ALPACAS AUSTRALIA

The official publication of the Australian Alpaca Association Ltd

25 est. 1990 YEARS

In this issue:

- Alpaca Fiesta
- Felting Alpaca
- Ultrafine Fibre

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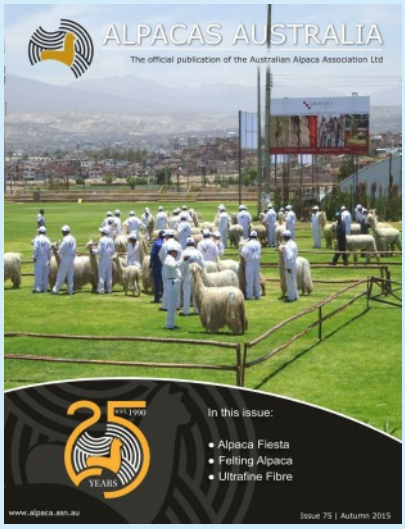

Cover: Alpaca Fiesta, Peru 2014
Photograph by Nick De Bruyn

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President's Message

Welcome to your first edition of the Alpacas Australia magazine for 2015.

This year the Australian Alpaca Association celebrates 25 years since its formation in 1990, and throughout the year we will reflect on how the Australian alpaca industry has gone from strength to strength, becoming a fixture on the Australian agricultural landscape.

As a membership services organisation, the Australian Alpaca Association represents industry and its members to government, and promotes all aspects of alpaca farming as a viable agricultural business. Agricultural shows and field days provide opportunities for informing and educating the public, and the show season is already underway. The Alpaca Fibre Showcase will again feature throughout Sydney Royal Show in April. This year, Australian Alpaca Week returns to its May timing, and will be held from 2 - 10 May across two weekends. Make sure you get involved in the opportunities to share the alpaca passion, learn, compete and promote, and to be informed and supported by fellow alpaca breeders.

The summer season has provided its usual challenges in weather extremes, with searing and unrelenting heat in many areas. A number of our members across several states were impacted by fires in early January, with several families having to evacuate from their properties, and one member losing his home. Thankfully there were no reports of injury or losses, but such experiences are stressful and traumatic, and I would like to thank our members who offered their support and were involved in providing assistance – the alpaca community can be relied on to look after each other.

In closing, I would like to applaud the work of our many volunteers, the AAA office staff, and my fellow Directors in maintaining the activities of the association. May all of us achieve our goals and enjoy success in 2015.

Kind regards
Michelle Malt - AAA President

News and Views

Australian Alpaca Week 2-10 May, 2015

All members and regions are invited to help celebrate a very special version of Australian Alpaca Week during 2015, our 25th anniversary year.

This is such a pivotal time in our industry, when Alpaca worldwide is in such high regard and high demand. Australian Alpaca Week is our focal point opportunity for getting the message out to all members of the public, including future industry members, about the Australian Alpaca.

To support Australian Alpaca Week 2015, a new campaign of marketing materials and media support are in store, with the campaign including high profile events and appearances. Open farms, live appearances, public events, media appearances and more are all in the works all over the country. AAW members can support this promotion of our industry by hosting, volunteering, participating, supplying display stock or fleece, or simply helping promote planned events in their areas.

Many members and regions are already well advanced in their exciting plans to add colour and excitement to our annual celebration of all things Alpaca, but it's not too late to join the fun. Members should contact the AAA on 03-9873-7700 or visit alpaca.asn.au for more information.

Make stock surveillance your New Year's resolution

With 2015 now here, Animal Health Australia (AHA) is encouraging producers across the country to reduce the potential impacts from diseases, pests and weeds by making it their new year's resolution to undertake regular stock surveillance on their properties.

Steps producers can take to improve their chances of early pest or disease detection include:

- Establish an active monitoring program and record the results, even when nothing is found.
- Become familiar with the usual animal and disease symptoms.
- Look out for insect pests and weeds found on your property. By knowing what's normally found on your property will increase your chances of discovering something unusual and consult with neighbours on anything suspicious, as it is unlikely that the cause of the problem doesn't stop at a single property's boundaries.
- Know what the high priority biosecurity threats are for your industry. As well as being available from the Farm Biosecurity website (www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) this information is available through local veterinarians, industry groups or state/territory departments of primary industries.
- Ensure your farm personnel know how and where to report any unusual diseases, pests or weeds.

$2 million to help school students learn about agriculture

The Australian Government will invest an extra $2 million to ensure primary and secondary school students in the cities and the bush can learn more about Australia's important agricultural sector.

Minister for Education, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, announced the Agriculture in Education initiative in 2014 at the Graham Centre of Agriculture Innovation in Wagga with the Member for Riverina, Michael McCormack.

"This programme is all about ensuring school kids get a better understanding of our primary producers from their first days of primary school and beyond by providing school teachers with new online education tools," Mr Pyne said.

This is an important part of giving school students the opportunity to learn about our agriculture industry and to consider a career in the sector.

To achieve this we must ensure teachers have the right tools to teach country kids and city kids about this industry which supports hundreds of thousands of Australian jobs and makes a significant contribution to Australia's economy."

The Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce said that students need to better understand the importance of agriculture to Australia's economy and our food security.

"Surveys suggest many children have never been on a farm or met a farmer and that many primary school children have limited awareness of agriculture," Mr Joyce said.

"For example, some children think cotton socks are an animal product, and some think yoghurt grows on trees.

Our children need balanced information about farming so they can appreciate where food and fibre comes from and the importance of sustainable and secure agriculture for a growing world population.

This information could help make today's city school students into the high-skilled workers of tomorrow's cutting-edge Australian farms."

The funding is supporting the development of resources such as online teacher support videos by the Primary Industries Education Foundation and Agrifood Skills Australia with quality assurance from Education Services Australia. Up to ninety resources will be developed in the first year of the project.

Alpaca Fiesta 2014

By Nick De Bruyn - Shandara Alpacas

As the post conference farm tour was coming to a close and we were reminiscing over a glass of red at Mount Compass in SA; an area better known for wine drinking than wine making, mention was made of the upcoming Alpaca Fiesta in November 2014. A number of ears pricked up and the seed was sown.

With less than 6 months till the opening ceremony, some serious and speedy planning was needed to book travel and accommodation for the conference, but also any add on meetings and touring. Our departure date of 5 November came around very quickly and one of the group was keen to let everyone know he had bought a Jeep, suitcase that is. After two of us received an upgrade on the Sydney to Santiago flight, the competition was on and serious for any upgrades or even exit rows on future flights as well as accommodation.

Our first port of call in Peru was Lima via Santiago and all went as planned. Michelle and Nick had arranged a meeting with the Australian Trade Commissioner in the Australian Embassy and this proved very worthwhile in fostering a working relationship for our membership in areas not just in Peru but through Austrade as well.

From Lima, most of the group flew direct to Arequipa, but 2 of us wanted to see the Nasca Lines so travelled by bus over 2 nights. Once the conference program had started we joined up with others from Australia, so our contingent now consisted of:

Michelle and Paul Malt – Big Sky and AAA
Adrienne Clarke, Chris Williams, Misty O'Connell - Ambersun
Julie Wilkinson - Baarrooka
Max and Craig Mathews - Bardella Park
Richard Bowden and Eduardo Casapia - AAFL
Nick and Lyn De Bruyn - Shandara

Day one saw participants travel by bus to Tocca to join in the annual Vicuna Chaccu or round up. This is an annual event to bring in a large herd of Vicunas for not only shearing but a major ceremonial blessing of the Vicunas event. Bringing the herd into the yards from an open range, can be physically taxing, especially at an altitude over 3,300 metres. Considering our only altitude training might have been the escalators at our local shopping centre, additional oxygen was provided to some of our group by ambulances on standby. No names!

As the Vicunas are an endangered species and primarily owned by the Peruvian government, there are bans on their export, so to experience an event like this or to see the Vicunas in their natural habitat, it is strongly recommended you put this Chaccu on your bucket list.

Arequipa, Peru

Back in Arequipa, the conference itself was underway with three major components; the judging of animals, seminars and trade fair exhibition. The conference opening included mass bands and over 200 dancers in amazing costumes representing the different regions and cultures of Peru. Welcome speeches by the President of the IAA and senior government ministers highlighted the importance of the Fiesta to Peru in promoting both trade and tourism opportunities.

Judging - Over 1050 animals representing some 39 local communities and while the majority of alpacas were huacaya, there was a much higher percentage of Suris than what we would see at any Australian show. Judging techniques varied from the norm in that all animals in the class walk in together but not observed by the judge as they do so. Once they are all in, the judge will do a fleece check only and select 5-6 finalists from the group. The rest are eliminated immediately. Samples of fleece are then taken for micron testing in an onsite laboratory. This testing process creates delays in announcing the winners of each class and eventual champions and in most cases winners were not announced until the final day. Alpaca owners and managers were very hospitable in allowing access for visitors to inspect their animals which led to some healthy sales being transacted.

Seminars - A distinguished list of international and local experts covered a range of topics including genetics, shearing techniques, dyeing methods, bio-bleaching, cloth and finishing techniques. These topics show the conference had an overriding emphasis on fibre processing through to the final product which then flowed through to the trade fair exhibitors. In addition to these seminar sessions, organisers arranged a 2 day business symposium where 70 international buyers from 16 countries were able to meet with Peruvian suppliers of alpaca products. These buyers included representatives from some of the major European fashion labels such as Max Mara, Cerruti etc.

Trade Fair - In amongst some 84 exhibitors, Sol Alpaca and Kuna had major displays highlighting just how far our industry has grown in the design and production of quality fashion garments. Trade stands featured everything alpaca related from fashion to artwork originating from a number of South American countries and beyond. Over 5000 people visited the trade fair over the 5 days with a reported $US 17.6 million spent in direct sales and forward orders.

Of particular interest to delegates were the factory visits to Michell and The Inca Group. Senior staff of both companies hosted the tours which were as informative and entertaining for both factory staff and visitors. Our arrival at Inca gave us a taste of the red carpet when factory staff formed a guard of honour for us to walk through. This was accompanied by welcome signs in different languages and continual applause.

Away from the conference proper, our evenings were taken up with a number of spectacular events, including the launch of a high profile photographic exhibition in the Santa Catalina Monastery highlighting the cultural history of Peru. An international fashion parade featuring alpaca fashion from some of the world's major fashion houses and designers was held at Claustros De La Compania. To see this quality of fashion garments being produced from alpaca fibre, justifies the importance of how we treat our fleeces from as early as the shearing process. The final night produced a night of truly gala proportions, great food, great wines, 'unique' fireworks display and a band that got the whole crowd involved. This event was held at the 'Seminario Redemptoris Mater' and as per the previous two venues, each of these buildings showcased the rich architectural history of Arequipa.

Once the conference was over, it was time to revert back to being tourists with visits to Cusco, Sacred Valley and Machu Pichu. We consider ourselves to be very privileged to have been able to walk through Machu Pichu, as we were told that accessibility will soon be restricted to approx 3 hours per visit before visits will be restricted to a viewing platform only. Due to an industrial strike, our train trip to Puno was delayed by 3 days so more time to spend in Cusco which was not a bad thing, although it did require cramming a lot into our last few days. The last day for some of our party saw an early morning trip out to the Reed Islands on Lake Titicaca before driving down to the Bolivian border and on to La Paz. The border crossing and experiences in La Paz caused some concern, however the two of us that were left out of our group soon flew back to the northern town in Peru, Iquitos. A few days on the Amazon calmed the nerves before flying back to Lima to prepare for the trip home and that last trip to the markets to ensure our suitcases were loaded to the baggage limits.

One final highlight from the Santiago to Sydney flight, was our flight path went that much further south, we had a spectacular view of Antarctica's icebergs. Totally unexpected, but another experience to cross off the bucket list.

Should you get the opportunity to attend any future Alpaca Fiesta, we strongly recommend you make the effort. The contacts we have made, the experiences, the culture, the people and all things Peru will be in our memories forever.

QLD Agricultural Educators Conference

Farming has changed significantly over the years and today's teachers need to know how modern agriculture is adapting to continue feeding and clothing us while protecting the environment.

For the first time AgForce partnered with the Queensland Agricultural Teachers Association (QATA) to provide a professional development conference for teachers and agriculture assistants interested in agriculture, science and technology. The conference, from January 14-16 was the largest of its kind held in Queensland, and is an initiative of the AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program.

Seventy five teachers from all over Queensland, one from the Northern Territory and one from South Australia attended at the Rockhampton Grammar School to hear an interesting programme including "Animal Ethics and the School Farm, How Agriculture in the Queensland curriculum compares to other States, Food in the Australian Curriculum, Practical sessions - Technology in Agriculture", tours of the school farm, which included alpacas and many more.

AgForce promotes careers in agriculture through their School to Industry Partnership Program (SIPP). AgForce Queensland is aiming to promote rural and related industries as an exciting, vibrant and desirable career path.

The main SIPP aims are to increase the number of people entering rural careers or undertaking higher education or training in agriculture; increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture and related industries, particularly in young people; and increase industry engagement with schools and associated linkages and program development.

However, SIPP Coordinator Tanya Nagle said without highly motivated and skilled teachers, the messages surrounding pathways into agricultural careers would be lost.
"Professional development is vital to keep teachers engaged and up-to-date in their fields of education," Ms Nagle said.
"Bringing agriculture back into the forefront of education through our educators is vital to the future prosperity of our industry."
With less than 11 per cent of Queenslanders living in rural areas, Ms Nagle said large numbers of young people in particular, were migrating to larger urban centres in search of career opportunities.

"While the interplay of economic factors is certainly complex in these regions – a lack of awareness of the diverse job opportunities for school and tertiary leavers is no doubt contributing to rural population decline," she said.
"We hope our teachers will then be able to communicate to their students that agriculture is more than just cows and ploughs, but the smart efficient use of our natural resources to provide food and fibre to the world.

A career in agriculture, horticulture or primary industries will see students working in an ever growing industry that not only feeds the world but contributes billions of dollars into our economy."

The Alpaca Association was represented at the conference with a trade stand run by Melanie and Branton Hibbett from Leaholme Rise Alpacas who attended with a trade display for the Queensland Region along with an array of alpaca products. Melanie says that "seeing and feeling the value added products for themselves was an eye opener for many." She also commented that of particular interest was the fact that alpacas are so environmentally friendly and that alpaca farming is far more sustainable than many other agricultural pursuits and believes that there has been more interest generated with regard to alpacas being a very "Green" alternative livestock.

Thanks to Melanie and Branton Hibbett – Leaholme Alpacas and Tanya Nagel - Ag Force QLD for information

Paraders

An International View

By Laurel Shouvlin

I confess to being a bit weary as I left the plane, stepping onto terra firma in Sydney at 6:30 in the morning on September 16, scratching my head, trying to work out how one loses a whole day somewhere over the Pacific Ocean. Oh well, I will retrieve a day to make up for that loss when I fly back in two weeks. It is my second trip to Australia to help with the Paraders event that is gaining in popularity across Australia, and I am flattered and delighted to have the chance to meet up with old friends, make some new ones, and see how things have progressed since I left in 2011 after helping some incredibly enthusiastic, energetic, and dedicated volunteers at the Easter Royal in Sydney, who were trying to get this concept off the ground.

And progressed they have! At the Sydney Royal we had a small but dedicated crew of parents and young alpaca folks who were happy to parade their stock around the show ring, through the grounds, and on a small stage where various alpaca breeders spoke about the alpaca, its needs, its products, and demonstrated shearing. For a few hours over the course of the show, much to the delight of the crowds that would accumulate in the stands to watch, these young people took their alpacas over challenges set up in the show ring. It was a grand but simple addition to the regular show - the seed for what would become a wonderful event a few years later at the 2014 National Alpaca Show in Bendigo, Victoria and the Melbourne Royal one week later.

Because the United States alpaca show system had its roots in the llama show system where these beasts of burden are utilized for tasks involving human contact more than their fleece, Performance (what you Aussies refer to as Paraders) has always been a part of what we offer at almost all alpaca shows. These classes are popular with young and old exhibitors alike, and while many visitors to an alpaca show will just walk right by the show ring during the regular halter classes, the Performance classes always draw and keep a crowd. Frankly, children working with alpacas is a double whammy of cuteness.

It is a great public relations tool capturing those considering owning alpacas who witness that, not only can alpacas be handled by children, but that they can also be led over jumps, taken through tunnels, walked up steps, and touched by a stranger. Our oldest Performance exhibitor here in Ohio and probably in the entire United States is an octogenarian and she takes Performance competition incredibly seriously! Additionally, and more importantly, involving youth in Paraders classes is a valuable step in bringing our youth into the industry.

I had to make some adjustments as I stepped into the ring to judge by AAA rules and fortunately was assisted with that by some great leadership found in Louise Lazarus and a team too numerous for me to mention here (plus I do not want to accidentally slight any of these terrific volunteers by not remembering one). I was also given a very complete and well thought out set of rules that had been meticulously developed in the last year or two. The rules and procedures are somewhat different from the U.S., but I truly appreciated what was being driven conceptually, and preferred some of it to our U.S. System!

The Showmanship classes were my favourite. While these would equate with the Showmanship classes back in the States, the AAA version differs in a very positive way. As in the U.S., the exhibitor and their alpaca are still expected to be a smart team with suitable, neat attire and the alpaca in good condition and well presented, but the Australian twist that I envy, is the addition of a small pen where the handler is asked to bring the alpaca in, answer specific questions posed by the judge, and demonstrate their ability to show the alpaca bite. The handler is also required to remove and replace the halter, thus proving that they understand and are able to demonstrate correct use and fit of an alpaca halter. But my favourite piece is that the handler must also demonstrate the proper way to examine an alpaca's conformation and fleece. The exhibitor is to examine the head, neck, back, tail, part the fleece correctly in three locations across the blanket, and then describe what they are seeing as they do so. I would imagine that there are many adult exhibitors that aren't capable of showing those skills, at least I know there are some in the United States that are unable to do so! The addition of this pen and procedures surpasses what we do in the AOA shows which are limited strictly to only showing the alpaca as in a halter class, and mimic the showmanship classes of other livestock species.

Finally, the exhibitor is asked to answer 3 questions from the judge. Obviously, the level of difficulty increases with the age of the exhibitors, but provides the opportunity to test the handler's knowledge of alpaca anatomy, husbandry, or the fleece itself. When the time spent in the pen is complete, the exhibitor returns to the lineup and their score is tallied on the scorecard before the next exhibitor comes to the pen.

The Stockmanship classes equate with our 'Obstacle' and 'Public Relations' classes. In the US, after the model first designed for llamas, the Public Relations competitions focus on the potential that the handler might take their alpaca to an event, where there may be many people gathered, such as parades, schools, or nursing homes. Here at home, I actually receive several requests over the course of a year to bring alpacas to different events or locations, and the Public Relations competition mimics those situations. At some shows we even have classes mimicking what an alpaca and their human partner might experience out on the trail, should they go on a hike in a park with the alpaca wearing a backpack.

Our obstacle classes are very similar to the AAA Stockmanship classes. What we call 'obstacles', you call 'challenges'. Regardless of the name, the purpose is exactly the same, to test the relationship between a handler and their alpaca. It turns out that regardless of which side of the equator an exhibitor finds themselves, alpacas can be fickle. The animal that leads easily and performs perfectly at home, can act like a table when it enters the ring, refusing to move unless dragged. The other universal appears to be that those young handlers who have had the experience of participating in Showmanship and Stockmanship classes are much better at showing alpacas than are their adult counterparts. It would behoove many adult exhibitors to watch and take notes, or better yet, ask a Parader to exhibit their alpacas for them!

At the AAA Nationals in Bendigo, the Paraders ring was tucked off into a corner of the venue, and this brings my only suggestion from my 2014 Australian experience. In the U.S. these classes are often held in rings adjacent to the regular halter classes. Most will agree that watching a halter class is much like watching paint dry until the judge is ready to award the ribbons. Having the Parader ring close to the Halter ring could actually draw the public to watch both and keep them there longer. Perhaps in subsequent shows, the show management might take advantage of the opportunity to market the alpaca by moving the Paraders' ring closer to the center of the venue, thus showing off the alpaca's capabilities and affirming the hard work of your youth.

It was incredible to see how far the Paraders event had come since my last visit. AAA is extremely lucky to have the committed core of volunteers who have taken this project on and brought it to fruition. This inaugural event was extremely well run, and the young exhibitors did a great job both in and out of the ring. They all showed a generous attitude with each other, great sportsmanship, and a strong commitment to the health and wellbeing of their alpacas. AAA has leapt forward with a great event and can look forward to an exciting future as more discover the advantages of offering Paraders at future shows. It has been a privilege to come and witness all that has been accomplished and to go home, retrieve the day I lost going "down under", and return to our show system to share some great new ideas to enhance our Performance shows in the USA. Thanks and congratulations!

This is a personal viewpoint and does not represent the position of Alpaca Owners Association, Inc.

Laurel Shouvlin has been raising alpacas since 1997 in the state of Ohio with her husband, Tim, and 4 children. She is an AOA certified judge in Halter, Fleece, and Performance. She is currently serving as secretary on the Board of Directors of the newly merged Alpaca Owners Association (formerly the ARI and Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association).

Beyond Ultrafine

Resurrecting the Incan Alpaca

By Julie McClen - Oak Grove Alpacas NSW

To many breeders the term ultrafine may still seem relatively new, and something they are yet to achieve to any great degree in their breeding programs. Ultrafine, generally referring to 18.0 micron and below, is a term that was introduced into the alpaca industry with the very first ultrafine bale produced back in 2006, nearly a decade ago.

Yet to a few select breeders throughout Australia moving beyond ultrafine, to a class of fibre in alpaca unknown since Incan times is not just a dream but already a reality.

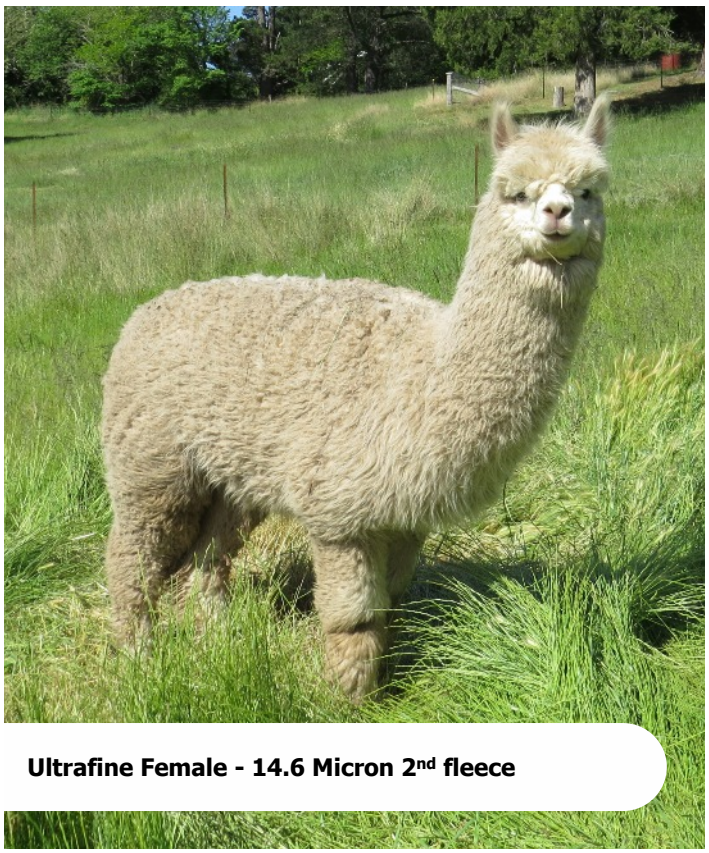
Whether this focus seems delusional or visionary, these breeders are showing that either way the existence of alpacas in Australia producing a fleece under 15.0 micron for more than a year can't be denied, and may well be the start of the resurrection of an alpaca with fibre that only the Inca would recognise.

The work of the famous archaeozoologist Dr Jane Wheeler shed light on the alpaca of the ancients, when she studied several mummified alpaca discovered in the Pre Columbian El Yaral site in Peru over two decades ago. These adult alpaca sacrificed to the gods were considered to be the culls of the herd, yet some had ultrafine fleeces.

Considering the alpaca has been shown by DNA analysis to be directly descended from the vicuña*, the finest natural fibre producing animal in the world, with an average of 12.5 to 14 micron fleece, it's no surprise that the Inca had alpacas at the very fine end of the spectrum. In Peru today there is a project planned to create a special herd of alpaca through DNA testing to determine those alpacas whose genetics most closely match the ancient alpaca last seen by the Inca over 500 years ago.

But what is the point of all this pushing of the envelope, when discussing ultrafine and beyond often generates the criticism that there is no market for this finest of alpaca fibre? To answer this you have to look no further than the alpacas diminutive relative to see there is already a market for the ultrafine vicuña. The vicuña only grows fawn fibre cutting a mere 500g per animal with a length of just 50mm biannually, which also needs to be dehaired. Prices for this fibre in the last decade have reached as high as US$1000 per kg, proving it is definitely a market that exists and one that is well worth pursuing.

Famous Italian garment manufacturer Loro Piana is renowned for it's vicuña garments and secures around six to eight thousand kilos of vicuña each year to produce an exclusive range of products with



Ultrafine Female - 14.6 Micron 2nd fleece

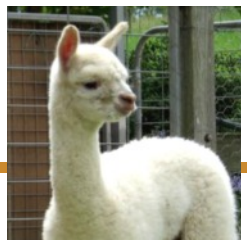
a single vicuña scarf from Loro Piana retailing at about US$4,000. Another Italian tailoring house Kiton makes only about 100 vicuña pieces a year, with sport coats from around US$21,000 and made to measure suits starting at US$40,000.

Having established that a market for the finest of camelid fibres does exist, like all fibre markets you can't expect to have a bite of the cherry unless you can produce a quantity that allows a manufacturer to make enough product to be financially viable. But you don't get that quantity if you don't attempt to create it, it all has to start somewhere, and that somewhere for the finest of camelid fibre can be in the paddocks of Australia, it doesn't have to stay confined to the wild herds of vicuña on the far distant Alta Plano of Peru.

So what if we could breed an alpaca to rival the vicuña ?

A manufacturer processing vicuña has limited options due to colour and length. Imagine being able to offer them an alternative - a white alternative, that would allow them to easily produce any colour garment they desired.






The Italians are famous for paying large sums for single bales of the finest ultrafine merino. What would they pay for a bale of the finest ultrafine alpaca whose handle equates to an average of at least 3 micron finer than merino at the same micron? This could be a sensual sensation in the world of the high end fashion market.

These are the lucrative markets that could be ours if we can organise our industry to focus on something that is actually financially viable to the breeder. Instead of paying as much as $25 a head to shear a fleece that is worth less than the cost of shearing, you could be seeing that fleece as a money spinner, not a money pit.

As one of the studs in Australia whose focus has always been to breed toward an alpaca whose fine fibre returns to the pinnacle of the alpacas heyday under the Inca, here at Oak Grove Alpacas we have started to see results of sticking to our guns for nearly 15 years. We have ignored the critics and followed our passion with some amazing results.

The results of our tenacity have been even more impressive when you understand where we live. We are located in the Bega Valley on the far south coast of NSW, right smack in the middle of dairy country! So why is that relevant and what does that mean for fibre production? If you have heard the term 'fine wool country' then you would know that fine wool is traditionally grown on pasture that is not lush or high in protein, that lush sort of pasture is better used to produce milk and will usually affect fleece animals by increasing the micron of the fibre.

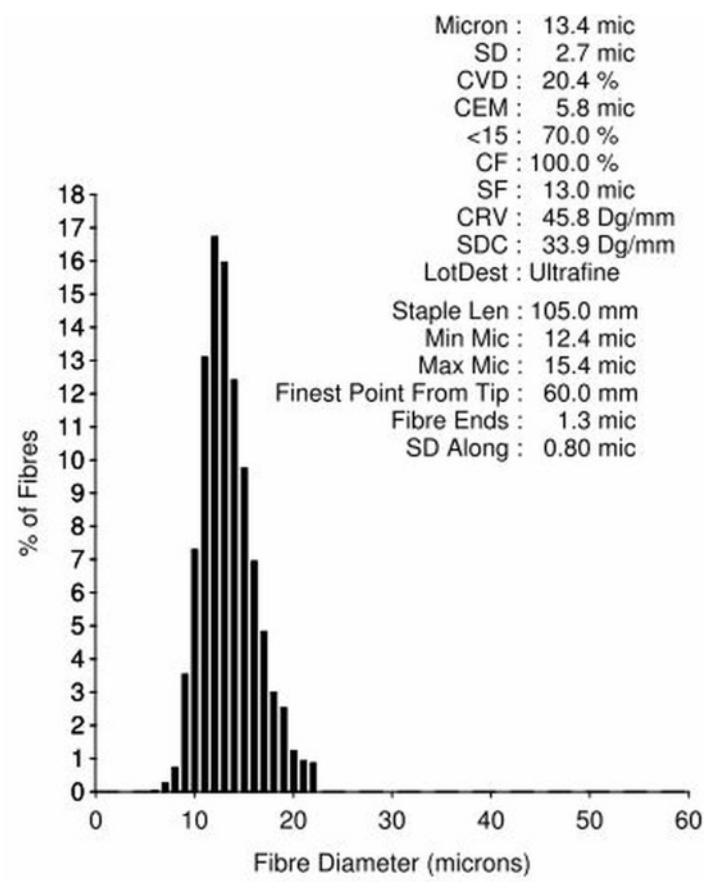
So what were we thinking, trying to produce not only fine fibre in dairy country but push the boundaries of what is possible back into the realms of the past? Well, we didn't know all this when we started out in alpacas, luckily maybe, as we may have never discovered what a bonus these circumstances would prove to be in our quest to go 'back to the future'.

Not only did we blissfully dream of producing the finest of alpaca fibre, but we also decided to hand feed a 16% protein dairy pellet and horse stud mix as supplement to our pregnant mums (at amounts approved by a camelid vet). Having previously bred dogs and seen the excellent results in the pups health and bone structure when the mother was supplemented, we wanted to give the best start to our cria. This had the result we now know of predictably blowing out the micron of many of our alpacas, but we also found that a few, despite our feeding regime plus richer pasture were remaining stubbornly fine.

We had discovered that alpacas with truly fine genetics could not be blown out to the same degree as their relatives, whose previously finer fibre may have been more the result of 'fine wool country' type pasture, or reduced nutrition, than genetics.

Ultrafine Male - 2nd Fleece at 20 months of age

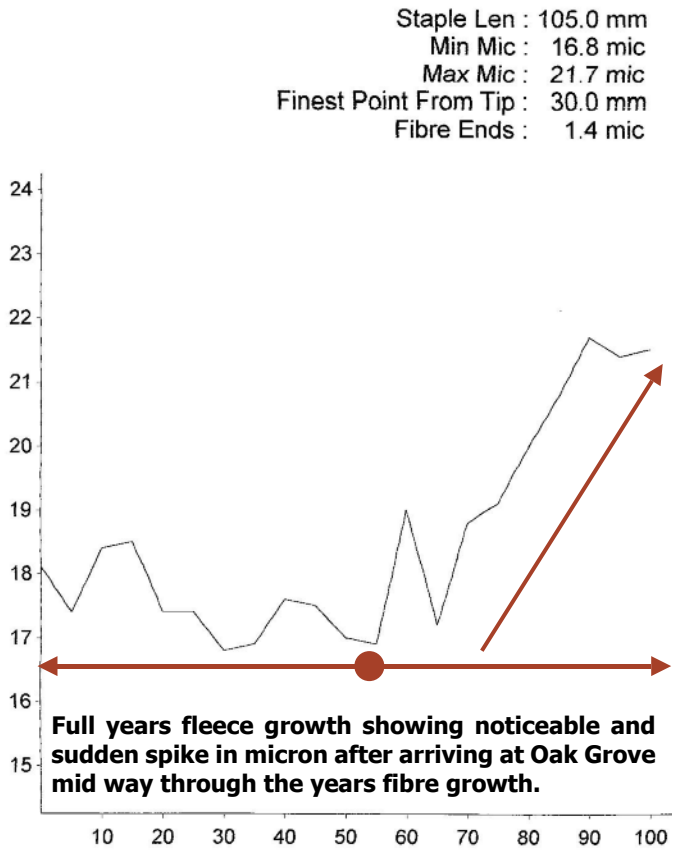
2nd Fleece Histogram shown below



We built on this core group of animals, increased our supplementary feed to all members of the herd on a daily basis, and sold off those whose genes where exposed by this method to not be those able to produce and maintain fine fibre past their second or third fleece.

We have been caught out more than once buying in 'fine' alpacas from other areas to see their fleece profile jump 5-6 micron in 6 months in some instances! *(As shown below)* We had created for ourselves a dilemma when it came to being able to purchase genetically fine stock from other breeders, but we eventually developed a process to determine how to increase the probability that we were purchasing truly genetically fine alpacas.

Although it is still a breath holding moment when reading the fleece statistics of newly purchased alpacas after their first year at Oak Grove.



Full years fleece growth showing noticeable and sudden spike in micron after arriving at Oak Grove mid way through the years fibre growth.

To date our attempts at resurrection of the finest of alpaca fibre has resulted in two and three year old alpacas exhibiting microns in the 13 - 14 micron range, and many in our herd are around or under 20 micron by 5th fleece with low standard deviation (SD).

We recognised that having a single first ultrafine fleece is not enough and we aim to keep all our herd as close to 20 micron or under by 5 years old with SD's under 4.0, as staying fine is more important than a fine first fleece that then blows out to 24+ micron by 5 years old. Longevity in staying fine is a critical element in our breeding program and blow out in micron is one of the alpacas traits we don't admire, those that can stay fine for longer are the sort of alpacas our industry needs to cultivate if we are ever to make any decent return on our fibre.

Obstacles To Overcome

As a breeder of the finest of fibre there are difficulties to overcome and one of those can be the very industry we are part of. This is nowhere more evident than in the show system, especially in the fleece classes where the criteria for point scoring is highly biased against stay fine ultrafine alpacas.

As an example if I entered my 32 month old fleece of 14.6 micron into the appropriate fleece class of 30 - 48 mths of age, the minimum micron to achieve the full 15 points for fineness only goes down to 18.0 micron. Add to this the weight point score that does not take into account that the finer the micron the less a fibre weighs, means my 1.3kg of 14.6 micron fleece gets just 4 points for weight. This means that I can't gain more points for fineness than a 18.0 micron fleece, yet that fleece will be heavier and gain more points for weight, all other factors being equal between the two fleeces, the courser fleece will always win. Is this the future for alpaca fibre we want to promote? Surely approaching what is now nearly a decade after the record breaking ultrafine bale project we should be seeing enough advances in finer alpaca fibre for the fleece judging to reflect this progress? The absence of many of these cutting edge fleeces in shows is not a reflection of their non existence, but a reflection of the breeders recognition that showing them would be doing so at a distinct disadvantage.

I have pushed for several years by speaking with judges and those involved with judging about lowering the micron in all classes to allow these cutting edge alpacas to get a fair showing, and this has been slowly improving, but still has a long way to go if the showing side of our industry is going to be a true reflection of the possibilities in alpaca fibre. I have also been promoting the concept of a fleece micron to weight matrix chart for over 5 years that takes into account the differences in fibre weight in relation to micron, to better address the scientifically proven fact that two fibres of different micron have different weights, and the weight difference is extreme when comparing 14 micron to 20 micron!

We also have the issue with many judges not having any great experience of these very very fine fleeces, which can look different and often have less crimp amplitude, but a high crimp frequency, some find it hard to accurately assess the true micron, this is why fleece testing wherever possible should be implemented.

I would like to see in major shows at the very least, a class for ultrafine fleeces, so they can be fairly assessed against other cutting edge fleeces and be given due credit without losing out to a system that inadequately acknowledges their very existence. Micron classes in the wool industry are commonplace, yet we still have basic age classes where a 13 micron fleece could be up against a 23 micron fleece, they are chalk and cheese. We need to do better.

Why is this industry still promoting and paying huge amounts of money for alpacas whose 4th or 5th fleeces are already in the mid 20's with SD's hitting 5.0+, when it is clear they do not have the sort of fleece that can provide a decent return to the breeder in our economy? Peru struggles to produce any quantity of sub 20 micron fleece, but has the mid 20 something micron and over fleece market sewn up, we can never compete with their low wages so why are we breeding more mediocre micron fleeces? This just doesn't make sense. There may be a market for this fibre but it's not a good one for the breeder. Surely a focus on

producing a fibre that could command even half of that paid for vicuna would provide Australian alpaca breeders with a viable income source, and a niche market that the competition would find hard to compete with?

Alpacas live for 20 years or more. Why are we producing alpacas with fibre that in many instances by five years old is only making a pittance per kilo, when we should be looking to breed alpacas whose fibre has a longevity of high value for at the very least half it's natural life span?

Maybe you feel the same way?

The Beyond Ultrafine Project

So to this end I have started a project to bring together all breeders of quality cutting edge ultrafine and beyond fibre to unite to produce the quantity needed to make an impact.

I invite anyone with fibre that has mid side tested at 16.0 micron and under with an SD under 4.0, length between 75 - 115mm produced on healthy well fed alpacas to contact me with the skirted weight of fibre they have. I will keep a database of who has what, and when we reach a critical mass of 100kg we will proceed with the next step of collecting and grid testing the fibre to ensure it meets the criteria.

Fibre testing is the only way to ensure we get the sort of high quality bale the top end of the market demands, hand classing is not anywhere near accurate enough.

Leading up to this time I will actively seek via already established contacts in the ultrafine merino industry to get the word out, that the Incan alpaca has returned, but it's resurrection has occurred not in the 'new world' of South America, but in the last of the great habitable continents to be discovered, the newest world of all, the Great Southern Land of Australia.

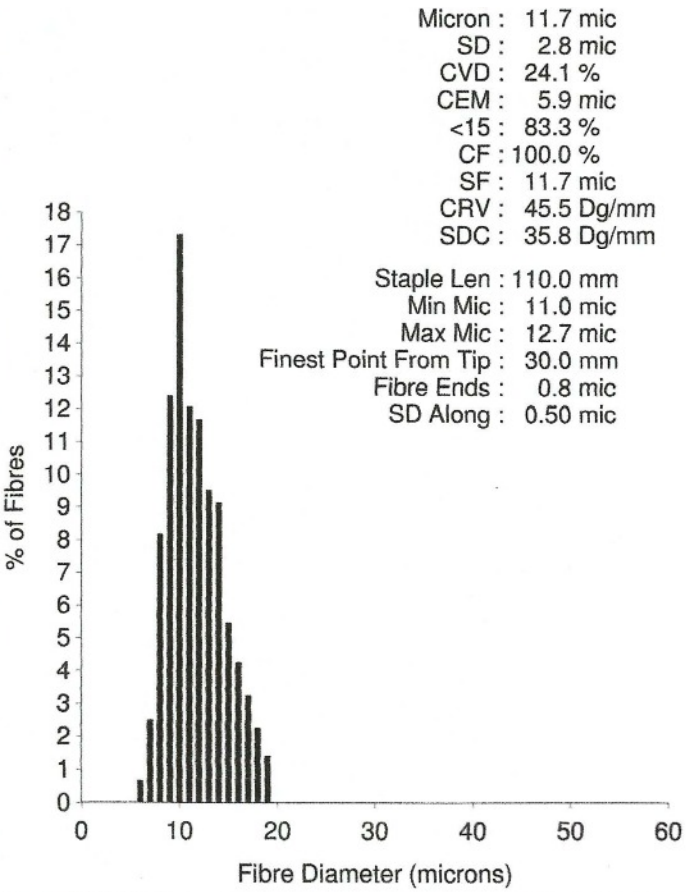
This is not a fibre revolution, but a fibre resurrection!

If you are interested in the Beyond Ultrafine Project or want to know more about breeding the finest of alpaca fibre, you can contact Julie McClen via the Oak Grove Alpacas website www.oakgrove.com.au or email info@oakgrove.com.au

** DNA studies, published in 2001 by Kadwell , M.,M. Fernandez , HF Stanley, R. Baldi, J. C. Wheeler, and M.W. R. Rosadio Bruford.*

Champion Fleece - 4yr old breeding female 19.1 Micron

Is a histogram like this in your studs future?



Editors Note:

The above comments are those of the author and not necessarily those of the publisher. Letters to the editor are welcomed on this topic.

AAA Showing and Judging Panel would like to make the following comment : "At a Showing and Judging Reference Panel meeting at the end of 2014, there was substantial discussion surrounding a review of the current Fleece Showing Scorecards, particularly in the areas of scoring for micron and fleece weight, for both suri and huacaya. To further the discussion and to take account of submissions already received on this subject, a Working Party has been formed to investigate, analyse actual weights and fleece test results from our major shows and make recommendations for the future. It was also agreed at the meeting to proceed with a trial series of additional huacaya fleece prizes for the 2015 National Show; to be awarded by commercial micron groupings..

Training sheep to take their own medicine

When we humans are in pain, it has become almost second nature to start searching for a Panadol.

Researchers at the University of New England and CSIRO are now looking at how that same cause and effect could be taught to sheep, allowing them to self-medicate when they are in pain. UNE/CSIRO PhD researcher Danila Marini says routine husbandry practices such as castration and tail-docking can cause pain that can last for several days.

"Graziers can provide pain relief at the time of the procedure but they can't effectively provide follow up relief. By identifying a drug that we can incorporate into feed, we can give sheep the opportunity to access pain relief when they need it"

"If the sheep are able to medicate themselves when they are feel pain, it provides farmers with an easy and stress free method of delivering pain relief to their animals."

"And just like humans, individual sheep have different pain thresholds meaning sheep could self - medicate to address their individual sense of pain."

She says training the sheep to choose between pain relief food and their standard diet shouldn't be as difficult as it might seem.

"A previous study in chickens has shown that they are able to self-medicate for different levels of pain associated with lameness. So if chickens can learn to take their own medicine, then sheep should have no problems."

"Sheep already use lick blocks and other feed supplements to address nutrient deficiencies in certain feed situations. This is merely an extension of that natural instinct to seek different forages to address different nutritional needs."

"We are hopeful that by teaching ewes to self-medicate, they might pass that learned behaviour onto their offspring, which would make the administration of pain relief across the mob self-perpetuating," UNE PhD researcher Danila Marini said.

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Hobart Royal Show 2014

By Alison Brolsma – Wharncliffe Alpacas

The Alpaca Section of the Royal Hobart Show (RHS) was held in late October 2014. Fleeces are judged on the public holiday, "People's Day" and for the following two days the animals are on view to the public while being judged. It is the only show in Tasmania where the alpacas are present for more than one day. This has some great benefits in terms of getting together from all corners of the state, exchanging views, checking out the up and coming stud sires and having time to chat with the Judge after the ribbons have been placed.

The RHS is a show with a long history - about the longest in Australia, because the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania (RAST) can trace its origins back to 1821. In that year, a group of residents of Van Diemen's Land gained approval for the establishment of a society for the protection of animals. The following year on 1 January 1822 in Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land was the first colony in Australia to form an Agricultural Society, the Van Diemen's Land Agricultural Society. The first show was conducted in January 1822 in the Old Market Place, just in front of the present State Parliament House.*

One hundred years after the first show, in 1922, King George V granted the prefix "Royal" to the Society, which then became the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania.

Alpacas have been in Tasmania since about 1993 and were out and about, promoting the new industry at shows for a number of years before a judging event was held.

The Royal Hobart Show hosted the first judging event for alpacas in Tasmania in October 1996. A little while before the show, Judge and AAA Life Member Allan Jinks visited Tasmania to teach the novice participants how to present our animals and polish our boots. Allan maintained that if it was impossible to decide between two animals for a place, he'd check the boots of the handler! Be that as it may, it was a good lesson in presentation.

Our first shows were held in various sheds and marquees around the showgrounds. The alpacas had to be present for all four days and being Tasmania in Spring, we could be freezing, flooded or roasting, one would never know what to expect.

Today, we have a permanent home and are required to be present for only the last two days of the show. What a contrast with the obligations of other Royals interstate!

The alpaca section is presented by the RAST under its own rules, and is open to breeders who are members of the AAA Ltd as well as members of AABA.

In 2014, our Judge was New Zealand judge Diane Marks, who offered a fresh view of the animals and fleeces. Volunteers helping to steward the Fleece section were privy to her insights and observations, generously shared.

Supreme Champion Huacaya
Gunnamatta Iceman (Maravillar Alpacas, Lauren Burn)

Supreme Champion Suri
Spring Rise Moonshine (Spring Rise Alpacas, Lori Jarvis)

Supreme Champion Huacaya Fleece:
Mossvale Accoyo India (Mossvale Alpacas, Mark and Helen Jessop)

There were many other winners in the classes, especially in the colour classes where the specialist studs were consistent in their results. All results are available on the RAST website. Thank you to the Convenor, Tracy Steele, Helen Dowd and the dedicated team of volunteers.

Best Spinning Fleece:
Mossvale Alpacas, Mark and Helen Jessop

Results this year included:

Supreme Champion Suri:
Spring Rise Moonshine (Spring Rise Alpacas, Lori Jarvis)

Supreme Champion Suri Fleece:
Woodward Farm Pascalina (Woodward Farm Alpacas, Marilyn Nicholls)

Suri Sires Progeny:
Surilana Madolo (Spring Rise Alpacas, Lori Jarvis)

Supreme Champion Huacaya:
Gunnamatta Iceman (Maravillar Alpacas, Lauren Burn)

Supreme Champion Huacaya Fleece:
Mossvale Accoyo India (Mossvale Alpacas, Mark and Helen Jessop)

Huacaya Sires Progeny:
Canchones Anarchist ET (Wharncliffe Alpaca Stud, Alison Brolsma)

Best Spinning Fleece:
Mossvale Alpacas, Mark and Helen Jessop

Best New Exhibitor:
Pandda Lodge Alpacas, Peter and Dawn Aspinall.

Supreme Champion Suri Fleece:
Woodward Farm Pascalina (Woodward Farm Alpacas, Marilyn Nicholls)

In a lovely example of history coming full circle, for the past 15 years or so on the 3rd Saturday of January, southern members of the AAA have held a "Paca Picnic" in about the same spot as the 1822 Show, now the lawns of Parliament House. Thanks to those who've gone before, we have our picnic under towering elms and linden trees. *

References:
(1) RAST website (www.hobartshowground.com.au)
(2) Speech at the opening of the RHS 2012 by the Governor of Tasmania, the Honorable Peter Underwood AC. (25.10.12) (http://www.govhouse.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/royal_hobart_show_ 2012.pdf)
(3) Website of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library: (parliament.tas.gov.au/tpl/Backg/ParliamentHouse.htm)
(4) Wikipedia, Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania

Charles Ledger

Australia's First Alpaca Importer

By Matt Ridley

Alpacas were being (usually illegally) exported from South America by the nineteenth century, and it was not surprising that they would eventually find their way to Australia.
Charles Ledger is the name usually associated with the introduction of alpacas to Australia, and the 1858 arrival in Sydney of his alpaca shipment is generally accepted as the first attempt to start an industry although several other attempts had been made.

Alpacas for the New World

Around 1850, Ledger had a discussion with the British Consul at Arica on 'the advantages that could accrue from substantial alpaca breeding in Australia – and a related alpaca wool industry in England – along the lines of the introduction of Merino into the colony from Spain in 1804'. There were certainly communications between the Consul, the British Government and the colony on the issue, although records are incomplete, obviously due to the legal impediments that had to be overcome, or ignored.
Then in 1851, and completely unexpectedly to Ledger (who had a most effective 'bush telegraph'), the vessel *Julia*, under Captain Dunnium, arrived at Arica to transport a cargo of alpacas to NSW. Thomas Mort of Sydney had been the major financier, but the export ban, brought into effect after the vessel had left Sydney, meant that the *Julia* returned empty, and the investment was lost.

While this was a disaster for some, for Ledger it represented an opportunity; the export order emphasised that there was an interested purchaser and reinforced his view that breeding alpacas in another country was feasible. He knew he was the best placed person in South America to export alpacas, and if that meant smuggling them, so be it. Nor was Thomas Mort one to be deterred: he was a major player in Sydney who had considerable influence with the governments in both the colony and London.

Ledger convinced Mr Pitt-Adams, Her Majesty's Charge d'Affaires in Lima that he was the man for the job, and Pitt-Adams even contacted London about the proposal. Eventually it was decided that, as a minister, he really could not invite Ledger to break the laws of Peru and possibly further worsen what had become a tenuous relationship between the two countries.

Then, in January 1852, and most likely because of the commercial successes being enjoyed in England by Titus Salt, the British Government had a change of heart. Ledger received a carefully worded letter from G H Nugent, the Consul in Lima, suggesting that the British Government might be willing to ignore the laws sufficiently to encourage a shipment of alpacas for the colony of NSW.

Charles and Candelaria Ledger - Taken at Tacna, presumably in 1852 (Family archives, Lima)

"You would be probably aware that in the commencement of last year a vessel arrived from New South Wales chartered by a Company with the object of exporting alpacas from the republic to that Colony; this object was frustrated by the illiberal spirit of the Peruvian Government. I have received a despatch from Her Majesty's Charge d'Affaires at Lima, informing me that H. M.'s Govt. are of the opinion that it would be very beneficial to the interest of the said colony that the views of the company be carried out, and requesting me to furnish him with any suggestions of the means by which the proposed object might be accomplished. I am given to understand that you have given this subject your attention and that you are more likely to be able to give the information required than any other person in Peru. I should feel obliged therefore if you would give me any information in your power as to the feasibility of procuring alpacas in large quantities, the expenses attendant on the same, the method of exporting them, in the understanding that any information you may think proper to give me will be forwarded by me to Her Majesty's Charge d'Affaires at Lima for communication to Her Majesty's Government."

Ledger leapt at the chance. He supplied the information and was soon in Lima talking to Pitt-Adams, who was understandably reluctant to commit too much to writing but left Ledger in no doubt as to the purpose of the exercise. Ledger was soon on reconnaissance, mapping out possible alpaca smuggling routes.

He planned the actual collection and transportation of the alpacas, leaving detailed instructions for his staff for the movement of the animals so as to avoid the Peruvian coastal area which was under close surveillance by the authorities. The actual

distance from Chulluncayani to the sea port of Arica was a mere 150 kilometres, but Ledger was prepared to move his flock from southern Peru into Bolivia and through Argentina, and finally to the Chilean sea port of Puerto Caldera. This meant he would have to move the herd over 2,000 kilometres in all – a monumental task.

By December 1852, Ledger was mid-Pacific en route to NSW to assess the suitability of the colony for alpacas. Once in NSW, however, Ledger suffered his first setback. He received correspondence from his agent (or sea captain, it is uncertain) Mr Blondel stating that he (Blondel) had withdrawn from his arrangement with Ledger to assist in transporting alpacas, even though he had pocketed a sizeable advance. Blondel went further, also threatening to inform the Peruvian Government of Ledger's plans.

Ledger kept busy in NSW: meetings were held with Thomas Mort and Henry Moore, and with Governor Sir Charles FitzRoy who, in the presence of Mort, Moore and the Hon E Deas Thomson, advised Ledger that if he was able to land 100 alpacas safely in the colony, he would be able to sell them profitably and "would be treated with the same liberality as had been shown to the MacArthurs for the Merino sheep, and would receive a grant of 10,000 acres .." Yet again, given the sensitive nature of the undertaking, nothing was committed to writing.

During a two-month stay in the colony, Ledger convinced himself of the suitability of the land for alpacas, and he sailed for Peru on 21 May 1853.

Returning to Peru six weeks later, Ledger received more bad news: Charge d'Affaires in Lima Pitt-Adams, and NSW Governor FitzRoy had both died. It would be almost six years before Ledger would realise the full impact of the latter's demise.

It was not until 1858 that Ledger would eventually disembark in Sydney with 243 camelids having lost 80 on the voyage.

Disaster in New South Wales

Charles Ledger had landed in Sydney full of hope. His journey of almost six years was at an end, and he would at last be able to realise his dream. It was springtime in a vibrant NSW. Ledger and his herd soon moved some 25 miles south west of Sydney Town to a property named Collingwood owned by J. H. Atkinson near present day Liverpool.

Ledger was a celebrity. His amazing journey was the talk of the town; he revelled in the adulation and looked forward to a new life with financial rewards and a sizeable land grant. But it was all a façade, for Charles Ledger was broke: his herd was still mortgaged for £15,000, he owed about £3,000 to his late wife's family, and he'd invested all (probably almost £7,000) of his own funds in acquiring and transporting the herd.

Everything rested on the NSW Government. Ledger had, not surprisingly, anticipated that the government would soon fulfil its part of the 1853 verbal agreement made with Governor FitzRoy, and he would not only receive his 10,000 acre land grant, but would also be in a position to either develop his herd or sell it to the Government so it could start an alpaca industry. He and his staff were the only people in the colony who knew how to handle the camelids, so he was indispensable.

The first blow came with Commissioner Halloran taking possession of the herd on behalf of Joshua Waddington. But all was not lost for, if the Government would allow Ledger to retain management of the animals, he could breed, cross-breed and sell sufficient stock to quickly repay Waddington before developing a profitable fleece-producing industry. He was still the owner of the herd, albeit it was mortgaged to Waddington, and he still had faith in FitzRoy's pledge.

The NSW Government had a few options available. It could retain (and pay for) the herd and exploit it, but would have to engage Ledger to manage the project. Or the herd could be sold, hopefully at a price that would enable Waddington to be paid out and leave something over. Another path was to encourage the formation of a private company that would exploit the herd commercially.
The last option was investigated, and the herd offered for sale for £45,000 – a huge sum that would prove too much, even for influential and enthusiastic businessmen like Thomas Mort, E Montefiore, E Deas Thomson and E Wrench who unsuccessfully sought out investors. The asking price dropped to £35,000 again without attracting investor interest.

The last thing Ledger wanted was for the herd to be sold off to individual farmers: he had repeatedly warned of small groups of animals ending up with ignorant farmers on far-flung properties, which he foresaw as the start of a rapid demise of the alpaca in the colony. There was still quite some public enthusiasm for the potential of the alpaca and when a Victorian bid, reportedly at £64 for each animal was suggested, The Sydney Morning Herald pleaded: "If this offer were accepted it would defeat what had been the desire of the Colony for many years." All this was going on against the backdrop of a buoyant and influential Merino wool industry. Merino owners lobbied government intensively: they did not want competition, and nor did they want more fleece entering a market approaching saturation.

So, in April 1859 the government did what governments do best, it determined to pursue a compromise solution that satisfied no-one completely, implemented it, and then changed its mind. It was decided to buy the herd from Ledger for £15,000, to engage him as herd superintendent at a salary of £300 plus expenses to allow £360 annually for an Indian assistant and nine shepherds (an amount so paltry that Ledger supplemented this from his own pocket), and to reimburse Ledger for some of his costs. Ledger had no choice but to agree and immediately repaid Waddington the £15,000.

Soon afterwards, and probably reacting to the Merino lobby, the government decided that it should not be in the business of owning and breeding alpacas, but its move to sell off the herd was defeated on the floor of the Parliament. In mid 1859 the first shearing of alpaca in Australia had taken place at Collingwood, a fashionable event that attracted over 300 ladies and gentlemen of Sydney society including the Premier the Hon Charles Cowper and featured a barbeque of grilled alpaca-llama.

Ledger's spirits were lifted. By now, the herd had increased to 291. He embarked on a visit to the Snowy Mountains district, assessed it as most suitable for the alpacas, and in late November that year began moving the animals to the Maneroo (now Monaro) region. He used Arthursleigh Estate, a property near Goulburn owned by a Mr Holt (presumably linked to Thomas Holt – one of his major supporters), as a staging post for the alpacas.

He was also awarded a medal by the Societe Imperiale d'Acclimatation of Paris, was invited to travel to Melbourne in 1860 to brief the locals on the potential of alpacas in Victoria, and negotiated improved financial arrangements with the NSW Government including:

- The government agreeing to sell him back the alpacas for £20,000 to be paid in 15 years, all secured by a mortgage to the government;
- Him receiving £2,000 for the first year and £1,000 annually for the next five years to manage the herd;
- Provision of a suitable grazing property; and
- A year's leave of absence to bring his children from Peru to NSW

While in Melbourne, he received an attractive proposition from the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria that involved him starting an alpaca industry there based on importing 'Coya' alpacas from near Cuzco in Peru. As well, he could continue other trading activities including importing cinchona seeds.

Edward Wilson was an ardent proponent of the acclimatisation movement, and he would become yet another early devotee of the alpaca. His 1862 letter to *The Times* typifies his enthusiasm:

"The alpacas of Mr Ledger have rapidly multiplied. They are exempt from every malady, and appear to accommodate themselves better to the indigenous plants than to the clover and lucerne and other cultivated plants first given to them … The propagation of the alpaca in Australia is only a question of time."

So Ledger ran the two projects in parallel, typically not seeing any conflict in being a NSW public servant at the same time as working on the Victorian concept. Things seemed to be improving: the herd, now mostly at Arthursleigh Estate, had grown to 349 by February 1861; and in May he travelled again to Melbourne, this time to address the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, where he impressed his audience to the extent that the society agreed to advance him £2,000, of which £600 was paid soon afterwards by the Victorian Government.

Ledger also convinced NSW authorities to make a presentation at the (July) 1862 International Exhibition in London, an idea involving the slaughter of six or seven alpacas for consumption in Sydney hotels and clubs where the fare was well received. The London presentation also received favourable comment, so much so that Ledger was awarded the Exhibition Gold Medal, the highest award, which was accepted on his behalf by his brother George.

October 1861 was a month of mixed fortunes for Ledger. On the 3rd, the Legislative Assembly of NSW rejected the proposal to sell the alpaca herd to Ledger. On the 23rd, Ledger married again, his bride being the widow Charlotte Olliver whose family was involved in spinning and owned a major store and who, at 43, was the same age as Ledger.

During 1862, when Ledger should have been enthused by the presentation of the Exhibition Gold Medal, events turned against him. Firstly, the NSW Government insisted he pay from his own pocket for his replacement while he was away in Peru, and then the Victorian Acclimatisation Society reversed its position on the importation of alpacas: the scandal surrounding the failure of the Duffield shipment had altered attitudes, the NSW Government saw the Victorian project as a threat, and the Merino lobby was hard at work. The Society broke its agreement with Ledger and demanded return of the £600 advance, which Ledger had already spent on livestock he had planned to sell in Peru.

The NSW Government accused Ledger of a conflict of interests over his Victorian dealings and, on 14 August 1862, suspended him from his position and stopped his salary. The herd at Arthursleigh was placed under the management of Mr Edward Payten, who moved it to Wingello at the beginning of December. Ledger tried to defend himself but, by July 1863, was forced to officially resign. He and his new wife had by now sold most of their possessions just to survive. He was finally paid some of the salary due during his period of suspension, but it came too late. Despite Ledger's protestations, the Government decided to sell off the herd, and to do so in the worst of all possible ways by dividing it into small lots: the alpaca industry in Australia, at least for the foreseeable future, had received its death sentence.

23 June 1863 was a fine winter's day at Wingello when Mr Wrench opened the auction. 307 animals were offered in 51 lots. Each lot contained at least one wether, almost as though there had been a conscious decision to make selective breeding impossible. Just eight lots had some potential for the future: these comprised four pure female alpacas, one male and one wether each. A further 10 lots comprised a wether, a male and four second or third cross females; and some 20 lots were mostly llamas.

The auction was a major social occasion with over 150 people attending, including the Governor, the Director of the Botanical Gardens, Ministers and Members of Parliament, and the Colonial Secretary, all entertained by a parade of mounted police. Ledger was absent, unable to face the humiliation.

The Government, using Mr Merrick as agent, encouraged events with an opening bid of £5 per head for Lot 1, and secured the lot with a successful bid of £30 per head. A few other lots were knocked down, for as much as £15 a head for some cross-bred females, but the sale was closed as interest waned. The Government invited any offers, but then, fearing cross Tasman competition, refused £25 per head for pure alpacas offered by an agent on behalf of the New Zealand Government.

The Government subsequently gave the remaining animals away to various farmers in NSW and Queensland.

The auction realised £345 of which the Government itself had provided £180.

The Herd Vanishes

What happened to the animals after the Wingello Park sale is a mystery. Berry Carter spent hundreds of hours seeking out clues while researching for his book, but to no avail: "The disappearance of Ledger's herd is extraordinary: no documentary record at all; no lithographs, paintings, drawings or photographs. There are written accounts of animals of all kinds in the lives of Australians, yet nothing of llama except the exploits of Charles Ledger…"

What is known is that those animals given away to farmers either died, just as Ledger had predicted, or finished up in zoos.

There are some snippets of information on the fate of the herd. "A few went to farms, some as far away as the Queensland border; some went as curiosities to such places as the estate of Henry Parkes, and to the mental home at Gladesville, Sydney to amuse the inmates."

130 Years Later

Helicopters buzzed the Victorian town of Seymour. Melbourne breakfast television had sufficient footage for a week of features, and more than 60 journalists – from television, radio and print media – swarmed over the Capalba Park property of Geoff and Nancy Halpin.

It was 6 June 1988, and the focus of all this attention was a group of just three alpacas, named Romeo, Stonewall and Majorette.

Almost 130 years after Charles Ledger had arrived in Sydney with his Camelid herd, alpacas were back in Australia. They had come to the Halpin's three days earlier, following a plane trip from North America and had been in quarantine at the Spotswood Quarantine Station in Victoria since January.

This article was written by Matt Ridley, a journalist and former alpaca breeder. He still maintains an interest in the industry and is currently discussing with AAA a project to publish a definitive history of the industry in Australia.

Remembering Alpaca Pioneer Clyde Haldane

1943 – 2005

By Eric Hoffman

Clyde Haldane was a silent giant in the alpaca business. It is likely that most North American camelid breeders won't recognize his name, and possibly some Aussies won't know of him either. However, breeders need only look as far as their own pastures to see his influence.

Clyde Haldane was instrumental in expanding the camelid business to places outside of South America. He and his brother Roger have been described as being as pivotal to the alpaca business in Australia as the Wright brothers were to aviation. Clyde's death in July 2005 provided a moment for us to look back to a small group of risk taking entrepreneurs who moved large numbers of alpacas from South America to Australia, North America, New Zealand and Europe starting in the l980s. Other key figures such as Tom Hunt, Jurgen Schulz, and Phil Mizrahie were also on the scene but Clyde Haldane was the first large importer who brought an extensive knowledge of fibre and livestock to alpaca exportations. His animal selection methodology and penchant for detail influenced many of those around him

I first met Clyde in l985. He appeared at my doorstep in Santa Cruz, California via a Greyhound Bus. At the time there were only two large imported source herds of alpacas in the United States. One, owned by Tom Hunt and Jurgen Schulz of Camelids of Delaware Inc., was known in the business as CODI. The other belonged to Pet Center Inc. and was owned by Phil Mizrahie, David Mohilef and Alex Perrinelle.

Clyde came to our farm because I sold CODI's animals during the l980s. He was the first Australian alpaca client any of us had met. He was from Port Lincoln where he and his family were well known for pioneering tuna and prawn fisheries in the often turbulent waters along the Great Australian Bight. I remember thinking Clyde appeared too naïve to handle the Byzantine and sometimes Machiavellian world of international animal export, a world where the art of politics, large sums of money, tweaking scientific protocols, setting up quarantines, and knowing the right people all came into play. As it would turn out I was naïve in my assessment of Clyde. He met the challenge and then some.

This tall, lanky, unassuming countryman possessed intelligence, tenacity, modesty, pragmatism and a ready sense of humour. While he had a keen knowledge of animals in general, he was well informed on fleece-bearing animals in particular. I did not realize at the time that Clyde was already a veteran of commercial livestock farming, international animal importation and award winning wool and mohair fleece production. Clyde had been classing the wool he and his brother Roger produced since the 1970's. Their 'Gleneagles'

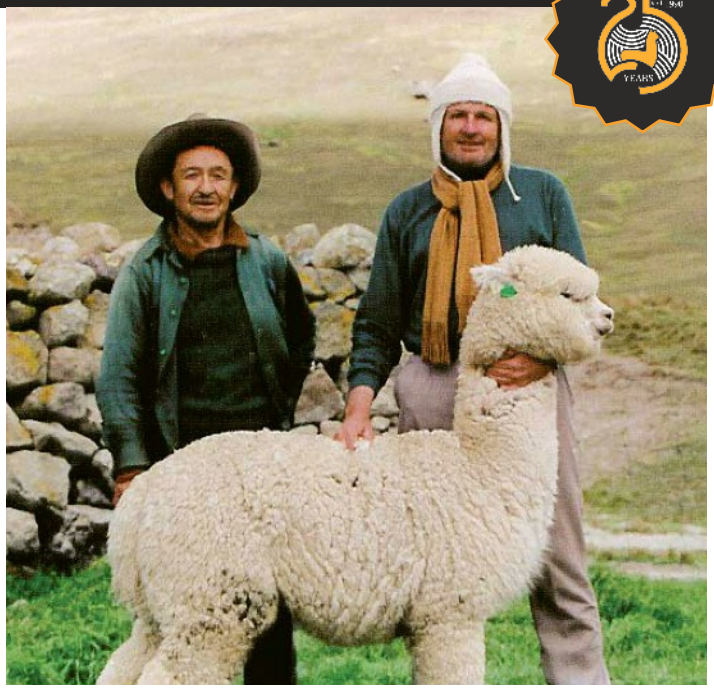
wool had become one of South Australia's premium clips. By the early 1980's the brothers were producing the largest mohair clip from a single grower in Australia. 'Gleneagles' mohair became famous for both its consistent quality and volume and twice topped the Adelaide wool sales. In a search for better goat genetics, Clyde visited Texas and South Africa. The Haldanes were involved in the first live importations of goats from Texas, and Angora and Boer Goat embryos from South Africa to Australia. About this time Clyde became aware of another fleece bearing animal, alpacas, and began looking into how to bring about a large scale importation to Australia. Since no quarantine protocols existed between Australia and any South American countries, Clydes's search started in North America.

Our crossing paths would benefit both of us in different ways. Like me, Clyde had a strong adventurous streak and fascination with wildlife. These mutual interests would rekindle our relationship in the decades that followed. When I was assigned to write a natural history guide on Australia by Sierra Club Books in the late 1980's it was Clyde, his brothers, and his brother-in-law Joc Schmiechen who offered much of the logistical help to get me to some of the most remote and awe inspiring parts of their country. It was Clyde who made a gruelling camel trek the length of the arid Flinders Ranges in south Central Australia with me. Clyde was also my companion travelling across the seemingly endless Nullarbor Plain, and exploring the labyrinth of caves where the remains of prehistoric animals had been found.

But back in 1985 Clyde was just this guy from Australia who was intensely focused on learning about the alpaca's husbandry needs and fiber growing capabilities. Clyde hung around our farm for a week and went to the International Llama Association Conference with me, which was held in Yakima, Washington that year. (This was before there was an alpaca association; the alpacas were a small sidebar to the bigger llama conference.)

Clyde and I travelled in a mini bus stripped of its back seats to make room for three alpacas that were being driven 1,184 km (736 miles) to be displayed at the conference and used in a presentation I'd been asked to do. We stopped along the way to photograph wildlife and let the animals out to exercise and relieve themselves. Clyde was the first person I heard ask questions that today seem obvious. I remember him asking, "What is the average fleece weight for an alpaca? What is the micron range? What diseases do alpacas resist and what are they apt to contract? How do alpacas handle stress? Can alpacas adapt to new environments that are unlike their high pastures and cold nights in the Andes?" At the time some of the literature about alpacas said they could only live at high elevations. Clyde was interested in an animal that would produce a viable end product. On our drive back to California at the conclusion of the well-attended llama conference, I remember asking him what he thought of the conference. "Amusing," said Clyde. I took this to mean he had something else in mind.

Shortly after returning home I sent Clyde to the Pet Centre in Los Angeles, the other large entity operating in the U.S. at that time. Clyde and Phil Mizrahie, the Pet Centre's most active partner in camelids, developed an instantaneous friendship and business relationship. Both Phil and Clyde described a sequence of events that went something like this: Upon arriving in L.A. Clyde promptly bought ten alpacas for a large sum of money. A couple of weeks later when Phil and Clyde were able to take a better measure of one another, Phil rethought how the Haldane's investment could be better applied. Phil gave the Haldane's their



Clyde Haldane and Don Julio Barreda discuss alpacas circa 1995

money back and he took back his alpacas. Instead of a seller/retail buyer relationship, the Haldanes and the Pet Center formed an export partnership that would have far reaching effects on would-be alpaca owners around the globe for decades to come. The animals (and now their lineages) exported by this partnership are standing in pastures in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada and to a lesser extent in Europe. Phil Mizrahie revered the Haldane brothers, "The Haldanes were great friends and superb partners. They are honest, smart and know how to get things done. Roger is better known, but Clyde was the one who spent months on the altiplano getting to know the herds and selecting animals based on his criteria. He wasn't interested in mass purchases as much as he was in selecting an animal based on its merits. He was a unique person who will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him."

The Haldanes, working with the Pet Centre, were everywhere in the rapidly expanding alpaca world of the late 1980s and early l990's. Only the CODI group matched them in developing protocols between nations and in sheer numbers of alpacas exported from South America during those early years. At times these two groups joined forces to complete some importations, most notably the first large exportation from Peru to the United States in 1993. Clyde Haldane was one of the main purchasers of alpacas for the first two shipments into the United States.

Spheres of influence developed. The Haldanes and Pet Centre were involved in developing the New Zealand and Australian markets while CODI did more to develop the North American market. The Haldane/Pet Centre group and the independent entities of New Zealand farmer Murray Bruce from Waimate, and the New Zealand based Agricola company, brought 1,100 alpacas into New Zealand the 1980's. One of the New Zealand imports was unique because it was done by a large sea-going freighter and took nearly 80 days to complete. Next, the Haldanes convinced the Australian government (first in the state of South Australia) to allow alpacas to enter Australia as a form of livestock. Shortly after this was accomplished, Australian Geoff Halpin exported a small group of alpacas from Alaska. This was

25 Years of Alpacas In Australia

followed by a series of large shipments, each numbering in the hundreds. Occasionally they teamed up with other importers such as Alan Hamilton, who was a major supplier to both the Australian and English market in the early years. A Haldane/Pet Centre/Alan Hamilton group was the first to use the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean for an alpaca quarantine facility prior to entering Australia. In 2005 the national herd in Australia was 60,000 today it is approx 200,000 (approx 160,000 registered) Many of today's alpacas can be traced to Haldane/Pet Centre's and Hamilton's initial importations and groups that followed them. Following these alpaca pioneers were a number of other importers. Of these Pat Viseconte of Melbourne moved the greatest volume, not only to Australia but also to the United States and Europe. Viseconte, who is fluent in Spanish, had a long run. He accessed remote and well known areas in Chile and Peru and stayed involved in alpacas until 2013, when he sold his alpaca business.

But in the 1980's while the movement of animals was just getting off the ground and creating a stir and a lot of newsprint, Clyde Haldane stayed out of the limelight, busy doing a great deal of animal selection in South America. Clyde spent about 4 months of each year from 1988 to 1992 in South America. He would go to great lengths to find animals and often stayed in remote villages working with the Quechua and Aymara herders. On these many-month sojourns he visited most of the major breeders operating in northern Chile and Peru. He had his share of memorable experiences. Once he was told that a group of herders in a remote area outside of motor vehicle access might have some good animals. He managed to contact the village through a relay phone and told them to watch for smoke coming from the far end of a huge salt lake bed that spanned nearly 32km (20 miles). This would signal that Clyde was there with a truck, ready to make purchases. Clyde arranged for a truck, arrived at the lake and lit his fire. By day's end he saw smoke signals from the villagers. Two days later a herd of 200 alpacas appeared on the horizon, seeming to float across the shimmering mirage of the inch deep lake. Clyde recounted that two rheas (the large flightless ostrich like bird of the Andes) scurried ahead of the herd as it approached.

Clyde held animals to exacting standards on his buying missions. He would sometimes look through an entire herd and not buy a single animal while other days he'd buy a dozen or more. I have traveled to many of the remote areas visited by Clyde such as Macusani and Rural Alianza in the years since his last visits. Many of the locals still remember him. They affectionately describe a tall man from Australia who stayed in their homes for weeks at a time, and always brought his own cereal.

By the mid 1990's the alpaca business was changing. The quarantines and protocols were standardized and had become workable situations. Screening and registration requirements were in place to ensure animal quality, and a new group of exporters were on the scene moving animals to the far corners of the world. By l998 the North American alpaca registries (ARI and CLA) were closed to imported alpacas.

Clyde and Roger Haldane were visionary men and pioneers. Clyde thrived on the puzzle presented by introducing unique animal species to new settings. In 2002 the brothers were still successfully raising alpacas but their curiosity about other poorly understood animals was getting the better of them. In another first of its kind importation, they brought a rare type of milking

buffalo from Bulgaria and Italy to Australia. Today Roger Haldane oversees a large dairy operation in Victoria with these immense but gentle bovines producing awarded winning cheeses and yoghurt.

Clyde became fascinated with Icelandic ponies, the 'Viking horse', and imported a sizeable herd, creating a rare genetic repository for the breed in the Southern Hemisphere. He also began working with relatively rare French breeds of dairy cattle that he believed would produce healthier milk products. Even as cancer began to limit his activities Clyde held out hope. He imported an Icelandic stallion months before he died.

I last saw Clyde in 2004 on his farm in Victoria. He introduced me to his herd of ponies and spoke of his plans to train and sell them. He saw these beauties as an ideal horse for children. We talked about our past adventures and compared notes on remote parts of the altiplano we'd both visited but never with one another. Clyde felt good about his contributions to the alpaca business in Australia and abroad and told me to tell his old partner Phil Mizrahie, that he was happy. Clyde Haldane's journey on this earth helped define the alpaca business on three continents. He leaves behind a valuable and ongoing legacy. Thank you Clyde.

About the author:

Eric Hoffman founded both the national breed association (AOBA) and created the Alpaca Registry Inc., (ARI) which was the first camelid registry in the world to rely on scientific verification to prove lineages. He is the primary author of The Complete Alpaca Book, which is in its second edition. He has written hundreds of articles on all four species of camelids. Some of these articles can be found on his website erichoffmanwriter.com. His articles have appeared in California Academy of Science, World Wildlife Fund Magazines, International Wildlife Magazine, and Outside Magazine. His speaking engagements on camelids have taken him to European countries, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. Most recently Eric and co-authors Sherry Edensmith, and Pat Long DVM published The Alpaca Evaluation: A Guide for Owners and Breeders, a three DVD set filmed in Peru and 120-page fully illustrated handbook.

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FINE ALPACA
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The Brat Pack

By Ian Davison – Coolawarra Alpacas

The Australian Alpaca Youth Group (AAYG), affectionately known as "The Alpaca Brat Pack", conducted their third Alpaca Youth Leadership Camp on the weekend of January 17- 8 at the Cambewarra farm of Coolawarra Alpacas, hosted by Janie Hicks and Ian Davison.

The Camp placed its emphasis on alpacas, fun, learning and sharing. There was a small army of adult supporters for the 26 Alpaca Brats, who came from as far afield as Rockhampton in Queensland, Perth in WA, and Gippsland in Victoria.

There were over forty guests at the "Buckingham Palace Dinner" on the Saturday night, convened on the lawns of the homestead looking out over the paddocks of Cambewarra on a moonlit night. The long table was dressed with white tablecloths, candelabras, flowers, and the family silver, and a three course dinner prepared and served by a bevy of volunteer chefs, in what was to be an instructional exercise in table manners, etiquette and courtesy. Diners were randomly assigned the roles of either a gentleman or their lady partner (regardless of sex), each role designated by the application of either a fake moustache or a tiara. 'Queen Davo', resplendent in tiara, gave directions for the courteous escort of ladies by their gentlemen partners, the correct side for the service and collection of plates, the proper etiquette for sharing condiments and drinks at the table, and the correct sequence and polite use of cutlery, while the moustachioed Janie gave direction on the breaking of bread, the placement of cutlery to indicate that a course has been finished, and the proper use of napkins.

On the first day, Brats were assigned to teams of five, each with members ranging from the youngest and least experienced to the oldest and most experienced, and each including a member of the AAYG committee. Each team was assigned two alpacas for the weekend, for whose care and wellbeing the team would be responsible, and which alpacas they would work with for the various alpaca-related activities. A Herdsman's Competition was conducted to choose the team which best looked after their alpacas.

Teams were instructed on how to take samples of alpaca fleece, and each team then sampled the fleece from four designated sites on one of their alpacas, making an estimate of average fibre diameter for each sample. Kim and Robyn Cartwright, from well-known Southern Highlands Fleece Testing (www.stft.com.au), brought their OFDA 2000 fleece analyser to Cambewarra, whose function they demonstrated to the Brat Pack before testing each of the samples. Of interest was the surprising fact that, on each alpaca, the brisket frequently measured over 20 microns more than the midside, and that although midside, neck and upper leg varied considerably in length, they were surprisingly similar in fineness. No one was safe, and Kim tested samples of hair from two of the girls and one of the dogs, and compared then to samples from alpaca and Merino.

Another welcome visitor was the Cambewarra Rural Fire Service. Captain Stuart Thales arrived in a fully equipped fire truck, and then gave a talk on fire safety, and how to prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan. Stuart and Helen then showed the Brat Pack how to prime and start a fire pump, before allowing them the opportunity to do so themselves.

The next visitor was local vet, Garry Bryce, of Bomaderry Veterinary Clinic (http://mvol.com.au/bomaderryvet.aspx) who gave two hours of his weekend to conduct an autopsy on a young male alpaca that had suffered from ill thrift. With Brats dressed resplendently in surgical gloves, gowns and masks, so they could get up close and personal with alpaca anatomy, Garry demonstrated firstly an alpaca castration, and then a dissection of the mouth and jaw, demonstrating the razor sharp molars, and the correct apposition of incisors to the upper dental pad. He then dissected a stifle (knee) to demonstrate the nature and pathology of a subluxing (dislocating) patella (knee cap), and how to examine an alpaca for this disqualifying fault. Finally, he opened the chest and abdomen and took the Brats on an anatomy tour of the three chambered stomach, the four chambered heart, the kidneys, liver, spleen and lungs.

Our next visiting demonstrator was John Hall, an alpaca shearer from Crookwell, who explained to the Brat Pack how to correctly and safely lay down and secure an alpaca for shearing. He then demonstrated how to shear the alpaca, explaining the various segments of the fleece as he went. Janie then demonstrated how to skirt, bag and bale the various segments of fleece.

The Young Farmers Challenge was one of the most popular activities of the weekend. This event, based on the same increasingly popular and competitive event recently introduced to agricultural shows around Australia, is based on teams performing a series of challenges testing skill and efficiency in performing some typical rural tasks. After some instructional sessions, explaining and teaching a range of skills, the six teams competed in a timed and scored event over a series of six stations, which included such things as tying a clove hitch, driving a star picket, erecting an electric fence, and loading and unloading hay bales. Teams were scored on both proficiency (correct performance) and efficiency (speed) to determine the ultimate winner.

At the end of day one, with the hot sun contributing to brain overload and threatened meltdown, the Brats cooled off in a waterslide constructed for their pleasure, with a torrent of dam water and detergent delivering sliders inexorably into a growing quagmire of grass cuttings and mud.

Sunday morning, it was back to work with inspiring talks delivered by three invited speakers. The first was alpaca breeder/accountant, Steve O'Keefe, who spoke on setting up an alpaca business. He addressed such issues as profit centres, cost centres, and taxation advantages, and their role in building a business plan as the preliminary step to setting up any business. This got many minds ticking quietly on future opportunities for young alpaca breeders.

The next was a talk by well known and respected AAYG committee member, young breeder and trainee judge, Amber O'Neill, who spoke at length about the alpaca, their types and characteristics, history, anatomy, management and ailments. Her passion for the alpaca was clear, and her progression in the industry an inspiration

to the younger members. Filming the delivery was a photographer for the ABC, preparing a profile on Amber that will go to air some time in the next month or two.

The last was an equally inspirational address by Berry Vet and ardent advocate for women in agriculture, Ashley Wright-Hands. She spoke of her development over the last 10 years, beginning with her entry in the Miss Berry Showgirl competition, and culminating with her current vocation as a fully qualified vet, with a leadership position in the Youth Group of the NSW Royal Agricultural Society, and Convenor of the Farmers Challenge event of the Sydney Royal Show. She spoke of the need to be assertive in seeking experience within the rural environment, and learning to say "yes" to opportunities as they present. Her message was to consult widely for advice, but to also trust your own intuition.

Of course, the weekend was fundamentally about alpacas, and there were plentiful opportunities for instruction in, and practice of the skills which are fundamental to the Showmanship and Stockmanship Sections of the Youth Paraders Competition, an event increasingly featured in the alpaca programmes of agricultural shows around the country, and where members of the Brat Pack look forward to meeting and competing throughout 2015.

If you (or, for parents, your kids!) are interested in joining the Brat Pack, or just in learning more about the AAYG or their Leadership Camp, you should visit their facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/AustralianAlpacaYouth, and then start planning your involvement in this expanding facet of the alpaca industry.

Alpaca Classer Training

Takes another step...

The training of classers continues to progress with another nine participants attending the short course at Hamilton TAFE, VIC and fifteen attending Illawarra TAFE at Goulburn, NSW. This now brings our total to thirty people trained and competent to class alpaca according to the industry standard. Amongst the participants were qualified and registered wool classers who may now apply to AWEX to register as a professional alpaca classer.

The following reports are from Diane Boede who did the Hamilton course and Andrew Munn who did the Goulburn course. Both were successful in obtaining their competency in the two alpaca units.

Alpaca Classer Training - Hamilton TAFE
by Diane Boede, Wattle Grove Alpacas

The weekend of the 22 - 23 November found me with a group of like-minded people undertaking two Alpaca Classing Units on offer at SW TAFE, Hamilton Campus, Victoria under the tutorledge of Stuart MacPherson, AWEX registered Wool Classer. Stuart has previously completed the alpaca units.

Nine people took part in the two day course, some travelling long distances. The course consisted of theoretical and practical components, as well as assessments. All materials and fleeces were supplied for the training course.

The course looked at the ability to process alpaca fibre and discussed the Worsted and Woolen systems.

We looked, touched, skirted, classed and assessed all types of alpaca fleece on offer, from huacaya to suri, white to black and a variety of colours in between.

Participants discussed, questioned, probed, considered and delighted throughout the course. Everyone happily shared their knowledge and each person walked away with an appreciation of what processors and buyers require when alpaca fleece is offered for sale on the open market.

All participants successfully completed the course armed with the knowledge that we can class our own fleeces, or become professional classers able to class and earn an income from classing other grower's fleeces should that be our goal.

Many thanks to SW TAFE and Stuart MacPherson for a wonderful, well organised weekend.

Alpaca Classer Training - Goulburn TAFE
by Andrew Munn, Alpha Centurai Alpacas

On the weekend of 5 - 7 December Goulburn TAFE opened its doors to conduct the two alpaca wool classer training units. These units are:

- AHCWOL204A - Undertake basic skirting of alpaca fleece – Cert II level
- AHCWOL313A - Class alpaca fleece – Cert III level

These units were delivered by Kay Carter, an experienced TAFE teacher and wool classer of many years. Kay completed the two alpaca units 2 years ago and has AWEX certification as a registered alpaca wool classer.

The weekend was attended by 15 participants who converged on Goulburn from as far as QLD, VIC and many parts of NSW. Friday had all participants involved in learning the basics of alpaca wool classing including the use of the AWEX endorsed AAA Alpaca Classing Code of Practice (COP), understanding classing methodology and associated documentation.

Participants also had the opportunity to handle both huacaya and suri fleeces with an open discussion on the characteristics of both fleece types, and also the opportunity to refine their eye in what to look for when classing each type of fleece.

On the Saturday the learning was very much hands on with everyone attending on farm at Alpha Centauri Alpacas. This provided the opportunity to observe shearing shed design and setup in a working shed. Later in the morning a number of animals were bought into the shed and shorn. All attendees then had the opportunity to get their hands into these fleeces all the way from the animal to the skirting table and finally into the classed bales. There were many questions and lively discussion on all aspects of fleece, shearing shed setup, shed flow and skirting and classing. This also provided invaluable information for participants to understand the oddment lines detailed in the COP and that these lines, if classed correctly, have value and can provide a return to the grower along with the return from the main saddle area of the fleece.

Sunday was the culmination of all the learning activities from the previous two days and each attendee was required to complete

the assessment for both Huacaya and Suri fleece classing. This involved classing a number of samples of each type into lines of like fleece. Everyone who completed the assessment was deemed competent and was credited with completing the two alpaca classing units.

Attendees who wish to gain further qualification after completing these two units as either Owner Classer or Professional Classer can do so by completing either of the following:

1. Owner classer level - need to complete Cert III in Wool Prep.
2. Professional classer level will need to complete Certificate IV Wool Classing.

We would like to thank Jillian Atkinson and Greg Bush from Illawarra TAFE - Goulburn Campus for their assistance in organizing the weekend.

Casa Chapi

A Birds Eye View

By David Tracey

Quechua Benefit started in 1996 when Don Julio Barreda, a famous Peruvian alpaca breeder, asked if his fellow alpaca breeders from the United States could do anything to help the children of his village. From this simple request funds were provided to give dental care to many of these children from impoverished backgrounds. Over the years the scope of Quechua Benefit's operations has steadily grown. Today Quechua Benefit delivers medical, optical and dental missions to more than 40 small communities, most with populations of less than 10,000. In addition, they support three orphanages/boarding schools and two programs that feed approximately 1,000 people per day.

These operations are mostly focused in and around the Colca Canyon in Peru. Although parts of this area have grown impressively in recent years due to increased tourist trade, there remain many isolated and impoverished communities who have not benefited from the greater incomes and opportunities. In these communities people often live in terrible poverty amongst difficult weather conditions. Alcohol and domestic abuse issues are rife. Infant and child mortality rates are high and those children who survive their early years often leave school at a young age.

Realising that they needed to have a more permanent presence in the Colca Canyon to make the greatest impact on people's, and particularly children's lives, Quechua Benefit began constructing a boarding house and school for local children in need. Work on this facility finished in 2011 and earlier this year Casa Chapi, as it was named, officially became a state-recognised school. It now has 40 children between the ages of six and twelve on site, a mix of boys and girls, and a total staff of fifteen. The children eat, sleep and learn all on site. Their days are well structured between teaching them the state curriculum, giving them time to practise more creative impulses and to indulge in more fun activities. It is a wonderful facility where the children learn responsibility, receive a quality education and hopefully improve their prospects for the future.

Since I began my time here I have been involved in a number of projects all aimed at improving the quality of the children's life at Casa Chapi whilst also improving the functioning of the NGO as a whole. The latter of these objectives has involved updating the organisation's internal policies to bring them in line with best practise. While this is extremely important work, for it ultimately dictates how the entire setup will run going into the future, I would be lying if I said it has been the most satisfying or inspiring work I have done here.

Day to day my time has largely been filled with teaching English and Physical Education to the kids. This is a lot of fun as it gives me time to enjoy the children's company and get to know them better as people. It is a beautiful experience to build real relationships with such intelligent and charming kids. Like most Peruvians, young and old, at first the children were somewhat shy and unsure around me. Over time though I have gotten to know them personally; I have learnt what they love and what they are talented at; I have learnt of their often tragic back stories; I have sometimes become frustrated if they don't behave, but mostly I have marvelled at their endless energy and abundant spirit.

Because of this connection with the children the two most inspiring projects I have been lucky enough to have been a part of have been the creation of a sports program and of a fortnightly English camp. These projects have been the most immediately beneficial to the children in the time that I have been here.

As it seems with every male on this continent the boys at Casa Chapi adore football, or soccer for any readers from the States! When I arrived all they had to play with were two footballs and a rocky, dusty pitch with two small goals hammered into the ground at either end. There was no team. The boys had never played against another school and the closest that most of them had ever gotten to a training session were the chaotic kick-arounds they would have every day at lunch time.

From my first week here we set up training sessions three times a week, four when we had time. Although the response from the boys was overwhelmingly enthusiastic at the prospect of having a real football team, it took them some time to properly adapt to the rigours of training sessions as many of these boys had never been exposed to the idea of standard training practises, warm ups, drills etc. All they wanted to do was play another tumultuous game like they were used to! Slowly but surely they came around to these ideas until we reached the point where I could leave the older kids with the responsibility of marshalling the younger ones through many of the simpler drills.

Eventually it came time for them to play their first match, against a set of children organised by the local parish priest, Father Marcos. Their first match was a total success, a 3-0 victory against boys who were older than them. Unfortunately their second match went the other way, losing 0-3 to a better organised side. Still all the boys played with heart and a surprising degree of organisation. Not a bad performance after just 10 weeks as a team. Now all their thoughts have turned to November when they will take part in a tournament of local teams. To say they can't wait for the next challenge is an understatement!

Of course our sports program did not only extend to the boy's football team but in the same time as we had been training the boys we had also set up a volleyball team for the girls. To be honest when I arrived, there wasn't a great deal of interest in volleyball from the majority of the girls, though this is not all that surprising when you consider we didn't even have a volleyball net at that point in time. Still once we organised a squad and began practising their enthusiasm slowly built and

built. Early training sessions were a bit messy seeing as I had never played volleyball before in my life. Probably realising this from my comical efforts to try and rally with the girls, some of the female staff thankfully stepped in and matters immediately began to improve.

Once we got a net set up in the school yard the group of girls truly became a team. Now no one was late for practice, a new feeling of seriousness developed and the training sessions were more focused than ever. This could be seen during their first game playing against a team of girls who were significantly older than them. Our girls played a brave game eventually losing by the respectable margin of 25-18, a score that is quite impressive when you consider they were playing a team of girls who had been playing for years while they had still not been playing the sport for even 3 months.

The most important aspect ultimately with this sports program had not been whether or not the children's teams won or lost. Instead it had been the great feeling of fun the children clearly derived from football and volleyball and the social and teamwork skills they learnt at every training session and at every match. Through sports they learnt new responsibilities and had begun to develop a greater pride in themselves, their teammates and their school.

As the school's English teacher for the past two months I was consistently surprised by the children's desire to learn this second language. The vast majority of the kids genuinely loved to learn and couldn't wait for English class. I never expected to have children running up to me begging to know when their next English class would be, even though they knew full well when it would be, same time every week!

Their enthusiasm is a far cry from how I remember my French lessons in school; bored, tired and dreary. I believe that says a lot about the expectations of people such as myself who come from first world countries and who have gone through better quality education systems. Education to us is seen as a right, we expect it and maybe that's part of the reason kids hate it; it's something they HAVE to do, an obligation. Here the situation is quite different. I can't speak for children in the cities; for all I know the attention span of students in Lima may be just as short as those generally found in Europe or the States. But out here in the countryside that is not the case. Here education is not quite at the stage where it is simply expected as a fact of life. Parents want their kids to be in school, and the kids for the most part want to learn. School here is an opportunity more so than a chore.

From early on it was clear that it would be ideal to institute a long term English programme for the children. So in conjunction with Extreme, a reputable English institute in Arequipa, Casa Chapi recently began a fortnightly English camp for the children and staff here. Every second Saturday five teachers are sent out from Extreme to teach the kids and lead activities with them, along with conducting a special class for Casa Chapi's Peruvian staff also. The children's response to this camp has been fantastic, as we expected. Not only is this another chance to learn more English but the group of teachers, the majority of whom are from North America, are another set of people with whom the children can play and have fun. They are another set of positive role models.

Luckily the teachers themselves loved the experience too. In their day job they have to put up with lethargic students who are forced to attend private classes by their parents. Here they have a class of energetic young pupils who can barely stay in their seats they are so excited by the prospect of learning. Of course this can sometimes lead to problems controlling the class but for the most part it's a positive!

Both of these projects, the sports program and the English Camp, have started on a hugely positive note. The children love them and there is potential for these two programs to benefit the children a lot going into the future. For me personally it has been an absolute pleasure to watch these projects come to fruition and to see the positive response they have already garnered from the children.

Casa Chapi is an exciting organisation to be a part of right now. It is still very much in its youthful stages and there is still a tremendous amount of work that must be done to make the non-profit everything I'm sure it can be. Still, every day this NGO is improving, gathering steam, instituting new ideas and bettering old programs.

To see that process take place is perhaps the most inspiring thing of all. The future for Casa Chapi, and most importantly the future of its children, is bright.

Camelid Dermatology

By Dr Chris Cebra, VMD, MA, MS, DACVIM

Camelid skin conditions have been some of the most enigmatic and frustrating disorders that we deal with. Owners are often very concerned, diagnostic tests are not enlightening, and treatment response is mediocre or temporary at best. References are fairly sparse and most reports are anecdotal.

Normal skin

Camelid skin may be divided into zones. It is thickest in areas of the densest fibre including the trunk and the back of the neck. It is thinnest in areas of light fleece and heat exchange, including the inguinal and axillary regions, the escutcheon and the head. To facilitate heat exchange, thin skinned areas frequently have extensive dermal plexi. Skin also contains a number of eosinophils, which can confound diagnosticians.

The muzzle, pinnae, legs and front of the neck are covered with short, thin hair. These regions are more extensive in llamas, whereas in alpacas, the heavy fleece covers larger portions of the legs and head. The axilla and inguinal region are relatively hairless.

Skin disorders

Camelid skin disorders can be roughly divided into disorders affecting fleeced areas, haired and hairless areas, and mucocutaneous junctions. Disorders affecting haired areas and the mucocutaneous junctions are the most common. In all cases, the most common findings are alopecia and dry hyperkeratosis.

Fleeced areas

The heavily fleeced areas of camelids are infrequently affected. The most common diagnosis is pediculosis. Camelids are affected by both sucking and chewing lice, with sucking lice more common in my practice area, but less common in other areas. Infestation is most common during the colder months, partially due to the long fleeces during that period, as well as the possibility that confinement housing or huddling eases transmission. Lice are usually easy to find by parting the fleece near the affected area, and pediculosis is one of the relatively few pruritic dermatoses that we see. Patchy fibre loss is also common. The type of louse

Fungal Infection

may be identified by microscopic examination of the mouthparts. Shearing and exposure to sunlight and fluctuating temperatures are very effective at reducing lice numbers, but may be impractical at certain times of the year. Parenteral avermectins may be effective against sucking lice. Topical livestock anti-louse treatments are effective against both types.

Dermatophilosis (Rain Rot) may be seen, particularly in areas with wet, mild areas. Lesions are most common on the back. Affected areas have wet, clumped wool, which comes out in clumps. The underlying skin is erythematous, with erosions and exudate. Impression smears of the exudates may reveal the classic 'railroad track' double chains of Dermatophilus congolensis, gram-positive cocci. Culture or biopsy may be used to confirm the diagnosis. Treatment is by use of parenteral antibiotics (usually penicillin or ceftiofur) and possibly clipping and topical disinfectants.

The other major consideration regarding the fleeced area is its possible contribution to heat stress. In hot, moist areas, especially during exercise, the inability to dissipate heat can lead to a pathologic rise in body temperature. Although the fleeced area is important in the pathogenesis of this disorder, the lesions are most common in the axilla, inguinals regions and perineal region, where erythema and edema may be seen.

Haired and hairless areas

The lightly haired areas are not as protected as the fleeced areas, and hence appear to be much more vulnerable to trauma, infection, and ectoparasitism. Bacterial folliculitis can lead to patchy, crusty, exudative hair loss, usually with minimal to mild pruritus. Staphylococcus intermedius is the most common isolate. Diagnosis is by culture and biopsy. Systemic antibiotics and topical antiseptics usually lead to resolution of signs within about two weeks.

Dermatophytosis tends to affect the legs, face, or peritoneum. Winter confinement appears to increase risk. A variety of Trichophyton and Microsporum have been reported. Lesions tend to be non-pruritic and alopecic, with thick crusts. Crusts tend not to be as thick as the "asbestos-type" lesions seen in cattle, and the diagnosis may be missed without further testing. Diagnosis is achieved by identifying the organism by microscopic inspection of affected hairshafts or growth in dermatophyte test medium. Culturing T. verrucosum may require special techniques. Treatment of dermatophytosis involves clipping and cleaning affected areas, followed by topical treatment with iodine, chlorhexidine, lime sulfur, Captan, Miconazole, or bleach. Using landscape-grade lime sulfur to make a 2% solution appears to be effective.

A variety of mites affect the predominantly haired regions. These include the Sarcoptic, Chorioptic, and Psoroptic mange mites, Demodex, possibly sheep keds, the Northern Fowl mite, and harvest mites. Of the mange mites, Sarcoptes is the most common in South America. It is a deep burrower, affecting primarily the legs, neck, face, axilla, ventrum, and perineum. In severe cases, the infestation becomes generalized. Pruritus is usually intense. Psoroptes is less common, and affects primarily the ears. Both these mites may be found by deep skin scrape, or potentially microscopic examination of exudates, particularly from the ears. Parenteral avermectins are very efficacious, and have severely limited the prevalence of these mites outside of South America. Treatment should be repeated weekly to biweekly for two to four treatments to eliminate mites newly hatched from eggs.

Chorioptes is the most common mite in camelids in North America and Europe. It resides near the skin surface, and primarily affects the legs, feet, tail base, and ears. Typical lesions include non-pruritic or mildly pruritic alopecic areas of thickened, crusty skin. These spread and worsen slowly, eventually leading to large patches of dry, elephantine skin. Certain individuals appear to be affected much worse than others. A hypersensitivity reaction is suspected. Detection of the mite is through skin scrape or occasionally biopsy. Because Chorioptes dwell near the surface, the scrape need not be deep. Although the edges of the lesions occasionally yield mites, scraping the skin between the toes, even if unaffected, appears to offer the best success. The axilla also frequently yield mites.

Chorioptic mange mites are extremely difficult to eradicate. Because we think the lesions are due to a hypersensitivity reaction in individuals, even a few surviving mites can elicit disease signs. The superficial habitat of the mite potentially decreases the efficacy of parenteral antiparasitical agent. Non-clinic herdmates or the environment can serve as sources for reinfection. Unlike lice or the other mange mites, Chorioptes appears to survive up to about two months off the host. The best treatment options augment individual treatment with either removal from the herd to a clean environment (semipermanently), or concurrent herd and environmental

Munge

Mite Infestation

treatment. Individual treatments that appear to have some efficacy include parenteral avermectins, topical permethrins, topical lime sulfur, or topical fipronil. All are likely to fail unless the reservoir populations are also eradicated. Continuously treating over the entire sixty day off-host survival period has not successfully eliminated infestation.

Demodex infestation is rare. When it occurs, it results in papular or nodular alopecic lesions on the face, neck, and brisket. Mites may be expressed from the nodules and identified microscopically. The Northern Fowl mite and harvest mites have also been described as causes of dermatitis of the distal extremities. Fowl mites usually come from chickens, so that reservoir population must be addressed. Harvest mites are difficult to diagnose because of their short time on the host. They tend to be seasonal, and may be treated with topical repellents or permethrins. Removal of the camelid from the affected pasture may be necessary.

Non-mite related hyperkeratotic lesions were once thought to be very common. A sizeable percentage of those are now being blamed on the Chorioptic mange mite, but some remain unexplained. Among the syndromes are dorsal nasal alopecia, Zinc deficiency/responsive dermatosis, Superficial hyperkeratotic dermatitis (Munge), Fly bite allergies, and Solar dermatitis. Most of these appear similar clinically and on biopsy, with parakeratosis with variable amounts of various cellular infiltrates and necrosis. Solar dermatitis tends to affect exposed areas with short white hair, such as the ears. Diagnosis is made easier by the presence of unaffected pigmented spots. The most effective treatments are increasing time indoors or covering affected areas with an effective zinc oxide or titanium dioxide based sun block.

Fly bite allergies tend to be seasonal and may respond to housing or insect repellants. Dorsal nasal alopecia may relate to halters or feeders. Otherwise, these disorders tend to get lumped together in the idiopathic category. Zinc responsive dermatosis gets its name from the fact that some lesions appear to respond to zinc supplementation, even though the camelids do not appear to have zinc deficiency. Organic forms such as zinc methionine are much more efficiently absorbed than inorganic forms, such as zinc oxide or sulfate. Given that many camelid mineral supplements now contain abundant zinc, the percentage of camelids with idiopathic hyperkeratotic dermatosis that respond to zinc appears to be declining. Other treatments that have been tried include many of the standard treatments for skin disorders, including steroids, vitamin E and selenium, antibiotics, antiparasiticals, and antiseptic watches.

An idiopathic congenital form of diffuse hyperkeratotic dermatosis (Ichthyosis) has been described. A fungal diorder (Entomophthoramycosis conidobolae) has also been described.

Dermatitis and bacterial infection

Dermatitis and bacterial infection

Rainscald with additional infection

Mucocutaneous injections

The lips, nares, periorbital areas, and mucocutaneous junctions of the urogenital system are affected by some of the same hyperkeratotic disorders that affect haired areas, particularly Munge and zinc responsive dermatosis. Additionally, a number of discrete, proliferative lesions may be seen. Contagious ecthyma or Orf may occasionally be seen, particularly in camelids exposed to infected small ruminants, or also potentially in camelids inhabiting a facility infected with the virus. Similar lesions may be seen in camelids exposed to camels with Camelpox. These diseases may be diagnosed by history and appearance, with electronmicroscopy of crusts or histopathology used to confirm the diagnosis. Lesions should regress over about two months.

Recently, a specific camelid Fibropapilloma virus has been identified. Associated lesions are usually multifocal and proliferative without crusting. They do not typically regress. Surgical removal can be curative, but also frequently lead to regrowth. In some cases, the regrowth is actually granulation tissue, not the original fibropapilloma. Cryosurgery and injection with cisplatin have been used on persistent, recurrent lesions.

Miscellaneous

Myiasis can occur in a variety of areas. The most common sites are around injuries or other lesions, such as dermatophilosis, or around the perineum and tail base. Squamous cell carcinoma of the skin has been described. It appears to be an unusual tumor, affecting either areas of previous injury or near the mucocutaneous junction. Oral and preputial tumors have been seen. Diagnosis is by biopsy. Excision and local chemotherapy may be curative.

How To Make:

A Felt Clutch Bag

By Anne Marie Harwood

There are many things which can be made with felt cushion covers, wall hangings, garments and toys but in this article, I am going to show how, with relatively simple techniques and a standard sewing machine, you can make a very classy Clutch Bag.

Felt Facts

Did you know that you can get 2 sheets of felt 900 x 1200 from 1 raw kilo of fleece?

Why not try having some FELT made, next time you send your fleece for processing?

Getting Started

You will need only a small amount of felt - about a quarter of a sheet. Some nice medium weight fabric for lining, some iron-on medium weight interfacing, contrasting cotton and whatever embellishment you like for the bag.

My pattern is a simple shape with rounded edges and a curved front flap with a clasp and a hook for a wrist strap.

Cut out Pieces

Cut out 1 x front, 1 x back and 1 flap in felt, the same in interfacing and the same in lining. For a full width internal pocket, cut 2 pieces, 1/2 the height of the bag.

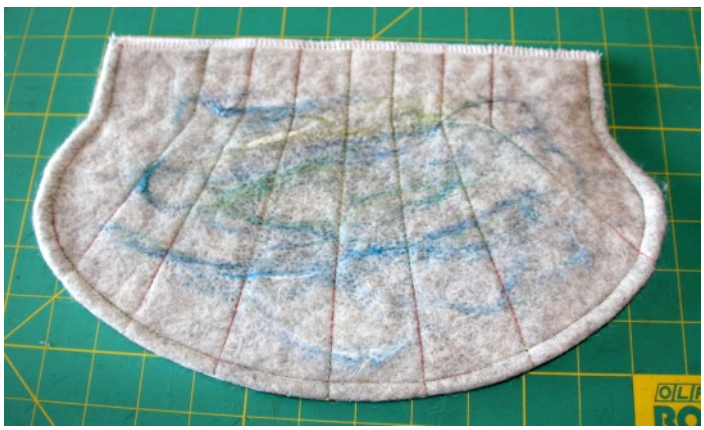
Iron the interfacing onto all of the felt pieces and overlock all edges.

Needle felt embellishments and stitching onto back and flap pieces. I have chosen some silk/alpaca rovings.

Interface the pocket and join. Turn right side out, iron and topstitch. Stitch pocket to the back lining piece all around leaving top open. Divide pocket if required.

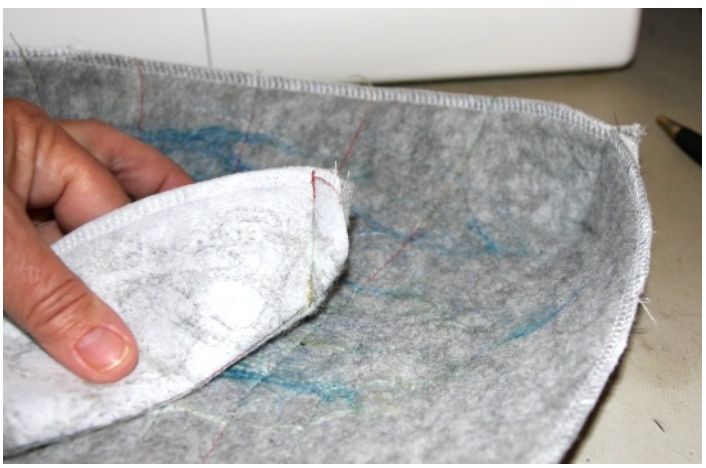
Flap

Attach flap lining to flap front - right sides together leaving top open. Clip curves and trim excess. Turn right side out and press. Top stitch around edge. Overlock tops together.



Bag Front, Back and Flap

Sew corner cutouts to give the bag some body.



Attach a loop of fabric for a 'D' ring to hold the wrist strap near the top of one side, if required. With right sides together, sew front felt piece to back felt piece, leaving top open.

Attach the flap to the body of the bag. Pin flap to bag back, right sides together. Stitch close to edge.

For the clasp or magnetic catch, on the centre, measure up 110mm or so from the bottom of the front piece and attach the knob of the clasp. Some extra interfacing on the back of the front piece is always a good idea. The clasp on the flap is done last.

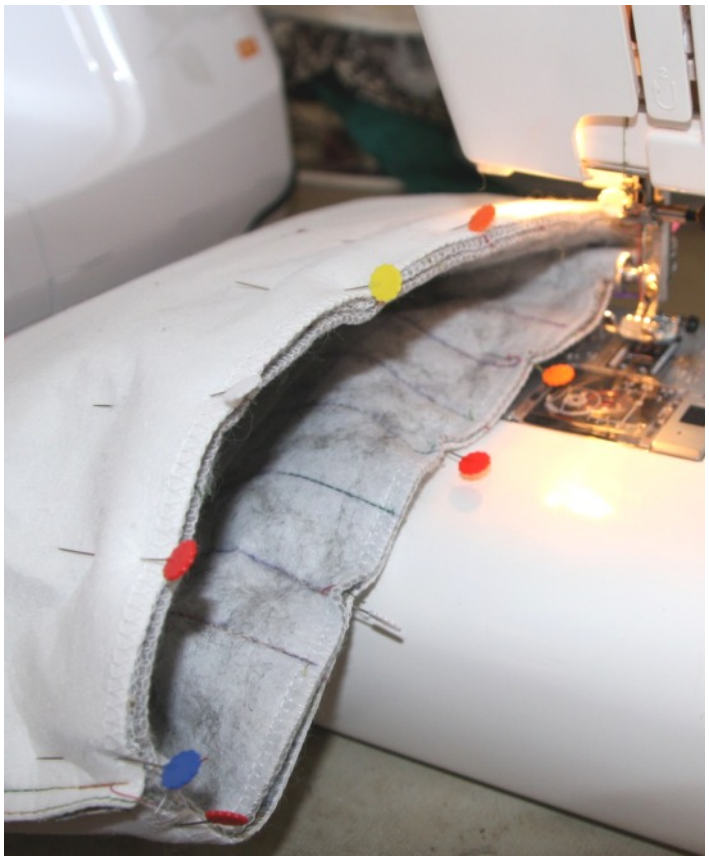
Lining

Sew the lining pieces together leaving the top open and 150mm gap at the bottom for turning the bag out later.

Final Assembly

With the lining inside out, insert the felt bag with right side of the felt facing the right side of the lining. Pin very carefully every 25mm or so.

Working slowly, stitch through all layers around the top of the bag. Make sure the needle is down when you stop to reposition the bag around the free arm. It's pretty thick by now but if you go slowly, it should be fine



Reach through the gap in the lining and pull the bag through - it looks like a disaster at first but it all falls into place. When the bag is all pulled out, push the lining into the bag and stitch up the gap at the bottom of the lining. Press well and attach front clasp, a purchased wrist strap and its ready for use.

Anne Marie Harwood runs Echo Beach Fibre Mill and is very experienced with processing fleece, felting, weaving and many other forms of creative art.

She can be contacted for advice at Echo Beach Alpacas - Fibre Processing Mill Mt Barker SA 5251 anne@echobeachalpacas.com.au

www.echobeachalpacas.com.a

There's endless possibilities with Felt.

Feet First:

Treatment of Foot Infections in Llamas and Alpacas

By Dr Michelle Ing (DVM)

Unless your llama or alpaca wears appropriately fitted shoes and socks, they may be prone to developing various foot problems. If you're anything like me you won't know a good camelid podiatrist either. It rests with us, the owners, to rely on our skill and alertness to attend to these problems. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to cover basic foot problems and their treatment.

In my practice, common problems include infections and abscesses as well as problems related to poor hygiene, (i.e. nails that have grown out like talons on a parrot). There are many reasons foot infections and abscesses in animals are such a common problem. The foot is the one area of the body having direct and nearly constant contact with the ground, including areas of contamination such as the dung pile. Even though the foot has a tough outer covering, it can still be bruised, cut and exposed to dirt, other debris, faecal material and the associated bacteria.

Obviously your animal can't verbalize his/her complaints so it is up to you to be alert to signs or symptoms of foot problems. One of the first signs you may notice is your animal standing out in the field holding up one leg or limping around in the pasture. Lameness is seen in varying degrees from a small limp to a non-weight bearing leg. A closer inspection of the area may reveal point tenderness on palpation of the foot. Heat or swelling may also be evident although some of the heavily fleeced animals may have too much fibre to assess swelling until the area has been clipped.

Above: Soaking Kit

Left: Soaking an alpaca's foot

Bandaging A Foot:

Step 1.

Step 2.

Step 3.

I recently evaluated an animal with a large abscess that occurred as a result of a bite wound from a pasture mate. The owner had witnessed the animal limping for several days and attributed the injury to a mere sprain. A week later, when the animal failed to improve and indeed worsened, I was called for a consultation. Upon examination of the foot and lower leg I discovered a golf-ball sized abscess oozing pus from a puncture wound. After several weeks of treatment including antibiotics, incision, drainage, and daily cleansing, the problem was resolved. The moral of this story: Early prevention is better than a "wait and see" approach.

I encourage my clients to get involved and treat basic foot problems. However, knowing when to obtain radiographs (x-rays) to rule out a more serious cause for lameness (i.e. fractures) should be left up to your veterinarian. If the problem is more chronic in nature, radiographs can rule out an infection affecting the bones of the lower leg. It is important to remember that an early investigation of lameness could well result in an easy resolution of the problem as well as averting the possibility of a permanent compromise to your animal's health and welfare.

Foot infections can be easily treated with a combination of foot soaks, bandaging and use of broad spectrum antibiotics. Soaking can draw out an abscess that is deeper in the foot. Superficial foot infections can also benefit from soaking, both to cleanse as well as yield relief from inflammation and discomfort. The foot should be soaked in warm water with Epsom salts and diluted betadine.

The recipe I use is approximately 1 quart of warm water with 1/4 cup Epsom salts and 2 tablespoons betadine solution. The animal's foot should soak for approximately 10 minutes. Once the animal becomes accustomed to holding his/her leg in the warm water, they may actually come to enjoy it.

Bandaging the leg is of utmost importance as this protects the injured foot from further contamination.

The photos above illustrate bandage materials (3M Vetrap, gauze, Duct tape and a disposable glove) used as well as the stages for wrapping the foot. The bandage is changed daily until the animal is walking normally and the area of the foot has healed.

Although these infections may heal without careful attention, they can also get worse and take longer to heal. Ultimately foot abscesses will heal faster if they are kept clean and shielded from dirt and faecal material. Foot infections that are not treated may result in a deeper infection that can affect the bones of the lower leg. Use of broad-spectrum antibiotics in treating foot abscesses is important not only to clear the infection but also prevent the spread of infection in surrounding tissues and bone.

As winter draws near remember; if you were running around barefoot in the mud, slush or snow you might also be prone to developing foot infections. Your llama or alpaca are depending on you to make sure their feet are in tiptop condition.

About the Author

Michelle Ing lives in Granite Bay, California, USA with her husband Steve Friend and their 16 alpacas, two dogs, a parrot, a mule and a miniature horse. She graduated from UC Davis in 1996 and spent the following year in Lexington, Kentucky, completing an equine surgery internship. In 1998 Michelle started a camelid practice in Spokane, Washington, USA. In 2002 she moved to Northern California where she continues a busy camelid practice. Her special interests include camelid reproduction where she admits to her facility several cases a month for work-up and treatment.

Reprinted with permission from the author and CQ Magazine.

Left: Bandaging Kit

Certificates Of Appreciation

Each Regional Committee can nominate one member from their Region each year for consideration by the Board. The nomination must be in writing and received at the AAA Office by 31 July. The AAA Board may award Certificates annually to any member outside of the Regional nominations.

Criteria to be considered but not limited to:

- Length of service for the member is to be 10 years +.
- Member is to have held an Office or Leadership position over a number of years at a National and/or Regional level.
- Made a significant contribution to a successful AAA project.
- Has been actively involved in shows, regional activities / workshops.
- Volunteered their services to assist the industry via working parties/panels/committees.
- Written documents to support the industry's progress.
- Is committed to the long term viability and sustainability of the industry.
- Is a consistent supporter of AAA events/activities.

It is with great pleasure that the Board announced the following members have been awarded Certificates of Appreciation for 2014, and the Board would like to thank the members for their contribution to the industry.

Sandra Vella

Sandra Vella receiving her award from AAA Director Jeff Willis

The Central Coast and Hunter Region (CCandH) nominated Sandra Vella with a list of achievements which tick all the requirements of the award and more.

Sandra, along with her husband Charlie, after turf farming and owning a small herd of beef cattle, entered into the world of alpacas in the late nineties with the purchase of three huacayas. They decided to do the Alpaca course at TAFE, with the intention of learning all about them before making any purchases. However, they could not resist an offer made to them and plunged into alpaca ownership well before finishing the course. They immediately joined the AAA and just a few years later Sandra commenced her many contributions to the broader alpaca industry. To this day Sandra continues to work tirelessly at local, regional and national level and is committed to the continued advancement of the Australian Alpaca Industry. It should also be mentioned that Charlie has been the long standing President of CCandH Region, so by default, as the wife of a Regional President, Sandra also supports the industry through the support of her husband in this role, and that includes spending much time travelling the geographically vast region that CCandH is to attend meetings and other regional events. Sandra has been part of the backbone of CCandH region for many years now and has often worked above and beyond the call of duty for individual members and the region. Charlie and Sandra are looking to relocate to be closer to their children and it will be a sad loss for the CCandH region when Sandra does move, but no doubt a big gain for her new region. Among Sandra's many roles are:-

- Secretary and committee member Hawkesbury Region 2000 to 2004
- Secretary CCandH Region 2006 to 2010
- Treasurer CCandH Region 2010 to 2012
- Convener or co-convener or steward at many shows
- Ran the back office for the National show in Tamworth 2010 and Sydney Royal
- Nominated and was accepted to do the Industry Liaison officer (ILO) course and is one of the ILO's for CCandH region – current
- Panel member Showing and Judging Reference Panel – current
- Web editor CCandH region 2011 to current

Graeme Smith

The Board is happy to support the QLD Regions nomination for a certificate of appreciation.

Since joining the Australian Alpaca Association Queensland Region in early 1999, Graeme and his wife Cristin have been passionate about the development of a viable and sustainable alpaca fleece industry for Australia. From small beginnings and a plan to breed superior white suri alpacas they have enjoyed success at local, national and international fleece shows.

Graeme has been a long serving member of the Queensland

Region Committee and has served on the Executive as Secretary for the Region.

As well as convening the Sunshine Coast Show, Graeme along with his wife Cristin, introduced Alpacas on Show to Queensland.

Graeme was one of the instigators of the successful Alpacas and You Seminars for prospective new breeders and helped to conduct these seminars for several years.

He has organised and conducted workshops and seminars for the benefit of members and has always freely shared his knowledge and experiences with members.

Graeme can often be found behind the microphone at local shows presenting an informative and entertaining spiel to the public.

Graeme Smith receiving his award at a regional Christmas function from QLD Regional President Fiona Laughton

Liz Coles and Rosemary Eva

Liz Coles and Rosemary Eva receiving their awards from SQNNSW Regional President Leanne Tunney

The Board would like to endorse the nomination from the Southern QLD Northern NSW (SQNNSW) Region for a Certificate of Appreciation to be awarded to Liz and Rosemary.

Rosemary Eva and Elizabeth (Liz) Coles joined the Australian Alpaca Association Ltd in 1996. Rosemary ande Liz have been members of the SQNNSW and QLD Region.

The proficiencies that Rosemary Eva and Liz Coles have gained as registered nurses and midwives, with high qualifications in administration, have given them a tremendous foundation to base their alpaca enterprise.

Rosemary Eva held executive appointments at several Victorian hospitals culminating in the position of deputy Director of Nursing at the Royal Melbourne hospital, a position she held for 12 years prior to her retirement in 1996. Liz had a 25 year career in the Royal Australian Navy during which time she held numerous senior positions. Some highlights being the Director of Nursing of the RAN Nursing Service, being appointed the first female Commanding Officer in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and ultimately receiving the Conspicuous Service Cross for her work in the Head Quarters of the ADF in undertaking the challenges of Equal Employment Opportunity across 21 areas of discrimination within the ADF.

With all of the above mentioned talents behind them, Rosemary and Liz are now full time breeders committed to the Alpaca Industry, running a boutique herd of black alpacas and breeding for quality fibre, conformation and character. They take particular pride in assessing whether potential customers are equipped with the sufficient financial, physical and emotional tools required in order to become successful breeders and fleece growers prior to sales. They are well known in the industry and are thought of with high integrity.

Rosemary and Liz have achieved great success at shows in both State and National levels, and their animals are highly sought after by other 'black' breeders both within Australia and Overseas.

During the 18 years that Rosemary and Liz have been members of the AAA Ltd, they have been actively involved in coordinating workshops and seminars within their regions with a particular focus on animal health and biosecurity. Several articles they have co-authored on animal health and biosecurity have been published in National and Regional AAA Ltd magazines. Liz held the position of Regional Education Officer for many years and also has been a member of the AAA Animal Health, Husbandry and Welfare reference panel for the past 10 years. Both roles are instrumental to the continuing development of the alpaca industry.

Being ardent supporters of new breeders and younger members in the industry, Rosemary and Liz are enthusiastic mentors in the practices of animal husbandry, farm management and all aspects of showing and are always willing to give freely of their time. For many years on countless occasions, Rosemary and Liz have contributed their time and skills in various capacities at regional shows, assisting as Stewards, Ring Stewarding and animal Inspection Stewards. In July 2014 they instigated the inaugural Murwillumbah Show. Rosemary was Convenor, supported by Liz. The show was very professional and supported by a large number of sponsors and AAA members from three Regions who made the show a huge success.

In regards to the exposure of alpacas to the general community, Longueville Park is the favoured home for 'hug-a-paca' for many folk in Aged Care and Disabilty groups. The Lions Club, Rotary, Probus and school groups are all regular visitors to their property. The reason they do this is because of "The joy that the alpacas bring to these groups is a wonderful experience". Rosemary and Liz can always be relied upon to impart their knowledge and wisdom whenever there is a crisis involving alpacas.

Russell Dawe

Russell Dawe being presented with his certificate by VIC Western Regional President John Harris at the Colac Show. Capturing the spirit of fun on the day Russell was also awarded a "blue ribbon" for his efforts!

The Board supports the nomination of the VIC Western Victorian Region who have nominated Russell Dawe.

Russell and Liz have been breeding alpacas since the early 2000's. Russell has been involved in the industry since its early days and has worked to help its growth, particularly in Victoria. He served as President of the Region for a number of years and has recently served as Secretary. He has convened Alpacafest and held committee positions for over a decade.

A leading contributor to the workings of the RASV Alpaca Committee and chair of the committee for four years. Russell developed the Regions first website and the first online newsletter.

Russell has demonstrated an inclusive leadership style for the Region, finding ways for committee and other members to contribute in ways that suited them best. He has participated in animal and fleece shows across the region and identified and arranged delivery of lectures from Deakin University that provided a detailed understanding of fibre characteristics and properties for the region's members. He has taken a leadership role in setting up local breeder networks and encouraged the concept of these groups working together to build economically viable fleece management processes. Russell also developed a database model for show entry management including generating show catalogues and managing results. He used this solution as a basis for a working party input to the RASV on-line showing system development for alpacas. Russell gave his time and effort to attending AAA Council meetings and reporting to the VIC Western Region.

Peter Kennedy and Robert Gane

Peter is a Level 1 AAA Judge, an AOA Judge (USA) and has judged internationally on many occasions. He has been involved in Judge training in Australia and New Zealand, and spoken at regional events including Focus conferences in Queensland. Peter was a member of the Showing and Judging Reference Panel from mid 2011 to mid 2013, and presented at the Apprentice Judge Workshop in June 2013.

Robert presented Marketing workshops in many regions in 2008/09, as well as at International conferences and seminars. He has been a Steward at the National Show, in addition to numerous regional shows. Robert has served on the AAA Board as Marketing Director.

Peter and Robert hosted the Apprentice Judge Workshop at Canchones in 2013, and in excess of 100 animals were brought onto the property, a logistical exercise requiring careful management to ensure the animals were in the right location at the right time.

Peter and Robert convened the National Auction in 2013, achieving a 100% clearance rate and an average sale price of $27,300. This was the first time for several years that a 100% clearance rate was achieved. Peter and Robert have also been regular purchasers at National Auctions in past years, in support of the industry.

Peter and Robert are also active at a regional level, hosting and attending regional meetings and educational events.

Peter and Robert are active in the alpaca industry both locally and internationally.

Peter Kennedy and Robert Gane receiving their certificates at the National Show from AAA President Michelle Malt

Julienne Gelber

Julienne Gelber receiving her award from NSW Central Western Regional President Dean Brown

The Board is happy to support the central NSW Central Western Region nomination of Julienne Gelber for a certificate of appreciation.

Julienne has been an active member of the Regional Committee since she moved to her farm in Orange more than ten years ago. Prior to relocating to Orange she also served as President of the Central Coast and Hunter Region.

Julienne breeds both a suri and huacaya herd. She is a regular participant in, and sponsor of, shows at a regional level and including the National Show and Sale. She regularly hosts regional meetings and training events at her farm.

Julienne has been a pioneer in many facets of alpaca industry development, including research and development for textile production and the suri genome project. Projects to which she has contributed energy, resources and funding include the NZ suri fabric trials, Surissimo and Rumplestiltskin. She has undertaken several study tours through Europe and Asia promoting Australian alpaca fleece to the textile market and investigating fibre processors and processing opportunities. She has also written articles for Alpacas Australia and been a speaker at workshops and conferences both in Australia and overseas.

Susan Haese

The Board is pleased to nominate and endorse Susan Haese for a Certificate of Appreciation.

Susan was the convenor for the National Conference held in Adelaide in May 2014, having initiated a request for a National Conference with the AAA Board in 2011. Susan handled the speaker program for the conference, in addition to producing the Conference Proceedings and numerous other details. Susan was called on to present one of the sessions at the conference at short notice following the unavailability of Jane Vaughan. Susan also hosted visitors on the Farm Tours following the conference.

Susan has been a regular attendee at conference events both in Australia and internationally, bringing her knowledge of these events to the organisation of the 2014 National Conference.

Susan provided assistance to Cameron Holt to ship his book from the printer to Australia, both in transport and import logistics.

Susan is a strong supporter (and sponsor) of shows and educational events in her region of South Australia, and has assisted the regional committee in the role of merchandise/equipment officer.

Susan Haese receiving her award at the National Show from AAA Director Greg Scarlett

TIPS:

How to keep your alpacas healthy

By Dr Chris Cebra, VMD, MSA, MS, DACVIM

In principle, if we would like to discuss how best to keep alpacas healthy, it is best to start with a discussion of what makes alpacas unhealthy.

If you look at everything possible, this becomes a lengthy list, but if you narrow the focus to things likely to affect groups of animals, it becomes much shorter. In my estimation, the most common challenges to group health in alpacas include:

1. Parasitic diseases
2. Nutritional deficits
3. Nutritional excesses
4. Herd stresses
5. Weather stresses
6. Infectious diseases earn an honourable mention; they are not as common in herd challenges as the previous five, but can be devastating.

Parasitic Disorders

There are a number of parasitic disorders that can have severe impact on individual alpacas or herds. These include diseases caused by the Barber Pole worm [Haemonchus], liver flukes, whipworms [Trichuris], Lamanema chavezi, Eimeria macusaniensis, Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Parelaphostrongylus tenuis, the sarcoptic mange mite, and the blood parasite Mycoplasma haemolama. The gastrointestinal worm (Haemonchus, Trichuris, and Lamanema) all infect animals through ingestion of contaminated faecal material or feeds contaminated by faecal material. Their life cycles are slightly different. The Haemonchus egg hatches fairly quickly and the larva matures in the environment. It is generally believed that the larvae climb stalks of grass, and thus a higher rate of successful new infections on pasture. Lamanema is fairly rare outside of South America. Its larva matures within the egg, then hatches and also requires ingestion, probably associated with pasture. The Trichuris larva matures within the egg, which hatches on ingestion. The keys here are that all of these initially are shed by infected alpacas as eggs, and then require a variable period of maturation outside, followed by ingestion by the new host. Distribution of eggs out of faeces occurs most readily when they become wet. Removal of faeces while it is still dry is the most effective way of controlling any of these parasites, and may be the only effective way of controlling whipworm. Haemonchus and Lamanema require pasture, and thus mowing may have an effect as well.

Crias are an exception to this pattern: they may have looser faeces that allows easier distribution throughout the environment and they also tend to eat faeces, dirt, and whatever else they find. Thus, infection of crias with any of these parasites, is near impossible to prevent without timely faecal removal.

Eimeria has a similar life cycle to Trichuris: it matures in the egg and must be eaten from the surface of the ground. Thus animals eating off the ground, especially in dirt lots, are most vulnerable. Crias, being the poop eaters that they are, are also vulnerable. Besides faecal removal, which should be done every 2-3 weeks to control Eimeria macusaniensis, feeding susceptible animals from above ground feeders with limited spillage may provide effective control.

Liver flukes are usually residents of cattle, sheep, or in the US, deer. The larger versions have an aquatic snail as the intermediate host, and thus are most common in moist areas or around water sources. Fowl and anti-snail agents and restricting access to damper areas may be more useful than medications in controlling them.

Cryptosporidium and Giardia are most commonly found in sick crias. They are especially important parasites because they affect that age group and because humans can get them too. You are unlikely to get Giardia from your alpacas but transmission of Cryptosporidium from alpacas to humans is fairly well documented. These were rare when farms were all small, such as less than 10 animals with only a couple of crias a year. As farms became bigger, these became greater problems. Both may come from other domestic animals or wildlife. Giardia is associated with contaminated water sources and damp pasture, but Cryptosporidium is not. Giardia may thus be controlled by restricting crias access to the source of infection. Hygiene is currently the only way to combat the spread of cryptosporidiosis.

Several of the other listed parasites are not common here.

Nutritional Deficits

Both nutritional deficits and excesses are becoming more common in the US for the same reason: with the pullback in alpaca prices, many owners are looking for ways to economize. This may result in not feeding enough of something or discontinuing an essential supplement, or in replacing a quality product designed for alpacas with a less suitable but cheaper substitute.

The most common nutritional deficits are everything at once (starvation), in some cases protein deficiency, and rarely single vitamins or minerals. Starvation is a sad event and the keys to recognition and prevention are clear. If it is partial, herd stressors may be more evident than starvation signs. Using lower quality feeds may also lead to deficiencies in individual nutrients, which lead to more subtle signs. Protein deficiency is a controversial example. Alpacas appear to have a fairly high requirement for protein compared to cattle or sheep. Feeding too little results in caloric sufficiency, and hence good body condition, but may compromise liver function and energy metabolism, leading to poor milk production and/or fatty liver. The flip is production of ultrafine fibre: too much dietary protein is associated with an increasing fibre diameter. The trick is balancing, and to optimize that, using the same animals as breeders and fibre producers may be problematic in some cases.

Regarding individual nutrient deficiencies, the most widespread and best known is the vitamin D deficiency associated with dark coat colours, long fleeces, and short days.

Nutritional Excess

Although too much of anything is likely to be bad, only a few nutritional 'poisonings' have been identified in alpacas. The most important of these are carbohydrate overload, vitamin D overdosing, and copper poisoning. Regarding vitamin D overdosing, there appear to be different philosophies in different parts of the world, and I would refer you to your veterinarians for their specific recommendations. Vitamin D supplementation is common around the world to combat the deficiency associated with rickets. This supplementation may be in feeds, oral gels, or injections. Most of the acute overdoses have been associated with injections. This usually occurs in crias; they quickly lose their appetite and show blood or radiographic evidence of renal disease, including mineralization. Chronic poisonings are more common in adults and related to an excess in feed. Signs are the same, but are more subtle and develop more slowly. Treatment is less rewarding than prevention in these cases, so ensuring proper amounts of supplements are given is key.

Carbohydrate overload is fairly rare. It usually occurs with inexperienced owners or holiday feeders who simply give too much grain supplement. Most mineral mixes for camelids have a forage base and are fairly safe, so this tends to relate to pure grain mixes. These are seldom necessary in alpacas, so avoidance is not too hard.

Copper poisoning usually occurs when pellets or mineral mixes designed for cattle, horses, poultry, or swine are fed to alpacas. Copper slowly damages the liver, so signs are also fairly subtle until the animal starts to lose weight and stops eating. Blood or tissue evidence combined with knowledge of what was fed are the keys to recognizing this problem, and avoiding the wrong feeds is the key to prevention.

Herd Stresses

Interactions between individuals often appear to work themselves out fairly quickly, but may have longer effects than is commonly appreciated. The key is usually space. If alpacas can get away from each other, they tend to do well. When they are confined or have to come into smaller spaces for feeding, weather protection, or other issues, the old rivalries emerge, and the stress on the animals increases. This stress is enhanced by feeder space or feed inadequacy, as there is greater competition for what is available. Various reports out there list recommendations for feed trough space or square footage per animal, but your observation is important here too. If specific animals are shy to come in, bullied when they do arrive, or end up picking up the leftovers, their management needs to change. Groups can be separated, feeding space improved, or anything that decreases these negative interactions. The effects of stress are hard to describe.

Gastric ulcers, one of the best known maladies of alpacas, are frequently blamed on stress. Other effects may include decreased immunity to infectious and parasitic disorders, increased exposure to these disorders, reproductive failure, and nutritional deficits. All of these increase unthriftiness.

Weather Stresses

Heat, cold, wet, and dry each pose a different challenge, and may create still other problems when in combination.

Overheating is commonly described, and appears to be worst when combined with humidity. The native alpaca environment tends to be moist in the shoulder seasons and dry in the summer and winter. They appear to tolerate arid conditions very well, as long as they have adequate potable water. They also tolerate dry cold, but can become quite hypothermic in cold, snowy climates. Shelter is really the only solution; occasional recommendation to feed more calories are problematic due to carbohydrate overload. Heat alone is also fairly well tolerated as long as they are shorn and have shade: there may be decreased reproductive efficiency, but that is not well documented. In hot, moist areas, shearing and shelter are also essential, but the ability of the heat to permeate even sheltered areas becomes problematic. This is especially true of alpacas engaged in any sort of physical activity. This includes packing, trekking, herd infighting, males excited by nearby breeding females, etc. In addition to the general recommendations, soaks appear to be helpful, but they must be kept stocked with clean water and used by the animals. Kiddie pools and mist sprayers both seem to be effective in delivering enough water close to the skin for cooling to occur.

Examining healthy, sick, or suspect alpacas

Several routine surveillance tools may help you keep ahead of several of these problems. These include routine weighing or body condition score assessments, routine faecal examination and/or membrane colour checks, and routine behavioural observations. Eating, moving around, lying down, cud chewing,

defecating, and urinating are all part of the daily routine, and the more you see your animals doing normal things (lying down is the one to be careful of here), the greater confidence you can have that they are healthy. If you fail to see the desired activity, or its frequency appears decreased (or increased, in the case of lying down), single that animal out for closer observation, or do a physical assessment. A variety of problems ranging from emaciation to a rounded abdomen are better assessed by getting your hands on the animal than from afar. If there is still a question, that's where the veterinarian comes in. Blood tests are best when done early in the process when it is still correctable, and may reveal much that is invisible to the external examiner. Imaging studies are another step, but they are best when you know what you are looking for. All in all, your success as an alpaca owner hinges on your ability to minimize the effects of most of the things in this report; individual animals with uncommon disease are another matter, but your ability to keep your herd healthy is the basis on which you build a happy, successful operation.

Dr Cebra was a key note speaker at the 2014 AAA Conference in Adelaide. He has worked with llamas and alpacas for over 20 years as a clinical veterinarian and researcher. He has authored or co-authored over 50 peer reviewed scientific reports on camelids and numerous lay articles, reviews, and book chapters. Most recently he finished his chapters for a new comprehensive textbook on llama and alpaca health care.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