



SPRING EDITION
APRIL — 2018

Curly Tales

NEWSLETTER—AMERICAN GUINEA HOG ASSOCIATION



ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER

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

AGHA members should submit ideas for newsletter articles to the editor, Tori Rozanski, at aghanewsletter@gmail.com

CONTENTS

(Click on a Title to Jump to that Article)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER	2
ASSOCIATION NEWS	3
HOGWASH.....	4
SEASONAL COLLAGE	5
<i>Spring...the Growth of New Beginnings</i>	
FARROWING	6
<i>Managing Farrowing—Start-to-Finish</i>	
NATURAL PARASITE CONTROL	13
<i>Part One - External Parasites</i>	
ZOO PIGS.....	15
<i>Building Breed Awareness</i>	
RAT EXTERMINATION.....	21
<i>American Guinea Hog Style</i>	
DAISY AND HER PET ROCKS	23
<i>The Sweet Story About a Unique Sow</i>	
GOING WHOLE HOG.....	26
<i>Tools of the Trade, Part Two (Preparing to Butcher)</i>	
TO MARKET, TO MARKET	28
<i>American Guinea Hogs—A Viable Choice</i>	
SWINE AND DINE	31
<i>How to Make Eggs Benedict, Noix de Jambon, and Bacon</i>	
ASSOCIATION CONTACT INFO	40



From Our President

Dear Members,

Greetings!

I am sure you are all enjoying, or looking forward to, spring weather. As I look out the kitchen window on the remaining snow drifts, I know that I certainly am! Here in Central New York, we have had one of the toughest winters I can remember when it came to livestock care. I am a dyed in the wool Northerner and love the winter, but even I cried "Uncle" after the last mid-March storm dumped 2 feet of heavy snow on my region and froze up my outside water source for the first time in 11 winters. Hauling water for my gang from inside the house for two weeks was certainly a challenge, making me consider reevaluating my plans of developing a pastured pork operation.

The challenging winter weather made the promise of the spring mud season actually seem a welcome relief. Fortunately, all the critters will be out on grass again by the end of April and the sight of happily grazing animals will dull the memory of the constant manure shoveling and water hauling through the last five, frozen months.

We farmers and homesteaders are an optimistic bunch, rising above the hardships, the losses, and disappointments that come with any kind of living creatures, be it livestock or produce gardens. No matter how hard it gets or what the obstacles are, *there's always next year*, is our mantra. Whether it's losing an entire harvest to tomato blight or insect damage, a favorite sow gets sick, or piglets die, we can eventually look past that to the promise of the next season, the next litter, the next success. We rally 'round each other when someone needs cheering on. The love that people have for these pigs draws us all

together and makes us want to help each other be more successful. Messages of hope and encouragement abound.

"It will get better."

"You can do it."

"That happened to me as well."

I see it all the time on the online forums. Comradery naturally forms within a group of like minded folks, especially within our Guinea Hog groups. I feel privileged to be a part of it.

This newsletter celebrates the success of many AGHA members and we'd love to hear from more of you with glimpses into what you are doing with your pigs, or how they are enriching your life. Nothing like sharing stories with friends to make you forget sloshing water into your boots on a 12 degree day! By next November, I'll be ready to do it all over again.....

Angele





Membership Meeting

The Association will be holding a supplementary Membership Meeting as a follow up to last November's Annual Membership Meeting for the purpose of formalizing some of the votes for Board of Director positions. Our Bylaws require a 10% quorum for voting, which we did not have. In late April, we will be sending out notifications of an online voting email, with details and reminders of the positions to be voted on. We hope that you will participate in this important part of our association's continuing success.

Mother Earth News Fairs

This will be the Association's third year participating in the Mother Earth News (MEN) fairs held around the country. In February, Wendy McDaniel was, once again, at the fair in Belton, Texas. Upcoming fairs include:

April 17-18, Asheville, ND — Matt Hunker and his wife, Virginia will represent the AGHA.

June 2-3, Frederick, MD — Tori Rozanski and her family will represent at this fair.



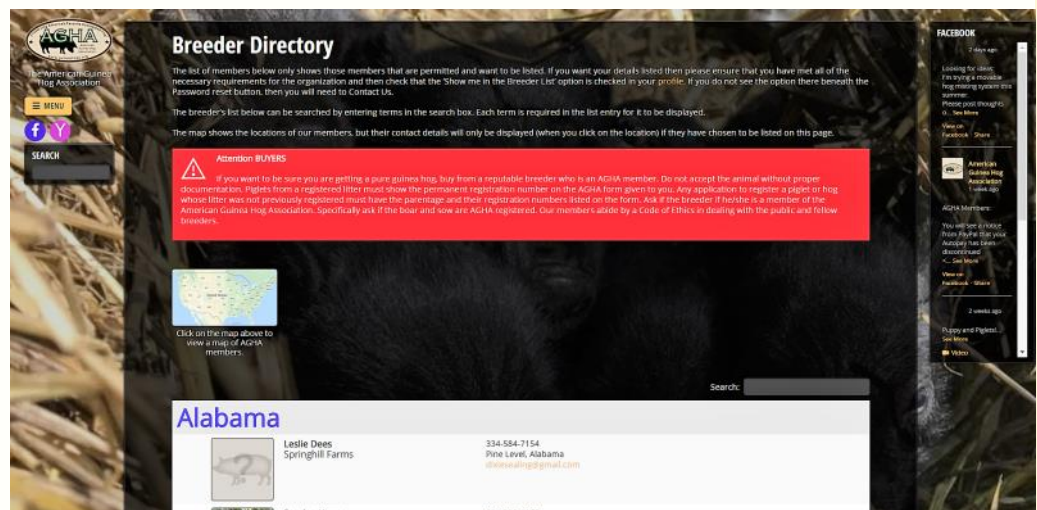
See the full year's line-up at <https://www.motherearthnewsfair.com/>



These fairs are amazing, with seminars and classes, vendors and displays all catered to people just like us. The folks that attend are a captive audience and our booth gets well deserved attention. Those working the booth come away exhausted and exhilarated, it is two days of non-stop "Talking Pig All Day." If you have never been to a MEN fair, you are in for a treat, whether it is to walk in for a few hours or stay for the whole weekend. You will probably end up wanting to help in the booth next year!

Breeder Directory

The website's Breeder Directory is starting to fill up nicely but we still have less than a third of the membership listed. The folks who are on the listing have reported great response with emails and sales resulting from their listing. If you are not yet listed, please contact your Regional Director for instructions or email Angela at president@guineahogs.org to start taking advantage of the traffic the website is attracting. If they can't find you, they can't buy from you!



(Continued on page 4)

ASSOCIATION
NEWS

(Continued from page 3)

Registrations and Transfers

We will soon have a One Step Hog Registration and Transfer form available to save time and paperwork. While this can be done with the two separate forms we have now, this will make the process more streamlined and have one combined payment

Recent PayPal Notifications

We apologize for the confusion caused by the recent PayPal notifications that your membership was terminated. PayPal does not have provisions for changing the membership fee on automatic payments, so anyone signed up for autopay was sent a notice of termination. PayPal should have said "Termination of Auto-pay", however that is not how it read, causing an understandable flurry of emails. We will be sending out email reminders for this year's renewals and should be able to go back to the autopay option after one cycle of the new \$30 Annual Membership fee. Again, our apologies for any inconvenience.



Three Little pigs insurance scam.

HOGWASH

Purely Playful

Porcine Puns



.....Spring ushers in
the birth and growth
of new beginnings.

JAREN L. DAVIS



Farrowing

BY SUSAN E. WILLIAMSON, D.V.M.



I've seen a many baby animals as a veterinarian, and even after over 20 years in the field, nothing, to me, is cuter than a piglet! I love the sweet little snouts and the teeny ears and tails, and I look forward to piggy snuggles with every litter. But to get that litter on the ground safely, there are a few things you can do to help your pigs.

Seasonal Considerations

Winter farrowing can be wonderful or a disaster depending on your climate and farm facilities. I prefer to not have winter babies and find that buyers in my area are not interested in overwintering piglets but prefer to overwinter a larger pig, so I time my litters for birth between late March to July. You would be well served to speak to fellow hog breeders in your area to decide whether or not a winter farrowing would be a good idea for you. Sometimes accidents happen even on the best managed farms, and warm, dry, draft free shelter would absolutely be needed in most areas of the US during the

winter to ensure survival of the litter.

Breeding Stock Condition

Before breeding, make sure your breeding stock is in good health, at a healthy body weight and has been receiving correct nutrition. A sow that is too fat can have difficulty conceiving and/or giving birth, and an obese boar can have trouble breeding his sows. Obesity also leads to structural breakdowns, such as lameness or weakness. Inadequate or excessive vitamin, mineral and amino acid intake, excessive parasites or other health concerns can lead to small litter sizes, birth defects or even stillbirths or abortions. Animals that are too thin may not produce adequate litter numbers, may be infertile or not even cycle. Overly thin animals may

manage to raise their piglets but at a huge cost to their own health.

Introducing the Boar and Sow

I find keeping the boar and sow in side-by-side pens for a few days before bringing them together into the same area reduces arguments and territorial disputes. Some breeders introduce the sow into the boar's pen. Placing a boar in the sow's pen may cause her to attack him if he approaches her when she isn't feeling frisky or is territorial.



Three Months Three Weeks Three Days

Once the deed is done, mark 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days (113 days) on your calendar. The majority of sows will give birth on that day, but there are plenty that will give birth a few days earlier or a few days late. If you pasture breed, mark the first possible day of breeding (113 days from when you put them together) to the last possible date of breeding (113 days from when you remove one or the other). This is so you have a window to be watching and provide your expectant mother with the supplies she will need. Many sows do not show pregnancy until they are late stage, so be prepared before she looks pregnant!

Continued on page 7...

Farrowing—continued from page 6

Farrowing Shelters

Each sow should have the opportunity to have her own small farrowing hut or be placed into a pen of her own. Some breeders keep a friend in with their mothers — some do not. Either practice is fine. When co-housing, it is important to remember that sometimes other hogs may also accidentally crush another sow's piglets. Make sure your shelter is large enough to allow the pigs room to scoot. Guinea hogs are especially gentle with the young pigs, so such deaths are frequently due to mismanagement and can be avoided by reducing numbers in the pen or increasing the size of the shelter.



Farrowing huts can take on a variety of configurations based on what each breeder has available. Some build lovely a-frame buildings, others use calf hutches, still others use other little shelters, some even use a large barn.

I take a 16-foot long cattle panel and cut a 4' section from the end. I then drive 4 T posts in about a four-foot square and bend the remaining 12' section between them. I use the short, 4' section for the back. I cover with the 12' section with a tarp and fasten everything with loads of zip ties. The biggest issue I have with these small huts is sometimes a laboring sow will tear parts off the tarp! They are also the perfect height for goats to jump on, so do not put them in with climbing goats. I take them down and put them back up as needed. I also have wooden structures that the hogs seem to currently prefer in this chilly weather.

NOTE: Not all sows will use the provided shelter. One of mine decided to have a litter out in the field one fine spring morning! She was very upset with me for moving her litter of eight strapping boys to the hut I had set up a few feet away.



Continued on page 8...

Farrowing—continued from page 7

Heat Lamps

I do not use heat lamps. Every year, in my area, several barns or homes burn down due to heat lamps. A veterinary friend, colleague, and fellow farmer almost lost her entire sheep herd last year when the cord

of a brand new heat lamp shorted and within a few hours after she correctly and safely hung the new lamp, fire ran up the cord and started her barn on fire. Instead of heat lamps, I ensure all my newborn animals have a draft free shed and plenty of bedding.



Fill the farrowing hut with straw or shavings. Too deep is dangerous for piglets. They cannot when a sow lays down and will be squashed. If the bedding is too shallow, the piglets cannot burrow in and stay warm in those first few critical days. Straw is my choice for winter, and I use shavings during the heat of summer. A small shelter may only need about half a bale of straw. The mother will use this to make a little taco-shaped bed, in a behavior called nesting.

Bedding

Keeping Boars with Sows and Piglets

I recommend removing the boar from the sows area prior to farrowing. One summer I was unable, for a variety of reasons, to remove my boar from the main pasture, and we had a handful of squashing deaths that summer. He was gentle with the little ones, but he didn't always look before laying down and would accidentally lay on piglets.

This was not exclusive to this boar; there are other stories of boars accidentally harming piglets, either by sitting on them or with their sharp tusks. It is very unusual for an AGH boar to deliberately harm piglets, and a boar that attacks sows or piglets should be removed from the breeding pool.

Continued on Page 9...

Farrowing—continued from page 8

Pre-Farrowing Signs

Although my sows often choose inconvenient farrowing times, I have always been able to notice when my girls are about to give birth. While they never miss a meal—one will even come to eat while giving birth—there

are some very noticeable physical changes worth noting.

1. their vulva enlarges, lengthens, and softens
2. the milk bar will usually look full or even drag on the ground, and
3. they may behave differently, as in they carry small items or hay or grasses into the hut or to their chosen birth place to build a nest.



Milk Bar - One week from Farrowing

Normal Farrowing

Normal farrowing should consist of the sow laying down and essentially pushing piglets out. Once she enters active labor, as indicated by hard contractions, a piglet should be produced within 30 minutes. Pigs can present front feet or

back feet first, both being completely normal presentations. If a piglet is transverse (crosswise) or with the head back, that cannot be delivered without assistance. I have had sows deliver pigs both feet back or one foot back with no difficulty, but this can be a problem for some sows. Piglets should follow each other fairly quickly; there may be up to half an hour between pigs or as little as a few seconds, depending on size of the piglets, presentation, and experience of the mother.

Pigs are different than other animals at birth. The sows generally do not lick and stimulate the piglets like you might see with many other animals. It's difficult for a sow to get up and easily turn, so most stay down once in actual delivery position, and the rapid-fire birth of most piglets is enough to stimulate a breath. This is similar to the delivery of a giraffe calf (for those of you who tuned into April the giraffe's birth live online). The thump of hitting the ground makes them take a breath and starts them moving about. The piglets should be vigorous and actually make their own way to the udder to suckle.



Sow in Labor

Continued on Page 10...

Farrowing—continued from page 9

Malpositioned Piglets

I generally do not recommend owners to attempt to manipulate malpositioned piglets. There is not a lot of room in there, and the sow's pushing, the shape of her pelvis and the lack of room can make it very difficult to correct a malpositioned pig. If you must try, be sure to wear OB gloves and use lubricant, and a good rule of thumb is that if you cannot fix it easily, if you cannot identify the presented body parts or it's been longer than about 20 minutes, you need a veterinarian. The longer you mess around, the bigger the chance for infection, more swelling, and increased drying of tissues. All this makes the vet's job that much harder and will cost you more money. Calling the vet out as soon as you realize there is a problem may also save you the emergency fee and usually results in a healthier mom and litter. Statistically, less than 10% of animal births have problems, so the odds are excellent that you will not need to assist at all.



You will know farrowing is complete when one or two placentas are passed and contractions/pushing have ceased. Sows can have a placenta for each horn of the uterus. You may not find the placenta if she has farrowed overnight or is in with other pigs; it may be eaten. I find that a sow that comes up to eat, drink and move around is usually done farrowing, although some sows certainly prioritize eating!

When is it over?

Post Farrowing

You may also notice your new mother staying in with her litter and resting, almost in a daze, for the first 12 hours. This is normal. You can certainly check her temperature and monitor, but many sows take the next day to simply recover and focus on their new piglets.

A piglet's stomach is the size of a small marble. They will not nurse long, and if they are relaxed, not squealing, and contentedly pile up together to sleep, they are doing fine and obtaining adequate nutrition. Colostrum is highly concentrated and they do not need a great deal of it at once. They will continue to reap the benefits over the next 24 hours as their intestines absorb antibodies and huge quantities of nutrition. Do not intervene if the litter is content and the sow is doing well.

A small amount of vaginal discharge is normal for the first few days. If, however, it looks like pus, is very bloody, is copious in amount, or if she won't eat, won't rise, or has a fever, you need to call a veterinarian immediately. If you had to assist with the birth, she is especially at risk for infection. If she has little to no milk, as indicated by piglets that do not settle in to suck, piglets that seem restless, the lack of a full udder, or lack of a rhythmic grunting sound, you need to speak to a veterinarian. She may have one of a number of conditions that are interfering with normal milk production; failure to rectify this quickly can lead to the loss of the litter and/or death of the sow.



Continued on Page 11...

Farrowing—continued from page 10

First-Time Farrowers

First time mothers can struggle a bit. They do not always realize the babies are theirs and may take some time to settle down and look after their piglets. I put my expectant gilts in with an experienced mother in a small pen and make sure to minimize distractions. Sometimes a first time sow will lose her entire litter. I tend to give them a second chance before deciding whether or not I want to keep that sow unless she does not fit my breeding program in other ways.

Increase Feed

I personally make sure my sows are given extra feed after the birth, but I do not give anything like vitamins or such. I feed a well balanced diet, and all she needs is extra calories. A sow will be expected to make up to five gallons of milk a day for her litter! That takes a lot of calories, and every sow loses some weight

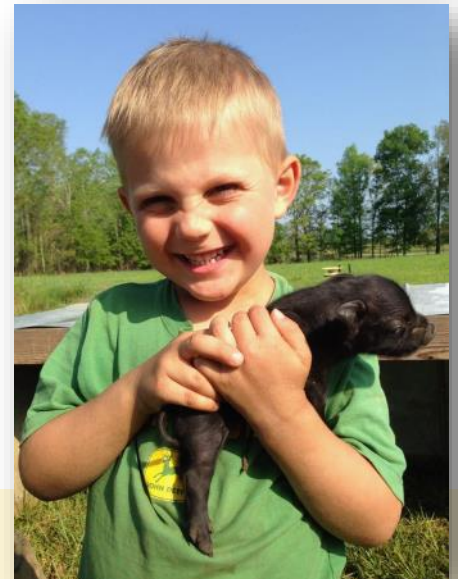
during nursing. While she is nursing, almost free feeding a sow is not a bad idea, plus the pigs quickly start eating feed, which helps mom out. Ensure she has plenty of clean fresh water; some farmers give their sows molasses water immediately postpartum, which does not hurt her. My sows have hay or pasture at all times, and I increase their feed as the pigs grow.



Handling the Piglets

Some sows can be very protective. Even a normally sweet Guinea Hog mom can become irritable or even bite if she thinks you are attacking her babies! I never penalize a mom for this behavior, as I don't mind her being protective of her babies. Coyotes, dogs and foxes love to eat suckling pig, and a strong, protective mother is my third line of defense, behind my livestock dogs and electric

fences. When I want to examine the littles after a few days, I distract mom with feed and make sure I have a wall between her and I, and I also like to have a helper who can distract her if need be. A squealing baby can set off the nicest mama! Ear tagging or notching may make a mama upset, and one of my sows does not care for castration day, even when they are 8-12 weeks old; we take the boarlets out of her hearing for sedation.



Continued on Page 12...

Farrowing—continued from page 11

Piglet Care & Weaning

they are eating feed well by about 6-8 weeks, they can be weaned, or you can let mom wean them if she is doing well health and weight-wise. You will see them playing within a few days of birth, and moms usually let them come out of the shelter by about a week, depending on weather, to run about and start learning about being a pig.

Pigs raised outside do not need iron injections, because they will receive adequate exposure while digging and playing in the mud, and the majority of guinea hog farmers do not clip needle teeth. In over 100 piglets raised on my farm, I have only had one sow have a wound of any sort on her mammary tissue, and I suspected it was an environmental injury and not caused by a piglet. Piglets grow very quickly, and if



Rebreeding Your Sow

Sows can rebreed extremely quickly. She will cycle again within days. If you do not want more piglets, you must ensure your boar is not in the pen. A common myth is that that cycle is infertile. I have had it go both ways: either the sow does not conceive, or she will. One of my sows had two large and healthy litters 115 days apart! She even nursed pigs from both litters at the same time. That took her months of recovery time to regain the lost weight and health. The boar was in a different pasture and destroyed the cattle panel fences to get to her, so you must be absolutely sure you can keep them apart to control reproduction.

Enjoy farrowing, as it's a most special time of the year on the farm!



Dr. Williamson has worked in a multitude of veterinary related careers, such as working for USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services as a field veterinarian. She currently is self employed as a relief veterinarian while raising four boys and a wide variety of livestock, including American Guinea Hogs, and heirloom tomatoes on her family's small farm in Maryland.

Natural Parasite Control

Part One—External Parasites

By Angela Ingraham



Last year we had two excellent articles written by Board Member and Veterinarian Susan Williamson, DVM, on lice and mites. These comprehensive articles include identification methods, their life cycles and treatments using conventional, chemical control measures and can be found in the January 2017 and July 2017 Newsletters on the AGHA website.

For those who prefer not to use chemical products due to Organic Certification or for personal reasons, this article explores some of the natural options that are available.

The first step in controlling any parasite problem is, of course, proper identification of the problem. An itching pig is not always an infected pig. Many pigs experience dry flaky skin or patches of lost hair that are not the result of a parasite infection. Normal shedding or "blowing coat" happens periodically, although not all hogs go through this, and those that do may not experience it every year. One of my boars loses hair every three or four years, while another blows coat each year, leading me to believe genetics may be a factor. Therefore, it is important not to think loss of coat is automatically linked to a parasite infection. Details on ID are contained within the prior-mentioned articles, so will not be covered again here. While lice are easy to see with the naked eye, mites are microscopic and while inflammation and redness is often visible, the insects themselves are best identified by having your Vet take a skin scraping. It is important to have a good working relationship with your Veterinarian, even if you chose to use alternative methods of care.

Early in my farming adventure, I bought a goat that had lice. In an effort to control the problem without the use of synthetic chemicals, I tried a product that I had purchased for my poultry called Manna Pro Poultry Protector. It worked miracles and the infestation disappeared with just one use. I have used it subsequently several times on poultry lice and am sold on its effectiveness. While researching for this article, I contacted the folks at Manna Pro to ask about use on other livestock. The company spokesperson responded that the company had not done testing on anything other than poultry, so could not recommend its use for swine. Not to be deterred, I searched and found that one of my favorite companies, Crystal Creek, offers a product specifically for external parasites on livestock. Their 'Lice and Mange Wash' is an Enzymatic Soap and has been tested extensively on lice and mange mites on livestock. Another well known company, Wolf Creek Ranch, also offers a Mange Parasite Oil.



Another natural product has been developed by the long time organic hog breeders at Kingbird Farm, here in NY State. Michael and Karma Gloss have raised Guinea Hogs and Tamworth hogs for over 20 years without the use of synthetics. Karma's Louse Oil is a combination of mineral oil and essential oils. Ingredients and instructions are listed on the site allnaturalpetcare.com. Kingbird Farm's experience and wisdom is well known in the hog community.

Many organic producers also use Diatomaceous Earth for the control of external parasites, especially lice, with excellent results. Also known as DE, this is a naturally occurring sedimentary rock which consists of fossilized remains of tiny aquatic organisms called diatoms. Diatomaceous Earth causes insects to dry out and die by absorbing the oils and fats from the cuticle of the insect's exoskeleton. Its sharp edges are abrasive, speeding up the process. DE must be handled wearing a mask, as in its powdered form, it can irritate the lungs when applied. DE is sprinkled on the affected animal and rubbed into the skin, especially into folds such as the neck

(Continued on page 14)

(Natural Parasite Control—continued from page 13)

and behind the front legs. Repeated applications to control any eggs that have hatched are recommended, as with the products above.

One of the most important aspects of natural livestock care is excellent all around health. Mice, lice and other parasites are more likely to heavily affect those animals with a lower immune system, so along with clean living environments, a good diet is key. Another well written article written by Kevin Fall (Alternative Treatments, AGHA Newsletter, January 2015) mentions an excellent book by Veterinarian Dr. Paul Dettloff, *Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals* (available on Amazon). Although written for those raising ruminants, there is a wealth of knowledge useful for any livestock. Dr. Detloff stresses over all health and is a wealth of information for those wishing to raise their animals naturally. Quarantine and preventative treatments of new animals is also crucial is preventing introduction of external parasites into your herd. Even the healthiest of herds can succumb to external parasites if brought in from another pig that is housed in close proximity.

While raising animals without synthetic chemicals is more time consuming than the relatively easy fixes provided by modern methods, it is possible to be effective as long as you are not complacent. Natural methods of control are much faster and more effective if used when the problem first arises. Heavy infestations of any parasite, external or internal, are much more difficult to control, hence the development and widespread use of synthetics. Again, do not hesitate to call on your Vet for help when needed to identify problems if need be.

For more information on the products listed go to:

Crystal Creek, www.crystalcreeknatural.com

Wolf Creek Ranch, www.wolfcreekranchorganics.com

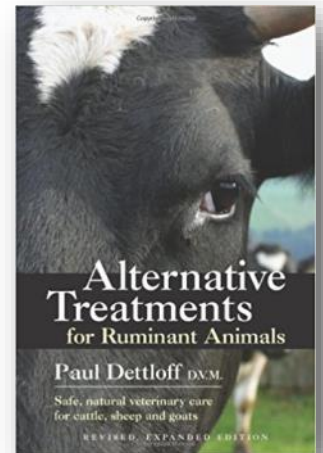
Kingbird Farm www.kingbirdfarm.com

Karma's Louse Oil, www.allnaturalpetcare.com/Holistic_Pet_Remedies/Preventing_Treating_Parasites-Hogs.pdf

Manna Pro, www.mannapro.com

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article, as with others in each of the newsletters, reflect the research and opinion and experiences of the author. They are not meant to be viewed as sanctioned by the Association and do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the Board as a whole

To search Newsletter articles on this and any other topic, go to the **Newsletters** tab at www.guineahogs.org.



Next issue:
Natural Parasite Control
Part 2: Internal Parasites

ZOO PIGS

BUILDING BREED AWARENESS

By Laura Dykstra



This is the story of how our little homestead hogs came to be a part of a big-city zoo, not permanently, but for a time. Most homestead pigs have no desire to visit the big city. Yet, that is just where our vet, Dr. Bill Morrissey, suggested we send a few of our American Guinea Hogs each year. With any new relationship, business or otherwise, there will be some unexpected bumps along the way. I worried about whether my precious hogs would be properly cared for. Our experience this past year—while challenging at times—proved my fears were unfounded. By going outside of my comfort zone and trusting someone else with my animals, I was able to place our hogs in the heart of Chicago, where they would be seen by thousands of visitors.

The *Farm-in-the-Zoo* exhibit at the Lincoln Park Zoo is designed to give city children an opportunity to experience a bit of the country. The zoo works with our large animal vet to bring in hogs, dairy cows, and sometimes goats or sheep for a free-admission, farm set-up, exhibit. Our vet has always been intrigued with our little breed of homestead hog, since he first encountered them on our farm, and he arranged for the zoo to consider our hogs as part of the *Farm-in-the-Zoo* exhibit.

The zoo staff asked for pregnant sows, just two weeks from farrowing. The plan was for our piglets to be born at the zoo, with mother and babies kept in the public eye for six to eight weeks, and then they would be returned to us just in time for us to deliver to them yet another hugely-pregnant sow. This in-and-out cycle would enable them to “borrow” up to three of our sows each season.

The idea didn't sit well with me at first. Disturbing visions of zoo visitors grabbing at piglets, picking them up, and carelessly toting them around occupied my thoughts. Would they be injured? Would they bring disease and illness back to our farm? The zoo veterinarian assured me that it was not a petting zoo. The sow and her piglets would be expertly cared for by their veterinary staff, the setting would be clean, and zoo visitors would not be allowed to handle any of the animals. The information they provided was reassuring and, after much thought, we decided to further explore the idea..

Our farm was inspected by a zoo representative and one of the *Farm-in-the-Zoo* workers. They were pleasant, and my fear of not measuring up to their standards evaporated as they expressed delight over our entire farm set up. To make things even better, I had one sow in the breeding pen with a boar. These two pigs decided to breed, as if on cue, right in front of the zoo rep and his staff. The timing could not have been better.

(Continued on page 16)

(Zoo Pigs—continued from page 15)

After our farm was inspected, we went to visit the zoo, to see for ourselves what their facility was like. Unlike our farm, the zoo exhibit had no dirt pens and pallet shelters, no composting-poop-corners, and no muddy pig wallows. The facility set-up was state-of-the-art. The pens were cleaned daily. A shallow, daily-drained and refilled, sparkling pool of water was always available. The pig droppings were scooped and removed several times a day. Top notch, alfalfa hay was provided. During their stay at the zoo, our pig(s) would live in the lap of luxury. We were very impressed and began to seriously consider the arrangement.

Working out the details was quite frustrating. There were quite a few conversations between zoo staff, our vet, and me. Dr. Morrissey walked me through every step of the process and was very honest about the fact that the necessary health testing would require a blood draw. He told us that the blood draw and subsequent transport process would carry some risk to the sow and to her unborn litter. With that in mind, we cautiously moved forward. Our sows were in excellent health and, with our vet's encouragement, we selected one of favorite sows, *WPF Cameo* - the very sow that was breeding on the day the zoo inspected our farm -- to be our first *Farm-in the Zoo* participant. We marked our calendars for a May 2017 "pig pickup date."

Once the date was set, testing had to be done. Knowing the risks involved, we were quite nervous when our vet came out with a needle that looked to be about six inches long, to draw blood from our sow's jugular vein. We need not have worried. All went well, and the blood was sent to the lab for testing. Cameo passed her health tests with flying colors. Excitement began to build.

Pick up day arrived, and our beautiful sow was loaded up - with a bit of trouble -- into the zoo van. I had suggested that she could safely and comfortably travel in a 48" dog crate. They arrived with the largest dog crate I've ever seen. It fit into the back of their van with about 1" clearance on all sides. It did not, however, fit through our barn door! So, we walked Cameo from the barn into their crate. The huge crate was so bulky that it took four of us to maneuver it back to their van and hoist it inside. When we

visited the zoo later, Cameo was limping. My vet and I suspected the injury was the result of transport trauma. Sadly, Cameo has not completely recovered -- even nine months later. The giant unwieldy crate could have been folded up in the van and one of my smaller dog crates may have been a better option for Cameo's safe travel. We learned several valuable lessons during our first *Farm-in-the Zoo* pig share.



Photo of Cameo and Her
Litter of "Zoo Piglets"

(Continued on page 17)

Zoo Pigs—continued from page 16

Lesson 1 — Ensure Safe Transport

Going forward we will be specific about transport details and then insist that the pig leaving on loan is transported safely! In retrospect, I should have insisted that they fold up their giant, unwieldy crate and transport her in one of my crates instead.

Cameo's litter was born right on schedule, two weeks after she arrived at Lincoln Park *Farm-in-the-Zoo*. One woman on the zoo staff took photos and sent them to me. The staff was thrilled. The piglets were adorable. They loved the white nose on one and the white front feet on another. Cameo had needed no farrowing help, and all seven piglets were up and scampering by the next morning. One piglet had been delivered fully formed, but dead in the afterbirth. It was sent to the zoo lab for testing. The vet and I suspect that it was the trauma of the transport that may have caused a still-birth, but there is no proof.

Lesson 2 — Require Three-Week, Pre-Farrowing Pick Up

We were not comfortable with the original two-week, pre-farrowing, pickup date so the zoo agreed to our preferred, three-week window instead. Due to a delay in getting the required blood work results, the pick up date was pushed back to the original two weeks before farrowing. This happened twice. Going forward, the hog will simply not be allowed to leave our farm any later than three-weeks pre-farrowing.

Lesson 3 — Relationships Matter

We did visit the zoo soon after the piglets were born. Imagine our surprise when the zoo staff recognized us, excitedly invited us into the hog barn, shut the public out for the entire time we were there, and enthusiastically chatted with us. We were treated like royalty. People were knocking on the outside door, wanting to come in to see the piglets, but the staff was focused on us, the humble farmers. No money was changing hands. They were not trying to secure a future sow or business deal. The staff was genuinely happy to see us and to share how they were caring for our hogs. The warm welcome and their appreciation for our quality hogs was unexpected, quite delightful, and definitely kept our hearts and minds open to future hog sharing possibilities.



(Continued on page 18)

Zoo Pigs—continued from page 17

Lesson 4 — Relinquish Some Control

On our zoo visit, I noticed that one young boar had an obvious bulge on one of his testicles. The other testicle was normally sized. While speaking with our vet later that week, he agreed that it was likely a scrotal hernia. Our farm is in Woodstock, IL, an hour or more away from the zoo. Since our vet does not travel that far to make farm/zoo calls, he would not be the one castrating the males in this litter. We brought the hernia to the attention of the zoo staff. On castration a week or two later, sure enough, there was quick action needed. The piglet survived the procedure and the potential loss was averted thanks to the quick reaction of the zoo vet and her staff. It is difficult to let someone else manage the welfare of your animals. I wasn't able to manage the situation or make sure everything was done exactly as I would have back on my farm. All I could do was relinquish control and hope for the best. In the end, all was well.

Lesson 5 — Nothing Replaces a Farmer's Eye

As Cameo's piglets grew, they became fat and sassy. Cameo, however, grew increasingly thin. The zoo had asked for my feed regimen, and I had given it without thought as to how I adjust things as I observe my hogs daily. The zoo had followed my feed suggestion to the letter, and I realized that, here on the farm, I would have increased the feed levels in order to maintain the sow's condition. There is a lot to be said for observation of any sow and her litter and



adjusting things as necessary. We appreciated how carefully the zoo staff had followed our feeding directions, and they were relieved to know that they had the freedom to adjust the sow's ration based on their own judgement, in order to maintain her condition. Once Cameo returned home, I set up a second quarantine pen for the piglets and gradually weaned them. Eventually, Cameo started

to look more like her old self.

Lesson 6 — Establish Expectation Ahead of Time

There was a bit of confusion when it was time for them to return Cameo to our farm and pick up the next sow. At the initial February inspection of our farm, and on the forms that I had signed for our part of the agreement, the zoo and I agreed that they would have the same bloodwork done on the returning sow as was done prior to her transport to the zoo. The zoo folks forgot about this important step. I saw this testing as a rightful expectation, since they had formerly housed hogs from a different farm, and Cameo could possibly bring viruses or sicknesses back to my farm. Our vet stood firm on this as well. The zoo did the testing that I requested, but this created a time-crunch as the second sow's due date loomed closer and closer.

Scrotal Hernia

By Susan Williamson, DVM

A scrotal hernia is when some of the intestines are protruding into the scrotum through the inguinal ring, which is a natural opening in the body cavity that allows the testicles to exit the body.

Sometimes this ring does not close normally, and intestines can enter the scrotum with the testicles as they descend from their place of formation near the kidney. Obviously this is a potential problem because the intestines can become "entrapped," where blood flow is restricted and the intestine can die, or when a boar is castrated, the intestines can be pulled out or fall out following castration.

Death is a common sequela, and fast and expert repair is needed to save the boar's life. If one notices the potential hernia prior to castration, as in an enlargement of the scrotum a veterinarian can be hired to perform the procedure, or the boarlet can be processed early to avoid taint and avoid the surgical risk.

NOTE: an enlarged scrotum is not always present in a herniated boar.

(Continued on page 19)

Zoo Pigs—continued from page 18

Our sow, Pearl, left our farm to have her first litter at the zoo -- again just two weeks prior to her farrowing date. This was a little nerve-wracking for me. I would have liked to send an experienced sow rather than a first-time farrower, but the official negotiations had not started early enough in the year for me to plan the breeding according to the zoo's hoped-for schedule .

Lesson 7 — Trust is Important in Every Relationship

By this time, I had developed a measure of trust in the zoo veterinarian. I was surprised, however, to learn that she wanted to castrate Pearl's boar piglets when they were a mere 24 hours old. Our vet had discussed the issue with her at length, and we decided together that we would trust them with the task. I had indicated that I would like one male left intact from the litter, and again, the trust between us came into play. I described what I was looking for (teat count, evenly spaced, as little white as possible, good size compared to the rest of the litter, with an "appealing" look about him) and left the choosing to her.

Pearl's litter was born right on schedule. The zoo staff was outside observing the eclipse (cloudy in Chicago, but still worth taking note of). When they remembered to go check on Pearl, they were astounded to find that in the short time they were out to observe the eclipse, she had delivered five piglets and was in the process of delivering the sixth. Pearl gave birth to five healthy little boars and one gilt.

The staff loved the look of the piglet that was born with a white nose and several white feet, but the zoo vet immediately chose one that was perfect, based on my description. She sent me photos and I agreed with her assessment. The rest were castrated 24 hours after they were farrowed.



Lesson #8 — Be Sure Both Parties Understand the Agreement

The zoo is hoping we will loan them three of our American Guinea Hog sows during the Summer of 2018. I am deeply grateful for their interest in this wonderful breed. So, given everything we learned last year, I have already scheduled sow breeding dates (with plenty of wiggle room) with the zoo in mind. They hope to pick up their first sow in mid to late April and I have one in mind for them. If they delay their testing requests or reschedule the agreed upon pick up date(s), neither our vet nor I plan to get caught up in any last-minute frenzy. If the request for testing is too late for one sow, we will calmly offer the next sow in our farrowing line up.

(Continued on page 20)

Zoo Pigs—continued from page 19

Our current contract is for three years and either party may cancel at any time. If we succeed at eliminating the 2017 glitches, we will gladly go forward with the contract as the program offers an amazing opportunity for these little hogs to be seen by a much larger public than if they were to stay snugly home on our little farm and the friendly and professional zoo personnel give the hogs a high level of tender and expert care.

We moved to our little farm seven years ago, and we brought our first AGH home three years later. Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined that our little hogs would be show cased at a big-city zoo -- Lincoln Park no less! It's heartwarming to receive photos from friends and family who have visited the Lincoln Park Zoo and have sought out our little pigs so that they could show them to their children and grandchildren. Our daughter and our granddaughter, Lily, both live in Chicago and have made repeated visits to *Farm-in-the-Zoo*. Memories are being made, as Lily sees "Grandma's Pigs" enjoying life in such a beautiful facility. Our hogs were even featured on a local television website -- WTTW. Watch for future updates of Little Pigs in the Windy City as our adventure with Lincoln Park Farm-In-The-Zoo unfolds, and be sure to say "Hi" to the Dykstra Farm pigs if you see them in their new habitat.

There are more than just bragging rights involved here. Somehow, these little black pigs – the homestead breed that is friendly, charming, and manageable – are serving as ambassadors for the entire breed. As more people come to know and enjoy them, our “zoo pigs” are building breed awareness and accomplishing more on behalf of the American Guinea Hog breed than we could ever achieve were they confined to our tiny farm in the country.

Laura Dykstra—Dykstra's Farm

Seven years ago, after reading *the Encyclopedia of Country Living*, by Carla Emory, Laura and her family left suburbia behind and moved to a small, two-acre hobby farm in the Illinois countryside. Their little farm is bursting at the seams with heritage breeds of hogs, dogs, goats, sheep, chickens and ducks. Of all their farm animals, Laura loves her Guinea Hogs the most. Their antics, their intelligence, and even their eager-for-breakfast slobbering warm her heart. Of course, the pork and bacon are very nice too!



Rat Extermination—American Guinea Hog Style

By Deborah A. Baker (Chapel Top Farm)

There are so many advantages and reasons for raising American Guinea Hogs. Guinea hogs, when allowed to be themselves, are one of the most useful best additions to a farm. On our farm I use my sturdy little hogs for breeding, food, weeding, tilling, and so much more. Their natural instincts also make them talented rodent exterminators. We are all so fortunate to have this recently endangered breed reviving.



Rats disgust me, and they are abhorrently invasive; according to Discover Magazine,

... a pair of brown rats can produce as many as 2,000 descendants in a year if left to breed unchecked. (A rat matures sexually at age three to four months.) An average rat's life span is two to three years.

They are carriers and transmitters of many diseases including Hanta Pulmonary Syndrome, Leptospirosis, Rat Bite Fever, Salmonellosis, Plague, Colorado Tick Fever and Cutaneous Leishmaniasis. According to Merck Veterinary Manual,

Abortions occurring 2–4 wks before term are the most common manifestation of leptospirosis in pigs. Piglets produced at term may be dead or weak and may die soon after birth.

Rat urine, feces, fleas and ticks all help spread these diseases. We don't want rats in our pig herd and rats are equally disruptive in our poultry flocks.

Last year on our farm was a down cycle year for rat predators, a neighbor had poached our resident bobcat, and the owls and hawks were scarce. We are not in a snake area and suddenly our rat population in the poultry coops was out of hand. I tried traps of all kinds: snap, box, live, water and even an on line "miracle trap". I used every bait and poison recommended and imagined. Rats are horror-movie smart. I might catch one, but the others learned to evade the danger. The situation became dismal. I had one rat that would come into the chicken run and wait at feeding time just looking at me (shudder!). I had chickens, turkeys and guinea hens. None of these birds would stand up to a rat. At night when they were roosting the rats would climb onto the backs of the darkness disabled chickens and eat their feathers. The filthy vermin were consummate egg thieves. Egg production dropped to zero. I was fighting the good fight. I put 24-hour lights in the coops and things improved a little for a short time. I fed once a day at noon to prevent feed lying about. In response to my efforts, the rats ramped up their game.



(Continued on page 22)

Rat Extermination (continued from page 21)

As the weather warmed I started letting the birds out during the day to forage in the yard, at night I would call them back to the coop. About this time, I had a barrow shoat coming into the yard to be with the chickens for reasons known only to him. At night he would go into the coop and sleep with them. I have never actually seen him with a rat, but since his arrival in the chicken area, he has completely cleared all the rats from the coop by digging out all their burrows. Every day he cleaned up all the leftover feed and even the occasional dead bird. I feed the birds pig feed when needed instead of chicken feed to avoid salt poisoning. My egg production went back to normal (except for a few laid on the floor that I feel he has earned!) and my birds again were a fine feathered flock. Next to them, where he can't roam, are two pens of purebred chickens which I keep separate from the rest. These birds continue to be bothered by rats, but at much lower levels than before.

A few years ago, I had a rat colony develop in a vacant chicken pen I had on another section of the farm. I wanted that coop and pen for one of my boars and he industriously rooted out the entire area and complete eradicated the resident rats. Since he is a breeder, and I had a customer that wanted gilts vaccinated against Leptospirosis I vaccinated the boar too and never had any problems. My little barrow (growing quite fat and shiny over the winter with his flock!) will of course never breed. He started life named Burton but is now known to all who know him as "Cooper – Rat Exterminator Extraordinaire!"



"Cooper" and His Birds



Deborah Baker, of Chapel Top Heritage Hope Farm, spent much of her childhood on her grandparents' farm in Staples, Minnesota, and has been a cold climate farmer for her entire adult life. For the past 11 years, she has lived on her 80-acre farm in the far northern portion of Wisconsin. She is devoted to small family farms, livestock and living with the earth. While she has always raised large summer pigs, in 2014 she became interested in the American Guinea Hog. Her first registered AGH were purchased from farms in Tennessee and Texas. Since then she has acquired stock from Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland and Minnesota. Deb now has a sounder of about 50 American Guinea Hogs and AGH from Deb's farm can be found on farms and tables in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Kentucky. She is a founding member of the *Historic Herds Network* and has helped to see them successfully add recently-discovered old farm lines to the AGHA registry. She has a pin that reads "I Can Talk Pigs All Day!" – and she means it.

Daisy

and Her Pet Rocks

BY DANELLE ROUNDABOUTS

We fell in love with Daisy the moment we saw her. Back then, we had no idea she would one day have a collection of pet rocks. We only knew she was going to be a special pig. She had a shorter nose than our other AGH and the longest eyelashes we have ever seen on a hog. Every time she blinked, it looked like she was winking at us. It didn't take her long to get settled in at our place. Straight away, she came up to sniff us and get acquainted. We were a little disappointed that she didn't lay down for belly rubs or the never-ending butt scratches that other folks' pigs seemed to crave. That, however, was alright with us. We assumed that, in time, she would get to know us, and things would be different.

Things were different alright. She was a pig on a mission and that mission was food! She was always on the go foraging here and there for something to eat. Fortunately, she didn't root much — unless the ground was soft and there was some tasty tidbit beckoning her from beneath the soft earth. Daisy was a skilled forager. She would not, however, eat hay of any kind. It didn't matter how much or what kind of hay we offered her. She refused it all. This girl wanted fresh food. The occasional snack of grain or apples was “ok” and was gladly accepted. Her heart, though, longed to search and find her own food.

No matter how we tried, though, Daisy was not going to have any part of that belly rub stuff. We decided that worked for just fine for us. She was smaller than the other



pigs, didn't want or need us to feed her, and she didn't demand a great deal of attention. She was, we thought, just about perfect.

We had Daisy for about six months when she gave birth to her first litter. We were so excited that waiting for her to farrow was almost painful. When the big day finally arrived, we eagerly counted and looked over the babies. Daisy was fine with us being near the piglets. In fact, the only thing Daisy was interested in after the piglets farrowed was foraging! She made sure she communicated her needs. All she did was yell at us in that high-pitched squeal that meant, “let me out I want to go forage.” Unfortunately, she had absolutely no interest in her offspring. Zero. Our hopes and dreams were dashed, and a feeling of bitter disappointment washed over us. What were we going to do? Bottle feed? Put her in the freezer? We tried rubbing her belly and uttering soothing words. Nope. She wanted out.

(Continued on page 24)

(Daisy and Her Pet Rocks—continued from page 23)

Instead of letting her out, we gave her a beer. Surprisingly, that seemed to do the trick. She began to let the babies nurse. Still, we were rattled by her initial rejection of her offspring. In the back of our minds we were wondering if we would, or should, give her a second chance at motherhood.

As the months passed, her litter grew up to be known as the *Hooligan Bunch*. They were piglets on a mission and, like their mom, their mission was FORAGING! They wanted to be out there eating grass. Of course, "there" meant anywhere on the farm, because they were little escape artists. That litter ran this farm. They were everywhere. No matter what we did we could not contain them. They had their mothers free spirit. Along with the gift of getting out without leaving any trace of how it was done. Because they never went too far, we simply accepted them as they were. The seasons changed, and Daisy farrowed her second litter. This one was dubbed the Rowdy Bunch. This time she took great care of those babies and had so much milk we put other piglets on her. She was like a walking sprinkler. It wasn't long before she had her little ones out foraging. If all they wanted to do was to sleep in their stall, she would go get them and move them out with her. They were allowed to sleep out in the pasture next to her – but they were absolutely not allowed to remain behind in the stall. Once outside, if she moved to a new area, she made them get up and follow her.

As her piglets got older and were weaned, we noticed she started a bit of digging. Not rooting but digging. This was an odd new behavior. We noticed the change but did not give it much thought. Eventually, all the piglets were sold except for one of Daisy's daughters. Strangely, Daisy didn't want to have anything to do with her daughter at all. Competition for the good eats I guess. Daisy would tolerate her daughter in her pen but not in her holes. The poor gilt was never, ever allowed in Daisy's special back-of-the-stall corner.

Then one morning when Daisy was going out to pasture, I saw something in her mouth. I grabbed the binoculars for a closer look and saw what appeared to be a rock! I didn't want her eating something she should not. So off to the pasture I went to check things out. As normal, she came running. When she was half way to me, she stopped, turned around, ran back to where she had been, picked something up, and again came running in my direction. When she reached me, she dropped a rock at my feet. It was the same shape as the object I had seen her carry out of her stall. Relieved that it wasn't something poisonous or otherwise dangerous, I gave her an apple and went back to the house.

When evening chores came around I called for Daisy and she came running as usual. I was amazed to see that she was still carrying the rock! She promptly ran over to the corner of her stall, gently placed the rock there, and then came over to eat. I went in and looked at the rock. It was the same one she had carried out that morning.

From that day on, she carried that rock with her everywhere. If her daughter got too close to the back corner of the stall, Daisy would make it clear that it was not ok to mess with her rock. Daisy would go out to the wallow, set the rock down, climb in, and take her mud bath. Then she would get out, pick up that rock, and out to the pasture they would go. Daisy and her pet rock.

As the years passed, we finally figured out what the why she was digging holes. She was digging for rocks. Unbeknownst to us, Daisy had amassed quite a rock collection in the back corner of that stall. When we cleaned out her pen, we found her stash. She didn't chew them, suck on them, or ever misplace them. Everyday all day she would carry a rock where ever she went. Some days it was a different rock -- but that rock went with her everywhere. She took great care of them. Every night she would carefully and thoroughly cover them with straw.

(Continued on page 25)

(Daisy and Her Pet Rocks—continued from page 24)

In due course, we came to understand that when she carried rocks and wanted nothing to do with her older babies that she was ready to be rebred and have more piglets. If her piglets were under two months old, she did not carry rocks but focused her attention on her offspring. She was a very sweet, attentive mother. Many times, we would go out to the barn and she would have stolen every other sows' piglets and let them nurse and sleep with her in one giant piglet pile. Once those piglets got old enough to pretty much be on their own, she would go get a rock from her collection and start to carry it around with her.

The last litter she had were dubbed the Wild Ones. I think those bratty kids drove their mother to back to her rocks. Rocks were quiet and didn't plow you over to eat. It was almost as though in giving attention to that rock, she hoped those Wild Ones would shape up. I would watch Daisy, rock in mouth, marching across the pasture and the Wild Ones lined up behind her.



Daisy wasn't a perfect pig. She wasn't a flopper and she could be pushy as well as a bit bossy. Perhaps her the worst of all her traits was her extraordinary ability to escape enclosures. She would push big rocks, or whatever she could find, up to gates, hop up on the object and calmly open the gate. She would push and push hay -- or bedding - up in a pile and use it as a step ladder. She was always looking for a way out. Even in a pen enclosed with wood,

she would somehow manage to get out by working the boards loose. She always kept an opportunistic eye on my husband, Wayne, as he was -- and still is -- HORRIBLE about leaving gates open. Despite her quirkiness, she was the perfectly-sized hog who loved to live on grass,

had nice litters, and had plenty of milk for her piglets. After that first litter, she was an exemplary mother. Best of all, none of her offspring had taint. Of course, time marches on and though Daisy is no longer with us, you can be certain we will always remember Daisy - our feisty sow and her collection of pet rocks!



Danielle maintains a five-acre homestead in Southwest Washington where she raises AGH, chickens, turkeys, ducks, sheep, alpacas and rabbits. She has four Permaculture Design Certifications and her permaculture-based systems are key to her farm's success. In addition to her farm work, she also coaches and mentors others in homestead design and organization. Danielle teaches a variety of the basic

foundational skills needed to run a successful happy homestead -- be it on an urban lot or several acres. She loves homesteading, but her passion is helping others to build and fall in love with their very own farms. She does consulting, either in person or via video conference calls, and can be reached at emaildanelle@yahoo.com.



GOING WHOLE HOG

BY BECKY MAHONEY

Tools of the Trade Part II “Preparing to Butcher”

The Butcher's Most Useful Tool:

KNOWLEDGE

Books

- *The Ethical Meat Handbook*, Meredith Leigh
- *Butchering Poultry, Rabbit, Lamb, Goat, and Pork: The Comprehensive Photographic Guide to Humane Slaughtering and Butchering*, Adam Danforth
- *DVM's Basic Butchering of Livestock and Game*, John Mettler

Videos

- *The Farmstead Meatsmith's On the Anatomy of Thrift*
Three-part series covering killing, butcher, and the history and philosophy of providing meat for consumption.
<https://farmsteadmeatsmith.com/films/>
- *Scott Rea's How to Butcher a Pig (The Ultimate Pig Butchery Video)*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXPmxWEXrRU>
- *How to Butcher a PIG like Hand Hewn Farm* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLj6-wkp5Mc>

Hands-On Training

Finally, learning via hands-on in group or individual instruction is available in many parts of the country. From paid classes, day-long workshops or weekends, to volunteering to help at the neighbor's butcher day, get your hands involved.

The tools you choose to use for home butchery are very dependent on the amount of money you choose to invest. Just remember, a butcher's most useful tool is *knowledge*. Be sure to take time to learn before wielding a knife.

The Work Surface

You will begin to butcher with your carcass laying on your table. Be sure to choose a surface height that will allow you to work easily without having to bend forward. Utilizing good work posture will help protect your back from stress and strain. I have a counter-height island in my kitchen that has a full coverage NFS (National Food Safety) approved cutting surface. This height works well for me and is about 4-5 inches below the level of my waist. It allows me to bear down when needed, without having to stoop forward. The island allows me to move the meat around to a suitable angle for cuts and keeps any spatter off of walls. The cutting surface is washable, can be easily sanitized, and can be resurfaced as needed. Work with what you can afford; a maple end-cut surface, though pricier, would be ideal. Determine the ideal height for you and make that happen. An injured back will not make that pork chop taste very good.

Cutting Tools

A skilled butcher can transform a whole carcass into cuts with nothing more than a knife and cleaver. Hand meat saws allow cutting through bone rather than separating at the joint. Some folks may choose to invest in a meat bandsaw. The choices you make depend on your goals, needs, finances, and a bit of pluck and determination.

As stated in *Tools of the Trade, Part 1*, there are endless choices of knives, from the brand, type of handle, full-tang or not, forged or stamped blade, stainless or steel, and, of course, price. My knives are all full tang (blade

(Continued on page 27)



("Preparing to Butcher"—continued from page 26)

extends fully into the handle, end to end). I have several brands; some I found used, some on which I splurged at a cutlery outlet in Missouri. While most of my knives are stainless steel, some are not. Choose the best knife that you can afford. Excellent knives are a worthy investment.

Whether you utilize sharpening stones, an electric or hand held sharpener, or send them out for sharpening. Keep your knives sharp! A dull knife is much more likely to slip and cause injury. Knives and tools that I keep sharp and ready for the breaking down of a carcass include:

Breaking Knives – to break down primal cuts into smaller roasts. The curved blade allows for single pass cutting and is key in separating joints.

Boning Knives have a sharp tip and a narrow blade for cutting along the bones to separate meat with little loss; available in straight or curved, rigid or flexible.



Meat Saws,
Meat Scraper,
Meat Hook

Cimeter – large curved knife for cutting large pieces of meat.

Cleaver and rubber mallet– to help cut and split bones.

Bone scraper – to remove bone fragments and fat particles after cleaving or sawing.

Meat saw – to cut through bone (Not meat).

Meat hook – to assist with holding large pieces.

Cut-resistant gloves – to protect hands from cuts.



Boning Knives—From the bottom:
Wusthof # 4863 5.5-inch rigid/straight
Wusthof #4607 6.5-inch flexible/straight
Victorinox #5.6606.15 rigid/curved



Clockwise from left:
Wusthof hand held sharpener
Wet stone and oil
9-inch Honing Steel
Cutting glove

One great source for supplies is butcher-packer.com.

With these ideas in mind, find your preferred source to learn, gather your tools, set up your workspace, and get ready to enjoy the satisfaction of putting meat on the table!



Becky Mahoney grew up on a Texas dairy farm, learning early on to care for, appreciate, and love the farm animals, and how to butcher for the family table. She has raised dairy goats, rabbits, many different types of poultry, steers, and commercial style hogs. She became interested in heritage livestock and sought out the breeds that would fit best in their space and lifestyle. Raising St Croix Hair Sheep and American Guinea Hogs, her farm tagline is "Joyful Noise Home-N-Stead, where superior meat choices really are black and white."

American Guinea Hogs A Viable Choice

By Trisha Alexander (Xander Farm)

To Market
To Market

Like so many other American Guinea Hog (AGH) owners, we originally bought our hogs to simply provide meat for our family. After owning these hogs for only two years, however, we were suddenly forced to re-evaluate our goals. My husband unexpectedly lost his job and we began to wonder if we could justify raising these tasty pigs on a farm that now needed to make a profit. Everyone recommended that we try a larger breed of pig. We did not take their advice lightly and had many discussions at our weekly farm meetings regarding the future of AGH on our farm. Their slow growth rate and small carcass size weighed heavily against them, while their delicious taste and delightful temperament kept us coming back to the table to discuss the option of keeping the breed. What we discovered surprised us.



Our History with American Guinea Hogs

In October of 2014, our family purchased 43 acres in Northeast Texas and named our homestead Xander Farm. We made the move to country living because – like so many other people -- we were struggling to find meat that we felt was raised in a humane and healthy way. The gentle disposition and natural grazing tendencies of the American Guinea Hog seemed perfectly suited to meet the needs of our family farm. We began out by purchasing three gilts from 5G Farm. Eventually, we added two young boars to our herd. We named these boars Bacon and Ham.

When Bacon was about nine months old, we took him to be butchered at a custom processing facility. The butcher told me that I would not get much bacon from such a small pig, but I told him to give me all the chops and bacon that he could. At that time, I wasn't keeping records, but we were happy with our small amount of delicious meat. The amount of bacon harvested from our "too small" hog was also pleasantly surprising. At this point, we had not yet fine-tuned our feeding and grazing processes and were not achieving a good growth rate out of our hogs. The fabulous flavor, however, was there from the beginning.



(Continued on page 29)

American Guinea Hogs — A Viable Choice (continued...)

Our Yorkshire vs. AGH Experiment

When it became apparent that our little farm needed to produce not just meat for our family, but income as well, we took a long hard look at the viability of raising AGH for profit. We needed to pay the bills, and we weren't convinced that raising AGH commercially would help us do that. We kept discussing the option of switching to a larger breed of pig, knowing that there were many large breed hogs from which we could choose. Finally, we decided to conduct an experiment.

We purchased a year-old Yorkshire gilt from some nearby friends. While they don't manage their pigs in exactly the same way that we do, their feeding/growing methods seemed close enough for our trial.

For example,

- They move their "grow outs" once a month to a new grassy paddock and let them eat it down to bare dirt.
- They ferment their feed.
- They sometimes feed their pigs corn, though they try to buy organic corn and always feed it out fermented.

We bought the Yorkshire gilt and had her butchered at the same time that we had our 18-month-old intact boar butchered. The results were interesting. Due to the time of the year and customer demands, we had all of the hams ground into sausages and only had roasts taken out of the Yorkshire gilt. We also received the bones and organs from both hogs. We had the butcher shop label the pork packages by placing a letter "A" on AGH and a letter "C" on the Yorkshire cut labels.

The AGH cuts were priced as much as \$3.50/lb. higher than the Yorkshire cuts because it cost more to produce this chef's quality AGH pork. Despite this, we sold out of the AGH pork MUCH FASTER than the Yorkshire. In texts, in Facebook posts, in telephone conversations, and in face-to-face conversations, our customers were raving about the delicious flavor of the American Guinea Hog pork.

Every single comment we received was from someone who simply couldn't believe that pork could taste so amazingly good. Time after time, we heard comments like:

*People think I'm weird
because of you.
I keep dreaming
of your pork chops.
I can't get them
out of my mind.*

*I'm usually a generous
person, but I can't
share your bacon.
It's too delicious!*

*My kids turned down
dessert, so they could
eat a second helping of
your ham.*

*The Yorkshire "package of
bacon ends and pieces "
was okay -- though it was
gristly in places and
lacked flavor -- but the
AGH "ends and pieces
package" was as tasty
as the sliced bacon!*



Pastured AGH at Zander Farms

American Guinea Hogs — A Viable Choice (continued...)

The only positive feedback that I got on the Yorkshire pork was from one customer who reported that the pork shoulder steaks were delicious. Other than that, if anyone commented anything at all, it was to tell us that they would wait for AGH pork to be available again. For the most part, the only people that bought Yorkshire pork were people that had never tried AGH meat before or people that were only willing to try the Yorkshire because we were sold out AGH pork.

Conclusion

Our customers report that the AGH meat is vastly superior to other pork that they have consumed. As a result, we believe that marketing any other pork breed products to our clients would hurt, rather than help, our bottom line. The evidence is clear to us. American Guinea Hogs have delightful temperaments; their small size makes them more manageable; they are a bit safer to have around farm visitors and their children; and their meat is simply delicious. We are through second guessing ourselves and have made a decision that works for our farm. Our customers prefer to eat AGH pork.

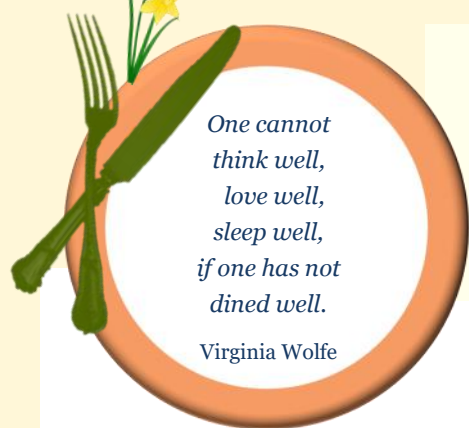
We are looking forward to the future. Meanwhile, we have a growing list of people who are anxiously waiting for us to announce that we, once again, have American Guinea Hog pork for sale. To meet this demand, we are increasing the size of our herd. My hope is that our results might help some of you as you determine the viability of raising American Guinea Hogs for profit.



Xander Farm Management/Feed Techniques

The way we manage the hogs is very important to us. They have been raised on pasture and have always had access to plants and critters that live in the fields. Our pastures are loaded with crawfish and our hogs consider them a such a delicacy that they will dig to China in search of these tasty crustaceans. The only time their pasture access is ever restricted is we need to run them through our electric fence training paddocks or when we pen them in the barn for various short-term reasons. We mix our own feed. This feed mix changes slightly at different times of the year, depending upon availability and nutritional needs, but we never add any soy or corn and we avoid all GMO ingredients.

All our feed is fermented before it is given to the hogs. This increases the nutrient levels of the feed. For example, the protein content of fermented feed has been shown to increase by as much as 14%. Each hog received approximately 1/2 quart of that swollen, fermented feed each day. In addition, the local bakery sells us their very high-quality, day-old organic bread. We feed our "grow-out boars" approximately one loaf of bread per day, per pig. If the pigs look like they're getting too fat, we reduce or eliminate the bread until they look "trim" again – if you can call any AGH trim.



SWINE & DINE

It's Breakfast (or Brunch) Time!

Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus

By Tori Rozanski



It's springtime on the farm. The grass is growing, the flowers are blooming, the bees are buzzing, litters of adorable piglets are being farrowed, the goats are kidding, the ewes are lambing, the asparagus are finally coming up, and those hens you were threatening all winter long with extinction finally got the message and are now redeeming themselves by laying more eggs than you can ever conceive of using.

It's the perfect season for making and serving a very special farm breakfast — *Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus*. If you decide to splurge and throw in a Mimosa (or two) garnished with a sweet, luscious, freshly-picked, perfectly-ripe, intoxicatingly-fragrant, spring strawberry—all the better!

To make Eggs Benedict, simply split an English Muffin and lightly toast it (but do not brown), top each toasted muffin half with pre-cooked ham or bacon, gently place a poached egg on top the meat, and dress your little stack of deliciousness with Hollandaise sauce.

Canadian Bacon

Most traditional Eggs Benedict recipes call for using Canadian Bacon.

I never have my pork processed into Canadian Bacon so I simply use my delicious, pre-cooked, AGH Bacon or Ham.

In my home, the lightly-steamed asparagus stalks are served alongside the muffin/egg/meat/hollandaise sauce layers—with just a light drizzle of the sauce on top.

I've included recipes for both Homemade English Muffins and Hollandaise Sauce as well as bonus instructions for curing your own AGH bacon and making Noix de Jambon or hamlets. A very special word of thanks goes out to Sam Crandall for the wonderful bacon making tutorial and to Becky Mahoney for her hamlet instructions.

The homemade English Muffins are (of course) prepared with AGH lard and the recipe includes an option for using either yeast or sourdough starter. You can always use

store-bought muffins if you prefer. I substituted lard for the butter in the Hollandaise Sauce, and it was delicious, but the butter gives the sauce a better flavor. Feel free to use either. You can buy Hollandaise Sauce packets in the grocery store, but homemade Hollandaise Sauce is so much better than the store bought versions that, in my opinion, it is definitely worth the time and energy it takes to prepare it.

This dish offers a delicious way to combine your AGH bacon, ham, and lard with your homegrown, farm-fresh, spring bounty. Enjoy!

(Continued on page 32)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus—continued from page 31)

HOMEMADE ENGLISH MUFFINS

Makes Approximately 12 Muffins

Ingredients

Starter

3/4 cup	All-Purpose Flour or Bread Flour
1/2 cup	Water
1/2 tsp	Active Dry or Instant Yeast (or 2 Tbsp Active Sourdough Starter)

Dough

1 cup	Milk, Whole or 2%
1 tsp	Active Dry or Instant Yeast
2 Tbsp	Sugar
2 Tbsp	Lard, Melted
1 tsp	Salt
2 3/4 -3 cups	All-Purpose Flour
Cornmeal	For Dusting
Lard	For the griddle



English Muffin Instructions

⇒ Make the dough

starter: Mix the flour, water, and yeast (or sourdough starter) in a small mixing bowl. Beat until the batter is smooth and glossy, about 100 strokes.

⇒ Cover the starter and let it sit for at least one hour and up to 24 hours. The starter will become increasingly bubbly the longer it sits and will double in bulk. I made my starter in the morning and it was ready to mix and put to bed in the refrigerator that evening. Try to give it at least a 12 hour ferment time, if you can. Your finished English Muffins will have more flavor and better structure if you do.

⇒ In the bowl of a stand mixer or large mixing bowl, combine the milk and yeast for the dough. Scrape the starter into the bowl and use a whisk to break it up and dissolve it into the milk. It should become quite frothy.



Starter Mixed and Ready to Sit For One to Twenty-four hours



Starter After Sitting for Four Hours

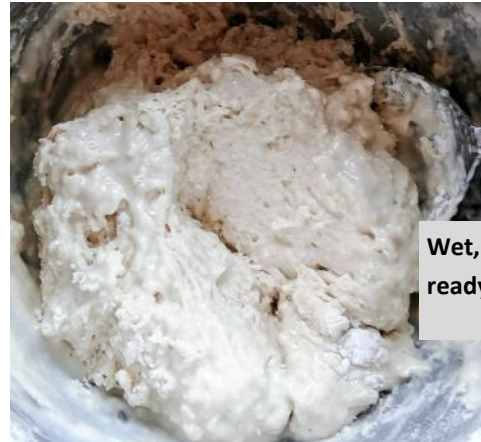


Whisk starter, milk, and yeast until frothy.

(Continued on page 33)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus — Homemade English Muffin Instructions —continued from page 32)

- ⇒ Add the sugar, lard, flour, and salt to the mixing bowl.
Stir until blended into a wet, shaggy dough.



**Wet, shaggy dough,
ready for kneading.**

- ⇒ Knead the dough with a dough hook on a stand mixer (I use setting #4 on my Kitchenaid) until it comes off the sides of the bowl and becomes soft and elastic(8-10 minutes).



**Dough is not ready as it still clings to the side of
the mixing bowl as it is being kneaded.**



**Dough is ready. It has come away from the
sides of the bowl and is soft & elastic, but still
sticky**

- ⇒ At this point, the dough will stick to your hands when handled, so lightly grease your hands with lard before handling. If you add too much flour and the dough becomes smooth, dry, and easily handled, the resulting English Muffins will be heavy and dense .



**Transfer dough to a lightly greased bowl, cover
and refrigerate.**

- ⇒ Transfer the dough to a large, lightly-greased with lard bowl, cover and place in the refrigerator overnight or for up to three days. You can also let the dough rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, 1 1/2 to 2 hours, and then make the muffins immediately, these muffins will have a milder flavor and fewer nooks and crannies.

(Continued on page 34)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus—continued from page 33)

- ⇒ Turn the risen dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Grease and flour your hands and divide the dough into 12 equal pieces (I weighed the entire mass and then divided by 12 and weighed each piece on my kitchen scale. You will have to keep flouring your hands during this process.
- ⇒ Gently shape into rounds.
- ⇒ Scatter cornmeal generously over a baking sheet and arrange the rounds on top, spaced a little apart.
- ⇒ Gently flatten the rounds and sprinkle the tops with more cornmeal.
- ⇒ Cover the rounds with a cloth and allow the rounds to rise for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
- ⇒ When ready to cook the muffins, warm a large skillet or griddle over low heat and coat with just enough lard to cover the bottom of the pan and prevent sticking.
- ⇒ Sprinkle the griddle with cornmeal.
- ⇒ Using a spatula, carefully flip each round onto the skillet. This is easier than trying to slide them off the spatula.
- ⇒ Gently coax the muffin rounds back into a round shape.
- ⇒ Cook over low heat until brown on the first side (about 4-8 minutes depending on the heat of your griddle). The slower they cook, the better.
- ⇒ Flip the muffins and cook on the other side.
- ⇒ Allow to cool for at least 10 minutes and they are ready to enjoy.
- ⇒ NOTE: never slice an English muffin in two. Always run the tines of a fork around the outside edges and then pull apart. This will keep the lovely texture intact.



Place the rounds on a cookie sheet and allow to sit for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.



rise for 1 1/2



(Continued on page 35)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus, continued from page 34)

Hollandaise Sauce—Instructions

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

(adapted from *Joy of Cooking*)

Ingredients

3 whole	Egg Yolks
1 1/2 tsp	Water
2–3 tsp	Lemon Juice, fresh (or more if needed)
1/2 cup	Barely Melted, Lard or Unsalted Butter
1 dash	Cayenne Pepper
Salt	To taste



- ⇒ Whisk the yolks, water, in a small saucepan for a few moments, until thick and frothy (this prepares them for what is to come).
- ⇒ Set the pan over moderately low heat and continue to whisk briskly at reasonable speed, reaching all over the bottom and insides of the pan, where the eggs tend to overcook.
- ⇒ As the eggs cook, the eggs will become frothy and increase in volume, and then (after about 2-4 minutes) thicken. When the eggs are thick and smooth, remove from the heat.
- ⇒ Soften the lard, or butter in the microwave or on the stove so that it is of a thick, pourable consistency. While briskly whisking the eggs, slowly pour a thin stream of fat into the eggs. As you do so, an emulsion will form and the mixture will thicken.
- ⇒ Add the lemon juice and season lightly with salt, pepper, and a dash of cayenne pepper, whisking in well.
- ⇒ Taste and adjust the seasoning.
- ⇒ Serve immediately.

(Continued on page 36)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus—continued from page 35)

Noix de Jambon (Nut of the Ham)

By Becky Mahoney

One of the first Charcuteries I learned to prepare was the small, quick hams called *Noix de Jambon* or *Nut of the Ham*. I, however, like to call them *hamlets*. These whole-muscle hams are salt cured only and are simply delicious!



Image Source: www.maisonblancwisseler.fr

DIRECTIONS:

- ⇒ Remove the skin and bones (both aitch and femur) from the whole ham.
[Click here to view a video of the entire process.](#)
- ⇒ Separate the boneless ham into four major muscle groups.
- ⇒ Trim the small hams of any bloody spots and fat.
- ⇒ Trim to be uniform and smooth.
- ⇒ **Important**- weight each piece of meat in grams
- ⇒ Using sea salt, rub vigorously all over, scrubbing the meat into the salt.
- ⇒ Let sit in the fridge, uncovered for 1 day per kilo of weight.
- ⇒ Remove, dust off, cover with fresh ground pepper.
- ⇒ Tie into log using butchers twine; cover with butcher net.
- ⇒ Light smoke if possible. Hang to dry in cool area (54-60 ° F) for 30-45 days, depending on size/weight. Ideal is a 35-40% weight loss.
- ⇒ The finished ham should have a 'soft' feel (squeeze).

(Continued on page 37)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus, How to Make Bacon —Continued from page 36)

How to Make Bacon

By Sam Crandall

What you'll need to make bacon:

- Kitchen scale that is capable of weighing in grams
- Gallon Ziploc or vacuum sealer bags
- Notepad and pen/pencil
- Calculator or cure calculator
- Hog jowl(s) or belly
- Cure #1 (Prague Powder #1, I like Hoosier Hill Farms cures)
- Sugar — I use either dark brown or maple sugars, granulated white sugar will burn and turn bitter when the bacon is cooked.
- Kosher/Sea salt — preferably coarse
- White/Black pepper
- Some method to smoke the bacon and hangers — if you want smoked bacon.
- At this point you can figure out what else you'd like to add to the cure to give it your distinctive flavor...or just leave it at the standards for a typical bacon profile.



Instructions:



Prepare the Belly or Jowl

You can cure bacon with the skin on or off, it's your choice.

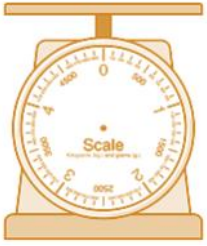
I prefer to take it off before the cure, just because it's a bit easier and it lets the cure and smoke get in on all sides more evenly. I'm not a fan of skin on bacon, although I do know a number of people who prefer their various bacons with skin on for the cracklin'.

If you're using hog jowl and it wasn't removed by the processor (or if you're doing the butchery at home) cut just below the eye, back to the middle of the neck, and then back up to the front of the mouth. That'll be the full jowl. Cut any glands out of the meat; they will cause discoloration and off textures and can affect the taste if they're left in.

Only work with one jowl/belly piece at a time to prevent errors from happening, weigh each piece individually.

(Continued on page 38)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus, How to Make Bacon —Continued from page 37)



Record the Belly or Jowl Weight

Write the weight of the piece down in grams, grams are highly recommended for consistency and accuracy. The weight of the piece will be your base number that you use to calculate all other ingredient amounts. Standard cure #1/Prague powder #1 is going to be 0.25% (yes, a quarter of a percent) but be

sure to check your chosen curing agent in case it may have different instructions.

Choose Your Recipe

Measure Ingredients & Allow to Cure

- Once you decide on your preferred percentages, measure everything out individually and combine them in a bowl.
- Rub the meat with its cure mixture.
- Put it in a bag and then set it in the fridge to cure.
- I usually let the bacon cure for a minimum of 14 days in the fridge, flipping the bags over once a day and massaging the cure into the meat.
- The cure can/will pull moisture from the meat and will probably form its own brine. If that happens, do **not** dump the liquid off, it's there to help cure the meat and you run the risk of food poisoning by removing it. However, if the cure doesn't pull any liquid from the meat, don't worry about it. It just means that that particular piece of meat didn't have a lot of liquid in it for the salts to pull out. As long as you have the curing salt ratio correct, the bacon will be fine to sit for quite a while (I've heard of people forgetting theirs in the fridge for over 10 months without any spoilage) and fully cured is always better than under cured. It cannot over cure, it will reach equilibrium and not go any further.
- Once your curing time is over, you can either slice and freeze your bacon, or, you can smoke it.
- I know many people recommend rinsing the bacon after it's cured, I prefer not to. I do, however, like to apply a final layer of flavor and rub it down with either homemade maple syrup or honey before starting the initial smoke session.

Bacon Recipes

Standard

0.25% Cure #1
2.5% Salt
2.75% Brown Sugar
0.25% Black Pepper

Sumac & Cranberry

0.25% Cure #1
2.5% dehydrated and ground cranberries
0.25% ground and dried sumac
3% golden brown sugar
2.5% sea salt

You'll notice the sumac & cranberry recipe has no pepper. That's not an accidental omission. We wanted to see how the sumac would perform and were afraid it would get lost in the pepper.

Cranberry & Maple Sugar

0.25% Cure #1
2.5% dehydrated and ground cranberries
3% maple sugar
1.8% sea salt
0.25% black pepper

Maple Sugar

0.25% Cure #1
0.25% white pepper
2.75% coarse sea salt
3% dark brown maple sugar

(Continued on page 39)

(Eggs Benedict with Spring Asparagus, How to Make Bacon - Continued from page 38)

Smoke Your Bacon (Optional)

Let the bacon sit at room temperature long enough to dry off and warm up a bit, you want the outside to be sticky and dry to collect the smoke (you can also lay them uncovered on a cookie sheet in the fridge overnight for the drying phase).

Cold smoking doesn't require any fancy equipment. I cold smoke using an A-Maze-N pellet tray and an old barrel that we cleaned and put some holes in for ventilation. I cold smoke in two or three sessions: 8 hours in smoke and 12 hours resting before starting the next session.

To rest the bacon, just put it in a bag or wrap it and put it in the fridge. Check the color and smell every time before starting a new smoke session, if you're happy with how it looks and smells you don't have to subject it to another smoke.

Once it's finished, with as much or as little smoke as you're happy with, put it in a bag and let it rest in the fridge for a minimum of 48 hours to let the smoke settle before slicing it.



AMERICAN GUINEA HOG ASSOCIATION, INC.

President

Angela Ingraham
250 Bassett Road
Naples, NY 14512
585-374-2695
president@guineahogs.org

Vice-President

Jack Rowland
region1@guineahogs.org

Region 1 Director

Jack Rowland
region1@guineahogs.org

Region 2 Director

Susan Williamson
region2@guineahogs.org

Region 3 Director

Deborah Niemann-Boehle
region3@guineahogs.org

Region 4 Director

Deborah Baker
region4@guineahogs.org

Acting Treasurer

Susan Neal
treasurer@guineahogs.org

Acting Secretary

Tori Rozanski
secretary@guineahogs.org

Region 5 Director

Wendy McDaniel
region5@guineahogs.org

Region 6 Director

Andrea Rigel
region6@guineahogs.org

At Large Directors

Donna Hertlein (Acting)
donnaahertlein@gmail.com

Susan Neal (Acting)
treasurer@guineahogs.org

Tori Rozanski (Acting)
assocwork@gmail.com

Advisor to the Board

Kevin Fall
advisor@guineahogs.org
registrar@guineahogs.org



Registrar

Ruth Bennett
594 Citrus Trail
Lake Placid, FL 33852
(515)344-9841