

Workshop Title: Introduction to Rare Breeds & Heritage Livestock

Speaker: Elwood Quinn

Executive Summary: With a slideshow, long-time farmer and educator, Elwood Quinn, introduced participants to the breadth of possibilities when it comes to raising, caring, and using rare breed and heritage livestock.

Detailed Notes:

Farmers are gamblers; the workshops this morning in these Rare Breed and Heritage Livestock sessions are offered to help you maximize your odds of winning in farming. The most knowledgeable person on any specific topic or issue probably won't be a presenter; please learn from all the other farmers in the sessions. This presentation consists of a slide show to introduce you to some of the rare breeds and heritage livestock in Canada.

Rare breeds tend to be good foragers, good at clearing up brush rows, able to live in harsh conditions and climate, co-habit with other livestock, eat a varied diet and still perform well, and require less medication to maintain health. Remember that when working with rare breeds and heritage livestock that they still need to be useful for their carcass, wool, milk, etc. Studies are even examining the usefulness of sheep brain in the treatment of Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, etc. – and there are other human health applications being explored.

The slideshow contained many photographs, including:

- milking shorthorn cows and working oxen
- a farm that milks cows and produces quality cheese
- dogs managing sheep without fences
- sheep grazing among Christmas trees
- Shetland sheep being raised for specialty wool
- Highland cattle – who are easy to work with and docile
- Hungarian Yellow chickens
- Naked neck chickens – who excellent layers
- raising ducks for eggs
- draft horses being used for taking hay out to sheep
- using horses for stock movement
- training a lamb to be in public
- using livestock in therapy programs for autism, etc.

The following sessions this morning will examine poultry, pigs, and cattle in greater detail.

Question: What's the best breed of hog to clear land?

Answer: Tamworth is best; they have the longest snout and turn pasture into a ploughed field.

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Question: Does Rare Breed Canada have any artificial insemination (AI) programs?

Answer: Yes, they have an AI bank. But semen stock is limited; they are trying to import. If an individual breed has an association, they try to give them their stock.

Question: Can we get customers interested in rare breeds and heritage livestock?

Answer: Yes! When marketing your product, the more adjectives you can use the better it is (eg. local, organic, pastured, grass-fed, heritage breed, etc). It's about marketing and having a specialty product.