Alive & Well
Larry Robinson, 12-6-08

One could get the impression from the lack of effective communication during the summer months that NAPgA had faded from the scene. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is just that many of us have been out on the trails and away from home and unfortunately newsletters were unintentionally put on the back burner for a time. I myself was able to do a number of trips during the short (at least here in Idaho) hiking season. The unquestionable best was 10 days long. What a hoot. I discovered that I love being on the trails for a long period. That coupled with the other shorter trips that I was able to get out on made for another great hiking season. Pictures are on my website at: http://www.boiselarry.com/re-cents/events08.htm

But winter has set in, in earnest, and so we are more attuned to winter pursuits plus making up for our summer absences.

NAPgA is definitely alive and well and continues to work to influence those that are in the position of making decisions regarding our entrance into the back-country. Our most recent meeting was in November, and we will be meeting again in January. We will be working with land managers and other agencies to keep goatpacking up and present on their radar so we will be considered in any land use decisions.

If you are reading this and are not a NAPgA member, please consider joining with us and helping us be a louder voice for goatpacking nationwide. Our website at: http://www.napga.org will have the appropriate links to allow you to join with us. Click on 'About NAPgA', then on 'Membership Application'.

2009 Election Results!
NAPgA members have spoken, electing Carolyn Eddy & Charlie Jennings to the NAPgA Board. Welcome aboard to these capable folks.
In Memoriam

George -- Super goat, and Super Friend

NAIS Lives! (sadly)
SUBJECT: What NAIS Is Really About

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is hitting a few snags: lawsuits, anti-NAIS bills in state legislatures, low registration rates, backlash from small farmers. This is not surprising, because NAIS would invade the privacy of small farmers and overwhelm them with fees and paperwork.

On the surface, however, NAIS sounds reasonable. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) says NAIS is necessary to “protect the health of U.S. livestock and poultry and the economic well-being of those industries.”

But consider:

*As we told you last week, the USDA is preventing Creekstone Farms from testing -- voluntarily, at its own expense -- every one of its cattle for Mad Cow Disease.

*The U.S. is allowing importation of beef from countries with graver instances of disease.

NAIS is a system of RFID-chipping of every farm animal, so that in case of disease it can be traced to the farm of origin. But NAIS can’t trace diseased animals from farms in other countries.

Common sense says that if public health was the issue, then the USDA would hold imported livestock and meat to the same standards imposed on domestic producers. And would allow, even applaud, producers to go above and beyond the USDA’s own safety standards, as Creekstone tried to do.

This suggests that NAIS is designed not for public health reasons, but rather to promote the “economic well-being” of the livestock and poultry industries, especially through increased exports. But even then, it is unnecessary at best.

Cascade PG Club Labor Day Outing!
The Cascade Packgoat Club of Oregon had our annual campout on the weekend of September 5th, 6th, and 7th, 2008. This event is held the weekend after Labor Day and since 2002 it has been held at Camp Howe Horse Camp. Camp Howe is on land leased from the forest service and is managed by the Skamania Saddle Club of Carson, Washington. Situated in the Columbia Gorge near Stevenson, Washington, this beautiful camp is in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and is located next to the Wind River.

Over the years we have endured some wet weather (especially 2004 when it rained hard Friday night, Saturday, and Saturday night) but this year we had the best weather ever! We had nights of 45 to 50 degrees and days of 75 to 80. There were some mosquitoes when hiking near the lakes but it was really perfect camping and hiking weather.

We had about 25 people in attendance and the same number of goats.

Everyone took advantage of the many great hiking trails in the area. Each evening we had a fantastic potluck followed by a campfire to sit around and “talk goat”. Life doesn’t get any better!

See More pictures of the Carson Campout in the NAPgA Website Gallery
First of all, the U.S. is a net importer of beef.

And as grains are diverted from livestock feed to ethanol to comply with Congressional mandates, domestic meat production will fall and imports from countries like Australia are bound to increase.

In other words, meat producers don’t really need the foreign markets all that much. The largest, wealthiest market for meat is right here in the United States. Darol Dickinson looked at the data and notes, “the average per pound price in US dollars paid for imported beef, live and processed, is $2.39. The average price received for each exported pound of beef, live and processed, is $1.60. Each exchange of a pound of beef produces a net 79 cent loss.”

If individual U.S producers want to sell overseas, they should be free to do so at their own risk. But why should the USDA encourage this?

Moreover, the two countries which at one time demanded an animal identification system after a Mad Cow scare several years ago, South Korea and Japan, are once again accepting U.S. beef even without NAIS. And, as Dickinson writes, “The two largest purchasing countries of US beef are Mexico and Canada and they do not require NAIS. It now appears certain that NAIS is not, and perhaps has never been a factor in the US beef export equation.”

Even though NAIS is unnecessary, the USDA seeks to implement it even as it prevents firms like Creekstone from doing their own Mad Cow testing to gain an advantage in the East Asian markets.

What the USDA fears is loss of control. It is offended by private efforts to improve food safety. It shudders at the thought that an American producer might actually compete in foreign markets without USDA “direction” and “help.”

NAIS is not about protecting health or helping industry. NAIS is about increasing the federal government's control over the food supply. Which means, greater control over the American people.

And Congress never even passed a law establishing NAIS. But it does have the power to dismantle the program. You can tell Congress to get rid of NAIS using our free, easy-to-use Educate the Powerful System.

DownsizeDC.org

QUOTES OF THE DAY:

“The real problem for me is that my farm’s focus is in producing food locally, but the laws are designed for giant, impersonal businesses that deliver food across the globe.” - Paul-Martin Grieben-trog

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR GOATS GET LOST

Over the last several years, goat owners have occasionally lost goats when out hiking or camping. The land managers in all areas drown on goats being left to their own devices in the wilderness and so it reflects negatively on all packgoat owners when a goat is lost. To say nothing of how badly the goat and most of the owners feel. I say most because there have been reports of goats left because their owners are angry with them for not performing up to their expectations.

How to find a lost goat:

The best way is to not lose him in the first place. There are a few scenarios that make it more likely that your goat will disappear. One is on the trail when being passed by hikers that are going back to the trailhead, especially when the goat is young, has been imprinted to follow a moving human, and the owner is sitting down, not paying attention to the goat. Another is in camp, when the goat is loose and the goat can’t see where the human has gone, such as into a tent, or early in the morning when a group of hikers or other stock goes by and the goat follows them. Other factors that may cause goats to leave camp would be excessive bugs, predators coming into or near camp and severe weather. If any of these scenarios exist it is recommended that you tie all of your goats in camp. There’s nothing more heart stopping than looking up expecting to see your goats and have no one looking back.

The first thing you need to do is to, in the best tradition of Leave No Trace, is to plan ahead. Every goat should have an ID tag and a bell. The ID tag should have your contact information, including your cell phone number and home number, and, if you like, the words, “REWARD”. This sets your goat apart from a dumped, worthless goat. Army surplus stores often have dog tag machines, which have plenty of room for information such as your name, home state, etc. A bell may help discourage predators and also, if they haven’t gotten far, give you a sound that indicates the goats are on the move. Use a big enough bell that it is audible, especially if the goats start to run. Good bells are available from goat supply catalogs, or REI sells bear bells with a Velcro strap. You can use a larger, louder bell at home to summon everyone to dinner every night. Then take the bell with you. Use it in camp when you feed your treats. Also, make sure you have a couple of photos of your goats with you to post with “LOST” signs. A couple of pieces of paper, a couple of short golf pencils and some string will make an adequate sign. There are also Radio Frequency devices such as are used by mothers to track their children and hunters with dogs.

Here are some sources for locators that would work on goats:

Cat locator:
http://www.loc8tor.com

Child Locator:
http://www.brickhouse-childsafety.com

Next, in camp, unless you really know your goats, and they know you, it’s worth tying up at least one goat, preferably the ringleader, so that you can see if he panics when he sees the other goats leaving. There are reasons to highline and not to highline, so that’s not the argument here. It’s to know your goats and what triggers a goat’s desire to leave. Make sure your lead goat knows where
you are at all times. If you duck into a tent he may go looking for you if he didn’t see you go. Keep in eye contact with him. If you don’t have a lead goat yet, tying one is a second choice. Bugs will make goats go walkabout to find a place where they get relief. Use repellent as necessary.

Rex Summerfield says: “Also I would caution about tying only one goat at night when you are asleep. Under normal conditions that should keep them all close to camp. But if the conditions are severe enough, the remaining goats may head out anyway and by the time you figured out what was going on they may already be gone. I’m getting more and more convinced that most people should tie their goats at night.”

If the goats are on the trail make sure they are all with you every time you pass another party. Also, getting a hold of your lead goat will help prevent separations. If one goat starts back, have someone else in your party grab at least one goat while you go after the wayward one. That way you are less likely to have goats spreading out all over. Call to the people to stop and wait. Most people are pretty good about this.

Camp out of sight and preferably hearing of the trail. Goats have great eyes and ears but won’t go too far to check something out.

**IF YOUR GOATS ARE REALLY GONE**

Usually you’ll find them very close but somewhere you can’t readily see them. Often they will climb up onto any rocks to get a breeze or to get away from bugs. If you are in mountains you should always suspect that they have gone uphill and to where the undergrowth is less or the food is better.

Rex added: Goats have been reported to keep climbing once they are lost. They feel most comfortable in high rocky places and if your area has places like that make sure to check them for tracks and other signs the goats are around.

But, sometimes they are really gone. Start by walking a circle around your camp, and try to spot which way they left. Look for berries, chewed leaves, footprints, etc. You may have to go a ways out of camp, always circling the camp to find where they really left, and not just where they have been walking around camp. You should be ringing your bell at this point also. If you have been diligent and they’ve only been gone a minute or two and a predator hasn’t run them off you should be able to find them pretty quickly.

If you find a trail, take your bell and follow them. If you don’t find a trail and get no response to the bell, it’s time to head toward the trailhead or possibly another trail that crosses the one you are on, especially if they have been in the area before. Again, watch for signs that they have been through there.

If you have checked these areas thoroughly and not found them, it’s time to get worried. If you have multiple people in your party, leave one in camp and send the best hiker out to the trailhead. Get a sign up with your cell phone or contact info such as where you are camping, which trail you took in, etc. If you were by yourself, I’d post one at the lake or campsite also so when you leave, if the goats come back, someone will realize they are lost.

Rex added: “Ask in the note that they tie all the goats or none. The person who found them wouldn’t know which was the herd leader and would most likely tie the friendliest subordinate goat. I can see the others butting it while it was tied helplessly or worse, leave it bawling which would attract predators from miles around.” I’d also add that you put in the note that they only be tied if they plan to make contact with you that day.

If you have to leave the area, head for the nearest land manager’s office and report them lost. Leave your info with them. If they are closed and it’s a weekend, get their phone number so you can call them Monday morning. Leave the information there on their door.

When you get home, try to get a search party lined up as quickly as possible. The sooner you get back up there and the more people the better. Post to the packgoat e-list asking for assistance. Retrace all your steps and post better signs. Also try to talk personally to the land manager about the situation and impress on him or her that you are very concerned and will do whatever it takes to retrieve your goats. Ask that his or her field employees be notified so that they can talk to hikers about the goats. Keep looking, even if you have to go up on the weekends to do so. Goats have been found months after they disappeared.

**LEAVING GOATS IN THE WILDERNESS**

Never leave a goat in the wilderness deliberately. The land managers are watching us to see how we handle our stock, since we are so new to the packstock scene. They are horribly concerned about the disease possibilities and leaving an animal to die and spread disease is unacceptable to them and should be to us also.

If for some reason you cannot get a goat out you need to first take his load off, do whatever first aid seems appropriate, and see if he can hike out on his own. If you have to spend an extra day doing this, do it.

If it’s impossible to move the goat, try a travois or a stretcher if you have enough people to carry him.

Rex added: “If, despite your best efforts, it becomes obvious that the goat cannot make it out then it may become necessary to remove it to a place several hundred yards from any areas frequented by other recreational users and humanely dispatch it.”

Think through how you plan to do this before you go out in the woods. It’s not fair to the goat to leave him to fend for himself. Land managers recommend this form of dispersal if you are unable to remove the goat on your own.

If you can’t find the goats right away then report to the land managers what you are doing to address the problem and try to get people up to look at the area as often as possible. Try to get people from the packgoat list, hunters, horsemen groups, and individuals to keep an eye out and watch for them. Goats have been found several months after they were lost. Don’t give up too soon. And don’t abandon them; they are your responsibility.

*Carolyn Eddy-Excerpt from Practical Goatpacking, 2nd edition*

With the help of:
- Charlie Goggin-Lightfoot Packgoats
- Larry Robinson-Idaho
- Rex Summerfield-Northwest Packgoat Supply
- Tim Gallaty-New Mexico
Test It Out! The results are in! Have you ever tried something and then found a better way? Or has the hunt for the no-waste hay feeder intrigued you? Something else? Email me your test results at hasligrove@yahoo.com so we can share our success and/or “don’t ever try this” stories. Please also email any questions or comments concerning a “Test it out!” story.

Algae Buildup in Water Tanks
by Rachel Suomela

Currently I am conducting a test with my two stock water tanks. They are identical 50 gallon tanks about 1.5ft tall, 3ft wide and 4ft long. They are both light colored plastic material so seeing the gunk is really easy. They are both accessible to all 8 of my goats at any time. In tank #1 I have about 9 goldfish that range from 1.5 inches to 3 inches long. In tank #2 I have apple cider vinegar (ACV) at about ½ gallon ACV to 50 gallons water. They both were started on the same day with clean tanks and fresh water. It has been three weeks so far with rainfall, moderate occasional sun and temperatures ranging from high 30’s to mid 50’s. I am located in the southwest corner of Washington State.

Results so far
Tank #1 – There is definite algae buildup. Lots of fish poop which I have been scooping out daily with a fish net. Maybe they need to get a bit bigger so they will eat more algae to clear the tank? Could be the mild climate is a breeding ground for algae buildup too. I know others have great success with goldfish. Maybe after they are bigger and clear the tank easily there won’t be so much fish poop. I will report back at a later time on this. A positive side to the fish is that they will eat more algae to clear the tank? Could be they really can keep going. Feel their bodies grow stronger and more robust.

In tank #2 I have about 9 goldfish that range from 1.5 inches to 3 inches long. In tank #2 I have apple cider vinegar (ACV) at about ½ gallon ACV to 50 gallons water. They both were started on the same day with clean tanks and fresh water. It has been three weeks so far with rainfall, moderate occasional sun and temperatures ranging from high 30’s to mid 50’s. I am located in the southwest corner of Washington State.

Tank #2 – So far there is minimal to no algae buildup. I haven’t had to refill the tank yet. It has been raining heavily so as they drink the rain fills up the tank. I have added a cup or two of ACV after a heavy rain to try and keep the ratio of ACV to water the same as when I started. Pro to ACV is that it is good for the goats and is said to help with urinary stones. Con is the cost. I got a gallon at Fred Meyers for $5.99. Costco doesn’t carry it here, just the regular vinegar. We have a Cash-n-Carry that may have it for cheaper. I have 8 goats and guessing about 1 to 2 gallons a month maybe more in summer. Estimated cost of $150-$200 a year. Could be a small price to pay for urinary prevention and less scrubbing of the tanks.

To be continued...

Any comments? Anything else I should test out regarding algae and water tanks? Email “Test it out!” at hasligrove@yahoo.com.

Goats are Good for the Soul
I started with horses, or at least the yearning for one, from about 10 months according to my mom. My first word was “horse”. It was my sister who kept telling me all my life that goats were great. I’d only known two goats before I brought 5 milkers home to feed my orphaned foal; one was a tethered little raging buck who loved nothing more than to terrorize children and the other was a sweet, but ill mannered wether the summer I was 13.

Fast forward many years, I’m the mom of an 18 month old and a 4 year old. There is a dehydrated, orphaned foal needing someone who can nurse her back to health. The goats were brought home to feed her and I suddenly found myself milking five does. I fed her hourly for weeks, night and day nearly all summer, though the feed-ings did get farther apart after two weeks, at least at night. These first few weeks with Kira and the goats were very hard as my own baby was also still nursing and sometimes I’d be milking the goats while nursing Sierra.

The one thing kept striking me over and over; the fact that these goats had not known me when we started, 2 of them were wild, but all of them willingly submitted themselves to my hands twice a day, every day to be milked. My hands burned with pain for I’d not been milking when this started and for one reason or another, not one was easy to hand milk. I did indeed cry over spilt milk that summer. One doe, a big black Nubian named, Black Goat, let Sierra ride her back to the pen after each milking. Black Goat was NOT tame and would not let us touch her other than to lead her to be milked and back, but she let tiny Sierrạ ride her. I was very touched by this and the fact that these five fine ladies gave me their milk twice a day every day so willingly when they’d not known me at all before it all started.

Finally that fall, when I could safely wean Kira, I gave the goats back to their owners and found myself missing them very much. I had discovered that goats are friendlier, easier to manage and sweeter than I thought they would be. I knew that goats prefer their own family and I had been a stranger to them, but we formed a bond on my hay bale-milking stand, and I was hooked!

Now I breed and keep packgoats. I am amazed at the incredible fidelity of these creatures who now share our lives, they are every bit as loyal as our dogs, but more independent minded. They are smart, sensitive, responsive and easy to live with. They’ve stood in defense of my children when they thought my kids were in danger and they’ve done the same for me. They carry our gear over hill, over dale, without complaint so that we, as a family, can enjoy the wilderness in ways not possible without the goats. They lay quietly by the tent at night, just touching it, so they can be close to us through the dark hours until dawn. The soothing, rhythmic sounds of cud chewing lull me to sleep each night in camp.

What a blessing the goats have been for my children. They’ve learned how to care for their goat friends in sickness and in health, have caught new kids slipping into the world in the freezing darkness, steaming, slick and alive. They’ve raised kids on bottles, trained them to run the trail course for 4-H shows, taught the public about goats, goat care and goat training at the same events. They’ve learned patience, responsibility and compassion, dispelled goat myths, taught goat facts and showed a least a few people that goats do make wonderful companions. They have also learned more than I can write about wild places, animals, plants, geology and life because they’ve lived on the trail with their goats. Without the goats these trips would have been impossible. My non-wilderness friends are amazed at what my children know about the world around them. They know because they’ve asked and I, as a mom, am also a teacher; they know because it was under their noses, in their world, under their feet and near enough to touch. They’ve watched eagles soar, seen osprey dive for fish and come up with the bounty of the lake to feed their young. They’ve seen an abundance of wildlife, natural beauty, and weather. They’ve been out in a lightening storm, rain pelting them, danger and fear mixed with the joy of life and living.

Too many children today never get a taste of the wild world around them; never watch a sunset, all the more beautiful for the effort it took to gain the view. They never test the physical limits of their bodies, never had the opportunity to push beyond that point of fatigue and learn they really can keep going. Feel their bodies grow stronger and more capable with every training hike. Their minds are not tested through
the body’s trials so they know neither their own limits nor capabilities. They have not learned how fragile life is, nor how amazingly resilient. They have no clue how good a bowl of ramen noodles tastes at the end of a long hike. Food, like life, becomes more precious out there, more real, more intense when you are on the trail. They are not out hiking, mucking out, grooming or just hanging out with their outdoor friends. Too many children aren’t learning to pay attention to their own bodies or their world, but are inside, playing some electronic thingamajig and are unaware of the phase of the moon or how bright the stars shine from out in the middle of nowhere.

Now here -- my children love that place, we’ve been there often, its peaceful there, quiet and alive. It is beautiful, worth the walk, worth the sweat and effort, how many children know this? How many adults for that matter? Think of what these creatures give us! How many people these days know the thrill of waking up to stag standing in the morning mist? Or know the bracing cold of a high mountain lake? How many folks have had to cook dinner in the rain or flee a thunderstorm, giving them stories to tell around the hearth on a long winter’s night? When do we get to taste the triumph, joy, simplicity, and beauty of the hundreds of moments trail life brings so readily yet are absent in our daily lives? Many goatpackers would not be able to access deep wilderness without goats to haul our gear. I know my life would be depleted without the ability to immerse myself in wilderness.

Their antics sustain us through the long winters when we dream of spring packing trips. Their personalities, so different, so wonderful, make us laugh and bring joy. Their daily needs keep us moving forward and getting out even in the darkness of winter or the harshest of weather, these things are good for us, bring is closer to nature, our selves, our world.

I know I’m not the only one who has sat out in the silence of a winter’s night to watch the stars spin overhead while snuggled against the warm bodies of my goats; their quiet companionship a balm to life’s pain. The serenity these animals possess seems to seep into my very soul so that I can feel the rightness of the family bond we share. To them, I’m the leader of the herd, family, as right and real as any family can be. My species means nothing to them, my looks, my age, my wealth or poverty, all meaningless to the goats. To them, I’m “The Mom” and that is enough.

So during this season of celebration when we gather, friends and family to be thankful for what we’ve been given, thankful for each other, contemplating the meaning behind our traditions, whatever they may be, remember the gifts freely given by our lowly and long standing companion… the goat.

Charlie Goggin
Lightfoot Packgoats

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Learnin’ the Hard Way
By: Rachel Suomela

I don’t think of myself as a packgoat veteran yet…in fact I still feel like a newbie even though I have been at it for 6 years now. When does that officially start? Trail time logged, years raising goats, quantity of goats or does it ever really come to be?

With some of us it is hard to admit and with some it happens too often, but we all should hear the stories and gain something when we learn it the hard way. If you have a story or have experience with “Learnin’ the Hard Way”, please email me at hasligrove@yahoo.com so I can share (anonymously if you wish) with the group so we all can expand our knowledge. Please also email any questions or comments concerning a “Learnin’ the Hard Way” story.

Dog Attack – In Memory of Sockeye

We were newbies! Never raised goats before, never had packgoats before but we had animal backgrounds with horses and other livestock growing up. How hard could it be? We attended several seminars, read several books and jumped in head first. We purchased two kids and two 3 year old Oberhasli. We were all set before our new friends were to come home. We had a small barn with separate living areas for the big boys and little guys. We had separate pastures with 5ft high field fence and electric on inside, outside and one up at 5.5ft. We had hay, milk, grain, mineral salt and water. Welcome to the world of packgoats!

Our goat barn was down the road a ways from the house. Not the ideal situation…I wanted to be able to look out the window and see the boys but this was what we had. It wasn’t too far away but a bit isolated so we made sure we had good fences. We went to the goat barn morning and night and sometimes mid day depending. Our boys were growing and learning…along with us…and we were having a wonderful time.

One misty morning, my partner went to go feed the goats and he knew something was terribly wrong the moment he arrived. A quick glance around and he saw the worst. Sockeye (one of the kids) was laying motionless near the fence, Neptune (a big boy) and Coho (the other kid) were cowering in the barn, Jupiter (the other big guy) was up in the large vine maple tree that he liked to climb and under the hay bin, laying like fat lions, were two dogs! It happened to be hunting season and he had his rifle in the truck and took care of the two dogs before they even knew what hit them. He entered hastily to assess the damage.

Poor Sockeye was dead and really chewed up. There was nothing we could do for him. Neptune and Coho, who were in the barn, were pretty beat up with lots of lacerations. Jupiter, up in the tree, was fine. Coho was by far the worst and was in shock. He put his jacket around Coho, called me and called the vet. We loaded the three goats up and off we went to the vet. (Make sure you have made contact with a vet…even if you never need them…you need to have one you can call in an emergency) We were not sure if Coho would make it. He had a deep laceration across the back of his neck and his esophagus had been punctured (we were not sure if he would be able to eat or not). Many, many staples and sutures later they were recuperating in separate rooms. The two big boys went home that evening but Coho stayed several days. I would sit with him and he would put his head against mine and kind of whimper. It was the worst several days. What amazing animals though. He started eating the next day and slowly began to heal. The wound on the back of his neck even healed and he can lift his head high and normal. The only fun out of the whole ordeal…was seeing the faces of the vet techs as we walked in. They
were expecting little goats (they are not a livestock vet but were all we had in an emergency) and their eyes grew wide. There were words muttered like “wow”, “look at those horns”, “so big” and from one small child waiting with his kitten…”look mom! Moose!”

So….What happened? We had been doing some work around the property and had piled up a bunch of logs right next to the fence. The stray dogs must have climbed up on the logs, jumped in, and then were unable to get out. The moral of the story…check inside and outside of fences regularly for any means for a predator to get in and maybe invest in a livestock guardian. A simple oversight on our part had devastating consequences. Don’t learn the hard way like we did.

A funny side note – We learned something about “the mysterious mind of the goat” (as I call it) that day. Neptune (one of the big boys) was heard boss and always a bit nasty. He was the bully, show off and just had a chip on his shoulder. We nick-named him Nasty Neptune. After the dog attack and Neptune got hurt he no longer was the herd boss. Jupiter took over that roll. Neptune was instantly the sweetest guy and Jupiter took on those nasty traits. It made me realize that dealing with the boss…you have to change your tactics a bit…and he’s not really a bad goat…just the boss. Learning to think like a goat…or better yet…out think a goat has been my biggest challenge!

By Wiley Miller

UM…BOB? THE MEMO SPECIFICALLY SAID THIS IS BRING-YOUR-KID-TO-WORK DAY.

Nightshade!

Last summer I found a plant growing on the weeds with flowers and black berries. I knew that it pulled it and put it in the trash. This summer I pulled it again and found several small plants sprouting along the barn. I pulled them right away.

Last month the local newspaper had an article about nightshade because several people had brought samples of it to be identified at the extension office. From this article I learned that the plants I was pulling were actually black or common nightshade. I researched “Plants Poisonous to Livestock” on the Cornell University Department of Animal Science website and noted these differences:

Belladonna or Deadly Nightshade
Species most affected: humans, goats
Poisonous parts: all
Primary Poisons: atropine and scopolamine

Common or Black Nightshade
Species most affected: humans, rodents, sheep, horses, and goats
Poisonous parts: leaves, immature fruit
Primary Poisons: soladukidine, solanine

I decided to write this article for my fellow goat packers in the NAPgA and also for my Working Goat 4-H club so I continued my research on the Internet. What a fascinating subject!

The name Belladonna is derived from Italian and means “beautiful woman”. Nightshade was once used by women to enlarge their pupils. Other names for deadly nightshade are Devil’s Cherries, Naughty Man’s Cherries, and Devils Herb.

Another interesting fact is that the nightshade family includes some of the most common edible plants. Members of the nightshade family include: potatoes, tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplant, tobacco, petunias, mandrake, hot peppers, and wolfberries. So this is why we’re told not to feed tomato or potato plants to our goats!

I found lots of sites describing how the nightshade family can cause inflammation and headaches in humans. The nightshades most often warned against are tomatoes, bell peppers, potatoes and eggplant! This REALLY surprised me. If you find any of these facts interesting you might want to do some research of your own, especially if you have arthritis, joint pain, or suffer from headaches.

One final page of interest was from Wikipedia and it described a nightshade called Solanum americanum or American nightshade. The picture of this plant showed it was exactly like the plants I have been seeing. The description says it is a herbaceous flowering plant native to the America’s, from the south and west of the United States south to Paraguay and Peru. It also occurs in Hawaii. I’ve changed my mind several times now but I believe the plant we’re seeing here in the Willamette Valley in Oregon is American nightshade.

The foliage and unripe fruit of most nightshades contain dangerous levels of a steroid alkaloid, solanine. The ripe berries are the least toxic part of these plants, but may be deadly under some circumstances. Solanine is also found in potato sprouts and the green spots of some potatoes. A toxic dose of any of these will usually result in severe digestive upset. This may be accompanied by trembling, weakness, difficulty in breathing, or paralysis.

I have a neighbor who I don’t get along with. Our barns are only 15 feet apart. Right behind his barn is a large area of weeds. A lot of the weeds are American nightshade. He has horses that aren’t very well fed (whole different story) so I called and warned him. He did mow them but now they have grown back. They haven’t matured and gotten berries so I hope I don’t need to worry about having thousands of little nightshades on my property. From my research I know that nightshade is an Annual or short-lived Perennial and can be hard to eradicate.

I’ll keep you posted…
Jan Privratsky
From Barnyard Bad Boys ... To Backcountry Bellhops

October 1, 2008, Dave Philipps, The Gazette

This man-meets-goat story can be seen as a question of who saved whom.

True, when Steve Galchutt (the man) met Gotta Love ’em Rooster Cogburn (the goat), Rooster was an unneeded male dairy goat headed for the Carniceria.

“He was very near to barbecue,” Galchutt (pronounced “galshoot”) said.

But Galchutt, 63, had looming problems of his own.

“I’m an old jogger whose knees can no longer take a heavy pack. So I guess you could say he rescued me as much as I rescued him,” the Monument resident said when he pulled up his Toyota pickup to a trailhead on the edge of the Buffalo Peaks Wilderness recently for a three-day backpack trip with friends.

Rooster is a pack goat - one of two with whom Galchutt regularly hikes. Each 200-pound European dairy goat can carry about 45 pounds, letting Galchutt go on long journeys without much in his own pack.

“I’m the original city slicker. I grew up on a surfboard in Los Angeles,” he said as he opened the covered back of the pickup. “But these guys are amazingly easy. It’s like having dogs, but they don’t bark, bite or chase.”

Rooster and his partner, Peanut, nudged their heads out like golden retrievers anxious for a walk. When Galchutt dropped the tailgate, they jumped gracefully down and ambled around the truck, nibbling the grass on the edge of the woods.

The goats are perfect trail companions, Galchutt said. They have no halters or leashes, yet they never wander. They don’t balk or scare. They’ve been up fourteeners and down canyons. They’ve trudged through deep snow in little homemade ponchos.

“They think I’m lead goat,” said Galchutt. “So they’ll follow me anywhere. They’d sleep in the tent if I’d let them.”

There was some contention over the lead-goat title two years ago, when Galchutt got Rooster. The goat butted Galchutt when he wasn’t looking. Galchutt turned around, held the goat down, sat on him for a few minutes to let him know who was boss.

“It only took one time,” Galchutt said. “Now these guys are so lovable Rooster will come lay his head in my lap by the campfire at night.”

Not exactly the image most people have of goats.

“They have a terrible reputation in the United States,” said Carolyn Eddy, author and former publisher of Goat Tracks Magazine, “The only magazine of the working goat.”

At best they’re seen as ornery, randy, aggressive, stinky beasts - bad boys of the barnyard that will eat anything from tin cans to laundry off the line. At worst, they are a symbol of Satan himself.

Maybe all the bad press goes back to ancient Hebrew practices of heaping the community’s ills on a sacrificial scapegoat, or to early Christianity’s demonization of the half-goat Pagan god Pan. Maybe it’s a xenophobic remnant of America’s first immigrants, who were mostly cow-tending English, against later goat-tending immigrants from the Mediterranean.

Or maybe some goats are just jerks.

“They definitely can be aggressive,” Eddy said. “But not if they are used to humans. If they think you are one of the herd, they’ll follow you anywhere.”

Since Eddy started breeding pack goats in the early 1990s, she’s seen demand explode, mainly from “Sierra Club backpacker types,” such as Galchutt, “who are getting too old to carry a pack.” Numbers are still small compared with horses or even llamas. There are no local commercial outfitters who offer goat-pack trips.

But for individuals, they can be ideal.

“The learning curve is not as steep. You don’t have to know a lot about pack animals to handle these guys,” she said.

Galchutt headed up the trail with friends Christian Nowak and Reed Dominik. The goats trotted behind, their little goat panniers bouncing at every step.

“This is certainly a luxury,” said Dominik, as he watched Peanut pad past. “He’s carrying my whole tent.”

They followed a trail up a gorgeous mountain valley fringed with golden aspens glowing against dark firs.

While the men savored the view of the landscape, the goats savored the actual landscape, taking a small bite at almost every step.


The strap hanging from the lead goat’s backpack? Chomp.

“Hey, stop that,” Galchutt said.

Because goats take little nibbles from nearly everything they pass, there is no need for packers to bring extra feed. (Galchutt brings a bit of grain as a treat.) And because goats browse on nearly everything, they’re easier on meadows than horses, which tend to focus on grass.

In fact, in many places, including Colorado Springs, goats are seen as so beneficial to wild areas that land managers use them to get rid of invasive weeds.

In almost every way, Galchutt said, goats are a cinch compared with better-known pack animals such as horses. Galchutt picked up both his goats for $140 from hippy goat-cheese outfits in the San Luis Valley. Even a pedigreed pack goat goes for a modest $300. And since goats don’t need horseshoes or a trailer, eat a fifth of what a horse does and need no regular vet care beyond annual shots, they are relatively cheap to keep.

There are concerns among land mangers that taking goats into some backcountry areas could spread parasites to bighorn sheep, but since Galchutt vaccinates his goats, he said the risk is minimal.

On the trail, his companions’ nimble hooves seemed designed for hiking. They followed Galchutt up rocky climbs and trotted across streams on wobbly logs that had the hikers flailing for balance. When they encountered a dog, they stood and stared, alert but calm.

Galchutt packs a pistol in case a mountain lion attacks, but he said if a mere Labrador gets up in Rooster’s grill, “He’ll butt them right off the trail.”

And if Rooster occasionally tried to nibble the map in Galchutt’s hand, he never actually took a bite.

“It’s pretty impressive what they can do,” said Dominik, who had never hiked with goats. “I’m sold on it.”

That night they set up their tents on the edge of a high meadow. The goats knelt down in the grass, placidly chewing their cud, and perked
Pack Goats:

Weight: 200 pounds
Cost: up to $300
Carry capacity: about 45 pounds
Range: 10-15 miles per day
Allowed in most National Forests and wilderness areas? Yes
Allowed to live within Colorado Springs city limits? No

400 Goats Visit Golden Gate Seminary

By Phyllis Evans, Sep 4, 2008

Golden Gate Seminary has used goats from Goats-R-Us for the past five years to cut grass on the hillier inclines of the San Francisco-area campus.

Four hundred goats from Goats-R-Us were used to cut grass this summer at Golden Gate Seminary.

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)–Four hundred goats descended on the verdant hillsides of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in July, cutting the grass as well as the seminary’s costs for landscaping staff.

“We save approximately $5,000 in labor and materials by contracting with Goats-R-Us,” said Robert Dvorak, the seminary’s facilities management director.

Additional potential costs if Golden Gate staff did their work are possible injuries from attempting to use mowers and weed whackers on the steep terrain or potential poison oak infections, both of which could incur medical treatment and loss of work time.

The goats, which were stationed for three weeks on the steeper areas of the 120-acre campus in Mill Valley, Calif., have been annual visitors at the Bay Area seminary for the past five years. They were managed by a Chilean goat herder and two border collies as well as visitors at the Bay Area seminary for the past five years. They were managed by a Chilean goat herder and two border collies as well as visitors at the Bay Area seminary for the past five years. They were managed by a Chilean goat herder and two border collies as well as visitors at the Bay Area seminary for the past five years.

Golden Gate also is swapping several of its gasoline-powered carts for four electric vehicles. “We hope to dispose of at least three of our gasoline vehicles,” Dvorak said. “For one particularly old truck, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is paying us $650 to retire it.”

Other “green” methods that Golden Gate employs is the use of “Orange Spray,” an environmentally friendly alternative for a chemical termite spray; a recycling program that includes fluorescent bulbs, batteries, used oil and old paint; and upgrades to some of its boiler rooms to more efficient gas burners and more efficient pumps.

“We appreciate the opportunities for the seminary to be responsible environmental stewards of this beautiful spot in Marin County,” Golden Gate Seminary President Jeff Iorg said.

Golden Gate Seminary is a Cooperative Program ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention and operates five fully accredited campuses in Northern California, Southern California, the Pacific Northwest, Arizona and Colorado.

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easy on their rumen and keeps up his energy and fat levels -- this is not his full diet of course, just a supplement.

This helps with high protein and extra fat. The next item you could think about and what has worked very well for us are vitamins and holistic care for the older goat. I mix up a “elixir” of vitamins (infant), plus extra B vitamins, plus immune supplements (Astragalus, or other type), and MSM -- this is a base mix that is given to our goat every day -- helps his systems stay strong and the MSM (human tablet form) helps with arthritis. I also use a holistic arthritis pain therapy (Arthritis pain formula by Hyland and Arnica Ic Arthritis -- this is oral too and so I just mix everything together (I crush the tablets or just dissolve them in warm water and keep a weeks’ batch in the refrig. I bring our old boy into the barn on really cold nights. I also make sure he is drinking well -- that includes warm molasses water on the cold days and clean water available all the time. We also use a coat to help him stay warm. I also keep up with his worming schedule and vaccination schedules (CDT, and selenium as needed).

Let me know if I can help with other ideas including holistic specifics.

Donna
Steve and Donna Semasko
Edelweiss Acres
Olympia, WA

Packgoats vs. Herd Goats
by Carolyn Eddy

There’s difference with large herds of domestic goats who may not be healthy and certainly not having had health checks being turned loose to do weed control or graze without any human overseeing, and our packgoats which are healthy and vaccinated for disease and not allowed to go out unattended for days, where they might have the opportunity to get close to bighorns.

The vets who do the research, differentiate domestic untended goats and packgoats. Unfortunately, the wildlife managers in some areas tend to tar us all with one brush, and say that it’s any goat who can cause the problem.

Fact is, it’s possible for these diseases to be spread by many vectors, horses, deer, sheep, etc, and packgoats are the least of their worries, if they looked at it rationally. Unfortunately, some of them do not.

The land managers in places such as Washington who have taken the time to look at the problem logically have come up with a list of recommendations that are posted at trailheads in bighorn country. The recommendations are in the NAPgA pages.

It’s a matter of education and perseverance that these areas remain open to us. Jan Huffaker, former NAPgA president, Charlie Wilson, Charlie Jennings, Rex, Clay Zimmerman, the Semaskos, myself and I’m sure I’m forgetting others who have spend a great deal of time and their own money on educating land managers. I know there are many more, just can’t come up with names right now. We just have to keep working on it.

BTW, NAPgA has a land use committee that can always use members. Contact Charlie Jennings vigilguy@gmail.com if you’d like to be part of the solution.

“Sweet Goat Mama”
Carolyn Eddy
www.goattracksmagazine.com

Disease Transmission, Goats to Big Horn Sheep
A response from Jan Huffaker, past President, to an individual who was worried about this issue...

There has been no instance of any disease transmission from packgoats to bighorn sheep. However domestic sheep DO transmit disease to bighorn. In the one research trial where the researchers attempted to transmit pasteurella to bighorn, they were unable to do it with the goat; even after swabbing the tonsils of the goat and transferring to the bighorn. CL and pinkeye are more contagious, so like Charlie said it is prudent to keep any sick goat home. Just makes good sense.

The wildlife veterinarians who are familiar with packgoats agree that although there has not been any known transmission, it is prudent to err on the side of caution and take a few precautions when goat-packing in bighorn territory. Namely, avoid direct/close contact with any bighorn. This means to avoid bighorn if you see them, avoid areas where they hang out, keep your goats in close contact at all times, and land managers would like to see you highline your goats at night to prevent them wandering off. These seem to be reasonable precautions to me for anyone hiking in bighorn areas.

None of us want to harm the bighorn. But for some reason some ignorant people seem to think that a packgoat is a walking disease factory. If they accost you about it, have them show you the proof. As a past board member of NAPgA, I have looked at pretty much every research trial done concerning disease transmission between goats and bighorn, (which admittedly isn’t very much) and so far the packgoats have NOT been proven deadly to bighorn. Yes, there was the case in Arizona where a herd of goats was left unattended to wander and unfortunately may have been responsible for pinkeye in the desert bighorn. But these were NOT packgoats; they were unattended, sick goats left to roam in direct contact with bighorn. I could just shoot the person who did this; besides harming the bighorn, he caused a lot of bad press for goats.

Horses are just as capable of spreading pinkeye as goats. But you never see horses banned from bighorn territory because of disease concerns.

So as long as you follow a few sensible precautions, I see no harm in taking packgoats into areas where bighorn may be.

Carpe Diem!
Jan Huffaker
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