



David and Bow Lynne McEwen with extended family: Jack and Jill are mixed Akbash/Great Pyrenees; Dani and Ola are pygmy goats.

Pups Go With Kids

Mammoth dogs and pygmy goats enjoy farm-life symbiosis

By Debby Schoeningh

Jack and Jill, unlike their nursery rhyme namesakes, don't have much time for going up the hill these days. They are sticking close to home, caring for their six puppies and the 25 head of pygmy goats entrusted to them.

Jack and Jill are Akbash and Great Pyrenees-cross guard dogs.

Bow Lynne and David McEwen of Haines bought the dogs as pups a little more a year to ward off predators, including coyotes, a fox that had become a little too friendly and the increasing threat of cougars that roam the nearby mountains.

"Before we got Jack and Jill, we were keeping our babies and does (female pygmies) locked up, as the coyotes were visiting too close and were right in with our bucks (male pygmies)," Bow Lynne says.

Coyotes, she says, do not appreciate the "stinky bucks" and, for the most part, leave them alone. Bucks have a very strong odor that most people and animals find offensive, although the female goats seem to find it quite irresistible.

Baby pygmies, called kids, weigh about 2 pounds when born, and are very susceptible to predators.

Jack and Jill have lived with the goats since they were 8 weeks old. Their offspring will be raised and sold to help others protect livestock.

"You have to raise them with the stock, show them their boundaries and teach them only the basics, such

as leading on a leash and the words 'come' and 'sit,'" Bow Lynne says. "You don't want to overly teach these dogs, as they will tend to pay more attention to you than the livestock."

Bow Lynne says she doesn't recommend the dogs as house pets.

"They are bred to be outside barn dogs for predator control and need lots of area to maneuver," she says.

The Akbash breed originated in Turkey, and the Great Pyrenees in Spain/France. Adults average about 120 pounds and 30 inches tall.

The little goats, which stand less than 2 feet high, were not too fond of the big dogs in the beginning.

"At their first introduction, the goats bounded off like deer, which they never do," Bow Lynne says. "Then they tried the butting defense thing, and finally they all gave up. Now they allow Jack and Jill to eat grain with them."



Top, Rebel sports his distinctive long beard and winter coat. Left, when Mick was a kid, he was no bigger than a shoe. Right, Bow Lynne cuddles with one of her Akbash/Great Pyrenees-cross puppies. Inset, the cute factor in overdrive.

The pygmies arrived on the McEwen farm in 2002. Bow Lynne had mentioned to David that she always had wanted to raise pygmy goats. To her surprise, she says, he actually listened to her.

They purchased their first pygmies in Canby with the help of Laurie Zeise, who is now Bow Lynne's "best goatie friend."

"We had set out to buy two or three does and came home with four does and a buck—and it started from there," she says.

Then came their first crop of kids, and that cinched it. They were transformed into real "goatie people" with the breeding herd name of Little Roulettes.

The McEwens had not necessarily planned on showing their goats, but found themselves in the show ring in Boise, Idaho, just two weeks after buying them.

One of their does won Reserve Grand Champion. That, along with their interaction with goat people, got them hooked on showing.

They have been attending about eight shows a year, but have plans to do about twice that many this year.

Although it started out being Bow Lynne's project, David jumped on the goatie show wagon in 2004 when Bow Lynne suggested, while en route to a show in Boise, that he show their senior buck named Showdown.

David had watched his son and daughter show in 4-H, but never had shown animals before. Bow Lynne gave him a crash course behind the show barn just minutes before the event, and he ended up taking Grand Champion.

"The look on his face was so awesome, and he has been hooked on showing our bucks since then,"

Bow Lynne says.

They also have a wether (neutered male), Little Roulettes Mick, who has one Grand Champion and four Reserve Grand Champion ribbons, enough to put him in the running for nationals this year.

Mick was a huge success story for the McEwens because, due to complications, he had to be taken

from his mother and bottle fed shortly after birth.

Bow Lynne took him to work every day at The Record-Courier newspaper in Baker City, where she is the office manager. He spent his early days there romping and playing in an infant playpen indoors.

It doesn't take much to imprint kids to humans. You just sit on the barn floor and let them come to you, Bow Lynne says.

"They are such people lovers, and are so precious," she says.

Pygmies are easy to care for. Their diet consists of grass hay, some alfalfa for protein and moderate rations of grain. They need shelter from the weather, preferably draft free, with dry flooring to help prevent runny noses and pneumonia.

To maintain their health, the McEwens have a regular schedule for immunizations and worming. Their hooves need to be trimmed every four to six weeks.

The McEwens haven't lost any pygmies to predators, and "now with Jack and Jill," Bow Lynne says, "hopefully that will never happen." ■

For more information about the McEwens' pygmies and puppies, go to www.littleroulettes.com.

