



May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014

To Whom it may Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the Poultry Research Centre application for an innovation credit through the STARS program for the Heritage Chicken Initiative at the Centre.

The Heritage Chicken program at the Poultry Research Centre is truly unique, innovative and a good template for a process for the preservation of heritage lines of poultry. Preservation of heritage lines of poultry is an international issue as outlined by the FAO in their 2007 Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Canada submitted a report on the status of its heritage genetic resources in response to this report but little has been done to address the call to action. There is global concern that the loss of genetic diversity in farm animals could be detrimental to mankind for benefits that these genetics may offer in the future: resistance to disease, dietary or heat or cold tolerances for example.

Recently, the Poultry Industry Council in Guelph, Ontario completed a project looking at the feasibility of sustaining heritage breeds of poultry by several means and found there to be a keen interest by several diverse groups of stakeholders. This would begin to address the FAO Global Plan of Action.

Development of the heritage breed program at the University of Alberta commenced at about the same time that the Poultry Industry Council carried out its project on sustainability of heritage breeds. This program successfully developed a niche market for eggs from heritage hens. Promotional marketing focused on the preservation of heritage genetics and thus biodiversity among chicken breeds. The intent was also to capture the local market potential. Through a unique system of web-based and local advertising, the program attracted a maximum number of customers willing to adopt a hen from the university for a dozen eggs every two weeks with a waiting list of almost the same number of customers again.



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Ultimately the Heritage Breed Program at the University accomplished the outcomes of the Poultry Industry Council project on a small scale, sustainably managing heritage breeds with a market for their products helping to support them.

The program continues to evolve as they developed pot pies from the end of lay hens and are now expanding their website to blogs and other interesting information for chicken enthusiasts. This program is so innovative that it has been featured several times on the CBC news with Peter Mansbridge introducing the newscast!

In our future, we can learn from our past. Thus we cannot underestimate the value of the genetics contained within heritage breeds of poultry and other farm animals. Ultimately though to save them we must eat them. In other words, there must be a market to help sustain them. The University of Alberta has developed an innovative program to preserve these valuable birds.

Sincerely,



Helen Anne Hudson  
Burnbrae Farms Ltd  
Chair of the Board of the Poultry Industry Council and  
Chair of the Poultry Welfare Advisory Committee, University of Guelph

