



Guard donkeys are raised from birth by a ewe and grow up thinking of the sheep flock as their family.

INTIMIDATING DONKEYS GUARD SHEEP FROM PREDATORS

Ewe'll Be Pleased With Guard Donkeys

If stray dogs or coyotes are killing your sheep, you'll be interested in a new system of predator control based on an old idea.

The "new" method consists of running one or several donkeys with the sheep. Donkeys scare off predators with their aggressive, protective actions.

George Haenlein, professor of animal science at the University of Delaware, says a baby donkey should be taken at birth and raised on a ewe. "It will grow up thinking of the sheep flock as his family. This is a phenomenon called imprinting," notes Haenlein.

Since donkeys are naturally protective, they will defend their "family" against predators by biting, explains Haenlein. "First, they bare their teeth intimidatingly—like dogs do. Then, they attempt to chase the

predator away. If they catch up to the animal they'll bite it. Donkeys have powerful jaws and can inflict a very painful bite," explains Haenlein.

He notes that various versions of "imprinting" have been used in Europe for many years. Puppies from certain breeds of dogs, such as Komondor and Great Pyrenees, are raised on ewes and spend the rest of their life defending their flock, he points out.

One problem with using dogs for "imprinting" is that they are meat eaters and must have humans around to feed them or they will prey on the animals they are supposed to defend. Donkeys, on the other hand, are grazing animals, the same as sheep, and can thus be left unattended indefinitely with a flock of sheep or goats in remote pastures.

Indiana sheep producer Bill Pur-



Indiana sheep producer Bill Pursell hasn't lost a sheep to stray dogs since he put a donkey in with them.

sell, of Spencer, was regularly losing sheep to stray dogs when, in 1976, he decided to try the idea of putting a donkey in with his sheep flock. He says he hasn't lost another sheep since to stray dogs.

Pursell puts an adult female donkey with a newborn foal in with his 35 ewes. "Since the mild-mannered sheep post no threat to her foal, the mother donkey adopts the entire flock as her family," Pursell points out. "If a dog comes after the sheep, the donkey protects them. When she runs out to defend them against the dog, the sheep close rank behind her. That's usually enough to scare the dog away."

Pursell paid \$125 for his donkey and feeds her about \$75 worth of hay

a year. "That's pretty cheap insurance," he notes.

Haenlein thinks a system like Pursell's could be a way to utilize burros which the National Parks Service is trying to get out of the Grand Canyon.

A free publication, "So You'd Like To Adopt A Wild Horse Or Borro?" tells how to apply for and care for a wild burro. It's available through the government's Consumer Information Center, Dept. B, Pueblo, Colo. 81009.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George Haenlein, animal science dept., University of Delaware, Newark, Del. 19711 (ph 302 738-2524); or Bill Pursell, Rt. 3, Box 480, Spencer, Ind. 47460 (ph 812 829-2303).

WEIGHS 10 TONS AND TOOK 30 YEARS TO MAKE

World's Largest Ball Of Twine

Among the many items listed in the Guinness Book of Records is "the world's largest ball of twine", which sits outside Francis Johnson's farm museum in Darwin, Minn.

The big twine ball measures 12 ft. in dia., 40 ft. in circumference, and weighs 21,140 lbs. If you unravelled it, the twine would stretch to about 1,000 miles.

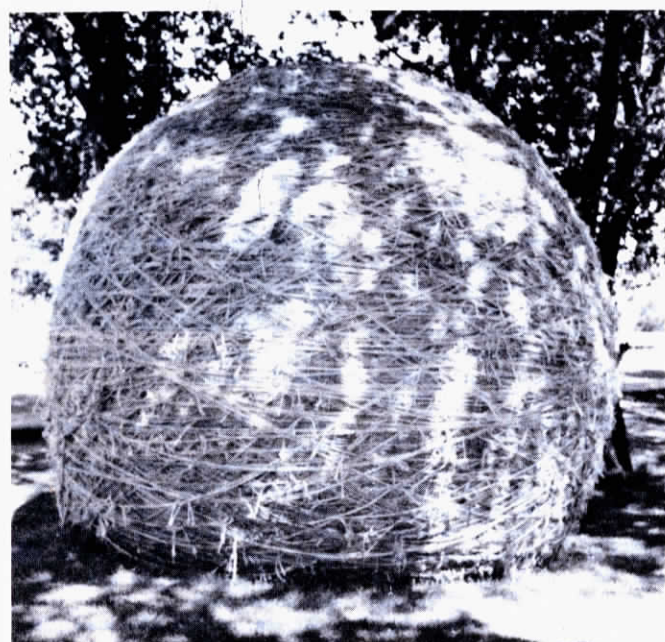
A former farmer and builder but now retired, Francis started collecting twine for the ball in 1949 and completed it almost 30 years later.

"I started collecting myself," he says. "After a while, farmers brought me twine to add to it. We can calculate the amount of twine in it by the weight. A 20-lb. ball contains about 5,000 ft."

The Darwin ball of twine has held the world record for the last 6 years, but he does have challengers. One of the contenders is in Cawker City, Kan. At last reports, the Kansas ball of twine measured about 32 ft. in circumference and weighed about 5 tons.

Francis' "world's largest" twine ball is located near U.S. Highway 12, 55 mi. west of Minneapolis. Visitors can also tour his farm museum of antique tools and field equipment.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Francis Johnson, Rt. 1, Box 276, Darwin, Minn. 55324 (ph 612 275-3466).



Huge twine ball measuring 12 ft. in dia. is part of a farm museum on the Johnson farm near Darwin, Minn.