



RARE BREEDS TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

SECURING THE FUTURE
PRESERVING THE PAST

Paddocks and Perches

**Official Newsletter of
Rare Breeds Trust of Australia
September 2020**



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RARE BREEDS TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday 18th November
at 7.15pm**

No need to leave home. It is by phone

Dial 03 9028 0274

Use access code 7741845

From the Editor

A big thank you to everyone that supplied articles etc. for the September edition of our newsletter.

It makes for interesting reading if people from around Australia and other parts of the world contribute with an article, profile or just some pics of their precious animals.

Have a breed you absolutely love, why not do a breed profile for the next edition in December.



Pictured a silver Sebright hen which is a 'True Bantam' that is; the breed has no larger counter-part.

This bird won champion rare breed of show at the recent Tasmanian Rare Breeds Poultry Club annual show and is owned by the Sorell School Farm.

Pictured on the front cover a breeding pair of black turkeys.

Photograph donated by Ros McMillan (AHTSI)

Australian Heritage Turkey Society

'Averlane' Suffolk and Dorset Stud Written by Andrew Vernon

Hello everybody. My name is Andrew Vernon and together my wife Amanda, four year old daughter Charlotte and two year old son Jack run "Averlane Suffolk and Dorset Down Stud". We are located on a small acreage block at Morayfield, just north of Brisbane. Both my wife and I are High School Science teachers and apart from Amanda teaching Agricultural Science working mainly with cattle, sheep farming is totally new to us. Since I was a young child I have been an avid fisherman and point blank refused to live more than an hour and half away from the salt, however this is going to change. Amanda however has lived in Kingaroy for quite a few years and enjoyed the lifestyle and community that country life offers.



Pic: Charlotte, Amanda and Jack enjoying bottle duties.

The beginning of our journey:

Our move to Morayfield was definitely not planned and coming across a small acreage residential block saw the beginning to this story. At the time our youngest child Jack was only six weeks old and Charlotte was two. It didn't take long before we recognised the need to put some stock onto the property to help manage the grass as our little John Deere mower simply couldn't keep up with the grass over the 2018 summer.

Amanda and I decided that sheep would be a good starting point and after some research we knew that shedding breeds were not for us. The initial purpose was to simply breed a few sheep to keep the grass down, have some easy to handle animals for the kids to enjoy and to potentially put the occasional lamb in the freezer. Amanda has always had a keen interest in teaching her students an

appreciation and respect for where their food comes from and these lessons and lifestyle are what we wanted for Charlotte and Jack.

A search on Gumtree revealed an advertisement for Dorset Down sheep being sold by Simon Lund in our local area. Amanda was very interested and after some quick research I was charged with organising a visit to view the sheep. Further research revealed the critical nature of the Dorset Down breed in Australia and I knew we were sold on them. Only one Ram and several ewes were available for sale so we committed to the Ram, two unrelated ewes and a cute little cross bred ewe lamb as a pet for our kids.

Ned, Nibbler, Niamh and Norah were delivered to us on Australia day 2019, and we soon fell in love with the Dorset Down as a breed. Right from the very beginning we found the Dorset Down ewes and ram to be friendly, inquisitive, easy to handle and have cheeky personalities. As a total novice I had my reservations when it came to learning to handle the sheep to administer oral drenches, trim hooves and other management tasks required. In saying this, the calm nature of these sheep made this learning curve much easier and relatively pain free.



Caption: Norah, Nibbler, Ned and Niamh inspecting their new accommodation.

Despite the sporadic and relatively low rainfall at the time our four sheep could not possibly keep up with the grass and it wasn't long before we decided to add a Lowline cow and two young miniature Hereford Steers, three whethers to grow out for the freezer and a Dorset ram and a two older ewes from a couple that could no longer afford to feed them. At this point we were simply

'Averlane', continued

starting a hobby farm to keep the grass down and to teach the kids responsibility and how to look after something other than themselves.



Caption: Jack bottle feeding a Dorset Down/
Dorset sired by Ned.

As I write this I realise I have begun to waffle so I will cut to the chase and outline some early lessons we learnt. Cattle born and reared in drought conditions can be very problematic. Just because a cow likes your wife and is docile and easy to handle for her does not mean it will be for you, and that cattle can spin and kick out sideways very quickly and without warning! Fortunately she missed on all four occasions. We were advised by a shearer that we could introduce the rams to each other in a small paddock and they would be fine after a bit of a touse.....wrong! Young Ned was far outweighed by the Dorset ram and after taking exception to being rammed it was clear he would not give in. And always check the condition of hooves when

considering any sheep, even if they are free. The sheep we took on were pets and treated like royalty by their previous owners with the exception of hoof trimming. It took four months for me to work these hooves down to the correct level as they were horrendously overgrown.

Not long after these additions we purchased two pure Suffolk ewes with the aim of using Ned as a Terminal sire after reading the results of several progeny tests in both Australia and New Zealand that demonstrated the hybrid vigour resulting from cross breeding Dorset Down rams over Suffolk ewes (amongst others). This cross produces high quality prime lambs with the added advantages of moderate birth weight equating to reduced birthing difficulties coupled with rapid growth of prime lamb for the dinner table.

We figured we were at carrying capacity at this point and we decided to make some choices. The cattle were sold, the Dorset ram was given away and the ewes that came with him were rehomed as family pets. All to make way for the Suffolk stud and additional Dorset Downs that were to come.

Our great southern adventure:

Since the early days we have developed a clear focus and plan for moving forward. Both the Dorset Downs and Suffolks are part of our registered studs and we have purchased quality sire and dam genetics from Woodhall (Dorset Downs), Close Up (Suffolk) and Milton Park (Suffolk).

Being school teachers our only real opportunity to travel any distance to purchase stock occurs during the school holidays. Unfortunately we have been unable to pick up our new Dorset Down ram and ewes from Colin Chapman (Woodhall) over the Easter holidays courtesy of COVID-19. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Colin for accommodating us and joining the ram with the ewes so we do not miss out on precious lambs this season. Hopefully our trip down and back in a few weeks sees fewer problems than our previous adventure last September holidays.

Having leased a Suffolk ram last year we decided to purchase a quality sire from the Close family in southern NSW. The timing could not have been better as this would also allow us a surprise visit for my sister's 40th as she lives in Albury. After making this decision I had an extensive list. Hire a

'Averlane', continued

trailer, service the vehicle, organise a sheep sitter and begin to pack and plan for the trip. Taking two toddlers to the shop can be a harrowing enough experience and I wanted to make sure we were well prepared. For all pick-ups and delivery of sheep and cattle I had previously used hire trailers so this was my plan.



Caption: Brayden Gilmore showing our new ram "Barry" at the Bendigo Elite Suffolk Show and Sale on behalf of the Close Family.

Unfortunately no suitable trailers were available, so I had to purchase a trailer and so begins the first of many "obstacles". I began typing this story and realised that it was going to be far too long with far too many words to include all the detail. Essentially we left on Friday afternoon. A full two days later than intended. Our woes included the trailer having a bent brake calliper mount needing repair, a rat chewing through the drive belt rendering the car inoperable and bolts that seemed to be welded on. Everything just seemed to be going wrong. We encountered a severe storm including hail which we had to wait out on a very dark and narrow stretch of highway and most concerning our check engine warning light came on at midnight, an hour from Narrabri. We checked into a hotel at 1 am, had four hours sleep, and woke early to continue the troubles. Advice from a mechanic was that the car would go into limp mode before major failures where on the cards so we soldiered on. After two hours of the check engine light being off it returned. We stopped at Dubbo however no mechanics were open and due to a festival, no accommodation was available either. So we continued, and finally arrived at Wodonga at 10 pm near the end of my sister's 40th birthday party.

The next day we drove 130km to choose our ram and a suitable ewe to accompany him home. After some quick introductions with the Close family we were soon faced with the choice of three rams. Given her background in showing cattle Amanda took the reins. While I definitely had my preference the final decision was hers. I am happy to say we both chose the same ram which was difficult as all three rams on offer were of exceptional quality. We stayed for lunch before heading off and not 20km out of town the Dmax went into limp mode. I called my sister and organised for Amanda and Jack to be picked up while waiting for NRMA to arrive. He was a friendly bloke however he arrived without a fault reader and clearly had no idea. Back on the phone and I was told a tow truck was not available and they had no idea how long it would be. By this time Amanda and Jack's lift had arrived, some sandwiched and drinks were handed over and I sat and waited. After several hours the car and I were finally picked up and taken back to Wodonga and some afterhours calls we managed to have the car booked in for repair the next day. And finally the troubles ended here. We picked up Barry and the aptly named "Close-up girl" the next day and continued our journey north without trouble.

The point of that story was to remind us that sometimes it seems like no matter what you do, everything seems to go wrong. I kept telling my Amanda during this troubled trip and at each obstacle "at least we'll have a story to tell", in an effort to maintain some sanity. And now we do.

Averlane, continued

Future plans:

Pic: Niamh and Nibbler enjoying a sunny Queensland afternoon.



At the time of writing we are eagerly awaiting our second drop of both Suffolk and Dorset Down lambs. This year we focused on purebred lambs, preferring to hopefully increase the number of registered Dorset Down in Australia. A move to much larger pastures will enable our focus on genetic improvement especially in growth, muscling and temperament to continue to be key elements in the increase in productivity and profitability of both of our studs. As a family we are committed to helping to preserve the unique genetic qualities of the Dor-

set Down breed in Australia, educating the next generation and showcasing the breed's potential as highly competitive production animals, not just very cute and quiet pets for small acreage blocks and hobby farms. As we have already mentioned, the results of several progeny tests have demonstrated that the hybrid vigour resulting from the Dorset Down x Suffolk produces high quality prime lambs with considerable scope for the selection of carcass composition. This knowledge will form the basis of our commercial prime lamb production flock in the years to come as we embark on our next sheep adventure.



Charlotte with lamb

Australian Heritage Turkey Society Inc.

Turkey Breeding Hubs

By Ros McMillan (Breeding Hubs Co-ordinator)

The Australian Heritage Turkey Society Inc. (AHTSI) is committed to ensuring the future of heritage turkeys in Australia. Turkeys are on the Red List of the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia, meaning they are critical, endangered, vulnerable and at risk. They are rated as “Top Priority” for breeding as there are less than one hundred breeding birds in some varieties—especially black, blue and buff.

In June AHTSI called for expressions of interest from interested people around Australia who would be prepared to commit to breeding one turkey variety, to ensure that the nine standard varieties do not die out through lack of interest or cross-breeding.

We had a great response with over fifty applicants. After considering all applications forty people were approved to participate in the breeding programme which is backed by the breeding expertise and experience of several AHTSI members. Approved participants are located throughout Australia in every state and the Northern Territory.

Participants will be mentored through sharing photos of potential breeders, careful selection of breeders and disposal of poor examples through the meat market rather than the on-selling of these poor examples of a particular variety. Members of each hub will be able to support one another as well.

The AHTSI committee is really pleased with this great beginning to our turkey breeding programme. We anticipate that the quality of each of the nine approved varieties will improve Australia wide, and there will be a greater awareness in the wider community of what constitutes good examples of standard Australian turkeys.

A Photographic Introduction

The AHTSI has sold out of its 2019 edition of our photo book so a revised and up-dated version is awaiting printing. The revised book has better photos of each of the nine standard Australian turkeys , from day old poults to adult birds as well as photos of the black-winged bronze turkey which we are hoping will be included in the next edition of the Australian Poultry Standards. There is also a new small section on common backyard turkey diseases.

These 2 photos show the difference between the dominant Slate (as in the USA) and Australia’s recessive Slate turkey. Below is the recessive slate turkey, to the right the dominant slate coloured turkey.



You can find us at



Cracked Heads and Short Legs

(written by Jill Weaver)



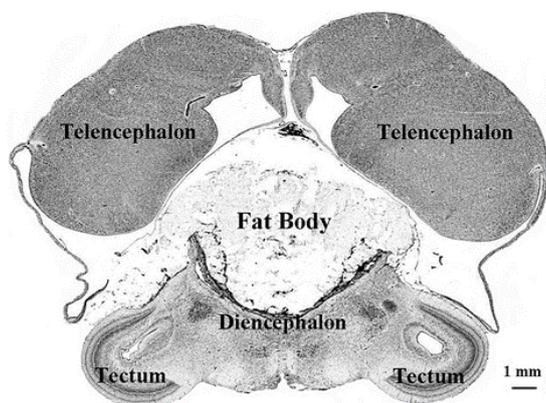
Did you know both these oddities in poultry are caused by a lethal gene?

I will begin with the Crested Duck with its lovely big pompom. The pompom or crest comes about because the duck has a crack or hole in the bone structure at the top of its head.

The Crested Duck has been seen in paintings as early as 2000 years ago. The breed was described in America in 1853 and the white Crested Duck was added to the 'The American Standard of Perfection' in 1874. The Crested Duck was recognised in the United Kingdom in 1910. A bantam version of this breed, the 'Crested Miniature' was bred in England and recognised as a breed in 1997.

The crested duck can be a good layer and a decorative pet but they are not favoured for showing due to the many challenges of having a crest.

The size of the crest comes about by mating, or not mating parent birds with crests. If two birds with crests are mated together then the offspring will have big, showy pompoms. If just one parent bird has a crest and the other does not, then the offspring will have small, insignificant crests to varying degrees.



Why is it called a 'lethal gene'?

The formula is as follows: if a person breeds two crested ducks together then 25% will be dead in the shell, 50% will carry the 'lethal gene' but might, or might not have a crest, and 25% of the ducklings will not have/carry the lethal gene.

If a person breeds one parent duck with a crest and the other without then the result will be 50% of the ducklings carrying the crested gene that may or may not have a crest

and 50% free of the crested gene.

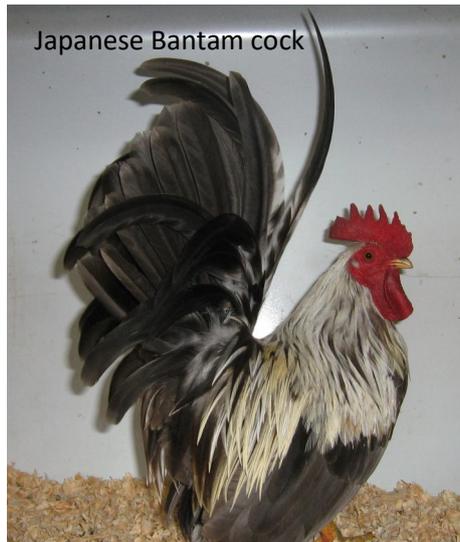
There were some problems with animal activists because of all the difficulties associated with this breed. Abnormal storing of body fat (there were tests done to see how long it took a duck to get off its back), motor incoordination, intracranial fat bodies and other malfunctions. The ducklings that die in the shell or shortly after, are hatched with their brain on the outside of the head. When it could be shown that the number of ducks with these problems could be as low as 25% then this old traditional breed was allowed to continue on.

People have used artificial selection for hundreds of years to genetically modify both plants and animals. In the case of the 'Afroduck' people have selected an unusual genetic mutation that has been found to be visually pleasing. Breeding an animal to enhance a single trait often creates detrimental side effects.

Lethal genes can also be found in some fowl breeds. The Araucana also has the 'tufted' lethal gene and the Japanese Bantam and Scots Dumpy carry a lethal gene that gives them the very short leg, this mutation is referred to as the 'Creeper' gene. The death rate in both these breeds is exactly the same as the Crested Duck.

Interestingly this same 'creeper' gene is found in Manx cats and Dexter cattle.

Cracked Heads, continued



Japanese Bantam cock

The lethal gene works in the same way in the Japanese Bantam as it does for the crested breeds. Some breeders of Japanese Bantams breed short leg to short leg knowing that the death rate will be 25% of the clutch, others breed short to long leg to reduce the death rate. If long leg to long leg is bred then all chicks will have long legs and will not carry the short leg gene. This is most undesirable as the short leg is one of the main characteristics of the breed. Without this gene it will not be a true Japanese Bantam.

Some breeders of Japanese Bantams used the short-legged gene found in 'Indian Game' bantams as the gene responsible for the short legs in this breed is nowhere near as lethal. They did this to lessen the amount of chicks that died in the shell but it did much damage to the breed and can still be seen in some Japanese Bantams.

In the Araucana the 'tufted' gene also causes profound deafness. This knowledge came about as the breed was used by the Clemson University for a study on deafness in children. This exact same deafness in people is called 'DiGeorge' syndrome.

The mutation in Araucanas leading to the formation of ear tufts also leads to middle ear blockages causing conductive deafness. The middle ear should be an air-filled cavity but instead is filled with cellular tissue. While the ear tufts are most appealing they are also causing deafness.

It is interesting to note that the study of the tufted Araucana led to researchers being able to understand the complexities of the developing ear in the womb and why some children are born deaf and become deaf later in life.

The mutated gene that gives us the 'Rumpless' varieties of fowl also has lethal properties. Rumpless varieties can be found in several different breeds of poultry most common, the Araucana. This effect comes about because of a mutation that results in the failure of the last few vertebrae of the spine to form which leads to a 'rumpless' bird. Researchers identified the region of mutations that cause the Araucana to be rumpless contain a family of genes that are important for making cells in the nervous system. In poultry these cells become neurons rather than vertebral cells resulting in the final vertebrae of the spine failing to form.



A tufted and rumpless Araucana



Pictured on the left is a Dexter cow. This breed is well known for its short legs. It is caused by a 'creeper' gene the same as is found in Japanese Bantams and can lead to spontaneous abortions, still born calves and calves that are referred to as 'bull dog' calves. These calves will not live for very long should they be born alive. There are many complexities to this breed and I will leave it to another time to do an article on the breed.

RDA Doveton Myuna Farm

Term 1 has started for the 2020 year and all the riders, coaches and volunteers are in full swing and enjoying the sessions. Pictured are the centres Highlands, Bruar and Herbie.



RDA Doveton

After a two month spell at Tooradin Estate, our ponies are back and ready for their riders to start a fresh new year, both Herbie and Bruar are looking well and ready for the 2020, challenges.



THE DALES PONY

The history of the modern Dales Pony starts in the seventeenth century as a native pony. In the eighteenth century, they were heavily used in the lead mining industry in the Dales area of England, from the Derbyshire peaks to the Scottish borders. The industry required a strong, fit and agile pony to transport lead from the mines in the high moors, to the wash grounds on the low lands and then on to the hills for smelting. Ponies could cover up to one hundred miles per week in harsh climates and over difficult terrain, carrying as much as one tonne in weight. The pony was required to have good feet for crossing mixed terrain, a strong and muscular body for drafting, and a gentle nature to work in groups, often by a single rider.

The Scottish Galloway pony was considered to have superior qualities for fast cart work and surefootedness over the mountainous country. It was, therefore, run with native mares to improve the speed and agility of the ponies used in the lead industry. Only the strongest, most active and healthiest of animals were retained for breeding and so eventually the Black Galloways of the mixed herds superseded the Scottish Galloway and became the Dales Pony.

In the late eighteenth century, the country saw a great improvement to the roads and the breed was influenced by Norfolk Cobs who were being worked for mail and stagecoaches. In the nineteenth century, stylish Yorkshire Trotters became fashionable and influenced the breed lines further. In the twentieth century, Vanners became the pony of choice for town transport and as gunners for the army. Clydesdales were travelling the district at this time and farmers could make a good return on breeding the Clydesdale stallions with Dales Pony mares. It was thought that this would adversely threaten the Dales Pony breeding, so the 'Dales Pony Improvers Society' was formed in 1916, and the official studbook was opened.

Due to their sound feet, strength, and temperament, the Dales Ponies were heavily used in both world wars by the British army. The war was cruel to man and beast and like many native horses of the time, this critically reduced its population. During the second world war, the British army took Dales Pony mares and bred them to Vanners to produce ponies for town and city transportation uses. Few mares ever returned and the Dales Pony was on the brink of extinction.

In 1964 a dedicated group of breeders reorganised the society and renamed it The Dales Pony Society (DPS) They went on to resurrect the breed with the remaining purebred ponies. A careful breeding program which included a 'grading-up' register steadily increased numbers and defined the breed standard. The success of this program then resulted in the studbook being closed to unregistered ponies in 1971, forming the purebred Dales Pony of today.

Although the Dales Pony is currently listed as category one endangered, the breed is being successfully maintained by its dedicated breeders and owners. Dales Ponies are active in all equine disciplines and have a dedicated following, including that of the British Royal Family. They can be seen performing to high levels in National and International competition. The breed is carefully monitored by the Dales Pony Society, which is solely operated by volunteers. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (UK) also records annual statistics and holds DNA of the breed for safeguarding. At the time of writing, the largest population of Dales Ponies remains in its homeland of the United Kingdom, but they can also be found in Germany, France, Spain, Holland, Czech Republic, America, and now Australia.

This article was taken from the Dales Pony website.

Photographs and article courtesy of Raylene Steptoe

To see further information on the Dales Pony and more lovely pics go to their web page:-

www.raycroftstud.com.au

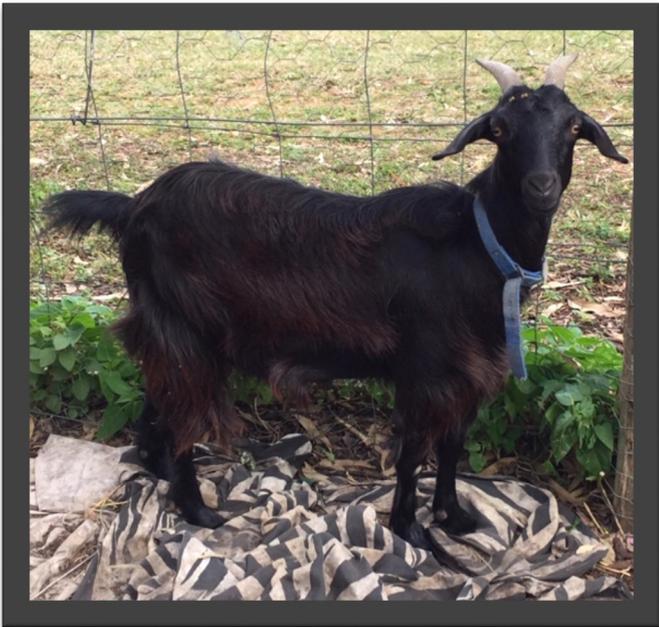


Pictured here and below Dales Pony foals.



Introducing Our New Goat Breed

By Anne Sim



Rare Breeds Trust of Australia has accepted a new goat breed. It is the Australian Heritage Percy Island Goat. A long name to go with a long history.

The Percy Islands are a group of islands are 122km south east of Mackay, Queensland, and in 1874 HM schooner Pearl released twelve goats on Middle Percy Island. The idea was to provide food for any stranded sailors in the future. By 1900 they had bred up and history records that 7,000 were shot. At this stage the occupants wanted to run sheep.

Moving forward to 2011 the National Parks resumed control of 83% of the Island. Goats being non native were to be eradicated. Other introduced animals were kangaroos, wallabies, rusa deer and cane toads (which were recommended by the DPI).

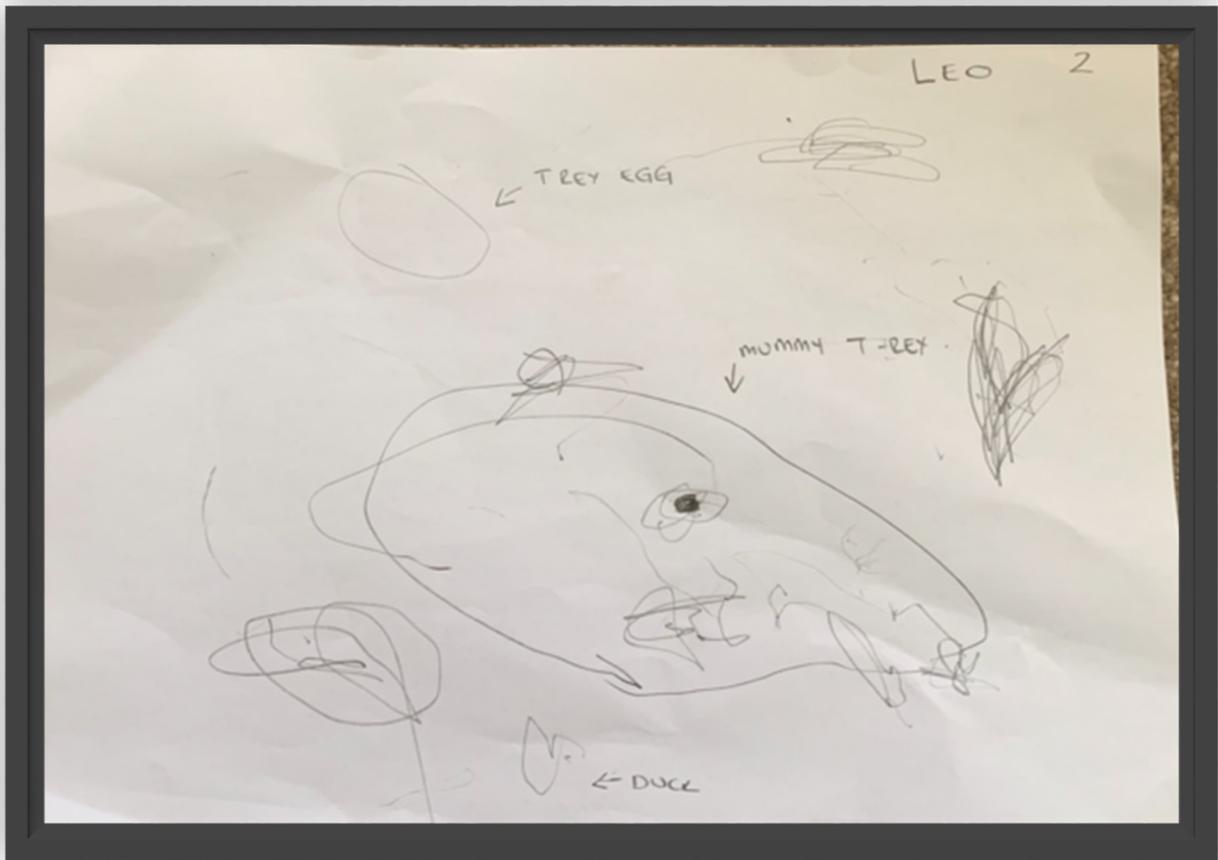
Island resident Cate Radclyffe put out a call for people interested in saving the breed when it became obvious that the breed could be lost. After that several herds were established in the Mackay area and are now flourishing.

The breed is small, about 60cm at the shoulder, it is very tough and tolerates all weathers. It has a good to meat to bone ratio, great udders giving a good quantity of milk. It is believed that the original breed was the Black Bengal Goat. Genome testing has yet to be done to confirm this.

RBTA congratulates these people with the foresight and courage to take on this emerging breed.

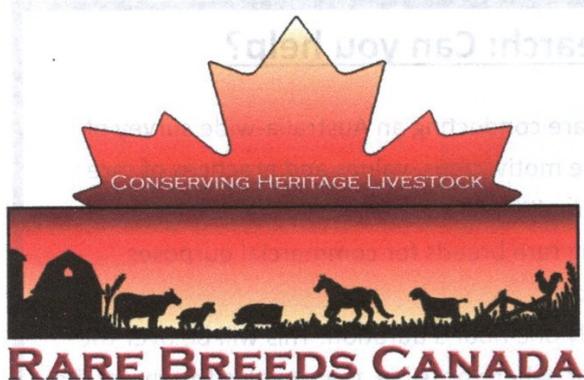
For further information go to <https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/news/rural-weekly/percy-island-goat-has-a-maritime-heritage/news-sto->





During 'International Heritage Breeds Week' Katy Brown ran a drawing competition for the littlies. These are two of the drawings selected by Katy.





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