



Three gals keep an eye on activity among Joan Stump's goat herd.



It takes only five minutes for Henry Bailey to milk a goat by hand.



Sindi Michalik, Henry Bailey, and Joan Stump want people to know that goats produce milk too. In fact, Bailey said that worldwide, goats provide more milk than cows, and that 85 percent of the world's population has never tasted cows milk.

Dairy Goats Give Milk Too

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TELFORD (Montgomery Co.) — The mischievous goat is notoriously known for its clever antics and unorthodox eating fare, but 20 members of the Delaware Valley Milk Goat Association (DVMGA) want people to know that goats contribute the best milk available.

"Goats are dairy animals, too," said Henry Bailey.

While most people living in the U.S. think cows are milk's source, Bailey points out that 85 percent of the world has never had cows' milk.

Officers of DVMGA Joan Stump, Henry Bailey, and Cindy Michalik enthusiastically promote goat breeds and goat dairy products. Some people complain that mothers and grandmothers notoriously brag about their children and grandchildren, but Stump, Bailey, and Michalik shamelessly interject "goat talk" into conversations with family, friends, and acquaintances.

"They're my babies," Stump said as she showed off her Alpine herd.

"How are my gals?" she calls to three curious Alpines peeping through the windows of the shed erected on the property.

Like many others in the goat circuit, Michalik's and Stump's interest in goats evolved. First, Michalik purchased a goat as a companion for her daughter's horse. But the goat soon nuzzled her way into the forefront of Michalik's interests and she now owns about 20 head of Alpine and LaManche breeds. Even Michalik's husband, Archie, helps with the daily milking.

Stump credits her husband Harold for getting her interested in goats. She said, "My childhood memories of them were not good, but when my husband stuck a two-week-old baby in my arms, I was hooked."

Since then, Stump does all the daily care required and her husband takes care of the heavy work.

Goats, the owners believe, are the answer for the person who has only a little land. In fact, Stump raises 19 Alpines on only one acre of land. The Stump's garage serves as a nursery and maternity pens, and a few sheds have been erected for the does, bucks, and yearlings.

"You don't need any more space for a goat than you do for a German Shepherd, and goats give you so much more in return — milk, milk products, and the best fertilizer ever," she said.

"It's a manageable animal and reasonable to own," Bailey said. As 4-H leader Silver Pals Goat Club, he believes goats make the perfect project for 4-H'ers. His daughter, Stephanie, has raised goats for a 4-H project for six years. She will be heading off to college and when she does, Bailey plans to continue the herd. His wife, Carole, is involved in the 4-H Seeing Eye Club.

"Goats are hardy and easier to handle than sheep. In pasture, they browse bushes and weeds not eaten by sheep. Goats are not prone to contract any major illnesses, although they can contract Johnes' disease if exposed when young or for a long time," Stump said.

On the Stump property, the does, bucks, yearlings, and baby goats are kept in separate pens. This offers more control in feeding. Although Stump has a homebred buck, she also uses AI services to breed the does in the fall.

Most births are without complications, but Stump likes to keep an eye on progress. To keep track, a baby monitor is placed in the maternity pen. Pawing and heavy breathing are tell-tale signs of labor that is easily picked up by the monitor.

Typically, newborn goats are taken from their mothers to be bottlefed.

"This ensures udder health because babies are brutal," Stump said.

The milk is pasteurized to keep from passing disease to the newborns.

Goat care includes clipping toe nails every six weeks. If goats are pastured in rocky areas, toe nail trimming happens naturally, but when raised on soft bedding, nails grow more rapidly and must be trimmed more often.

Although all Bailey, Stump, and Michalik own milk goats, they are not licensed to sell goat milk. Each family makes lots of ice cream, cheese, other cooking dishes, and even make their own soap. The excess milk goes to pigs, to supplement Jersey calves, and other nourishing projects.

People call and ask for truckloads of goat manure. "It's great in the garden — makes plants grow like nobody's business," Bailey said.

Stump agrees. She said she had one butternut squash plant that rooted itself on top of a manure pile produced 68 squash.

"During last year's drought, ground rich with goat manure remained moist," Bailey said.

Organized in 1932, DVMGA assists goat keepers, large and small, in their efforts to improve milk production, breeding, and herd health.

"We consider this (DVMGA) a self-service club. We teach care and hold seminars on kidding, birthing, management practices, hoof and udder care, clipping, showmanship and fitting," Stump said.

Another perk with DVMGA membership is breeding services.

Newcomers benefit from the experiences of other club members. One of the most pressing needs is help in milking goats.

Michalik uses a milking machine converted from one used on a cow. Stump milks by hand. It takes five minutes to milk a goat by hand. When milking is finished, goats are rewarded with a cookie treat.

"Goats will do anything for cookies. They love them," Stump said of the reward system.

"It is important for milk to be handled properly for taste and purity. I never worry what's in my milk, I control it," Stump said.

Goats' milk is naturally homogenized and is most like mother's milk. People with milk allergies usually tolerate goats milk.

DVMGA is involved in every aspect of the goat industry. It even prints a newsletter edited by Stump. The "Newscaper" keeps members up-to-date on the latest goat-related information and legislation that affects the goat industry.

One of the club's primary goals is to have a rabies vaccine approved within a year. Stump said, the goat industry does not have a large enough lobby to in-

fluence pharmaceutical companies to develop one. Cornell is conducting testing on close herds, but needs money for the testing. The club encourages goat members to donate the price of a bag of feed to the program. In addition, an online auction raises money to support the Rabies Goat Vaccine Test Program at Cornell University, N.Y. Items of many kinds have been donated to the auction, including live breedings, semen, buck and doe kids, cheeses, soaps, books, collectibles, and crafts. To date \$7,000 has been raised. The goal is \$10,000. Check out the online auction at www.khimaira-farm.com.

From October through May, DVMGA meetings are held the first Sunday of each month, 1:30 p.m. at the Indian Valley Library, Telford. Members bring homemade cheese and other specialties made with goat's milk. Those interested in attending meetings or desiring more information, write to Stump at 750 Allentown Rd., Telford, PA 18969 or call (215) 723-5415.

