

LEADERS AND LONERS  
FROM ECHOES OF EDEN  
BY ALICE EBY HALL

Living with and observing my goat herd has allowed me to observe parallels with human life. One thing I've noticed is the similarity between the leader and the loner—and the differences that put them in their respective positions.

One set of twins illustrated the comparisons and contrasts with special clarity. Except for color, Adventuress and Sabrina resembled one another with smooth-blending junctures, ample width throughout, and angularity shown especially in superior width and depth at the rear of their barrels. Adventuress's black coat beautifully contrasted Sabrina's dark red.

Adventuress and Sabrina, Nubian twins extraordinary, exhibited innate independence by the time maturity enabled them to accompany the herd. Both does enjoyed leaving the herd and wandering away alone. Both had an air of stubbornness that exhibited how determined they were to have their own way.

The reaction of the herd to the twins' independent behavior illustrated the differences between the twins. When Adventuress ambled away, she remained alone. When Sabrina skipped out, the whole herd followed. Why would one twin become a leader when the other remained a loner?

After watching these twins for many months, I was able to identify several reasons why the herd followed Sabrina and let Adventuress do her own ambling.

*Carriage* is important in a leader. Adventuress ambled along with her head hanging low. Sabrina stepped sprightly with her head held high. As a result, Adventuress gave the impression that she drifted, not caring where she went, having no clear-cut goal. In watching her wanderings, we knew that wasn't true, but she presented that portrayal of lackadaisical carelessness.

Sabrina's appearance impressed observers with her purposefulness, her assertiveness. She seemed to have a clear goal in mind and self-confidence enough to achieve it. Adventuress accomplished as much as Sabrina, but she never seemed to care.

*Sociability* is also important in a leader. Where Adventuress snuggled, caressed, and communicated only with her sister Sabrina, her mother Brandi, and her kids Hilda and Helga, Sabrina often touched noses or rubbed shoulders or pressed heads with a variety of herd members.

Pressing heads seemed to be especially important, as her considerable substance gave her a decided advantage in dominance. She never showed advanced aggression, but even though she was a young doe, she could maintain dignity and assertiveness in a challenge. Adventuress avoided confrontational engagement.

*Enthusiasm* sparks a good leader. In a human, we might call it charisma. Adventuress' dogged approach to reaching her goals of delectable scrub or delicious meadow left no doubt she knew what she wanted and was willing to sacrifice companionship to obtain it. She usually went where she wished, ate what she craved, and did it alone.

Sabrina also reached her similar goals, but she pranced about with such joyous self-confident verve that the whole herd followed, even the old matriarch, Qiana. So Sabrina never experienced aloneness.

*Responsibility* shines in a leader. Adventuress willingly accepted the responsibility of raising her own kids and teaching her daughter Helga how to raise hers, but she didn't want any other hangers-on.

Sabrina enjoyed the challenge of leading others to safe places where she felt comfortable and secure. Adventuress didn't mind if others joined her, but Sabrina excitedly and willingly shared what she found.

*Courage* is evident in both leaders and loners. There IS "safety in numbers," and those who forage alone are vulnerable to predators. I tend to worry most about the loners, but surprisingly, it's the leaders who meet the most challenges and experience the most terror.

*Alertness* is seen in leaders and seems to run in family lines. Alert animals are often offspring of the leaders, and they seem to smell or otherwise detect intruders or threats before the herd has dug in for a rest period. Alert animals seem to rest less soundly than others. They often take breaks to look around.

Dairy goats rest well. They paw the ground, leaving huge holes in which they nestle down. They seem to enjoy pawing holes, sometimes bypassing strong permanent pasture grass to paw in arid spots for buried Bermuda sprouts. In their holes, they snuggle against one another in piles—sometimes three generations with their heads resting on one another—with the leader or her offspring watching.

Qiana, the undisputed herd boss for seven years was taken by a cougar. Jenny was attacked as she led the herd into the brush, but she survived with near scalping and numerous swellings and abscesses throughout her head and throat because Roger was there to rescue her. Elizabeth was taken down by a cougar as she led the herd to the edge of the pasture. Again, she was rescued, but she grazed on her knees to pamper wounded legs.

So a leader must be courageous enough to face the possibility of taking the full impact of an attack. Unfortunately, once leaders have faced an attack, they lose the assertiveness that made them good leaders.

In comparing my goats with the human leaders we follow, I see that our leaders usually walk with a self-confident carriage. They exhibit open sociability. They tend to be enthusiastic in their public appearances.

Our leaders are assertive enough to command respect from people needed to vote on their proposals. Our leaders show courage, especially when dealing with aggression from probable enemies. We look at our leaders, and want to follow them, even if we recognize that they may not be any more determined or intelligent than the loner on the street.

One way in which human and goat leaders are different, is that goat leaders are usually female. Even if a male lives with the herd, his position is that of protector or guardian. The matriarch of the herd retains her position of leadership.

What have we done in our society that causes us to deviate from this particular premise when we still follow most of the others?