



Oakview Plantation earns Century and Heritage Farms Award

By Colin Merritt
Sun-Advocate Reporter

GILBERTOWN -- James and Shirley Johns received state recognition for their farm during the local Cattlemen's Association awards banquet on Saturday night, one of only five local farms to have ever gained the honor.

The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries recognized the Shirley's family farm, known as Oakview Plantation, as one of the state's oldest and most vital with the Century and Heritage Farms Award. The award is given to landowners who have had the land in their family for at least 100 years and operated the land continuously as a family farm for at least the same amount

of time. A Heritage Farm must also possess interesting and important historical aspects, including one or more structures at least 40 years old.

Oakview Plantation, located in Lisman, checked all the boxes and then some.

Purchased by Ruby McCall in 1919 and used to raise cattle, cotton, corn, sugar beets and timber, the farm is now owned by Ruby's granddaughter, Shirley, and her husband, James. The farm boasts several historical structures, including an overseer house built in 1792, the Big House built in 1823, a barn raised in 1840 and an old cook house built in 1850.

The Century and Heritage awards program began in 1976 and has recognized over 650 farms statewide.



TOP PHOTO: An aerial view of Oakview Plantation in Lisman; ABOVE: Some of the plantation's structures are pictured in this Facebook photo posted in 2017.

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in business in Butler for more than 30 years, will see some cosmetic changes in the near future, to make the facility more 'home-like'.

Leigh Ann Cobb, who served as administrator under Blue Ridge, remains as administrator under the new ownership.

"I like the new direction for the facility," Cobb said, adding that the new owner is very interested in community involvement.

Cobb said that the nursing home has been an integral part of the community for decades and the new ownership plans to expand that involvement in the coming months.

"We are hoping to grow the Halloween event that already draws hundreds of people, and we want to continue to be an integral part of the community," Cobb said.

In addition to long-term nursing home care, Choctaw Health and Rehab offers short-term rehabilitation for patients following surgery and other medical needs.

Cobb said that the quality of care provided to residents is evident in the multiple deficiency-free surveys that the nursing home has gained under current Director of Nurses, Michelle Walker.

In addition to Walker, the majority of the personnel now providing care at the facility have been there for years and are members of the community that they serve, Jenkins said.

Both Jenkins and Cobb said that the nursing home has an open-door policy and invites the public to come by, visit, and take time to see the care that is provided to those who reside there.

"We want the community to know that the people here are loved and cared for," Jenkins said.

DOGS IN RURAL AREAS What laws are on the books?

By Dee Ann Campbell
Sun-Advocate Publisher

CULLOMBURG -- A local family's dog was the victim of a fatal gunshot wound recently, and the issue has prompted questions about laws regarding dogs that belong to residents in rural areas.

A Cullomburg woman told the *Sun-Advocate* that their adopted rescue dog had been shot and allegedly dumped on a roadside. Similar scenarios have reportedly occurred in other areas of the county as well.

But what does state law say about the issue? Are there laws that govern animals in rural areas where no leash laws exist, and

what are the laws concerning those who kill or injure animals?

The Alabama Code does have a so-called 'leash law' on the books, providing fines and penalties for those who violate it. But that law is only enforceable if the county has also adopted it.

According to Alabama Code Title 3-1-5: "Every person owning or having in charge any dog or dogs shall at all times confine such dog or dogs to the limits of his own premises or the premises on which such dog or dogs is or are regularly kept. Nothing in this section shall prevent the owner of any dog or dogs or other person or persons having such dog or dogs in his or their charge from allowing such dog or

dogs to accompany such owner or other person or persons elsewhere than on the premises on which such dog or dogs is or are regularly kept. Any person violating this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not less than \$2.00 nor more than \$50.00."

The law goes on to say that: "This section shall not apply to the running at large of any dog or dogs within the corporate limits of any city or town in this state that requires a license tag to be kept on dogs *nor shall this section apply in any county in this state until the same has been adopted by the county commission of such county.*"

Choctaw County has not adopted such an ordinance.

Outside of municipalities where leash laws on the books, county residents can legally allow their pets to roam free and unconfined by fences or chains.

What happens if dogs are found on the property of others? According to state law, it depends on the circumstances.

It is unclear whether or not the Cullomburg dog had ever threatened anyone, but state law does hold owners accountable if they allow their dogs to run free, IF those dogs pose danger or harm to others.

"When any person owns or keeps a vicious or dangerous animal of any kind and, as a result of his careless management of the same or his allowing the same to go at liberty, and another person, without fault on his part, is injured thereby, such owner or keeper shall be liable in damages for such injury." (Ala. Code 3-1-3).

In 2018, Gov. Kay Ivey signed into law a bill that sets felony penalties for owners of dogs that seriously injure or kill a person in certain circumstances. Emily's Law was enacted in memory of Emily Colvin, 24, who was attacked and killed by dogs outside her home in Jackson County.

However, there are also laws against deliberate cruelty to animals, including injuring dogs. State law provides specific penalties for such actions.

Alabama Code Section 13A-11-14 says that "The act of cruelty to animals, particularly domesticated dogs and cats, is defined as: 'Overloads, overdrives, deprives of necessary sustenance or shelter, unnecessarily or cruelly beats, injures, mutilates or causes the same to be done; intentionally tortures any dog or cat or skins a domestic dog or cat or offers for sale or exchange or offers to buy to exchange the fur, hide, or pelt of a domestic dog or cat.'"

Cruelty to a dog or cat is a Class A misdemeanor in Alabama, punishable with a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. Intentionally torturing a dog or cat is a Class C Felony punishable with fines up to \$5,000 and/or up to 10 years in prison.

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