

Strickland family lives dream raising goats

by Richard Marx
Staff Writer

One often dreams of getting some fringe benefits from a favorite hobby. With Chris Strickland, we see an example of such a dream coming to its fruition. Strickland, a biology and Anatomy and Physiology instructor here at CCC, manages a small goat dairy farm. It is a project that involves the whole family.

"Our herd presently numbers about 30," she stated, "and are all purebred Alpine goats, a breed noted for good milk production."

Originally from the French Alps, they are considered a Swiss breed because of their erect ears. They come in different colors, each color pattern described by a French name.

"A mature female or doe, weighs at a range from 125 to 150 pounds, while the mature male or buck will weigh up to 200 pounds," she said, then added most emphatically that "the correct terms respectively for the male and female is not billy and nanny."

In the early 1900s, about 20 some Alpine goats were brought to the United States. "Today all purebred Alpine goats in this country are descended from these original twenty-plus animals."

"About 15 years ago, we bought some property to the south of Oregon City, where we now live and farm. Our back property was covered with blackberry vines. In fact, there were so many that they had completely covered the apple tree and were growing up into the barn loft."

So, she searched for a solution to this problem. One day she saw an ad in the newspaper that mentioned goats for sale. Having heard of people using goats for brush and briar control, she got curious.

"However, rather than to just go out and buy some goats, I decided to do some research at the



One of the older male goats shows curiosity.

Photo by Jillian Porter

library first. Then, I would learn about what I would be buying and getting into," said Strickland. She then added that she also had pleasant memories of two pet goats in her childhood.

After having done her homework, Strickland then purchased two goats. Throughout the years, she added to her herd through purchase and breeding. She now has about 40 animals. They have only had this number for the past five years. Most of the herd was composed of only four or five animals.

The goats were very effective on blackberry control. Also there was not the negative side effects on the environment as there might be with the more conventional

herbicide spraying. However, she stated that "goats will not produce good quality milk on just a brush diet. Their nutritional requirements include correct proportions of protein, phosphorus, and calcium which are very important for good milk production. This, they receive largely from grains and other commercial feeds."

Dubbed as the "poor man's cow," a 125 pound doe can produce a gallon of milk a day.

"In reality, that is a super producer. The average home cow produces only four to five gallons a day," said Strickland.

Strickland's standard is that when a goat produces less than a gallon per day after her second

kidding, she is then a poor producer. She has a doe who at peak production milks two gallons daily. However, this is exceptional and one of the largest goats in the herd.

Bucks and low producing does are either sold or are used for meat. People may buy these for food use, brush control, or simply have them as pets. Few animals in the Strickland herd die of old age, these few are favored as pets.

The Strickland's show their goats at both county and state fairs in Oregon, Washington, and California. Many are prize winners which command high prices at sales. These are in demand for pedigreed breeding stock.

Strickland is a member of the

American Dairy Goat Association (ADGA) and attends their conventions. "We sold a pedigreed doe kid goat for \$4300 at a ADGA convention in Roanoke, Virginia. This was the highest price at the 1989 sale of any goat of any breed. It was also the third highest price for any goat in the 35 year history of these sales."

The entire family is involved. Presently they are saving up for a trip to Pomona, California where they will attend the 1990 national ADGA show and also take the children to Disneyland. They have two daughters, both of whom are active in the 4H dairy club their mother leads.

"There are many misconceptions about goats," said Strickland. The stereotypical 'billy' goat butting people in the behind is not natural, but rather is taught. Goats will butt heads with one another, each trying to outpush the other. "Actually, goats are very friendly animals and make great pets. This makes choosing which ones to keep permanently as pets rather difficult. Each has their own distinct personality."

"Also, they are finicky eaters and do not eat tin cans. But they are curious and will taste and nibble things. However, they will not eat such items as paper and clothing." She then added that "they are browsers (like deer) and not grazers (like cattle)." It is because of this that they are such good brush controllers.

Goats were used as companions for race horses. "This had a calming stabilizing effect on the horse. However, should the goat be taken away, the horse would be hyper and perform poorly at the races. For this reason, individuals would hide the goat of a particular competitive horse if they did not want that horse to win. From this, we get the expression of 'getting one's goat'."



Dolly stops playing to strike a pose.

Photo by Jillian Porter



Chris Strickland, biology and Anatomy and Physiology instructor gets a big kiss from Dolly, one of the Stricklands' one month old goats.

Photo by Jillian Porter

