

31-Ft. "Goat Tower" Keeps Animals Fit, Happy

By C. F. Marley, Contributing Editor

"Goats love it, and people driving by can't believe it," says David Johnson of Findlay, Ill., about his 31-ft. tall, 7-ft. dia. "goat tower" built with the help of the late Jack Cloe, Herrick, Ill. The tower was constructed with 5,000 hand-made bricks, each one a different size and shape. The tower has 276 concrete steps, arranged to form a spiral staircase, that allows Johnson's goats to climb up and down with ease.

Johnson has 34 Saanen milk goats that use the tower. "Goats are the most curious animals in the world so they use the tower a lot. They come and go, passing each other on the ramp as needed."

The tower has six floors made from poured concrete, with three openings on each side. The tower sets on a 10-ft. sq. concrete block set 6 ft. deep in the ground.

Johnson got the idea to build the tower after seeing a magazine photo of another one, located in South Africa.

"As far as I know, there are only three brick goat towers in the world. There's one at the Fairview Winery in South Africa and one in Portugal," says Johnson.

The tower's spiral steps consist of 2 1/2-in. sq., 40-in. long concrete slabs with rerod in them. The steps are cantilevered through a double row of bricks and are about 1 in. apart

where they meet the tower, but about 6 in. apart at the ends.

The roof is intentionally steep to keep birds from roosting. It's made out of copper because it's long lasting and, again, birds won't roost on it. He had to use a crane to lift the roof into place.

The roof is supported by wheels that ride on a circular steel rail along the upper edge of the tower wall. "I cut a door into the roof and plan to use a garage door opener to rotate the roof and use it as an observation tower. I might even bring a telescope up there to look at stars," says Johnson.

"People often ask if any goats ever fall off the tower, and I always tell them the answer is no because goats are very sure-footed. Once in a while we do get freezing rain, and then I use a portable torch to melt the ice from the steps."

The concrete floors give structural support to the tower, says Johnson. "About every six months I use a high pressure water hose to blow manure out of each room. It washes out onto the ground, and later I scoop it up and use it for fertilizer on my farm," he notes.

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Goats stay fit and entertained climbing this 31-ft.tall "goat tower". It has 276 concrete steps, arranged in a spiral pattern.

Roto-Tiller Races Attract Big Crowds

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Roto-tiller racing has nothing to do with tilling a nice straight row to plant seeds. With souped-up, custom-built "tillers", racing is more about hanging on for dear life.

"I wear ankle and back braces. At times photos show both my feet are in the air," says Shane Waller, known as the Mario Andretti of roto-tiller racing after winning the world championship of tiller racing 5 years in a row. The Junction City, Ark., man averages speeds of 25 to 28 mph, and he holds the world record of 200 ft. in 5.72 seconds, set in 2004.

The sport of tiller racing was born in 1919 in Emerson, Ark. (pop 359), when newspaper columnist Glen Eades suggested holding tiller races at a local festival.

The now deceased Eades might not recognize the event his creative mind conceived.

"In 2003 we had 5,000 people attend the races," says Bill Dailey, Pea-R Guy for the festival. "We became a true world championship race in 1995 with our first international tiller racer, Dominique Niessen of Holland."

The races have grown into several divisions with everything from stock races with ordinary tillers to the Super Duper Dirt Slangers modified division, where the tines are often the only recognizable tiller part.

Having long legs helps, says Waller, who works as an electrical lineman foreman. But the real secret is his tiller "Radio Flyer" built by his father, Kevin, from a 60 hp, 750 Honda motorcycle. The Wallers let friend Erica Butler use Radio Flyer, and she has won the women's modified event four times and holds the record at 6.19 seconds.

Waller, 33, says he trains for the race on weekends for three months before the festival at the end of June.

"I've got a track at my house that I disk up with a tractor," he explains. On racing day, he takes practice runs to check out track conditions.

Some racers change tines, Dailey notes, to match wet or dry soil conditions. In recent

years racers complained the track was dug too deep. Race officials admitted it was deeper - to slow the tillers for safety.

Officials have had to set a few rules over the years, such as requiring racers to wear shoes. There's a 100 hp size limit, too, which even Waller thinks is a little nuts. His 60 hp tiller already pushes the envelope.

It isn't a sport for the faint-hearted, he says. He's never broken any bones, but he has pulled some muscles. Still, it's a lot of fun and his children, ages 7 and 11, compete in children's divisions.

Wannabe tiller champs can find out more about the June 26 to 27 Purple Hull Pea Festival and World Championship Rotary Tiller Races on the event's website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Dailey, Pea-R Guy, PurpleHull Pea Festival & World Championship Rotary Tiller Race, P.O. Box 1, Emerson, Ark. 71740 (ph 501 416-4657; www.purplehull.com; purplehull@juno.com).



Roto-tiller racing includes everything from stock races with ordinary tillers to modified machines, where the tines are often the only recognizable tiller part.

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