

# Moraga's 'Bray-dee' Bunch

By Cathy Dausman



Pat Rose with her donkey, Ava. Once overweight, Ava now has a roll of fat on top of her neck.

Photos Cathy Dausman

Pat Rose's charges – babies Janie and Libby, plus Ava, Theodore and Eddie – give her that warm, fuzzy feeling every time. "They are sweeties, but I do have a lot of mouths to feed," Rose admits. Fortunately, they're all on the same carb-heavy diet, consuming three to five pounds per day of ... hay.

If you haven't guessed by now, her "sweeties" are Sicilian donkeys, "one of the smaller breeds," she said. Sicilian donkeys came to the U.S. in the early 20th century, weigh between 250 and 400 pounds, and stand 26 to 36 inches high at the shoulder, according to the PawNation website (www.pawnation.com). Although most have mouse-gray coloring, they can also be dark brown, white, spotted or chestnut.

Donkeys are smaller than mules, which are the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. Mules are sterile; donkeys can reproduce. Janie and Libby (short for "Liberty"— born on the Fourth of July) are living proof, as they are Ava and Theodore's offspring and were born on Rose's Moraga acreage.

"I've always wanted a donkey," Rose said, but rather than fostering the larger, wilder donkeys the Bureau of Land Management offers, Rose purchased her donkeys from private owners. Eddie was her first; he is "the old man" of the group. "He's probably in his late 20s," she said.

She's had him 12 years. Ava was pregnant when she bought her, something the former owner didn't disclose. Each donkey needed looking after. "They

were thin and hadn't had their feet trimmed in years," Rose said. Ava's hooves "turned up like elf shoes, poor girl."

She is fine now though, Rose noted. The donkeys ask very little from life, just clean water, and some space. "They aren't very aerobic," Rose said, so there isn't the need for a large corral. They do like company, as they are pack animals. They receive vaccinations every year or two, she said, and now have their hooves trimmed three times a year, "just to tidy up their toes." Although "they do a pretty good job of

wearing them down, just trotting around," Rose added.

Rose is diligent about fly and mosquito control because the herd lives near her house. "The gardener picks up all the manure twice a week and takes it out to the compost pile in the back corner of my property," Rose said. "And I hang fly traps on the fence posts during the warm months."

As for the donkeys themselves, "if you want one or two, I would be happy to give you some of mine," she teased.

Somehow, her donkeys know that isn't likely to happen.



Sister donkeys, Janie (partly visible) and Libby, munch on their daily flake of hay.

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