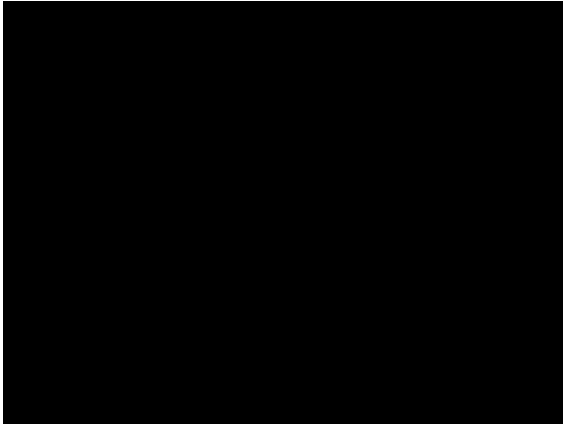




Chickens and donkeys and goats ~ Oh my!





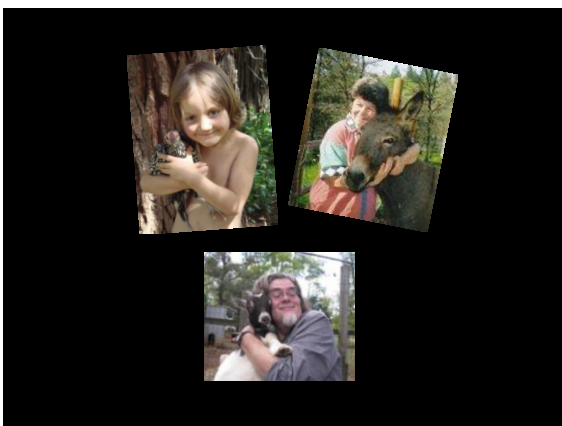
Understanding relationships with other kinds of pets

R. Lee Zasloff, PhD
 Veterinary Social Work Summit
 May 14, 2010









General survey questions

- Reasons for acquiring the animals
- Are the animals considered to be pets?
- Do they have names?
- Are people attached to the animals?



Additional questions

- Chickens and goats as food animals
- Loss of donkeys



Additional questions

- Personalities of the animals
- Stories of their relationships



Experiences with goats



"Yours is a city-person, Europeanized mentality, and that's what's wrong with this world nowadays. You probably subscribe to AGW too. And that's BS."





Demographics

- January 2 - 18, 2010
- 400 respondents
- 87% from 46 states
- 13% from the UK and Australia
- 85% female
- 49 years average age
- 73% recruited through Yahoo groups



Goat Terminology

- Doe ~ a goat ~ a female goat
- Buck ~ a very stinky male . . .
- Doeling ~ a baby female
- Buckling ~ a baby male
- Wether ~ a neutered male
- Dam ~ a mama goat



Types of goats people have





Why people get their goats



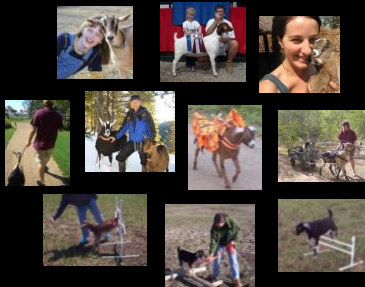
Commercial food production and breeding



Food, fiber, and other products



Fun and recreation



Goats As Pets

- Integrated into family life.
- Hobby has become almost an addiction... They make me happy.
- Can't help but develop attachment to these interesting creatures.
- House privileges for some.
- Therapy pets.



Pets with a Purpose

- Pets, companions, and friends who give milk and pack.
- Provide milk, but also pets who will never leave the home.
- Pure pets as much as cats and dogs, being trained as pack goats.
- Working pets provide fiber and milk - and need lots of love.



Strictly Producers, Pets, or Both?

- Some are sort of pets, but cannot support any animal simply because she is cute.
- Pets are by definition not productive.
- Retirement pet homes for some special goats when no longer productive.
- Goats are loved, but are not really pets.
- Those with engaging personalities are livestock that become good friends.



Production: Unambiguous Viewpoint

- Milk them, eat them, but all are pets and babies from birth until they leave the farm -- by whatever method.
- Pets with a purpose: treated with utmost care, but must produce milk or become meat.
- All are babied, loved, and talked to -- but those sold for meat are not named.



Friend/Food Dilemma

- "Petstock" goats produce fiber commercially, but farmer is attached and cannot sell goats for meat.
- Surplus and retired goats are found pet homes rather than being sold for meat.



Pet Status Earned

- A few commercial dairy goats earn dignified retirement after doing their share during productive lives.
- Certain does earn retirement through performance in milking, show ring and kidding.
- Money comes first, but a few earn retirement and even pet status through production - those are allowed to grow fat and happy in the barn.



Some Goats Choose Status

- Some goats will never be pets, as they are not so inclined.
- Goats that want human interaction become pets - goats who prefer not to be pets are respected for that choice.
- Some goats decide they want a relationship with their caregiver; others want only food and shelter.
- They THINK they are all pets.



Naming Goats

- More than 85% name all goats.
- Only 1% do not name any goats.
- Most goats in large herds may have numbers as names.
- Registered goats all have names.
- Names often depend on goat's status.



Naming Meat Goats

- Young male goats may not be named.
- If named, young meat goats may be called "Taco," "BBQ," or "Toast" as a reminder of their status.
- All bucklings may be called the same name, such as "Little Billy Goat." If owner decides that the goat will become a breeder or a pet, he is then given a name.



perspectives on Goat Names

- Names make no difference at all.
- All animals on the farm but chickens have names.
- They all have first and middle names.
- Names are better than numbers.
- All get numbers at birth: the ones with good dispositions get names (except the boys).
- How would I call them if they didn't have names?



Attachment to Goats

- 63% of respondents are attached to ALL of their goats
- 33% attached to some goats
- 3.2% not attached to any goats
- 30% avoid becoming attached to at least some of their goats



Avoiding Attachment

- Wethers to be sold or butchered get names that remind owners of status -- not always effective.
- Kids to be sold for meat aren't named, but treating them in a more "commercial" way doesn't always work ~ their personalities shine through.
- My rule with the bucklings: Do not name, and do not kiss the boys.



Perspectives on Attachment

- Goats are kind, social creatures - as loving and affectionate as a dog.
- Goats are understanding, very intelligent and compassionate - they know how to comfort people.
- They have unique personalities and are as fascinating and more honest than most people.
- How can one NOT be emotionally attached to their goats?



Perspectives on Attachment

- They have terrific personalities and are easy to train for crate, obedience, and pet therapy work.
- When my favorite goat died, it was more of a loss than when my mother died.
- Goats have a way of connecting with people that is unique. As herd animals, I think they try to incorporate their human caretakers into the herd with is flattering and rewarding.
- Oh my - I can't put that into words . . .



Special Stories



Chickens!



Demographics

- March 24 to May 5, 2010
- 375 respondents
- 70% from 43 U.S. states, 79 from UK, 1 each from Canada, and Australia
- 45 years average age
- 82% female
- Two third recruited through Yahoo groups
- 60% had chickens up to 3 yrs; 16% for 10 yrs +



Mother Hen's Chicken Club



Why people decide to get chickens

- I want my children to have a connection with and a respect for the food they consume.
- Since living with my father in the suburbs of Pittsburgh . . . we realized the benefits early on as a family of hunters to have a sustainable meat and egg source available to us.



Why people decide to get chickens

- I wanted to save ex-battery hens from being killed when they were no longer any use to the farmer.
- Local eggs and manure for garden.
- It's something I have always wanted to do as long as I could remember, so when we moved we got the chooks before we even finished decorating the house.



Types of chickens people have



Why people have chickens

- 91% have them for the eggs!



Why people have chickens

- 85% have them for pets
- 17% have them for meat
- 5.5% have them for show.



Why people have chickens

- They work our compost heap and make us laugh a lot.
- To give them the opportunity to live out their lives as they should be living them after life as a battery hen.
- We are a school. Caring for the hens teaches children all sorts of skills. Joy, slowing down, education (learning how to care for something other than a cat or dog). They are great therapy.



Why people have chickens

- The birds are a wonderful way to relax, and they provide a perfect reason for getting up in the morning! They show their gratitude by asking for your company as they search for bugs, grain, etc. I can't imagine how I ever lived without them. Being able to have chickens here was the only stipulation I put on the idea of moving here in the first place with my husband!
- Because Henrietta is a wonderful chicken.



Chickens as pets

- 75% say that all chickens are pets
- Nearly 17% say that some chickens are pets
- 8.2 say none of the chickens are pets



Chickens as pets

- They are, and always will be, pets.
- I am attached to ALL my girls, some are more friendly than others but none the less they are all treasured. As you get to know them you realise and appreciate the different personalities of each of them.
- I was not intending for them to be pets, but I quickly developed a real love for them and do now consider them dear pets.



Chickens as pets

- They are not pets as such but are interesting and nice to have around.
- I do not eat them or their eggs and they are cherished pets.
- I love my chickens and spend time with them having a chat every day. In fact all members of my family do this.



Naming chickens

- 68.5% say all chickens have names
- 24% say some chickens have names
- 7.4% say no chickens have names



Chicken Personalities

- Polka-Dotty is the smartest chicken out of our little flock. She likes to jump up on the picnic table bench, and gently peck you until you give her a treat- she's trained up to give her treats!
- Tilly - short for 'Atilla the Hen' - as she was the boss of the bunch and used to peck the others. She was a bit of a bully.
- Elvis has a funny hairdo and looks permanently surprised. She especially kicks off when another hen is in 'her' nest box and will honk like a goose. She has been known to swallow a whole frog. Maybe that's why she honks.



Attachment to chickens

- 64.6 are attached to all their chickens
- 21.5% are attached to some chickens
- Nearly 14% are not attached to any chickens



Attachment to chickens

- I am very attached to both the chickens. They chat back when I talk to them and they sit on my knee if I have a cuppa in the garden. They are little feathered people and are members of the family.
- Emotional attachment seems like a strong way to describe it. They certainly don't exhibit any affection and I don't expect them to. But they are living beings that I see every single day living out in my yard. They're part of our lives.
- They are delightful little creatures and I would be heartbroken if anything bad happened to them. I love the way they come running when we whistle and they make us laugh too.



Special things people do for their chickens

- We give them foot rubs, hold them if they seem unsettled (they don't like change), feed them warm oatmeal in the winter, give them treats (raisins and grapes are a favorite), I sing them a lullaby at night sometimes.
- Talk to them; cuddle them; stroke them gently; praise them and thank the girls for their lovely eggs.
- We have both a morning waking-up routine and a nightly going to bed routine that includes turning on their warming light, covering their cage and talking softly to them, and giving each of them a final hug. I'm amazed at how much love they want and give.



What will happen when too old to lay eggs?

- They will stay on as valued pets.
- MMM chicken soup, that's why I named them all Girl.
- They will enjoy their retirement in my garden.
- Keep them. They are my chickeny mates. I know they will stop laying, but they are the hardest workers and provide meat to keep. They are little savages who have wrecked my garden, but so what, I love 'em to bits.
- They are pets & treated as such. No stew pot for them. I'll be running the geriatric ward for hens.
- Obelisk the Tormentor has a forever home here...eggs are just an added benefit.
- Keep their useless butts around for entertainment :-)

What will happen when too old to lay eggs?

- Keep their useless butts around for entertainment :-)
- I'll find someone who wants them for food. There are plenty of people who would want our hens for food, but as they are our pets, we don't want to eat them.
- Although I still eat chicken, I could never eat one of MY chickens. Hypocritical, yes, but I consider them pets.

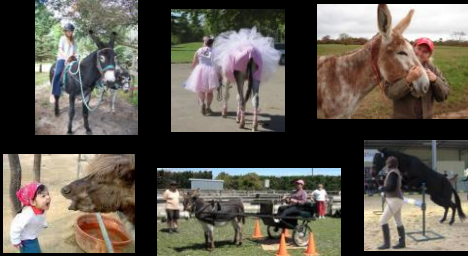


What will happen when too old to lay eggs?

I will hold them lovingly in my arms as I always have and when we are both relaxed and ready I will quickly and as painlessly as possible break it's neck. I will continue to hold it as it goes through the death throws and the body is drained of blood. I will clean it and process the body with respect and appreciation and I will consume it with full awareness of who that creature was that gave it's life for my meal. I will celebrate that it's bones are hard from running in my garden and that it actually had a life, unlike the mass produced meat at the grocery store.



Experiences With Donkeys



Demographics

- March 2 to April 30, 2010
- 217 respondents
- 70% from 43 states in the U.S.
- 20% from Canada; 4% from New Zealand; one each from S. Africa and Yeman
- 88% female
- 52 years average age
- Most recruited through Yahoo groups



Types of Donkeys



Why Have Donkeys?



Donkeys for Practical Purposes

- Guardians for sheep and goats
- Protectors and companions for horses
- Jacks for breeding mules
- Giving rides at petting farms
- Driving a cart or wagon



Donkeys for Fun and Recreation



Donkeys for Companionship



Captivated by Longears Charm

- I saw one and my heart melted.
- I love their looks and their sound.
- They make me laugh and take me for VERY interesting rides. There is nothing like riding a curious burro!
- They are a constant source of love and company.
- They are the most fab animal and the perfect pet for kids or adults... God's greatest creation!



Love of Donkeys: A Genetic Link?

"I have always been attracted to donkeys... have no idea why, except that my maternal Granddad owned them in Sicily. My mother thought it genetic."



Donkeys as Pets

- 75% say all donkeys are pets
- 16% say some donkeys are pets
- 10% say none of the donkeys are pets



Donkeys as Pets

- Donkeys adopted as companions for horses became companions for me
- Donkeys are working stock on a ranch and are ridden to check fence lines, scout for game
- Donkeys - the pet you can ride



Donkeys as Pets

- Companion donkeys have no other job
- Donkeys used for breeding, but are also pets
- All of my donkeys are loved pets, but each has a job to do - driving, riding, ground work.
- Donkeys as part of a support system - due to my close relationship with donkeys, I have met great people who share my life and passion for them



Special Issues Presented by Jacks

- Jacks are not pets. They need to be treated firmly but kindly.



- As much as we love them, their primary purpose is as brood stock.

- My goal is to breed a real mammoth donkey. My jack is a very correct specimen and will be an asset to the breed, but he is also very much my pet and companion.

Attachment to Donkeys

- 85% are attached to all donkeys
- 12% are attached to some of their donkeys
- 3% are not attached to any of their donkeys



Attachment to Donkeys

- I am attached more than a person can know.
- He makes me laugh and feel that I am special.
- I have great respect for them as a breed, but they are livestock. It is a business arrangement - not a love affair.



Attachment to Donkeys

- She is the equine light of my life. I love her attitude, the way she processes information, her learning capacity, her patience, and her company.
- He trusts me. He feels I am his person. His breath smells like honey. He is a character with whom discussions are important, not orders. He requires fact and a relationship.



Donkey Attachment vs Dogs and Others

- I am attached, but they are not cats or dogs.
- They are just like big, friendly dogs that don't come into the house.
- They follow me around and enjoy human company, with temperaments very much like big puppy dogs.
- I see no difference between my 4-footed and 2-footed children.
- I love them just as I love all my pets.



- Donkeys work their way into your heart and soul.
- They are like giant dogs with bunny ears and have the intelligence of a small child.
- I would be lost not seeing his happy face and big ears. He shared my grief when I lost other animals.
- They have a presence that is unmistakably loving, warm and comforting. They have been my solace in hard times - there's no human that has been such a steady friend.



Donkey Names

Cocaa Puff	Kissed by the Full Moon
Dry Gulch Maynard	Asteroid
Winston Churchill	Bella Teodora
Lollipop	Ruby Slippers
Flapjack	Buffalo Bill
Peapod	Louis L'Amour
Honkity Hank	Mighty Small Wilbur
Mischief	Patience My Ass

D.B. Buckaroo's Little Stinker

Loss and Grief: When Donkeys Die

- The death of my donkey was very difficult.
- Our donkeys are buried on our farm, with each having a board on the fence with their name and dates of birth and death.
- The donkey was in constant pain, so I did what was best and put her down. Of course I was sad. I felt like someone ripped my heart right out of my chest and sucked the breath right out of me, but it was the right thing for her.

Loss and Grief: When Donkeys Die

- It is illegal to bury an animal in our county, so we had to dispose of the body through the rendering truck. It was very distressing to lose a friend you love to see and hear each day, then see him dragged across a field by means you wouldn't dream of doing in life.
- I missed my donkeys very much, but not as much as the other donkeys. For two weeks, they left a place at the trough where the others once fed.
- At the moment of her death, all the donkeys brayed as I wailed. The vet said he had never witnessed the compassion these animals had.

Loss and Grief: When Donkeys Die

"He was a top halter and performance donkey and a dear friend. We never got over his death and still have his old nylon halter hanging in our living room. We said we would take it down when a jack came along who deserved to wear it. We've had two that were that good, but the halter still hangs."
