

Tears

O/N/ December 2009

by Mary Young Robinson

It was a day that reminded me that we always have the capacity to shed tears; no matter what we have encountered in life or how drained we may have felt in certain valleys. There is a bond between animals and humans that we cannot ignore.

Hay prices were going up, the care of the animals was getting more time consuming, and two goats were not able to function as packers. This is where we all may have to decide if you keep these animals as pets, or you move them on to greener pastures.

Larry and I were trying to find a suitable home for Shadow and Sassy Brown, our first real "kids" in the goat world. Shadow has always been a "leaner" especially if Larry is anywhere close. We bonded to him tightly after he broke his leg soon after we brought them both home. Sassy has always been a "pain the arrear's" although we always were good to him.

These two goats have always stayed close to each other, so to separate them now after 4 years plus, seemed unimaginable. Larry posted notices for a good home for our hornless goats, hoping we might find a home where there were older children or a mix of people that would want to communicate with the socialized boys. When that did not happen as planned, we took a shortcut that did not work well.

Larry left me at home crying after, I hugged both boys and gave them their favorite weeds. Traveling about 45 miles to the west, Larry left Shadow and Sassy Brown in a somewhat green field with horned, un-socialized goats. I think he knew inside that the situation wasn't as good as he had hoped, but there they all were!

There was a gnawing inside of both of us during the next two weeks. There was only one thing to do, go and check on them and see if the goats were working out their place in the herd and/or pecking order. We happened to arrive with no one home, and Shadow hollered and hollered for us and was being chased all over the field. Sassy had been lifted off his rear with the other goat's horns. We gave them some peanuts and just observed.



There was no doubt in either of our minds. We would try to contact the people that were on vacation and advise them that we were not happy with the arrangement and would try to help them find other grass-eaters for their field. Even though we couldn't reach them, their daughter's boyfriend was present when we arrived to gather them up, and helped us get them into the truck. The goats were acting confused even though they had only been there less than a month.

Shadow has always been sensitive and a little different from the other goats. He is still acting like he is unsure of what is going on. Sassy is already back to bullying our other goats! We still intend to try and find a good home for the boys, but we again have learned additional lessons in

the goat world dynamics. There is a bigggggg difference in socialized and unsocialized goats, horned and unhorned goats together may not work out, one type of weeded field may not be healthy (according to the calcium/phosphorous ratio), and it sure makes for a looser and messier output of goat berries!

All in all, like with children, it is a learning process with animals. Larry and I (a mostly city girl) will probably never be the same, since we have had goats. I firmly believe that the Lord brings all of these things into our lives to help us grow and expand for His Glory.



The other day my elderly country neighbour asked for a bit of help to get his new washing machine into the kitchen. That generation never use "it", always, "he" or "she", so I wasn't surprised to hear the washing machine called "he", but I was surprised by what followed: "My old washing machine, he's given up the goat," he said, in a broad Gloucestershire accent. "The goat?" I replied. "Are you sure?" "Oh, yes," said my neighbour, "ain't you never heard that expression before, given up the goat?" "Well, not exactly . . . where does it come from?" "Ah well," said my neighbour, "in the old days, when folks didn't have much, and mainly worked the land, a man would set store by his animals, especially his goat, and when he come to die, he would bequeath that goat to his heirs, and that is why we say, 'he's given up the goat'."