Rendys, Rendys, Rendys, they're popping up all over!

The 2008 NAPgA Sheep Creek Rendezvous

What can I say, it was a wonderful weekend!

Sheep Creek Lake is a beautiful area, and the weather was perfect. Warm days, cool nights, no rain. We shared the lake with the local fish biologist, who was spawning cutthroat. I’m used to little brook trout, I’ve never seen fish that big. They have a fish trap and fish pens at the lake, and they “turn on the water” by diverting water through the trap and into a small creek, and when the fish notice that the creek is running, they head upstream to spawn. So we could see this small creek literally boiling with fish around 15-20” long. They head upstream and get caught in the trap, then are sorted, weighed, and the eggs are harvested. The fish are released back into the lake, the eggs are taken elsewhere and fertilized and hatched out, and fingerlings are released by airplane into other lakes.

But enough about fish.

Goatstock 2008 was a rousing success. By my count we had 25 people and 24 goats, plus two dogs. We had people from Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Wyoming, and even Maine! And probably somewhere I’ve forgotten about. Pretty much every breed of goat was represented. Some of us arrived early on Wednesday and set up camp. Thursday we pretty much mellowed out and sat around chewing the fat, catching up with old friends and making new ones, and welcoming people as they arrived. Some of us took a walk around the lake. Thursday night was the first of our potlucks; and boy I’m not kidding when I say I gained two pounds in five days. We had a bunch of good Dutch oven cooks.

The 2008 Ohio Regional Packgoat Rendezvous

The rendy successfully wrapped up this morning as we reluctantly packed up to go home.

There were 11 groups that made the trip to The Spotted Horse Ranch in Laurelville, Ohio for the three day event. I’m guessing that the pictures will be posted soon in the photo albums.

If we counted correctly, there were 27 people and 22 goats in attendance during the weekend. We had folks of all ages (from 72 and down), goats of various breeds: Lamancha, Ober, Togg, Alpines (gobs), Saanen, Boer, Nubian, and one silky-long haired Golden Guernsey boy* (we even had two infant potbellied pigs in the camp). There were many goat carts at the rendy -- they are fun to watch. I hope someone posts some of the great harness goat activities... Our Saanen Merriewether (the yard “dog”) did a great job under harness for the first time—thanks Meagan!

Stephanie Balzer brought her spinning wheel and fiber rovings, thus she spun yarn while camping...I fell in love with her cashmere/alpaca creation in the back of her van while she was packing up to go home...if I’d had stickier fingers it could have been mine all mine! LOL

We had (((RAIN))))... but we did have nice temps in the upper 70’s to low eighties during the day and cool temps for good sleeping.

Thankfully the camp area drained well. The hikers forged ahead on the horse trails -- with much uphill climbing, some water crossings (loved the wide shallow creek) and beautiful Ohio hillscapes to take in.

Each night we enjoyed a potluck meal as a group in the

News Flash!

Jim Bennett felt it necessary due to personal pressures to resign from the NAPgA Board, vacating the President’s position. Jan Privratsky is ‘acting’ at this point, but does not desire to continue in that position. We will be having a meeting on the 8th of July to resolve these and other NAPgA issues. His goals, stated elsewhere in this issue are intact. They will be pursued with vigor.
and every night was a feast. Chicken, meatloaf, veggies, salads, peach cobbler, chocolate cakes, potatoes, fruit, you name it, we had it. Each morning Clay fired up his stoves and we had sourdough pancakes (with real Maine maple syrup!), eggs, sausage, bacon, and leftovers from the night before.

Friday morning the toilets finally arrived (some sort of mixup and major apologies from the potty man), and boy were we glad to see them. On Friday we greeted more arrivals, walked around, and had an interesting talk by the fish biologists about their operation at Sheep Creek Lake. We spent a good part of the day doing demonstrations on highlining, Leave No Trace, blood draws, and so forth. We got out a variety of gear and spent time showing how to saddle, the pros and cons of various types of gear, and in general sharing tips and expertise among one another. Charlie Hackbarth has been making llama gear for a long time and is now designing goat gear, so he brought some saddles for people to try.

Carolyn Eddy and I spent a good part of Friday getting set up for the silent auction. People were very generous in their donations, in fact we got 51 items donated for the auction. We had camping gear, books, goat stickers, water bottles, and lots of goat gear. Everything from hoof knives, blankets, panniers, and three sets of hard saddles and one soft saddle. Grab bags, gift certificates, handmade items, and 5 lifetime subscriptions to Goat Tracks (that was a hot item!). We displayed all the items in the canopy, then people had a day to write down their bids. Saturday evening was the auction; there was a mad scramble the last 15 minutes to finish bidding, then Carolyn gathered the tickets and announced the winners. The auction netted $1266.50, thanks to generous donors and generous buyers. I don’t have all the names, but they will be listed in Goat Tracks. My heartfelt and sincere thanks to all donors. Charlie Hackbarth donated two saddles/panniers, Kristina Bradford a saddle/panniers, Carolyn Eddy a soft saddle and books, there was a variety of gear from Northwest Packgoats, 5 lifetime subscriptions to Goat Tracks plus gift certificates from Shannon Ashment, a variety of stickers and cards from Rachel Suomela, donations from Caprine Supply and Alternative Livestock, plus lots and lots of other items from other people, too many for me to remember them all.

On Saturday we did our service project. Clay led a large contingent of people and goats to a nearby trailhead, and we hiked in about 2.5 miles up towards Tepee Lakes, clearing downed logs as we went. We had two chainsaws going and lots of helping hands. We stopped for lunch at a junction, then a one crew headed towards Red Lake while another headed for Lost Lake. Here the trail damage was worse, and both crews were busy. After awhile both chainsaws quit, but we got quite a bit of work done, cleared partway to Red Lake and nearly 3 miles of the Lost Lake trail. Then we headed back for a late potluck supper, and auction action. During our absence a wagon train showed up at Sheep Creek Lake, much to the delight of the people who had stayed in camp. Plus Brett Reynolds showed up with a stash of goodie bags from the Vernal Chamber of Commerce. We stayed up late Saturday night chewing the fat around the campfire, then off to bed.

Sunday morning I left for a 9 hour drive home. I wish I could have stayed longer. What more can you ask for than a beautiful setting, lots of good camaraderie, and lots of goats! Clay and Charlotte Zimmerman of High Uintah Packgoats were wonderful hosts, they took care of every need. Their wether Goattee with his HUGE rack became our mascot for the weekend. My thanks to them for all their hard work throughout the year in getting this set up, and for taking such good care of everything. My thanks also to Carolyn Eddy for doing the silent auction, and to everyone who attended for being such a wonderful group.

Now the next question is, where do we want to go next year? Carpe Diem!
Jan Huffaker
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The 2008 Ohio Regional Packgoat Rendezvous (cont)
ily room area in the party hall -- he recovered well and entertained us with his “Hats of History” program that highlighted many American historical figures via his use of recognizable hats (tricorn, stovepipe, headdress, mountain man raccoon hat, keppie, were some for example).

We were led in a small, meaningful worship Sunday morning by my son Cody. He used Merrie’s first harness goat experience as an example of being willing to be led by a loving hand. Then much later that evening we enjoyed a gift drawing with items donated from Northwest Packgoats, Pacific Packgoats (Rachel S.), Quality Llama Products, Sharon Allen, and Michelle Henry. Thanks much!

My Goatstock logo tees arrived after I left for rendy -- BUT Larry and Tammy Wilcoxen went out of their way to pick them up for me when they came for the day on Saturday -- also bringing along their three La-Mancha bucklings. Thanks and... YAY! Alice Shoemaker, my husband and I showed them off and spoke of you who were attending the Utah Goatstock while we were at the Ohio Rendy (all good things!). Nice design and nice tees!

Upon clean up, I goofed. I saw a dutch oven in the ranch kitchen and assumed it was Michelle’s as she cooked in them all weekend. I grabbed it and took it home -- “trying to be a hero” and just found out that it belonged to the ranch... They’d just bought it for an upcoming “Cowboy Cook Out” and left it on the counter where we’d been prepping food all week. Whoops... I have one week to get it back to them! Dummy me... roadtrip!

After a little rest for the weary but happy, we’ll start planning for next year. We’ve already had two ideas and invites for next yr’s location. I hope I didn’t leave anything out -- forgive if I did and post what was missed, please! Thanks to everyone who made the 2008 Ohio Rendy happen! It was a terrific weekend!

-Wendy Hannum
Secret Creek Farm
SE Ohio
June 23, 2008

Oregon SOLV Beach Clean-up
Oregon Governor Tom McCall founded Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism in 1969. It’s evolved into so much more that it’s now known simply as SOLV.

SOLV held the first clean up in the country, in 1984, and now every state has one. Other SOLV projects include river restoration; tree planting and an Earth Day clean up of illegal dumpsites.

The Cascade Packgoat Club has participated in the spring and fall SOLV Beach Clean-up for 9 years. Our organizer is club member Janet Lamberson who lives near Newport.

On March 29th, 2008 the Cascade Packgoat Club joined thousands of other Oregonians for the Spring clean up. Our group consisted of, Phil Lamberson with Otis, Michael and Stephanie Powell with Strider and Wilbur, and Perry and Jan Privratsky with Zeus and Wizard.

The weather is often bad for the spring clean up and this year was no exception. We encountered snow in the coast range on our way to the beach! When we arrived in Newport it was 37 degrees and hailing. By the time we checked in, geared up, and drove back to Moolack Beach the sun was shining. Yay!

We cleaned the beach from 10 am to 1 pm. We found the usual; rope, wood, pieces of plastic, along with the unusual; at least 8 broken light bulbs, a scrub brush, and a shoe. No buried treasure or glass floats but we did see a lot of fossils of clams. According to Janet’s fossil book they lived 15 million years ago and Beverly Beach is one of the best exposures of this particular geological formation.

There was a glitch at the end, the bridge on Highway 101 at Beverly Beach is being replaced and the construction crew has moved the walking path from one side of Fogarty Creek to the opposite side. As we neared our destination we realized we would have to cross the swift moving, knee deep creek (ok,ok, I’m only 5’2” tall so it was knee deep on me). We all made it across safely and it was great water training for the goats!

Jan Privratsky
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Greetings and Salutations to all Members, both long-term and new. For the new members, Welcome!! As the New President of the NAPgA, I would like to thank the Board of Directors for showing their confidence in me by appointing me to the position of President. This is a small task by no means. We are a busy organization manned by volunteers with plenty of work to be done. And by no means will it be easy. But I also have big shoes to fill! Jan Huffaker did a fine job as NAPgA president, and I will strive to help finish some of the work she began, and begin some things that I feel will help this organization, and specifically our passion, ...Packgoats! There are several goals I would like to see accomplished this year, although I doubt all will be accomplished we will try to fulfill these by hard work, and membership support plus lots of volunteer hours.

1) My first goal as President, as always, will be to increase membership. The last two years has seen a great increase in NAPgA membership. It is important to increase our membership and strength of our organization, if we are to become and remain a viable, important and relevant organization. And to have a significant impact on Packgoat and other outdoor and livestock related issues. Increasing our size will only make us stronger. Gaining new members is as important to me as retaining “old” ones.

2) My next goal is to see us gain access into one or more of the National Parks. At this point we are the closest we have ever been, but we still have an uphill climb. Let's work hard to get this done this year. It would be a great accomplishment for the folks who have spent so much time working on this, as well as a great step forward for the packgoat community.

3) The packgoat Recordation Project. Although this project has a long way to go, I think with diligence and hard work from the membership, we will be able to make some great advances this year bringing this goal closer to fruition.

4) It is very important to me to get some more volunteers from the membership. I would like to see each of the NAPgA committee sizes increased with active volunteers that hold their own MSN Messenger meetings, and report back to the board during regularly scheduled board meetings. I believe if we can increase the numbers of active members in the organization, I believe we can increase our productivity, effectiveness, and in the long run, membership. Let me be the first. As chairman of the Land use committee, I would like to have volunteers step up to address land issues from around the country. I would like someone to co-chair the committee with me I would hope to have the first meeting within the next thirty days to discuss important land issues that are currently being worked on and address new ones as they arise. If anyone is interested please contact me immediately, there is plenty of work to be done.

6) I would also like to see the formation of several more local clubs affiliated with NAPgA formed across this great country. There are already several clubs such as Cascade Packgoat club in Oregon, and the Evergreen Packgoat club in Washington, that are well organized and have active participants with a busy agenda to help further our cause. It would be great to see several of you take on the initiative and organize local clubs and make your presence known locally. You would be surprised what a busy local club is capable of doing once you set your mind to it!!

I want to thank you all for your time and look forward to hearing from many of you, whether it be new ideas for the club, or volunteering for a committee, remember your participation is very important to the existence of this organization, and you have the ability to take this organizations to heights it has not yet been able to achieve. I always welcome more volunteers, with fresh new ideas to help push this organization into the future, thank you, and God Bless!

Jim Bennett
Wethers’ Field Packgoats
Longbranch, Wa

“Let our boys Bear your Burden”

www.wethersfieldpackgoats.com

Packgoats & the Fitzpatrick Wilderness

Jan, thanks for the follow up note. There are a couple of items that I need to clarify. While the Fitz was identified as “core habitat” in the state, it is the Forest that is revising its management plan, not Fish & Game. The core habitat delineation was accomplished by a multi-agency effort and are areas identified as the most important for bighorn sheep survival within the state. For the Shoshone, essentially only that area east of the Wind River Reservation is not within core habitat. To date there is no ban on pack goats in the Forest. However, one of the items being discussed in the Forest Plan revision process is to prohibit the use of commercial pack goat operations in the core habitat in the Forest. The reason is the concern that has been expressed by Fish & Game about the potential interaction between the two species and the possible transmission of diseases. The point has been raised that if there were to be a prohibition on commercial packgoat use should there not also be a prohibition on private use. I’ve included Bryan and Mark on this response since they are the Forest planner and District biologist respectively and are integral to the packgoat-bighorn discussion. I would encourage you to visit our web site at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/shoshone/projects/planning/revision/revision_index.shtml
to get the latest information on the process.

Rick Metzger, District Ranger
Wind River Ranger District, 307-455-2466

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Watch Out for those Dangerous Goats...
You never know what they may be carrying! (talk about your classic ‘double entendre’)

Two years ago on a wilderness hike, I came across a group of people being packed in via Llama. One of my more friendly goats walked up to one of the female hikers and nudged her leg with his nose -- nothing more than a brief “Hey lady, I’d sure like a little affection here” type of nudge. One of the male hikers made the statement “Be careful Edna ...you better wash that off ...goats are the devils animal you know.”

The woman looked a bit perplexed. I just looked down at Elvis and said “It’s OK baby ...I’ll help you rinse your mouth out as soon as we get to camp ...no telling what you might contract from these humans ...”

This reminded me of one of my favorite lines from the movie, Shadowlands. The female lead in the movie makes the statement to a professor at the English University at Oxford, "Are you purposely trying to be offensive? Or are you just stupid! (I think it was just 'stupid'.) L. Robinson

Kids Eat Poison Hemlock
And the relevance here, is that 'kids' of all types eat dumb things!
Talent, OR -- Police say a teenage boy who ate poison hemlock and persuaded four Talent elementary school students to join him will not be charged with a crime.

Three of the four students were treated after eating the weed that killed the philosopher Socrates in ancient Greece and becoming ill. They and the teenage boy have recovered.

“When we first looked at the case we thought it was a police matter, that he knew the hemlock was bad for them,” said Talent police Detective Mott Potts. The teenager said the weed looked and tasted like parsley, and he didn’t know it would have an effect, Potts said. The other students told police he ate more of the hemlock than they did.

“Although it’s foolish, I didn’t find any intent on his part to harm the children or any proof that he knew this was going to be harmful,” Potts said.

The teenager, whose name has not been released, visited Talent Middle School Monday after classes to see his sister, an elementary pupil who was playing there with the four other students.

He reportedly told the children that the hemlock was parsley. One 10-year-old girl described what she ate as a “hallucinogen,” her mother, Lucille Orndorff said. She and her brother, 11, became ill from eating the weed. Her daughter said she was dizzy and saw a purple cow, Orndorff said. Her son was vomiting, and his muscles were shaking, she said."He kept saying, I don’t want to die," Orndorff said. “It was scary.”

Hemlock is found in marshy areas in the Pacific Northwest and is common near the school. The hemlock was removed this week from the school property. Phoenix-Talent schools Superintendent Ben Bergreen said he will discuss spraying to eliminate the herb with Jackson County officials.

In 339 BC the Greek philosopher Socrates, convicted and sentenced to death, was killed by being made to drink a cup of hemlock juice. from THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

This story was in our local newspaper because it happened in Talent, Oregon. As you can see from the photo the leaves do look like Parsley but when I checked the Cornell University Poisonous Plants website (www.ansci.cornell.edu) and read the description I realized what a large plant it is.

Here is what they have to say about Poison Hemlock:

Poison Hemlock is native to Europe. However, it is now widely distributed across the United States, especially in the Northern states. It is common along roadsides, hiking trails, ditches and field borders.

Poison Hemlock can grow to be about 6 to 10 feet tall. It has leaves and white flowerheads resembling those of parsnips, carrots, and water hemlock. It has a fleshy, white taproot, a main stem with characteristic light red spots and a disagreeable smell. All plant parts are poisonous. However, the seeds contain the highest concentration of poison. The conium alkaloids are volatile and can even cause toxic reactions when inhaled.

Jan Privratsky
Lebanon, OR

Extreme Storms Cause Havoc in Costa Rica!
Hi Group!
Isolde Schmidt, schmidtisolde@yahoo.com

I am still sorry for missing the Rendy, but with the damage here, there was no way. Since all the traffic is now happening behind our house, and the bridges are too damaged for traffic, a big truck came up to the bridge full of coffee plants. I am sure it was a donation from the government or the Cooperativa. Anyway, I saw people loaded with plants, the lucky ones got a horse, so more plants. So I donated my goats to haul the stuff in their panniers with the condition, that they come with their handler. Maybe now they understand, why I tried to rescue them. The goats loved it, and it is the perfect situation. Only horses, motorbikes, people and goats can go over those bridges for the present. Isolde
Tiggs – Accident Prone?
A while back we revisited the subject of what breeds make the best packgoats. I remember someone saying something about how we tend to start out liking one breed then as we learn we sometimes shift to other breeds. I believe I may be making that shift. When I first started out I was in love with Toggenburgs. The first “real packgoat” I ever saw was a beautiful, large togg wether with a full set of horns. He was so sweet and friendly and very responsive.

After owning 3 purbred tiggs I can’t help but think they are accident prone. I still love my boys sweet and loving nature. They are willing and cooperative but they always seem to be getting hurt. It would be an interesting poll of the membership to have everyone list the breed of their most clumsy goat.

My first togg was Jolly. He fell and broke his leg and had to be put down.

My second togg is Sunny (Jolly’s twin brother rescued from the same person a few months later). He has gotten himself injured several times since I have had him. Badly enough that he was quite lame for a week or more and I feared the injury was permanent. He is currently sound but who knows when he will do something again.

My third togg is my 2 year old buckling. He is from a show breeder and I bottle raised him from 2 weeks old. In his first 6 months he required treatment for a bad wire cut on his face that abcessed. Then he severely sprained his front foot some how. That took his entire first summer as a yearling to get better. Many days he could not even bear weight on it. Recently he did something to one of his back legs and was gimpy for several days.

None of my other goats have ever been lame in the 3+ years since I started owning packgoats. (knock on wood!!) The breeds represented are LaMancha/Nubian/Kinder/Boer/Saanen and Alpine. Over all now that I have owned several different breeds my favorites are my LaMancha/Togg buck but again we are going back to the LaMancha influence. So far he has never been lame or accident prone. So, crosses with LaMancha/Nubian and alpine are going to be my main goal. A little Boer thrown in for good measure.

Glenna Hendrix
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Wolves Fatally Maul Dog In Rural Boise County Subdivision
By Katy Moeller - kmoeller@idahostatesman.com Edition Date: 02/25/08

And the relevance here is not just because this is where I live, but that our favorite pack animals are always at risk from predators. Now there is just one more ‘introduced’ predator to be wary of.

Idaho Fish and Game officials confirmed Monday that wolves fatally mauled a dog last week in a rural Boise County subdivision northwest of Idaho City.

The family pet was a 104-pound German Shepherd mix named Dawg. The attack occurred sometime between 7 and 7:30 a.m. Wednesday near Centerville, and the dog died the next morning.

No one witnessed the attack. It is unclear how many wolves attacked the dog, though tracks in the snow indicate it was probably three or four, said Steve Wilkins, one of Dawg’s owners.

“He was a good neighborhood protector. He turned out everybody who didn’t belong,” said Wilkins, whose family took in the dog when it showed up about four years ago.

“But there was more of them than him.”

In 2007, there were eight confirmed killings of dogs by wolves in Idaho, and another six probable killings, said Steve Nadeau, large carnivore manager for Idaho Fish & Game.

“It’s primarily herding or guarding animals or hunting hounds,” Nadeau said. “This is kind of a rarity.”

The federal government recently approved a plan to remove Endangered Species Act protection from wolves in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and parts of nearby states.

Wolves are territorial, particularly at this time of year, when they are breeding. Garbage left outside will attract the animals as well.

Nadeau said there are four to five wolf packs that live between Boise and Lowman — around 28 to 40 wolves.

“We’ve had wolves in the area for the last decade,” he said. “Every now and again, there’s going to be an encounter like this.”

Wilkins and his wife, Vicki, said their dog suffered terribly from bite wounds to his neck, chest, abdomen and hind legs.

“He was so black and blue,” Vicki Wilkins said.

Nadeau advised residents to keep their pets and garbage inside at night.

Wolves don’t normally see humans as prey, he said, but wolf behavior can change if they begin to associate humans with food.

“North American wolf attacks on people are pretty rare,” he said. "Un huh...

Below is the text of a letter written September 3, 1998 and signed by David Hunter, DVM, Idaho Fish and Game, Alton C.S. Ward, PhD, Caine Veterinary Teaching Center, and Bob R. Hillman, DVM, State Veterinarian, Idaho Dept of Agriculture.

Dear Wilderness Friends,

We would like to advance a set of recommendations for management of domestic packgoats on public lands in Idaho. These recommendations are supported by veterinarians and researchers at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Agriculture, and the University of Idaho, Caine Veterinary Teaching and Research Center.

There has been some concern that pack goats should be vaccinated for Pasteurella to reduce the risk of transmission of these bacteria to wildlife. Vaccines have been developed for and used to prevent diseases associated with Pasteurella organisms in cattle. Although these vaccines...

(Cont Pg 7, Col 1)
have been successful in reducing the incidence of disease, they have not been shown to eliminate these organisms from the upper respiratory tract of vaccinated animals. In view of this fact and the absence of a commercially available Pasteurella vaccine approved for use in goat in the United States, we do not make a recommendation for Pasteurella vaccination of goats to be used on public lands. In addition, there is no indication of Johne’s disease, caused by Mycobacterium paratuberculosis infection, in goats in Idaho; therefore, we do not recommend testing pack goats for this disease at this time.

We concur with the following recommendations:
1. Animals should be tended and kept in sight at all times, especially when packing in areas where bighorn sheep and/or mountain goats are present.
2. Animals should be tethered or penned at night and not allowed to roam free.
3. When bighorn sheep, wild goats, or cervids are in close proximity, pack animals should be moved quickly through the area and the wildlife gently hazed and forced to vacate.
4. Finally, we agree that it is imperative to take precautions to avoid approaching wildlife within 50 feet.

Thank you for your concerns and cooperation to minimize risks of disease exposure to wildlife.

Below is the text of a poster used by Washington. Goat Packing Advisory

The area you are packing in has an established herd of native bighorn sheep which may be susceptible to diseases carried by domestic goats, domestic sheep, and moufflon sheep. These domestic animals can transfer diseases like bacterial pneumonia (Pasteurella), Mycobacterium tuberculosis, lungworm, pinkeye, and soremouth which can be fatal to bighorn sheep.

You can help minimize their susceptibility by:
1. Avoiding direct contact with wild bighorn sheep.
2. Using only healthy animals on your trip.
3. Following the state’s regulations for your animals (eg. maintaining a current Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) and/or Import permit for out-of-state visitors with packgoats).
4. Maintaining control of your animals on the trail, and at night (lead ropes in the day and tethers/hobbles at night are recommended).
5. Rotating your areas of use for feeding and bedding.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in maintaining a healthy wild bighorn sheep herd in this area.

Carpe Diem!
Jan Huffaker
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The Dreaded Hungry Goat
By Glenna Hendrix, 2-20-08, bend_rex@yahoo.com

Tonight, for the first time my eight boys made me really nervous. I have waded through the lot of them with a bucket of pellets and managed to boot them in the butt or bonk their noggins with my fist to keep them out of the bucket until I could pour it into the feeders. Just eight naughty boys who want their dinner. No sweat!

But not today! Today, they made me nervous.

To fully understand you have to have a little background of how this all got started.

As a result of the excessive amount of snow that I have been ranting about all winter I found myself temporarily out of hay tonight.

In the past we have had to stack our hay outside on pallets and tarp it. We always lose a percentage of it to mold and “goat damage”. “Goat damage” is when the goats get out and decide to climb the stack, break bales and pee on it. We usually loose several bales worth of hay to this each year.

So, this year when our neighbors offered to let us store a large portion of our hay in an empty shed we jumped at the chance. The plan was to stack part of the hay at home and the rest in the neighbors shed. We would securely stack, tarp and fence off the home portion and bring home a few bales at a time as needed from the neighbors stack until the snow got too deep. Then I would have the home stack to use from.

Well, between late days at work and a busy life in general I found myself digging into the home stack a bale here and a bale there because I didn’t have time to run to the neighbors for hay. The result was that by the time the home stack was used up the neighbors stack was all but unreachable due to the excessive snowfall.

About a month ago we dug our big truck out of the snowbank and drove it to the neighbors. Using snowshoes and a sled we got 20 bales out over 5 feet of untouched snow and onto the truck. We drove the truck home, parked it and tarped the hay. I have been feeding out of the back of the truck since that time.

Now is were the attack goats come in! I fed the last of the hay out this morning. It got home from work later in the day than I expected. It was dark, I was tired. The goats are fat and had a big breakfast...I gathered up the loose hay from the bed of the truck and gave them some carrots. They should be fine till tomorrow.... I decided to wait until morning to get hay from the neighbors... This is where I went wrong... very, very wrong... I forgot.... I still have no fences... the snow is still too deep... what was I thinking!!???

I went out to feed the rabbits. The goats heard the rattle of the feed can and the rabbit pellets falling into the feeders...
Suddenly, there was a lot of stomping on the roof above my head. The snow has melted down enough to reveal an open window into my shed. A scary Jedi goat face with an evil glint in his eye came through the window.... two more goat heads come poking around the corner. They have the same evil look. You could almost see the fangs dripping with blood and tiny little devil horns growing from their disbudded heads. I have never seen them look at me like that before.... It was like one of those horror films when the people lock themselves in a room to hide and the aliens are banging on the walls and breaking windows to get in..... The banging on the roof continued..... Jedi tried to force himself in the window.... Pecos and Panda shoved their way into the shed through the half open gate..... the banging on the roof got louder..... AHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

In a fit of panic I chased Pecos and Panda back outside with a rake handle and did what I could to secure the gate. I covered the exposed window with a pallet..... I ran for the car and raced to the neighbors at 8:30p.m. I scrambled across the frozen snow and hauled a bale of hay to the car as fast as I could. I shoved it into the front seat raced for home.

The savage beasts have been appeased.... for now....

Glenna

Charlie Goggin Ruminates on Goats in Wilderness

I think one thing to really point out is that goatpackers LOVE the wilderness and we love the animals in wilderness and not one of us wants to see the bighorn wiped out. We want them out there, roaming around, doing their thing and we try hard to avoid them. I, for one, don’t go where they are if I can help it. If I saw them while packing I would detour around them, haze them as effectively as possible, (I’m sure it is not hard) and I would move on quickly and without delay through the area and go around it on the way back if I was not doing a loop.

I would not camp near them.

I would point out that they could offer goatpackers a map with known, heavily used, bighorn habitat on it and we could then skirt these areas to avoid possible contact. If they know the herd is on ridge A during the month of X, we can avoid that ridge for that month pretty easily and always just walk over it and never camp on it.

I know a few places in Nevada where the bighorn are. Some local 4-H packer kids saw them on a hike with their elders who should have known better. They took pictures and told me how fun it was to see the “mountain goats”. When I pointed out that “Mountain goat or bighorn sheep” they should have left the area, they were hurt and a bit offended, but I kept talking until everyone was on the same page. They were incorrect on even which species it was (I had to point out on more than one occasion that mountain goats don’t live here) so NAPgA has to make sure our members are educated on these things. If goatpackers are educated about the issues and the repercussions of hanging out and watching these animals at close range, perhaps these closures will reduce in number over time, but I do not think so.

The two species cannot be mistaken at close range or far range though Dall sheep could be mistaken for mountain goats from a distance due to coloration.

When you answer “why not recreational packgoats as well?” please do mention the reduced number of goats, and the ease of educating a small group about what they need to do to avoid contact and conflict. Shoot, handouts with the permit and having the person have to sign something saying they will gently haze bighorn and move quickly through any area that might contain them and tether their goats, etc. might be all it takes to help the managers begin to thaw. BUT my experience so far has been that they are just plain terrified of what bugs goats might bring and are too scared to take the risk.

I hate to be negative, but we might have to bite the bullet in some areas and perhaps accept temporary defeat.

Research is expensive, but I’d sure like to see more research, but who would fund it? NAPgA is a small organization and likely we do not have the cash to fund research and it would be looked down upon if we did as we would want certain results and they would think the research flawed because of this.

Charlie W. has worked very hard to get his goats into the Winds and I know he has tried to make sure he crosses his T’s and dot’s his I’s in every way. What more can the man do?

I would highline in an area of bighorn use, or not camp there if I could help it. They are often such high country animals that this is a non-issue, but I’ve seen them in valleys too many times to say they only occur high on the rocks. If my goats are low-lined or high-lined in camp the sheep are not as likely to get near us. They do fear people. I think my dogs are a deterrent as well and I know the forest service would not appreciate me mentioning them but it is true. While they don’t run off and harass wildlife, they do warn me if something approaches camp at night and having predators in the group and in camp is a definite deterrent to herbivores of every species. I don’t think this is a bad thing considering the situation. But having two leashed dogs hiking with us would indeed deter any bighorn from coming near, the smell of them alone would ward the sheep off.

If they impose a highline at night rule and that is what they require, we ought to comply so that we can continue to use the area. Every area that is closed to packgoats helps pave the way for the next one and so on and so forth.

I personally have a lot of trouble with the attitude that goats are horrible but horses and mules are ok. I’ve camped with horses and I have to say the damage done by just one horse doesn’t touch the damage by 4 of my goats. It just doesn’t. The goats tend to be very defensive about wildlife too, if they see a deer or bear they gather together defensively and snort at it, making it run away. This is a good thing! It keeps species apart and I’m all for that if there is a chance someone might transmit something. My friend’s goats got sore mouth from deer last summer. The biologist and vet involved could think of no other explanation so the diseases can transmit both ways. She runs a business called “Weed warriors” and she makes sure every animal in her herd is tested negative for CAE and CL before going out and gets a clean bill of health. None of the goats had ever had sore mouth, none had ever been exposed to it and none had been anywhere else but the biologist said a deer was seen with it in the area the week or two before she came in and well, there ya go. Most likely the poor deer caught it from domesticated stock, so this is a terrible shame but she pulled the herd and let it run its course away from deer.

There are no easy answers, but as my father used to say, “If you throw enough mud against a wall, eventually some of it will stick!”

Charlie