



All in the 4-H family

Agriculture-based organization still strong on P.E.I., offering plenty of chances for young people to learn about animals, as well as important life skills

November is national 4-H Month. When asked what that means to the Matheson family of Albion Cross, mom Melaney happily answers: "It's a family affair!"

Growing up on the farm he still calls home today, George Matheson has great memories of time spent as a young member of the Dundas 4-H Club. As an adult, he continued the tradition by

becoming a volunteer leader with the Grand River East Club, along with wife Melaney. Daughters Rae and Ila (now 12 and 15) joined the organization when they each turned nine. 4-H has been a part of Island communities for almost a century, having begun in 1918 as the Boys and Girls Club. While the face of farming on P.E.I. has changed a great deal since then, the organization's original mandate — to provide young Islanders with hands-on learning, leadership and life skills opportunities — continues today, with almost 600 members from across the Island, living in both rural and urban settings.

For the Mathesons, it's rural all the way, although many will know them as long-standing vendors at the Charlottetown Farmer's Market. As the owners and operators of Springwater Farm, the Mathesons have been able to lead their daughters and other young 4-H club members in projects focusing on raising and showing sheep, turkeys, rabbits and dogs.

"But, it's not just about showing animals at exhibitions," explains Rae. "4-H teaches you things like cooking, and sewing, speaking and selling — things that will help you the rest of your life."



Living on a farm means that sometimes barn life combines with home life. This newborn lamb needed a few hours by the wood stove before returning to her momma and sister in the barn. PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY MELANEY MATHESON

AT A GLANCE

Quick questions

► Who can join 4-H? 4-H members must be between the ages of nine and 21, as of Jan. 1. Many 4-H Clubs also accept Cloverbud members as young as six or seven. Members do not have to live on a farm and do not need to own an animal to participate in an animal or livestock club. Volunteer leaders must be at least 19 years of age as of Jan. 1. Volunteers must successfully complete a training and screening process.

► What is the 4-H Pledge? The pledge is said at the beginning of every meeting or 4-H event. It encourages a balanced lifestyle (intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual) and reminds participants to always aim to be a good friend, mentor, community member and citizen.

I pledge my Head to clearer thinking,
my Heart to greater loyalty,
my Hands to larger service and
my Health to better living
for my club, my community and my country.

► Where can I get more information about 4-H? By visiting the 4-H website at: www.pei4h.ca or by calling the P.E.I. 4-H office toll free at 1-866-308-4833.

the Charlottetown Farmer's Market. As the owners and operators of Springwater Farm, the Mathesons have been able to lead their daughters and other young 4-H club members in projects focusing on raising and showing sheep, turkeys, rabbits and dogs. "But, it's not just about showing animals at exhibitions," explains Rae. "4-H teaches you things like cooking, and sewing, speaking and selling — things that will help you the rest of your life." It's these hands-on opportunities to "learn to do by doing" (as the 4-H motto states) that continue to attract members ages nine to 21 from across the



The Matheson family and just a few of the animals from their busy Springwater Farm in Albion Cross. (L to R: Pebbles the pony, Ila Matheson, Rae Matheson with Fluffy the rabbit, Melaney Matheson with Little Lady the chicken, George Matheson with Teardrop the sheep and Samara the dog). PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY SHIRLEY MACLURE

Island in projects that not only involve livestock but also include wide-ranging subjects such as gardening, timbersports, entrepreneurship and rocketry. Additional opportunities to travel and to compete regionally, nationally and even internationally create experiences members have reported to be life changing.

It's important for young people to have a meaningful connection with their community which includes understanding and respect for people, animals and the food we eat each day," explains George. "The four leaves of the 4-H emblem embody that concept in their representation of Head, Heart, Hands and Health."

For Ila and Rae, it's given them the skills and confidence they needed to take personal responsibility for their own home-based animal-related businesses. Ila is raising a Jersey dairy cow named Daisy, which means getting up first thing each and every morning to feed and milk her before heading to band practice or school. Rae sells farm-fresh eggs to neighbours, which involves caring for the chickens, managing finances and making door-to-door deliveries by bicycle.

The question of whether or not the girls will eventually take over the operation of Springwater Farm from their parents remains unanswered, but George and Melaney believe that by sharing the joys and challenges of farming with their daughters and with the other 4-H members in their com-

munity, they have given them important experiences and tools they will need to be better prepared for whatever choices lay ahead of them.

Next month in Animal Talk:
Bunnies as house pets

Kelly Mullaly is the administrative director of the P.E.I. 4-H Council. Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian produced by CAWI, the goal of

which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I. CAWI consists of the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College and P.E.I. 4-H. Links to each of these groups are at gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI. Readers are invited to send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to cawipei@gmail.com.

Happy endings



Jenna Felix is shown with her nephew, Landon, and Salem, who was recently adopted from the PEIHS. Says Jenna: "I have always wanted a black cat named Salem since my Sabrina the Teenage Witch days. He is so cuddly and spends most of the night on our bed. We will definitely adopt any future pets from the Humane Society." PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY JENNA FELIX

Shake up pet gift giving with unique holiday options

By SUE MANNING
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Pet owners looking to launch the next Internet sensation or just longing for a new view of their dog's dashing and digging won't have to shop for long to find the perfect holiday gift. Wrap up a dog harness that holds any durable, wearable camera and watch Frisbee fetch, lazy lap naps and every memory in between come alive.

GoPro Inc.'s Fetch dog harness fits over Fido's chest or back and holds the small, waterproof camera known for attaching to helmets, surfboards, cars and wrists to film rugged adventures. Sony, Garmin and Kurgo also make camera mounts for dogs.

The device is among a legion of gifts that retailers have rounded up for pet wish lists this year. Narrowing it down is tough, but the harness tops the more unique options and creates footage that lasts.

The most pet-friendly camera in the GoPro Inc. line is the Hero4,

Pup is like a member of the family, too. He belonged in this picture because he was welcoming home part of his family.

John Duffield

which allows people to decide what the dog records and control all the functions with a touch screen, company spokeswoman Kelly Baker said.

The camera sells for \$399, and the mount costs \$59.

The chest harness captures bone-chewing and digging while the back mount films running and jumping, Baker said. They adjust to fit dogs weighing 15 to 120 pounds.

The canine camera view has proved popular. A video went viral of an eager Labrador strapped

with a camera sprinting through trees and across rocks to an Italian beach, where it leaps into the ocean.

John Duffield of Santa Monica, California, loves the footage he got from the GoPro he mounted on his two dogs. He got enough shots to make a short video shortly before his chow-Labrador-Akita mix, Lupa, died.

But Duffield didn't strap the camera to his Chihuahua, Pup, three months ago when he and his wife brought their newborn daughter home from the hospital.

"Pup is like a member of the family, too," Duffield said. "He belonged in this picture because he was welcoming home part of his family."

Those looking for pet gifts besides the traditional treats, new bowls and beds can give something unexpected such as:

UGLY SWEATERS

They are the rage this year, so PetSmart Inc. will hawk ugly sweaters for cats and dogs from

Bret Michaels' Pets Rock line (\$15.99), said Shelly Albrecht, spokeswoman for the national retailer. Swath pets in sweaters stitched with gingerbread men and Christmas trees and they could win worst-dressed at those seasonal ugly sweater parties popular with people.

PetSmart also is selling leg warmers online and in stores from Top Paw and Luv-A-Pet.

"STAR WARS" GEAR

Dogs will "use the force" with Petco's line of "Star Wars" toys and clothing. Dress up dogs like Princess Leia with a headband sporting her signature bun hairstyle. The Death Star won't menace when it comes as a treat dispenser (\$7.49) or tug-of-war toy (\$5.99).

Plush squeaker toys feature favourite characters — R2-D2, Chewbacca and Darth Vader — for less than \$10. And don't forget the cats — the Millennium Falcon flies at the end of a teaser toy string for less than \$5.

DEVICES FOR OLDER DOGS

Make it easier for your senior dog to get around safely with equipment from Solvit Pet Products (www.solvitproducts.com). Help them avoid injury in the car with a Department of Transportation-tested safety harness (\$30) and ease their way out of the vehicle with a ramp for those who can no longer jump (\$159).

Keep them close on a bike ride by pulling them in a bicycle trailer (\$399) or placing them in a wicker basket (\$89).

GOURMET FARE

After romping in the snow, pets can warm up with San Diego-based Honest Kitchen's Winter Warmers Broths. Just add hot water to the dehydrated mixes in chicken consomme, beef and bone, and turkey stock flavours.

The company, which focuses on natural food good enough for people's palates, offers the \$19.99 three-box sets for a limited time.