

# AGHA Pigtales

Newsletter of the American Guinea Hog Association

Fall 2008

## Calendar

November 13-15, 2009  
The American Livestock  
Breeds Conservancy 2009  
Annual convention in Houston,  
Texas.

## Getting Started: Food and Water

Guinea Hogs are known for thriving primarily on pasture in summer, hay in winter and supplementing with a bit of hog feed and/or kitchen and garden scraps.

In this issue we hear from guinea hog owners about what they feed their animals. Also we find out how some people have dealt with the problem of keeping water available to hogs who like to tip over their water dishes. And what to do about frozen water in the winter.

Donal Parks of Maryland says "A lot of their feed comes from the kitchen and garden extras. My in-laws used to have pigs and they absolutely love saving leftovers. It's feast day for the hogs every time we visit our in-laws because we come back with piles of stuff.

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## Scrumptious Bites

My husband and I attended the annual American Livestock Breeds Conservancy conference on September 19 and 20. It was our first time and we had a ball. We got to meet other American Guinea Hog owners and find out about other rare animals and their breeders.

This year's conference was held at Tillers International in Scotts Michigan, Near Kalamazoo.

My favorite workshop was Friday morning's "Turning a Whole Pig Into Scrumptious Bites".

For years I have been aware of restaurateurs like Alice Waters at Chez Panisse in Berkeley California and Odessa Piper at L'Etoile Restaurant in Madison, Wisconsin. These two are among the pioneers in the fresh, local and seasonal food movement in restaurants.

I was pleasantly surprised to meet Chef Matthew Millar, who led this workshop. Millar, also a food pioneer, along with wife Amy Cook own Journeyman Café (journeymancafe.com). This Café is located in the tiny Southwest Michigan town of Fennville, population about 1500. Millar and Cook have operated the restaurant for five years and are passionate



Chef Matthew Millar at the ALBC conference demonstrating a hog fabrication

about offering unique SW Michigan cuisine.

I was really impressed with what Millar has accomplished. He was not satisfied with the typical purveyors of restaurant food, who only offer single-serving cuts of mass-produced meats. Because culinary schools no longer teach their students how to deal with whole animals, he had to teach himself how to butcher animals. This way he can have the control he wants with the local meats he uses in his restaurant. He searched online, talked to butchers and dove into the process. It has been a challenge; a two dimensional diagram is quite different than a three dimensional carcass and butchers are reluctant to share their methods. It is after all the butchers' livelihoods and they protect their trade secrets.

Millar admits that he's still learning but I thought he

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## ALBC Conference Highlights



AGHA members at the 2008 ALBC Conference. L-R Nancy Gaedke, Shirley Sullivan, Jim Barnett, Don Oberdorfer and Gray Moore

Five AGHA members were in attendance at the 2008 American Livestock Breeders Conservancy annual conference.

There were many interesting and informative workshops. The two pertaining to hogs were "Turning a Whole Pig into Scrumptious Bites" and "To Market To Market to Buy a Fat Pig." The latter was by Ed Snavelly from Ohio who described his small scale Tamworth and Berkshire hog farm.

We had two wonderful dinners featuring rare breed meats. The food alone was worth the trip.

There were many live animals on display including Myotonic goats, a Caspian horse, Mammoth donkeys, Jacob sheep and Buckeye chickens.

Jim Barnett's photo of one of his guinea hogs won first place in the photo contest. Yay Jim! A copy of the picture is in the latest ALBC newsletter.

For more about the conference check out the ALBC article at <http://albc->

[usa.org/conference2008/PostConferenceSummary.html](http://albc-usa.org/conference2008/PostConferenceSummary.html).

I strongly encourage anyone who can, to attend next year's conference in Houston Texas.

### Scrumptious Bites Cont.

did a great job on the demonstration hog.

We were treated to many interesting stories and to some very fresh, very delicious pork tenderloin.

From this workshop I gained an appreciation of the butchering process. It's nice to imagine the time when guinea hog populations are high enough that farmers can market their pork to chefs.

Thanks to Nila Robinson of Shiocton, WI for donating the tamworth hog.

For more on the chef-producer connection check out Chef's Collaborative <http://chefscollaborative.org/>

### Food and Water Continued

"Trying to make sure the largest hog doesn't 'hog the food (sorry I couldn't resist) is a problem I've dealt with by spreading the food around. It drives the larger one nuts because she runs from one spot to the other trying to get the best of everything. Heh heh.

And for water, Parks states "I tried buckets and bowls and over-the-fence horse waterers, but nothing worked well. I finally took an old plastic storage bin we had lying around, the sort that's used for dry dog food, and modified it to serve as a waterer. First I drilled a 1/2" hole near the bottom at the back of the container and fitted it with 1/2" pvc tubing of the kind used for potable water. The tubing is about 30" long. I bought a fitting at the

hardware store that's designed for bulkheads and pvc glued it all together through the hole I'd drilled. On the other end of the pvc tube I pvc glued a threaded adapter. Then I got a hog nipple waterer from Tractor Supply and screwed it into the adapter, using some plumber's tape. I raised this contraptions on cement blocks to high hog nose position and pushed the nipples end of the pvc tube through the fence. This way the hogs can reach the nipple to drink but can't get to the waterer to play with it. Because the hogs are kind of rough with the nipple, I found that they could knock the waterer off its pedestal after a few days, so I pounded steel posts in on either side of the waterer. So far that's kept it in place."

Paul Krumm of Kansas says, "We feed alfalfa pellets (as we haven't found a source of good hay, and they just make bedding out of poor quality stuff) and a little rolled milo (sorghum) grain, along with the occasional table or garden scrap. We add a little commercial hog grower for the little ones, and lactating sows."

Stephanie Parrish of South Carolina states, "We have been feeding our 6 month old piglets alfalfa pellets and 1/2 cup each of cracked corn a day, plus kitchen and garden scraps. They are on pasture. I would have loved to get some hog pellets for them, but all of the hog pellets around here have antibiotics in them, which I think is unnecessary and undesirable for our pigs."

Jim Barnett of New Hampshire says, "Here in NH we do not have local grain mills that will custom make feed. We feed our adult

breeding hogs 2 cups morning and night of Blue Seal (Kent) hog pellets. During warm weather, they forage for the rest of their food in very rough pasture and in winter we give them good quality grass hay. Of course, whenever available year-round, they get cracked eggs from the henhouse, kitchen leftovers, pumpkins, apples and are loving the abundance of acorns here this year in NH. We are careful with corn, as it fattens them really fast. We do occasionally use hay stretcher pellets (similar to the alfalfa pellets but not as rich). They like it all. We are a bit wary of supplements because you can overfeed minerals to other livestock, so we don't give them anything." In winter he uses electric heaters in the water trough to keep the water ice free."

Don Oberdorfer of the Dodge Nature Center in West St Paul, Minnesota likes as a waterer "a deep black rubber water bowl stuck into an old tire. It keeps their feet out and keeps them from knocking them over- and they're cheap. Put some larger rocks in when you farrow as they are too deep for piglets to crawl out of when they are young. A few rocks allows the piglets to get their footing to get back out."

Nancy Gaedke of Wisconsin has many old apple trees in her woods and had a steady supply of windfalls from July through October. "The hogs can't seem to get enough. Although one did throw up after gorging, so I limit the four hogs to a 5-gallon bucketful twice a day. I also feed them unshelled hickory nuts. I was hesitant to until a veterinarian friend of mine said it should be fine. Hogs have teeth that continue to grow

and it's good for them to have something hard to chew on to keep the teeth worn down. He said that as a kid living in the cherry region of Door County Wisconsin, his family would buy truckloads of cherry pits for their (non guinea) hogs.

A couple of nearby farm stands have been a great source for cheap squash.

Bill Skriba, Ithaca, Michigan describes how he built his hog waterers "I buy the 6" diameter PVC pipe in 10ft lengths. (Approx \$18) I cut to 4 feet (if you are filling the waterer with a hose then 5ft wouldn't be bad, but we fill by using a 5 gallon bucket and its a little of a stretch for my kids to reach the top). Nipples (1/2") can be bought at any farm store for under \$5 each. (I bought 15 on Ebay for \$1 each) You need 2 end caps (2 waterers) about \$3 each.

You want to temporarily place the end cap on the PVC, then mark with marker, where it is going to fit on the pipe.



Bill Skriba's hog waterer

Remove the end cap. Drill your hole as level as you can above the line you marked on the PVC. Insert your nipple waterer, you can use pliers to tighten the last few turns. Then caulk with marine epoxy, both from the inside of the pipe and the outside where the nipple comes in contact with the pipe.

(You could probably use shower and tub caulk, but we had the epoxy on hand). Glue the end cap to the pipe fitting as snugly as you can get it. Let dry according to the recommendations of whatever caulking material you are using, (usually 2 days). Then affix the waterer to the pen using metal strapping. You can use cement blocks to rest the waterer on at whatever level that your pigs height is. We try to make ours almost level to the snout so that the pig doesn't have to pull down on the nipple. We don't cover the tops of the ones that are inside. Our outside waterers are covered. They can be filled either by bucket or hose.

We take the waterers out of the pens, and clean once a week to get whatever settles beneath the nipple out of the waterer.

Shirley Sullivan and Jim Barnett sum it up best. "We can't stress enough that one of the attractions for us in raising these true landrace hogs is that they seem to thrive on what they have available, a trait we all should strive to preserve. It adds to their vitality and usefulness as part of a sustainable plan on all our farms. The beauty of these hogs and much of their appeal is that they will make good use of what is available."

## Win a Book

Submit an article, quote, or joke to be used in a future edition of Pig Tales and be entered in a drawing to win the book "Managing Breeds for A Secure Future, Strategies for Breeders and Breed Associations" by D. Phillip Sponenberg and Donald E. Bixby. Send submissions by January 1, 2009 to [gdknncy@yahoo.com](mailto:gdknncy@yahoo.com).