

FEATURE ARTICLES

- The Healthy Pig & Pasture
- Parasite Management
- Customer Service Marketing

AMERICAN
GUINEA HOG
ASSOCIATIONINSIDE THIS
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Curly Tales

Dear Members,

Our Autumn Edition of the AGHA Newsletter is being offered to everyone, Non-Members as well as Members. We have done this because we want everyone to know what has been going on in the Association, perhaps leading some of you to join us as we grow. An organization is only as strong as its membership. and this is never truer than with a Not-for-Profit Organization.

We depend on volunteers for efforts such as our recent participation in several of the Mother Earth News Fairs across the country. Without the dedicated people who stood for hours, tirelessly answering questions, how could we have showcased these wonderful pigs to the public? Thousands of people paraded through each venue, people who may one day be customers of yours — for meat or for piglets. Our heartfelt thank you to those volunteers. Maybe next year, it could be you!

For the past few weeks, I have been contacting members to do some website updates and I have had the opportunity to speak with so many wonderful, dedicated Guinea Hog Breeders. As with any farming endeavor, or any business endeavor for that matter, it just doesn't work out for some, while others thrive. I know that it can be discouraging when you are new to any project to see others who are "getting out" because it just didn't work out for them. We see this type of thread on some of the Facebook forums on a regular basis, but it really doesn't paint an accurate picture of the success of our breed at all. Many people get into raising an animal, or a crop with unrealistic expectations, only to be disappointed when they don't make money quickly. I think most folks with years of experience in any type of farming can tell you that there is no "Get Rich Quick" plan.

One of the first things I ask people when they are calling about purchasing piglets is, "What are your goals? Are you wanting to provide a delicious meat for your family or are you starting a pork

production business, making Artisan Sausage and Smoked Meats?"

Both approaches are reasonable and legitimate. Their farming focus, however, couldn't be more different. Someone who has a small family and a circle of friends for which they plan to provide meat should not need several sows and a boar to feed through the winter. One pair is sufficient. This family may sell off the extra piglets to pay for some of the feed required to winter the adults, but unless they are near 100% pasture based, they are not going to, nor should they expect, to show a profit. Good, homegrown meat is not less expensive than store-bought meat. It is just better. Plain and simple.

The Artisan Meat producer may have a larger herd of hogs, or may band together with other breeders in their area, producing enough meat for a niche market. This type of effort is working well all across the country. It does require hard work, some start-up costs, and excellent marketing skills. Success does not come over night, but it can be done. In upcoming issues, we will highlight some AGH breeders with successful business ventures and offer you some insight into their methods.

As I made my calls, it was encouraging to speak with folks who have been breeding these hogs for eight to ten-plus years. Their dedication and love for the breed was readily apparent. Many of those who had to sell due to life circumstances, expressed their wish to have Guinea Hogs again in the future. Truly, this is a breed that captures our hearts in addition to gracing our tables with wonderful meals.

Happy Fall, and we hope you enjoy this issue.





Jeannette Beranger, from The Livestock

Conservancy, has been working with us to expand on the AGH

DNA research that has been done in past years. She has hired a student to begin work on this project and the Genetics Committee will be in contact with them as they begin. We hope, at some point, to be able to have a reliable test of AGH purity. This should enable us to rule out crossbred pigs with similar appearances as we move forward to recapture some of the lost AGH genetics.

In related news, the board voted to once again sponsor

The Livestock Conservancy at the \$500 Sponsorship Level. This sponsorship provides the Association with many advertising benefits as well as supporting an extremely important organization.

We have worked with Not-for-Profit Attorney, Jessica Birken, to write an updated set of

Bylaws. These new bylaws have been passed by the Board and will be available for viewing on the AGHA website (www.guineahogs.org) along with instructions for voting.

Our Genetic Recovery Initiative has been passed by the Board

and will be available for vote by the General Membership. A postcard, detailing this, and the new Bylaws, will be arriving shortly via US Postal Service. The document will be available to view on the AGHA website (www.guineahogs.org) as will voting instructions

The Board of Directors welcomes Wendy McDaniel (TX) as Region 5 Representative and Donna Hertlein (AK) as

Member at Large. You will find an introduction to Donna in this issue and we will get to know Wendy more in the Winter Newsletter. We are looking forward to working with these two knowledgeable women who will add their expertise to our Board.

The board has voted to disallow name changes of hogs that have produced offspring. This decision was based in part on research into the policies of other livestock organizations. Name changes of hogs that have not produced offspring will be allowed with the breeder's permission.

In the past, several methods have been used to designate a deceased hog on the pedigree papers. The board voted to use the “-

D” designation after the hogs name, (for instance Setty Lily-D). Any names of deceased hogs that don't include this designation, will slowly be changed in the system. Remember to send the original pedigrees of any deceased or castrated hogs back to the Registrar so these can be noted. Keep a copy for your records.

AGHA Calendars will once again be available. These will be ready for purchase in time for the holidays and pre-orders will be available. Laurie Munroe did a fantastic job on these for the 2016 edition and will be creating them for us again for 2017.

A Herd Census will be conducted beginning in January of 2017. A mailing will go out to all AGHA Members to determine the population and whereabouts of as many registered hogs as possible. If you are not a member, but own registered hogs, we would be grateful for your participation.

Mother Earth News Fairs in Wisconsin, Oregon, and Pennsylvania were attended. The public response to our hogs was phenomenal and we deemed the first three a definite success.



ATTENTION AGHA MEMBERS

You will shortly be receiving a postcard from the Postal Service which will give instructions regarding two important issues that require your vote. We look forward to your participation!

A Glimpse From the Wisconsin Fair

By Deborah A. Baker (Chapel Top Heritage Hope Farm)

Early this summer we were invited to be AGHA exhibitors for the July 9-10, Mother Earth News Fair

in West Bend, WI. Deborah Niemann-Boehle (AGHA Region 3 Rep.) of Antiquity Oaks Farm, Shel Gooch of Asylum Farm Sheep & Poultry, Erica Q. Solis of Emancipation Acres and I volunteered. It was an incredible experience!

When I was a young wife in the 70's and living in the country with a small income and family I subscribed to the Mother Earth News magazine and we read each issue eagerly. The articles and ideas sparked the entrance of DIY and encouraged people to live with what we had and use it to make what we needed. In our case we read how to build a greenhouse and built an attached solar greenhouse that successfully provided food, stored heat for the house and gave us the self-confidence to do more. Mother Earth News is still being the catalyst for new ideas and dreams.

In their October/November 2015 issue, the article, American Guinea Hog: A Small Pig Breed for Homesteaders, captured the attention of many people looking to go back to older ways of providing for their families and community; while at the same time helping to save this important breed. The fair provided a way for people to see and learn more about this breed and the registry I'm so passionate about. Since it was a chance to talk about pigs for two days to people who wanted to hear about them I eagerly signed up!

We arrived at the beautiful Washington County Fair Park- Livestock Conservancy building on Friday, June 8th to set up our display and settle my hogs in time for the veterinary check later that evening. Everyone we met was so nice and helpful.

The veterinarian was taken with the AGH and visited the next morning again just to make sure they were fine.

All the exhibitors for the Conservancy were devoted, hard working people. Many had traveled across the country to gain interest in the breeds they are saving. We were surrounded by amazing displays and I couldn't help but walk around and see each as they set up. There were Galicenos horses all the way from Florida. Old World Wisconsin had some of the other heritage breed hogs like the Mulefoot. Also exhibiting were The Kinder Goat Breeder Association and The Midwest Llama Packing Co. who never tired of my questions or showing me their array of llama saddles! While I was working and walking I notice a soft, soothing background sound. It came from a pen of alpacas from Hums of Faith Suri's farm. Yes, they actually hummed!

The next day people were lined up at the gate for an hour before opening. The flow of people through the livestock building was non-stop the entire two days. I was so humbled and impressed by their thirst to know and do more. There were many times, especially after a workshop let out, that we had people three to four deep at our table. All we had to say was, "Are you interested in American Guinea Hogs?" and the conversations would flow! Many were looking for breeders and we were able to direct them to the AGHA's breeder listing, some wanted to know what they ate, how many are born to a typical litter, how much land was needed and what good are they? My favorite question was, "Why do you like them?" Oh I could go on about that! All were encouraged to go to the AGHA website to learn more and I hope they joined. Deborah Niemann-Boehle ran an AGHA calendar drawing that was very



popular and Erica Solis kindly brought us soaps she makes with lard for showing and smelling. Shel was very helpful in fielding questions.

I had taken four barrows. Fergus, an 11-month old, beautiful example of the breed, and Noah, Ronan and Parrish, three, 9-week old feeder quality shoats. My belief is all creatures deserve a name even if only for a short time.

These hogs drew in the children. We were never without children visiting the pigs. My heart was so touched by them. Some showed up first thing. Some stayed with us all day. Some came because they were worn out and needed to cuddle a pig. Most came back the next day. We had children in strollers and children who set aside their electronics in preference of a pig. If our children want American Guinea Hogs in their future, then our AGH will have a future.

"If our children want American Guinea Hogs in their future, then our AGH will have a future."

At the end of Sunday we were exhausted, fulfilled and hopefully shared what wonderful animals the AGH are and we are so grateful for the American Guinea Hog Association.

The Healthy Pig & Pasture Part 1: Foundational Foraging

By Merry Schepers



"As an amateur herbalist, I challenge you to step back and plant diverse forages for your hogs not just for those components, but also for the health benefits that are inherent in a varied diet."



Hippocrates said: "Let food be your medicine, and medicine be your food."

This philosophy of health is as applicable to pigs as it is to humans. We have become increasingly reductionist in our thinking, to the point that we look at the nutritional benefits of fodders and forages strictly as a N-P-K ratio.

As an amateur herbalist, I challenge you to step back and plant diverse forages for your hogs not just for those components, but also for the health benefits that are inherent in a varied diet. Also, view your hog as a partner in improving the tilth of the soil, and as a means of re-seeding your pastures.

A wide range of types and species of forages are beneficial to all hogs, but especially so for an efficient grazing animal such as the American Guinea Hog. Most of you know the basics of intense rotational grazing:

- ◆ small areas, frequently rotated;
- ◆ a waste area where the animals are fed, watered and sleep;
- ◆ electro fencing; paddocks planted with suitable forage plants.



The more your animal relies on forages, the more varied their options should be. A good start is a combination of

- ◆ LEGUMES (clover, alfalfa, cowpeas)
- ◆ GRASSES (barley, oat, wheat, orchard)
- ◆ BRASSICAS (kale, turnips, mangel beets, daikon radish)
- ◆ OTHER NUTRICIOUS PLANTS (melons, buckwheat, squash, sunflowers, sun chokes, etc.)
- ◆ NATIVE PLANT SPECIES which also provide needed minerals and vitamins and should not be eradicated.

"...hogs, when provided with a choice in foods, will eat according to their needs..."



These provide a good balance of proteins, carbohydrates, nutrients, and even water to your hogs. You will find that the hogs, when provided with a choice in foods, will eat according to their needs (and not necessarily when you think they will! Be patient and observe your stock and what they eat and when). In their natural wisdom, the hogs are also meeting more subtle health needs.

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The Healthy Pig & Pasture

Part 1: Foundational Foraging (continued)

EXAMPLES FROM ALL FORAGE CATEGORIES & THEIR BENEFITS

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

"...our hogs love dock weed and seek it out actively, but when I made a trip to Illinois and toured hog farms there, I noted that dock weed was plentiful but the hogs were indifferent to it.

This doesn't make much sense in a conventional way – the hogs should crave a food for its basic nutrition, and that should be universal. But from the viewpoint of an herbalist, it makes perfect sense.

Our soils in Missouri are deficient in certain minerals amply provided for by dock weed, but in Illinois, those minerals are plentiful and readily available to their pigs.



LEGUMES

ALFALFA

- rich in proteins and vitamins
- tonifies (balances) appetite and digestion
- aids in milk production
- aids in weight gain
- improves mental and physical vigor



GRASSES

OAT & OAT GRASS

- tonifying of the whole physiological system
- high in silica,
- high in vitamins and minerals
- strengthens connective tissue, mucosa, skin and nerves



BRASSICAS

MANGEL BEETS

- tonify the blood
- provide a wide variety of minerals and vitamins
- soothe dry skin
- counteract anemia
- anti-arthritis



OTHER NUTRITIONAL PLANTS

SQUASH

- high in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants
- support the immune system
- counter dry skin
- detoxify the body



NATIVE PLANT SPECIES

DOCK WEED

- vitamin and mineral rich
- promotes bile
- tonic alternative
- promotes digestion

The above examples provide strong support for sowing and growing a diverse selection of forages for your hogs. Achieving this varied array of foods will require some effort and time, but within a few years, can also provide a large proportion of the animals' nutritional and health needs at least for part of the year. In time, you will only need to re-seed patches that are bare.

GETTING STARTED

Initially, the stock person will be seeding pasture that is already in place. If you can lightly disk the soil before seeding, that is ideal, but we have had good luck broadcasting seed ahead of a rain. If you are able to buy seed in bulk, do so for the more expensive seed, such as cowpeas. Grass seeds, like oats or barley, are relatively inexpensive and can be bought by the bag.

Because you are not mono cropping, suggested seeding rates are not relevant. Deer plot mixes are a good way to start, as they provide a good mix of seed types. Add in some odds and ends of seed packets, if you are a gardener. Think ahead to when the seed ripens and time it to your rotational plans. Allow for the pigs deciding when to eat the plant. I was disappointed that the hogs wouldn't eat the tender cowpea greens, but when the pea pods were dead ripe, they then ate pods *and* greens; they didn't eat much of the turnip till after a late frost, when tops and roots turned a bit sweet.

Allow plants to go to seed. Hogs love seeds, which are dense in nutrients and oils, but they only digest about 20% of them, which means that the other 80% are sowed by the hogs in conveniently fertilized "seed bombs", and those will sprout in their due course. Last year, I scored a truck load of pumpkins and squash, and this autumn, they are growing in our fields in abundance. It will not be necessary for us to buy or plant turnips or beets or rye this year for the same reason.

At the turn of the 20th century, hog expert Joseph Harris advocated for planting diverse pasture in his book, *Harris on the Pig*. Not only did he realize, even then, that a pasture with a mix of legumes, brassicas and small grain grasses contributed to the growth of healthy and tasty hogs, he also knew that these foods made a superior, balanced manure that replenished the soil. The tilth of the land is the basis of healthy soil, healthy hogs, and by extension, healthy pork. A soil well-manured by the hogs and fed carbonaceous material from the plant material that are worked in by their industrious trotters is a perfect seed bed for next year's plants. It promotes larger populations of earthworms, improves soil structure, and provides needed minerals and vitamins.

"The tilth of the land is the basis of healthy soil, healthy hogs, and by extension, healthy pork."

Diverse and varied forages for hogs makes sense from the ground up. The hogs are offered foods that nourish their bodies and promote their health and vitality. It is a system that can replenish the soil and tilth on your farm. And not only is seed cheaper than feed, it can be sown by the hogs themselves, carrying this year's feed forward to the next year.

Next in this Series—*The Benefits of Fermented Feed*

Merry Schepers studied Animal Science at Oklahoma State University and interned for a year at a bull and boar stud in Griesheim bei Darmstadt in Germany. She now raises heritage hogs on pasture on a small farm in the Missouri Ozarks.



Parasite Management

Part 1—Roundworms

By Susan J. Williamson, D.V.M.



As a veterinarian, my staff frequently fields calls that say something like, "There are these long white worms in my animal's stools! Gross!" They are gross in more ways than the obvious reason!

These worms are generally what is termed a "roundworm" because they are long, round, visible worms. Every species has roundworms; they are generally species specific for their entire lifecycle, but some species are responsible for human disease related to aberrant migration – they travel to places to which they don't really belong.

Our pigs are host to roundworms, called *Ascaris suum*. There is, perhaps, some evidence that this species can infect humans and complete its life cycle and whether or not it is descended from or is the ancestor to the human-specific roundworm is unclear. It is best to assume that humans can be infected by swine roundworms; use adequate hygiene after handling hogs.

Swine roundworms are definitely a potential issue for all hog farming styles. Roundworms are not restricted to confinement operations; in fact, when hog husbandry went indoors they almost disappeared. Strict hygiene and all-in/all-out management can be used in indoor operations to reduce the environmental burden, but those methods are not feasible for a pasture and breeding operation like most of us have on our family farms. So what can a pastured hog operation do?

The goal is not necessarily a complete eradication of the parasite, as this is, quite frankly, impossible due to the longevity and hardiness of the eggs in the environment, but a reduction to a level that has no economic impact and does not cause harm to the animals.

Diagnosis is done via fecal examination. Your veterinarian can easily run this test; some recent research has improved fecal examination specificity and sensitivity to improve diagnosis, and treatment discussions can be more tailored to your needs. Some owners do fecal testing on-farm, and while this is a rough count usually, it can provide valuable data. Determining whether or not your particular operation has a roundworm burden that poses a risk to the health of your hogs is easily determined by running fecal samples. One can approach this in one of several ways, and your veterinarian can help you pick which method(s) might work best for you.

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Roundworm Lifecycle

EGGS

- A female roundworm can lay 200,000 to a million eggs a day.
- It takes 2-6 weeks for an egg, depending on temperature and humidity levels, to become infective in the environment.
- Infection generally begins with ingestion of viable eggs at birth or in the first few days.
- Highly resistant to disinfectants and other means to eliminate them.
- Depending on environment, up to 50% of eggs can be infective in the soil 8-10 years later.
- Direct sunlight may eventually degrade egg viability.

LARVAE

- Eggs hatch into larvae in the duodenum (the first part of the small intestine).
- Penetrate the tissues, are picked up by the circulatory system, and are rapidly deposited in the liver via the portal vein.
- Enter the tissues, continue to develop, and cause localized inflammation
- Can greatly damage the liver and result in condemnation due to "milk spots"
- In non-condemned livers, tissue damage makes the end product tough and chewy.
- Can be coughed up and swallowed, grow to maturity, and shed eggs.
- When seen in the feces, especially of an untreated hog, the likelihood is high of a significant infection in that animal and the herd
- Can also circulate into other parts of the body
- In the lungs can lead to excessive coughing, pneumonia, lung edema, hemorrhage (bleeding), difficulty breathing, exercise intolerance, and even death.
- Younger pigs are more likely to suffer negative effects of such infections. It can slow their growth rate and/or impact their feed conversion rate, both of which end in an increased cost of production.

ADULT WORMS

- The adults live in the small intestine, grazing on the gut lining and ingesting particulate and liquid materials from digesting food.
- Adult worms are sometimes seen in the fecal matter of hogs; those are dead or dying worms.

Parasite Management: Part 1—Roundworms (continued)

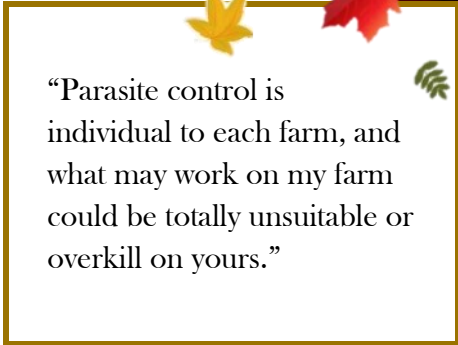
One can "pool" fecal samples for fecal egg counts and then treat on a herd health basis. Running individual fecal tests on animals on a rotational basis, such as sampling all sows one month and boars another, can also provide valuable information, as well as running tests on animals that appear to potentially have a burden, such as persistent weight loss, slow growth, coughing, or a rough haircoat, although I would caution an owner to understand that many animals carry a significant burden with no exterior signs, but milkspots may be found at processing, or growth may be less than optimal. Treatment can then be on an individual basis, or one can choose to treat on a whole-herd basis.

Treatment and management can also be done in several ways, and again, your veterinarian is best suited to help you decide. Some thoughts to consider:

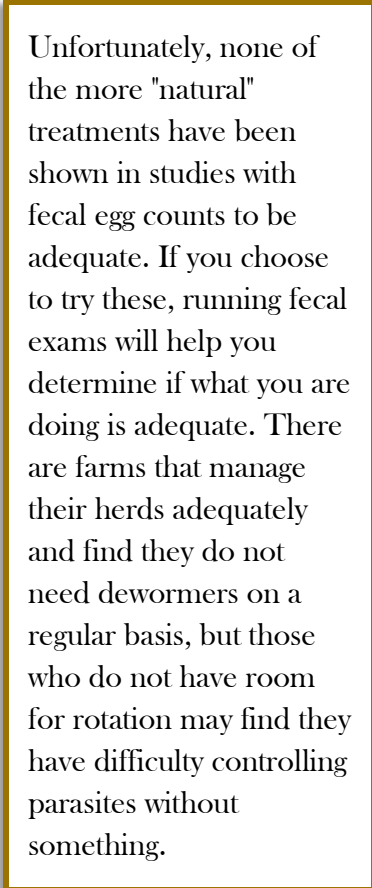
- **Manage rotational grazing.** While we cannot remove the eggs from the environment, we can prevent a buildup of eggs in one place as we practice rotational grazing. If the environment is dry and hot, the eggs may be destroyed by exposure to heat and sunlight, but this is insufficient to rely on entirely.
- **Clean up fecal matter on a frequent basis,** again to reduce egg burden in the environment.
- **Monitor stocking rate.** A high number of hogs in a small area will have a greater risk of infection.
- **Deworm strategically.** Sows, as well as their piglets, can benefit, from deworming prior to breeding and then again before birth. Deworming piglets at weaning, a time of stress that can weaken their immune system, can also give pigs a better opportunity to overcome any parasite load they are carrying. Boars can especially benefit from individual fecal testing with deworming as needed, checking every 6 months.
- **Deworm with adequate dosage and medications.** Not all dewormers will treat roundworms, so discuss what works best in your area with your veterinarian. If treatment is needed, roundworms are easily treated with most anthelmintics, the most commonly used being Ivermectin. Ivermectin has the added benefit of being effective against the tissue stages of the parasites. Knowing the weight of the pig will help you administer an adequate dosage. Many drugs require retreatment in 10-14 days to break the lifecycle of roundworms; discussion with your veterinarian will help you decide when and if you need to retreat.
- **Quarantine and run a fecal exam on new herd members.** Stress can increase fecal shedding and decrease immunity, making it easier for new additions to become ill from any parasites they may have, and your current herd also undergoes stress when new animals are brought in. It is better to not share parasites and other issues between animals as they all adjust. Even an animal from a well managed herd can have parasites under such conditions.
- **Asking about the herd health program and requiring documentation from sellers** can also go a long way in preventing problems for your herd in the future.

Following treatment, roundworms may be visible in the fecal matter but should not be cause for concern. A follow up fecal in a month is of benefit to determine effectiveness of the treatment, whichever treatment was used, and to develop a plan going forward.

Most of us may never see a roundworm, but it never hurts and can only benefit our herd health program to keep these parasites in mind when planning our breeding season and pasture management.



"Parasite control is individual to each farm, and what may work on my farm could be totally unsuitable or overkill on yours."



Unfortunately, none of the more "natural" treatments have been shown in studies with fecal egg counts to be adequate. If you choose to try these, running fecal exams will help you determine if what you are doing is adequate. There are farms that manage their herds adequately and find they do not need dewormers on a regular basis, but those who do not have room for rotation may find they have difficulty controlling parasites without something.

Customer Service: Before, During, and After the Sale

By Cathy R. Payne (Broad River Pastures, Elberton Georgia)

Farmers who raise heritage breeds often realize the importance of preservation and biodiversity. The heritage breeds we choose for our farms and homesteads, including the American Guinea Hog, came close to extinction because they did not have the characteristics most farmers in this century were looking for. When larger, faster growing, leaner pigs became popular, the American Guinea Hog was all but forgotten. It is not likely that many, or any of us will get wealthy raising American Guinea Hogs. But we can certainly strive to let the hogs earn their keep or even make a modest profit while they provide us with some of the best tasting meat and lard on the planet. In this article I will focus on some best practices breeders can choose from in order to improve their customer service. Providing the best service will differentiate you so that you can charge top prices for your breeding stock.

"...we can certainly strive to let the hogs earn their keep or even make a modest profit while they provide us with some of the best tasting meat and lard on the planet."

I have owned American Guinea Hogs since the fall of 2013 and have only been selling breeding stock for 2 years. During that time I have purchased 7 gilts and two boar shoats. In only one case was I able to visit the farm prior to the sale, meet the parents and breeders, and view the litter. Purchasing breeding stock from a stranger sight unseen can be unsettling. As I reflect on the various buying experiences, I think about what I would have wanted to know and experience as a customer. Then I do what I can to provide that experience for my customers. This article will give buyers ideas of what they might look for in a breeder in addition to giving breeders ideas on how to offer customer service that will result in referrals and repeat buyers.

Before the Sale

Help the Customer Find You

Before you can make a sale, your potential customer must be able to find you. Some ways you can post pigs for sale is through the AGHA website, local agricultural bulletins, Craigslist, or various Facebook venues. These can be effective, and will get responses. However, having a strong internet presence and Search Engine Optimization will get you even more inquiries about your stock. This way you can develop a waiting list to contact when stock does become available.



For example, I have a simple website that features my heritage stock and includes a "contact me" page. I have given podcast interviews on the American Guinea Hog, held a fundraiser to promote the hog, given interviews to reporters about heritage livestock, and presented at conferences on heritage livestock. I just Googled "American Guinea Hogs," "American Guinea Hogs in Georgia," and "American Guinea Hogs for Sale." My farm came up in the top five on all three search lists. That was actually a pleasant surprise, as I've never set out to be in the top five of a search engine list. I do try to keep a good internet presence, though. My tendency to heavily promote the breed has apparently helped people to find me. Most people I sell to are not due to ads I place. It is because they "find me on the internet." Perhaps you will soon be in the top five to ten yourself!

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Before the Sale (continued)

Know your Breed and Know your Stock

Find out as much as you can about the American Guinea Hog in general, the lines on your pedigrees, and your particular stock and its unique traits. Talking to your customers about what you have available and knowing what you have instills confidence in your buyer.



I learn by observing and collecting data on each piglet from day one. In order to do this, I need to identify each piglet right away. With 20-30 piglets on the ground in spring and fall, this can be a challenge. I create systems to help me do it. First, I use the Universal Swine Notching System to mark ears on each litter within 24 hours of birth. This helps me monitor everything right away. I use a notes feature on my smart phone and/or a 5X8 Index card or paper on a clipboard to record my observations. On day one I check color and sex, weigh, observe temperament, inspect for injuries or lice, and count teats. Over the following days and weeks, I compare notes on piglets to see if traits are consistent. This is how I know which piglets are always calm, which ones like belly rubs, which ones gain weight quickly, which started out typical but then slow their growth, etc. After three to six weeks, I tag ears. Tags are easier to read from a distance if they are not too muddy, and accessible to those who are not fluent in reading notches. If the tags fall off, the notches are still there forever. I tag gilts in the left ear and boars in the right. This makes it easier to separate once they reach sexual maturity (as early as 3 months) so breeding accidents do not happen.

Know your Costs

At some point you will be pricing your breeding piglets and meat piglets for sale. Regardless of what other people are charging for their stock, you need to recoup your costs unless you can afford to pay people to purchase your pigs. The only way to do this is to keep good records. After trying several popular electronic accounting tools, I have personally found it simpler to use two-column journal. Costs go in the left column and income goes in the right column. I make a note in my journal to determine what is related to the Guinea Hogs. I can determine whether the hogs are earning their keep and adjust prices accordingly. Expenses include feed, shelter, medical supplies, notching and tagging supplies, fencing, vet bills, and bedding. If you are running your farm as a business, labor can be counted, too.



Once you know what it costs to raise your hog for several months, you can then determine a price for your pigs. Each piglet will not have the same price. A pick of the litter will bring the highest price and a cull meat piglet the least. If you are attracting from a wide audience and providing high quality service, customers will come and not hesitate to pay your price.

Select the Best and Eat the Rest

Selection is the process of choosing which animals become breeders, and which become meat. An American Guinea Hog with registered parents MAY be registered, but not every piglet in a registered litter is necessarily a candidate for breeding. Each breeder needs to develop a way to evaluate their litters and make decisions. Communicating your selection criteria will help develop a breeder's reputation for providing high-quality stock.

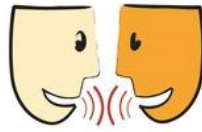


Each breeder will have different criteria for selection. In general, the saying, "Breed the best and eat the rest" is a simplified statement to describe selection.

During the Sale

Communicate Clearly and Regularly

When I am contacted about purchasing a piglet, I get as much customer information as possible – home phone, mobile phone, email, city, and state. If asked about pricing for an out of state customer, I bring up the legal requirements for health inspections if the prospective buyer does not live in my state and requires papers



and blood work to cross state lines. This cost needs to be added to the cost of the piglet or hog.

I also ask some probing questions to determine if the customer is suitable for pig ownership. Examples are determining how much property they have, what type of land, if it's fenced, if they have guard dogs, if it is zoned agricultural, etc. I reserve the right not to sell a pig if I believe the animal will not be safe in a particular situation.

I keep a waiting list with contact data on a spreadsheet so I can get back with customers once a litter is tagged. I answer email and phone messages daily. A prompt response will help you stand out to the buyer.

Preparation for Transfer

I like to catch hogs slated for sale about thirty minutes before the customer is expected to arrive. This gives me a chance to clean off mud, give it a once over, separate it from the herd, and



have it waiting in a crate in the shade ready to quickly transfer into the buyer's vehicle. The buyer may have driven a long way and won't want to participate in a frantic chase in the mud trying to catch a scared piglet.

As the piglet is transferred, I hold it out for inspection of eyes, feet, sex organs, ears, tags, etc. to make sure that the identification on the piglet matches the pedigree and that males have two testicles and a normal penis, etc. Mistakes happen. If this inspection is done before the piglet leaves the property, there is less chance that the customer will claim there is a problem after they are several hundred miles away.

Continued on next page.....

SELECTION CRITERIA

I interviewed Donna Dorminey of Soloman's Wisdom Farm in Kentucky. Here is what she said about how she selects for sound stock:

"I am looking for correct structure. And I am especially looking for legs that can bear the weight of the Guinea Hog. That sloped pastern, but not where the dewclaws are on the ground, and not up right that there will be a lot of joint wear and tear. So I am looking for the gently sloped pastern for the movement of the hogs.

I look for good bone structure. Like in a horse, I look for nice, thick, cannon bones in the pig. That is the bone between the hip and the knee. That will hold this animal up for life. I look from the front and the back and for well-set legs, so when they stand they have a good stance up front. The front feet are straight and pointing straight forward. A little bit of towed out is okay, but I don't like a lot of toed in. That will put stress on the joints over time. In the back, I like a nice wide set to support those hips. I like a nice spread in the legs. And then I look for the flat top line. I like balance between the hind quarters and the shoulders. I don't like one to be massively bigger than the other. If something is going to be bigger, I prefer the shoulders to be a little wider than the hips over the opposite way around.

And then for headset, a lot of that is preference. I prefer the shorter snout to the wider snout. When I look at the head, I prefer slightly bushier ears. And I look for the personality. That is a gut feeling type of thing. It is hard to describe."

During the Sale (continued)

Information Packets and Other Paperwork

I register litters, although not every member of a registered litter is transferred. Each buyer receives a packet that includes a receipt for tax records, a copy of the litter registration with their pig and identification highlighted, an information sheet about the American Guinea Hog and the AGHA, a copy of my business card, a chart explaining the Universal Swine Notching System, and whatever else may be helpful. I will probably start including a copy of this article to help them get off to a good start selling their future offspring.



Tour Farm and Introduce Parents

If time and weather allows, I enjoy showing buyers the various sizes and ages of hogs, let them meet the sire and dam of their litter, and see the diversity in the lines of Guinea Hogs.



After the Sale

Follow Up

I transfer hog ownership for registered piglets as soon as possible, and send a follow up letter to the buyer letting them know when to expect their registration papers. I also remind them to look at the folder for additional information and that they will need to join the AGHA if they want to register litters.

TO DO LIST

Follow Up
Follow Up
Follow Up ...

Ask for Feedback and a Review

I have a farm Facebook page and a Google account, so I ask customers to leave me a review. Many of them follow through with that. These reviews also help me to rank higher on search engines. I befriend my customers on Facebook if they have an account, and enjoy seeing pictures of my farm bred piglets as they grow up and have litters of their own. So much fun!

Customer
Feedback

Provide Support

I let my customers know that I am only an email, text, or phone call away, and to call me with any questions. And they do!



Summary

Your sales and service process will differ from mine to reflect your unique style and knowledge set. The important thing is to think about how you can offer customer service before, during, and after the sale, to develop a process that works for you, and to implement it with some consistency. Doing this will enhance your reputation as a breeder, increase customer referrals, develop repeat buyers, and help you sell your hogs.

Praise the Lard!

Throughout history, many cultures around the world developed various preservation methods as a means to save food during plentiful times for leaner times ahead.

Cured meats are one such example of food preservation. In some regions, the climate is a natural meat preservation tool, and where climate is not enough, application of salt, smoke, and spices, along with time, was a way to ensure that a harvest would remain edible for months or even years after the animal was killed and butchered.

Let's make Lardo!

By Kate & Christian Spinillo (Ham Sweet Farm)



Fat is flavor, and lardo is a wonderful showcase of the simplicity and richness of cured pork fat.

Lardo [literally "lard"] is an Italian salumi, created to use the hard fat found atop the loin of the animal, commonly known in the United States as "fatback." As chops and roasts were prepared from the loin of a hog, families were left with slabs of beautiful, hard, white fat, which could then be preserved. It was this excess that led to the

creation of lardo— essentially fatback cured with salt, herbs and other aromatics.

Originating in Italy, perhaps the most famous version of this preparation is *Lardo di Colonnata*. The villagers of Colonnata have been making lardo there in the Alps since Roman times, using the nearby Carrara marble in the process. In order to be designated Lardo di Colonnata, the lardo must be made within Colonnata and must be aged in marble vats created from the local Carrara quarries. Second only to *Colonnata*, *Vallée d'Aoste Lard d'Arnad* is also a prized version of lardo within all of Italy. For that product, the fatback is cured in wooden tubs known as doils, and the chestnut or oak wood gives the lardo its characteristic flavor.

While fat has long been an important and cherished part of cooking in the world, America's "War on Fat," waged since 1980 or so, led to Americans consuming far fewer animal fats and far more processed fats in their diet. What does this have to do with Guinea Hogs, you ask?

To meet consumer demand for lean meat, commercial pigs were bred to be incredibly lean [so much so that pork, "The Other White Meat," was positioned to compete with chicken for your grocery store dollars. That slogan was developed in 1987]. Guinea Hogs are a lard breed, perfectly suited to both fresh and cured applications, much in the way that an Italian family traditionally would have utilized their hogs at harvest.

"Guinea Hogs are a lard breed, perfectly suited to both fresh and cured applications..."

Continued on Page 12

Traditionally in curing, you're looking for a reduction in water content within the whole muscle cut of meat. With this particular preparation, there is virtually no water to be lost, as most water loss is typically found within the lean muscle rather than fat.

Let's make Lardo! (continued)

As with all things great, patience and simplicity are key. While the method of making lardo has been around for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, the methods have changed little, if at all. Let's take a look at Lard D'Arnad. Traditionally in curing, you're looking for a reduction in water content within the whole muscle cut of meat. With this particular preparation, there is virtually no water to be lost, as most water loss is typically found within the lean muscle rather than fat.

What we're attempting to do here is infuse the salty brine and aromatics throughout the fatback. While recipes vary slightly from maker to maker, the baseline spices are typically the same and you see more variations in the levels of spicing.

Typical Baseline Spices



SALT



ROSEMARY



SAGE



JUNIPER



BAY LEAVES



BLACK PEPPER

STEP 1 - Start with a rectangular piece of fatback, with the skin removed. Your butcher can help you identify this cut if you are unsure, or if you're butchering at home, there are many DIY-focused resources available [Farmstead Meatsmith is one of our favorites].



STEP 2 - Once you have your fatback, you'll be making a brine combining the water, salt and other aromatics, then allow it to cool. Once cooled, submerge the fatback in the brine, using a deep hotel pan or similar,



STEP 3 - Flip twice a month for approximately 90 days.

STEP 4 - Remove from brine, pat dry and enjoy! To eat, just slice it paper-thin and place atop of hot bread, crispy polenta, pizza... well you get the idea. It can be served plain, with black pepper or with a drizzle of honey for a sweet treat.

For a recipe and a more in-depth explanation of how to produce lardo, take a look at our friend Jason Molinari's blog post on the subject: <http://curedmeats.blogspot.com/2010/04/lardo-darnad.html>

Swine & Dine - It's Pizza Time!

by Tori Rozanski

One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.

Virginia Wolfe

Always looking for ways to replace purchased cooking oils with our homegrown, home-rendered lard,

I approached my husband about possibly substituting lard for the traditional olive oil that he uses in his homemade pizza dough. Being the accommodating soul that he is, he agreed to give it a try.

Yes friends, my husband makes pizza....from scratch. The warm fresh crust, the ever-so-slightly, spicy sauce, and the wholesome, fresh toppings produce a pizza so yummy, so unique, so mouth-wateringly delicious that, for us, all other pizza pales in comparison.

Since this is a recipe for American Guinea Hog lovers, I also used some of my ground AGH pork to mix up some homemade Italian sausage for use as one of the toppings. Of course, all the traditional toppings (cheese, mushrooms, onions, black olives, and peppers) are also included.

Lard improves the texture of most baked goods and the experimental lard crust turned out splendidly. The homemade sausage was equally delicious. We will definitely be using lard in our pizza crust from now on!

Feel free to experiment. Choose your own toppings, leave the cayenne out of the sauce—or add more if you like it flaming—throw in your favorite herbs and spices. Most importantly, have fun!

Manja!



Chuck's Homemade Pizza

Step One—The Crust

(perfectly fits a 15" pizza stone)

Ingredients:

2 ½ tsp Granulated Yeast
1/4 cup Lukewarm Water
1 tsp Sugar or Honey

2 Tbsp. Lard (plus a bit extra for coating the rolling pin)
1/2 cup Lukewarm Water
1 tsp salt

Directions:

- Combine Granulated Yeast, 1/4 cup water and sugar — let stand for 10 minutes
- Add flour, salt, lard and 1/2 cup water and mix together either by hand or using the bread hook on electric mixer.
- Knead dough for 10 minutes — either by hand or using bread hook and your electric mixer.
- Place dough in a warm place (approx. 80 degrees) and let rise for 45 minutes to an hour.
- Rub rolling pin with a light coating of lard
- Sprinkle pizza peel with corn meal
- Roll out dough into desired size/shape. Note: This dough will make a nice, medium thick crust for a 15" round pizza or a deep dish crust for a 13" round pizza.





Swine & Dine - It's Pizza Time! (continued)

Step Two—The Sauce

Ingredients:

1, 6 oz. can	Tomato Paste
½ tsp.	Thyme
1 tsp	Oregano
½ tsp.	Basil
¼ tsp.	Garlic Powder
1 pinch	Cayenne Pepper
5 Tbsp.	Water

Directions:

Combine and stir all ingredients together.



Step Three—The Sausage

Ingredients:

1½ tsp.	Salt
3½ tsp.	Paprika
2/3 tsp.	Garlic Powder
2/3 tsp.	Fennel Seed
¼ tsp.	Anise Seed
1 tsp.	Ground Black Pepper
¼ tsp.	Red Pepper Flakes
½ tsp.	Oregano
½ tsp.	Sage
½ tsp.	Basil
½ tsp.	Thyme
2 Tbsp.	Lard
1 lb.	Ground Pork (AGH of course)

Directions:

- Blend all dry ingredients together until well-blended.
- Thoroughly mix dry ingredient mixture with the ground pork until mixture is evenly blended.
- Add lard to skillet and cook sausage mixture—leaving in large chunks.
- Drain fat from sausage and retain for future cooking projects.



Step Four—Prepare Toppings, Assemble & Bake

Ingredients:

½ cup	Green, Red or Yellow Sweet Pepper
1 cup	Sliced Mushrooms
½ cup	Chopped Black Olives
½ cup	Chopped Onions
All	Previously cooked sausage
1½ lbs.	Grated Mozzarella, Asiago, Provolone cheese combination.

Directions:

- Preheat oven and pizza stone to 450°
- Spread Sauce on Rolled-Out Dough
- Evenly distribute all toppings (except cheese) on surface of sauce.
- Top with your grated cheese
- Slide pizza onto stone and reduce temperature to 425°
- Bake for 12 minutes or until brown
- Remove from oven and enjoy!



oven
golden

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Board Member Spotlight

Donna Hertlein
Member at Large



I began my American Guinea Hog adventure in 2010 with the purchase of Skyfire Pete and Skyfire Pulp. My family and

those razorbacked hogs that used to run the hill 'round here. Sadly Skyfire Pete is now deceased, but Mama Pig lives on. Their progeny have fed us, cleared garden and field, entertained children and friends, supplied breeding stock to other AGH enthusiasts and provided life lessons beyond measure. The Skyfire line has proven the exact fit for my purposes. They are floppers, calm, intelligent, and they taste great too (it's a little sad to send them to market). I am currently investigating avenues to market the hogs as a heritage meat product.

In my former life I had 25 years of experience in the natural resources professions working over a wide scope of environmental issues in the public and private section as a biologist, environmental consultant, college instructor, and affected landowner. My areas of expertise were natural community classification with conservation planning, habitat restoration and wetlands and waters delineation.

I had returned to Arkansas after many years away, landing one mile down the dirt road from my childhood home. Pete and Pulp, soon renamed Mama and Papa Pig, instantly stole our hearts. I chose American Guinea Hogs because they were considered the historical breed of Southern homesteads; well, and they kinda look like

About Our Newsletter



Curly Tales

Curly Tales is the quarterly newsletter of the American Guinea Hog Association. Its fourfold mission is to inform, inspire, support, and connect Association members as they work together to save America's Favorite Homestead Hog.

America's Favorite Homestead Hog



American Guinea Hog Association
www.guineahogs.org

UPCOMING FEATURE ARTICLES

The Benefits of Fermented Feed

Parasite Management - Lice & Mites

WE NEED YOUR INPUT

If you have questions regarding any aspect of breeding, caring for, or marketing your American Guinea Hogs which you would like to see addressed in an upcoming Curly Tales issue, please email Tori Rozanski, clearmorningprovisions@gmail.com.

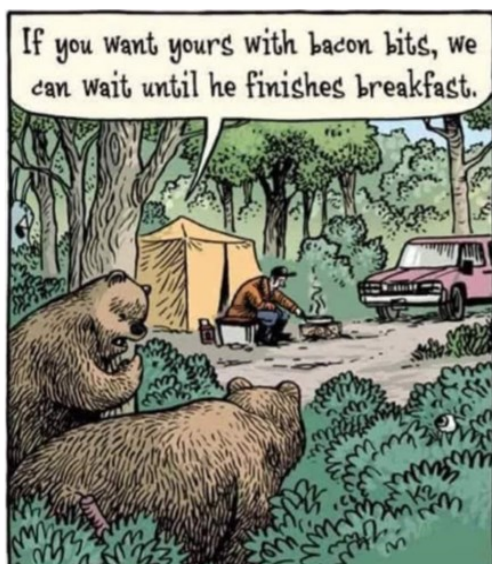
LITTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Have a litter or litters of registered guinea hogs which you would like to announce in the newsletter? Please email the following information to Tori Rozanski at clearmorningprovisions@gmail.com.

Farm/Owner Name—Contact Information

Farrowing Date—Parentage (Boar and Sow)

Number of Piglets in the Litter



HOGWASH

Purely Playful

Porcine Puns