

WEED CONTROL CAN BE A REAL BLAST

Local goats don't kid around with invasive plants on Peninsula

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If only David Bowie could see what he started.

There's no Major Tom at Ground Control Goats, but there is a woman named Lydia Vadopalas, who has seamlessly melded a love of the pop icon with four-legged munchers used to suppress and clear invasive plants.

Her rag-tag crew of 16 goats commute to their job sites in the "Spaceship," a custom-built goat trailer.

And sometimes, as proved in a recent video on Instagram, she hangs out with her herd while wearing a glittery space glam jumpsuit.

This is what cutting-edge land management looks like for Vadopalas, who graduated from Evergreen College with degrees in agroforestry and woodworking.

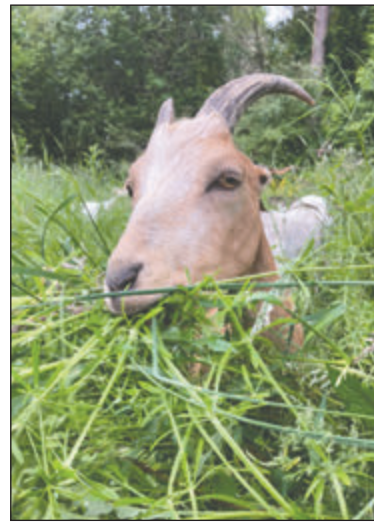
"I've always loved animals," she said.

After an internship at Sunfield Farm in Port Hadlock, she says she became "obsessed" with goats. A goat kid was born a few days after her arrival, and they instantly bonded.

After college, an opportunity to



Lydia Vadopalas has a special affinity for goats, and she finds spending time with them on and off the job site enriching. Photo courtesy of Lydia Vadopalas



She found herself on Marrowstone Island at Mystery Bay Farms, another goat dairy, before settling in for a while with Mark and Nancy Bowman in Port Townsend, who ran a goat meat business.

When they moved operations to Port Angeles, she stayed behind with a herd at Natemba Northwest, a 97-acre farming co-op in Port Townsend. When meat processing costs soared during the pandemic, the Bowman's business folded, and they gave Vadopalas her first very own goat.

When someone suggested a goat-grazing business on the Peninsula, she was in. After having a hand in numerous goat business models, she felt this was the fit.

After experimenting last year, the business went official. With the help of her business partner, Julia Thurston, and her life partner, by the end of this year, Ground Control Goats will have wrapped up its first grazing season.

At a basic level, the process works like this: A customer books a job, Vadopalas delivers the goats via the Spaceship, and the goats get to work eating up undesired plants.

COMMODITY ODDITY

Just what are the goats eating? "They're really good at thistles," she said, but blackberry thickets are where the goats really shine.

"When they're in a big patch of blackberries, all is well with the world."

Vadopalas said they can easily reduce the most gnarly canes while enjoying every minute.

The Bowmans were instrumental in her getting a leg up on a grazing business, she said. They bequeathed

see **GOATS**, Page A4

Embark on a tasty farm tour this weekend

It's a real treat to tour Jefferson County farms and vineyards via the annual Jefferson County Farm Tour, happening Saturday, Sept. 18 and Sunday, Sept. 19.

Pick up a map and informational brochure at the Chimacum Corner Farmstand, a.k.a. "Farm Tour Central," at 9122 Rhody Drive in Chimacum, and buckle up for a taste of Jefferson County. (There have been COVID-caused changes to this year's line-up: Find the most up-to-date information on the Farm Tour's Facebook page, at facebook.com/jeffcofarmtour.)

Wilderbee Farm at 223 Cook Ave., Port Townsend is the first stop. This organic farm has everything from sheep to bees, and activities like u-pick lavender and mead

tasting.

Natemba Farm Cooperative (home to Ground Control Goats, plus a few other small ag businesses) is offering a virtual tour online instead of an in-person experience. Settle in at natemba.com.

Next up is Eaglemount Wine & Cider off of 1893 S. Jacob Miller Road, also in Port Townsend. This small heirloom cidery and winery has recently expanded to include 12 more acres, including an event venue. Tour the 103-year-old orchard as you sip a fruity beverage.

Wine not more beevies? Sailor Vineyard has 3 acres with three different varietals, and they offer sulfite-free wines. Visit in person at 1673 Woodland Drive in Port Townsend.

See where the Port Townsend Food Bank reaps a harvest at the Red Hen Garden at RainCoast Farm on 12224 Airport Cutoff Road. The farm is not open to the public

at this time, but the garden is. Tour greenhouses, progressive planting techniques, and an orchid house.

Get dynamic, as in bio-dynamic, at Sunfield Biodynamic Farm at 111 Sunfield Lane in Port Hadlock. The 81-acre property is dedicated to learning through land, and hosts an accredited Waldorf School and community education programming. There will be guided walking tours at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day. Self-guided tours throughout the day aided by way-finding signage.

The lucky seventh stop is Finnriver Farm and Cidery located on 124 Center Road, Chimacum. The 50-acre organic farm and orchard will be open noon to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Cider tastings, farm tours, local food carts, and live music help bring a festive feel to the tour.

The Organic Seed Alliance has switched to digital. See seedalliance.org for more information.

Prepare for delicious immersion at White Lotus Farm & Space Twin Provisions on 3723 Beaver Valley Road, Port Ludlow. This collective of small businesses works together to farm the property. From sourdough bread, to sheep, to veggie production, this farm offers a little of everything.

Farming fiber is a thing. See for yourself at Jacobs' Fleece on 3940 Leland Valley Road West in Quilcene, hop over to Ananda Hill Farm & Fiber while you're there. Yarn, fleeces, and naturally, sheep, will be on-site.

Also going solely online are Compass Rose Farms and The Dirt Rich School at thedirt-richschool.org; Hopscotch Farm + Cannery at hopscotchfarmpt.com; Kodama Farm and Food Forest at kodamafarming.com; One Straw Ranch at onestrawranch.com, and Sweet Seed Flower Farm at sweetseedflow-ers.com.

What's the difference between Doctors of Chiropractic (DC) and Doctors of Medicine (MD)?

While their education is similar in many aspects, DCs on average total 4700 hours of training throughout their schooling, while MDs total 4500 hours. Additionally, DCs specialize in several key areas of medicine, including:

DOCTOR OF CHIROPRACTIC	DOCTOR OF MEDICINE
540 hours of Anatomy	510 hours of Anatomy
630 hours of Diagnosis	325 hours of Diagnosis
360 hours of Radiology	150 hours of Radiology
360 hours of Pathology	400 hours of Pathology
120 hours of Microbiology	115 hours of Microbiology
320 hours of Neurology	110 hours of Neurology

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Upcoming trials to be suspended due to increase in COVID-19 cases in JeffCo

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Jefferson County Superior Court has canceled upcoming jury trials due to the spike in recent COVID-19 cases.

Superior Court Judge Keith Harper signed an administrative order Friday to cancel all criminal and civil trials in Jefferson County through Dec. 6.

Nonjury trials and fact-finding hearings will continue as scheduled.

“Jefferson County remains a high-risk region with respect to COVID spread and vaccination of county citizens has not progressed as hoped and anticipated,” Harper said in the order. “In addition, current case rates have reached an extremely high and possibly the highest rate in Jefferson County since the COVID outbreak.”

Harper has been warning attorneys who have appeared in his court in recent

weeks that the move is imminent.

Other counties in Washington state have suspended trials in recent weeks.

Jefferson County District Court has already suspended upcoming civil jury trials.

District Court Judge Mindy Walker approved an administrative order Aug. 27 that suspended civil jury trials until Oct. 29 due to higher rates of coronavirus infection in the county and the increase in COVID-related hospitalizations.

Walker’s order did not affect bench trials.

“We are trying to be proactive,” said District Court Administrator Brian Gleason.

Gleason said the court had been getting calls from prospective jurors who were worried about exposure risks if they were called to serve.

Judge Harper has repeatedly said in

recent weeks that he was considering a similar suspension of jury trials.

During Friday’s court docket, Harper hinted that trials may be delayed until late November.

“I guarantee you there are not going to be any trials on Sept. 20,” Harper told attorney Richard Davies of Jefferson Associated Counsel during discussion of setting dates for a felony rape trial.

“That’s going to be the reality,” Harper said.

The judge noted the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in Jefferson County, and expressed concerns that it may continue.

“Once school kicks in we’ll see another potential large spike that might not dwindle out,” he said.

Harper initially indicated he expected trial dates to be deferred until Nov. 29.

Friday’s order extended that timeline for an additional week.

Auditor’s office to move out of courthouse

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The Jefferson County Auditor’s Office is setting sail for Boat Haven.

Commissioners for the Port of Port Townsend approved a five-year lease for the Commission Building at their meeting Sept. 8.

The Commission Building, located at 333 Benedict St., has sat empty since Jefferson County PUD moved out of the building in late April.

After the port placed “Building for Lease” newspaper ads, the port was approached by Matt Court of Jefferson

County’s Central Services Department, who said the county would be interested in negotiating a lease for the property.

Port commissioners approved the 18-page lease agreement last week, which will see the county auditor and related staff relocate from the county courthouse in Port Townsend to the building at Boat Haven.

According to the contract, the county will pay a lease amount of \$1,765 a month, plus taxes, for the building. The rent works out to approximately \$21,180 annually, or \$1.28 per square foot of the 1,350-square-foot building (with the deck, ramp, and stair areas charged at

26 cents per square foot).

A one-month security deposit of \$1,765 is also required.

The county must also pay for utilities, including water, sewer, garbage disposal, electricity, and Wi-Fi.

Jefferson County is also responsible for maintenance and repair of the building.

The lease will run through Sept. 30, 2026.

Port commissioners approved the lease without discussion as passage of their consent agenda at their Sept. 8 meeting.

Goats: Ground Control spreads by work of mouths

continued from Page A3

her a group of goat-dairy cast-offs cross bred with hardier Boer goats, traditionally used for meat.

They also left portable electric fencing, critical to corralling goats on the job-site, and other supplies.

“I kinda lucked out,” she said. “A lot of infrastructure was here left over from the Bowmans.”

In a perfect world, Vadopalas wants to move from simply battling invasives to building an environment that is no longer conducive to their growth.

“Let’s transform the landscape instead of just keep[ing] the weeds at bay,” she said.

Drawing from her agroforestry background, her ideal form of landscape reclamation incorporates planting trees to grow a canopy that would shade out rapidly spreading invasives.

COMMENCING COUNTDOWN

Her big-picture dream is to use goats as a tool for overall landscape restoration.



Lydia Vadopalas and her business partner Julia Thurston use goats to build soil and control invasive plant species on the Peninsula. Goats are shuttled to and from jobs on the “Spaceship,” a custom built rocketship goat trailer. Photo courtesy of Lydia Vadopalas

She’s doing just that on a longer-term project at the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building in Port Hadlock.

After grazing the goats through an overgrown orchard where several existing trees were pruned and fenced off from goat nibbles, a ground-cover mix of wildflowers, oats, and two types of clover were distributed throughout.

Vadopalas’ goal is three-fold: stabilize the fragile bare soil of a steep hillside; attract

pollinators to the orchard, and add biomass to the poor soil.

“I strongly believe that good grazing practices lead to a lot of sequestered carbon,” she said, adding that goats are also putting nutrients into the soil through their urine and droppings.

The goats will cycle back during another season to crop down the returning weeds and less desirable plants.

So far, Ground Control is flourishing. Business

has grown mostly through word of mouth, the business Instagram account, @ground-controlgoats, and through the goats themselves. When folks see the herd out at work, their curiosity often gets the better of them.

In the future, Vadopalas would like to expand into meat and dairy goats as well. But for now, the Spaceship is at capacity, and with the earth below 64 cloven hooves, Ground Control seems to have really taken off.

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