



Established For the Members, By the Members Working Together, the Possibilities are Endless!

The British Invasion - Kunekunes in the UK

By: Debra Allen

Kunekunes arrived in Britain in 1992. Zoe Lindop and Andrew Calveley had worked in New Zealand for several years and fell in love with the KuneKune. After meeting Michael Willis and learning how endangered these little pigs were, they imported a small group to breed in Britain. As the Kunes only existed in New Zealand, having a population in another country was essential in case of disease. Michael bred a wide range of Kunes, because it was important to have as wide a variety of genetic stock brought into the country as possible.

In 1993 Zoe imported two more bloodlines, and in 1996 Andy Case imported three more bloodlines into the U.K. KuneKune pigs are now well-established in Britain. In 1993 the British KuneKune Pig Society was organized.

The two decades of breeding in the UK greatly benefited the KuneKunes. No one can argue that improvement and selection were rigorous for the future breeding stock, and only the best was used to continue the lines. Thanks to the efforts of British breeders, the pigs imported into the US had well-documented pedigrees and a significant head-start on quality, both in conformation and temperament, and far fewer inheritable genetic issues. This last issue has become more critical recently here in the US as there is an apparent increase in some of these problems (scrotal hernia, cleft palate, atresia ani, cryptorchidism). Breeders saw the value of a breed of animal developed by people in a time when great poverty was the

norm. The animals needed to be utilitarian, easy to manage and feed and house, sustainable through bad weather and retain a sweet temperament.

Once established in the US, early American breeders bred and interbred the UK and NZ lines. As a result, most pigs now are a mix of the two.

KuneKunes in the USA

There have been 4 imports of KuneKunes from the UK into the United States.

2005 Import

In 2005, Lori Enright imported the Andrew boar line (Thatcher),

Thatcher (Andrew)



Photo of Thatcher (Enright)

The Te Whangi boar line (Winston)

Winston (Te Whangi)



Photo of Winston (Enright)

The Jenny sow line, Carrington

Carrington (Jenny)



Photo of Carrington (Enright)



Meadowlark Farm

Thatcher left; Carrington right (photo courtesy of Lori Enright, with permission)

Photo of Thatcher and Carrington as piglets (Enright)

2010 Import

In 2010, Sue Drake imported the Tutaki boar line (Henry)

Henry (Tutaki)



Photo of Henry (Drake)

The Rebecca Gina sow line, Sadie

Sadie (Rebecca Gina)



Photo of Sadie (Drake)

2012 Import

In 2012, Matt Burton and Christopher Rowley imported the Ru boar line (Barclay & Middleton), the BH Tutaki boar line (Darrowby), the BH Rebecca Gina sow line (Tatiana), the Sally sow line (Duchess Kate), the Kereopa sow line (Contessa), the Trish sow line (Ailsa & Freya), and the Awakino sow line (Pippa)

Barclay (Ru)



Photo of Barclay (Burton/Rowley, Olson)

Middleton (Ru)



Photo of Middleton (Burton/Rowley, Milroy)

Darrowby (BH Tutaki)



Photo of Darrowby (Burton/Rowley, Barlow)

Tatiana (BH Rebecca Gina)



Photo of Tatiana (Burton/Rowley)

Duchess Kate (Sally)



Photo of Duchess Kate (Burton/Rowley, Milroy)

Contessa (Kereopa)



Photo of Contessa (Burton/Rowley)

Ailsa (Trish)



Photo of Ailsa (Burton/Rowley, Barlow)

Freya (Trish)



Photo of Freya (Burton/Rowley, Barlow)

Pippa (Awakino)



Photo of Pippa (Burton/Rowley, Barlow)

2022 import

2022 import by Libby Milroy contained 14 pigs.

Crick Lodge Farms DDC Awakino 4

"Richelle" double wattled, cream



Button End DDC Sally 16

"Annabeth" double wattled, ginger/black



Button End DDC Sally 15

"Annalynne", doubled wattled, ginger/black (littermate sister to Annabeth)



Kinecroft DDC Kereopa

"Henna" ginger/black



Pencommins Trish 8

"Daleenna" ginger/black



Pencommins Trish 7

"Delcie" (littermate sister to Daleenna)



Pencommins DDC Rebecca Gina 26

"Lizette"



Pencommins DDC Rebecca Gina 27

"Lynne" (littermate sister to Lizette)



Knowlhill DDC Jenny

"Tink" black



Martinsfield DDC Sally 8

"Allaya"



Button End DDC Andrew 26

"Grizz" double-wattled, gold-tip



Button End DDC Andrew 27

"Quinn" (littermate brother to Grizz"



Kinecroft DDC Tutaki 23

"Huxley"



Fenswood DDC Ru 1

"Robin"



Photos by Libby Milroy

BH Meaning

The BH descriptors were added by the US registry to differentiate from the 2010 imports of the same names. The Tutaki/BH Tutaki lines and the Rebecca Gina/BH Rebecca Gina lines originate from the same lines in the UK.

The difference was that the BH stands for Barton Hill, the farm owned by Wendy Scudamore, who has played a key role in the kunekune breed in the UK, and in the exports to the US, including the 2022 import.

DDC Meaning

Similarly, the 2022 imports from the UK will have a designator added to their names DDC, which stands for Duck Dawg Creek, the farm owned by Libby Milroy, the 2022 importer. This will help breeders know which import the pig lines are from.

100% Pure British Pigs

Thankfully, a few breeders in the US now own 100% pure British kunkunes and are attempting to maintain their unique characteristics. A special mention to Brian Barlow of Arkansas, the owner of Darrowby, Pippa, and Freya when they passed. Libby Milroy in Nebraska still owns Middleton and Duchess Kate and owns the 14 pigs from the late 2022 importation.

Elizabeth Olson owned Barclay for many years before his passing. Jeremy Thompson, Nadene Reynolds, Stephanie Clapp Ash, Melissa Howitz, Bettina Saylor also have pure British bloodline Kunekunes. And other breeders have them as well.

(Photos of some of these pigs follow at the end of the article.)

My daughter and I are lucky to have several, including a son out of Duchess Kate (Royal), a daughter of Darrowby, and possibly the last adult daughter of Contessa (by Barclay).

This sow, named Maggie, is 11 years old. We have a daughter and now the granddaughters of Maggie. We also have two litter sister sows, who are by a son of Winston out of a Winston/Carrigan daughter. And a junior boar, Ike, who is a grandson of Barclay, Darrowby, and Freya.



Photo of Maggie (Allen)



Photo of Royal (Allen)

The imports and first generation pigs are either gone or aging, and it is due to the efforts of these breeders that the pure lines weren't just absorbed into the whole genetic soup and lost forever.

The Kunekune is a breed that shows a lot of genetic variation, this is one of the charms of the breed, and most people find they have favorite variations of kunes and breed types. We must be careful and breed all types of Kunes. To help a rare breed, you must preserve as much of the gene pool as possible, and not breed for fads and fashion, which inevitably leads to changing the breed forever.

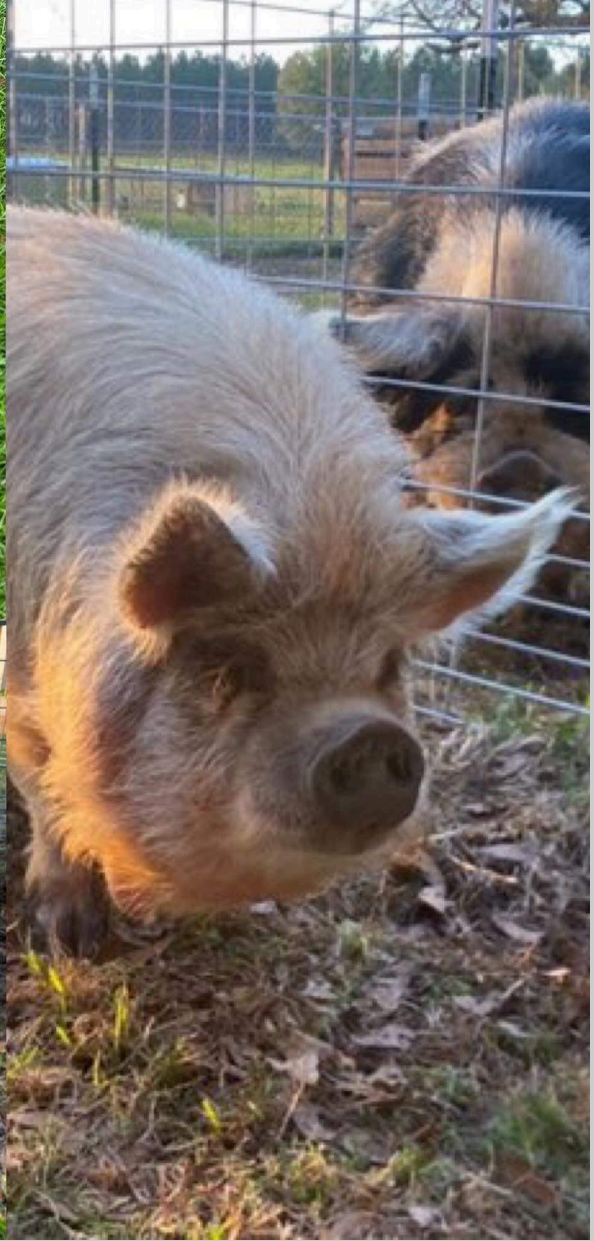
Improving or Improvising

Is it improving or improvising? Breeding for colors, patterns, excessive size and growth rate, or extremely short snouts is not the proper way to preserve a heritage breed inherently known for its slow growth, easy manageability, great mothering ability, and gentle usage of land resources. Maybe it's a viewpoint different from many, but preserving the original type, form, and function is essential. What's impressive to me is that these British pigs' names show up in so many pedigrees of today's great kunekunes, which shows they are superior genetic carriers of durability, efficiency, and manageability and prime examples of the roly-poly kunekune we all love.

It is important to maintain diverse genetic pools in a relatively small population. With the trend toward low COI breeding... Eventually, the breed will be a genetic mash of everything as breeders constantly seek unrelated animals from all corners..and then there can be no more outcross or COI reduction. Having isolated groups like British.....or others....protects the biodiversity of the breed and serves as a hedge against disease or harmful fault in the population at large.



(Photo by Jeremy Thompson of Angus (Darrowby and Ethel))



(Photo by Jeremy Thompson of Matilda Barclay and Duchess Kate)



(Photo by Jeremy Thompson of Sinbad Bennett and Pemberly)