

OUT TO PASTURE SANCTUARY HARVESTING LOVE

Nikki Jardin • Spot Magazine

All photos courtesy of Out To Pasture Sanctuary

THE FIRST THING you notice when entering the big swinging gate at Out to Pasture Sanctuary in Estacada, Oregon is the racket. Imagine for a moment all of the barnyard sounds you can, shake them around, multiply them a couple of times, and hit "play." That'll be a good approximation of the joyful noise that greets you here. Bleating and crowing take up the most headspace, and the occasional turkey gobble or pig grunt adds a nice accent. Altogether it makes you smile.



Near the entrance on the left are several very rotund pigs waddling about in their pens. Next are curious, talkative woolly sheep, and then a couple of goats. To the right, roosters bluster and puff up, and in the distance, two llamas crane exquisite necks to take a peek at the visitor while a horse looks to see what all the fuss is about.

It may be just another day at the farm, but this sanctuary, with its mission to rescue abused and neglected farm animals, isn't your typical barnyard.

Out to Pasture (OTP) was founded in 2004 by Kit and John Collins, shortly after Kit saw a flyer for Oregon Animal Rescue in a feed store. Already active with In Defense of Animals and the NW Miniature Pig Association, the couple was at that time also becoming more aware of the plight of unwanted farm animals.

Kit called Oregon Animal Rescue, and was surprised to learn that founder Carmel Guzman didn't even have property, let alone a working farm.

"At that time, Carmel drove a school bus for a living and had no land," says Kit. "She would just find homes for unwanted farm animals without housing them in between."

After agreeing to adopt a donkey from Carmel's rescue, Kit realized that Out to Pasture had been born. "I decided it would be better to do something with what we had than to do nothing at all."

What the Collinses have is three acres in Estacada, now home to more than 150 animals — including that magnificent posse of pigs, sheep, goats and llamas, plus a turkey, pea hens, a nutty little dog, that first rescued donkey, and a retired thoroughbred racing horse. Oh, and also a few dozen rescue cats and more than 50 roosters.

The farm has an impressively efficient system of pens and pastures that allows the animals to be as social or as introverted as they like, with plenty of room to roam, wallow, peck or simply kick back for a nice stretch of reflective cud-chewing. So far, the

system has worked well, though there has been considerable challenge with those 50 or so roosters.

"It's really unnatural to have that many roosters together," Kit says, "so that's been our biggest challenge." A series of tree-shaded, spacious rooster pens wend through the property, each housing various numbers of the boisterous birds. The Collinses discovered that in some cases, housing bigger roosters with smaller ones created a natural hierarchy that kept fighting to a minimum. They also found that sometimes creating a little interspecies bonding helped too. "We put the big turkey in with eight other roosters and that stopped the fighting in one of the pens," says Kit.

Um . . . why so many roosters?

"Well, the rooster issue is a huge problem," acknowledges Kit. Citing the recent boom



in backyard chickens, she says that when people consider buying chicks, they often don't realize that half of the hatchlings will be roosters, leading to a lot of unwanted birds. "People selling these chicks should be a little more upfront about that so people can consider what they'll do if they do get a rooster," says Kit, adding with a sigh, "We get calls all summer about roosters."

It seems like a tremendous load to manage on a relatively small property. Thankfully, the Collinses are bolstered by a dedicated cadre of volunteers that helps with everything from rounding up animals for vet visits, harvesting hay, feeding and watering pets and livestock, and of course, doing a goodly amount of cleanup.

"Our volunteers do a lot of input and output work," Kit says, laughing. To which John chimes in, "Yeah, bringing in the food and



Left page: Volunteer Hannah and Hank the Pig exchange love

Top left: Two of the many roosters on the farm

Top: Poppy gets a massage from Owen and Xiao Miao

Bottom: Where pigs can be pigs

- Nursery Dog Championship
- Cow Dog Demonstrations
- Spinning & Weaving
- Western Trade Show
- Entertainment
- Food Vendors

2012

NATIONAL SHEEPDOG FINALS

Klamath Falls, Oregon

Top 150 Dogs will compete over 6 Days to select the Best Dog in North America

For information:
541-891-7518 • 7677 Lower Klamath Lake Road

WWW.SHEEPDOGFINALS.ORG

Photo by Ron Armstrong • Painting by Tierney Graham • Design by Z Designs & Production, Klamath Falls, OR





Portland in addition to stewarding their sizeable flock. Amazingly, the pace doesn't seem to faze them. When asked what he loves about the work, John replies, "It's multi-faceted; I love looking around at the end of my day, noticing the weather, the plants and the animals, all the sounds. I'm just so happy to be here."

Learn more about Out to Pasture Sanctuary, or about donating or volunteering, at OutToPastureSanctuary.org.

See video of the animals at OTP at SpotMagazine.net.

Top left: A resident goat greets visitors

Top right: Several goats live on the farm

▶ water and taking out the results!" Monthly volunteer work parties help with larger projects, and people in the professional community offer assistance as well (see *OTP's Circle of Friends* page 10).

While the primary mission of OTP is tending to the physical and emotional well-being of its rescues, it also works with other groups, like the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon. By loaning feral cat traps to locals, OTP relieves residents of the cost of traps, as well as the hour-long drive to get them in Portland.

Along with these on-the-ground efforts, John points out that an

important part of their mission is to "inform and inspire people to find alternatives to exploiting animals for things like food, research and entertainment." OTP plays an active role in the vegan community; at a recent open house event Kit and John offered vegan cookbooks as raffle prizes. "We try to promote the idea of both veganism and animal compassion," says John. "Our point is that all these animals want is to live, and we ask people to think about that a little bit."

Out to Pasture is 100 percent volunteer run, including Kit and John, who both have day jobs in

Kit agrees, adding, "I love getting animals when they're in a really tough spot, when we get them at the last minute and I can look them in the eye and know that they are going to live out their lives like they should. You can tell that they are so happy to be alive." 🐾



KIT COLLINS has said of Rick Vandebrook that he's the only farrier she knows who kisses the horses and hugs the humans as part of his visits. Farriers practice an age-old craft of shoeing the hooves of horses, donkeys and burros, and providing care that keeps hooves and feet healthy.

Play and Stay with your Best Friend.



Planning your next vacation?

Bennington Properties offers more high-quality, dog-loving vacation getaways in Sunriver and Caldera Springs Oregon than anyone.



Join us for Yappy Hour every Thursday during the summer!



Complimentary off-leash dog park and self-service dog wash.

Pets are family, and we understand how important it is to include them in your adventures!



www.SunriverDog.com | Sunriver, Oregon | 888.298.3136

When OTP rescued Sergio, a donkey who had suffered years of neglect and abuse, the animal was so frightened of humans that he had to be tranquilized just to get his hooves trimmed. Then Vandebrook came to the farm. A firm believer in administering love, kindness and apple oat treats instead of tranquilizers, the experienced horse shoer worked with Sergio for hours, and eventually was able to care for the donkey without drugging him. Today, Sergio looks forward to Vandebrook's visits, having learned at last that humans can also be loving friends. 🐾



Sergio and Rick

Read more about Rick Vandebrook and his work in a future issue of Spot Magazine.

Nikki Jardin is a Portland-based freelance writer who loves to write about people dedicated to making the world a better place for all beings.

