

My husband Bill and I have 5 rescue dogs. Our house sits on about ½ acre with a fenced in yard that provides plenty of room for our pets, despite 4 of the dogs being large breeds.

I never expected to fall in love with a goat but I rescued him at 2 days old when he was about the size of a Ritz cracker box. Like our dogs he became a member of our family and Eddie the goat has had more than his fair share of adventures and close calls in his 4 years of life. I was visiting my daughter who was raising Nigerian Dwarf goats for fresh milk, and the day I arrived twin boy goats were born. In a male goat's life, there are only two paths – one is becoming food and the other is being kept as a pet.

The day I rescued Eddie it had been snowing since the day before when I arrived so sweaters were fashioned for the baby goats to keep them warm. Something told me to go check on the “kids” and Eddie was not with his mother. I didn't see him anywhere in the small fenced pasture so I went for a closer look and saw him lying in the snow not moving. The sweater was wet and he was hypothermic.

I yelled for my son-in-law who ran to the pasture and grabbed him while I ran inside and put a towel in the microwave. Once he was inside, I started rubbing him with the towel while we sat by the fireplace. We tried to take his temperature but it was too low to register on the thermometer. We put his mother's milk in a bottle and were able to get a tiny bit of nourishment into him. It took hours for his temperature to rise but when it did we intended to give him back to his mother. However, when Eddie was reunited with her, his sibling had passed him in size, in the one day that Eddie had not nursed. His brother became the dominant nursing twin taking most of the milk, which left Eddie half-nourished.

So I became Eddie's surrogate mother and I called my husband to let him know that I was bringing a goat back to Springfield with me. When I arrived my husband went to the car to see the goat, but was surprised when he didn't see it in the car. He came back inside and said “where's the goat?” and at that moment Eddie's head popped out of the purse on my shoulder and I said “right here!” which gives you an idea of how tiny he was. Eddie became the darling of our entire household, dogs included.

Multiple times every day he was bottle-fed a special formula for goats and slept in a dog cage in our living room where he watched TV at night and played all day with the dogs. When they went out, he went out. When they played, he played back. My husband and I experienced milestones with Eddie that impacted our lives forever. We had his horns “budded” so they wouldn't grow long when he was only weeks old. And being a male we knew that at some point he would become a horny goat with all the bad behaviors that come with it. All our dogs are fixed but we didn't know how goats are fixed. We assumed it would be in the same manner as our dogs. Boy were we wrong.

The vet told my husband to hold Eddie's back against his chest, and grip both his hind legs spread-eagle while the vet did the deed right then and there in an instant. Eddie screamed and Bill almost passed out in shock when he witnessed what just happened, but the vet said that Eddie would get over it before Bill did. However that night while Eddie was in his cage watching TV with us, he looked over at Bill with sadness and betrayal in his eyes, which brought my husband to tears. He said that if he knew that's how they neuter goats, he would have paid to have him knocked out like we do with dogs. The event was traumatic, but they did both get over it in time. So Eddie lived inside the house with us for 4 months until I felt that he was big and strong enough to take care of himself outside on his own.

One time I was out of town and Eddie was in the yard with our Shephard mix, when my husband began to walk home from work for lunch. As he rounded the corner he heard Eddie screaming and the dog

barking like crazy. He started running for home and discovered that Eddie had tipped the lid off the top of a rain barrel next to our porch and fallen in. He was hanging on to the side of the barrel with his little hoofs and he was neck-deep in cold water – only his head was visible above the barrel. We don't know how long he was in the barrel but if my husband had not walked around the corner when he did, Eddie might have died that day too.

Another time Eddie figured out that he could jump on top of the dog house and jump over the fence to get to the yummy weeds in the alley next to our house. It was about 8:30 on a Sunday morning and a group of young adults saw him standing there and took him. I went to check on him but he was gone, and I frantically searched the neighborhood, not knowing what happened to him. After putting the word out on social media, we were able to find the house where he was being held. As it turns out from their posts on social media they were going to take him to the country and give him to a farmer. I think we all know how that would have turned out.

Due to advertising our search, the City of Springfield found out we had a goat and ordered us to get rid of Eddie. We saved him from hypothermia, drowning, and goat-napping, but we could not save him from the City of Springfield.

Eddie now lives in the country with a nice family who has other goats, but everyone who meets Eddie says that he is far superior in intelligence than the others. He has grown into a very handsome boy with a distinguished goatee, nicely shaped horns and he weighs no more than a large breed dog. He is a special goat because he knows what goes on in the human world and I often wonder if he misses watching TV. He's escaped his pen on occasion and he doesn't wander off, but goes right to the door wanting to be let in the house.

However, nothing is permanent and if he were ever to lose his home, he would not be able to come back to ours. There are many "dwarf" or "mini" species of animal breeds now like never before. As a property owner, taxpayer, and responsible pet owner I should not need the approval of the City of Springfield to enjoy an unusual pet, as long as it does not affect anyone else in a negative manner.

Please pass this bill.



