

# The Lincoln Letter

Publisher-North American Lincoln Red Association

WINTER 2024

## President's Report

Scott McClinchey, President NALRA

It was great to meet some of our new breeders who joined the North American Lincoln Red Association in 2023. One of our most memorable moments of 2023 was receiving a Christmas card from a local farmer showing a beautiful picture of his Lincoln Red bull. This bull has an exceptionally quiet demeanour, and he loves being scratched, which has made him quite popular with his farm visitors and neighbours. Our farm was able to add two new Lincoln Red bulls last year with genetics from strong families that match our herd well, so we are very much looking forward to our 2024 calf crop! We have decided to seed down the final section of our home farm to forage and look forward to grazing our Lincoln Red cattle in these additional fields in 2024. These strategic practices have been done very well by many of our breeders already and we hope to extend the grazing season later into the Fall which will reduce the amount of quality hay required to produce in these ever-changing environmental conditions. With a steady decline in beef cattle numbers over the past years and current weakening commodity prices, there is positive momentum to continue to grow and develop our Lincoln Red herds. I encourage you to continue to communicate and learn from our fellow breeders. I have and will continue to learn so much from their wisdom.

Wishing you all the best with your Lincoln Red cattle in 2024!



## Patrick Milner Show Quality Lincoln Reds



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## Pondering Beef from Lincoln Reds

By Jenifer Morrissey, Scotty Springs Ranch, South Dakota

A few months ago, I was asked the question, 'Why Lincoln Reds?' I quickly recited a few of their admirable traits like easy fleshing, good mothers, and placidity. At the time, I felt unsatisfied with my answer. Later, I realized why. When I began thinking about the question from the perspective of a rare breed steward, I didn't have an immediate answer for why someone with a small farm, like my inquirer had, should add Lincoln Reds to their operation. It's been my experience with rare breeds that small farms are often the ideal location for heritage livestock.

In thinking about my answer further, I realized that much of the way I have seen Lincoln Reds talked about is as great stock for crossbreeding to bestow their admirable traits to other breeds that lack them. Relying on crossbreeding to market stock, though, can be a recipe for disaster for a rare breed. I also steward Fell Ponies, and one of its ancestors, the Galloway, was crossbred out of existence in part to help create the Thoroughbred. Instead of relying solely on crossbreeding, which of course has been a way for dedicated stewards to keep the breed alive, I want to market our Lincoln Reds for what they can contribute as purebred animals.

A few months on from receiving the question, 'Why Lincoln Reds?', I'm starting to come up with other ways to answer the question. For instance, their docility is great for people new to cattle. And their medium frame size is great for small farms marketing direct-to-consumer who want a nicely portioned steak and a quarter that leaves room in the freezer for other things.

In the back of my mind, I've also been pondering how to use the cattle we have to raise the best beef that I can.



This year we have two steers to grow out and one interested customer, so the topic has more urgency. How does someone like me who is newly starting with the breed raise this sort of beef? This pondering led me to yet another possible answer to the question 'Why Lincoln Reds?'

While I am new to stewarding cattle, I have been stewarding rare breeds for more than two decades. It's that experience that got me pondering how to raise the best possible Lincoln Red meat. One of the species that I stewarded for a long time was ducks. I raised them for both meat and eggs and sold small quantities of both products. One year, I raised a commercial variety, Pekins, alongside my heritage breed Silver Appleyards. Here is an excerpt from an article that appeared in 2012 in The Livestock Conservancy's newsletter:

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WINTER 2024



**Rare breed Silver Appleyard ducks raised alongside commercial Pekins gave an opportunity to learn that heritage breed meats can have better flavor than commercial varieties.**

*I got a gratifying comment from a customer recently. "Jennifer's ducks taste good the next day. The grocery store ones taste rancid." This was the second endorsement I've gotten in the flavor department for my Silver Appleyard ducks. The other came from an experiment I ran last summer when I grew out hatchery Pekins alongside my home-hatched Silver Appleyards. I had always assumed that feed influenced flavor because I had varied that in the past and noticed a difference. I concluded that feed alone was the principal arbiter of flavor, and I was wrong....*

*It was fascinating to watch the Pekins develop; they've definitely been selected for fast and large growth, and these weren't even the ones marketed as 'jumbos.' Then at butchering time it was interesting to see the substantial difference in fat on the carcasses of the two different breeds. My Pekins on my feed regimen looked just like the ones I used to buy at the natural foods store which was both surprising and gratifying. I'd always assumed that my management techniques, including raising them in tractors at high elevation, wouldn't match up to commercial growers in the carcass department, but they did.*

*What most surprised me, though, was what happened when I served my ducks for dinner. My husband and I are big eaters because of our physical lifestyle. And we are very tuned into the flavor of our food (I'm a super-taster if that means anything to you.) When I served a Silver Appleyard, we each took second helpings, easily demolishing most of a single bird. When I served the Pekins, though, neither of us were inclined to go back for seconds, and we lacked enthusiasm for the leftovers. It wasn't that my Pekins tasted rancid the next day, as my customer shared about her experience with the grocery store variety. It's just that the meat lacked flavor appeal.*

So if a heritage duck breed can produce better tasting meat than a commercial variety, even when raised the same way on the same diet, it seems likely a Lincoln Red can too. But how to get there from here?

Initially I had no idea where to start, and then when I started researching, I was overwhelmed with information. For instance, is it nature or nurture that most affects the quality of the end result? Or is it both? I have attended enough bull sales that I'm familiar with the characteristics that are marketed there. I decided I would go down the genetic/nature path later and instead focus on the management/nurture part first in my research since for now I'm feeding out the steers that I have. Eventually I hope we can select within our small herd for meat quality.

Over the years, as a consumer, I have purchased more



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quarters of beef than I can count, so I know how hard it is to use up those last few pounds of ground beef when the steaks are long gone, even when the meat has good flavor. I consider it sinful to waste food, so that ground beef did get used, but it took effort. The quarters that I have purchased in the past have been grain-finished, and I have heard horror stories about the poor flavor and lack of mouth appeal of some grass finished beef.

Nonetheless, there is demand for grassfed beef. Taking all these things in combination, then, it's important to me to manage our Lincoln Red steers – feed, concentrates, pasture versus hay, grain or grass finished, etc. – so that their meat encourages complete and enjoyable consumption. Of course, I'm assuming direct marketing to the consumer to earn the value-added of a heritage breed well-raised.



Over the last three years I have had the great good fortune to research and write about regenerative agriculture for *Rural Heritage* magazine. A topic of particular interest to me has been the intersection of human health and soil health. You may be aware of an ambitious study being conducted by Dr. Stephan Van Vliet and his team that seeks to document the connections between healthy soil, healthy plants and animals and healthy people. Early results support that improved soil health leads to plants and animals that have higher nutritional value that have positive impacts on the health

of people who eat them. I would like our Lincoln Reds to contribute similarly positively if possible.

As you may suspect, the animals with higher nutritional value in the study are managed in some sort of rotational grazing program and are typically grass-finished instead of grain finished. Given the easy-fleshing characteristic of Lincoln Reds, it seems within reason that they could produce good meat in a grass-finished program. The potential for lower inputs and thus higher profits is attractive too.

My partner in Lincoln Reds, Bruce Murdock, is a lifelong cattleman whose time is mostly spent on his large commercial herd. He has said more than once that the best beef comes from a three-year-old dry cow fattened on spring grass. While this isn't necessarily helpful as I ponder the steers before me, it does confirm what some of my research has said: older animals have more flavor, and harvesting when at the height of the grass season yields the best meat.

Here's more of what I've learned:

- Matthew Walter: One bad experience can lose you a customer forever. (1)
- John-Scott Port (Pennsylvania): I've learned that I can achieve extremely fast growth on my grassfed cattle in the late spring and then again after the fall flush of grass hardens up a little. I only kill grassfed cattle during these seasons, as I do not yet feel confident enough in my ability to grow cattle quickly in the dead heat of summer or the frigid cold of winter. (2)
- Mathew Walter: "I had a couple of four-year-old cows that had lost their calves in a freak April blizzard. They were fattening quickly on our lush spring pastures.... The meat was marbled with enough fat to correspond to high select or low choice.... Chefs and other knowledgeable consumers rave about our beef, especially the older beef. It has a fuller flavor than the younger beef."
- Joel Salatin: "...the best grass-finished operations now segregate their growth stock from their cow herds." (3) As we all know, every farm or ranch

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# The Lincoln Letter

has grasslands that are highly productive and grasslands that are more marginal. Salatin's point is that the marginal areas can benefit from the type of grazing that a cow-calf herd can do, and the productive areas can put weight on market animals.

- Gabe Brown: "We're seeing that our beef now has...the omega 6 to 3 ratio, we're down to 1.3:1 for beef, which is about unheard of. We're getting down there where our beef is about like eating wild salmon. Typical feedlot beef will have an omega 6 to 3 ratio anywhere between 9:1 and 15:1. Now though, if that feedlot beef was fed distillers grain, and distillers grain is a byproduct of the ethanol industry, [it's been measured] as high as 55:1." (4)
- John-Scott Port: "Grassfed beef producers can learn customer quality expectations by studying the feedlot.... Grainfed cattle are rapidly gaining weight when they're killed.... Feedlot cattle do not lose weight.... Feedlot cattle do not run.... Grassfed cattle must be very calm around people.... Feedlot cattle yield a consistent, predictable flavor.... The feedlot yields steady flavor by default via consistent feed. We on the other hand must manage a diverse diet so that it yields consistent results. This is achieved by keeping the animals eating, a tendency borne from very consistent movement to fresh forage. It seems to me that the flavor takes care of itself as long as we keep fresh ingredients going in front of the animal."
- Dr. Allen Williams: "We have participated with Dr. Stephan Van Vliet and his team of researchers to do detailed phytonutrient analysis on pastured proteins.... Phytonutrient profiles are significantly higher in grassfed beef from animals finished on diverse pastures compared to feedlot beef.... In a 10 week human clinical trial with the subjects being fed either grassfed meats or commodity meats, there was a significant reduction in inflammation and a significant increase in red blood cell function. (5)

sure most of you have thought about this topic for years and have settled on a way to feed out your culls. As interest in grassfed beef grows and as consumers are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from, and as more and more small farms are raising beef to sell direct-to-consumer, I would love to be able to tell customers of our cattle that purebred Lincoln Reds produce good beef in a low-input regime. If you have relevant information, I would love to hear it to help me understand how to better promote our breed, not just as stock for crossbreeding but for what they 'bring to the table.' I'm always looking for inspiring answers to the question I got recently: "Why Lincoln Reds?"

- 1) Walter, Matthew. "Grass-finished beef: Closer Than You Think," *The Stockman Grass Farmer*, March 2023, p. 21.
- 2) Port, John-Scott. "Learn from the Feedlot," *The Stockman Grass Farmer*, April 2023, p. 1-6.
- 3) Salatin, Joel. "Meadow Talk: Tensions," *The Stockman Grass Farmer*, October 2023 p. 21.
- 4) Brown, Gabe, interviewed on the *Doctor's Farmacy* podcast by Dr. Mark Hyman, September 23, 2020, <https://drhyman.com/blog/2020/09/23/podcast-ep136/>
- 5) Williams, Dr. Allen R. "Epigenetics and Regenerative Grazing: The End Result," *The Stockman Grass Farmer*, November 2023, p. 1.

I will be pondering all of this information for the rest of the winter and how it might be applicable to the steers we have to grow out on the land that is available. I am

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WINTER 2024

## Meet the Wittenbraker's



Greetings from the Wittenbrakers!! We, along with our 5 young children, are living our dream on our small, 15 acre homestead in southwestern Indiana. We had a couple auction barn cows a few years ago and knew that once we had our homestead established, we wanted to raise quality beef cattle. We are both old souls at heart and were quickly drawn to the heritage breeds when we started researching livestock breeds. I reviewed the Livestock Conservancy's priority cattle list and as soon as I saw the Lincoln Red I knew we had found our breed. Abraham Lincoln grew up in the county next to us so his history is very rich here. Brent also has a thing for red heads. Haha I went to the Livestock Conservancy's breeder directory and reached out to Sarah Pedelty. I had many questions for her but once I learned that they were great pasture cows, calved easily and made good mothers, produced exceptional beef and were mild tempered I knew they would be the perfect fit for us. In many ways you can say the rest is history!



The whole herd

We purchased our first 3 Lincoln Reds from Sarah in the fall of 2022. Last fall Sarah was kind enough to sell our neighbor 3 bred heifers that were added to our herd. We are very much looking forward to the baby calves arriving here in the next few months. We plan to breed all 5 females this summer to gain some momentum with our herd size. We will be selling meat and breeding stock in the coming years. We will process our steer this fall for our personal consumption and can't wait to finally try the beef!

We are absolutely loving our Lincoln Red experience thus far. They have been easy keepers and will do just about anything for a bucket of grain. They are so good around our kids and the steer will let our oldest grab him around the head and snuggle. We have been blown away with how hardy they are. They are truly a stress-free animal. We are big proponents of education and look forward to introducing others to the breed through 4-H and social media. We are all in when it comes to doing our part to preserve the breed and are excited about our future breeding program. With Sarah's help and guidance, I know we will make a positive impact for Lincoln Reds for many years to come. Feel free to follow our journey on our SB Farms dba Sweet Success Honey Facebook page!

Brent & Sarah Wittenbraker



"Excuse us, but I believe that's our grain"

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## Fact: We Need More Cows

**Bob Nusbaum, Emeritus Professor of Animal Science  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville**

Do you remember the “6-foot distancing” protocol advocated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) during the Covid pandemic? Dr. Anthony Fauci recently disclosed that it was not based on science. What?! And there were many other Covid “strategies” that have caused lingering negative consequences without providing a remedy. We have witnessed the extremely disastrous effects of mandated school closures on our students. Complete shutdowns of businesses, beaches, theaters, gyms and other venues wreaked havoc on our lives and the economy. These outcomes have recently prompted many other “health experts” to now admit that there should have been a more “robust” debate among ALL the scientific community members before implementing strategies to combat Covid. Wouldn’t input from several knowledgeable sources with accurate, proven data have been the best game plan to find solutions to an unknown and frightening pandemic?

Other current topics generating national discussion similarly are subject to massive amounts of questionable information. One of the main controversial issues today is climate change. For some reason, cows have been targeted as the main scapegoat in the race to find blame for our global warming. With very little evidence, some school, hospital and workplace administrators have championed “Meatless Mondays” and other “strategies” to push a plant-based diet and reduce cattle numbers in an attempt to save our planet. Others, including many elected officials, have stated that “cow farts” are a major contributor to Green House Gases (GHG) which will eventually envelope the earth causing a punishing increase in temperatures. The “intellectuals” pushing the “cow fart” theory evidently don’t understand the basic biology of the bovine. Methane is the gas released, not through the back end, but belched as a ruminant chews its cud. It’s called eructation. Perhaps this is one area where there could be more scientific diligence.

An article entitled “Climate Change Reality Check” written for Beef Magazine (November, 2019) by Dave Sjeklocha reported data from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that listed GHG contributors. The transportation industry accounts for 29% of all emissions, followed by electricity, 28%, manufacturing, 22%, commercial and residential, 12% and agriculture, 9%, of which livestock make up only 3% of that. Obviously, cows are not the problem. On the other hand, there are 87,000 flights every day in American airspace that burn 18 billion gallons of airline fuel. Additionally, over 260 million trucks and cars burn 385 million gallons of gasoline per day. All of these consumption values have increased markedly over the past 40 years. On the other hand, Sjeklocha points out that since 1970 our dairy and beef cow numbers have decreased from 130 million head to 94 million today. Yet, “even with this lower population, we are producing more beef and milk than ever. While beef and dairy efficiencies have improved drastically, other major causes of GHG emissions have expanded significantly”. He ends his article with a very common-sense statement. “Shouldn’t we focus more on the sources of GHG’s that are expanding, rather than the sources that have a proven track record of reducing GHG’s?”

Joel Salatin, a nationally known grazer, in his book “Folks, this ain’t normal” states, “Clearly, cows aren’t causing global warming. That junk science is sponsored by a thought process that blames the cow for ecological degradation. The ruminant is the most efficient, soil-building, hydrology-cycling, carbon-sequestering tool at the planet’s disposal. Yes, the cow has done a tremendous amount of damage, but don’t blame the cow, the managers of the cow cause the problem. The same animal mismanaged to abuse the ecology is the greatest hope and salvation to heal the ecology”. About 38% of the earth’s surface is considered agricultural land. One-third of this is used as cropland while the remaining two-thirds consists of pastures (United Nations Food and Ag Statistics). According to Salatin, “grasslands are the lungs of the earth”. Photosynthesis is the process where grass

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plants absorb carbon dioxide, a major GHG. It sequesters the carbon portion in the soil and returns oxygen to the atmosphere. The cow recycles about 50 pounds of nutrient-dense manure daily to the soil which fertilizes the grass and builds soil fertility. She also acts as a lawnmower to keep the grass in its vegetative, growing stage, thus preventing it from becoming too ripe and dormant. What a unique and healthy system! The cow converts nonedible grass into milk and meat. And she's very versatile. She can do this with corn stover, canning industry waste and even bakery and candy industry byproducts. These are proven, published scientific facts. Salatin maintains we don't have too many cows, but just the opposite, we need MORE cows to properly utilize all of the world's grass.

A point of interest with some historical context is another example of the cow's expertise and value. The main cash crop in Wisconsin from 1840 to 1880 was wheat. In fact, 1/6 of the wheat in the U.S. was grown there. Decades of mono-cropping depleted soil fertility which could only be corrected with organic matter. This dilemma ushered in the tremendous growth of cow numbers in Wisconsin, especially the dairy cow. The cow replenished the depleted soil and was instrumental in building a world-renowned dairy industry.

We, as cattle producers have a great story to tell, but unfortunately there is a lot of misinformation, "fake news" and poor science that negatively affects the public perception of our industry. We need to use every communication tool available to convey accurate facts and science about our healthy and sustainable industry. Stay informed and know the facts. If you have kids or grandkids that participate in 4-H and FFA speaking contests, encourage them to spread the word. Letters to the editor and social media can also be used to educate

## **SEEING IS BELIEVING!**

Take a look at Lincoln Reds at one of these farms:

large numbers of people. We need to be proactive on this, there is too much at stake.

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- **Kincaid Family Farm**  
Sadieville, KY  
859-967-9610  
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(859) 967-9610
- **George McQueen**  
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