

# *Napa Valley Register*

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## **Vet keeps Connolly Ranch animals happy, healthy**



A Connolly Ranch veterinary volunteer since 2004, Claudia Sonder of the Napa Valley Veterinary Hospital holds one of two 10 month-old LaMancha goats she helped deliver in February 2010.

The humans at Connolly Ranch appreciate Napa veterinarian Claudia Sonder for her volunteer work with the ranch animals.

Olivia the potbellied pig is another story.

Sonder said she visits the ranch several times a year to trim Olivia's feet and administer a vaccination.

"She's a very interesting patient," Sonder said. "She's a good girl, but she screams the entire time you are handling her."

Sonder, owner of Napa Valley Veterinary Hospital, has been the volunteer vet at Connolly Ranch since 2004. Her patients include goats, sheep, a mini horse, Olivia the pig and two donkeys named Mini and Cupcake.

The vet said she visits the ranch four to five times a year to provide preventative medicine such as dental care and vaccinations, but she also de-horns goats and provides emergency care when needed.

After six years as ranch vet, the animals recognize her, Sonder said. Sometimes they run when they see her truck pull up, she said. "But once I get to them and reassure them, they are fine with me."

"I know their quirks," she said. "I appreciate their individual personalities. I really enjoy working with the different animals."

The two donkeys at the ranch are 14 to 15 years old, the vet said. “Mini is a real handful when it comes to vet stuff, so I’m always doing what I call a little bit of donkey wrestling out there.”

The baby goats are among her favorites.

“I adore goats, so it’s a real joy to me to attend to their newborns each year,” Sonder said. This year, three baby goats were born at the ranch, she said.

Luckily, there haven’t been many emergencies at the farm. “Most of the work we’ve done is pretty routine,” she said. At one point, she had to sew up a cut on a 250-pound sheep. “That was challenging to get the sheep anaesthetized appropriately,” she said.

Besides her vet work, “I love the fact that children get to interact with animals they would otherwise never get to see,” she said.

She also enjoys talking with children who are visiting during one of her calls. “They ask questions. They are interested. I always tell them we need more vets in the world.”

“Connolly Ranch sends a very important message about responsible farming and compassion for animals and interest in nature, and I like being a part of it,” Sonder said.



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