

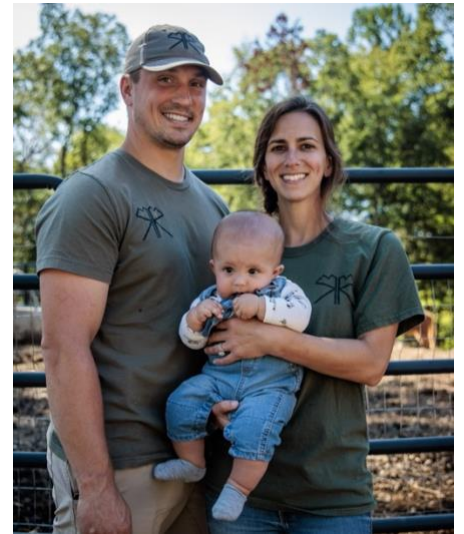
Agritourism in Putnam County

Ridge Ranch: Small Animals and Big Ideas

When you think about agritourism in Putnam County, apple orchards, farm stands and horse stables dot our map from east to west – we have some wonderful agricultural and equine businesses here. What you might not think about is having donuts with mini donkeys or a paint night with a mini Highland cow as your model. However, that is exactly what you experience if you go to an event at Ridge Ranch in Patterson.

In 2021, Dan and Arielle Honovich purchased their wooded property in Patterson and had a few chickens and goats for eggs and to assist in weed control. Along with their 14-month-old son, Maverick, Dan, a small animal veterinarian and regional medical director for PetVet, and Arielle, an elementary special education teacher, began realizing their dream of building Ridge Ranch. The following winter they started traveling with some of their animals for off-site parties and opened by appointment-only in the summer of 2022.

Work continues on the farm as they have had to clear trees to make pastures and build shelters and fences to keep their growing number of animals safe. A few chickens and goats (according to their website “goats were the gateway drug”) became Nigerian Dwarf, Nubian and mini Nubian goats; mini donkeys; micro Zebus; mini and micro Highland cows; and a not-so-mini Brahman cow.



“We are mainly into miniature animals because they are a more manageable size for working with people and children and require less food than full-size animals,” Arielle said. “We do have a Brahman cow which is going to be a full-size cow that we will breed to our micro Zebu bull to try and start a line of mini Brahmans. We also have some Nubian goats which are larger dairy goats, and we are breeding them to Nigerian Dwarf bucks to make mini Nubians.”



Because visitors (especially children) can interact easier with smaller animals, events like Donkeys ‘n Donuts, Cows ‘n Coffee and Goats ‘n Coats were created. In addition, the ranch hosts farm tours and private parties and photo sessions. For those who wish they had a donkey or a cow, the ranch offers sponsorship opportunities. Each sponsorship supports an animal or animals by providing food, health care and routine vaccinations. Plus, sponsors receive an hour visit with “their” animal every month of the sponsorship and weekly photo or video updates.



“The unique events, we hope, bring more of a draw to our farm and provide the opportunity for a wide range of demographics to find a reason to enjoy the farm,” Arielle said.

According to Fortune Business Insights, “the global Agritourism Market size was valued at \$69.24 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach \$197.37 billion by 2032.” Agritourism has many benefits. It promotes tourism and local history. It generates employment opportunities and boosts the local economy through increased visitor spending. It also makes rural and agricultural experiences more accessible to a wider audience and supports practices that preserve and protect natural resources.

“We love being a part of the growing agritourism industry because, being a teacher, it provides an opportunity for us to teach people about agriculture and animals,” said Arielle. “It also allows us to share what we find so special with others. We hope it provides people with unique and interactive experiences to be hands-on with animals they wouldn’t normally have the opportunity to interact with. Our opportunities can provide creative outlets, animal therapy, something fun to do with friends and family, get the kids outside and so much more.”

As mentioned, Ridge Ranch has started a breeding program and rehomes some of their animals. Their website states that their priority is the animals: “All of our animals are not rehomed until they are adequately weaned, up-to-date on vaccines, castrated or banded upon request and have up-to-date health certificates.” And, of course, they screen potential adopters to make sure it’s the right fit.

“Although we don’t have one main idea for what is next, we hope to continue all of our breeding programs and provide a wider opportunity of experiences for all different people,” Arielle said.



For more information or to schedule a farm tour, visit the Ridge Ranch website at www.ridgeranchny.com or email ridgeranchny@gmail.com.