

Nodaway French Alpines – success with the philosophical method

By Kevin W. Kinney

The Waldman family has been successfully breeding nationally competitive French Alpines for 27 years. As of 2007 they have breed 44 champions, had 8 spotlight sale nominations, a 1996 National Best Udder, and most importantly they have been fortunate enough to be one of the few breeders to know and understand just how it feels to breed and own a National Champion.

It was in 1992, Sheila Nixon was the judge and the doe getting the most buzz in the barn was GodlenLark. However, in that dusty and dry panhandle of Amarillo TX the time had come for an aged doe that was very dairy, correct in general appearance, sound on her feet and legs and gifted with a perfectly attached mammary system to make her mark; GCH Nodaway Sorcerer Kibbitz 2*M.

To many it was no surprise considering that the lineage of Kibbitz included some of the strongest bloodlines in the alpine breed. Notable herd names included Sanstroms, Serndipity, Redwood Hills as well as Nodaway in just the first three generations. Add this to the equation of the Waldmans using their philosophical method of line breeding in selecting the correct animals to use in their program; Kibbitz had all the advantage needed to influence the alpine breed. So how did this doe come to be? Was it chance luck or was it the thoughtful selective breeding and sharp eyes of the Waldmans? The answers can be found in the following conversation with the Waldmans in their own words.....

When and how did you start in dairy goats and what lines did you select to work with?

In 1977 we started with 2 horses and 3 acres of land in North Kansas City and added ducks, chickens, geese, and a doe kid whom we bred to a backyard buck. In the spring the kids were born and we were hooked. In 1981 we purchased from Marianne Sans a six year old brood doe, Sanstorm's Sock Me Samantha and bred her to Tom Koenig's Serendipity's Dreamworthy. She produced our first GCH, Nodaway DW Sabra. We bred Sabra to Jennifer Bice's Redwood Hills Acclaim Mystic to produce ++*B Nodaway Mystical Sorcerer EX90. Sorcerer, our most consistent buck, sired 19 GCH does, 2 GCH bucks, 1 Spotlight Sale buck, and the 1992 Natioanl GCH, Nodaway Sorcerer's Kibbitz EX92.

In 1983 we went to our first National show in Louisville, KY and saw "in person" Sheila Nixon's GCH Luminary, 4x National GCH - for us time stopped !! - Extremely dairy, a wonderful front end and an amazing udder. We also saw the Res GCH Thunderhead Fantastic Lass. Even with our limited knowledge and experience we recognized that these were two outstanding animals.

In the fall of 1983 we sent for sales lists. On a cold February night we called Art Keefe to see if the breeding of Sunshine Stella's Strike to Sudbury Hill Flint Abba had produced a doe kid. GCH Sudbury Hill SS Ariel, the future 1988 National Res GCH and Res GCH udder, had just been born. Ariel bred to Sorcerer produced 1 GCH son and 5 GCH daughters, who all classified EX, milked over 3000 pounds each, and were part of 3 National first place Produce of Dam and 2 Spotlight Sale bucks. Ariel and "Soc" lived in the same pen for many years, as comfortable together as an old married couple.

How does your breeding program work? How do you choose what bucks to use? What has been one of your strongest lines (maternal or paternal)?

Line breeding is our philosophical method in selecting a buck kid to use in our breeding program. We choose a buck out of one of the best does of an outstanding sire. For example, National Grand Champion, Nodaway Kibbitz, was one our best Sorcerer daughters and we used her son ++*B GCH Nodaway Dragon Slayer who appraised EX92. Dragon Slayer's daughters (25) appraised 85.6. One of our best Dragon Slayer (Sly) daughters was GCH Nodaway Sly Reflection, best udder 1996 National, linear appraised four times EX92 and at 10 years of age

EX93. Three of her sons were: Nodaway Spirit of Endurance EX91, owned by Sheila Nixon; 7 daughters LA average 88.1, Nodaway SR Tempting Fate EX91, 4 daughters LA average 85.5, and Nodaway Crossroads of Time EX91, 2 daughters LA average 87.3.

In selecting a buck kid to bring into the herd Sunshine Gyniry Gyro (21% in bred) is an excellent example. His dam GCH Sunshine Aries Gyniry EX93 with excellent milk production is one of the best Nodaway MD Ayla's Aries daughters and his sire, Sunshine Rehma Reprise, is also an Aries son. Aries is double line bred on Sudbury Hill Ariel. Another example is the*Oak*Hill Sedic Sequel who is the son of Sunshine Seign Sedic, sire of the first place Sr. Get at the 2004 National show. Sedic's dam, Seign EX92, is an Aries daughter. His sire is Sunshine Rehma Revive, who is sired by Ariel's Spotlight Sale son Nodaway Sorcerer Visionary.

A number of national level breeders as well as hobbyist breeders have used your lines. What kind of influence are these lines making or have made across the nation?

We are honored that our goats have gone to other herds and have had a positive effect without having done too much harm. Examples include: Nodaway Md Ayla's Aries - 45 daughters LA average 85.6 and Nodaway Sorcerer Visionary with 54 daughters LA average being 82.7

What have your animals done on the National Show level, DHIR, and Linear Appraisal or other awards OR what do you feel has been the most significant accomplishment of your breeding program?

It is gratifying to have bred 44 champion does and bucks, and honored that 8 of our animals have been chosen for the spotlight sales. We are pleased that we bred the 1992 National Grand Champion Alpine, Nodaway Sorcerer Kibbitz 2*M and the 1996 National Best udder GCH Nodaway Sly Reflection 5*M.

What would you do differently - What would you do the same?

Most important is that after 27 years, this labor of love continues to be a challenge, something we can do together. We continue to try to correct the structural faults of our animals without losing the cherished loving temperaments, top lines and rumps and udders that we have consistently bred.

What advice would you give new breeders?

Our advice to new goat owners First find a mentor - someone you can learn from, someone you can call. There are no dumb questions. Next start with healthy foundation animals, insist on CAE tests. In the beginning you may not know what style of animal is your ideal and what traits are most important, so study.

How do you feel about French vs. American Alpines?

We recognize that some of the prettiest goats are American and that both French and American Alpines have shown extremely well at National shows. We salute them both.

What should breeders be working towards, correcting, or adding to the breed; what future do you see for the alpine?

The future of Alpines is for others to determine. We would like to recognize Tom Koenig of Serendipity's Alpines whose offspring continue to influence the breed 20 years after his retirement from breeding goats. Tom said, "That since he couldn't paint or play an instrument that breeding pretty goats was his artistic expression".

Would you like to share any last thoughts on your 25+ year caprine adventure?

Our goats consume our time, our thoughts, our money and they have given us a feeling of accomplishment and success, a sense of joy at their antics, their frolicking, their prettiness; and a sense of frustration at their sickness, and sadness at their deaths at difficult deliveries and their loss from accidents and disease. Like our children they are part of the family, difficult to part with, And provide a constant feeling of anticipation - like baseball spring fever - any goat (team) can win.

We have culled a lot of goats - to improve our herd and to maintain our sanity. We have sold some of our best and now appreciate when others - owners of our animals - call late at night to share their joy at winning. Half of our calls we receive in the barn because we spend so much time there.

So many of our friends are "goat people" - part time lawyers, nurses, truckers, teachers, and farmers who's other "part time" is their goats. We have benefited from the warmth, guidance, and teaching so freely shared by our friends.

The goats have been capricious- our best kid with the best pedigree and our hope for a dynamite yearling has freshened with the worst udder. That special buck with so much promise that has not clicked and done his appointed job. That plain kid out of an average dam who freshens with a wonderful udder and becomes the "star" of our show season. That average yearling who takes two to three years to mature into a GCH. These are valuable lessons we continue to learn.

The hand of fate, the beginners luck, the time spent researching pedigrees and making choices - who to purchase, who to keep, who to bred to whom. The major effects of good management- early detection of illness, doing some extra work when you really don't feel like it: feeding, watering, pasturing, barn cleaning, hoof trimming and never quite catching up with your list. The goats seem to come with no guarantees. The goats seem to come with special people attached.