

## Things to think about:

### Harriet Ritvo, "Possessing Mother Nature: Genetic capital in eighteenth-century Britain."

What did "improvement" mean in the context of livestock breeding at the turn of the nineteenth century?

Why was Bakewell so important to stockbreeding in Britain? Why was he so secretive about his methods?

How did (or didn't) Bakewell's techniques represent a rupture with past breeding practice?

What does Ritvo mean when she writes that Robert Bakewell "assumed that it was possible for the improver to redraw the conventional boundary between the sphere of nature and the sphere of agriculture"? (415)

What sort of "new value" entered into the price calculation of stock in the eighteenth century, and why was it significant? (416)

How do Bakewell's practices represent changing ideas of property in the late eighteenth century? What is new and important in these changes?

What was "genetic property," and why was it new and important?

What does "template" mean in this article?

What was significant about individuating animals from the herd at this time? (419)

Why was it important for breeders in the late eighteenth century to know the parentage of their breeding stock? How did recording this kind of information change the practice of livestock breeding?

What does Ritvo mean when she says that "the value of the most distinguished animals was ratified in language after it had been created in the breeding-pen"? (420)

How did breed books "create distinction"? (421)

How did what defined a "breed" change in the late eighteenth century? How and why did the meaning of the word "breed" change?

How did the perceived naturalness of domestic animals change at this time?

Why were these changes significant?

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