



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: www.rotary.org www.rotary5470.org www.paoniarotary.org

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

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Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: May 3, 2018

Club President James Schott presided over the meeting.

Francois played America the Beautiful.

No visiting Rotarians.

Key Guest: Ben Lehman brought a plant as his key guest. Bain Weinberger got the key for the next key guest.

Announcements:

- Highway cleanup is scheduled for 9:00 AM Friday May 4th.
- The Special Community Event is scheduled for Thursday, June 7th at Wischart Springs. Members are encouraged to attend and bring food.

Program: Western Culture Dairy

President Schott introduced David & Sueann Miller – owners and operators of Western Culture goat dairy and creamery. Western Culture is the only Grade A goat dairy in the state and the producers of high quality cheese and fresh milk and yogurt.

David spoke first and said he was not exactly sure how he got here. His wife Sueann had been taking a home cheese making course in Longmont. They thought it would be great to make cheese and sell it at farmers markets. They were already in the wine business. They discovered that you cannot successfully buy milk from the grocery to make cheese, so they started raising goats for milk despite having no previous experience with goats. They volunteered at a small goat farm to learn how to deal with goats. Meanwhile, they started looking all around the front range for a small farm. When they could not find anything suitable there, so they started looking on the western slope. They eventually found Paonia and realized it is an amazing spot. About 3 years ago they found and bought 5.5 acres on Matthews Lane. They got some goats from a breeder and had to learn to milk goats.

“Man plans, goat laughs”.

They received lots of help and support from neighbors and the community. The dairy inspector for Colorado thought they were crazy. Nonetheless, they continued to learn and went forward, embraced by the community. David said this is a special aspect of Paonia. They now have about 30 goats and 27 kids and are milking 10 goats. They get 30-40% of their forage from their own land and buy the rest locally. Club members gave some recommendations for where to obtain hay.

Their dairy is US Grade A certified (the only one in Colorado right now). Sueann is making all sorts of cheeses as well as milk. All the cheeses are made with goat milk. Their farmhouse cheese is aged for 10 days. They are just beginning to make aged cheeses. They plan to grow the business, but not become huge. Perhaps throughout the North Fork Valley and maybe a little beyond. It is a good life to grow and evolve. David and Sueann wanted to say “Thank You” to the most amazing community they had ever been a part of. They cannot imagine doing anything else. There is no bad day with 80 goats around.

Q and A:

What is biggest challenge on animal side?

Attachment and health. A healthy herd makes a good product. Keep it clean. Parasites are the biggest killer of goats. It is a constant battle and requires multiple methods to control. Attachment is a problem because it is a small operation and it is easy to get “a little too close” to the animals. They are livestock, not pets.

How is the product marketed?

They are currently marketing at Delicious Orchard, Big B's, Root & Vine and Happy Valley CSA (on line catalog). Mostly word-of-mouth marketing. It is an open farm and people are invited to meet the goats and try the products. They use local products, such as using Berg Harvest fruit for the yogurt. They want to keep the business based in this area. No Whole Foods or front range.

Are tours available?

The dairy is on Matthews Road just east of SEI. There is a sign out front for the Western Culture Farm Store. The small store is open daily 9-5, but they will sell whenever they are there. There is a farm tour coming up on Tuesday. (VOGA open house with samples of cheeses, yogurt and milk).

What is the advantage of goat cheese over other cheeses?

Goat milk easier to digest than cow milk. There is more “character” in goat cheese.

Remember to feed the polio jar. Also, pay your dues.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

- May 10: Doc Vincent
- May 17: Nigel Supertramp regarding traditional breathwork healing ceremonies that he's been conducting in the valley.

