



Family mourning the passing of Bucky the pet deer

From: MSNBC.com

Raised from a fawn, Bucky was the beloved, albeit unusual, pet of a Tincum woman. For 13 years the crack of hunters' gunshots in neighboring state game lands would send Debbie Ukarish-Falk running to protect Bucky, her "baby deer."

The Tincum woman is now mourning the loss of her pet deer after more than a decade of caring for the animal as if it were a member of the family. "I don't think there's a deer out there that got treated like Bucky did," said Ukarish-Falk.

Bucky came into Ukarish-Falk's life quite by accident. She found the tiny, newborn, with its umbilical cord still attached, caught in her fence one morning.

She brought the deer home, and for the first year of his life he was bottle-fed and lived in the house with Ukarish-Falk, her husband, Chris, and their children. As he grew, Bucky was given a home of his own - a fenced-in section of the barn set up with deer feed, corn, water bottle, mirror and a fan in the summer and heater in the winter.

Though 1,600 acres of state game land is just a stone's throw away from the family's home, at Boulder and Perry Auger roads, the deer

was free to roam a 1 acre, fenced-in tract of their property.

Bucky always wore a collar with ID tags, and in hunting season, Ukarish-Falk made sure he wore his bright-orange one. He mostly hid out in the barn when hunters roamed nearby fields.

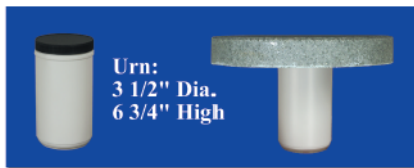
"I felt very scared all the time when it was hunting season. He had to be extra protected," she said. When Bucky was 4 years old, the Pennsylvania Game Commission granted Ukarish-Falk special permission to keep the domesticated deer, knowing that it would not survive in the wild, she said.

And there's little about Bucky that was wild, she said. He was a gentle friend and companion to her. And he was loved by neighbors and friends, who would often stop to visit and pet the deer.

In the end, it wasn't the hunter that got Bucky, but his aging bones. The arthritis in the deer's back legs became so debilitating that the veterinarian euthanized Ukarish-Falk's "baby deer" last week.

Marked with a plaque and candle, he is buried in the front yard, beneath the spot he always stood to greet neighbors and passers-by.

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Pet Health Spending Expected to Increase

Total spending on pet health products and services in the U.S. is expected to increase by 6.5 percent annually, reaching \$33.1 billion in 2014, according to an study released in August by a market research firm.

"Pet Health: Products & Services," published by the Freedonia Group Inc. of Cleveland, provides historical data and forecasts spending for the U.S. pet health market.

Freedonia forecasts spending on services to increase by 7.2 percent annually, hitting nearly \$21.5 billion by 2014. Pet insurance will continue to see the fastest growth, rising nearly 17 percent a year through 2014, according to the study.

At the retail level, Freedonia expects pet health product sales to increase by 5.2 percent a year to reach \$11.7 million in 2014. Online pharmacies and pet superstores will gain market share because of the cost savings, according to the study.

At the manufacturer's level Freedonia expects the demand for pet health products to increase by 5.8 percent annually, to \$5.5 billion in 2014. The fastest gains will be in dietary supplements due to an ongoing focus on preventive health care, according to the study.

From: Veterinary Practice News



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