

Red Wattle Hog Association Election Candidate Issue

Included are: Helpful RWHA updates, tips on how to select hogs for breeding, and results of The Livestock Conservancy survey.

These are our candidates running for the offices of Secretary/Treasurer, and Board Members at Large. Also in your envelope you'll find our ballot postcard already addressed and stamped for you. Please review the candidates and vote for the people that you feel can best represent and direct our hogs and the Red Wattle Hog Association. There is one position for secretary/treasurer and 2 positions for Board Member at Large. Please mail your votes before Oct. 20. Any ballots received after Oct. 20 will not be counted.

***Office of Secretary/Treasurer:** Kathy Bottorff, from Horse Cave, KY.

I've been the RWHA sec/treas. for the past 3 years. During this time I've seen us grow from a fledgling but hopeful group to a more informed and positive association that is well respected and immolated within the nationwide swine community. I'm proud to have been a part of that. We still have work to do and my hope is that the RWHA will always continue to improve as they grow in population and membership, while always protecting the integrity of the breed first and foremost.

I grew up with hogs and so did my husband who has degrees in both agriculture and animal husbandry. We both love the breed and are always fascinated by their personalities and traits. While I knew a lot about raising hogs, I've learned even more by holding this office and I learn more each day by researching, working with other organizations, and just talking to people. I've also learned nobody can know everything, sometimes there is no right or wrong, sometimes there are no answers, and sometimes there are easier ways to still get to the desired result.

I was also an account bookkeeper for many years and enjoy making numbers "work". The RWHA treasury has grown nicely in the last 3 years to the point that the association can offer a scholarship, advertise our hogs in well-known publications that will bring new members and owners in turn increasing Red Wattle population, distribute funds to RWHA regions for their projects, and even offer membership drawings for educational books and magazines.

***Office of Board Member at Large:** Dale Stevens, from Lucedale, Mississippi.

My name is Dale Stevens. My wife Tina and I own and operate "Sand Ridge Farm". Our farm is located in Lucedale, Mississippi. We, at the present time raise Brangus cattle and Red Wattle hogs. I am 52 years old and employed with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, (NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)). Prior to graduating high school in 1980 I had the desire to raise hogs. The opportunity to do this never presented itself until the end of 2013. At that time I came across information with the idea of raising this breed of hog. After a lot of searching, and traveling long distances to get them, we now have three sows and a boar and we are loving them. They are awesome. While I do not have the experience with these hogs that some others may have, I feel I have learned a lot about them over the past 9 months. I have talked at length with a lot of members within the Red Wattle Hog Association about the breed and feel that I have gained some degree of knowledge from each one of you that have taken the time to talk with me and for this I want to thank you all for these discussions.

I feel I can contribute to the breed and the RWHA as a board member by making open minded, nonbiased and informed decisions on any issues that may come before the board. I will look into any issue that may come before the board and become as informed as possible on the subject before coming to a conclusion or making a decision on that issue.

I would like to see the Red Wattle breed continue to grow and expand as it sounds like it has done over the past few years. I feel this should be done through sound management of the breed and with members of the Red Wattle Hog Association that share these same ideas and goals. Members of the RWHA need to make sound choices in selecting only the best stock for breeding, knowing who we are selling pigs to, and for what reason someone may want to purchase our hogs. For example; breeding stock, meat hogs, or as I have recently dealt with, someone that wanted to purchase hogs to cross with other breeds to try and come up with something different. (We didn't do business with this person). Why try to change something that is already as close to perfect as one could ask for? Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

***Office of Board Member at Large: Sam Plank, from West Liberty, OH.**

I'm running for my second term as Board Member at Large. I started raising Red Wattle hogs about 3 years ago but have raised hogs all my life. My wish is to find a way to get back to the old style Red Wattle hog. That's what they were, what we all want and my belief is that the RWHA has a duty to focus on and assure the breed stays pure and distinct with the traits and characteristics that only Red Wattles have. This past year I've learned a great deal and I want to continue to learn and share my knowledge and experience with you. I've enjoyed working with the current Board of Directors and feel that with all our help the board will continue to make great strides for Red Wattles and for the RWHA.

***Office of Board Member at Large: Walt Wickham, from Maquoketa, Iowa.**

My name is Walt Wickham and I would like to be considered for the at large position on the Red Wattle Hog Association board. I live with my wife Jane and 4 of our 5 children on a small farm just outside the small community of Maquoketa, Iowa. I am a part time farmer who also works full-time as the director of the Clinton County, Iowa Conservation Board. When I'm not managing parks and wildlife areas for the Conservation Board, I raise red wattle hogs, a few chickens, a couple steers and a few colonies of honey bees on our 40 acre farm.

We got our first red wattles in 2009. What started as 2 gilts and a boar has grown to 7 sows, 2 boars and several litters of piglets. We sell most of our hogs as pork at the local farmers market as well as to a couple local restaurants. We also sell whole and half hogs and a few of the more outstanding animals are sold as registered breeding stock. I am a strong believer in breeding the best and eating the rest! The Red Wattle Association has done a lot of positive things to promote the red wattle hog and to help its membership over the last few years. If elected, I will do what I can to help keep the association a strong resource for everyone.

RWHA Updates

The Board of Directors has approved the registration of hogs over the age of 18 months if DNA can be provided from the hog and the registered sire and dam showing the hog is the offspring of the registered sire and dam. DNA testing is done at UC Davis, kept on file there and copies are sent to the RWHA and the owner of the hog.

Your RWHA Board of Directors contact information can now be found on the homepage. Look for the "Contact Us" button at the top. For a while it will still be in the forum section until everyone gets used to the new location. Thank you to everyone for suggesting it. It's a good change. If anyone has suggestions to make the website better or more user friendly please let your board know. The website is another tool to help and we all want to make it as good as possible.

Your newsletter, updates or notices can be emailed to you instead of snail mailed. Snail mail will always be an option. If you'd rather have email you need to let us know by emailing the Secretary/Treasurer at: redwattles@hotmail.com. All email will be blind copied to better keep everyone's email addresses private. An exception for email would be for our elections. The ballots need to be snail mailed. If you own a registered hog that has been put down, retired, sold without papers, or is no longer producing, please notify one of your board members. The hog can be removed from the production list. The production list is for registered hogs that are currently producing offspring. The hog is never taken out of the registry and will always show up on pedigree information. This helps the RWHA keep better track of the current producing hog population and is a critical part in assuring our hog numbers are growing.

The RWHA Face Book is open to anyone who wants to discuss anything pertaining to their hogs be it feed, growth, illness or injuries, processing, housing, farrowing or whatever. It is a closed group to help keep spam off but all that's needed is to ask permission to join in. Some face book sites are overrun by spam and what was once enjoyable or educational is destroyed and the group fades away. We don't want that to happen. If you haven't been there you should check it out. Google face book and type in Red Wattle Hog Association. You can ask to join, or you can just read and not become a member. There's always good information there and you'll get to know some of your fellow Red Wattle breeders.

The RWHA website also requires membership. It's free! The membership is required for the same reasons. Its better control of who and what is on the site so that everyone can use it like its intended. It's also another way to help protect our website from hackers who may alter or destroy records. Anyone can read and browse the site however only website members can post on the site. Membership to the website does not mean membership to the RWHA or to face book. RWHA membership requires a membership form and an annual fee. The form can be found on the website under the RWHA tab. It seems like a lot of memberships to deal with but they're quick and easy to do and they're for your protection as well as the RWHA.

Remember that our RWHA annual membership renewal date has changed. It's now March 31 with no grace period. You can send in your membership renewal any time from Jan. 01 2015 thru March 31, 2015. After that time if renewal hasn't been received your name will drop from the membership.

Making wise decisions for the long term

In order to grow your herd wisely and to have the best Red Wattle hog you can, there are certain steps you should take. There are more, and over time you'll develop your own routine but these listed are some of the most important. We all know our hog population is lacking in some areas of the country so travel distance is a very real obstacle. We all do the best we can and sometimes traveling across the country for genetics you'd like to have is not an option. Below are some things that may help in your decision to begin your herd or to add to for improvement. They are not in any particular order of importance, are not all inclusive and are only meant to help guide you.

There is no perfect hog. There never has been and there never will be. We all try to improve and go forward. If hams are lacking, we look toward adding a hog to our herd that has great hams. If legs are not as stout, straight and strong as we'd like, we look toward a new breeding hog with those legs. You are the judge of your herd and you are in charge. You know what you have, what you like, what you can improve, and you breed toward it.

Use the Breed Standards and Card Grading System on our website. They are there to teach and to help. Not every hog will have everything perfect, right? So you choose by what you need or want to improve. Get pictures of the hog and get pictures of the sire and dam if possible. Get to know the breeder and feel comfortable with him or her.

It's not only about the financial layout when adding to or beginning your herd. It's the future of that herd which can be an even bigger financial boost or burden in the long term.

Study the pedigree. It's all available on-line. Are there hog names and breeder names you're familiar with that have great reputations? Could those genetics you like be in a herd close to you? You may not be able to cross the country to get the hog you want but you may find the genetics closer so look at descendants. Even with genetics and reputation you still want pictures before you make a decision. Any hog can have a great pedigree but look like crap.

Sometimes hogs with outstanding sires and dams or backgrounds get registered and they shouldn't be. This can happen sometimes when they're registered while piglets and still growing. It's impossible to know what a piglet will look like until it's matured.

Experienced breeders can judge better but accidents still happen, and there are always those other things that effect how a piglet matures. Just a few are: weather, types of feed and pasture, living conditions and even parasites.

COI's. or coefficient. This determines how closely related hogs are. There are breeders that line breed and we hope they know what they're doing so this section is not for them. Line breeding is an art that takes years of experience and nerves of steel because culling hard is very important to bring out the best qualities and traits of a breed while breeding out the bad traits that will always show up. Another word for that is in-breeding, but that word is usually associated with accidental breeding and not by intention. If you're breeding for hybrid vigor, perhaps you should look into low numbers on the COI. This means the hogs are not closely related and you'll bring the best of the genetics from both sire and dam out in the offspring. The experts agree that for hogs with lower populations like our Red Wattle, a number of .0625 or 6.25 or lower is what you should aim for in your selection. A higher number is not necessarily bad and depends on what you're aiming for as an end result. None of the experts believe sire and daughter, dam and son, or brother and sister should be bred together because the genetics are too close. This also usually applies to those that line-breed. For vigor and to have the best traits and characteristics you should avoid breeding so closely. Line breeding requires close monitoring, keeping impeccable records, and culling ultra-hard. With line-breeding the desired end result can take many years to accomplish. Be sure to ask the breeder for copies of those records if they line-breed. If they don't provide them you should find another breeder. You can calculate COI's on our website under the animal tab. It's another tool on the website to help you. Some breeders don't look at COI's but they study the pedigree, the breeder, and the hog. They know what they're comfortable with in breeding for their herds and what they're looking for toward improvement. By looking at the pedigree they can also determine the closeness of genetics and know if the risk is worth pursuing or if they should look elsewhere. This takes experience.

To learn more please read the book: Managing Breeds for a Secure Future by Dr. Phillip Sponenberg. It can be purchased thru The Livestock Conservancy and even on-line thru Amazon.

Other informative reading can be found in the RWHA Winter 2013-2014 newsletter in an article titled Bloodlines within Breeds, which is also an article written by Dr. Phillip Sponenberg for the RWHA. You can find the newsletter on our website.

A few lucky members won this book thru a membership drawing recently.

There's no right or wrong way in choosing animals but it's very important to your future, the future of your herd and the future of Red Wattles that you do your homework and choose wisely. Just because the hog is registered or comes out of registered, is red and has wattles, it does not ever mean the hog is a good example of a Red Wattle hog.

Lastly, trust your gut. Look over everything from breed standards, records, COI's, breeders, hogs and pictures. This is a big short and long term financial investment that can be a rollercoaster. If anything along the way doesn't feel right you need to walk away and begin your search somewhere else.

If you don't choose the best you can, it can take a long time to recover. Also remember, we all make mistakes. That's how we learn and it sticks with us. Always go forward.

From The Livestock Conservancy (ALBC)

The Livestock Conservancy (formerly ALBC) recently examined the RWHA herd books and history and has determined that we have some overuse or closely related herds. Their recommendation is to attempt to expand our breeding if possible to hogs not so closely related. We feel this is partly due to the greater distance from other breeders who have different genetics and the travel difficulty to obtain new stock. This makes certain genetics stay in particular areas. We travel as far as we reasonably can but the genetics still stay in that reasonable travel area. We are seeing an improvement. Hogs from Texas are showing up in Tennessee and hogs from one coast are showing up on another coast. This takes time, years, but it is happening.

On another note we found interesting from The Livestock Conservancy is that from their studies they determined there is no Wenglar, Prentice, Kirsh, Nichols, Timberline, Endow or other lines. All the old breeders traded and bought or sold often with each other and with other breeders, mixing their genetics. The names are still on the registry for some great hogs however there is no real line of any particular breeder and there never was even though some breeders bred for particular looks or traits. This is actually a good thing. Those genetics need to be spread out and they knew that even back then.

The Livestock Conservancy also determined there has been one Red Wattle breeder that has been consistent throughout the years beginning in 1999. That's even before the present RWHA existed. This person is Clyde Grover. Clyde is a wealth of knowledge and he loves working with his hogs. The RWHA has been fortunate to have him as a successful breeder, member and friend. He deserves the recognition.