

## Local woman finds joy in goat-rearing

**Bobbie Samme'**

Almost everyone would agree that goats are adorable, especially baby goats. Hopping and jumping around without a care in the world is certainly entertaining to watch.

Goats can live up to 18 years, and despite having a reputation for being slightly rebellious, people

"I love animals of all kinds and I want to raise my goats as pets," said Schuster. "I also would like to use them as therapy animals because adult goats are very calming to people, and they are even used to calm down race horses."

Schuster shared the story of how the goats

two and half acres and their pen, which is situated towards the back of my yard in the shade, is 50 feet by 75 feet.

"There are tree stumps for them to jump on as well as their own little house built from recycled material that is heated in the winter."

According to Schuster, goats have a mini compost pile inside their bodies known as rumen.

"I give my goats probiotics because a healthy rumen is crucial for a goat to properly digest roughage," said Schuster. "For a goat to thrive, its rumen bacteria must be healthy."

Spending time with her goats and getting to know them better is important for Schuster.

"We play games like stump jumping," shared Schuster. "I run around the pen and jump on the tree stumps and they follow me up onto them."

"We play tag and they crave the attention. I am teaching them to jump through a hula hoop and even kneel down and pray."

Schuster also walks the goats regularly.

"When they see the leashes and collars come out, they get very excited because they know I am going to take them for a walk," she said.

According to Schuster, fencing height for the goats' pen is crucial.

"The fence has to be six feet tall for pygmy goats and eight feet for full size goats," explained Schuster. "If not tall

enough, they could easily jump it."

Schuster shared a story about how the duo once attempted to escape from their pen.

"The gate is latched, and one day I was sitting on the back deck and here comes Rudy walking towards me," she chuckled. "I was curious how he got out of the pen, so one day I snuck up on them and watched as Rudy used his nose to lift up the latch and Roberta pushed against the gate at the same time and they double teamed to get the gate open."

"Rudy is an escape artist, and Roberta is his accomplice," smiled Schuster.

Goats are vegetarians, and Schuster feeds them specialized goat chow as well as an organic goat food that contains minerals. She also gives them greens, lettuce, salads, carrots, watermelon, bananas and salty snacks like popcorn and corn chips.

"The salt makes them thirsty which encourages them to drink more water during the summer to avoid dehydration," said Schuster. "That is very important for them."

Caring for goats is a lot of work, but for Schuster, it is a labor of love and she shared some tips for raising goats.

"Do your homework before you get a goat," she advised. "The amount of work involved is tremendous and requires a great deal of effort."



Schuster with Roberta, front, and Rudy getting ready for a walk.

still enjoy choosing companion animals like goats, because of their ability to form close bonds with their owner.

Meet Kim Schuster, goat owner extraordinaire and aficionado of all things goat-related.

Schuster, a Niagara resident, owns two pet goats, each one year old. Roberta is a female African Pygmy goat, and Rudy is a male mini-silky fainting goat.

The African pygmy goat is a breed of miniature domestic goat. The pygmy goat is quite a hardy animal and can adapt to virtually all climates.

The fainting goat is a domestic goat that temporarily seizes, or freezes up, when it feels panic or fear.

became so important to her.

"My neighbor had a couple of fainting goats as a birthday gift, and one of them died," she explained. "He didn't want to take care of Rudy, the surviving goat, so he agreed to let me adopt him."

"Since goats are herding animals and need other goats with them, I decided to buy Roberta from a farm in Coleman as a playmate for Rudy."

Schuster conducted a great deal of research about goats before adopting them, including how to feed, shelter, groom and exercise them.

"They live in a fairly large pen in my back yard," she said. "I live on



Roberta and Rudy enjoy treat time.

It is obvious that Schuster's goats are pampered pets. Cleaning, or mucking, the pen is a never-ending chore but a labor of love for Schuster, who also enjoys grooming the goats.

"I brush them daily and give them baths often, using a watering can with warm water and shampoo," she said. "They kick their heels up and run around because they love it so much."

For owners who can provide all these essentials, goats can become very rewarding pets and companions.

"All the neighbors stop by to see the goats and everybody loves them," said Schuster. "I have a neighbor who is autistic, and she loves interacting with them."

Schuster welcomes visitors to reach out to her at 906-282-8085 to ask questions about raising goats or even to visit them.

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