

Hinkles help "clear the air" about goats

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Staff Correspondent

SHIPPENSBURG — Can-eaters and mischievous, nasty and strongly scented. These are all adjectives used by most folks to describe goats.

But according to Shippensburg's Harold and Erma Hinkle and their family, they are all misconceptions.

Erma said, "Until we had goats I believed the same things." But now with a herd of 30 goats the Hinkles know differently and are trying to educate the public.

The Hinkles were first introduced to the goat world when they bought their children a pigmy goat from a neighbor. Erma said, "We fell in love with the little goat. Then, the local veterinarian suggested that we buy other goats to keep the pigmy company, and of course, keep the pasture grass cut.

So we did." And she added, "We enjoyed every minute of it."

At first the Hinkles were primarily interested in the goats as a hobby and bought grade animals. Then they realized that it was just as simple to feed registered goats. And maybe with the registered animals they could realize a small profit through sales and breeding.

Now the Hinkles have a herd of 30 and raise three breeds, the Toggenberg, French Alpine and the American La Mancha.

It was during those first years of upgrading and increasing the goat herd that Harold, Erma and their daughter Diane realized all the misconceived ideas people had about the goat.

Erma said, "I don't know how they all were started, but the ideas are prevalent now."

Probably the first and foremost false characteristic is goats are

can eaters. Erma shakes her head, "Goats cannot eat or digest can. They may eat the paper off and lick the glue, but they can't eat the can."

"Although," she chuckled, "Goats are very hungry animals and if fed improperly will try to eat anything that is digestible — leaves, paper, table scraps, etc."

Goats are mischievous! Erma said, "Yes, but so are most 3 or 4 year old children."

Goats are like very smart children who want to know and get into everything. "They are extremely smart animals, they learn

quickly," said Erma. "All the goat needs is a lot of love and affection."

Neglect is something Hinkles goats know little about. The Hinkles become friends with the kids shortly after birth. After three days with the mother, the kid is bottle fed by Erma. She explained that raising kids is the same as raising calves. If you let them with their mother, they would suck for months and months.

However, Erma has an ulterior motive in bottle feeding the goats. She said, "The kids become your friend quickly and that's what

we wanted. We have created 30 loving monsters."

And, believe it or not, these goats don't smell like 'skunk'. The billys have been descended.

The common belief that the smell is created by the fluid excretion on the beard is also a fallacy. The disturbing odor is created by the secretion of the scent glands located behind the horns. The scent glands are easily removed after the kid billy is a few weeks old.

Erma added, "The goat like any other animal has a slight odor, but

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Diane Hinkle, a 4-H member and goat lover, cradles a kid goat that will possibly be her next 4-H project.

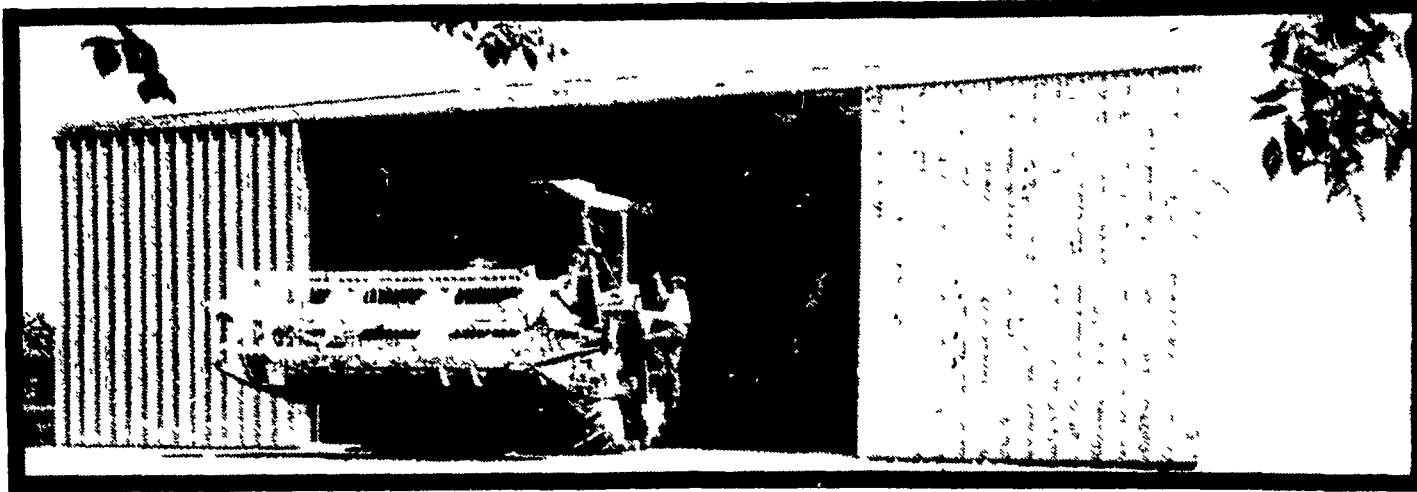


Goats and more goats — a herd of thirty in all. Toggenbergs, French Alpines and American La Manchas make up the milking string for Harold and Erma Hinkle of Shippensburg. Standing by Erma's side in Blondie, a show goat and one of the oldest on the farm.

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