

Donkeys get the hee-haw on dogs

Goats and sheep protected by watch burros



Dr. Haenlein with Clara and her newborn son, Othello. Clara and Othello are miniature Sicilian donkeys.

NEWARK, Del. — Donkeys and goats mow the acreage around the home of Dr. George Haenlein of the University of Delaware. The two, he says, get along well.

In fact, the professor produces an interspecies association by introducing each newborn donkey to the goat herd within the critical first few hours of its life. The donkey is thereby imprinted on the goats, and from this point on, the donkey, basically a shy animal, will defend the goats as aggressively as it would defend one of its own kind.

European shepherds have been using basically the same technique for centuries, explains Haenlein, to produce interspecies associations between their sheep and certain special breeds of dogs. Shepherds introduce the newborn pups to the sheep flock, and the dogs which eventually grow to be about the size of sheep, uncomplainingly spend the rest of their lives as members of the flock.

Predators rarely approach such a flock, but even when they do, the sheep-guarding



A donkey keeps a watchful eye over the grazing goats outside the home of Dr. George Haenlein, Delaware.

dogs advance barking and the sheep close ranks behind, frightening the predator away.

Haenlein insists that

donkeys could make even better goat and sheep protectors than dogs do. A donkey bares its teeth aggressively when provoked, and the gesture is threatening enough to cause a hungry dog to change its mind about lamb chops for dinner.

But a guard donkey is even better than a guard dog, Haenlein explains, because of its diet. Like sheep and goats, donkeys eat vegetation. Dogs of course, eat meat or dog food. A sheep-guarding dog requires a human somewhere in the picture to give it a suitable dinner. A sheep-guarding donkey could graze right along with the flock, caring for its charges without human labor.

Maryland sheep breeder, Tom Morris says the theory works. The Reisterstown farmer runs donkeys with his sheep — eight to ten per field. He bought them after a terrible night in which dogs

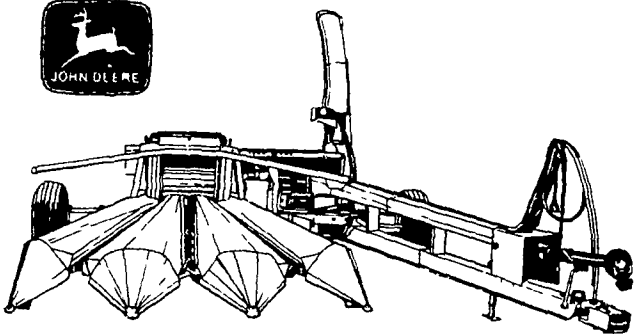
killed 56 of his sheep, and he hasn't had any trouble with predators since.

Morris' donkeys aren't imprinted specifically on sheep, Haenlein explains. They are just ordinary donkeys, yet some turn out to be naturally good sheep protectors. Morris just uses the ones that will do the job.

The wild burros in the Grand Canyon must find new homes or they'll face the business end of a park ranger's rifle. Haenlein hopes that some of the wild burros will be adopted by sheep and goat breeders to guard their flocks.

A free publication listed in the current issue of the Federal Government's Consumer Information Catalog, *So You'd Like to Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro?*, explains the Government's program to find new homes for burros, the care these animals need and how to apply for one.

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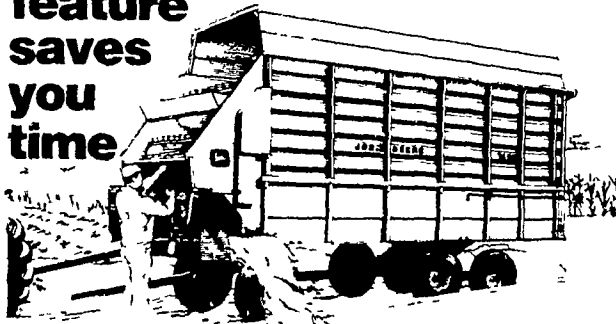


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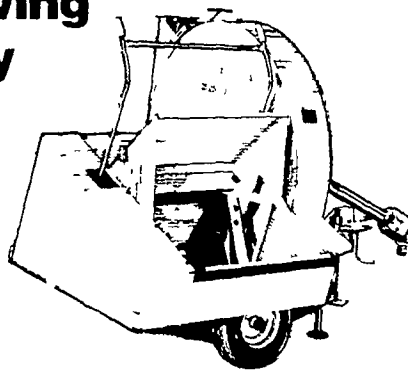
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