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Rural menagerie



[Show Caption](#) HEATHER MCCLELLAND/Advocate
Variety spices up farm life

- By [SONYA KIMBRELL](#)
- Ascension staff writer
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GONZALES — When local businesswoman Cheryl Fontenot moved from a subdivision to a 7-acre spot off La. 621, she thought she needed a rooster.

“That’s how it all got started — me thinking I needed a rooster now that I was living out in the country,” she said.

On a recent afternoon, Fontenot stood near a fence that encloses five wooded acres next to her home site.

A 10-point buck she calls Nosy pokes his snout through the fence to get pieces of bread.

“This is what all the men want to get when they go out in the woods,” she said.

Nosy was soon joined by a nine-point buck named Butter and by Samson and Delilah — a pair of sheep.

Fontenot’s home — also known as Rosehill Habitat — includes seven deer, two sheep, four turkeys, one peacock, one goose, seven ducks, two squirrels, one raccoon, one possum, 11 caged rabbits, two pheasants, 20 chickens, 20 button quail and one parakeet.

That doesn’t account for other assorted wildlife or three dogs and four cats.

“We love animals, and I like to share what I have,” she said.

To that end, Fontenot has begun opening her place to tours and children’s parties.

The five enclosed acres house the deer and sheep.

An aviary, a chicken house and other enclosures house the other normally wild animals.

She’s acquired the animals in different ways.

One day her son was having lunch at Gulf Net Seafood when local construction workers nearby had found baby squirrels as they were cutting trees.

He brought them to her and fed them. Now they are Chip and Dale who live next to her patio.

Two turkeys are recent arrivals that were an older man’s pets. He moved and couldn’t take them.

“So we get them different ways,” she said.

She said she enjoys showing children the animals and the habitat. “When we were kids, you didn’t have to go on a field trip to see chickens. Everybody had them,” she said.

The property’s pond has catfish, bass, sac au lait and bream so she also hosts fishing birthday parties.

She said the habitat is something that has evolved from its small beginning and is likely to continue to evolve in the same way.

“It’s a lot of work,” she said.

She said she doesn’t know exactly how much they spend on the habitat, but for now it’s out of pocket. She said she developed the area out of love, with no eye toward a business.

“We’ll just see how it grows. And I’ve always wanted an alpaca, so who knows,” she said.

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