



The "bottle babies" are especially friendly and inquisitive.

Goats, Kids Keep Nurse Ebaugh Busy In York County

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DELTA (York Co.) — If there is a "goat guru" in York County, Sharon Ebaugh has earned the title.

Involved in sheep and goat 4-H clubs since 1960, Ebaugh has not only educated 4-H'ers about goats, but has liberally doled out her expertise and experience to members of the community since she began her career with goats — almost by accident.

"When we first moved here there was a man down the road who had a goat he didn't know what to do with and he asked us if we wanted it," she said. The goat found a home with the family's already-existing flock of sheep.

Farming life was a natural step. Ebaugh and her husband Paul grew up on farms. Paul worked in Lancaster County as herdsman for a hog operation before the couple purchased their present farm in 1960.

Market sheep and goats are actually very similar, according to Ebaugh, and "we just learned along the way," she said, about how to pick and breed quality animals.

Since goats would be useful in giving lambs milk when the sheep didn't have enough, when their daughter Linda asked for a goat, Paul and Sharon purchased another goat. When that nanny kidded and presented the Ebaughs with triplets — Olivia, Newton, and John — the Ebaugh's herd began.

I guess everything came from them, said Sharon. Pretty much, they've all come from those first two goats.

One of these two goats was a Toggenburg billy. However, as time went on, we found that we had a lot of people that wanted goat milk to drink, and Toggenburg milk tends to be pretty strong, so we mixed in other breeds," she said.

Although Sharon is no longer milking her herd, dairy breeds are still represented in her cross-bred herd.

The Boughs use some of the acreage of their 50-acre farm for hay and rent out the remainder.

Sharon stays home to take care of the operation's 51 kids, 26 nannies, and three billies.

Her husband Paul works part-time at a nearby meat market. The Ebaughs have raised three children: the oldest daughter works as a meat cutter, their second daughter is a York County 4-H, dairy and animal science extension agent in York County, and their son owns Holtwood Pork, a hog farm.

Sharon, a registered nurse, has



Since she leaves a maximum of two kids on their mother, this year Ebaugh had seven bottle-fed babies to take care of.

worked part-time as a nurse and uses her skills in the community and church, but has enjoyed transferring her medical education to her now-exclusively goat herd.

Kidding season comes at once and with a vengeance to Ebaugh's herd. In the last 10 days of January, 50 kids arrived.

"On one day the nannies had a set of twins, a set of triplets, and a set of quads," she said. This means more work for Ebaugh.

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"It works better (to bottle feed) because the goat only has two

feeding places, so the kids must compete with each other and none of them do well," she said.

Ebaugh prefers a short kidding season, "since I'm always there, tending them — I just live in the barn. Especially when it's cold, I'm there to clean them off." This year was a successful one for Ebaugh, who didn't lose any kids. "We had a beautiful kidding season — everyone's fine."

A regular schedule of feeding and lighting tends to keep the nannies from kidding at night, according to Ebaugh. In fact, many of the nannies kid between 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and occasionally later in the evening.

Those last days of January put her nursing skills to the test.

"If the mother is in strong labor for more than a half hour, I'll go in and check on it," she said. In addition, if the nanny has had one kid and is still in labor 15 minutes later, she will check for a foot or head in the wrong place or an upside-down presentation. That's the nursing part, she said.

Understandably, Ebaughs nursing/kidding skills are in demand. "I go around the community delivering, then I teach people how to do it," she said.

She tells the story of delivering goats for 4-H'ers, during a snowy, treacherous Valentine's Day for a neighbor, and even talking friends through a delivery over the phone.

"People get a little panicky with their first kids," she said. "Most people are not prone to putting their hand in the back of a goat."

After two weeks the kids are separated from the nannies. "I don't let them run with their mothers full time, which allows both the nannies and kids time to rest and grow," she said.

The kids may go to area 4-H or FFA participants or to the ethnic market in Baltimore.

Besides supplying 4-H'ers with goats, Ebaugh has been involved as a leader, adviser, and a 4-H mom to her own children in the Airville Community 4-H Club since 1960.

"The goat projects teach the kids responsibility," and are also ideal "since goats don't need a lot of property," she said.

Goats also make a good project since they are so hardy, accord-



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ing to Ebaugh. Most of her medicine cabinet includes only dewormer.

"Worms. That's the main thing, worms," she said. "You just have to really keep on top of it." She also vaccinates for liver problems associated with over-eating.

"I think it's not a project that you really lose your shirt if it doesn't do well," she said. "It's not a get-rich-quick thing, but it's coming on — there are a lot of people wanting goats."

Besides 4-H, another passion is the meat goat show at the Mason-Dixon Fair. She serves as superintendent of the show. The event is the only open meat goat show of eastern Pennsylvania, she believes.

Another pet project of Ebaugh's is the fair's "older and bolder" show, where parents, community members, interested passers-by, and anyone willing to go into the ring can try their hand at showing the 4-H goats. This July will be the fifth year for the relatively new fair.

The growing goat shows in Pennsylvania are a barometer of the growing goat business. "When we got our first goat, the guy couldn't even give the goat away. But then, I would say that in the next 20 years, people became interested in goat milk for their babies," she said. Also, in-

terest in goat milk products is growing among lactose-intolerant adults, according to Ebaugh.

Goat milk fat globules are smaller than those in cow's milk, which makes them easier to digest. Although the globules are smaller and take longer to separate, goats milk is not naturally homogenized as widely believed, she pointed out.

Also a growing ethnic market has created demand for goats. Also, "people are finally getting smart about the meat, which is good for a low-cholesterol diet," she said.

As Ebaugh moves into the next phase of her life (she is looking forward to moving to a new house and caring for elderly members of her family), she is cutting down on the herd. However, a few goats will remain on the farm, she said.

One of her favorites is the aging Goldie. "I'm hoping to find some papers to find out how old she is," said Ebaugh.

"She was taken to the county (elder care) home, and she always thought she was a person after that." Although goats can remain productively in a herd for 8-10 years, she believes Goldie to be much older than that average age.

Also a favorite is Clifford — named after the children's story-book dog — a large red goat that Ebaugh hopes to teach to pull a cart.

