

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

Meet Alice: Central Montana's popular camel

Story and photos by

Charlie Denison
Contributing Writer

“We need a camel.” That’s what Horizon Veterinary Services owner Greg Carlson told his wife, Jolyne, during an exceptionally bleak winter day in Lewistown a few years ago.

She didn’t have a response, so Greg let the comment go, acting like he’d never said it in the first place.

But, a couple weeks later — much to his surprise — Jolyne took him up on it.

“I’m in the kitchen making a sandwich, and she says, ‘you know, I think you’re right. Let’s get a camel,’” he said.

Her name is Alice, and for the last year and a half she’s startled traveling locals and tourists alike, mostly by being so noticeable, as Horizon and her pen are located directly off US Highway 87.

“Sometimes people stop in the middle of the road,” Greg said.

This kind of reaction has surprised the Carlsons, even though getting the camel from Washington to Montana foreshadowed their experience as camel owners.

“You want to talk about one of those trips that kids will never forget?” he said. “Every time we’d stop at a rest stop and let her stretch her legs it was amazing. You jump a camel out of the back of a Yukon it tends to gather people. I stopped for fuel in Lincoln, we jumped the camel out, and it was almost an hour-long process. People were coming out of the bars, out of the convenient stores. There was a crowd of people. I was like, ‘load the camel. We’ve got to go.’”



Alice and Greg Carlson pose outside her pen last month. Camels can grow to be over seven feet tall. Less than two years old, Alice has a lot of growing to do.

A pleasure to have around

Getting Alice was a family experiment, Greg explained, and it’s working, as Greg, Jolyne and their four children love her.

“She is... interesting,” said Raya, 15. “She has loads and loads of personality.”

Alice is a lot of fun to be around, Raya said, but that doesn’t mean she’s not difficult sometimes.

“If you make her mad, she’ll let you know,” Raya said. “She sounds like a bear or something, especially if you do something she doesn’t like.”

Sometimes Alice doesn’t like to cush (lay down so someone can get on her), Raya said, but she’s getting better, just as she’s getting better at behaving herself. Like humans, it’s a maturing process since she’s still pretty young for a camel at less than two years old.

Watching her go through this maturation

can actually be pretty humorous.

“When Alice gets mad, she often stomps her foot like a two-year-old throwing a temper tantrum,” Greg said.

“She even shakes her head sometimes when she doesn’t want to do something,” Raya added.

Although she has her good days and bad days, she is a very content pet, spending most of her time rolling around in the dirt, eating raspberries and bananas, and drinking a lot of water.

“She can drink 25-30 gallons of water in one sitting,” Raya said.

How does she do in the winter?

The Carlsons were concerned about how Alice would manage during the winter, but cold weather has not been an issue.

“I’ve never seen an animal hair up faster,” Greg said, “It grows fast and it

Continued on page 5



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney



Copper Mine – White Sulphur Springs

NorthWestern Energy and Fergus Electric Cooperative reached an agreement allowing Fergus Electric to provide electric service to the proposed Tintina Resources – Black Butte Copper Project north of White Sulphur Springs. After months of work, I am pleased to report that this agreement was approved by the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) on September 1, 2017.

NorthWestern will provide a tap on their existing transmission line, and will provide transmission service to the new tap. Fergus Electric will build the new transmission line from the tap to the new copper mine. Tintina Resources plans to begin mining in 2021.

Strategic Planning meeting

The Board of Directors has decided it is time to review and update our latest strategic plan, which was prepared during the last planning session held in November 2015. Over the past two years, our board and staff have been able to check off several completed assignments that resulted from the last strategic planning session.

In our rapidly changing world, the board believes it is important to set aside a couple of days for goal setting and long-term planning so it has scheduled to meet on November 2-3 for this purpose. I enjoy this time for the board and staff to work together, planning and setting goals that will help determine what our priorities will be in the short- and long-term.

One of our key topics this year — succession planning — is a topic that is currently trending in the electric utility industry. It is essential to prepare for the inevitable staff changes that will occur within our workforce to keep the co-op running smoothly.

Projects

With the Cooperative Solar project successfully completed and generating power, there are other projects to focus

on this fall. We are pleased with the sale of the solar panels. The total array consists of 324 panels, and our members have purchased 267 panels, leaving just 57 more panels to sell. Hurry and get your name in if you wish to buy one or more panels!

The new truck garage project plan is being finalized so it can be put out to bid and construction can begin, then we can get our big trucks inside and out of

the weather.

Fergus and PRECorp are continuing to work on bid proposals to replace our out-of-date “Turtle” metering system. This is a big project, which will take several years to get fully deployed.

We are beginning work on rebuilding our existing 50 kV transmission line north of Lewistown, which extends about 7.5 miles from the Carters substation north towards Hilger.

TIMELY TOPICS

Fergus Electric observes National Co-op Month in October



Vangie McConnell, Editor

Fergus Electric Cooperative is joining 30,000 cooperatives nationwide to celebrate National Co-op Month and to recognize the many ways cooperatives meet the needs of their members and communities. Included in this celebration are producer-owned cooperatives, farmer-owned co-ops, small businesses that come together to form a co-op, community-owned cooperatives, franchise owners that use purchase co-ops, and cable or telecommunications cooperatives to name a few.

“Co-ops Commit” is the theme for this year’s celebration. Being part of a cooperative means being part of something special for 120 million people nationwide.

Rural America is served by a network of about 1,000 electric cooperatives, most of which were formed in the 1930s and 1940s to bring electricity to farms and rural communities. Large, investor-owned power companies had no interest in serving rural America because of the higher costs

involved in serving low populations and low-density areas.

“Fergus Electric delivers electricity to 3,808 members in a 12-county service area of Central Montana,” said General Manager Scott Sweeney. “Delivering safe, reliable, affordable power is our top priority, but we are also invested in our communities because we are locally owned and operated.”

“Revenue generated by Fergus Electric goes back to Main Street, not Wall Street.”

In addition to providing the vital power co-op members depend on, Fergus engages with local communities through scholarships, Youth Tour, high-voltage safety demonstrations, charitable contributions to schools and other community organizations, and community solar.

Although we started out to provide electricity, our impact (with your support) has grown. As we continue to look toward the future, you can be confident that Fergus Electric will commit to explore new ways to help

popular camel

Continued from page 3

grows incredibly thick.”

Not only is the winter not a problem for Alice, but Greg’s son Sayer, 11, said she prefers it.

“She likes the winter so much better than the summer,” Sayer said.

“It doesn’t faze her at all,” Greg added. “She just lays there happy as can be.”

This raises a question: if camels can handle a Montana winter, why aren’t camels more common in the state?

“Camels were used in the gold mines in Montana, but the mules hated them so much, people stopped using them, apparently,” Raya said.

It’s too bad, Greg said, because camels are tremendously efficient.

“Camels are twice as strong and can go twice the distance of a horse,” Greg said. “A lot of it is stamina, and a lot of it is the way they are built. You can put two full-grown men on a camel and they could do a dead trot all day long.”

When Alice gets older the Carlsons plan to put her to work, but, for now, she is continuing to develop.

“She doesn’t look big and beefy yet, but her mom is seven-feet tall at the hump,” Greg said. “They are great big, stout animals.”

The most popular pet in town

People continue to stop on their way to town, and Greg predicts the curiosity will only increase as Alice grows, and that’s all right. She loves the attention.

“I have yet to meet anybody who is not fascinated by her and who does not love her,” Greg said. “It’s amazing. I have people come out here just to see



From left, Greg Carlson, daughter Raya and son Sayer gather around Alice by the sign to Horizon Veterinary Clinic off US-87. As they drive by, many passersby do double-takes when they see the camel.

Alice. She definitely has a fan club.”

“Camel mania” exists and there are no signs of it slowing down.

“I thought it’d wear off by now, but, still, to this day, not a week goes by that I don’t have someone stop in and say ‘hey, can I pet the camel?’”

And that’s OK with Alice.

“She loves people,” Raya said. “She sticks her nose right in your face and

nibbles on you. She’s very sweet — like a big puppy.”

“Plus there is no spooking her,” Greg added. “When we’ve walked her down Main Street, little kids who don’t even come up to her knees grab her, and she just sits there and looks at them. Horses aren’t that tolerant.”

So by all means, come see her. She’ll be pleased to make your acquaintance.

Fergus Electric Cooperative

COMMITTS

To Education, To Members,
To Community, To Kindness

Co-op Month 2017



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Innovation - Accountability
Integrity - Commitment to Community

October is Co-op Month

Spread the Word

Help celebrate Co-op Month! Complete this form and return it to Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457 by October 31.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Your name will be entered in a drawing for an electric credit of \$50. Three winners will be contacted in November.

Identify Account Number*

Win a \$32.50 credit

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

Account 318473

Account 381828

Account 390772

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month’s statement.

*Numbers are drawn monthly.

Write an essay, win a trip to Washington, D.C.



Plans are underway for the 2018 Youth to Washington Tour and Essay Contest. The tour is scheduled for June 9-15, 2018. Airfare from Great Falls to Washington, D.C., is paid, along with lodging, meals and admission to events.

Contest rules are:

- The student must be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2018.
- The student cannot be a prior winner of the Youth Tour.
- The student and/or parent or guardian must be served by Fergus Electric Cooperative.
- The student must write an essay of 400 words or less (double-spaced) on the topic: *Electric cooperatives offer*

various opportunities to young people, such as scholarships, job shadowing, electrical safety programs and sponsorships. What are some innovative ways your electric cooperative can connect with young people, especially children and teens?

Essays should include a cover page with the student's name, address, telephone number and the cooperative's name. Essays and applications are due



December 1. Mail them to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457.

An application form must accompany the essay. Please call 538-3465 for the form. It is also available on the MECA website at www.mtco-ops.com under the Youth Tour link, or on the Fergus website, www.ferguselectric.coop, under community.

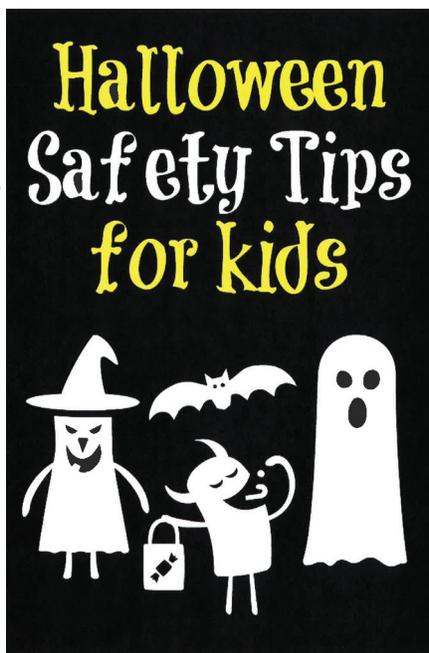
The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, headquartered in Great Falls, selects a statewide winner, and Fergus Electric also sponsors a student. For additional information, call Vangie at 538-3465.

Cooperative Trivia

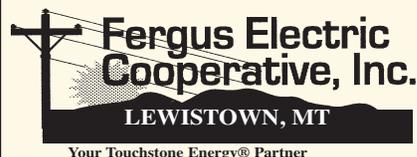
1. In what country did the modern-day cooperative movement begin?
2. Who formed the first known cooperative in the U.S. and in what year?
3. How many times would cooperatively-owned distribution power lines circle the Equator?
4. How many people in the world live without electricity?
5. How much of America's landmass do electric co-op lines cover?
6. How many states have electric cooperatives? Bonus: Name the three that don't
7. In the 1930s — before widespread rural electrification efforts — how many American farms had electricity?
8. One in ___ Americans belong to a cooperative. Along with electric co-ops, this includes credit unions, farmer-owned co-ops, telecommunications co-ops, day care co-ops and other community-owned cooperatives.
9. Today a wooden utility pole costs, on average, \$500. How much did a pole cost in 1940?
10. How many members does Fergus Electric serve per mile of line?

Answers

1. England. The cooperative was called the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.
2. Benjamin Franklin in 1752.
3. U.S. electric cooperatives own 2.5 million miles of distribution lines — enough to circle the Equator more than 100 times.
4. Two billion
5. 75%
6. 47. Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.
7. Less than 10 percent.
8. Four
9. About \$8-\$27, if you include installation costs and labor.
10. 0.9 members as compared to 34 by investor-owned utilities.



Don't go off the beaten path
Don't cut through back alleys
Be careful, tripping hazards abound



FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala406-535-5192
Guy Johnson406-366-9170
Scott Sweeney406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)406-366-3465
Monte Obert406-425-1288
Melanie Foran406-462-5650

FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT 59457-2058
Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-F

Website: www.ferguselectric.coop

E-mail: ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ferguselectric

Scott SweeneyGeneral Manager

Dale RikalaOperations Supervisor

Sally HoracekOffice Manager

Vangie McConnellEditor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1: Paul Descheemaeker, Vice President, Lewistown, 428-2417

District 2: David Dover, Buffalo, 374-2315

District 3: Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555

District 4: Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202

District 5: Terry Frost, Sec./Treas., Roundup, 323-3415

District 6: Jason Swanz, Judith Gap, 473-2462

District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., President, Geysers, 735-4476

Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.