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Geoff Schrock

If you ask my wife, Janice, about the Agile Wallabies she's hand-raised, her enthusiasm is obvious. "They are, without doubt, the sweetest, most loving animals I've ever had in my arms and home," she says.

And she's right. The Agile Wallaby is a grand animal ambassador. Calm and friendly, these sweethearts are, their buyers will tell you, perfect for introducing children to quasi-exotics and for allowing residents of elder centers some animal interaction time.

Although Agiles are common in the north of Australia, they are uncommon in the United States. We got our first from a zoo in Arizona and only know of one other American zoo that has them. We made a trip to Europe to obtain others in order to get new blood into our stock.

The Agiles are about the size of a Bennett Wallaby, with the females weighing about 20 pounds and reaching around 28 inches in body length, doubled by the size of the tail. The males are larger, about 10 to 15 pounds heavier and approximately 33 inches in body length, before the tail.

The tail is an especially interesting feature of the *Macropus agilis*, as it is tipped in black and, during the courting/mating ritual, this wallaby undulates it sinuous curves. Their mating is not limited to a particular season.

Distinct markings are also found around the ears, which are edged in black and the striping found on the face and thighs. The Agile is sometimes referred to as the Sandy Wallaby, because of its characteristic coloring that includes a sandy brown coat fading to a white stomach. Overall, the coloring is brighter and crisper than in other macropods.

They like warm weather. Before moving to Florida, we lived in Michigan and had to provide them heated shelter all winter. They need warmth, sunshine – and a healthy diet with plenty of pasture to eat and exercise in.

Like other wallabies, the Agile is crepuscular (active in twilight). We feed our mob a mixture of good quality Timothy or coastal hay - but no alfalfa – and supplement that with a Macropod diet (*Healthy Hopper*). They enjoy an occasional treat of carrots, apples, sweet potatoes, and whole wheat bread.

The joeys, which we pull at about 6.5 months, are bottle fed on Wombaroo. At about eight months, we re-introduce them to the mob, hanging them in the barn overnight in cloth pouches. They remain bottle fed until weaned, at between 10 to 12 months. When indoors with us, they are pouched and cuddled and rocked just like babies; they even get pacifiers!

Janice likes to tell folks that, never having had children of her own, God gave her wallabies and kangaroos - something she could handle very well. We have been raising macropods for 15 years and

have shared our home with well over a hundred joeys, including Red Kangaroos Grey Kangaroos, Bennett's, and Swamps Wallabies and cantankerous little Wallaroos.

The Agile Wallabies are, by far, her favorite. "I just find raising them very rewarding," she says. "They are calm, never "bite-y" or mean. And they remain tame. I can go into the mob and, as adults, they'll still come to me when I call them by name. Sometimes they'll see me carrying the cloth pouch for a joey and they'll run over and jump in. They really are adorable."

Raising healthy, tame, wonderful pets is very important to both of us. The Agile Wallaby meets that criteria in spades. It is time they are introduced more widely in the United States.