

Ancient Breed Chickens Worth Considering

Lakenvelder chickens, an ancient breed from Germany, can add contrast to any backyard flock. These chickens are on the smaller side and boast an eye-catching pattern of black and white feathers. That's clear from their Dutch name, which loosely translates to "white sheet over a black field." You'll see black hackles and tail feathers contrasted with white feathers along the middle and black-tipped feathers at the wings. A Dutch breed of cattle goes by the same name, linked by location and their similar black and white patterning.

It's thought that Lakenvelders are descendants of the Tel Megiddo chickens brought into Europe by Jewish immigrants around 1 AD. The breed was common by the 1700s, as the Dutch painter Van Gink mentions them as found in the southeastern corner of Holland. By 1835, the breed made an appearance in West Hanover poultry shows. Still, it took until the 1900s for Lakenvelders to arrive in the U.S., and they weren't admitted to the American Poultry Association's Standard of Perfection until 1939.

An active breed, Lakenvelders aren't overly friendly. They pose a flight risk and occasionally show dominance over gentler chickens. Still, their vigorous foraging tendencies make them an excellent fit for small farms and homesteads. While known for tasty meat, the birds tend to be on the small side. They have round, plump breasts



Photo courtesy of The Chicken Coop Company

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Like many heritage chickens, Lakenvelders have reached "threatened" status due to growing interest in hybrid breeds at the expense of heritage. Consider adding a few to your flock to keep their populations as vigorous as their foraging habits.

One source for Lakenvelders is the Chicken Coop Company (ph 888-222-5213; www.chickencoopcompany.com).



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Ranching Heritage Center Offers Entertainment, Education

By Lydia Noyes, Contributing Editor

The National Ranching Heritage Center (NRHC) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, offers an educational and family-friendly excursion into an iconic part of American history.

"We opened in 1976, dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of ranching in North America," says Director of Education Julie Hodges. "The vision was to honor the culture and legacy of the American ranching industry. Over time, NRHC has grown into a world-class educational destination."

The center serves as both a museum and an activity center.

"From hands-on programs for students to national collaborations, we're continually expanding how we share ranching's vital role in shaping our culture, economy, and environment," Hodges says.

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"One of our most beloved attractions is the Cash Family Ranch Life Learning Center," she says. "Its interactive exhibits, featuring Hank the Cowdog, teach kids and families about ranching. Outside, our historic

structures—including ranch houses, barns, a one-room schoolhouse and a blacksmith shop—are perennial favorites with visitors."

The indoor exhibits are frequently updated with a rotating collection of art, vehicles, firearms and cowboy gear. Ranch volunteers bring the historic structures alive every Saturday throughout the summer through living history demonstrations.

"We also host several one-of-a-kind events for visitors of all ages—Ranch Day, Summer Stampede, Ranch Verse, National Golden Spur Award Honors, and Candlelight at the Ranch," Hodges says. "Find more information on the website and social media."

She recommends that visitors set aside at least two to three hours to explore the Center.

"That allows time to walk the historic park, visit the Cash Family Ranch Life Learning Center, take in the indoor exhibits, and stop at our gift shop. Many visitors end up staying much longer."

The Center is open seven days a week, and admission is free.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, National Ranching Heritage Center, 3121 4th St., Lubbock, Texas 79409 (ph 806-742-0498; ranchhc@ttu.edu; www.ranchingheritage.org).



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Horse Tank Made From Civil War Era Tree

When Dale McLaen salvaged a bur oak log from a deconstruction site, he didn't have a wooden horse tank in mind. However, when a new tank was needed at a historic display at a nearby state park, the Civil War era oak proved perfect. McLaen, a member of the Fort Ransom Sodbusters Association, enlisted the help of a fellow member, Jim Rudlang, to do the job.

"Jim helped me cut the stave blanks out of the log and cut them down to size," says McLaen. "We cut grooves in the edges of the staves and used splines to fit them together. It was a poor man's tongue and groove."

McLaen and Rudlang cut the new tank's bottom out of plywood with plans to line the tank with plastic. While they wanted it to look authentic, they also wanted to avoid the fate of the tank being replaced.

"The old tank had been dry too many times and couldn't hold water," explains McLaen. "Without a liner, wooden tanks have to hold water all the time, or they won't stay tight."

The staves were 4 1/2 in. wide and 22 in. long and were planed down to 1 7/8 in. thickness. The two woodworkers laid 57 splines into the grooves on the 56 staves to make the 68-in. dia. (inside) tank.

"We planned to use the steel bands from the old tank, but our staves were a hair thicker," says McLaen. "We had to lengthen them about 4 in. to fit."

The tank will be filled and on display for the association's horse-drawn equipment demonstrations held twice yearly. Draft horses used on implements will water at the tank with water pumped into it from a quasi-working windmill. Donated by two of the association's members, it too was restored by McLaen.

"The windmill hadn't been used in 40 years, but it was in very good shape," he says. "All it needed was a bearing. I cleaned it up and painted it."

The windmill will pump water from a reservoir into the tank with a return pipe carrying water back to the reservoir. A hydrant will supplement water as needed, as horses use the tank.

The tank and windmill will be two of many elements demonstrating farm life in the early 1900s in North Dakota during the Fort Ransom Sodbuster Days Shows. They're held in mid-July and again in early September.

"We'll have it all operating like the windmill and tank would've been used in sodbuster days," says McLaen.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Fort Ransom Sodbusters Association, P.O. Box 56, Fort Ransom, N.D. 58033 (fortransomsodbustersassociation@gmail.com; www.fortransomsodbusters.com) or Dale McLaen, 13756 Hwy. 11, Rutland, N.D. 58067 (ph 701-678-5232).

Bee Balm Can Be Useful In Gardens

Bee balm, a popular native of eastern North America, goes by many names. You might know this shaggy scarlet flower as wild bergamot, monarda or Oswego tea. It's an attractive ornamental that thrives in zones 4 through 9. As a cottage garden favorite, bee balm holds appeal even when not in bloom, making it ideal for perennial borders and backdrops.

The flowers are filled with nectar, making them a favorite food source of ruby-throated hummingbirds and butterflies. But lucky for gardeners, deer and rabbits tend to leave it alone. Still, the flowers are both edible and highly nutritious. Eat them fresh or dried for a good supply of protein and antioxidants.

Bee balm leaves contain an antiseptic that's useful for skin irritations as well as mouth, gum or tooth infections. During the American Revolution, colonists used it as a substitute for English black tea. As the common name implies, it was once used as a treatment for bee stings. In contrast, the flower has little in common with the bergamot orange (used for Earl Grey tea) besides its scent.

While bee balm can be planted in the spring or fall, it's best to trim back the foliage for fall plantings to encourage root growth. The plant prefers full sun, but partial shade in the afternoon is also suitable. Too much shade will make it grow leggy. Ensure there's rich soil amended with compost, and add mulch to keep moisture levels appropriate.

As a member of the mint family, bee balm requires careful planning for its planting



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location. Otherwise, you'll deal with spread. In southern regions, it's even regarded as aggressive. The plant can reach up to 4 ft. with a spread of 3 to 4 ft., though dwarf varieties top out at 15 in. The tallest plants might require staking, but most have sturdy enough stems to be fine.

Once established, bee balm requires minimal maintenance. Deadhead spent flowers to encourage a full season of blooms, but leave a few as fall approaches; the seeds offer a much-appreciated winter food supply for birds.