

The Friendly family goat, more than just amusement

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A person who can look at a goat without smiling has no sense of humor as far as I'm concerned.

Goats are the one farm animal God surely created as much for amusement as for utility. Cows are ungainly, horses are handsome, mules are powerful, sheep are simple-minded, and chickens are ridiculous, but for me and a lot of other people, goats are just plain funny.

I have been fond of goats ever since one insisted on joining our family years ago when we lived in Mexico. Chivo was an amiable fellow with bright friendly eyes, a cheerful expression, and large ears that flopped at right angles to his head like drooping awnings. He was devoted to us and wanted very much to be a house goat. The closest he could come to achieving this was the back porch, where he spent as much time as possible peering in through the screened door, rubbing against anyone who happened by, and freely dispensing little round goat-droppings everywhere. Our porch always looked as if someone had just spilled a sack of coffee beans.

This last distressing habit caused my mother no end of frustration. Her efforts at keeping Chivo off the porch were heroic but unsuccessful. Somehow he always managed to outfox (or outgoat) her and sneak back onto the porch when she wasn't looking. To her he was a useless pest. But to my brother and me he was an attentive and affectionate friend. Who cared if he was useless? Cocker spaniels were also useless.

I have since learned that not all goats are freeloaders like Chivo. They are a source not only of amusement but also of meat and leather. Furthermore, Kashmir and angora goats provide some of the finest, most luxurious wool in the world.

But most of all, goats provide milk—sweet, creamy, delicious enough to give some cows an inferiority complex. And the talented goats homogenize it themselves! The butterfat will not rise to the top, but will remain evenly dispersed throughout the milk.

Many non-farm families keep a friendly nanny goat (called a doe) to provide them with milk. It's simpler than keeping a cow. Dr. George Haenlein, Delaware extension dairy specialist,

says he gets several calls a week from people who want to buy a goat—and for good reason. An ordinary doe can provide a gallon of milk a day, and will likely cost no more than \$80. (If she has registration papers she could cost \$200.)

Goats are easy to keep, says Haenlein. They eat much less than cows, and don't require specialized feed. They thrive on just about anything—grass, weeds, bark, branches, leaves, table scraps, kitchen leavings.

Their bedding requirements are minimal. A small three-sided shelter is all they need, even in the winter. They like people, and can be handled by children.

Also, those neat little pellets that so annoyed my mother are a big improvement over cow

manure. They cause less mess, attract fewer flies, and are excellent fertilizer for plants.

According to Haenlein, a single acre of grass can support up to five goats, which means many city lots could support one. That brings us to zoning laws. Communities which permit homeowners to keep a dog or cat may not look with favor on a goat. However, you might be surprised. For example, California allows city residents to keep up to six goats. Only if you keep seven or more are you classed as a farmer.

If you're interested in a dairy goat, Haenlein suggests local auctions and goat breeders as good sources. Regional farm publications contain advertisements for dairy goats. You might even find a listing in the classified

section of the daily newspaper. And, of course, the Delaware Cooperative Extension Service is always a source of helpful information.

If your family should decide to get a dairy goat, you can expect her to live perhaps 10 years. That's a lot of milk—and a lot of friendship.

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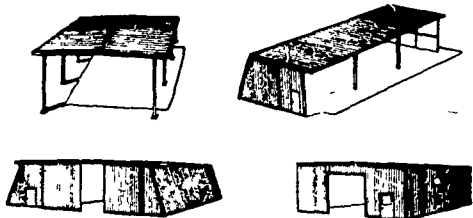
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0.3	1270	2540	3811	5081	6351	7622
0.4	1694	3387	5081	6774	8468	10162
0.5	2117	4234	6351	8468	10585	12702
0.6	2540	5081	7621	10162	12702	15242
0.7	2964	5928	8891	11432	14819	18206
0.8	3387	6774	10162	13549	16936	20323
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