

# A goose lays eggs on your roof. What do you do?



MARY SCHMICH

Three weeks ago, Jennifer Baron opened the door to her fourth-floor rooftop on Chicago's Northwest Side and confronted something odd in her big strawberry pot.

A goose.

With a hiss, the goose stood up and flapped its wings, revealing something else in the pot.

"Oh, look," Baron thought. "Six eggs."

Six little goslings-to-be that would soon be stranded high above the big city. On her roof.

"This is the last thing I need," she thought. "I'm a busy Realtor. I'm trying to make a living. I don't have time for this."

Baron is also a self-avowed animal lover, however, and that includes geese, even though she understands that Chicago geese aren't universally adored. They're aggressive and prolific, they colonize entire parks, they poop with abandon.

"I know a lot of people don't like them and will do vicious things to them," she says. "I thought, well, I'm just going to give these guys a chance."

But she knew that a goose on the roof — where there was no food and the babies might fall to their deaths — was a problem. She set out to solve it.

She went in search of information on what geese eat, then put corn and peas in a flower pot next to the strawberry pot so the mother goose could eat without leaving the nest.

She called organizations she thought might safely take the goose family away but was told she'd have to wait until the eggs hatched. She discovered that destroying the eggs without a permit was against the law, and she didn't want to do that anyway.

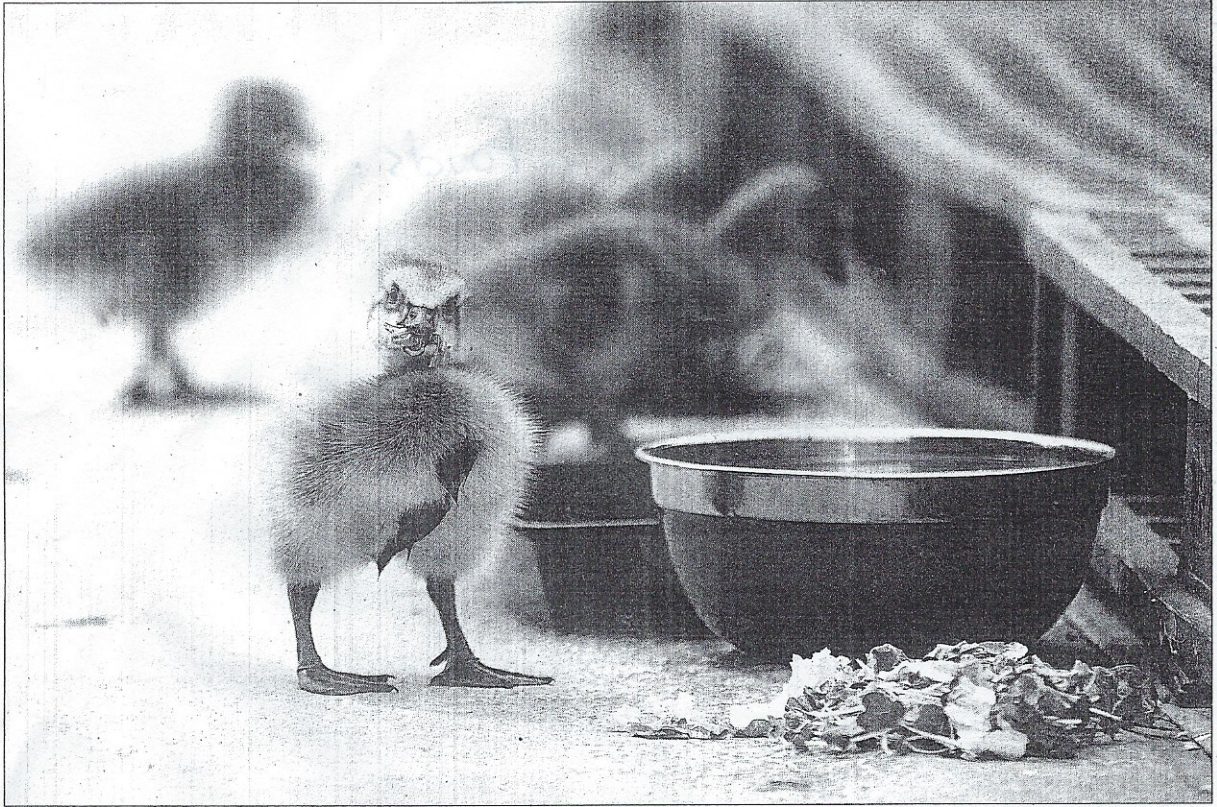
She disregarded friends who told her goose is good for dinner.

Waiting for a long-term solution, Baron resolved to treat the goose, christened Carlotta by a neighbor, like a friend. Every day, she went up to the roof, sat down in a chair near the strawberry pot and talked to her visitor. Sometimes she sang to the tune of The Beatles' "Norwegian Wood":

*I once had a goose  
Or should I say  
She once had me*

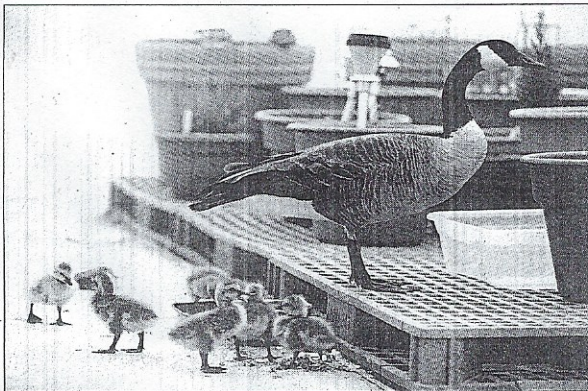
The goose got used to her. Carlotta, she learned, was hardly the first goose to make the mistake of laying eggs on a high Chicago rooftop.

"It is a fairly common situation," says Robert Schuman, operations manager at the Fox Valley Wildlife Center, one of the agencies Baron contacted for help. "Geese like to nest in open areas where it's flat and they can see around them.



ERIN HOOLEY/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS

Canada goslings munch on greens left out by Jennifer Baron. A goose, later nicknamed Carlotta, laid eggs on the roof of Baron's building.



Baron had to wait for the eggs to hatch and for Carlotta's mate to return before requesting the help of a rescue organization.



**"I thought, well, I'm just going to give these guys a chance."**

— Jennifer Baron, above right

They want to keep an eye out for predators. On a roof, they don't have to worry about a fox sneaking up on them."

It's postpartum when the high, safe nest becomes dangerous.

Once the goslings are born, the mother goose has nothing to feed them and no way to get them down to the ground. It takes weeks for the newborns to learn to fly.

A baby goose that topples off a roof might survive if the fall is short and the landing soft. A fall from a tall building onto pavement can be deadly.

"Unfortunately," Schuman said, "geese haven't fully adapted to the concept of sidewalk and asphalt."

Finally, on Sunday, which happened to be Mother's Day, Carlotta's six goslings popped out of their shells, and pretty soon the family was parading around with a panoramic view of the Chicago skyline.

"Thank God I have a 3-foot parapet wall," Baron says.

As a precaution, she blocked entry to the downspouts. She bought microgreens and wheatgrass for the newborns to eat. She continued her quest for a rescue.

But there was another problem.

In her crash course on the lives of geese, Baron learned that the big birds mate for life and that if Carlotta and the goslings were taken away with-

out the father, Carlotta was likely to abandon the kids and go in search of her partner.

"To have witnessed how dedicated she was to these eggs," Baron says, "I was shocked to learn how much more dedicated she is to her mate."

She'd seen no sign of the patriarch, however, until Monday evening, as thunderstorms swept Chicago. She heard honking overhead. Dad was back.

On the rooftop, in the rain, Baron tipped a plastic cooler on its side to create shelter for the clan. Instead, Carlotta spread her wings and the goslings gathered underneath. Dad stayed the night and

was still there Tuesday afternoon when I stopped by. He and the family were circling the rooftop over and over, while Baron hoped the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors rescue team would soon come to take them to safe ground.

Once that happened, she planned to goose-proof her roof. If she didn't, Carlotta was likely to be back in the strawberry pot with a new brood.

Baron is glad she has learned so much about geese. It's amazing, she says, not that we survive them but that they survive us. She'll miss Carlotta and the gang.

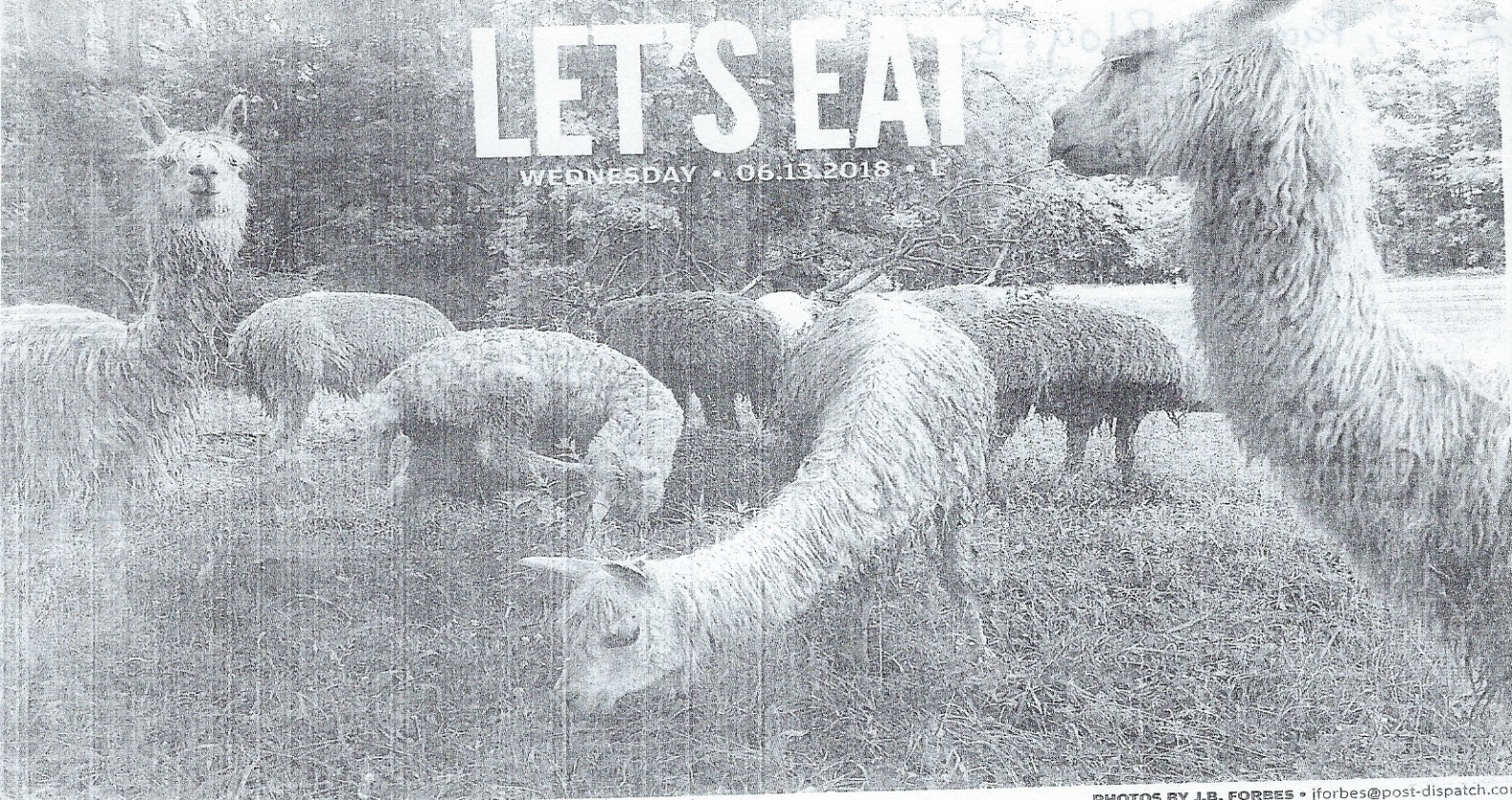
"I felt an obligation to do what I could for one little family of geese in this big, cold, hard, hungry city," she says. "It was an honor to have them."

mschmich@chicagotribune.com  
Twitter @MarySchmich



# LET'S EAT

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PHOTOS BY J.B. FORBES • jforbes@post-dispatch.com

Alpacas keep to the shade as they graze in a field at Alpacas of Troy, Jeff Suchland's farm near Troy, Mo.

# ALPACAS

## FUZZY AND ADORABLE BUT ALSO LEAN AND DELICIOUS

BY DANIEL NEMAN  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Yes, alpacas are cute. Adorable, even. But about one out of every nine male alpacas is aggressive. And when they are in a sufficiently large herd — 100 to 150 or so — the aggressive ones will form their own group.

If they sense any weakness in the others, even something as small as a stomachache, the aggressive group will kill the weak one. And this will happen as often as two or three times a day.

According to Jeff Suchland, owner of Alpacas of Troy farm near Troy, Mo., the biggest killer of alpacas is not domestic dogs, the bane of smaller alpaca farmers.

"In my experience, the No. 1 killer of alpaca is alpaca," he said.

Separating the aggressive animals into their own pen does not work, he said, because they will only turn on each other.

See ALPACAS • Page L4

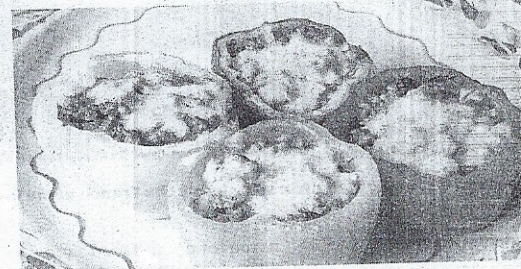
Jeff Suchland calls to his alpacas that were spread out over a field at his farm near Troy, Mo. Fleece accounts for a majority of Suchland's income from the alpacas, but he also sells alpaca meat, which is leaner than bison.



It is almost time to shear the alpacas at Jeff Suchland's farm near Troy, Mo., on May 30.



Jeff Suchland, shown at his farm, sells alpaca meat at farmers markets around the St. Louis area.



Alpaca meat has a mild flavor; it's a little sweet and lean. Recipe • Alpaca Stuffed Peppers and Alpaca Stew. PAGE L4



# Alpacas are well-suited for Missouri climate



Jeff Suchland holds one of his alpacas to check how far along she is in her pregnancy at his farm on May 30. In the background is his brother, John Suchland.

PHOTOS BY J.B. FORBES • jforbes@post-dispatch.com

## ALPACAS • FROM L1

So Suchland identifies the problem alpacas and sells them for meat.

Even though they are adorable.

Alpacas are not just cute; they are delicious. They are a mildly flavored, very lean red meat — about one-third leaner than bison — that is just a little sweet. If beef are a cabernet, alpacas are pinot noir.

Suchland sells his alpaca meat at a number of farmers markets in the area: Tower Grove, Schlafly, Eureka, Point Labadie, Wildwood and, every other week, Ferguson.

He also sells the exquisitely soft yarn made from alpaca fleece, which accounts for the majority of his income. Alpacas weigh an average of 150 pounds and take two to three years to come to maturity. He gets about 90 pounds of meat from each one, meaning he couldn't stay in business if he only raised them for meat.

The Alpacas of Troy farm is 75 acres, which Suchland has divided into several fields. The space is shared by horses, goats, pigs, ducks and chickens, but the focus is on alpacas.

Why alpacas? "I don't like cows," Suchland said.

He had been raising cattle several years ago, and not enjoying it or making much money at it. His herd was getting old, and it came time to get a new herd or move into something else.

"We wanted an animal that would be gentle for the ground. You can sell the poop (for fertilizer), which I do. And you can sell the fiber," he said.

Alpacas, a member of the camel family, are native to the mountainous regions of Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. They were only imported to the United States during a few years in the 1990s.

"In hindsight, they were trying to get rid of their colored animals, because the industry wanted white, because you can dye white," he said.

As it turns out, Missouri has a good climate for alpacas, he said. Although in the Andes Mountains the temperature falls below freezing 300 days a year, it rarely dips below zero. And on hot Missouri summer days, the animals can stay cool and happy by lounging in the shaded stream that runs through Suchland's property.

The animals themselves are relatively easy to raise, requiring less labor than other livestock. Most of

Suchland's time is spent turning their fleece into yarn, a time-consuming 12-step process involving an assortment of machines. He warns would-be alpaca farmers that, unless they have a sizable herd, they will not be able to afford the equipment necessary to turn a profit.

"If they have less than 30 animals, they have to come to the realization that they have pets," he said.

Suchland rotates his animals through his fields, so they can get the right mixture of grass and clover. In spring, for instance, the alpacas need more nutrient-rich clover to help them shake off the effects of the winter.

In the winter, he grows winter wheat, which he lets the animals eat in the form of wheat grass, "the same thing people put in smoothies," he said. Only when the weather makes it impossible to feed them anything he has grown himself does he give them grain.

He is tending to about 100 alpacas right now and is looking to pick up 30 more next year. Even so, he knows each one by name (Creampuff, Jake, Frosty) and personality (Mara is particularly docile and is protective of small animals

but turns mean when she is pregnant).

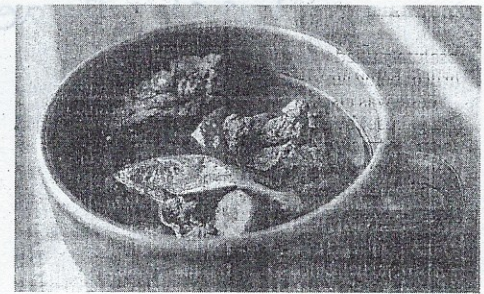
On most farms, it is a hard and fast rule never to name animals that you are going to eat. But it takes a year for alpacas to show that they are going to be aggressive, and by then they already have names. That doesn't bother Suchland. When he had cows, whenever they knew one was going to become meat, he started calling it George.

Alpaca meat is processed in much the same way as lambs, he said, but with longer shanks. You can have alpaca chops, roasts, steaks and tenderloin. Suchland is particularly fond of the neck, which he uses to make osso bucco and oxtail soup.

The meat is so lean, you usually have to add a little fat to it while cooking. A thin coat of oil before grilling will do, or you can increase the moisture by adding sautéed onions to ground alpaca. Because it is so lean, it is best served rare or medium rare, and you can substitute it for beef in any recipe.

If it's cooked right, you won't even care that it's cute.

Daniel Neman • 314-340-8133  
Food writer  
@dnemanfood on Twitter  
dneman@post-dispatch.com



## ALPACA STUFFED PEPPERS

Yield: 4 servings

**3 tablespoons butter**  
**½ cup leeks, white part only, cleaned and sliced**

**1 teaspoon minced garlic**  
**1 pound ground alpaca**  
**Pinch crushed red pepper, or to taste, optional**

**Salt and black pepper**  
**1 cup chopped spinach**  
**4 medium bell peppers, any color**  
**½ cup shredded cheese, such as parmesan or cheddar**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium-high heat and sauté leeks until softened, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for 30 seconds. Add the meat, crushed pepper and salt and black pepper. Cook, stirring frequently and breaking up any lumps, until meat is browned all over. Remove from heat and stir in spinach until it wilts.

3. Cut the tops off the peppers and remove any seeds and veins. If any of the peppers do not stand up by themselves, cut a small horizontal slice off the bottom. Divide the meat mixture evenly among the peppers. Place in a baking dish, add a little water to the bottom of the dish, and cover with foil.
4. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and sprinkle the cheese evenly over each pepper. Bake an additional 5 minutes or until the cheese is thoroughly melted.

**Per serving:** 317 calories; 3g fat; 10g saturated fat; 100mg cholesterol; 34g protein; 8g carbohydrate; 4g sugar; 2g fiber; 421mg sodium; 128mg calcium

Adapted from mesamill.co.nz

## ALPACA STEW

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

**2 pounds alpaca roast, such as a shoulder**  
**Salt and black pepper**  
**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**1 onion, chopped**  
**2 cloves garlic, crushed**  
**1 carrot, peeled and sliced into 1½-inch pieces**

**1 celery rib, sliced into 1½-inch pieces**  
**1 large potato, cut into ½-inch dice**  
**½ cup dry red wine**  
**1 cup beef broth**

**1 (15-ounce) can crushed tomatoes**  
**3 sprigs fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon dried**  
**1 serrano pepper, optional**

1. Trim the meat of any fat, gristle and silver skin. Cut the meat into 1½-inch to 2-inch pieces, and season with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat and brown the meat on all sides; you may need to do this in batches. Remove to a plate with a slotted spoon.

2. Add the onions and sauté until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic cloves and cook 30 seconds. Add the carrots, celery and potatoes. Cook 2 minutes, then pour in the wine and use a wooden spoon to stir up any browned bits. Simmer 3 minutes, then stir in the broth, tomatoes, thyme and whole pepper, if using.
3. Return the meat to the pot, bring to a boil, cover and lower the heat to a simmer. Cook until the meat is tender, 2 to 2½ hours. Taste and correct for seasoning, and serve.

**Per serving (based on 6):** 373 calories; 15g fat; 6g saturated fat; 67mg cholesterol; 40g protein; 17g carbohydrate; 4g sugar; 3g fiber; 509mg sodium; 57mg calcium



# Science Prizes Add Intrigue to The Race For the Nobel

BY AMY DOCKSER MARCUS

**THESE DAYS**, high-profile prizes in science seem to be everywhere. The prizes usually bring glitzy award ceremonies, lucrative purses and a modicum of public acclaim.

More tellingly, they also produce buzz about who might be in line to win science's most coveted award, the Nobel Prize. That's why the announcement on Thursday that the prestigious 2018 Kavli Prize in nanoscience is going to Emmanuelle Charpentier, Jennifer A. Doudna and Virginijus Siksnys for helping discover the Crispr-Cas9 gene-editing tool is likely to make a splash.

The award comes with a trip in September to the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in Oslo to receive a gold medal and \$1 million cash in each of three fields.

(Astrophysics and neuroscience are the other two.) It also comes with an impressive record: Six previous Kavli winners have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.

"It's like having a mantle," says Harriet Zuckerman, professor emeritus of sociology at Columbia University, who has written about the proliferation of science prizes. "Once you win one prize, you are in line to win others."

The Norwegian Academy's choice of Crispr scientists this year brings it into a contested, and often contentious, arena. Crispr (which stands for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) serves as the immune system of bacteria and has been the subject of study by researchers for decades. In 2012, a group of scientists led by Dr. Charpentier, then at the University of Vienna, and Dr. Doudna of the University of California, Berkeley—and a few months later, a group led by Dr. Siksnys of Vilnius University in Lithuania—published papers reporting that Crispr and the Cas9 enzyme it produces could be adapted as a tool to edit DNA in plants, animals and humans.

The Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard's Feng Zhang, working with a team of scientists, showed in 2013 how to use Crispr in this way. Drs. Charpentier and Doudna and their institutions also claim the invention, but the Broad holds the patent in the U.S. The Berkeley group has



filed an appeal in federal court, with a ruling expected this year.

Whatever the outcome of the patent dispute, scientific awards of-

▲ Jennifer Doudna, left, was a winner of the Kavli Prize; Feng Zhang was not.

including Drs. Charpentier and Doudna. Dr. Zhang was the sole winner of the \$500,000 Lemelson-MIT Prize last year.

But on the prize front, Drs. Charpentier and Doudna appear to be in the lead. The two have also won the 2017 Japan Prize (which earned them \$420,000 each), the 2015



Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences (a hefty \$3 million prize), and other awards that are considered harbingers of a possible Nobel.

Some observers say the Kavli solidifies the status of Drs. Charpentier and Doudna as leading candidates for a Crispr-related Nobel. Since the Nobel is granted to a maximum of three people for each category, that leaves one open spot.

Jacob Sherkow, a visiting scholar at Stanford Law School who closely follows Crispr, believes that the Kavli bolsters Dr. Siksnys's claim for the third spot. In his opinion, he says, "these scientists were the first to understand this system could be engineered as a genome-editing tool with ease and flexibility and precision that could not have been achieved previously. I think that is what the Nobel will be for."

Still, David Pendlebury, an ana-

lyst with Clarivate Analytics, says that other prizes don't always tell the full story in predicting the Nobel. Since 2002, Clarivate has named 300 "Citation Laureates"—scientists whose work is Nobel-worthy and whose papers represent major advances that are regularly cited by their peers. The company has a good record with prediction: 46 of the Citation Laureates have gone on to win a Nobel. In the field of Crispr, four scientists have received the Citation Laureate: Drs. Charpentier, Doudna and Zhang, and George Church, a professor of genetics at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Church's team published a 2013 paper demonstrating the use of Crispr to edit genes in human cells.

Prizes like the Kavli, first awarded in 2008, get started partly in recognition of the limits of the Nobel. There are more worthy scientists than could ever possibly win, and some fields are so new that they aren't eligible for the prize at all. The newer prizes also reflect the scientific community's effort to engage the public more.

Cori Bargmann, a scientist at the Rockefeller University and winner of a Kavli, compares the prizes to an Oscar that leads people to see a movie they might have missed. As she puts it, "A prize for Crispr says there is something really good out there, and people who are not scientists should learn about this because it could affect them, and very soon."