

## A Visit to Leilani Farm Sanctuary

by Ritch Yount with Jenn Alm

When we were planning our President's Day weekend trip to Maui, we called Laurelee Blanchard, founder and President of Leilani Farm Sanctuary, to set up a visit. Following the easy directions via Haiku, Laurelee greeted us with pruning shears in hand and a peahen close by. We could instantly tell why this was going to be a special morning; the warmth of the greeting and the polite curiosity of the animals said this was a special place. "Wear closed toe shoes", she'd advised; it rains a lot in the highlands, but it was sunshine and fun for our visit.

Our tour started at the goat barn and everyone was curious. I say everyone because every member of the Sanctuary has a name and we soon learn, a personality. While the goats who came to greet us are quite noticeable, it's the beautiful hens and roosters that caught my eye. Saved after the closing of egg production plants, they are quite an eclectic group. "Here, hold Henrietta, she loves to be held and you'll find them all so soft", Laurelee intones. OMG, soft, and even with mud on her feet, she smells soft.



The goat barnyard seems to be the meet-and-greet location as more animals show up. Two rather identical donkeys appear; Lehua is the cuddler while Jenny is the kisser and we're talking a real lover's kiss! Pig? Did I say Pig? Kea finally gets some attention when the brush comes out. The more we brushed, the more she relaxed and soon it was Pig

Down! As Kea goes into a trance with belly brushing, we hear a primal whale sound coming from deep inside.



As the goat barnyard starts to get rather full, Laurelee directs us through Animal Alley, the way the animals get from the goat yard to the luscious pasture among the fruit trees. I stop to ask volunteer Anudeva about the little wooden box house he's visiting. It's a safe house for a blind pig who was overfed garbage that eventually sealed his eyes shut. Nathalie, the calico feline, seems to have been watching over us the entire time as she's always close by. There are a number of cats and as all the animals, everyone is well kept! On the way, we pass the rabbit area where Anudeva has brought organic carrots from his garden. "Hold on to the carrot or they'll take it right out of your hand!" Most are Easter castoffs of children who lost interest; they are so soft and appreciative. The best vegetarians in the bunch were the armor-plated, spikey desert tortoises. They loved every bit of the fresh lettuce!



This is a special place, a place where animals have come to heal themselves in a safe and loving environment. These animals are so much closer to the universal source; being with them for even this short time had a very special vibration, a sense of calm amid all the trauma they each must have faced in their past. To quote from the January 7, 2010, Mautime, “Leilani Farm Sanctuary isn’t your average animal shelter – Just ask the animals!” If you too are headed for Maui, or you live there and have never visited, do not miss a wonderful visit with some very happy personalities! Fun for the whole family! Visit all the residents on their robust website: [www.leilanifarmsanctuary.org](http://www.leilanifarmsanctuary.org) and browse to see how you can volunteer and help.