

AGWEEK Farmers' Forum

Friday, December 2, 2016

Fargo-Moorhead

HIGH PRAISE

Sheldon, N.D., couple named Horseman and Horsewoman of the year

Special to The Forum
Dave and Kim Utke of Sheldon, N.D., have been named the 2016 Red River Horse Breeders Association Horseman and Horsewoman of the year.

The Utkes own Sheldak Ranch in rural Sheldon and are known worldwide for producing versatile Appaloosa horses that excel in and out of the show ring.

For 50 years, they have sold foals each fall to eager buyers across the United States, Canada, and the world. The blood of these foals runs deeply with the rugged, sturdy lines of western stock that gave rise to the Appaloosa breed.

Dave grew up on a farm north of Fargo and attended NDSU. He and his father were stock contractors in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They also spent many years threshing with horses. Carolyn "Kim" (Evanson) Utke grew up in Detroit Lakes, Minn. She helped start the first 4-H Horse Project in Becker County and

Have an idea?

Agweek Farmers' Forum welcomes submissions for possible feature stories. Send your ideas to: Agweek Farmers' Forum, Box 2020, Fargo, ND, 58107 or by email to danielle.teigen@forumcomm.com

for the state. She trained her "backyard horse" to win numerous area show championships and make parade appearances. Dave and Kim met in 1959, when they were showing their Quarter Horses at the fair in north Fargo.

After marrying, they bought a dilapidated old farmstead outside of Sheldon, ND. The couple started with nothing but \$1,000 cash, a small loan from the local bank, and one mare. The strong-willed young couple decided they would run the ranch on their own with no hired help, which they continue doing to this day.

UTKES: Page 9



Brose Photography / Special to the Forum
Dave and Kim Utke of Sheldon, N.D., have been named the 2016 Red River Horse Breeders Association Horseman and Horsewoman of the year.

QUALITY **PRIDE** **INTEGRITY**

WINTER DISCOUNTS!
CALL TODAY!

BROCK BROCK® COMMERCIAL & FARM TANKS • CATWALK & CONVEYORS • MEYER DRYERS • SUPERB DRYERS



701-293-7202 • 1-800-747-4499 • gatewaybuilding.com

UTKES

From Page 1

In 1968, the industrious young couple dove into research to start breeding Appaloosas. They called Appaloosa show judges across the country to learn of the breed's best bloodlines.

To build up the broodmare band, the Utkes followed the advice of well-known Texas oil man and horse breeder Carl Miles. He told them to "buy the best horses you can find, even if you have to finance for years to do it. A sure way to lose is to buy a few cheap horses and pray for a miracle."

Following Miles' advice, and with the help of their trusted local banker, the Utkes brought in the best stock they could find. Before long, foals off the ranch went straight to the top of the show ring. Since the start, Dave and Kim have tried to keep track of Sheldak winners.

By their count, there are hundreds and possibly thousands of awards won by Sheldak Ranch bred-and-raised foals in the United

States, Canada, and several foreign countries. They can boast national and world champions in all categories, divisions and age groups, both in halter and performance, including pleasure, trail, roping, reining, western riding, cutting, hunter, dressage and more.

Sheldak Ranch horses have been used in recent years as seed stock to start the Appaloosa breed in Chile, and dozens of foals have been sold to Mexico since 1997.

Other customers are from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, Germany, Panama, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Venezuela and nearly all 50 states. Sheldak Ranch was named one of the Top 5 Horse Farms in the U.S. by Horseman Magazine in 2009. Among the top 5 were Calumet Farm and Claiborne Farm, retirement home of legendary race horse Secretariat.

Even with a worldwide presence in the horse industry, Dave and Kim have been, and will continue to be, deeply involved in local government, soil conservation, community service, and equine research.



Sheldak Ranch mare The Crime Seen is pictured in a pasture with CSI, her 2011 filly by Imagine in this 2011 file photo.

Kim Utke / File photo special to The Forum

Inhumanity of catch-and-release programs for cats

Dear Dr. Fox: You recently ran a letter about National Feral Cat Day, which is an insult to the domestic cat, our most popular beloved pet.

Forcing unadoptable cats to live and die outdoors through the misguided practice of trap-neuter-release (or abandon) rather than receive a quick, humane death is cruel and irrational. As the director of a cat shelter, I have witnessed too many who suffer miserably with prolonged deaths from parasite infestations or systemic infections from injuries or diseases transmitted by fleas and other animals.

After one trip to the clinic for sterilization, these cats will never receive any palliative care for the

many afflictions they may eventually acquire.

Cats do not belong on farms where they can contaminate farm animals and vegetable crops with toxoplasmosis gondii oocysts, spread via feces, which they catch while hunting native wildlife, not just pest species.

Animal shelters were created to prevent cruelty to animals, not for people to do what makes them feel good. The true heroes are open-admission

shelter staffs who make difficult but compassionate decisions for the sake of the animals while cleaning up the problems that irresponsible people leave behind. Love your cats by keeping them safe on your own property and away from wildlife.



DR.
MICHAEL
FOX
Animal
Doctor

I spent three months this past summer fighting the crazy "no-kill" people at town board meetings because they didn't approve of euthanizing feral cats instead of applying TNR to them. They basically spread lies about me stalking cats in backyards and taking peoples' cats. It was quite frightening. I came through with the help of my supporters and from three veterinarians. – Gail Mihocko, Project Cat director, Accord, N.Y.

Dear G.M.: I agree with you; communities endorsing TNR without question are undoubtedly betraying what I consider a sacred duty to care for cats and all creatures great and small.

In most communities, releasing cats to live permanently outdoors is an abdication of responsibility for wildlife protection, public

health and cats' welfare.

Dear Dr. Fox: I can relate to the reader who wrote about his two deceased dogs coming back to visit him. I, too, had that experience with my beloved black Labrador, King. He was 10 years old when he died last November.

About a week after he died, I was in my bedroom, crying. I looked out my window and saw a set of dog prints in the snow. I went outside. The gate was closed and had a lock on it. I opened it and saw dog prints; I followed them for about eight feet, right into the middle of my yard, where they just disappeared. I knew it was King, since no dog could possibly jump the fence, let alone leave paw prints that led to nowhere. I came in and had the most peaceful feeling ever, knowing my King was still here with me. – P.C., St. Charles, Mo.

Dear P.C.: Many skeptical readers, the latter-day doubting Thomases of instrumental rationalism, will have something to think about when they read your account of your beloved dog's communication with you after life.

I have added your letter to the many that I have received to my website www.DrFoxVet.net, under "Animal Spirits." This subject is important because it adds a dimension to understanding the nature of reality, where perception is reality and seeing is believing. Letters on this very personal subject from other readers are always welcome.

Send all mail to animaldocfox@gmail.com or to Dr. Michael Fox in care of Universal Uclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64106. The volume of mail received prohibits personal replies, but questions and comments of general interest will be discussed in future columns. Visit Dr. Fox's website at www.drfoxvet.net.