

# Curiosity Corner: Tie me kangaroo down, sport

Before getting into this week's Corner, I want to take the time to thank those that have a hand in getting them to you. I send each edition of Curiosity Corner to Lander University's Office of University Relations and Publications, where Megan Price sees that they are distributed to the various newspapers, but not before Graham Duncan reads and edits them, keeping me straight! Many thanks to both of them.

I was reading my National Geographic magazine the other day and noticed an article titled "Becomes a Pest!" A picture showed an Australian home with a dozen or more kangaroos in the yard. "Roos" (as they are often called) are an Australian icon: on their coins, coat of arms, commercial airlines, in children's books, and much more. So, why are they pests?

It seems there are too many, with twice as many "roos" as there are people (an estimated 50 million kangaroos to 25 million people). In populated areas, they can be a nuisance. They graze on lawns and decimate gardens. For farmers, kangaroos are a problem in eating crops, livestock feed, and so on. They account for 80 percent of vehicle-animal collisions (which reminds me of the deer population in West Virginia). So, people must be careful — they are wild animals, after all!

I recall seeing kangaroos in a park when I visited Australia. They look nice enough for humans to interact with, and I really wanted to pet the lit-



**CURIOSITY CORNER**  
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tle ones, but a big sign read, "Don't disturb the roos!" This is due to their powerful hind legs and large feet (for hopping), and long, muscular tail (for balance) that, when combined, can deliver a deadly kick if they take a notion ... and you don't want to find out. A large male can stand over six feet tall and weigh 200 pounds!

Kangaroos are marsupials — that is, they feed their young milk and carry them in a pouch. Our common possum (opossum) is a marsupial, as well. One of the contributing factors to kangaroo overpopulation is the reproduction process, which is fascinating. Kangaroo females get pregnant the regular way: a fertilized egg is embedded in the wall of the mother's uterus. The big difference from regular mammal development is that no placental connection is formed (analogous to a bird's egg). So, the fetus develops, and the whole pregnancy is only about 28 days long!

The baby is born alive, but the infant is very tiny — only about the size of a jelly bean, with two front arms that are critical for climbing up to the mother's pouch. Once inside the pouch, the baby finds one of its

mother's four nipples and begins to feed. The "joey" (a baby roo) spends several months in the pouch developing, and then spends brief periods outside under the protection of the mom, returning to the pouch to sleep.

But the cycle doesn't end there. Once a mother has given birth, she will mate again and become pregnant. However, this second baby won't be born after 28 days like the first. Instead, the second baby develops into a bundle of cells and then stops growing. It remains there in the womb, waiting for the pouch to vacate before finishing development.

So, now you can see why kangaroo overpopulation can be a problem. As a friend of mine in Australia told me, "a mother kangaroo can nourish three separate youngsters at a time — an older Joey that has left the pouch, a young one developing inside the pouch, and an embryo still waiting to be born."

**C.P.S. (Curious Postscript):** When you come across a problem in your life, do not always try to solve it; make a long jump like a kangaroo and continue your way! Sometimes problems must be leaped over without touching them. - Mehmet Idan

*Curious about something? Send your questions to Dr. Jerry D. Wilson, College of Science and Mathematics, Lander University, Greenwood, SC 29649, or email jerry@curiosity-corner.net. Selected questions will appear in the Curiosity Corner. For Curiosity Corner background, go to www.curiosity-corner.net.*



**PRIZE WINNER** — Congratulations to the April Score Big/Win Big prize winner at Laurens Middle School who was seventh grade student Jasiah Williams. Jasiah earned tickets for the prize drawing by doing his best academic work, as can all students at LMS. An LDHS Raider gear cap was part of Williams' prize, which was presented to him on "Hat Day". Pictured are, from left, JR Reid, Assistant Principal; Jasiah Williams; and Anna Brink, Principal.

## Gass completes basic training

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Deondra S. Gass graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, San Antonio, Texas.



**Deondra S. Gass**

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Gass is the daughter of Darryl Gass of Sumter and Dionne L. Pringle of Greenville; sister of Danisha J. Gass of Woodruff and Destiny D. Gass of Greenville; and granddaughter of Robert and Laretha Pringle of Sumter.

## Vascular screenings offered April 22-26

Early detection is key in treating vascular disease. High blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes or a history of smoking can put you at risk for developing vascular disease.

In the U.S., these vascular conditions affect more than 14 million people every year and can lead to disability, long-term care or even death.

The Prisma Health Vascular Lab-Laurens offers an advanced facility to perform vascular screenings. The vascular labs are

the only accredited facilities in the Upstate with screening exams and board-certified staff to assess your risk for vascular disease.

Vascular Lab-Laurens is proud to offer a valuable screening opportunity to community during the week of April 22-26, from 9 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. each day.

Three vascular lab screenings for a fee of just \$40 per exam will be offered to community. All three exams would be \$120

and include:

- Carotid screening for stroke prevention.
- Abdominal screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm.
- Ankle brachial index for peripheral arterial disease.

All screenings take place at the Vascular Lab-Laurens inside Laurens County Hospital on Highway 76 in Clinton.

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