

The Importance of Registrations

By Kathy Petersen

So why bother?

I see an alarming number of breeders selling unregistered stock. We are also seeing an increase in the amount of cross breeding KuneKunes with other breeds. KuneKunes are selected for THEIR characteristics, why change a purebred heritage breed to something else? Would you take a purebred Doberman and breed it to a Beagle? Is the offspring going to have the temperament of a Doberman or a Beagle? You don't know who they will take after! The same is true for cross breeding KuneKunes. If the KuneKune does not have the traits that you desire – why get a KuneKune? You should not get into the breed of purebred heritage pigs if they do not have the breed characteristics that you want. You should get into the breed because of the characteristics that they HAVE that you like. While AKKPS supports the breeder's individuality of their programs, there are some basic facts that you may not be aware of that will seriously impact the KuneKune here in the USA. This is a matter of grave importance to the breed and to all breeders, owners, and enthusiasts. This, and a member's request, is what prompted this article. I hope that every member will read this article to the end as this is a matter of extreme importance. The quotes within the article are written by Allison Martin and were in the Livestock Conservancy Newsletter a few years ago.

Back in New Zealand when John Simister and Michael Willis were searching for KuneKunes, it was very difficult for them to find 18 pigs that had the characteristics of the breed. At that time, there was no registry in which to track the breed. They found that Kunes were near extinction. In their recovery efforts, they found it of extreme importance to begin tracking pedigrees and registering the breed. For many generations they did in fact register their offspring and other breeders followed suit. Things continued that way for many years. Where things get fuzzy in the heritage of this breed, is when breeders did not register their offspring and they were sold unregistered. Later, the society in New Zealand began to see a trend in unregistered stock. So, they began to accept, unregistered pigs into the herd books in hopes of trying to get the unregistered stock back to registered ones. They would send a knowledgeable person to look at the pig and register the pig as KuneKune based on the look of the individual pig. They also began to allow unregistered pigs into the herd book without registration. Now in New Zealand most offspring are given away or sold for \$50-100. We must not allow the KuneKunes in the USA to follow in those footsteps.

How can we all make an important difference to KuneKunes in the USA? We can purchase registered stock, we can keep the breed pure by only breeding to KuneKunes and we can register all intact animals that leave our farm. So what do you do with a female sold as a pet? You can do a pet registration which requires no DNA but, maintains the pedigree and the animal is marked "not for breeding and it says PET on the registration". Let's say this owner falls in love with the breed and decides down the road they want to breed her, instead of them doing it and selling unregistered animals, they can simply call the breeder and come to some type of agreement and the breeder can

get the animal DNA'd and they can change the registration over to breeding stock. (Of course this is provided the breeder agrees that this animal can be bred. Sometimes, the pigs offered as pets should not be bred. This allows the breeder to make the decision of whether the animal is bred or not. It also allows them to collect the difference of a pet price versus a breeding price of the animal).

Each breed has unique characteristics that sets them apart from other breeds. Some of the characteristics of our breed is their amazing personalities, grazing ability, excellent mothering skills, ease of handling, just mention a few. To conserve this breed, it means to only mate within the breed and thus conserving these characteristics. "Too many breeds have been lost when the purebreds are used to create value in crossing and their characteristics weren't maintained. The Livestock Conservancy calls this 'crossbreeding out of existence'."

One of the easiest ways to preserve the breed is by the tracking of pedigrees and using only registered, purebred breeding stock. If you are not registering your pigs, others will have no idea what they are breeding. They could have all kinds of hereditary defects come up in the breedings as they don't even know if the animals are related. By not registering your stock over time it would be impossible to track improvements or hereditary defects within the breed. It will be the beginning of the end of KuneKunes.

Registration is fairly simple to do. It is not expensive. Litter notifications are \$10.00. Let's say you have a litter of 5. The DNA will be \$29, their share of the litter notification is \$2.00 and registration is \$6.00. So, you have invested a total of \$37.00 to ensure the future of the breed for later generations. Each time a breed is lost, we lose a part of our agricultural heritage.

Breed Promotion is important to AKKPS. As you all know AKKPS is in most of the top magazines, promoting the breed to the public and on Facebook. Your registrations help fund this! "Breeders who work together through the breed association raise the level of awareness for both products and breeding stock... By registering animals, we support the breed associations and their breed promotion efforts, which benefit all who raise the breed".

Here is a scenario written by Allison Martin and published in the Livestock Conservancy Newsletter.

"Raising the value of your animals... Who knows what the future will bring? Let's look at a theoretical breeder Mr. Suarez, who raises pigs – let's call them the "Super Heritage Breed" She is successful in building a market for her animals, is able to increase the size of her herd, and naturally she keeps her best gilts for breeding. As Ms. Suarez learns what her customers want, she selects gilts who can pass those characteristics to their offspring and who also developed into great mothers. Not only does her herd get bigger, they get better. In fact, in five years Ms. Suarez has a reputation for having really good quality breeding stock, and other breeders approach her wanting to buy a boar. But, she never anticipated selling breeding stock, so none of her pigs are registered. Wanting to make extra money by selling registered breeding stock, she asks the Super Heritage Registry for the procedure, only to be told that they have a closed herd book and that her wonderful breeding stock cannot be registered. By not planning ahead, Ms. Suarez can't take advantage of the market for purebred breeding stock, even as a sideline to her meat business. She has also inadvertently removed her stock from the gene pool, and the improvements she has made to her stock are lost to the breed rather than providing a lasting contribution."

That scenario could happen to anyone that is raising and selling unregistered pigs. “If your current breeding stock is registered, thank you for contributing to the future of the breed! If not, consider getting your registrations up to date and/or adding registered breeding animals to your herd. Doing so will help ensure that your herd’s legacy will influence the breed for generation to come.”