



RARE BREEDS
TRUST OF
AUSTRALIA

2026
June

Paddocks & Perches

Quarterly Newsletter of the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia

Securing the future • Preserving the past



IN THIS ISSUE

Damara Sheep
Australian Settler Geese
Pinzgauer Cattle
Large Black Pig
Artificial Breeding
and much more

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In this issue

LIVESTOCK & POULTRY

- 10 Damara Sheep and the arithmetic of conservation. Louise Anderson
- 14 Pinzgauer Cattle. Julia Roso
- 16 Tales from the chook yard: saving an orphan. Tas Doornbusch
- 20 The Large Black in retrospect. Megg Miller
- 22 The Large Black today. Judy Barnet

BREEDING MATTERS

- 5 Registration as a conservation action. Christopher Price, RBST
- 7 Breeding Australian Settler Geese: colour inheritance. Bevan Nicholas
- 17 Artificial breeding approaches: an overview. Australian Galloway Association

Cover photo. Damara Lambs, Wild Valley Damara. Photo credit. Louise Anderson

TRUST NEWS AND CONTACTS

- 2 From the Managing Director
- 3 Trust News and Membership Renewals
- 4 Gene Bank Fund Raising Auction thank yous
- 27 Trust products and services

PEOPLE

- 12 International Year of the Woman Farmer Profile. Michelle Gooding, Rare Flocks Farm

CURRENT GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES

- 4 Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

CLASSIFIEDS

- 29-30 Member ads

JUST FOR FUN

- 26 From the Archives: Mozaic Sheep
- 26 Rare Breeds quiz

From the Managing Director - Judy Barnet

It's been a dry autumn here of the Downs, with the dry stretching down into NSW as far as Armidale. Many sheep and cattle breeders have destocked completely. We don't usually receive rain until September/October so many people are bracing for a long hard winter.

The auction has just wrapped up as I write this. We have received record support raising \$4,601 for the Genebank. Thank you to everyone who supported the auction as bidders and as donors. We sincerely appreciate your commitment and support for rare breeds.

I have some really exciting news – Libby Henson (daughter of Joe Henson who started the RBST in the UK and brother of BBC presenter Adam Henson) is coming to Australia and has offered to do a talk on Rare Breed Conservation. She will also be offering another webinar for her Grassroots Software. Grassroots is a management system for breed associations that has been successfully used all over the world. These talks will be held via a Zoom Webinar and are free – stay tuned for more information about how to register in coming weeks. Keep the evenings of 24 and 26 July open in the meantime!

We also are having a site for the second year at Farmfest – both Letisha Johnson and myself will be attending with cattle and sheep, as well as a representative from the Dexter Association who is coming along with a cow and calf.

Membership renewal time is coming up very soon and we sincerely hope you will join us again. We thank you for your invaluable and ongoing support. Watch out for the renewal email in your Inbox.

And finally! It won't be long until Christmas, the way the days fly by. We are trialling a Christmas Gift Guide this year. Find out more on page 27 about how to get involved. The Guide is proposed as another avenue for members to promote their rare breed products.

Sincerely. Judy Barnet



**THE IMPORTANCE OF RARE BREEDS:
SPECIAL WEBINAR EVENT**

Libby Henson talks about her work in rare breed conservation world wide

Hosted by the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia

Friday 24 July
7pm AEST



Welcome New Members

The Trust extends a warm welcome to new members.

- Charlotte Dumesny
- Damian White
- Haldane Icelandic Horses
- Hamilton Ridge Damara Stud
- Harry Johnston
- Robert Whitton
- Ryan Craig
- Tamsin Baker

Member donations: a big thank you

The Trust is deeply grateful for a very generous financial donation from new member Tamsin Baker. We also acknowledge the annual donations from Life Member Tasman Doornbusch.

These donations are allocated to the Future Farms GeneBank fund to support the storage costs of genetic materials donated to the Trust.

Financial donations can be made through the Trust website at <https://rarebreedstrust.com.au/public/shop/products/donation-for-future-farms-gene-bank>. Alternatively, an invoice can be requested for your nominated donation amount. Contact rarebreedstrustau@gmail.com

Future Farms GeneBank Auction

Thank you to the many members who supported the annual Gene Bank auction through donations and bids. The Auction raised a record \$4,601. The Auction is a vital fundraiser for the costs of genetic material storage. Without your support we would find it very difficult to maintain donated genetic material into the future.

Membership Renewals are coming up

Members with memberships expiring on 30 June 2026 will receive an automated renewal email in the next week or so. We thank you for your membership and do hope that you will renew your membership.

If you prefer to pay via bank transfer you will find details on our membership form at <https://tinyurl.com/RBTA-MembershipForm>. Or contact Susan Locke to be emailed a form. Contact details: rbtamembership@gmail.com or ring 0425 806 493 with any queries.



Terry Heiner Youth Grants

We are keen for Junior members as well as children in Family Memberships to take up a Youth Grant. Find out more about the Grants program at <https://rarebreedstrust.com.au/public/pages/youth-grant>.

Please contact Letisha Johnson, Youth Grants Coordinator to discuss your idea. Email jakalahstud@gmail.com. The Youth Grant is made possible through a generous bequest from the Terry Heiner estate.

Sponsorship and Marketing: Do you have sponsorship and marketing skills that you can offer to the Trust?

The Trust is looking for a Sponsorship and Marketing Coordinator to support its work across fund raising, Gene Bank auction sponsorships, and strategic promotion.

Step up to the Board

Do you have governance skills, or a commitment to rare livestock and poultry breeds, or an interest in supporting a not for profit organisation? If so, we are looking for you. A Board Director role offers the opportunity to be part of the movement supporting the conservation of rare breeds in Australia. The Board meets monthly online, with Directors taking up roles relevant to their interests and experience.

The Trust is a registered charity under the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission. Directors need, or be eligible to apply for, a Director ID. See <https://tinyurl.com/rbta-director-id> for information on how to apply for a Director ID via the Australian Business Registry Services.

Call Judy Barnet on 0422 938 865 for further information.

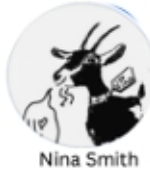
Printed Newsletter Cost Increase

Due to increased postal and printing costs, the annual cost of printed Newsletters is rising to \$40 per annum. **This cost is additional to the Membership fee and is only applicable to those members specifically ordering a Printed Newsletter.** The Printed Newsletter can be ordered through the Shop on the Trust website. Life Members will continue to receive a Printed Newsletter free of charge. Any legacy memberships with a Printed Newsletter will continue to receive the printed Newsletter at the past rate until the end of their current membership period.

Rare Breeds Trust of Australia Auction. Thank you!



GLENLYON DAM HOLIDAY COTTAGE



Thank you to the generous donors for the annual GeneBank Charity Auction, including individual donors:

- Carol Wormald
- Johanna Willans
- Judy Barnet
- Kay O'Neill
- Paddy Zakaria
- Susan Locke
- Yan Kleynhans

The Auction raised a record \$4,601!

Now to get ready for the 2027 Auction!

CURRENT GOVERNMENT (DAFF) INQUIRIES

National Biosecurity Reforms

Opened 30 April. Closes 12 June

<https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/nationalbiosecurityreform>. Consultation is open on proposed reform ideas for the National Biosecurity Strategy.

World Organisation for Animal Health Standards Review Part B

Opened 13 April 2026. Closes 5 June

<https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/oie-standards>.

Australia conducts biannual consultation on the Organisation's draft international standards for animal health and welfare. Part B is open for comments on guides for management of animal welfare and disease,

Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock Review for Version 4. Tranche 2

Opened 28 April. Closes 9 June.. <https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/asel-review-2025>

Tranche 2 seeks stakeholder feedback on 3 discussion papers which outline proposed changes to the export of livestock by sea and by air, including bedding related requirements.

Registration as a Conservation Action

Adapted from an article written by
Christopher Price
Rare Breeds Survival Trust



“Unregistered animals can be lost to history. Registered animals become part of it.”

The following article is adapted for the Australian context and published with permission from an original article written by Christopher Price, CEO of the UK Rare Breeds Survival Trust.

The success of a breed relies on breeders keeping these animals and registering them with the relevant breed society. In order to understand the conservation status of the breed, data provided by a breed society is critical for reliable data being based on the animals registered in the relevant flock/herd books. Therefore, animals that are not registered with the breed society are not included in rare breed status analysis and are not seen to be contributing to the conservation of the breed.

Where a breed society exists, animals not registered with the breed society do not, for all intents and purposes, contribute to the conservation of the breed.

What does the term “Registered” mean?

There is often confusion on the definition of a ‘Registered’ animal. Terms such as ‘Pure Bred’ or ‘Pedigree’ do not necessarily mean an animal is registered or eligible for registration with the relevant breed society.

A ‘Registered’ animal means that it is recorded in the relevant flock or herd book of that breed. Each breed society has its own set of rules and regulations regarding the registration process and what is required.

It is important to highlight that ‘Registration’ is separate to the legal compliance such as identification and movements. All keepers of livestock need to conform to the legal compliance.

Why should you register your animals?

1. Secure your legacy: protect your genetics

Your animals are more than just stock—they carry generations of genetics, history, and hard work. Registration is formal proof of pedigree, ensuring your bloodlines are recognised, recorded, and respected.

*Image top. Cheviot sheep
Image right. Lincoln Red cow and calf*

Registration:

- Proves your animal’s pedigree
- Preserves your bloodlines for future generations
- Ensures your stick is part of the official breed record

2. Breed smarterd improve genetic health

Knowing the lineage and breeding of your livestock enables you to make informed breeding decisions.

- Access breeding tools like EBVs and genomic tests
- Monitor inbreeding levels
- Join improvement programs and breeding advice networks



3. Become part of the breed community

Being part of a breed society is not just about breed registration, they are a community of enthusiast striving to ensure the success of the breed.

- Support your breed’s future
- Promote sustainable, heritage farming
- Access technical resurces
- Be eligible for breed society directory listings

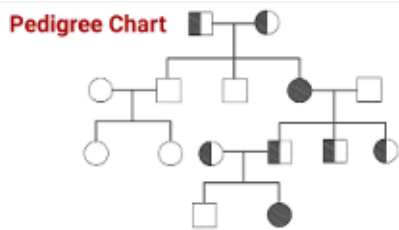
>>> Registration as conservation cont.

How do I know if my animals are registered with a breed society?

If you are unsure if your animals are registered with relevant breed society, the best way is simply to get in contact with them. Using identification such as the tag number of the animal, the breed society can search their records.

Purchasing new animals

If you are purchasing new animals, it is important to understand the registration status. The vendor of the animals should be able to provide evidence of registration. This could be in the form of a pedigree certificate. Once again you can confirm the registration status of the animals by contacting the relevant breed society.



Unfortunately, there are cases in which breeders purchase animals with the intention of registering them with the breed society, only to find out they are not eligible.

What additional work is required to register my animals?

When discussing breed registration there are often two key things highlighted as potential barriers to registration, these are the costs involved, and the additional work needed.

Cost

The cost of registration can vary from breed to breed and will usually be different for males and females.

Breed registration does not mean your animals will instantly be worth more, however there are many examples where breeders have achieved excellent sale prices due to the genetics of their pedigree animals – which can be identified through the pedigree registration.

Additional work for the breeder

The rules and regulations for registration vary for each breed and the information required does change.

However, there are a few common requirements from the majority of breed societies:

- Date of Birth
- Sire
- Dam
- Sex
- Tag number

It is important to check what the requirements are for registration. Normally a DNA test will be required to be undertaken, usually either in the form of a nasal swab or hair sample. There can also be time limits on registration where animals must be registered by a certain date.



How can the consumer help?

Even if you do not currently keep or breed rare breeds, it is still important to understand the terms Pedigree and Registered. When purchasing animals, ask the question as to whether it is pedigree or registered. The aim is to create a value on the breed being consumed. The more people asking for specific breed names and discuss breed registration, the more the demand will increase. This will provide an incentive for breeders to have pedigree records and to register their animals with the relevant breed society.

Joining a breed society

The first steps are to contact the relevant breed society, the details of which should be available online. It is important to ensure you are reaching out to the correct group and the society that is officially recognised. However, if there are any issues in locating the correct breed society then please contact RBTA who can direct you accordingly.



Rare Livestock Breed Associations

- [Cattle](#)
- [Donkey](#)
- [Goat](#)
- [Horse](#)
- [Pig](#)
- [Sheep](#)

Link to the RBTA listing of breed associations on the RBTA website at <https://rarebreedstrustofaustralia.tidyhq.com/public/pages/rare-livestock-breeders-directory>

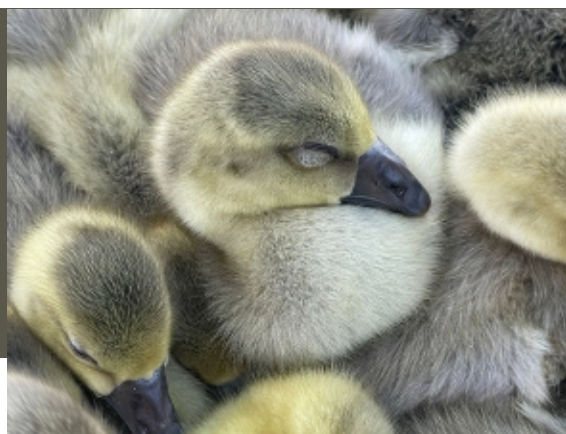
The Australian Settler Goose

Dilution and Spotting Inheritance: a study

Bevan Nicholas

Nicolstoke Farm

<https://www.nicolstokefarm.com.au/>



The following article is a summary of a more detailed report of the colour genetics study conducted by Bevan with his Australian Settler goose flock. The full paper can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/Nicholas-AusSettlerGeese>

“Work is needed within Australian Settler flocks to better understand how the Australian Settler colour genes express under local breeding conditions.”



OF CONCERN

The Australian Settler

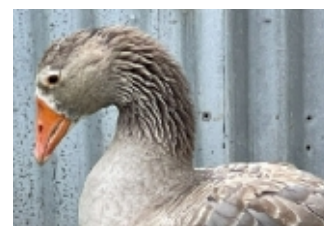
In Australia, the breed commonly known internationally as Pilgrim is listed in the Australian poultry standard under the name ‘Australian Settler goose’. This designation was adopted to reflect the reconstruction and establishment of the breed from local stock where lineage could not be tracked to purebred imports. The Australian Settler goose has largely been reconstructed from mixed farm and utility stock, often without complete pedigree information. As a result, variability in colour expression and inheritance patterns can be greater than in the long-established international lines. The RBTA classes its status as **Of Concern** reflecting its risk level.

The following therefore is an accumulation of available evidence, which includes very old studies, as well as observations and information taken from various long- and short-term breeders I have spoken to. One of which I will acknowledge, Chris Ashton, who LITERALLY wrote the book on this and has supplied a huge range of guidance and support in my breeding program and understanding of colour heritability in these goose breeds.

My interest

I have only been keeping and breeding geese for a limited time. My background is in research with a focus in health and psychology and my family has been breeding and showing stud cattle, including rare breed cattle, for over a decade. As part of this, coupled with my analytical skillset, we moved to a major focus on heritability of desirable phenotypes within our herd, and how this could be achieved to make more saleable animals through hybridity. There is a large body of research in cattle and cattle genetics that really helps with this process and informs data driven decisions each breeding season.

By sharing both expected and unexpected outcomes, we hope that this work will contribute to a growing body of practical knowledge and support future collaborative breeding efforts.



Colour inheritance in Australian Settler Geese: the need for a study

Work is needed within Australian flocks to better understand how the Australian Settler colour genes express under local breeding conditions. Using our own small Australian Settler flock, I set up a study to document and interpret colour inheritance across a single breeding season. When trying to apply the same model we use for our cattle to our geese program, we largely relied on anecdotal evidence, and the findings of a few very dedicated breeders internationally trying to support goose breeders and keepers and decipher some of the heritable characteristics.

However, the following is just preliminary findings in what may be a longer-term project. So, please keep this fact in mind when reading, as the variable control is already significantly impacted by the geese used in my study.

*Images Top. Australian Settler goslings.
Above. Callala Girl 2, Australian Settler goose
All images in this article supplied by Bevan
Nicholas and used with permission*

Colour genetics background

European breed domestic geese (*Anser anser domesticus*) display a limited but genetically informative range of plumage patterns including (Ashton, 2021; Olli et al., 2026):

- * Dominant wild greying (**Sp+**)
- * A recessive pied or spotting (**sp**)
- * A sex-linked dilution gene (**Sd**)
- * No sex-linked dilution (**sd+**), and
- * A sex-linked buff gene).

These colour types underpin several traditional European breeds such as **Pilgrim, West of England, Normandy, Pomeranian, and Buff Back geese**.

Although formal genetic studies on geese are sparse compared to chickens or ducks, a combination of classic experimental work (e.g., Jerome, 1950s), breed manuals (Ashton, 2021), and breeder records provides a workable model for interpreting plumage inheritance in European lines.

Domestic European geese descend from the greylag goose (*Anser anser*), retaining the barred grey–brown plumage pattern typical of the wild species (Ashton, 2021). White plumage in European lines is understood to derive from an interaction between dilution and pied genes in plumage.

The Basics: White, Grey and Dilution

Classic experimental crosses reported by Jerome (1952, 1953, 1959) demonstrated that white × white consistently yields white offspring, while white × grey produces exclusively grey carriers, supporting a recessive white locus segregating against wild-type grey.

A key genetic system in European geese is the sex-linked dilution locus, commonly symbolised **Sd** (Jerome, 1953; Muller, 2019). The locus appears to be incompletely dominant on the Z chromosome, producing:

- * a diluted grey in heterozygous males (**Z[^]Sd/ Z[^]sd+**) and
- * a somewhat darker but still diluted phenotype in hemizygous females (**Z[^]Sd/W^{^-}**).

Autosexing genes in Pilgrim geese

This system underpins the autosexing characteristics of Pilgrim geese (Ashton, 2021; Pilgrim Goose Breeders Association, 2020). Adult ganders present predominantly white plumage with expected greying on flights and secondary wing feathers, back, tail, and coverts, while females retain soft diluted grey with a white facial mask.

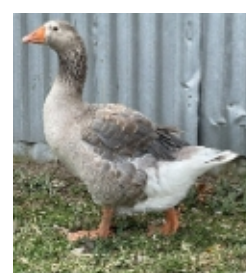
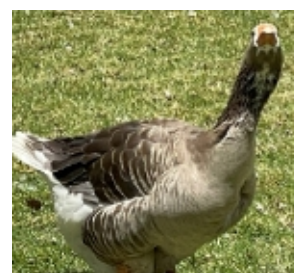
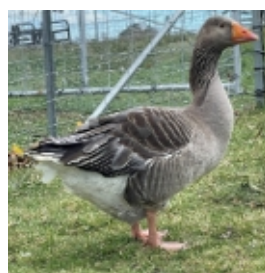
Goslings are sexable at hatch: males exhibit a yellow-grey down, while females hatch with darker down and darker bills & feet (Ashton, 2021).

As geese's chromosomal presentation is ZZ for ganders, and ZW for geese, assumptions from experimental observation have allowed some basic colour mapping and heritability predictions for a number of these breeds. Dilution for example is theorised to only be present on the Z chromosome which is what allows for sexual dimorphism amongst certain breeds.

THE STUDY IN ACTION

1. Background of the studied geese

The parent geese in this study are geese I have sourced without 100% knowing their parentage. For all sets of parents, they are from Pilgrim 'type' parents, and by that, I mean a white gander sire, and a grey goose dam.



Images Top L to R. "Puffin", Gander. "Sooty Tern" Goose.
Bottom. L to R. "Callala Girl 1", Goose. "Callala Girl 2", Goose
Images supplied by Bevan Nicholas and used with permission

2. The study aim

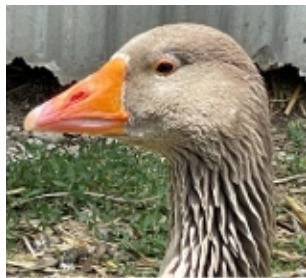
The primary aim of the study was to determine whether our grey gander - Puffin - when paired with correct Australian Settler type geese, would produce white male offspring given his white paternal parentage. This would demonstrate that, despite his grey phenotype, he carried one copy of the sex-linked dilution gene.

For this very quasi experimental design, Puffin, the gander was put with Sooty Tern, Callala Girl 1, and Callala Girl 2, all unrelated to Puffin, with the idea to test several hypotheses.

3. The studied geese in detail

Puffin

Puffin is a 3 year old grey gander. As far as we know his parentage is standard Australian Settler stock (white sire, grey dam). However, working backwards, we hypothesise that Puffin's dam must have been solid grey (non-dilution carrier) to have a grey gander born of a white sire. Puffin has very light whiting at the base of his beak and around his eyes, however this presentation has been unchanged as he has aged. Puffin generally weighs between 6.5 & 8kg. Puffin has a very small, faint, white spot on his chin. The image above shows Puffin's head colouring.



Assumed – Sd/sd+ , Sp+/Sp+

Sooty Tern

Sooty Tern is in her fourth breeding season. This is her first season successfully sitting, though she consistently produces a large number of eggs. She is our most correct Pilgrim female demonstrating a correct mask. Sooty does have some white speckling on her neck, and the white of her mask continues as a strap under her chin. Sooty maintains weight well and is typically between 5kg & 6kg. Figure 2 shows some photos of Sooty.



Assumed – Sd/- , Sp+/Sp+ - may be (sp) carrier.

Callala Girl 1 and Callala Girl 2

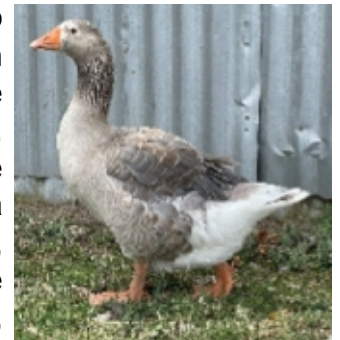
These two are rescues. They were from Settler parents; however, we anticipated the presence of spotting gene as one of their siblings we rescued was a white female. These females present typically; with some potential spotting phenotypes we've identified.

Callala Girl 1 (shown to the right) is a much greyer or ashy colour than Sooty Tern, and has over whiting on her head. This is her first season, and she is a bit smaller, typically around 4.5-5.5kg. She also has



a white chin spot. **Assumed – Sd/- , Sp+/Sp+, may be (sp) carrier**

Callala Girl 2 (shown to the right) is not as ashen in colour and has a more typical mask. However, she does have a recessive spotting sign, being a white bar across her chest, as well as a small white chin spot. Like her sister, she is in her first breeding season and is typically 4.5kg – 5.5kg.



Assumed – Sd/- , Sp+/sp, unsure as to whether the white bar is a reliable absolute indicator of presence of (sp).

THE RESULTS

Together 21 goslings were hatched. 11 goslings from the first clutch (sat on by both the Callala girls) and 10 from the second clutch (sat on by Sooty). Unfortunately, the eggs were mixed so individual birds cannot be attributed to a specific Dam.



Of the 21 goslings hatched, 8 were males with 4 white and 4 grey, leaving the 13 remaining as females. DNA sexing was used to confirm genders.

Continued on page 24 ...

Damara Sheep and the Arithmetic of Conservation

Louise Anderson
Wild Valley Damara

The success of the Damara in Australian environments demonstrates the paradox of a breed endangered by its own desirable traits.

A successful rare breed

There's a quiet paradox at the heart of Damara conservation in Australia — the breed's current endangered status may well be a product of its own success.

The Damara's strong reputation usually precedes it. Hardiness earned over millennia in the arid Namibian landscape. Browsing habits and feed conversion rates that surpass other breeds. Natural parasite tolerance. Strong mothering instinct. Year-round breeding. No shearing.

While large scale sheep operations shied away due to their difference to the merino-type sheep, many other operators took up the Damara as an extraordinary genetic resource and used it extensively — and for entirely good reason. Damara genetics passed into flock after flock across the country, infusing resilience & reducing management pressure.

The Northern Territory welcomed them as a breed that is unaffected by bluetongue disease. Further south, composites carrying the Damara influence emerged in organic operations, low-input systems and dryland properties alike. In the Damara, many found the qualities they needed in their sheep.

The problem that comes with success

The problem is arithmetic. Every time Damara genetics are diluted into a crossbreeding program the pool of traceable, documented purebreds shrinks. The Australian Rare Breeds Trust now estimates that there are fewer than 500 provable purebred Damara ewes remaining on record in the entire country.

The breed that strengthened so many others has, in the same process, weakened its own foundation. This is not a story unrecognised by livestock conservators.



*Trio of Damara lambs from Wild Valley Damara.
Credit Louise Anderson*

It often plays out with any breed that proves too useful, too advantageous. The very qualities that make a breed worth preserving are the same qualities that make it an attractive resource, and that use, without careful stewardship of the purebred population, is a slow form of erosion. It happens farm by farm, season by season, in the entirely justifiable pursuit of a better, tougher flock.



Paul. Damara ram from Brae Park Damara. Credit M. Wilkinson

The Damara's case is harder still, because the small purebred population cannot be replenished through importation. Australia's scrapie import restrictions make bringing in new sheep genetics extraordinarily difficult and effectively impractical for African breeds whose origin countries are not on the approved list. The current provable Damara population is what Australia has to work with.

Genotype not just phenotype

The breed's distinctive appearance adds a further complication. Many sheep across Australia now show Damara-like traits — the colour patterns, a leaner frame, a shedding coat and any type of tail — but as those who maintain purebred livestock know, appearance can be deceiving.



*Ewes and lambs from Wild Valley Damara.
Credit Louise Anderson*

Crossbred expression can vary wildly across generations. Without documented lineage those original Damara traits cannot be reliably reproduced. An animal that looks the part is at best "typey", and is not the same as one who carries the full genetic profile of a true Damara.

The need for pure bred registration

That distinction, of course, matters enormously not just for those trying to preserve the breed, but also for those needing Damara genetics in the future.

Today, every purebred that becomes undocumented makes the next generation smaller. Five hundred provable ewes is indeed an endangered population, and substantiating those numbers matters now, as much as the genetics themselves.

The paradox of a breed endangered by its own desirable traits is only resolved when the purebred population is strong enough to be drawn on without being eroded.

Louise Anderson
Wild Valley Damara, NSW

*All photos supplied by, and with permission to use,
by Louise Anderson.*



Lamb from Green Patch Damara. Credit K. Hardy



*Cyclone. Damara ram from Wild Valley Damara.
Credit Louise Anderson*

Quick fact

The Damara was introduced into Australia in 1996 through embryos and straws from South Africa.

RBTA Damara breed profile

<https://tinyurl.com/rbta-damara>

The Damara Sheep Breeders' Society of Australia

<https://damaras.com.au/>

Profiling Women Pastoralists Michelle Gooding Rare Flocks Farm

The United Nations declared 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026). The Year highlights the roles women play in shaping and sustaining agrifood systems as farmers, pastoralists, rural leaders, producers, family and smallholder concerns, and many other agrifood areas. In recognition of the IYWF we will be bringing you a profile of a woman involved with rare breeds in each of the 2026 issues of Paddocks and Perches.

It's a slow process... finding the path... but the universe provides!

I grew up in small town Queensland on a mushroom farm. My parents both had varied careers. Maybe that's why I wasn't too worried about leaving my career to become a farmer. By the time I was in high school we were city folk and I followed the usual path of university and then a career in local government caring for land, wildlife and community. 20 years later, I was itching for change.



Stepping into quail farming

I took a gap year to 'make a plan' and my partner and I bought vacant farm land. Then we just had to work out what we were going to grow. I've always loved my chooks, but that's too mainstream... so lets try Free Range Quail Eggs! I was lucky to find a market distributor who was a perfect fit and we are ticking along nicely with the usual ups and downs. But the daily egg hunt is still fun!

Branching out to butterfly farming

I mentioned to a fellow colleague that we were looking for something to farm, and bingo that started a new venture - butterfly farming. Who would have thought! We grow plants to feed Monarch Caterpillars, raise caterpillars in a climate-controlled shed and maintain a flock of butterflies for breeding stock.



Again, plenty of ups and downs like all farming but it's a joy to see people appreciating the wonders of nature when they receive their butterflies, chrysalis or caterpillars.

The rare goats and sheep come next

The land we bought was 100 acres, and we needed something to eat the grass. My partner had Angora goats in his childhood. So we started asking around and found an Australian Heritage Angora breeder who was retiring. We took on her last 2 breeding does and some retired girls and then we were goat farmers too.

The grass was growing quicker than the goats could eat it and we realised that Mohair blends well with wool so we found Romney Marsh sheep and started a small stud flock.

And then there is the fibre and spin off ventures

Now we were producing fibre. So a new chapter began... processing it. My sister visited and got inspired. She had been a fibre



artist in her past and so we sent her home with bags of mohair and wool and she created up a storm. Her daughter, my niece, then took hold of our marketing and we have websites, social media and marketing

material. We gave ourselves a target to launch at our local Seymour Farming Expo and we made it! Who knows where we go from here. We are winging it... I think that's our family style.

Saying Yes and jumping in

None of this was really planned. It has all just emerged, but being open to the opportunities has been key. Jumping in before having all the answers is scary but has mostly paid off. I used to think my plan was 'say yes to all opportunities' but I now want to refine that. Not everything works, I'm happy to give it a go, but sometimes you have to let things go when they aren't a good fit.

It's a bit relentless having so many ventures on the go, but I guess that's my nature. I'm happy when I'm busy. Having a social life is chatting to my quail... going out for dinner is cheese and biscuits on the porch... meditation is spinning yarn... and exercise is... farming!

But also consider what does not have to be done today!

The list of jobs is long, seemingly never ending. I read a small business book a few years ago and took from it the following advice... rather than looking at 'what has to be done today' consider 'what doesn't have to be done today'.

Diverse farming is what we are aiming for, I think. But it's a balancing act. Each element has to fit into a busy schedule and bring some return. That's not necessarily direct income. It could be a byproduct, or a service or goods to barter with. But the key is having complementary ventures that aren't all busy at the same time.

I couldn't do this without...

My past work experience. Having had a prior career in local government gave me so many skills and also gave me a great appreciation for working mostly on my own. Farming can be socially isolating; not for everyone!

My partner who facilitates my crazy ideas, builds things I want, and equally shares my passion for the creatures we farm.

My parents who have taught me to chase the dream and push on in the face of uncertainty, 'she'll be right', albeit maybe different outcome to what you were expecting. And for all the food parcels!

My sister Tracy, whose fibre motto is "perfectly imperfect" and has shown me how playing with fibre is lots of fun!

My fellow goat tribe (humans), I think they are truly unique and ever so passionate.

Financial security. This is maybe the hardest thing to achieve, is the luckiest thing we have, and is the most important for our mental health. We don't have a mortgage, my partner works part time off-farm, and we don't fret about having material things or money. We have worked to get here, and we appreciate what we have.

Passion for the lifestyle. We enjoy what we do, otherwise it would be such a drag... don't get me wrong, it's not all fun, but at the end of the day we enjoy it.

My advice to new women farmers

Don't worry about the naysayers. Seek out and listen to as many opinions as you can find, research (you can learn just about anything on the web), and don't be afraid to try stuff.

People will tell you that you can't do it, and that it won't work... but give it crack, you'll never know otherwise. Give it time, don't rush, and don't force it; the puzzle pieces will fall into place.



There is a difference between farming where its profit driven and it's a job, versus diverse lifestyle farming ... I don't know what to call it... but its my life, not my job.

Michelle Gooding

<https://rareflocksfarm.com/>

Photos supplied by Rare Flocks Farm

Pinzgauer Cattle

Julia Roso

Fairfield Family Farm Pinzgauers

Pinzgauers are very docile, long-lived, feed efficient and have tender meat.

The Pinzgauer Cattle breed comes from the region of “Pinzgau” near Salzburg, Austria. Pinzgauers came to Australia in the 1990s and have been further developed as a beef breed by members of the Australian Pinzgauer Breeders’ Association (APBA).

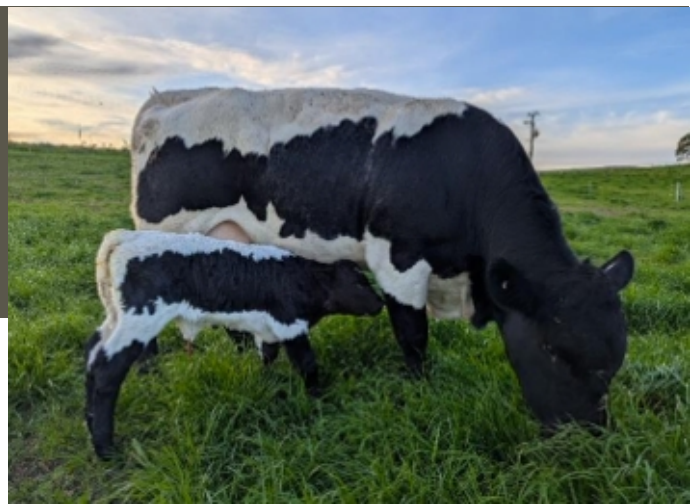
Pinzgauer cattle have a colouring and pattern that is very distinctive and unique to this breed. They are most commonly red and white, but some Pinzgauer cattle have a black mutation. These are becoming more popular for obvious reasons.

Pinzgauers are very docile, long-lived, feed efficient and have tender meat. They are generally owned by enthusiasts who value their beauty, kind temperaments, and enjoy the cultural ties back to the home country.



As for statistics, the breed in Australia has approximately 150 purebred registered females, and approximately 20 bulls in working stud-herds. This still leaves the breed in ‘critical’ rare status.

The APBA is actively promoting a transition of the national herd to polled animals to remove the need to deal with horns for the lovers of the breed.



The national stud herd is tracking well towards this goal. As at June 2025 approximately two-thirds of all registered animals are polled. Most of the Australian bulls are poll and at some studs including Fairfield Pinzgauers there are homozygous poll bulls at work– so we can expect to make further progress quickly.

Pinzgauers around the world

Around the world, there are Pinzgauer breeders in many countries – USA and Canada, Brazil, South Africa, and of course the core European countries – Austria, Germany, Denmark, UK, Italy, Slovakia etc. It is in many places a heritage and rare breed also.

The International Pinzgauer Breeders’ Association (IPBA) is based in Maishofen in Austria, near Salzburg. The IPBA coordinates a whole international community of breeders. Belonging to this organisation via the Australian Pinzgauer Breeders’ Association opens many doors to new friendships in lots of places around the world.

Our breeder members have made many individual visits overseas to meet with other breeders on their own farms, and have organised trips to different countries. Just the most recent trips on offer were:

- 2019 – Italy
- 2023 – Australia (we hosted over 70 international breeders)
- 2025 – Germany
- 2028 – Slovakia (planned)

>>> Pinzgauer Cattle cont.

Several of our member breeders always attend these tours, they are a beautiful way of having a holiday overseas which also caters for the interests of visiting farms, seeing different agricultural systems and accessing overseas Pinzgauer genetics.

The German tour of 2025 included many farm visits across all of Germany, with beautiful Pinzgauer herds to inspect and long table lunches to be enjoyed with friends.

The highlight of the trip was 2 days at the German Limousin and Pinzgauer Show 2025 in Alsfeld, Hessen. The show was very well organised and there were some impressive animals to see.

One bull was purchased by the Austrian Semen Station, from where it is possible to export semen into Australia. The APBA is planning to import in 2026 to provide access to new genetics for our breeders.

Get involved

For anyone further interested in this breed, and joining this worldwide community, find more information at the APBA – www.pinzgauer.org.au, or our own website – www.fairfieldfarm.com.au, and the facebook group “APBA”.



Pinzgauer homecoming

In the Alps, farmers keep their Pinzgauers in the home barns in winter, and send them up to the mountain 'Alms' in the summer. The animals have to be nice to their humans in the barn, and then very strong on their legs and independent in the summer.

It is beautiful when we receive pictures from our friends like this one to the right. It shows the tradition to dress them up with big headpieces and bells when they are driven back down from the mountains in September. The headpiece on this cow says "Farewell to the Mountains".

All photos supplied by Julia Roso and used with permission.

Tales from the Chook Yard Saving an Orphan

Tas Doornbusch

Trust Life Member, Tas, a long time poultry breeder, brings us his cliff hanger story of saving a newly hatched chick with two mothers



When I was much younger in my seventies, I used a good incubator to hatch most of my pure bred poultry. Then tragically due to my home being burgled and burned down, all my belongings and chicken equipment were lost; everything I treasured was in that house. But I still had my poultry, and so I turned to my natural incubators - broodies! I now only use natural incubation for the reduced number of poultry I keep.

Bantams as broodies

During Spring when all my big Cochins and Leghorns are in full production, my bantams can be relied on to go broody. They can cover a nice clutch and they become very dedicated clucky mothers. However, they *generally* won't accept any new babies after a couple of days, with their first hatched chicks taking all their attention.

Nevertheless, after the "official" breeding season is over, and even with the bantams recommencing laying for a little while, the bantams like to become mothers again and go broody all over again.



In one old henhouse, all the nests are on the floor, so it's not every day that I manage to get down to gather up their little eggs. So when I found that one had gone broody on about 4 fertile eggs, it was too late to use those eggs inside. And so I let her sit. The other hens usually lay their eggs in other nests, given how tight the broodies sit.

The bantam hen hatches her eggs - and a surprise

And so one day on going into the shed to collect eggs, I found the sitting bantam had hatched her four chickens and was sitting with them in front of the nest. I collected the crushed and now empty, dried out shells from the nest, only to discover three unhatched bantam eggs. She couldn't have been sitting that tight!

With developing embryos in those three eggs, they would be of no use in the kitchen. Not knowing when they were laid, I pushed them under a bantam that fortunately had gone broody in a nearby nest, with eggs already under her.

A second mother hen takes over the rescued eggs along with her own

Not wanting to chance another similar episode, I moved the second broody with the rescued eggs, plus the clutch she had been brooding, to my brooding shed.

About five days later, one of the rescued eggs had hatched. What to do next? The second broody clearly needed to keep sitting on her own clutch. I took the chance of trying to put the chick under the first mother hen even though it was 5 days later. Incredibly success!

The next day, another chick from the rescued eggs hatched under the second hen. I was late getting to the nest and the second mother hen being hungry had come off the nest leaving the clutch of eggs. Again what to do? I didn't want to lose the eggs that the second mother had been sitting on, and didn't want to lose the newly hatched chick. Try my luck again with the first mother? I picked up the newly hatched chick with that in mind.

However, the second mother hen had other ideas. She was looking and calling for the chick, far away from her now rapidly cooling clutch of eggs. I risked losing those eggs.

Decoy baby

So I reckoned that the only way to get her back sitting on her eggs was to place the orphan baby back into her nest and wait for it to call for the mother hen. Luckily it did not take long for the anxious mother to hear and return back and settle down upon her eggs and the orphan chick. Once settled I moved the baby out of her earshot.

The questions pile up

A cup of tea called to help think over the questions piling up. Will the second hen go on to hatch her own clutch? Will the first mother take on this second chick? And what about that third egg if it hatches? Will I need to be the third mother hen? I sipped my tea. Hmm!

Artificial Breeding

Australian Galloway Association



This article provides an overview of Artificial Insemination, Embryo Transfer and In Vitro Fertilisation. It was originally published in the 2022-2023 Annual of the Australian Galloway Association and is reprinted here with their kind permission.

Many breeders would be aware of the artificial breeding options available. However some may not, and this article discusses factors to consider and the different programmes currently available.

Artificial breeding can help achieve rapid genetic improvement in a cattle herd and utilises technologies such as artificial insemination, embryo transfer and in vitro fertilisation.

A breeder may choose artificial breeding for many reasons:

- Rapid genetic improvement
- No necessity to run a bull
- Access to genetics from bulls that are otherwise unaffordable
- Access to bulls not available locally
- Access to overseas genetic
- Mating individual cows to specific sires

Before commencing an artificial breeding programme you will also need to consider:

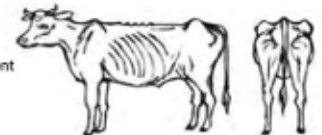
- The adequacy of handling facilities – holding yards, a race and a crush are needed as a minimum with other facilities required for the more advanced programmes.
- The cost of genetics to be purchased.
- The time needed to invest in the correct procedures for the best outcomes.
- The cost of the drugs needed to be used in the programme (costs will vary depending on the synchronisation protocol used and the type of procedure undertaken, as different programmes vary in drug and time requirements).
- Cost and availability of an AI technician.

To gain the best possible pregnancy rate from any artificial breeding programme the animals in the programme should:

- Have been vaccinated or treated to prevent relevant diseases with all vaccinations/treatments finishing a minimum of 30 days before the commencement of the programme.
- Be in a body condition score of 2.5-3 for cows and three for heifers at calving (on a scale of 1 - 5).
- For heifers have reached at least 60-65% of mature weight at the commencement of the breeding season.
- Be on a rising plane of nutrition post calving consuming a balanced ration.
- Continue to be provided with an adequate ration following the breeding programme to support the pregnancy.
- Have been calved for an average of at least 40 days or more before the commencement of an AI program.

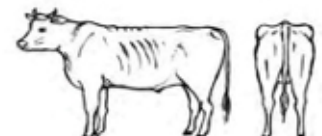
Condition score 1

Backbone prominent
Hips and shoulder bones prominent
Ribs clearly visible
Tail-head area recessed
Skeletal body outline



Condition score 2

Backbone visible
Hips and shoulder bones visible
Ribs visible faintly
Tail-head area slightly recessed
Body outline bony



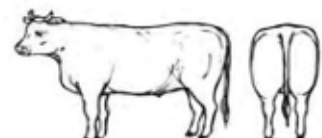
Condition score 3

Hip bones visible faintly
Ribs generally not visible
Tail-head area not recessed
Body outline almost smooth



Condition score 4

Hip bones not visible
Ribs well covered
Tail-head area slightly lumpy
Body outline rounded



Condition score 5

Hip bones showing fat deposit
Ribs very well covered
Tail-head area very lumpy
Body outline bulging due to fat



Image source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Cattle-body-condition-scoring-system-Anon1994-Body-condition-scores-BCS-of-1-5-were_fig14_267948147

>>> Artificial breeding cont.

Animals which meet these requirements are more likely to have resumed normal oestrus cycles by the start of the breeding period increasing the chances of conceiving to AI.

Many factors affect the success rate of an AI program. It is crucial that:

- Drugs are administered in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Insemination is carried out following appropriate techniques, and
- Drugs and genetic material are stored correctly.

There are various synchronisation programmes that can be undertaken. Synchronisation of oestrus saves time and labour. There are three basic types of synchronisation:

- **Prostaglandins** – a hormone administered as an injection that shortens the reproductive cycle. It will work only on cattle that are already actively cycling. The most usual is a 10 day programme with heat detection and insemination twice a day.
- **Progesterone implants** – a removable implant placed inside the vagina which postpones the onset of oestrus until two days after removal. The implants are usually left in for 8–11 days. Five-day AI programs are possible here with heat detection and insemination twice a day.

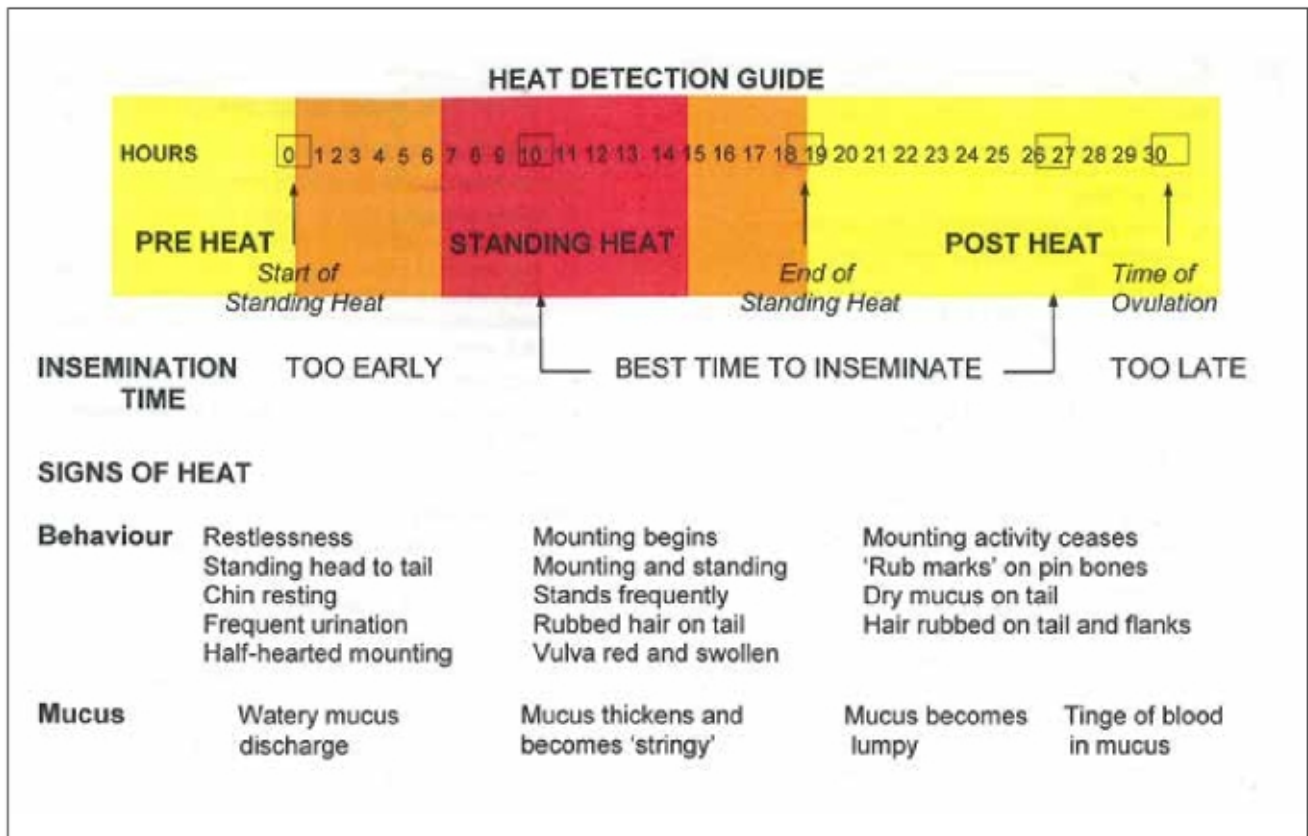
- **Fixed time insemination** – a removable vaginal progesterone implant in conjunction with a series of hormone injections will align oestrus so that a group of cattle can be inseminated in a six hour period without heat detection. This type of programme is appropriate for large numbers and in particular cows with calves at foot.

The definitive sign of an animal in oestrus is that she will stand to be mounted by another animal, but there are considerable variations between animals in how often this behaviour occurs during oestrus.

Tail paint and pressure mount detectors can assist with heat detection but visual observations are also necessary to ensure animals are artificially bred at the correct time.

Animals may sometimes activate heat mount detectors or remove tail paint by scratching on low hanging branches, so paddocks should be selected carefully for the heat detection period of the programme.

Additionally heat mount detectors may be partially activated or lost making it difficult to tell if the animal is in heat unless particular behaviour has also been observed (see the Heat Detection Guide table following).



Artificial insemination

Artificial insemination (AI) is used in both stud and commercial herds, and involves placing semen directly into the uterus of the cow or heifer by an AI technician. Animals should be artificially inseminated 8-12 hours after the start of standing oestrus being observed (i.e. if they are observed in oestrus in the morning they should be inseminated in the afternoon and if they are observed in oestrus in the afternoon, they should be artificially inseminated the following morning).

Embryo transfer

Embryo transfer (ET) is generally used in stud cattle herds, with breeders who have identified elite females in their herds using ET to maximise the genetic potential of those females with a variety of sires.

A simple explanation of the process is that it involves transferring fertilised ova (the embryos) from a donor female to a recipient female who then rears the calf.

The ET process calls for two groups of cows, the donor cows and recipient cows. The donor cows are synchronized and treated with a follicle stimulating hormone drug to ensure “superovulation”, i.e. the production of many ova, rather than just one.

The cow is then AI'd, and seven days later the technician recovers the resultant embryos. The recipient cows are also synchronised and must be in standing heat to receive the embryos, and the embryo is implanted seven days after the standing oestrus is observed. If not all embryos are used they can be frozen for later use.

In Vitro Fertilisation

In vitro fertilisation is a relatively newer practice for artificial breeding and does not require the administration of drugs to the cow prior to collection of the ova.

The technician collects the ova directly from the ovaries of the donor cow and fertilisation of the ova is carried out in a laboratory. The fertilised ova are grown in an incubator for seven days and they are then ready for fresh embryo transfer into the recipient cows, or they can be frozen.

IVF generally to date has had a lower success rate in successful pregnancies than ET.

Timeline source: https://futurebeef.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Artificial_breeding_of_beef_cattle.pdf. The timeline is not part of the reprinted original article.

Conclusion

It is unrealistic to expect a 100% pregnancy rate in an artificial breeding programme. Some cows may not respond to the initial synchronisation, fertilisation may be high but not all cows will go on to establish a pregnancy. Detection of standing oestrus is crucial, if animals in heat are not detected and/or some are presented at the wrong time for insemination a pregnancy will not result.

The key to good pregnancy rates for any artificial breeding programme is attention to detail, good planning, and good management.

Your local artificial breeding centre, vet or AI technician should be able to help with any advice for your individual situation

A brief timeline of key developments in AI

14th Century. AI was recorded as early as the 14th century when it was reputedly used by an Arabian horse breeder who used a sponge for the transfer.

1677. Detailed knowledge of the physiology of reproduction commenced in 1677 when the Dutch scientist, Van Loenhoek, observed sperm cells in an ejaculate.

1780. The first scientific artificial breeding was done with dogs in 1780, by an Italian physiologist, Spallanzani, who proved that the sperm fraction of the ejaculate is the component which causes fertilisation.

1914. Development in Italy by Ivanov and his co-workers, of the artificial vagina (AV) to restrict the spread of vibriosis – a venereal disease of cattle.

1937. Sorensen, a Danish veterinarian, and his co-workers, developed the recto-vaginal technique of insemination; the method used worldwide today.

1949. AI spread around the world after a British scientist, Polge, developed techniques for deep freezing of sperm for long term storage in 1949.

1960s. In France, Cassou designed the straw system of packaging deep frozen semen, culminating in the development of the medium straw in 1969 and the min-straw in 1972. Advances in storage containers using liquid nitrogen as a refrigerant were concurrent with the development and spread of the Cassou straw. The Cassou straw system has been almost universally adopted with more than 200 countries using it as a method of semen packaging.

The Large Black

Megg Miller

Reprinted from the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia
Newsletter December 2001

2026 marks 25 years of the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia in its current organisational form. To mark it, we are reprinting some of the articles from the 2000s Paddocks and Perches issues.



The Large Black has featured prominently in conservation discussions in Australia ever since a rare breeds group was established in early 1991. This breed remains low in numbers worldwide despite obvious suitability to smallholder farming. When and where was the Large Black breed developed and how long has it been in Australia?

About the Large Black

An English breed, the Large Black was concentrated in the eastern counties and the west country. It resulted from the amalgamation of small, hardy, prolific stock from East Anglia and Sussex and large bodied specimens from Devon and Cornwall. Bryer Jones, writing in *Live Stock on the Farm* (1915) points out that both types were slow to fatten, were of a poor 'meat' shape and generally lacked quality. Infusions of Chinese and Neapolitan pigs - used already to improve Berkshire and Whites - introduced the commercially viable characteristics the regional black types lacked.



A free range Large Black sow photographed in Suffolk, United Kingdom in 1998.

"The Large Black of pre-exhibition days was long in body and on the legs, too high off the ground, too flat-sided, and furnished with ears of great size. The hair was, we believe, abundant but coarse, the meat leaner than now and the process of fattening longer". (1)

Images. Header image top right. Nocturne 67th, a 12 month old female from fifty years ago, an English prize winner. Right. Nocturne 193rd, the mother of Nocturne 67th, a massive deep sow at just five years old.

When numbers of the Essex, Suffolk and other black pigs from East Anglia dropped so low as to be unsustainable, the remaining specimens were amalgamated with the west country pigs; "subsumed into the Large Black Herd Book and all examples of the breed since have been 'Large Blacks'." (2)

The Large Black Pig Society of England was set up in 1899. A trademark in the form of a shield with the initials LBP was instigated in 1902 along with a breed booklet. "There has been a remarkable development of desirable points and grading up of the poorer types, with an eye to meet all the requirements demanded by butchers and bacon curers today, viz a wealth of lean flesh free from coarseness and a wonderful length of side to yield prime interlean bacon, in other words size with quality."(3) It's important to remember that many animals had been large and coarse with a lot of bone, including thick bony shoulders. Many were also inclined to be 'guttie' with a rounded uneven back and general lack of depth.

The Large Black arrives in Australia

In material published by the Australian Pig Breeders Society (undated), Hawkesbury Agricultural College is credited with importing the first examples of the breed into Australia, in 1908. Within the same paragraph the unknown author contradicts this, saying, "A Large Black Pig Society booklet published in 1902 noted that . . . a number . . . were exported to SA, NSW and Tasmania."



>>> The Large Black cont.

Can we read this as meaning purebred stock were imported before the booklet's release to herd society members in 1902 or had it been reprinted a couple of years later and the Australian Pig Breeder's Society author has overlooked mentioning the reprint date? There doesn't appear to be evidence of purebreds arriving at this very early date of 1900 or earlier. It can be substantiated that a consignment arrived late 1902 or early 1903, imported by English gentleman farmer Mr A E Mansell, setting up at Mount Vernon, Melton Moubay, Tas. Two boars and seven sows were purchased, three sows being served prior to departure, two to Royal Bodmin, a prize winning boar at the Royal North of England Show at Carlisle. Mr Mansell chose stock from the best bloodlines in England. "Three of the sows had litters on the voyage . . . numbering no fewer than 40 young pigs. Unfortunately 30 of these died on the ship owing to the want of proper nourishment". (4) Some surviving piglets were from the Royal Bodmin matings, giving Mr Marshall a considerable genetic base to work from.

Mr Mansell had been recognised as a successful breeder back in England, specialising in show quality Shropshire. With such experience behind him, it's not surprising he considered the Berkshire, the most popular breed at the time, before deciding on the Large Black. He visited Essex looking for stock because of the counties' long association with the breed. "Last year I went through all the best herds in Essex and I was wonderfully struck with what I saw."



An Australian free range Large Black sow, 2001

What tipped the scales in the Large Blacks favour was their prolificacy; profit arising from the large numbers produced from just a couple of sows. Grazing ability and fecundity were other points in their favour. Compared to the Berkshire, they were longer in the body and finer in the shoulder as well as having the longer head and lop ears. Their reputation for thriving in hot weather was a further plus.

Mr Mansell's experience of importing the Large Black featured as a story in the Live Stock Annual of Australia, 1903. This book also listed the major classes and winners of the Royal Shows for 1902, an invaluable guide for finding out which breeds were either in Australia or of such numbers as to be represented at shows, as well as which were the major and minor breeds of the period. Both Adelaide and Melbourne Royals had classes for 'Black Breeds including Essex, Suffolk, etc,' at Melbourne the sole exhibitor being Worner Bros of Renrow Park, Tennyson with Essex, and at Adelaide three exhibitors vied for honours, H J Bird, J W Porter and J Eddy. The 1905 edition of this Annual again lists Worner of Tennyson at Melbourne Royal with Porter and Eddy joined by C Cant at Adelaide. No pig classes were listed among Sydney or Brisbane results and unfortunately Hobart was not included with the Royals coverage. This leaves us with reliable data that Essex specimens preceeded the Large Black by some years, and possibly were subsequently swallowed up by them. We also have proof of one of, if not the first, importation of purebred Large Blacks.

Small numbers: promise waiting to be realised

Leaping ahead to 1930, we find the Large Black claims only 1% of the pig population in Australia. The breed had followers in Vic, SA and Tas but poor representation in NSW and Qld.

"There can be no doubt that this old world breed in its remarkably improved form is possessed with many valuable qualities. It has an aptitude to adept itself to varying conditions. Years ago the breed was thought to be too coarse and to carry too heavy a percentage of offal to be of much value, in fact, earlier importations of Large Black, though they had a remarkable run of popularity for a few years, did not live up to their reputation and at one time it was difficult to locate pure herds. Recent importations have, however, done much to regain for the breed its former popularity and it now appears its future is assured." (5)

1911	-	1977	29
1917	19	1987	2
1927	32	1988	-
1937	21	1991	29
1947	60	1992	28
1957	77	1993	5
1967	140		

Record of registrations with the Australian Pig Breeders Society

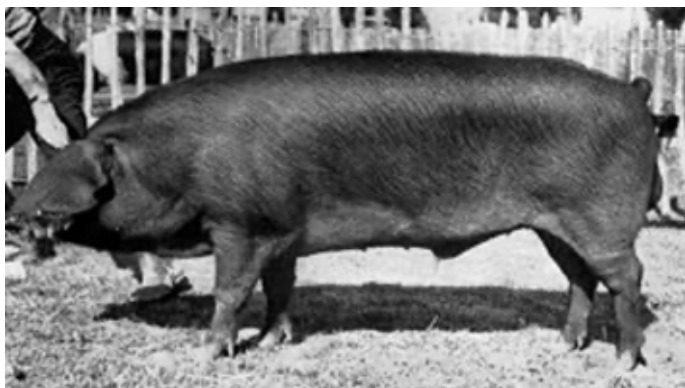
However, the anticipated success was never fully realised, the breed staying close to 1% of the pig population, a rise occurring in the second half of the century and then dropping off to almost nil registrations in the 1980s.

Comparing the old style Large Black with the modern Large Black



Above. Gayboy - an old fashioned style of Large Black boar from 1949 - very heavy and hairy and inclined to lay down excess fat.

Compare Gayboy to the more modern style of the boar below which is longer and leaner - Endeavour 5th.



Slow food demand

The renewed interest in the breed in the last couple of years looks promising. The rise in demand for slow food and real flavour may provide the impetus for the breeds growth and future.

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- (1) Bryner Jones, C 1915, Live Stock of the Farm: Vol 5 Pigs and Poultry, The Gresham Publishing Company, London UK.
- (2) Lutwyche, Richard 1998, 'The Large Black Pig', Country Garden and Smallholding, D and K Thear, Saffron Walden UK.
- (3) Wallace, Robert 1923, Farm Live Stock of Great Britain (5th ed) Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh UK.
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The Large Black Pig 2000-2026

Judy Barnett
RBTA Pig Species Coordinator

Judy provides an overview of where the Large Black stands today in Australia as a follow on from the reprinted article by Megg Miller . The Large Black is currently classed as Critical.

Large Black numbers were already critically low when I first discovered the breed in the early 2000s. I was working on a dairy farm in South East Queensland and was given the job of feeding the manager's pigs. These pigs were unlike any breed I had seen before, despite attending our local pig sales for many years*.

The manager advised me that they were Large Black pigs, that they had brought with them when they moved up from Purrumbete in Victoria. Their neighbours, the Neill brothers, had bred them for many years.

At the time, this did not mean anything to me, but I was soon to discover that the Neill brothers were among only a handful of people still breeding Large Blacks in Australia.

The pigs themselves were large, of course, with long floppy ears hanging right down to the tip of their noses — something you do not see as often in today's Large Blacks. The adult pigs were contained behind a single strand of electric tape, while the younger pigs were kept behind two strands.

Feeding time could be a challenge because they could smell the milk coming from a mile away. To get to the troughs, I had to turn off the electrics, and climb through the fence carrying buckets while the pigs tried to steal them from me!

They were incredibly friendly though, and it was love at first sight. I have always found them to be hardy, extremely docile and economical to keep.

* Footnote – I had previously purchased Tamworth pigs at the Warwick sale back in the late 1990s which are a very rare breed.

Continued next page

Beginning with Large Blacks

When the managers decided to move on they offered to sell me the pigs, and that was the beginning of my journey with stud pigs, and the discovery of just how rare the breed truly was.

I was very fortunate to meet fellow breeder Katy Brown from Victoria, who became both a mentor and friend. Katy was — and still is — an expert in pig breeding and management. She worked with the Department of Primary Industries advising on pig health, management, and welfare issues. Katy has also played a major role in helping save not only the Large Black from extinction in Australia, but also the Tamworth breed.

On her Victorian farm, Katy kept and bred all seven recognised heritage pig breeds. More recently, she has also been active in advising breeders regarding JEV and pig health management.



Large Black Sow. *Black Beauty Princess F850*. Bred by Judy Barnett. Shown at Bedgerabong Ag Show. Photo with permission Geoff Riley.

The situation in Australia today

Unfortunately, there are not many Large Black bloodlines left in Australia today.

Sow lines

- Busy Maid
- Princess
- Gypsy
- Lady

Boar Lines

- Black Jack
- Smithy
- Black John

Black John was added later to the Boar Lines List following the discovery of a distantly related boar, which provided much-needed genetic diversity.

Where are they now?

Fast forward to 2026 and sadly my own herd is gone. In 2020, due to drought and soaring grain prices, I sent a truckload of pigs to Nick Brain in Victoria. Nick now carries the baton for Large Blacks, along with Harold Thornton of Eastwind Farm (established 1993).

In South East Queensland, Harold purchased pigs from me early on and still breeds Large Blacks today.

Several newer breeders have also become involved in recent years, including a well-known Wessex Saddleback stud in New South Wales who took up the challenge of breeding Large Blacks after purchasing a sow I bred. They later achieved Reserve Champion at Sydney Royal.

In today's Large Blacks, litter sizes have diminished, and it is critical to retain breeding pigs with a minimum of 12 evenly spaced teats, both in sows and boars.

The need for registration

Unfortunately, very few Large Blacks are being registered these days. Figures obtained from the Australian Pig Breeders Association show that only one breeder registered pigs during the 2024–2025 financial year.

“ **Unless more breeders begin registering stock, the future of Large Black pigs in Australia looks increasingly uncertain. Maintaining accurate registrations and bloodlines is essential if the breed is to survive in Australia.** ”

Contributor note

I am sure there are breeders in Australia I may not be aware of, and I apologise for any omissions. Please feel free to contact me via rarebreedstrustau@gmail.com.

Australia Settler Goose continued from page 9

Ganders

All white males showed some degree of secondary flight feather greying and greying on the back, with faint greying on the coverts in some birds. However, there was minimal greying or grey speckling in the outer flights. This absence of greying on the outer flights is often cited as a potential indicator of recessive spotting. Observations from a separate breeding group using a stereotypical Australian Settler pair showed a similar pattern, with white ganders displaying normal autosexing traits but no greying in the outer flights.

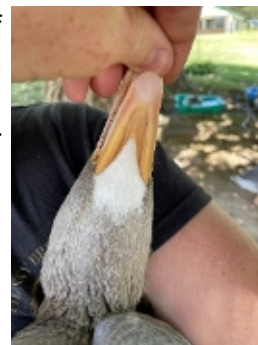
Initially, two grey males were identified based on size and masculine structure. These birds also displayed slight whitening at the base of the beak and around the eyes, similar to their sire, as well as light toenails and a lighter beak pigment. This aligned with expectations for males carrying a single dilution allele. However, DNA sexing revealed that two additional solid grey birds were also males. One of these showed relatively lighter beak pigmentation, while the other, which developed angel wing, displayed darker beak and nail pigmentation typical of solid grey females. This was unexpected and suggests that the expression of dilution may be more variable than previously assumed. It is possible that wild greying or other modifying genes may suppress or alter dilution expression in some individuals.

Geese

The female results broadly aligned with expectations. Approximately half presented as typical Australian Settler type birds, with lighter plumage and early mask development. These birds also showed varying levels of neck speckling. Two diluted females displayed subtle but recognisable spotting traits, including a chest blaze and white wing tips. However, these expressions were far less pronounced than in known spotting carriers from previous breeding seasons, where fully white breasts, necks, and flight feathers were observed.

These findings suggest that the expression of the recessive spotting gene may be influenced by interactions with both wild greying and dilution. The phenotype may be partially masked or moderated, resulting in more subtle or incomplete presentations.

The widespread presence of chin spots, including in birds from dams believed not to be carrying spotting, further complicates interpretation and suggests that this trait alone should not be used as a reliable indicator of spotting in Australian Settler geese.



These observations align with recent molecular studies that have confirmed the genetic basis of sex-linked dilution in European domestic geese, while also highlighting the complexity of recessive spotting (Olli, 2026). Although spotting has long been treated as a relatively simple recessive trait, emerging genetic evidence suggests that the expression of spotting may be influenced by additional loci or modifying factors. This may explain the subtle and variable spotting phenotypes observed within Australian Settler populations, as well as the difficulty in identifying reliable visual markers such as chin spots or neck speckling.

The interaction between dilution, wild greying, and spotting therefore remains an important area for future research and structured breeding programs. Taken together, these observations highlight the importance of careful, long-term breeding and recording in reconstructed Australian Settler populations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BREEDERS

The findings from this breeding season highlight several practical considerations for Australian Settler and Pilgrim-type breeders.

First, phenotypic appearance alone should not be relied upon when making breeding decisions. Grey ganders may still carry the dilution gene and produce white male offspring, reinforcing the importance of test breeding to confirm genetic status.

Second, subtle white markings such as chin spots, neck speckling, or mild chest whitening should be interpreted with caution. These traits appear to be common within reconstructed Australian lines and may not reliably indicate the presence of recessive spotting.

More extreme and consistent expressions, such as white flight feathers or defined saddleback patterns, are likely to be more useful indicators, although even these may vary.

CONCLUSION & FURTHER DIRECTIONS

This breeding season successfully addressed the primary aim of confirming that a phenotypically grey gander can carry and transmit the sex-linked dilution gene, producing white male offspring when paired with Australian Settler type geese.

The results also broadly supported expected patterns of inheritance for dilution and autosexing traits. However, the observations raised further questions regarding the inheritance and expression of recessive spotting and its interaction with dilution and wild greying.

Based on the current findings, it is possible that the spotting gene within this flock has been inherited through the maternal line and may be more readily expressed in females. However, this remains unconfirmed and requires further structured breeding. Alternative explanations include incomplete expression, the presence of modifying genes, or variation in the intensity of dilution across different genetic strains.

Future breeding will therefore focus on pairing the grey sire from the current study with females confirmed not to carry spotting, as well as test mating selected white male offspring to determine whether they are carriers.

While colour remains an important aspect of breed identity, breeders should prioritise structural quality, health, temperament, fertility, and productivity. Colour traits can generally be stabilised over time through consistent selection.

The interaction between dilution, wild greying, and spotting appears more complex than previously assumed. Breeders should expect variability and avoid over-selection based on single visual traits. Long-term tracking of family lines and consistent recording of offspring phenotypes will be essential in improving understanding of colour inheritance.

Establishing a broad and genetically diverse base of structurally correct Australian Settler geese will be critical in strengthening the breed nationally. As Australia's recognised national domestic goose breed, continued collaboration among breeders will play a key role in improving consistency, expanding genetic diversity, and promoting the long-term sustainability of Australian Settlers.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES: MOZAIC SHEEP

From The Land (Sydney), Friday 26 November 1954, p3.

Source. Trove - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/135256312>

"C.S.I.R.O. scientists in Sydney are seeking a rare, and "peculiar " type of sheep for research work into fleece structure. The sheep, known as "a mozaic," grows two distinct types of fleece, and only five to 10 have been found in the last 20 to 30 years.

One such sheep in Queensland, a strong-wool Merino, had a strip of fleece along the side which was far longer than the Merino fleece, had large crimps, and closely resembled an English lustre longwool. The clip of longwool was clearly marked from the strong wool Merino fleece.

Dr. A. S. Fraser, of the C.S.I.R.O. Animal Genetics Section, Zoology Laboratory, Sydney University, in a letter to "The Land" this week, asks for readers' help in finding some mozaic sheep. He says: "It does seem like a search for a needle in a haystack, but these sheep are invaluable for research, and some may possibly be available. "If any grazier has such an animal, we would be willing to help him find it, and bring it down to Sydney for "extensive study".



JUST FOR FUN Rare breeds quiz



Check out your livestock and rare breed knowledge with this quick quiz. The number of letters for the correct answer is shown at the end of each quiz item. Answers on the following page.



1. You can't make a silk purse out of a ___ _ ' _ ear (4 letters/ characters)
2. The ___ _ _ _ _ _ pig breed has four white socks (9 letters)
3. The ___ _ _ _ _ _ duck is shaped like a wine bottle (2 words, each of 6 letters)
4. A group of mixed age pigs is called a ___ _ _ _ _ _ (7 letters)
5. A chicken breed with a rare breed comb is called the ___ _ _ _ _ _ Buttercup. (9 letters)
6. ___ _ _ _ _ _ is a technique used to raise an orphan lamb by a substitute ewe when the mother ewe has died or is unable to feed the lamb. (8 letters)
7. The ___ _ _ _ _ is the outer coating on an egg. (5 letters)
8. Australian Heritage Angora Goats trace their origins back to the ___ _ _ _ _ _ flock. (7 letters)
9. The ___ _ _ _ _ straw invented in the 1960s is now used in over 200 countries for the storage of genetic material. (6 letters)
10. The last name of one of the people involved in the development of the American Mammoth Jackstock donkey is ___ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (10 letters)

RBTA PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

Send a postcard and help support the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia

The Trust's postcard series is not only a great way to promote rare breeds by sending to friends and family but also helps raise funds for the work of the Trust. Breeds included on the postcards include English Leicester, Dorset Down, Large Black, Mandalong Special and Wessex Saddleback, plus an extra one of a Clun Forest flock photographed by Judy Barnet on her UK trip. *Note: the watermark is not included on the actual postcards.*

Use the postcards as greeting cards, thank you cards, or for adding to the many images you already have on your fridge! Postcards are \$2.50 each plus postage. Find out more via the RBTA's online shop at <https://tinyurl.com/rbta-postcards>.



Member Only Resources - Poultry

The Trust has a number of member only resources available through logging into the RBTA website. The majority of the resources are poultry related and include:

- Chicken breeding methods
- Keeping geese **NEW**
- Keeping turkeys
- Poultry Show Schedules beginners guide **NEW**
- Poultry Showing beginners guides **NEW**



Rare Breeds Trust of Australia Breeder Directories

- > Find breeders!
- > Get listed!

The Trust's breeder directories are a useful way to contact Trust members with rare breeds available.

Listing eligibility is Trust members only. If you have rare breed animals available, please feel free to submit a listing request.

Find out more or view the directories by clicking the Breeder Directories menu on the Trust website at <https://rarebreedstrust.com.au>

Christmas 2026 Gift Guide Call Out

The Rare Breeds Trust of Australia is proposing to put together a Christmas Gift Guide. The aim is to provide Trust members with another avenue to promote the rare breed products they already sell through their own businesses or as sole traders. The Guide would be promoted to Trust members, through the Trust website, and social media platforms.

What might be included? Rare breed fibre or yarn, or jewellery or clothing incorporating rare breed fibre, or rare breed foods.

Listing would be free, and for current Trust members as at November 2026. Orders would be managed directly by members.

We need a minimum of 6 members to kick start the proposal. Please email Susan Locke at rbtamembership@gmail.com or call 0425 806 403 if interested to discuss further.



Place an ad in Paddocks and Perches!

Check the following pages for information on rates, and submission dates and formats.

Quiz solution

1. Pig's or sow's
2. Berkshire
3. Indian Runner (although not a rare poultry breed!)
4. Sounder
5. Sicilian
6. Grafting
7. Bloom
8. Banksia
9. Cassou
10. Washington

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Megg Miller. Newsletter Support

Paddocks and Perches Content, Contributions and Advertising Policy

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Members interested in advertisers' animal sales should make their own enquiries on the breeding lines and quality of advertised animals.

Deadlines for Paddocks & Perches Contributions and Classifieds

1st February for March issue
1st May for June issue
1st August for September issue
1st November for December issue

Please email contributions in Word format to rbtamembership@gmail.com. Ideally articles should be no more than 750 words (3 pages). Images should be in .jpg or .png format and credited with the photographer name plus information on permission to use.

Letters to the Editor

Please email rbtamembership@gmail.com with any follow up response or information on Newsletter content.

CLASSIFIEDS *

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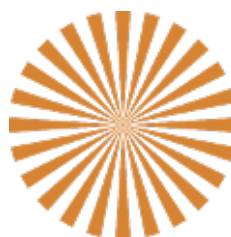
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