

Randall Cattle in the ALBC Conservation Priority List

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The 2005 ALBC Conservation Priority List has listed Randall Cattle by that name instead of the previous Randall Lineback Cattle. The reason for this change is that the breed association has used Randall Cattle, and not Randall Lineback Cattle, ever since its founding in 2001.

The history of this breed and the name it goes by can be confusing. In the earliest beginnings of ALBC (then AMBC) there were several breeders interested in Linebacked cattle. These included, at that time, several herds of New England landrace type cattle (notably in Dave Warden's herd, but also in others such as Cyril Green's). The "Lineback" name included cattle from these landrace sources, in two color patterns (the Pinzgauer type as well as the colorsided or Witrick type). These distinctive patterns were superimposed over black, red, or brown base coat colors. Alongside the landrace cattle were several herds, in fact more than the landrace herds, that sported these linebacked color patterns but were crossbred cattle that included a preponderance of genetic influence from standardized breeds such as Holstein, Shorthorn, and Jersey.

The presence of the landrace cattle and crossbred or mongrel cattle under the same breed umbrella (American Lineback) was always a problem for ALBC, because the landrace cattle were in danger of extinction while at the same time the crossbreds were of no genetic conservation interest.

Into this situation the Randall herd came to ALBC notice in the 1980s. This herd was large enough and well enough documented to warrant conservation as its own entity, and even in the earliest days ALBC staff recognized that including "lineback" in the name ran the very real risk of confusion with the American Lineback. A very few of the Randall cattle did end up in the American Lineback registry. Eventually the American Lineback included no more landrace cattle other than these few Randalls, with the rest of the registered cattle being crossbreds and mongrel cattle. As a result the American Lineback was dropped from the Conservation Priority List because it did not satisfy ALBC's criteria for inclusion on the basis of being a breed in the genetic sense. This was a significant loss, for it meant declaring a sort of New England Landrace to be extinct. ALBC has done this a few times over its history, always hoping that some outraged breeder would present a legitimate landrace herd for notice and conservation. Unfortunately for this type of cattle, that has not occurred.

Randall Cattle breeders organized an association and registry in 2001 to preserve the pure Randall line of landrace cattle. At that time they adopted the name Randall Cattle, dropping any reference to "lineback" in the breed name. This, to ALBC's knowledge up to this date (May 27, 2005) is the only association serving this breed. ALBC's general policy is to list breeds by their association's names. Exceptions to this rule are those breeds that are grouped together for the purposes of tracking, and even in that case every reasonable attempt is made to list the breed names chosen by the associations.