to an age where you would be proud to serve them for dinner? As fried chicken? As a Sunday roast? How long does it take your pullets to mature to the point of laying their first egg? Some breeds are noted for the speed of their growth. Fast growing can mean a big difference in profits when raising market broilers or layers – product to market faster on less feed. Some things to watch would include: Appetite – the more they eat the faster they grow. Keeping accurate records is the only way to be sure of which birds grow best for you – select for breeders those that grow faster. Avoid mistaking fast growth for large finish size. In some breeds, like Jersey Giants, the birds that reach the largest size put frame on first, then meat; early, meaty birds will not grow to the large size the breed is noted for.





Wyandotte, CHB Photo

Other points to remember when selecting for rate of growth: Appetite equals fast growth. Birds with wide feathers grow at a faster rate than birds with narrow feathers. Birds with narrow feathers are apt to be slow to grow back-feathers during the first 6 weeks of life. Extremely slow or excessively fast maturing chicks tend to suffer higher mortality than chicks, which grow at a “normal” rate.

Rate of lay. Healthy and productive chickens can lay in the range of 150-200 eggs per year. E. Lea Marsh, of White Leghorn fame, believed that this was a goodly number of eggs for a bird you could expect to be productive for MANY years. The commercial Leghorn has been bred to lay over 300 eggs, but they do so for a very limited lifetime with no consideration for the stress this cause on their bodies. Mr. Marsh even suggested that the commercial industry periodically purchase exhibition stock that layed around 200 eggs per year for improvement of the health of their layers.



Silver Leghorn, Rico Sebastianelli

Rate of lay can be a confusing term as it has had several meanings over the years, some imprecise. It seldom means what it sounds like – the number of eggs a hen will lay in a period of one year. Often it has meant the period from the pullet’s first egg until she stops to moult (thus early hatched pullets who moult in the fall have been considered less productive). It sometimes is measured from an arbitrary date, such as the beginning of October until the end of September. In current industrial housing the amount of light, and dark, the chickens receive is regulated; under this system the number of days in a year changes.

You may not be in a position to try and measure the actual rate of lay of your chickens, but that doesn’t prevent you from improving the laying ability of your flock. The good news is that the actual rate of lay for a hen has little precise significance in determining the rate of lay of her offspring. This is because many issues factor into the equation that determines how well a hen lays: age, month of hatch, housing conditions, broodiness, winter pause (slowing of the egg laying frequency during periods with less light), exposure to disease, infestations of parasites, even the weather can have an effect on rate of lay. In other words, a hen with the genetic potential for high production is not always able to demonstrate her actual ability.

So what can you do to select and improve your flock for better production? Try these ideas: Monroe Babcock (creator of the Babcock B2000 commercial layer), and others, recommended using hens for breeding that lay before 10 am. He noted that these birds tend to lay more eggs and were generally healthier and longer lived. Saving eggs for incubation that were layed before 10 am (even if you only save eggs on the weekend for setting) can improve your flock’s egg production over time – just be sure to collect the rest of the eggs at dark, for eating! When you pair mate, keep track of your most productive hens. Sons from these hens should be favored and mated, when possible, to other hens that lay near the top for your flock. Compare only hens of the same age. First and second year egg production should guide selection for egg production. Hens with high

records from these two years should be used as long as productive. Birds that are fast in molting tend to lay better - band fast molting hens. Hens that drop all of their feathers at once tend to be out of production for less time. Keep track of this trait and encourage it in your flock. Birds that molt early are usually the poorest layers. Poor layers tend to stop laying in July and take a long time to molt. In most birds the feathers during molt are usually shed in the following order - head, neck, breast, body, wings and tail (in some individuals a few tail feathers may drop before the wing feathers). It takes 6 weeks for a wing feather to grow in either poor or good producers, but the good producer grows more feathers at a time thereby completing the molt faster. First year hens that lay 25 or more eggs during August and March (in the year following that in which they were hatched) tend to be better producers. A hen in heavy production will have good width between the pelvic bones and will have soft, velvety skin and a soft, pliable abdomen. Pullets that tend to come into production between 180 and 215 days of age tend to develop into excellent layers.

Some other interesting facts: Eggs from the best layers tend to hatch as well or better than those of poor layers. Evidence indicates that breeding from only yearling and older hens increases longevity and reduces mortality. Second year egg production is usually reduced from first year by 20%. Egg size and body size are correlated. Pullets that begin to lay early tend to lay smaller eggs. February is the month that maximum first year egg size is obtained regardless of when the birds were hatched. Overly large eggs result in chicks, which have faults such as extruded yolks and other incubator related weaknesses (which is why hatcheries prefer pullets to hens – smaller size of the first year eggs). This means that to have viable production in older hens overly large eggs are to be avoided. Malposition accounts for chicks that do not make it out of the eggshell – this is inheritable.

Consistency and Breed Character. In a statement from about 1953, A.L. Hagedorn, a poultry geneticist, said, "Selecting for type alone has reduced

productivity in Game Bantams and selection for productivity in production Reds and Leghorns has reduced type quality." The birds should look like a good representative of its breed, but some variability should be allowed. The point most important to stress here is that those traits long associated with the breed be preserved – like the flavor of Rhode Island Red meat.



Rhode Island Reds by Hawthorn Hill Poultry

Disease resistance is relatively simple to breed into your stock. The old-timers used to say to never use a bird in the breeding pen that had been medicated that year. As many have said before, cull sick birds and after a few generations you will no longer have any illness in your flock. If you have one male that doesn't get sick when the rest of the flock suffers a cold, mate from that one male. Simply use healthy birds as breeders and stop using otherwise excellent birds that have had health concerns. Jim Rines said many times, "Your flock will have only what you tolerate."

Vigor goes hand in hand with disease resistance. Selecting for vigor requires choosing from amongst the dominant cockerels and pullets for replacement breeders, selecting males and females that have bright red combs, without dark tips, selecting birds with bright, strong eyes with well formed irises (many diseases, in particular leucosis, will prevent the iris from forming in a nice round shape). Birds that are very active, and those that have thick, well-rounded shanks tend to be more vigorous.

I hope some of these ideas will prove useful as you start planning your breeding goals and choosing your breeders. Remember, tomorrow's breeding stock depends on what you do today!



Buckeye Pair, owned by Crystal McKinnon

*Don Schrider is an author and former Communications Director for American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. His written works include many poultry articles and "Storey's Guide to Raising Turkeys".*

*This article has been reprinted with the written permission of the author. Our thanks to Mr. Don Schrider for his support of CHB and our initiatives.*



St-Isidore Farm

Heritage  
**Lincoln Longwool sheep**  
breeding stock, fleeces  
yarn and sheep skins

**Lynch Lineback cattle**  
breeding stock

# Welcome, Amelia the Clydesdale!



April 21<sup>st</sup> 2021 was a momentous day for young CHB member Maddox Grover...that was the day his registered Clydesdale mare, Calico Oaky, foaled for the first time.

Calico Oaky was born Feb 17, 2017, and Maddox has owned her since she was 6 months old. While this is Maddox's first Clydesdale foal, the family is well acquainted with draft horses...they breed and raise registered Percherons under the name 5M PERCHERONS.

The filly's name is Amelia.

