

# Becoming a Dairy Goat Shareholder

My husband and I considered joining a local small scale Dairy Goat Farm, small scale meaning it's basically a small herd that consists of five goats; Eve, Trisket, Abernathy, Misty, and Penny. We purchased a quarter share for \$7 and once a week we are able milk goats. We end up getting 5 quarts of goat milk a month. We could have invested in a full share which is 5 gallons of goat milk a month and about \$35. (We didn't continue being shareholders after the first month however because we didn't agree with the animals living arrangements.)

I've always had a love for goats, ever since I helped take care of 27 on a farm that had 59 animals, many of which were different. My interest in them has grown as we develop our passion for buying a larger homestead property in which we will have a few acres or more. My need for goat milk has increased since I started making chevre goat cheese and paying an upwards of \$16 a gallon just to make 1 lb of cheese! After sourcing local farms and the farm that produced the milk I bought, from Wheatsville Coop; I knew that there had to be another way! I was fortunate to be able to speak with one of the owners of Watroak Farms, Mark, who was extremely helpful in my cottage production of cheese. Although I can not sell the cheese that I make from the milk that I get from City Farm Austin, I will be able to learn an entirely new skill set. I am new to the milking field and it was a bit challenging for me. I hope to get better as time rolls on. My husband picked up the skill rather quickly but then the Lord has blessed him with being very gifted with his hands so that doesn't surprise me.

So we add another skill to our list of things that we have learned how to do to become more self sufficient. Last winter Davin and I helped harvest 18 Muscovy ducks at a friends local

Organic Duck Farm; Munkebo; boy was that a lesson, challenge, and experience. I can't say that I'm a fan of plucking molting ducks, it's probably the least favorite part of the job altogether, in due part because they were molting which meant extra presents secreting from their skin once plucked, disgusting. Not sure if I am able to post those pictures because they may be a little offensive but educational nonetheless. Also a great way to meet new people, learn new skills, and have a better understanding of where our food comes from.

We have by far a lot more to understand and learn what to do to be able to be 100% independent and live off the grid, but since we brew our own beer; make our own cheese-I'm still just a beginner in this field and I'm still experimenting; grow our own food and preserve it using several different methods; harvest rainwater; learned to milk goats; learned how to process poultry; learned some basic permaculture practices; are getting our own chickens-we would like 3 to start since we do live in an HOA that doesn't allow us to have them but another family owns a rooster that crows every day and has for years and we live along the greenbelt and have created the perfect urban homestead with room to grow; we have been blessed that our endeavors have educated us in the field of sustainability prompting our response to learn more.

We fish freshwater and saltwater fish for our food supply. We enjoy hiking, exploring, backpacking, camping, and getting our hands dirty whatever way possible outside. If we can benefit from an activity in some way we have gained yet another priceless lesson in life. We have so much to learn from our ancestors, and neither one of us grew up on a farm although my father has been doing agriculture for years as a farmer who went to school for geology. I've learned a little from him but a lot more from all of the organic farms that I have worked on or volunteered for over the years. Also the continuing education class I took one summer at Austin Community College

was extremely useful in becoming a better Texas gardener. I learned that I couldn't just throw a seed in the ground and expect it to grow like it does in Michigan. You laugh, I know, but people think they are "black thumbs" because they can't grow plants here but the reality is that plants only need 6 hours of sunlight in Central Texas. Whoa! It takes a completely different understanding of the land, water, soil, sun, and weather elements to be successful! It's no wonder your plants may be struggling which is why it's advantageous to learn about alternative gardening methods, including wicking beds, shade screening, gardening with raised beds, berms and swales, etc. Also make sure to rotate your crops.

As for now, we are headed to Habitat for Humanity to get more supplies for our greenhouse that is being converted into a chicken coop and a more efficient outdoor growing room.

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## **Please Take Part in Gulf Coast Seaweed Survey**

**So through my sustainability studies at Texas State University, master's program, I've been recruited to help finish some research that will be published; survey marketing project that is reviewing "the marketability of a seaweed-based compost as a "boutique" compost. The seaweed is an invasive species on the Gulf Coast. " We need 250 more surveys of gardeners who just look at samples**

of the compost. We need 10 people to actually try gardening with the compost & do interviews later. Anyone interested in taking a seaweed survey for your garden? I am in the Central Texas area doing this research. Please sign up on my site if you are interested in participating in this study.

If you would like to read more about the impact of the latest news on the **Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative** check out the article listed to the featured picture; What Lies Beneath: Scientists Study Seaweed to Understand Gulf Oil Impacts.

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## Urban Roots Promotes Growth through Volunteerism in the Austin Community

This morning I spent a few hours weeding tomato plants for a local nonprofit that supports the development of youth by teaching organic farming techniques as well as genuine life principles. Although the youth who work on the farm are scheduled on Saturdays it was a great way to meet people on an Organic Farm that I haven't volunteered at before. Truth be told it's been on my list of nonprofits to volunteer for quite some

time. I was prompted to help out when I also thought it'd be mutually beneficial for LateBloom, Siduslink, and my own personal development too.

I must admit, what I love the most about volunteering on organic farms is learning what other people are doing, meeting new faces, sharing ideas, reflecting on lessons in life, and if your lucky, getting some complimentary produce for your efforts at the end of your shift. This farm is just off 183 S; loop around the Balm exit and it's tucked back around some curves that eventually turn into Delwau Lane. The farm is on just a small plot of land with well established and maintained rows. Megan assisted volunteers; there were 8 by mid morning. She even held a t-shirt drawing for volunteers at the end of the shift which I think is just another fantastic way to give back even more! I had the pleasure of meeting a great gal originally from Vermont today who shared an equally fulfilling conversation with me right from the start. It's hard finding women to connect with who don't live states away so hopefully we will keep in touch!

If you are looking for a great way to meet others who share the same interests as you, volunteer on a local farm who invites volunteers. Urban Roots only asks for 3 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays which isn't long at all. Urban Roots not only assists in the developmental and educational growth of urban youth in Austin but helps

strengthen communities through their farm volunteerism program! I will definitely return. I had a wonderful time and experience. As an added bonus I was able to glean a few more peppers for canning tonight! Davin will be happy I can add a few more into his hot sauce too!

Thank you Urban Roots for a genuine experience. Glad I volunteered my time and efforts. For more information on how you can help Urban Roots thrive check them out online at <http://www.urbanrootsatx.org/> or Give to Urban Roots by volunteering or donating.