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Church bazaar leads Swanville family to raise Nigerian dwarf goats

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Initially, the Throener family at Red Willow Acres in Swanville planned to only have a couple of Nigerian dwarf goats. Today, they raise registered purebred goats and have a herd of 20.

Glen Throener said the passion for the miniature dairy goat breed began in 2014 when he and his wife, Shannon, attended a church bazaar at the Sacred Heart Church in Flensburg. Two Nigerian dwarf goats were auctioned off.

"We didn't get those two, but that's what gave us the idea," Glen said.

Shannon discovered a couple of goats for sale near Bemidji and set out on a road trip with their children, Riley, Preston, Alex and Landon.

After purchasing the two unregistered goats, the Throeners decided to switch to only having registered goats.

"We decided to go with a registered herd because you can see their pedigree. That way you can follow their history and know whether they are related or not," Shannon said.

Certain standards also have to be upheld when raising registered Nigerian dwarf goats, such as it cannot stand taller than 22.5 inches and bucks no more than 23.5 inches.

When they first started raising the goats, it was difficult to find a lot of information on the breed, said Shannon. But with the help of a couple of other breeders and their veterinarian, Tom Czeck with Freeport Veterinary Service, their goats are thriving. The fact that Czeck raises his own goats has also helped tremendously, especially with nutrition, Shannon said.

A doe is pregnant for about 145-150 days. Once a doe gets closer to her due

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— Shannon Throener

date, Shannon checks on her frequently.

"I set an alarm to wake me up at night to go check on her in the barn," she said.

Shannon also stays with the does during

birth to make sure all goes well. While some does may only have one kid, they can have up to five.

"Last year, we had 10 kids get born in a day and a half," Shannon said.

Once the kids are born, they are separated from the doe. Although the doe is



(012719-ThroenerGoats)

Staff photo by Sheila McCoy

Glen Throener, left, shares a fun moment with his son, Landon, giving their Nigerian dwarf goats a treat.

milks shortly after for her colostrum (first milk), the kids are bottle fed pasteurized colostrum the Throeners have on hand.

For the first week, Shannon bottle feeds the kids every three hours. She keeps them in plastic totes inside the their house, which makes it easier. Then they are moved to the barn with a heat lamp. Altogether the kids are bottle fed milk for about eight to 10 weeks. Each kid is also tagged so the Throeners knows which doe it came from.

The Throeners prefer to feed the kids real milk instead of milk replacer (powder). They also make sure it's pasteurized milk so no potential diseases are spread through the milk.

Once a year, all the animals are tested for diseases through a simple blood test. Having the written confirmation from the veterinarian does not only put the Throeners at ease, but it is also a selling point when the time comes to sell the kids, Shannon said.

The does are milked twice a day and yield on average about a gallon of milk per day. The milk is then pasteurized and frozen.

"For their size, they can really produce," Glen said.

The goats are also given a tetanus shot and are disbudded, a process in which a hot iron is briefly used to burn the horn bud to keep it from growing.

"One of the goats we got was horned and we learned that you can't have both. When the horned ones fight, it can get quite dangerous. Their heads get pretty bloody when they headbutt," Shannon said.

It is for that reason, all of Throener's goats are disbudded, she said.

Since the Throeners spend a lot of time with their goats, they are very friendly and calm around people.

In 2017, the couple's son, Landon, started showing his favorite goat, a doe named Lupe, in open class at the Morrison County Fair.

He also joined the Livestock Legends 4-H Club and showed last year as a Cloverbud as well as in open class.

There's a lot that goes into showing goats. The main thing is to work with the goat so by the time it is out in public, it behaves splendidly.

It is also bathed and the hair and hooves are trimmed.

Landon's work with Lupe has resulted in several ribbons, such as grand champion, champion junior doe of the year, first places, third premium and more.

"It's a lot of fun," Landon said.

Red Willow Acres is also home to 11 beef cattle, 30 chickens and several dogs.

DNR makes appointments to Commissioner's Office

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced leadership appointments in its Commissioner's Office.

DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen named current Assistant Commissioner Barb Naramore as deputy DNR commissioner. Since 2013, Naramore has overseen three divisions (Ecological and Water Resources, Forestry and Lands and Minerals) and worked frequently with other divisions on interdisciplinary efforts. Prior to joining the DNR, Naramore was executive director of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, where she worked with five states, federal agencies, and stakeholder groups on river-related programs and policies, including a groundbreaking aquatic ecosystem restoration and monitoring program.

Naramore will oversee the agency's regional directors, assistant commissioners and general counsel.

Strommen said as she works to create a DNR leadership team, "My primary goal is to ensure that we have both the framework and the individuals DNR needs to implement its critical and complex mission and pursue Gov. Tim Walz's vision for One Minnesota."

Other appointments:

Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier will continue leading the DNR's legislative and governmental affairs efforts.

Meier has been with the DNR since 2003, serving as legislative affairs director and as assistant commissioner. He was the legislative affairs director for the Office of Environmental Assistance from 1994-2003. He is an avid outdoors person, hunter and angler.

Jess Richards, currently director of the DNR's Lands and Minerals Division, is joining the Commissioner's Office as assistant commissioner overseeing the divisions of Ecological and Water Resources and Lands and Minerals.

Before joining the DNR in 2012, Richards worked at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for 18 years, serving in a variety of leadership and staff capacities.

Randolph Briley will join the DNR as special assistant to the commissioner. Briley will focus on public engagement, outreach and building stakeholder coalitions.

Prior to joining the DNR, Briley served for over nine years in Washington, D.C. as Congressman Walz's agriculture and natural resources policy adviser and legislative director.

"I'm very humbled and honored that these outstanding public servants have agreed to work in the Commissioner's Office," Strommen said. "They share a passion for the DNR's mission and will provide a diversity of deep experience and perspectives."

Sesquicentennial farm applications due March 1

Minnesota Farm Bureau's Sesquicentennial Farm program will honor Minnesota families who have owned their farms for at least 150 years. Since the Sesquicentennial Farm program began in 2008, over 225 farms have been recognized. The Sesquicentennial Farm program recognizes family farms according to the following qualifications:

1) The farm must be at least 150 years old this year (2019) according to the ab-

stract of title, land patent, original deed, county land records, court file in registration proceedings or other authentic land records. Please do not send originals or copies of records.

2) Your family must have owned the farm for 150 years or more. "Family" is defined as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, first cousins and direct in-laws (father, mother, brother, sister, daughter, (Continued on Page 6F)



(012719-ThroenerGoatsShannon)

Staff photo by Sheila McCoy

The Throeners take time to bond with their Nigerian dwarf goats. Pictured getting some snuggles is Shannon Throener with the goat, Ginger.

Workshop: 'How to add value to your dairy farm without adding cows'

"How to Add Value to Your Dairy Farm without Adding More Cows," a value-added dairy workshop, will be offered at Coyote Moon Grille in St. Cloud Wednesday, Feb. 20 and Cascade Meadow Wetlands and Environmental Science Center in Rochester Thursday, Feb. 21.

This half-day workshop will use an interactive and fun approach to teach participants how to creatively consider adding value to their existing dairy operation. The keynote speaker, Dr. Becca Jablonski has worked with dairy producers in New York and Colorado to successfully add value to their existing dairy. Various approaches include value-added milk processing on the farm, diversifying

the farm with new livestock, incorporating agrotourism or adding food grade enterprises.

The event will allow dairy producers to build a network of peers who will learn from each other through engaging sessions and evaluate if value-added is the correct strategy for their farming operation. There is no cost to attend the workshop. The doors will open at 9:30 a.m. with the class starting at 10 a.m. and will conclude around 2 p.m.

Dr. Becca Jablonski is an assistant professor and food systems Extension economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Colorado State University. (Continued on Page 3F)

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