



Buck—Wheat Bytes

May 2010

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SPECIAL EDITION

Guinea Fowl International

Conference 2010

For those of you that could not be there, we're here to share!

"...a collection of knowledgeable people who were interested in furthering their knowledge." ...Zoe

"...an adventure in learning new ideas.."

.." the opportunity to forge new friendships.."

"I especially enjoyed having the conference at a place where we could hear guineas outside while we learned about them!"..Terri

This year's **5th Annual GFIA Conference** took place in Lexington, Texas on the wonderful property of president, Cindy Gibson. The setting was beautiful, the weather perfect, the food was awesome (thank you to Cindy and her Mom!) and the information provided by the excellent speakers was interesting to "old" guinea folks and newbies alike.

It started Friday morning with a presentation by Dale Hyatt, an expert in the field from Texas A & M, on incubation and hatching. He had great pictures of different types of incubators and hatchers, outlining some of the differences of each. He walked us through the steps of successful incubating and hatching, giving us bits of information, such as his opinion that forced air incubators are better than still air, as it helps regulate the temperature better; the first 13-14 days the eggs take heat and afterwards they give off heat, and it's for this reason that he recommends staggering the ages of your eggs. And a bit of information that we all found interesting was the fact that by having two pouches for holding semen, our guinea hens can fertilize different eggs and lay more than one clutch!

Ross Windham of Ideal Hatchery also came by Friday morning. He talked about some of the differences of the backyard hatchery versus a large commercial set up. One of the issues he discussed was biosecurity. With a hatchery that large, the systems they have in place are very tight. They have separate sets of clothes and shoes to wear at the farms, offices, etc. They have foot baths at all entrances of the farms and rotate disinfectants regularly.



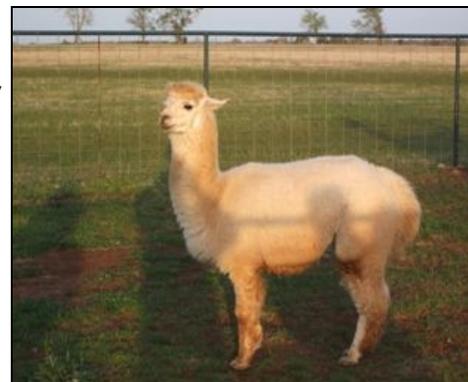
Did someone say *Guinea Fowl* Conference?

With airplanes and jumpers flying all around us, the conference was not only informative, but fun!



Learn how to build a DIY bird feeder and save \$\$\$

See Insert



I think someone's confused!

(cont'd on pg 2)

2010 Convention (cont'd from pg 1)

The hatchery had to stop offering tours to the local elementary schools due to the hazards presented with outside germs coming into the farms. Disease spreads quickly in a hatchery and all measures are taken to minimize the danger. One bad germ could wipe out a complete line of fowl and the monetary loss would be substantial.

We were treated to a wonderful lunch provided by Cindy and her Mom, and after a good visit and a tour of Cindy's farm and greenhouse, it was back to the conference.

Dr. Scott McKenzie educated us on water quality, sanitation and rodent control. Water should be bacteria free with a pH below 7 (on the acidic side) with few heavy metals present.

It only takes 1 parts per million of iron in the drinking water of guineas to cause distress. At this time there are approximately twenty one chlorine resistant pathogens, so care must be taken to treat the water with the correct agent. That's where a good water analysis comes in handy. Most county extension offices can furnish information on where to get this done and how to go about collecting the water.

Dr. McKenzie discussed rodent control and tell-tale signs of which kind of rodents may be present. Some of the signs of rodent population are gnawed wood, concrete, metal or plastic. The kind of rodent dictates what to use for best control. Norway rats are among the largest. They burrow under buildings, concrete slabs, and into trash bins or piles of dirt next to buildings. Their traces will be down around the bottom of walls. To get rid of this rat, first locate and clean out every rat den, filling every den hole. The next day place generous amounts of poison in each re-opened den hole. Repeat once a week until none of the holes are reopened. Roof rats prefer higher surfaces. They will gnaw holes in ceilings and get into the electrical wiring. The best way to get rid of them is to put poison in the attics. Bait stations are the most efficient method to disburse the poison baits, taking into account what other animals may come across the poison. Finishing nails or rebar can be used to keep them fixed and unable to be drug away. Rotate pesticides, using 2 or 3 and change up every 3—4 months. Checking the active ingredients will assure having totally different types of pesticides. Baits do not store well, so buy only what will be used within 4 months.

Next, Dr. Morgan Farnell, also of A & M talked about "mycotoxins" in poultry. This is a toxin produced by fungus that is caused by high humidity and warmer conditions. The rate of mycotoxins goes up when corn is contaminated in the fields and then put into the poultry feed. Other reasons for the rise in this toxin are higher demand for grains, adverse weather conditions, use of dried distillers' grain as feed for poultry, and as the recession worsens, the quality of feed goes down. Poultry owners can minimize the chance of mycotoxins in their feed by safe, airtight storage of all feed. Dr. Farnell also discussed guinea fowl anatomy, ending with a guinea necropsy. To some this may sound gross, but to most of us, it was extremely interesting to see the anatomy, and it helped explain why necropsy is so often necessary when dealing with an unknown cause of death of poultry. It can help determine what caused the death and hopefully keep it contained to just the one, or help determine what can be done to help the rest of the flock.



Cindy's going for seconds!
(to feed the masses!)



Carl and Terri checking
off names



You're going to do **what** with
that food scrap?!



Never too young, Andrew!



GFIA
Decals

Annual Meeting Minutes

It wasn't *all* fun and games at the conference. There was new business attended to, including voting in a couple of new officers, and saying "thanks" to one that's stepping down. Susan Schaler resigned as Secretary and we all want to thank her for her great service and dedication to the GFIA. Terri Thompson was elected to fill that position, and we know she'll do a great job! The other office that was up for re-election was for Vice-President and Zoe Howland was re-elected to that position. There were also three board of directors up for re-election and I'm glad to say, they all agreed to continue as directors. They are Michaele Freund, Betsy Mahtani and Barbara Buscemi.

Debbie Starr volunteered to take the Newsletter off Cindy Gibson's plate and was readily approved!

There were various items of interest discussed, such as the SARE Grant Program (Sustainable Agriculture Research Extension) grants for farmers studying sustainable agriculture methods. Brigid McCrea, of Delaware State University agreed to be an advisor to our group in researching and applying for this grant.



The next two conferences were also discussed, with the 2011 conference to be in Arkansas and being focused around work done by Dr. Ann Fanatico on free-choice feeding for small flocks.

The 2012 conference will be under the leadership of Carl Schaler and will be held in North Carolina.

For more in-depth information, please see the website's posting of all meeting minutes.



Ceramic Keet by TammyLeigh Brooks, donated by GFIA



Art by Barbara Riddle & donated by Barbara Riddle



Paintings by Penny-Meakins, donated by Carl Schaler



Print on canvas donated by Barbara Buscemi



Christmas Ornaments by TammyLeigh Brooks, donated by Carl Schaler



Coffee Mugs donated by Zoe Howland

"Guinea Spots" bowls donated by Michaele Freund



Guinea tablecloth donated by April Howington



Book and Eggs donated By April Howington



GFIA Conference *cont'd from pg 2*

Saturday morning started off with a field trip to Coyote Creek for an opportunity to talk with Mr. Jerry Ramsey, the owner. Jerry makes his own feed with his own combination of molasses, earthworms, different fungi, hydrolyzed fish and other ingredients for all of his chickens. The mill itself could have been a day's learning activity! He showed us around his property, where his chickens were housed and explained how they were "tractored" from area to area to keep the grass growing and healthy for the chickens. He chose Hyaline chickens for their superior laying and he takes good care of them! Jerry's a strong advocate for all things organic, and considering what we've learned about mycotoxins, that may be something to consider, as all the products going into his feed is grown on his farm.



In the afternoon, after another delicious meal provided by Cindy and her mom, April Howington, of H & H Poultry, provided the group with a slideshow of keets representing a large number of the beautiful guinea colors. It was fun "testing" ourselves, trying to figure out what colors the keets would be. April even had a "guess the color" contest for us! Afterward, she talked about splints and the different reasons they may be needed, such as splayed legs or rotated femurs in keets. Since April has a commercial interest in the business end of raising poultry, she had valuable information pertaining to the state regulatory operations and gave handouts of different applications to be able to ship live poultry in and out-of-state. She discussed the testing processes necessary to keep a flock healthy and showed us a picture of her "testing box" that was the envy of all present that had to deal with that aspect of poultry ownership. It was similar to a "cattle shoot", and if you've ever tried to catch a guinea for a blood test, you know the importance of this handy piece of equipment!



After a night of good food and visiting, we headed back to the hotel. Sunday we got to listen to Brigid McCrea talk about the finer points of coops. While not hard to build or necessarily expensive, there are a few things that are required for the health of your birds. These things are much the same as needed at the bigger hatcheries: 1) ventilation 2) fresh food and water available at all times and 3) clean litter. They also need a shelter that is a safe place for them to lay eggs and stay away from predators.

In the afternoon we finished up with the auction and headed back home. It was a wonderful conference and kudos to Cindy Gibson, Carl Schaler, Brigid McCrea and everyone else that worked so hard to pull it off!

We were lucky enough to have Ms. Brigid McCrea, of Delaware State University, present additional information on rodent identification and control. She also shared some ideas of how to make inexpensive bait traps at home. With the size of some of your farms, that information could come in really handy!





The Guinea Tribune

Good morning! The latest news of today has to do with the guinea communities and the heightened state of excitement we find them in. It would seem that "Spring has sprung" and as in every spring since any guinea can remember, that means a couple of things. 1) Moms everywhere are very nervous, pacing back and forth to the oddest places with names like the "nursery" and the "brooder box" and 2) there are a few moms that will simply disappear for weeks on end, leaving their families worried for their safety.

On a small farm in Texas, our reporter, Gertie G has been braving the battle zones and just recently returned with her report.

Well, readers, I have to admit that this Spring has definitely come in roaring. On this small farm of perhaps 35-40 guineas, there are keets of all different ages in the nursery . The males are chasing each other like a group of first years and there are secret trysts going on behind every bush and tree. In my attempt to interview one young guinea I was practically drug to the ground when another male came, grabbed hold of his neck and they were off again! I hate to admit it, but I think it may well be into summer before I'll be able to get any of these guineas to settle down enough to have a real conversation. I did have the opportunity to visit the Celtic Breeze Lane Guinea Farm in the mountains of North Carolina, and while it was certainly beautiful there, the farmer himself hardly had time to shake my hand, as he was so busy running between his barn and his brooder boxes! At last count, he said he'd already gotten 305 keets this spring and most have already been spoken for. There are going to be a lot of lucky new guinea owners this spring! Hopefully I'll have more to report in the next newsletter!

If there's anything going on in your neighborhood that you'd like to tell our readers about, please contact Gertie G c/o Debbie.starr@gmail.com



GFIA memberships expire at the end of each calendar year. If you joined anytime after Sept. 1, 2009, your membership is still valid for 2010. If you have not joined or renewed since then, now is the time! Benefits include a Welcome Packet, educational materials, thrice-yearly newsletters, and an annual educational conference. In addition, you'll be supporting our work to expand the information available about guinea-keeping. Already, two studies are underway involving guinea fowl (one on free-choice feeding and one parasite control) which were started because of GFIA.

Our mission:

- Supporting the responsible keeping and breeding of guinea fowl;
- Educating on the care and habits of guinea fowl;
- Assisting those interested in incubating, hatching, and keeping Guinea fowl

2010 Membership Rates (prices in US dollars):

- Single Membership \$20.00
- Family Membership \$28.00
- Junior membership \$ 5.00
(age 15 & under)

To join or find out more about membership:

Join online using Paypal at
www.guineafowlinternational.org;
 call (979) 773-9100

Send payment to the address below:

GFIA
 2812 FM 987
 Kaufman, TX 75142

When you join, please include your name, address, phone number(s) and email address. We'd also like to know whether and how you want to be listed in our membership directory, how many and what color guinea fowl you own, and any special areas of interest.

Also, please consider contributing to our newsletter or serving on a committee. Email president@guineafowlinternational.org or call (979) 773-9100.