



Contributed photo

Bruce LeGoat, left, and Mike LeChevon are the first known goat caddies in the world at The Retreat & Links at Silvies Valley Ranch. Selected from the ranch's meat goats, they will pack golfers' clubs and items on a seven-hole ridgetop challenge course at the resort.

GOATS

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goats raised for meat. While most of the goats are destined for the table as chevon, those selected as caddies will work until they are 8 years old and will then be adopted out to golfers, or others, interested in taking them in as pets.

The goats have many rounds ahead of them before retirement, however. Bruce LeGoat is the oldest caddie at 4 and has been training for three years.

"Bruce is in the prime of his career right now," Marshall said. "When he does retire, he does want to spend that time telling jokes and sitting around the caddie shack with other old golfers."

The caddies are all affectionately named: Mike LeCh-

evon, Bruce's nephew Peanut LeGoat and the first female goat caddie, Roundabout LaDoe. Peanut was the reserve grand champion market goat at the 2017 Harney County Fair — "already a star in his own right, but he will tell you he's very excited about this new career," Marshall said.

The caddies start training when they are kids. The more than 2,000 goats on the ranch are tended by a Peruvian goat-herder, who uses the young caddies-to-be to carry extra water and food.

"Goats, for thousands of years, were pack animals, so this is not something new in terms of them packing things or packing carts," Marshall said. "It's just a new spin on that."

To make the transition from the range to the golf

course, Silvies contracted with Seamus Golf Company to design a special backpack.

"This is a first-in-the-world design," Marshall said. "It's specially made so they can pack three or four

clubs on each side."

The goats are selected for the caddie program based on their personality and whether they enjoy wearing the backpack. Marshall said they behave much like a dog.

"They will lead on leash. They will stay with you off leash," he said. "They're very social. They want to be right there with you. You have their favorite snack, which is a peanut. They're kind of in heaven

up on that course. They're just not going to want to run off somewhere."

If they do decide to walk off the job, golfers are provided two-way radios to contact their supervisor.

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