

March 2026

Spring/Summer

2026 Issue

- Critical Status
- Board Updates
- News articles about Cotswolds
- Board goals for 2026
- Breeding thoughts



The ACRA Newsletter

The American Cotswold Record Association: Spring 2026



The Big News
Livestock
Conservancy
Conservation status
change for Cotswold
Sheep from
Threatened to Critical

A message from ACRA's President

March 2026

Happy Spring Shepherds,

We are faced with what probably isn't "new" news this week and I want this to be an area of discussion and a call to action. The recent designation of the Cotswold sheep as critical by the Livestock Conservancy marks a pivotal moment for one of the world's oldest and most historically significant long wool breeds known for their lustrous fleese and calm disposition. Cotswolds were once a cornerstone of the medieval English wool trade and played a key role in shaping early American sheep populations. Today, however, their numbers have dwindled to the point where fewer than 2000 purebred Cotswolds are across the world and annual registrations in the United States place them at serious risk of disappearing. This status is more than a label- it is a warning genetic diversity, agricultural heritage, and a uniquely productive breed are all in jeopardy.

The implications of this shift to critical status extend beyond preservation lists to farmers, fiber artists, and sustainable agriculture advocates. Protecting the Cotswold is not only about saving or breed but also about maintaining traits such as hardiness, mothering ability and adaptability that are increasingly valuable in low-input farming systems. The Livestock Conservancies classification serves as a call to action encourage breeders to invest in conservation efforts, expand our breeding programs and educate the public about the importance of heritage livestock. With coordinated effort and renewed interest there remains hope that the Cotswold sheep can recover from the brink and continue to contribute to diversify diversified and resilient agricultural systems.

We welcome input from our members of ways ACRA can help to expand the Cotswold and help to move along preservation efforts. We encourage our members to register their animals and promote their flocks. We love our Cotswolds and want others to share in their greatness.

My best to all of you and I hope we will hear from you or see you at many of our nations fiber shows promoting our breed!

Kathy

ACRA's 2026 Board of Directors

President Kathy Crow

Vice President Lisa Carpenter

Secretary Maggie Brand

Registrar Beth Ivankovic

Eastern Regional Director Nicholas Tsimekles

Midwestern Regional Director Kay Lytle

Member-at-Large Director Bob Viewrow

To find contact information for board members, check out the website:
<https://cotswoldacra.com/contact-us/>

A bit of history and backstory about this decision

For the past couple of years, the ACRA board has had a feeling the conservation status of “threatened” by the Livestock Conservancy did not seem quite accurate but ACRA is only one piece of the puzzle for Cotswold sheep in the US.

ACRA has witnessed less sheep registrations as well as memberships compared to the early 2000s but there have been multiple reasons for the decline. The division between ACRA members in the early 2000’s which led to the development of CBA. ACRA did not have an active board for a good decade. This is a common occurrence for many breed associations as it is volunteer work and owners are spread across the country. Prior to “zooming”, annual meetings would be held at a sheep show making it hard for many to participate. The Cotswold sheep has been the backbone of “upbreeding” programs for many other breeds. From the Teeswater sheep to now the Blacknose Valais, many of our Cotswold ewes have been used to grow other breeds and not more Cotswold lambs. The 1990’s push to add color to white sheep breeds didn’t miss out on the Cotswold sheep and again this declined numbers of ACRA Cotswold lambs. The Black Cotswold Registry was started for this reason. Add on the economics of raising sheep and farming in the United States. There are less farms in the US, Cotswold sheep are slower growing than many meat breeds, Cotswold wool sales are a niche market, and there are less mills in the US buying white wool. All of these have impacted the numbers of Cotswold sheep. There have been times over the past 100 years where numbers have dwindled. We are at that junction again.

As breeders of Cotswolds, we know what a wonderful breed they are and why we need to keep them in the world. For the past 5 years, the ACRA board has worked very hard to focus our goals on improving the numbers of Cotswolds. One goal has been to take a census. We attempted one this past fall.

The ACRA Board’s fall 2025 census had participation from 24 farms, half from ACRA and half from CBA for a total of 324 Cotswold sheep. Those 24 farms gave us great information and sparked a new discussion with the Livestock Conservancy about the Priority listing. They replied this past month stating they “calculated CBA’s numbers from registrations using a formula developed by the British, and added the census figures of ACRA” and estimated the number of Cotswolds in the US to be about 915.

“Each year The Livestock Conservancy reviews the conservation status of each breed on the Conservation Priority List (CPL), and we are writing to let you know that Cotswold sheep will move from Threatened (global population less than 5000) to Critical (global population less than 2000). This move was made based on the registration numbers received from the American Cotswold Record Association, Cotswold Breeders Association, as well as figures from the UK and Canada. The US population accounts for about half of the global population, and is growing here but declining in the UK.”

This change in priority listing is an opportunity for each of us. We now own an extremely rare breed in our barnyards. Let's work together to make that not the case! Here are a few things we can all do:

Increase Education about the Cotswold breed.

- ◆ Contact your local news outlets and have them do a story about your flock.
- ◆ Utilize social media to show the wonders of this breed. They are gently giants and have the cutest lambs.
- ◆ Give a talk to your church, 4H groups, or FAA about raising sheep.
- ◆ Find ways to show off your sheep in your local area.

Marketing their beautiful locks and mild tasting meat.

- ◆ The board is working on a policy for labeling with the ACRA logo. Watch for more information regarding this.
- ◆ Utilize the ACRA website for listing your sheep for sale as well as your woolen goods.

Share your ideas with other members and be active in the association.



March 2026



Cotswolds are making news!

Lisa Carpenter wrote a wonderful article for the Small Farmer's Journal. Make sure to check out this journal!

<https://smallfarmersjournal.com/small-farmers-market/>

[vol-49-no-3/](#)

Cotswold sheep and a picture of their beautiful fleeces highlighted a story about the Fibershed movement in the Madison, Wisconsin's Isthmus paper:

<https://isthmus.com/news/cover-story/fibersheds-farm-to-fleece-to-market-grow-local-movement>

Sunflower Lane Farm is having a Sheepfest in Lindsborg, Kansas on Mother's Day Weekend.

Next summer, plan on a Midwest Gathering.

This spring and summer there are many Sheep shows and events to check out!

Please share any news about your flock!



Update from our VP

Lisa Carpenter, Kline Creek Farm, Dupage County, Illinois

My update focuses on the other livestock breeding venture at Kline Creek Farm besides Cotswolds, which is our Heritage Shorthorn herd. Kline Creek Farm was primarily a dairy farm, so cows were a big focus of their operation. Records indicate that the Kline family kept sheep from time to time, but they were never the main focus of the operation. But like many nineteenth century farms, they were diverse and didn't necessarily focus on just one commodity. In January 2026, we had the pleasure of selling one of our bred cows to Greenfield Village, part of the Henry Ford Museum complex in Dearborn, Michigan. Greenfield Village had been searching for a horned Heritage Shorthorn to interpret their 1885 Firestone Farm, the relocated boyhood home of Harvey Firestone. Firestone went on to found the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company and became closely associated with Henry Ford. Most modern cattle breeders dehorn their animals, so it's ironically difficult to find Shorthorns with their horns left on. Kline Creek Farm breeds for a historical type and leaves the horns on the cows as most farmers did in the nineteenth century.

We don't normally deliver livestock we sell to our buyers, but in this instance Greenfield Village did not have to twist my arm to get me to bring the cow to them and fit in a little time to visit the site. The only other time I had been there was as a child visiting with my family. The museum was gracious enough to give us a private tour of their vast agricultural implement collections



KCF Ruby May at her new home in Greenfield Village (Merinos are in the foreground).

which are housed in the former Ford Motor Company engineering building. I only had time to scratch the surface of what the museum complex had to offer, but luckily I will be back in June for the annual conference of the Association of Living History Farms and Museums (ALHFAM). I will be leading a roundtable of living history farmers at the conference and presenting on cattle conservation breeding for living history farms. The icing on the cake for me is that the cow I sold to Greenfield is due to calve during the conference, and her pregnancy is the result of my developing skill in artificial insemination!

Greenfield Village's main livestock focus is their flock of Merino sheep, which is what the Firestone family originally raised. Greenfield Village tries to preserve nineteenth-century style wrinkly merino sheep! The philosophy back then was the more wrinkles the sheep had, the more surface area for the wool to grow on. It was amazing to step into their barn and see Merinos that looked like they stepped out of the pages of history.

To learn more about
Greenfield Village and the
Firestone Farm, check out
their website:

[https://
www.thehenryford.org/visit/
venues/greenfield-village/
working-farms](https://www.thehenryford.org/visit/venues/greenfield-village/working-farms)



■ ARTIFACT

Firestone Farmhouse

Benjamin and Catherine Firestone raised their three children in this farmhouse, including tire maker Harvey Firestone. Originally located near Columbiana, Ohio, the 1828 house was updated ...

It's shaping up to be a busy year for me with conferences. In March, nearby Wagner Farm in Glenview, Illinois will be hosting the conference of the Midwest Open-Air Museum Coordinating Council (MOMCC)—the Midwest affiliate of ALHFAM. Kline Creek Farm will be hosting livestock breeding management and draft horse workshops, and I will also be presenting my cattle conservation breeding talk that I will be giving at ALHFAM in June. The timing for the livestock breeding management workshop at Kline Creek Farm is perfect because if all goes as planned we should have our first calf on the ground and be in the midst of lambing. Workshops participants will get to hand milk and get tips on lambing, calving, and farrowing.

I love selling breeding stock (Shorthorns and Cotswolds both) to other breeders, but it's extra special moving an animal on to another museum that will use that animal to educate the public. - Lisa Carpenter



Lisa milking a newly freshened Heritage Shorthorn, next to her newborn calf.

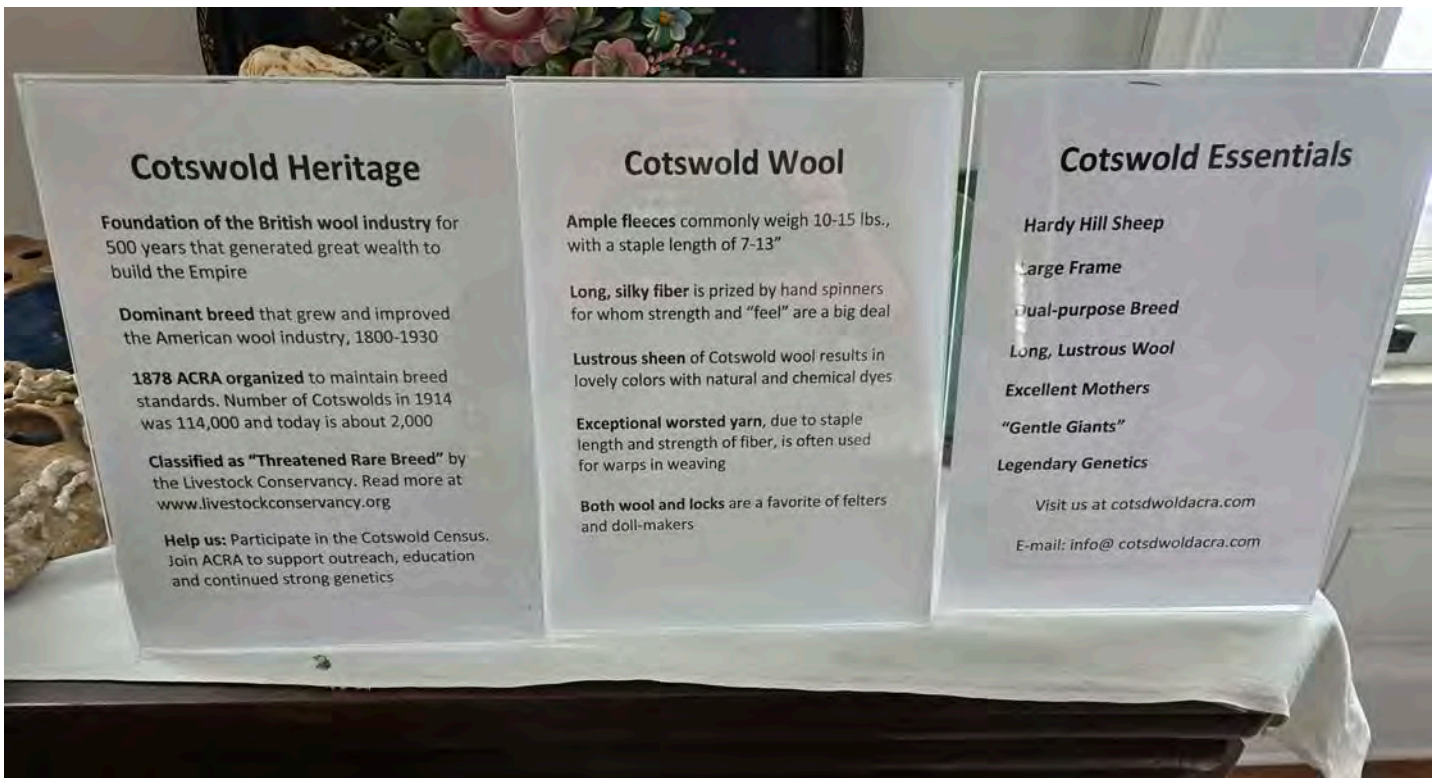
Maggie Brand, Greenwich, New York

Cotswold Ambassadors

As a recipient of this newsletter, you probably own or appreciate Cotswold sheep. You might raise them for their long staple lustrous wool, their hardiness or their ability to thrive on a variety of forages, not to mention their good looks. But did you recognize their importance as a heritage breed?

Heritage breeds ensure our capability to adapt with our changing climates by providing genetic diversity. Cotswolds have provided the sheep and wool industry with the superior traits of hardiness, long staple wool, and large frames for meat for over 500 years first to the British wool industry in the 1500-1600s, and later to the American textile industry of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Now the breed is in trouble. The Livestock Conservancy has listed the Cotswold breed as 'Critical' which means there are under 1000 registered sheep in the US. We need to encourage more people to raise more Cotswolds.



You can help by spreading the word. Some ideas to educate and spread the word are: provide a display at your local library during lambing or shearing season, give a talk to a small ruminant or sustainable farming group (sometimes organized through your extension office), sponsor or help a youth raise a lamb to show at your local fair, provide a small static exhibit at a yarn shop or speak to a knitters group with contact info about Cotswold wool/yarn sources.

Your ACRA Board can provide you with printed material and ideas for your exhibit. Contact Maggie Brand at info@cotswoldacra.com. Losing our beloved 'gentle giants' and their future genetic contributions is an unacceptable possibility. We need you.



Registrar Information

2025 Totals: 74 ACRA/BCR registrations and 57 transfers

As always, thank you for your yearly dues and registrations. Memberships expire a year from the last payment. Please let me know if you have any questions with registrations or transfers through the website.

When selling sheep, sellers fill out the back of the sheep's "Certificate of Registry". The seller sends the "Certificate of Registry" along with the transfer form found on the website to the Registrar -Beth Ivankovic, S5001 William Court, Eau Claire, WI 54701 Beth will fill in the rest of the transfer information and will forward the "Certificate of Registry" to the new owners.

This is a great way to keep registered sheep and bloodlines available for the future. Include the cost of transfers with the cost of selling your sheep.

From the Midwest Director:

Kay Lytle, Mustang, OK



From Oklahoma: My flock is doing well. Like much of the country, we've had recent winter weather that broke records for low temps and had 8 1/2" of snow, which is unusual for Oklahoma. However, the sheep bedded down in waste hay and didn't seem to notice anything amiss. After working my arms off to chop ice in the tank, I look around to see Rose eating the snow. None of them were impressed with my effort and ignored me with boredom. All of the ewes have been confirmed bred through ultrasound. Good job Mortimer! Ewe #6 is carrying twins this year. She's a great mama with a large enough udder/milk supply that I milked her briefly last year, so I know she'll do great raising twins. The rest will have singles. Lambing will start by the end of February and run through March. Can't wait to see the new lambs!

Registrar - Beth Ivankovic Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Hi everyone,

Did you see that we are splitting the Secretary and Registrar position? Maggie Brand is taking over at Secretary and she and I are figuring out how best to split duties that have been together for a really long time. Please reach out to Maggie for Association questions and reach out to me with Registrar questions or both of us and we will figure out how best to help!

I've had some really great questions come up this past year. Here are the top ones:

1. What do all of the different numbers mean on the registration sheet and where do we find them?

Flock name: Your farm name or the farm you work for such as "Priory Farms"

Flock ID: That is the ear tag number you give to your sheep. It must be unique to each sheep. This number will go on the sheep registry form. If the sheep loses his/her tag, the easiest way to keep things straight is to replace with a blank tag and write this number on it.

Association number: This is a 6 digit registration number that is listed on the Sheep's Registry certificate. It is unique to each sheep and cannot be transferred to any other sheep. This is the number ACRA uses to trace a sheep's lineage.

2. Who should take care of the transfers? The seller. This is the best way to ensure sheep are registered, transferred, and accounted for within ACRA. Add the cost to the sale of the sheep and make sure you have the new owners address, email, and information when you send it to the registrar.

3. What should you do if you find a Cotswold sheep at an auction? Do not buy the sheep if they don't have the registration paperwork with the animal at the auction. I cannot register an animal without registration proof. I have had multiple calls this year about this issue.

4. Can a CBA sheep be transferred to ACRA? Yes! I will trace all sides of the sheep to see if they go back to ACRA Association numbers. If all do, they can be transferred into ACRA. If they have been bred with any sheep who had color in their genetics, I can transfer them into BCR.

March 2026

If anything is confusing, please give me a call, text, or email me. I am happy to help! If you need something right away, give me a heads up!

If you would like to obtain 5 generation information on any of your sheep, this can be ordered through the website.

On my farm, lambing should start next week. I cut back on breeding numbers for this year and only bred 13 ewes. I ran 3 different breeding groups and all went well until the day I found two rams in one grouping. The power of love can be strong, a ram had broken through 2 woven wire fences! Shirley was loving the attention of two guys. I will now be figuring out the ins/outs of DNA testing with her offspring. A few pics from the last month are below. We were hit with 18 inches of snow a couple of weeks ago. This week freezing rain, snow and ice....I am ready for spring!

This winter I had an interesting discussion with a vet who has been posting blog posts through his Facebook site. <https://www.facebook.com/LinessaFarmsLLC> Make sure to check out his site. He posts insights on multiple topics and they are great.

I reached out to him to ask him his thoughts on breeding especially with a small breed. I've copied our correspondence below as I think it might be helpful to all of us.

Have a wonderful spring and best wishes for all of your new lambs! Beth



Correspondence between Beth Ivankovic and Veterinarian Timothy Ventrello

I reached out to Dr. Ventrello with an introduction, how I figure out breeding groups with COI (coefficients of inbreeding) and asked this question. Do you have any recommendations for small breeds to ensure we keep “lines” but also breed thoughtfully?

Dr. Ventrello’s reply:

“Everything you’re describing is exactly what shows up in small breeds with limited annual registrations, even when people are being careful, intentional, and data-driven. This isn’t a failure of management — it’s the reality of population size and math catching up over time.

A few points that may help frame things more clearly:

First, you are using inbreeding coefficients appropriately. Keeping most matings under 3% and being cautious as you approach 5–6% is responsible breeding. That said, COI is best thought of as a rate indicator, not a pass/fail test. It tells you how quickly genetic uniformity is increasing — it doesn’t tell you whether the direction that uniformity is moving is safe or resilient long-term.

Second, there is a real tension between preserving “lines” and preserving genetic robustness. Lines are useful historical and organizational tools, but resilience lives across lines, not inside them. In very small populations, it’s possible to successfully preserve lines on paper while still narrowing the overall genetic base of the breed. That’s often where the discomfort you’re feeling comes from — you’re seeing consistency, but wondering what it’s costing you down the road.

Third, importing animals with higher COIs isn’t automatically a mistake, but it does deserve context. A higher COI animal isn’t “bad” by default — it simply carries less genetic variability. If that animal brings something genuinely missing (fertility, parasite resilience, longevity, structural soundness), it can still be valuable. If it mainly reinforces traits already common in the population, it accelerates narrowing without much return.

Fourth, this is not something individual farms can fully solve on their own. For breeds registering 70–110 animals per year, the biggest gains usually come from association-level thinking:

- actively encouraging use of underrepresented lines
- avoiding popular-sire effects, even when animals are attractive or successful
- tracking and valuing traits like fertility, longevity, and survivability — not just appearance
- recognizing that card judging and visual selection, while useful, can quietly dominate decisions if not balanced

And I already know what you're thinking: trying to motivate members to not always use the "popular" ram is like herding cats. You're fighting marketing, prestige, etc. and you're ultimately going to get push back and potentially make the "top breeders" feel like you're stepping on their toes. That's not great, but we both know it's a possible reality. We are seeing some breed up programs starting to circle the drain (Valais Blacknose) due to this very issue.

Finally — and this matters — thoughtful breeding in small populations often means accepting slower progress and resisting visual optimization. That's not a failure. That's restraint, and restraint is often what keeps rare or small breeds viable long-term.....Best Regards, Tim"

A lot to think about with this email on both the board and the farm level. As we look at our lambs and figure out who to keep, who to sell, ponder how to judge our Cotswold sheep in more ways than physical. Our Cotswold sheep are known for their hardiness and good mothering skills. How can we quantify the qualities he has listed above such as fertility, longevity and survivability? Is anyone keeping detailed records for parasite resistance? How can our association help breeders with all of these questions?

Make sure to check out his Facebook page and blog posts. Please share your thoughts on our Facebook page regarding breeding and genetics!

250 years of Sheep in the US

Fun Fact: The Redcoat jackets were made from Cotswold wool.
Oldest mention of Cotswolds on the site newspapers.com
from Friday Nov. 4th 1831

NOTICE.—A large sale of full blooded Cattle of the pure short horned Durham and Devonshire breeds, imported as well as their descendants.— Dishley, (otherwise Bakewell) and Cotswold sheep, some of them imported, all of pure blood.—Blood Horses, including Stallions, brood Mares and Colts, comprising the most pure blood of the race horse of England, and the Arabian breeds: will take place on the 16th inst., at the residence of Charles Henry Hall, at Harlem, being the 3d annual sale of surplus stock of his own raising, and that of his friends, Dr. Hoosack, Mr. Britnall, Mr. Powell of Philadelphia, Mr. Watson of Connecticut, Mr. Bowne of New Jersey, Mr. Brittain of the same state, Mr. Minturn, and others. Catalogues, giving description of the various stock, will be immediately issued.
R. R. MINTURN & CO. Auctioneers.

In other news....

2026 Board Goals

1. Membership and Registrations - continue to grow ACRA to ensure the conservation, development, and promotion of the breed our Cotswold sheep. Goal: 10% increase for both registrations and membership.
2. Improve marketing ideas of ACRA Cotswold sheep. The board will come up with standards for the use of the ACRA logo on yarn and meat products for members.
3. Develop a new census for Cotswold sheep within the United States. Publish the census for fall of 2026.

Welcome to new members

Nicole Foster, Fairbanks, Indiana

Katlyn Weimer, Williamsport, Maryland

Isabella Ortega, Mechanicsville, Maryland

Maribeth Andresen, Aqvebogne, NY

Julie Baird, Pownal, Maine

Anthony Willkom, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Would you like to help out the board? We have lots of small jobs that can be done from helping with the newsletter, writing articles, taking pictures, to marketing Cotswolds! Let us know what you might be interested in doing! Check out the next newsletter for information about running for a board seat!

Do you have your heritage Cotswold sheep mentioned in your will?

The genetics running around our barnyards might be essential for the Cotswold breed to continue. Make sure to have a plan with your family or executor of your will as to where your animals will end up.