



## **EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY FOR THE NEW KIDS AT HESS**

(Mount Veeder - Napa Valley, CA) April 20, 2008 Who says there's no free lunch? At Napa Valley's Hess Collection Winery, the newest eco-friendly work crew gets to stand around on the job all day with their mouths full. And these workers don't get poison oak – they eat it!

The goats also feast on thistles, puncture vine, assorted grasses, bay leaves, plus wild mountain blackberry vines. They balance on the steep, rocky outcroppings, standing on their hind legs to reach low-hanging branches to reach the choicest morsels. It wouldn't suit the palate of most Napa Valley gourmets but for this herd of happy goats, it's just fine. At night, they amble back to their own room with a view – a custom shed with one of the best views in Napa Valley.

The 47 goats - 26 adults and 21 kids born on The Hess Collection's Mount Veeder Summit Vineyard – arrived at Hess in March to perform an important task - one they happen to enjoy. They munch largely on invasive, non-native weeds that threaten to choke the precious grape vines or cause brush fires depending on the season. Hess viticulturist Sander Scheer said, "Getting the goat herd is another step in our sustainable farm plan for Mount Veeder. Our small herd is just about the right size for managing the underbrush in the forested areas and reduces weed pressure in the 300 acres planted to vineyard." This task was previously performed by wildfires throughout the millennium.

For these galloping gourmets, Earth Day comes along during their busy season. Winter rains have made vegetation, shrubs and weeds over-abundant. With over 40 acres of dry brush on Mount Veeder Summit, it's a perfect time and place to send in the goats.

But best of all, a bond has formed between the winery's veteran two-legged workers and the newbie four-legged ones. Several of the vineyard workers volunteer on their own time on weekends to make sure that the babies get fed on a regular schedule. "The goats are a lot of fun, like pets," said vineyard manager, Sergio Robledo. "They're very smart and low maintenance. Two of the lady goats have bells and they are leaders of the herd. The others follow them around all day."

Why goats? Why not cows? Technically, goats don't graze; they browse. They eat leaves and twigs first, only gobbling grass when there's nothing else left. Goats also don't munch plants down to a nub and move on. They'll pick off the flower heads so the plant doesn't seed and eat the leaves so it can't photosynthesize. But they'll leave the stalk, which holds the soil in place, preventing erosion. With only a bare stem left, the plant has to work overtime just to stay alive, giving the grape vines a chance to grow.

Although the goats seem to be a sign of the environmentally-friendly times, they are only the most recent in a series of earth-friendly agricultural practices at The Hess Collection dating back 30 years to 1978 when Donald Hess first acquired land on Mount Veeder, 502 rugged acres named Veeder Hills. In 1992, Hess hosted the first Natural Farming Symposium for vineyards in the United States at The Hess Collection. He instituted key sustainable measures that continue in the vineyards, winery and marketing practices today.

## IN THE VINEYARDS

**COMPOSTING:** Each fall, grapes enter the winery to be crushed and the remains are recycled back to the soil. We compost all pomace, old grape vines and other vegetative materials. They are ground and aged for a year before being spread on the vineyards to maintain on-going soil and vine health.

**COVER CROPS:** Each fall, vineyard rows are seeded with cover crops such as yellow mustard, fescue, brome, barley and vetch. This benefits soils by promoting soil life through erosion control, improved soil structure, and soil moisture management.

**SOIL MANAGEMENT:** Care is taken to maintain the health of the soil in the vineyards. Vines are matched to specific soil types to minimize soil nutrient depletion; no-til farming is used to help the soil retain carbon and to avoid soil compaction.

**BENEFICIAL INSECTS & OWLS:** We encourage the presence of beneficial insects that are attracted to the variety of native wildflowers, wild mountain blackberries and other plants that are part of Mount Veeder's natural habitat. These beneficial insects such as wasps, praying mantis and ladybugs prey on vineyard pests. Owl boxes are used to encourage bird population that helps control vertebrate pest populations, e.g., gophers and voles.

**WATER CONSERVATION/DRY FARMING TECHNIQUES:** Careful irrigation practices allow us to control vineyard canopies which ensure small berries and concentrated flavors that yield the highest quality fruit. We allow for many vineyard blocks to be nearly dry-farmed as part of our efforts to conserve water.

**EROSION CONTROL:** Each fall a large effort is made to "winterize" our vineyards to prevent erosion. This involves the use of cover crops, straw mulching, installing water bars on roads and maintenance of drainage systems. This is important as our soils give life to our vineyards. Taking care of our local watershed benefits everyone around us.

## WINERY

**RECYCLING:** Systems are in place at all of our facilities to recycle paper, cans and bottles. Office notepaper and printer paper that is made from at least 30% post-consumer recycled materials is used. Packaging supplies for bottling come in containers that are completely recyclable, including shrink-wrap, cardboard and plastic. Even the plastic backing that the labels adhere to is recycled.

**CARBON FOOTPRINT:** By reinitiating estate grown practices we keep all mountain grapes at our Mount Veeder winery and direct our Single Vineyard Napa Valley fruit to our facility in Napa. Truck traffic has been significantly reduced. In-house shipping reduces the carbon footprint even more by shipping orders from our own facility, allowing us to bypass a third-party warehouse.

**WATER CONSERVATION:** Conservation of water is mandated. In addition to employee water conservation practices, The Hess Collection is initiating a system for recycling hot water used during barrel washing and bottle line sanitizing. We continue to monitor our water use and look for innovative ways to implement other water saving practices.

**ENERGY USE:** Lighting has been evaluated by a utilities analyst and there are now energy saving fluorescent lights in place. The cooling systems in the production area are also being upgraded to highly energy efficient systems that will result in significant reduction (20%) of energy used. This is an ongoing effort and implementation of additional energy saving measures are imminent.

**CERTIFICATION:** The president of The Hess Collection Winery is on the board of directors for the Wine Institute and is involved in their development of "The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices". This will be a standardized

policy that establishes a set of sustainable standards for all wineries. The Hess Collection Winery is also one of the first seven wineries to enroll in the Napa Green certification program that will be certified by ABAG (Associated Bay Area Governments). The winery is also on the steering committee that established the Napa Green program.

## **PRODUCT PACKAGING**

**WINE CASES (BOXES):** Product cases are produced from kraft (unbleached, natural brown) cardboard to ensure an environmentally friendly and recyclable medium is used. Kraft cardboard is chlorine free and has a higher percentage of recycled paper within the board than bleached white board products.

**LABELS:** Ink used for our labels and cartons is water-based, not solvent-based.

**BOTTLES:** Glass used for our Appellation Series Wines (which represent a majority of our total production) uses the lightest weight glass that is available with a punt style. All of our bottles are made with 35-60% recycled glass.

**CAPSULES AND CORKS:** Natural cork is biodegradable and renewable; synthetic corks are recyclable. Tin capsules used for all wine packaging are recyclable.

## **OTHER INITIATIVES**

The Hess Collection Winery is proud to be a member of *1% For The Planet* and donates proceeds from the sale of its estate grown Small Block Wines to support 1,473 environmental organizations worldwide.

## MEDIA INQUIRIES

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