ALPACAS AUSTRALIA

The official publication of the Australian Alpaca Association Ltd

In this issue:

- National Show
- Line Breeding
- Arm Knitting

www.alpaca.asn.au

Issue 81 | Spring/Summer 2016

In this Shearing Season please keep in mind…

AUSTRALIAN
ALPACA

Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd

Working for the Australian Alpaca Industry since 2004

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AAFL uses Australian Alpaca to produce high quality clothing

(*) Contaminated fleece will be downgraded or disposed without value, if necessary
(**) Please contact us for freight requirements to access this program.

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Cover: Arm knitted animals
Photograph courtesy of Anne Weil - Flax & Twine

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Presidents Message

This will be my final message to readers of the Alpacas Australia magazine in my capacity as AAA President. I retire from the AAA Board at our Annual General Meeting in Moss Vale on 17 September, having served for two consecutive three-year terms. When you receive this magazine, members will have elected four new Directors, and a new AAA President. During the past four years as AAA President, preceded by two years as an AAA Director, I have had the opportunity to engage and collaborate with individuals and groups who have a broad range of knowledge and skills; and experienced many different situations and challenges, that I would otherwise have been unlikely to encounter.

I have learned something from each situation, and have been inspired by the dedication of many who share the alpaca passion. I am proud of where the industry is now placed, with many initiatives still to achieve their full potential, and a wide range of options and opportunities through which alpaca producers can generate a return from their herds. To know that I have been a part of this journey and have made a contribution is very pleasing.

The Australian Alpaca Association is a membership services organisation, and the key resources and assets of the association are its members. As a membership services organisation, the Australian Alpaca Association has the role of representing the industry and its members to government, and promoting the aspects of alpaca farming as a viable agricultural business.

The role of our members in this industry body is to represent and promote the alpaca industry at all levels, and our reach may be local, regional, national or global. We may not all follow the same path to our destination, but I believe we all share a common aim to be part of a successful, thriving livestock industry.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Alpacas Australia magazine, with articles covering a range of topics from our recent National Show and Sale in Adelaide, breeding considerations, workshops for our AAA Judges, and a helpful Service Directory. The magazine is available by subscription and as a service to AAA members, with a circulation across Australia and overseas. Advertising in the magazine is a great opportunity to reach a wide customer base and to promote your business. I encourage you to provide feedback to our Editor and to submit articles for publication.

Ownership of alpacas is a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Alpacas are easy on the environment and relatively easy to breed and manage. Our alpacas are one of the most environmentally friendly livestock farmed in Australia, and have a nature and appearance that is highly appealing – what a great asset we have!

Every AAA member has the opportunity to promote the alpaca industry and their own alpaca enterprise through shows, educational displays and promotional events. The members who volunteer their time at these events benefit all of us from increased awareness of alpacas and alpaca product, growing the demand for fleece and the need for a larger herd to supply the market.

I would like to thank our many volunteers, the AAA office staff, and my fellow Directors – past, current, continuing and future - in continuing the activities of the association. I look forward to continuing the journey.

OBITUARY - By Glenn Sutherland - Alpaca Panache
BEATRIZ Canedo PATINO - World's leading alpaca fashion designer. Died March 2016

While Beatriz was not well-known in Australia she did visit us here for the 1998, National Show staying at Sandi Keane's farm, Pinjarra Alpacas which is where I met her. A charming, elegant and very stylish lady who was still not worried about getting her hands involved with the shearing.

Beatriz started her fashion career working under European designers such as Balenciaga. In 1987 she set up a suri alpaca salon off Fifth Avenue then moved her salon to La Paz in Bolivia. Beatriz held a number of alpaca fashion collections in the US and Paris up until a year or so before her passing, and in so doing was at the forefront of creating the alpaca brand as luxurious and elegant haute couture.

So much so that amongst her clients were Hillary Clinton, Melinda Gates, Queen Beatriz of The Netherlands, Queen Sophie of Spain, King Carlos of Spain, Duchess of Cornwall Camilla Parker-Bowles, Pope Francis, Pope John Paul and numerous presidents .

She was also very well-known for her charitable work with UNCTAD and a number of South American charitable foundations.
Beatriz remained single and had no children. She was 65. Her passing is a very sad loss to the global alpaca industry.

Ekeko progeny have had an amazing year at top grade shows around Australia with 6 Supreme or Best Grey awards in 12 months!

To celebrate we are offering a very limited number of outside mating packages*

*Conditions apply

Tarraganda Lodge Ekeko - Sire of Grey Champions!

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VISTA DEL SUD ALPACAS

Arm Knitting

A new take on an old craft

By Anne Weil - Flax & Twine

Chunky knits offer fabulous style, both in interiors and in fashion. I find the loft and scale of extreme knitting incredible. I fell in love with it immediately. That was almost 5 years ago now...

After experimenting, I found extreme knitting more comfortable on my arms rather than enormous needles. I began arm knitting furiously and often. In arm knitting, the actual act of knitting, bringing new loops of yarn through existing stitches, remains the same as traditional knitting. The main difference lies simply in that your arms become the needles.

After some trial and error, I discovered that most traditional knitting techniques apply to arm knitting with great results. For example, in my book, Knitting Without Needles, you will find projects that include a variety of techniques and you will find various stitch patterns, as well as lace, cables and other decorative effects. (One of my favourite projects is the beautiful faux sheepskin shown here made with Blue Sky Alpaca Suri USA.)

Some people fear learning how to arm knit. However, many beginners find that knitting on their arms is a friendlier, faster introduction to knitting than learning on needles. I teach complete beginners and well-experienced knitters, both of whom seem to get similar joy from their new skill. Young children also pick arm knitting up with ease.

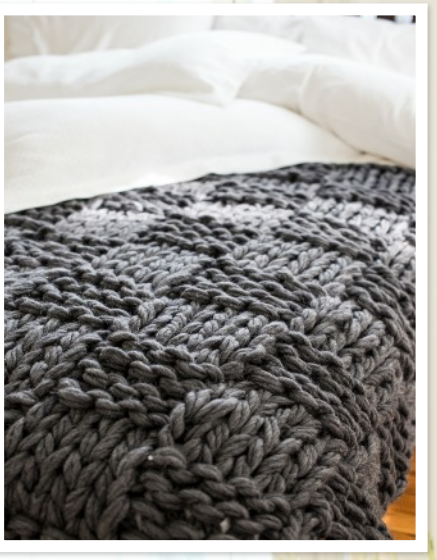
Arm knitting's speed is one of the best things about it! You can knit gorgeous projects, like those shown here, in a matter of hours. Find resources for how to arm knit both in book stores and online. Find tutorials, patterns, books and videos on my blog in my shop (www.flaxandtwineshop.com), and at video teaching platforms, such as www.creativebug.com.

A thrill rushes through me when I transform a pile of yarn into something beautiful with only my hands. I hope you get the sense of what's possible in arm knitting. Finally, I hope you find the same joy in it that I do.

Bio

Anne Weil is the creative voice behind Flax & Twine. A lover of beautiful things, she designs charming knit and crochet patterns and simple DIY crafts for the modern maker. Her signature style is bright and clean, with gorgeous photography and step-by-step instructions that can be followed with ease. Anne spends a lot of time in her Denver USA studio relishing joyful making moments that really make her heart sing!

Anne's book, "Knitting Without Needles," a Potter Craft title will teach you to immerse yourself in chunky, stylish arm and finger knit patterns. Follow Anne: Facebook Twitter Instagram.



"Arm knitting's speed is one of the best things about it! You can knit gorgeous projects, like those shown here, in a matter of hours."

Online Alpaca

Search for 'alpaca products' in Google Images and a vast array of beautiful, amazing and downright whacky items appear.

Items made from alpaca, for alpacas, for alpaca lovers and everything in between are now available to buy online from all corners of the globe.

We have selected a few interesting products to showcase.

You can't get anymore 'in your face' than this - show your love for alpacas with this **Big Face Alpaca T-Shirt** available from www.clothingmonster.com

Price - Approximately $40

Maybe these printed socks are more you style? If so pop along to www.aliexpress.com & visit Jonas Store No.124895

Price - Approximately $2.25 per pair

Get ready for Summer with this alpaca motive BBQ apron (above)
Price - Approximately $25

Left- This little micro sized - nano block alpaca is a cute option for the kids, it fits in the size of your palm and is made with durable plastic.
Price - Approximately $20

Both available from www.purelyalpaca.com

Revised Fleece Score Cards

Showing & Judging Committee - Fleece Score Card Working Party
Written by Lyn Dickson

The Showing and Judging Committee has received a number of approaches from members and exhibitors over recent years drawing attention to anomalies in our fleece judging and scoring system.

Our Fleece guide and mentor, Cameron Holt has provided the framework for our fleece judging methodologies and scoring system since its inception almost 25 years ago. After discussion with Cameron following an initial paper he submitted on the feasibility of judging in Micron Groups, we formed a Fleece Score Card Working Party to review our fleece score cards and investigate possibilities for variation in the scoring system. The Working Party was chaired by Angela Preuss, working with Ben Schmaal, Lyn Dickson and Pauline Glasser.

Australian Alpaca Association

HUACAYA FLEECE JUDGING SCORE CARD

SHOW: _____

CLASS: _____ ENTRY NO: _____

STUD: _____

ALPACA NAME: _____

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	MAX	POINTS
Fineness / Annualised Weight	Average fibre diameter from multiple sites (as related to annualized weight from matrix)	30	
Handle	Softness, independent of fineness	5	
Uniformity of micron: *across entire fleece*	Across entire fleece (lacks variation)	10	
Uniformity of micron: *within staple*	Within staple (lack of / low presence of guard hair)	10	
Uniformity of length	Consistent length throughout	5	
Uniformity of colour	Lack of colour contamination and variation within staple and across fleece	5	
Character and style	Crimp definition and alignment within staple and throughout fleece	10	
Density of staple	Staple Density & Definition; alignment and solidity throughout fleece	5	
Brightness	Ability to reflect light	10	
Impurities	Lack of tenderness and impurities such as cotting, vegetable matter, dirt, seed, stain and tip damage etc.	5	
Effective skirting	Effective removal of coarse fibre and other contaminants from around fleece presented	5	
	TOTAL	**100**	

Australian Alpaca Association Ltd - July 2016

It had been 6 years since the previous score card review, (despite an estimated 20 - 25% increase in the quality of fleeces being presented for judging since then). In particular, there was increasing concern regarding inequities in weight/micron scores and the inability to reward finer fleeces in older age groups.

The Working Party's brief was to:

1. Explore/resolve the inconsistencies in the weight/micron relationship and scores.
2. Investigate the possibility of judging in Micron Bands.
3. Review all of the score categories on the fleece score card.
4. Refine the scorecard to ensure correlation with commercial realities.

PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATING CHANGES

Actual micron and weight data was collected from major fleece shows, (where testing occurs) from the past two years.

This data was transcribed into databases, then collated and analysed to remove outliers, determine maximum, minimum and average values for both annualised fleece weight and average fibre diameter.

The data from the tested fleece shows revealed the following trends:

• That some results from show to show were inconsistent

• That most fleeces scoring high weight scores were not receiving high scores for uniformity (fleece of differing quality left in to increase the weight score?)

• The current micron chart seemed to be around 4 microns too coarse for current averages.

• Fine fleeces (especially in older age groups) were being unfairly penalised due to assumptions within the current system that were now out of date. i.e. older fleeces were regularly presenting below the current minimum thresholds of 19 and 20 microns and therefore being penalised both in their fineness score as well as with a proportionally lower weight score based on the outdated data.

The Working Party investigated three possible methods to address the weight/micron dilemma.

1) Keep the scorecard similar, but change the micron and weight scales.

2) Judge in micron groupings, e.g. Ultrafine, Superfine, Fine, Medium etc.

3) Introduce a combined micron/weight score by using a micron/weight matrix chart.

During this investigation process, the Working Party tested each method on a large array of pre-judged fleeces. They also consulted other judges, breeders and experts in other fleece breed stock.

Australian Alpaca ASSOCIATION

SURI FLEECE JUDGING SCORE CARD

SHOW: _____

CLASS: _____ ENTRY NO: _____

STUD: _____

ALPACA NAME: _____

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	MAX	POINTS
Fineness / Annualised Weight	Average fibre diameter from multiple sites (as related to annualized weight from matrix)	30	
Handle	Softness, independent of fineness	5	
Uniformity of micron: *across entire fleece*	Across entire fleece (lacks variation)	10	
Uniformity of micron: *within lock*	Within lock (lack of / low presence of guard hair)	10	
Uniformity of length	Consistent length throughout	5	
Uniformity of colour	Lack of colour contamination and variation within lock and across fleece	5	
Style/Density of Lock	Well-defined lock formation and style, displaying solidity of lock.	10	
Lustre	Ability to reflect light	15	
Impurities	Lack of tenderness and impurities such as cotting, vegetable matter, dirt, seed, stain and tip damage etc.	5	
Effective skirting	Effective removal of coarse fibre and other contaminants from around fleece presented	5	
	TOTAL	100	

Australian Alpaca Association Ltd - July 2016

RESULTS FROM INVESTIGATION PROCESS

While the Working Party initially favoured a change to judging in Micron groupings, the practicalities surrounding the number of classes required to cover all the colours within each micron range and the need to have fleece testing for all shows led them to discard this method. Perhaps this concept may be re-visited in the future.

After exploring each possibility thoroughly and with considerable trial and error, the Working Party decided that introducing a combined weight/micron chart, was the best workable solution at this stage in our industry.

This method is based on the scale that has been developed and used successfully by the wool industry for showing merino fleeces, where Weight is benchmarked against Micron. It recognises that finer fleeces weigh less than coarser fleeces and promotes and rewards high quality and productivity rather than fineness alone.

The new matrix correlates the relationship between micron and weight, irrespective of age; which is very important for determining a superior, commercially producing alpaca. The points awarded from the new combined Micron/Annualised Weight Matrix will remain at 30 points (currently 15 for Fineness and 15 for Weight)

While acknowledging the commercial imperative of average fibre diameter in combination with fleece weight, the new Fleece Score Card also aims to retain a balance with all other positive commercial traits.

At the recent Judge Training Workshops in both Victoria and NSW, there was 100% acceptance of this new method to provide a combined score for annualised weight/micron. The concept has also received the seal of approval from Cameron Holt, who was an advocate for this model some years earlier.

There are also a few other changes to the scorecards that have been discussed and trialled with success at these recent Judge Workshops. These changes have been introduced to place more emphasis on uniformity and other commercial traits.

• Effective Skirting out of 5 points - is a new category that has been introduced to allow the judge to indicate to the exhibitor how well their fleece has been skirted and presented for showing. This is also extremely important for presentation of fleeces for sale on a commercial basis. Presence of Guard Hair around the edges of the fleece in areas that should have been skirted out, will be penalized in this new category.

• Uniformity of Micron is now divided into two categories:

1) Uniformity of Micron (across the entire fleece) out of 10 points (as for current score card)

2) Uniformity of Micron (within the staple/huacaya or within the lock/suri) out of 10 points (previously Lack of Guard Hair)

While Guard Hair across and around the fleece may still be penalised in Effective Skirting and Uniformity of Micron Across the Fleece, this is recognised as quite often being a 'management' issue in presentation of the fleece for judging. The Working Party believes that Lack of Guard Hair within the staple is highly significant, both commercially and in a breeding program, and is therefore included as an extra component to Uniformity of Micron out of 10 points.

The Working Party also formed the opinion that Lack of Guard Hair was just as important in Suris as it is in Huacayas and increased this to a point score of 10 (previously 5 points).

After consulting with many suri breeders, it was decided to combine the "Lock formation and Style" score with the "Density" score. Combining Style and Density does not discriminate on any particular lock style. Both of these traits are highly correlated.

• Style and Density of Lock, (suris only). These two categories have been combined into one described as 'Well-defined lock formation and style, displaying solidity of lock'. The combined score is out of 10 points (currently Style 10 and Density 5 points).

• Uniformity of Length now allows for a commercial variance of 20% in length (all staples or locks within plus or minus 10% of the average staple or lock length). The points have been altered to a total of 5 points (currently 10 points).

Australian Alpaca
ASSOCIATION

ALPACA FLEECE ~ MICRON / ANNUALISED WEIGHT MATRIX

POINTS	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Micron																														
<16	2.00	1.90	1.80	1.70	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.30	1.20	1.10	1.00	0.95	0.90	0.85	0.80	0.75	0.70	0.65	0.60	0.55	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.35	0.30	0.25	0.20	0.15	0.10	<0.1
16-16.9	2.25	2.15	2.05	1.95	1.80	1.70	1.60	1.45	1.35	1.25	1.15	1.10	1.00	0.95	0.90	0.85	0.80	0.75	0.65	0.60	0.55	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.35	0.30	0.25	0.15	0.10	<0.1
17-17.9	2.55	2.40	2.30	2.15	2.05	1.90	1.80	1.65	1.55	1.40	1.25	1.20	1.15	1.10	1.00	0.95	0.90	0.85	0.75	0.70	0.65	0.55	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.30	0.25	0.20	0.15	<0.15
18-18.9	2.85	2.70	2.55	2.45	2.30	2.15	2.00	1.85	1.70	1.55	1.40	1.35	1.30	1.20	1.15	1.05	1.00	0.95	0.85	0.80	0.70	0.65	0.55	0.50	0.45	0.35	0.30	0.20	0.15	<0.15
19-19.9	3.15	3.00	2.85	2.70	2.55	2.35	2.20	2.05	1.90	1.75	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.35	1.25	1.20	1.10	1.05	0.95	0.85	0.80	0.70	0.65	0.55	0.50	0.40	0.30	0.25	0.15	<0.15
20-20.9	3.50	3.30	3.15	2.95	2.80	2.60	2.45	2.25	2.10	1.90	1.75	1.65	1.55	1.50	1.40	1.30	1.20	1.15	1.05	0.95	0.85	0.80	0.72	0.60	0.55	0.45	0.35	0.25	0.20	<0.2
21-21.9	3.85	3.65	3.45	3.25	3.10	2.90	2.70	2.50	2.30	2.10	1.95	1.85	1.75	1.65	1.55	1.45	1.35	1.25	1.15	1.05	0.95	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.60	0.50	0.40	0.30	0.20	<0.2
22-22.9	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.55	3.35	3.15	2.95	2.75	2.55	2.30	2.10	2.00	1.90	1.80	1.70	1.60	1.50	1.35	1.25	1.15	1.05	0.95	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.55	0.40	0.30	0.20	<0.2
23-23.9	4.50	4.30	4.05	3.90	3.65	3.40	3.20	3.00	2.75	2.55	2.30	2.20	2.05	1.95	1.85	1.70	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.25	1.15	1.05	0.90	0.80	0.70	0.60	0.45	0.35	0.25	<0.25
24-24.9	4.70	4.45	4.25	4.10	3.90	3.65	3.45	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.50	2.35	2.25	2.10	2.00	1.85	1.75	1.60	1.50	1.35	1.25	1.10	1.00	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.50	0.40	0.25	<0.25
25-25.9	4.80	4.55	4.35	4.20	4.05	3.80	3.60	3.40	3.20	2.90	2.65	2.50	2.40	2.25	2.10	2.00	1.85	1.70	1.60	1.45	1.35	1.20	1.05	0.95	0.80	0.70	0.55	0.45	0.30	<0.3
26+	4.90	4.65	4.45	4.30	4.15	3.90	3.75	3.55	3.30	3.00	2.75	2.60	1.45	2.35	2.20	2.05	1.90	1.80	1.65	1.50	1.40	1.25	1.10	1.00	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.50	0.30	<0.3
WEIGHT																														

Australian Alpaca Association Ltd – August 2016

For the Huacaya Score Card the categories of Handle, Uniformity of Colour, Density of Staple, Character and Style, Brightness, and Impurities all remain the same.

For the Suri Score Card the categories of Handle, Uniformity of Colour, Lustre and Impurities all remain the same.

GENERAL FLEECE OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM CHANGES

• The final placings were more indicative of commercial quality.

• The most highly developed fleeces were put on a much more level playing field.

• The uniformity scores had extra significance and therefore became much more a determining factor in differentiating fleeces.

• More emphasis on lack of guard hair.

The modifications to the fleece score cards have taken a lot of time and research plus trial and error. It would be expected that at the current rate of improvement, the matrix will need readjustment in around 5 - 6 years to ensure that it stays ahead of our best fleeces.

The revised Fleece Score Cards will be introduced in January 2017, with appropriate Showing Rule changes also effective from that date. A review will take place after two years of use. New master sheets and fleece steward paperwork will be made available on the AAA website for convenors and stewards prior to the first fleece shows for 2017.

Addressing Inconsistency - in Fleece Score Cards

During the Judge Workshops, concerns about inconsistencies in fleece score cards from show to show were addressed. This focus will continue in ongoing assessments. While every effort is made to ensure our judges are on the same page, it is important for exhibitors to note that there are some obvious reasons why differences may occur from show to show:

- Fleeces have a limited showing "life" and the fleece qualities may change from show to show if the fleece has become tired and scrunched up in a bag for too long.

- The judge has a limited amount of time to assess a fleece in a show, so it may be that some negative traits (second cuts, tenderness, colour variation, hairy edges) in the fleece presented are missed or hidden from view in one show compared to another, depending on how the fleece is opened up and the space available in which to lay it out.

- Lighting – different or inferior lighting - Fleece judging often occurs in 'out of the way' places, sometimes in old showground sheds and less than ideal conditions. Sufficient good lighting is very important. A coloured marquee backdrop (e.g. blue) from one show to another can make a big difference to how a fleece is 'seen' by the judge.

- Exhibitors sometimes re-skirt a fleece between shows which may result in different marks for the traits assessed and/or differing weight scores

- Variations within the normal range of points - A trait such as Brightness in a huacaya fleece out of a total of 10 has a range of points to cover from Good to Very Good, Average to Above Average and Poor to Very Poor. Points for a fleece that is assessed at Good to Very Good can fall anywhere between 7 and 10, depending on how an individual judge assesses it on the day of the show; 8 to 10 being excellent to superior, 7 to 7.5 points still being Very Good. It's human nature for individuals to vary in their assessment but still mark correctly within the normal range. So if this trait is classed as Very Good by two different judges at two different shows, it can still fall into the range of 7 - 10, producing different results. Of far more importance is the fact that each judge remains consistent with assessments for each fleece within the show on that particular day.

- Points for Fineness are awarded based on an average of samples (staples or locks) taken from across the fleece. A fleece that varies a lot in micron may have varying micron assessments made from show to show depending on just where the representative staples or locks are taken.

- Despite calibration, varying weight scores can occur from one show to another, as many different types of scales are used by stewards.

Whats New?

New colours all round…

LEFT: 4 new colours are now available in the Alpaca Ultimate 8 Ply 100% Australian Alpaca yarns.

The colours are (clockwise from top left) Acacia Yellow, Bush Rock, Uluru and Hayman Blue. All are available from our online shop at www.australianalpacayarn.com.au.

ABOVE Adagio Mills Rainbow beanie, showcasing the beauty of the natural alpaca colourway.

www.adagiomills.com.au

LEFT: Accessorise your beautiful female alpacas with these attractive Pink Halters and leads.

Keeping with the quality of the Zephyr brand these halters are made to last and look great! (other colours available)

available now from www.alpacadynamics.com.au

How You Catch your Alpaca -

Might Just be the Most Important thing you do

By Marty McGee-Bennet - Cameliddynamics

If you think the way you catch your alpaca is inconsequential - that catching is only a step towards accomplishing the really important things like trimming toenails or halter training - you might be mistaken. How you approach and catch your alpaca sets the tone and stage for everything that happens after. Imagine going to the dentist. You are sitting in the waiting room with your magazine and suddenly two burly guys grab you by the arms, drag you down the hall and physically put you into the dentist chair. I would wager that everything from that point forward would be heavily influenced by that experience.

Alpacas speak to us in the only way they can with their body and behaviour. If your alpaca evades you when you approach, it is evidence of fear. The more determined and dramatic the evasion the greater the degree of fear. Animals that move into a corner but hold their breath, freeze and put their ears back are giving in to the inevitable but in my opinion are not comfortable with their human. These catching scenarios say to me, that there is work to be done. You must "systematically desensitise" the alpaca to your approach.

What exactly is "systematic desensitisation"? It is a scientific term and it has a very specific definition that is not open to interpretation. Systematic Desensitisation is the introduction of a stimulus in the smallest possible increment that the animal can accept without fear, building gradually to the full stimulus. In common usage it is frequently misused by trainers and confused with another scientific term "flooding." Back when I wrote my book, "The Camelid Companion" and before I fully understood the science, I heard other trainers describing what they did as "desensitisation." Based on what I observed I became adamant that I was NOT doing that! In fact these trainers were "flooding". Flooding is presenting the ENTIRE stimulus, all at once and persisting until the animal stops resisting. Holding an animal still and putting a halter on even if it is done slowly, picking up a foot and holding it until the animal stops fighting, the process of working with newborns by holding them down and applying various stimulus full strength are all examples of flooding.

Trapping an animal in a corner, grabbing it by the neck and holding on until the animal has given up is "flooding" with respect to approaching and catching. Flooding works to a degree or it wouldn't be as common as it is in the animal training world. The problem with flooding is that it comes with a significant price-tag. Flooding damages trust, and it can lead to aggression and learned helplessness. Learned helplessness occurs when the animal learns that it cannot control the outcome of an unpleasant stimuli and therefore does not take action to avoid the stimulus in the future, even if it is escapable. Perhaps the biggest problem with flooding is that there is no increase in the rate of learning.

When you use a corner to catch an alpaca it may save time initially but it will make every other aspect of handling and training more difficult. If an animal is afraid of your proximity it is difficult to address and reduce the fear of anything else - there is no fear free place to begin. Using systematic desensitisation for other aspects of handling then becomes very difficult. If your animal doesn't trust the way you approach and catch him, doing something more frightening like trimming toenails is not going to be possible without restraint and force.

This is a very good set up with a smaller catch pen adjacent to a larger holding pen.

Approaching alpacas in the catch pen

How do you desensitise an animal to your approach? You approach this task systematically and break the process of accepting YOU into manageable increments. The most important aspect of desensitisation is that you must offer the animal a choice about whether or not to accept a new stimulus. Working in a catch pen is the secret. The catch pen allows you to offer the animal a choice to move away but not too far away. I have found over the years that a 2.7m x 2.7m space adjacent to a larger area that is about four times that large is the ideal arrangement. (Photo 1) The idea is to herd the animals into the holding area and from there into the catch pen. I always work with two to three animals in the pen but focus only on the target animal. The other animals are there to provide a feeling of safety in numbers.

Once I enter the pen my next task is to say clearly and specifically with my actions that I will give the animal an escape route. The important thing is that the animal understands that I am giving him the opportunity to escape, that he is not making his escape. I have found that the quickest success comes by consistently offering an escape route to my left (counter clockwise). (Photo 2) In this way the animal associates the ability to move away from me as something I am offering and he can count on it. This is a much different experience than moving out of the way allowing an animal to find his own path to safety. I maintain the escape route by continually moving in a way that allows the animal to move forward into the escape route that I provide. Ironically, once an animal understands that he is free to move away if he feels the need he is less inclined to move.

Once I determine that the animal understands he can move away I use a wand with a special clip on the end to bring a rope around the neck. Once the both ends of the rope are in my hand I disconnect the wand from the rope. The purpose of the rope is NOT to hold the animal still. I do my very best to keep all tension out of the rope as I work. The rope is long enough that once it is around the neck the animal can still move around freely and get well away from me within the confines of the pen. (Photos 3-4)

I continue to work standing in a place behind the eye that allows the animal to move into the escape route I offer. Now the task is to move incrementally closer to the animal. I use a light contact with the rope to help teach the animal to remain in balance. (photo 5) I move toward the animal, if the animal shifts his balance away from me, I see it on the animal's body and feel a bit of tension in the rope. This is my cue to back up and take the pressure off. The process is like a conversations wherein I ask by moving closer "Do you feel safe with my presence?" If the animal doesn't offer to move, the answer is "Yes". If he indicates he wants to move the answer is "No" and I back away and make the next approach a bit easier by not coming as close. The fact that I move away is exactly what produces the confidence for the animal to answer "Yes" the next time I move towards him. The process of incrementally introducing my presence desensitises the animal to my approach.

This process takes many words to explain and some time to read and understand but the actual process goes very quickly. I can often desensitise an animal to my approach in just a few minutes after many years of being chased and grabbed. The process may need to be repeated a few times and under new conditions but it saves more time than it takes.

Using a corner for catching teaches the animal that when you or any human approaches it means to move away from you until there is no more room to move away, in other words into a corner. You are actually creating a conditioned response. When you are in a show ring the same thing happens as the judge and ring steward approach, only in this context you don't want the animal to move AND there is no corner. When you stop him from moving away by putting your arm around his neck, quite often the result is bucking or rearing and in the show ring, without a corner, you are at a big disadvantage. The more restraint we apply the more the animal fights and from the animal's perspective the more dangerous the show ring becomes. This is only one example of why it is worth going back through this process if you skipped it during your initial training.

Almost every aspect of alpaca management begins with catching the animal. Desensitise your animals to your approach and you will save time and build a better more satisfying relationship with your animals.

The handler brings the rope from the back to the front using the wand.

The handler uses the wand to bring the rope back to her, making sure to stay an arm's length or more away from the alpaca the entire time.

With a light connection through the rope the handler can help the animal remain in balance and accept an approach.

Using the rope as a balancing tool, the handler makes a small approach. If the alpaca remains calm and in balance it will be followed by a closer approach the next time.

Victorian Alpaca Colourbration

Australias Premier Colour Show

Colourbration 2016 drew unprecedented financial support from our Rockstars, Roadies and Groupies, which allowed us to put on a world class event!

With over 500 alpacas and 200 fleeces entered, breeders voted with their feet and Australia's original colour show also became Australia's biggest alpaca show in 2016.

Thanks to our hardworking team including Halter Judges Natasha Clark and Molly Gardner, Chief Steward John Crutch, Fleece Judge Lyn Dickson, Fleece Steward Jenn Errey and a host of awesome volunteers, this huge event ran like clockwork.

Events we were all held onsite in the huge Bendigo Regional Exhibition Centre and were very well attended. The City of Greater Bendigo Australian Alpaca Fashion Fiesta was opened by the mayor Cr Rod Fyffe. Dr Kylie Munyard's Alpaca Colour Genetics Workshop answered some of our questions and raised plenty more and then the Argentinian BBQ in 'The Latin Quarter' delivered lots of meat...and some very questionable dancing.

In summary I think we achieved our goals for 2016.

ENGAGE .. INSPIRE .. CONNECT .. AND HAVE FUN!!!

Photos, results, slides from Dr Kylie Munyard's presentation and lots more are now available to download from the Colourbration website

WWW.COLOURBRATION.COM.AU

VISTA DEL SUD ALPACAS

BREEDING PERFECTION millpaca

NEO SUMMERHILL ALPACAS
Spot the Difference

ILLAWARRA PRIME ALPACA

Canchones
fine black alpaca

Bendigo

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

Colourbration 2016 halter class judging commenced with the Grey Suri Show on Friday morning. Exhibitors wore their 'I will wear red to help fight cancer' shirts with pride, raising awareness and funds for the Victorian Cancer Council, and creating a bright friendly atmosphere for the entire show.

The City of Greater Bendigo Australian Alpaca Fashion Fiesta was held on Friday night. 'The Alpaca Yarn Lady' Robyn Betts organised a spectacular parade featuring garments designed by Lorena Laing and Wendy Voon and made from Australian Alpaca.
Exhibitors and a large number of other breeders attended the Alpaca Colour Genetics workshop on Saturday evening and are pictured below intently focusing on the presentation by Dr Kylie Munyard, or was it their gourmet snack boxes?

The huge number of fleeces were judged by Lyn Dickson in the days prior to the show and then displayed 'front and centre' to allow breeders and members of the public to admire the high quality of entries, and hopefully be inspired to grow or work with the wonderful fibre produced by Australian alpacas.

The introduction of Judge's choice awards at the conclusion of all the individual colour shows resulted in line-ups of spectacular huacaya and suris. Judges Natasha Clark and Molly Gardner spoke passionately and eloquently about each supreme winner as they moved down the lines with the crowd intently focused on 'fleece-cam' on the big screen. Surilana Macusani Maddox and Softfoot Shamarra Sariffe MD ET were awarded the magnificent trophies.

Judges Workshop

By Paul Haslin - Showing & Judging Committee Chair

Back in December 2014 the Showing & Judging Committee gathered for a face to face weekend to plan ongoing strategies for the care of the portfolio into the future.

One of the major initiatives to come from that meeting was a plan to develop some form of ongoing training and skills maintenance for alpaca judges in Australia. We are confident that our trainee judge selection and apprentice training is working well and we see some of the graduates of that system performing admirably in the show rings now.

Our concern was to ensure that skills are maintained and further developed as judges move through their years of service. We have a panel of judges who are equal to the best in the world but, until now, we have lacked an ongoing system of review to ensure that all judges work to a consistent standard.

So, the plan was developed to bring judges together once a year to workshop some aspect of the craft as well as provide the opportunity for judges to network and to raise matters for discussion in a forum environment.

It took some time and considerable effort to get the funding and organisation in place but finally the first Skills Maintenance Workshops for Judges came to fruition.

We decided to hold two workshops, one in Victoria and one in NSW, to give the attendees options on timing and venue. Given the busy timetable of shows and other activities through most of the year we opted to freeze our toes off in alpaca barns in mid-winter!
The subject matter for this year's workshops was Fleece Judging.

Back at the S&JC meeting 18 months ago we recognized that fleece judging was an area of concern to our members, as far as consistency was concerned. I think we have all seen examples of a fleece being awarded markedly different scores at shows very close together.

Whilst we recognize there are many factors that can cause such variations we considered that this would be a good opportunity to revise and hone fleece judging methods and skills.

Keeping in mind that we wanted this to be a workshop rather than a lecturing environment we wanted the participants to trade knowledge and techniques for the benefit of all. Over the course of the weekend the judges had the opportunity to benchmark their scoring against the group during solo and group judging exercises. These gatherings were the ideal time to introduce the judges to the new fleece scorecard concepts that have been developed by a

very industrious and forward thinking working party. The main objective of this scorecard update is to address the challenge that presently exists in rewarding micron and weight characteristics. (For full details of this project see separate article). As the groups worked their way through scoring fleeces with the proposed new scorecard much discussion ensued, providing the working party with valuable feedback to fine tune the scoring system.

The other very important part of the weekend was the judge forum discussion time. This gave the judges and apprentices the chance to bring forward some of their frustrations and suggestions covering a wide range of showing matters. Lively debate resulted from the very active participation of all, with newer judges and apprentices taking the opportunity to challenge the status quo in a number of areas. Issues debated here were documented and will be examined by the S&JC in preparation for recommending procedural and rule changes where appropriate.

Of course, an army of judges marches on its stomach and after long days in cold sheds dinner was an important time to warm up, relax and chat. This vital element was provided for at the gorgeous home of Carolen Fisher in Victoria, accompanied by the tasting of some fine red wines from her vineyard whilst in NSW dinner was enjoyed with the welcoming fireplace and hospitality of the local pub.

Money is always tight for these events and our costs were contained wherever possible. We are indebted to Millduck and Pacofino for generously opening their farm facilities to us and supplying many of our needs, ensuring that we were kept as warm and comfortable as possible for the time of the year. Prue Walduck twisted arms throughout her neighbourhood to ensure that everyone had a comfortable bed at a bargain basement price while Paul Cramley captured the on-line auction market for the required trestle tables and other equipment at no cost to the committee.

Catering at each venue was supplied at amazingly low cost by Denise Crowhurst in Victoria and Pat Hawkins in NSW. Many of the judges and the administration team travelled at their own expense, further containing the costs.

The enthusiastic participation of all will ensure that this was the first of what will become an annual gathering to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the skill level of our judging team.

Planning is already underway for the 2017 workshop.

2016 Australian ALPACA National Show & Sale

By Karen Davies - green green grass communications

The Australian Alpaca Association National Show sees an industry hot to trot, as robust bloodlines emerge supreme from a solid commercial field.

There was fast paced competition in the ring at the 2016 Australian Alpaca Association National Show & Sale recently at Adelaide trotting raceway venue Globe Derby Park. Premium Australian alpaca Surilana Bella Vista and Ambersun Que Sera secured well-earned titles as Australian Supreme Suri & Australian Supreme Huacaya, adding to the established successes for their accomplished studs.

Competition Judge Peter Kennedy, who has presided over AAA competitions for more than ten years, said it was impressive to see the 441 strong field presenting elite qualities of a particularly enduring nature in animals this year. The 2016 entrants showed how our industry is maturing in its commercial strength indicators. Australia is producing the kind of reliable quality that will set up the global industry for its next steps in supplying the high volumes of consistent, elite alpaca fibre now in demand by global textile industries.

International buyers from several nations were again present, including a number from the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium,the Netherlands and New Zealand. Trading was lively throughout the weekend, and the top price paid at the Australian Alpaca Breeders Choice Auction was $46,000 for EP Cambridge Revenant.

The Australian Champion Junior Huacaya Male of the day was sold to a consortium of breeders including Ashbourne Alpacas, Buckland Valley Alpacas,and Malakai Alpacas of Victoria.

AAA National President Ms Malt said of Australia's contribution to the global alpaca industry as it moves further into commercial fibre production, "we couldn't be more pleased with this year's overall quality livestock outcomes. They demonstrate the breadth and depth of the Australian alpaca industry's expertise as it continues to consolidate, creating dynasties of bloodlines for future success."

Junior Judge Winner - Hannah Doyle

From the Halter Show Judges' Perspective
By Lyn Dickson/Peter Kennedy

The quality of alpacas on show at this year's National Show was extremely high. Damp conditions had adversely affected some of the finer fleeces, following extreme rainfall events in the previous weeks in the southern states of Australia and this was evident in quite a number of classes. Despite this, there was quality lineup after quality lineup presented to us, making for some very close scrutiny to ensure careful and correct decision making.

It was particularly gratifying to see the advanced quality coming through in all of the colours presented for judging in both suri and huacaya, even though the final line of huacaya champions was predominantly white and light fawn.

The Supreme Champion Suri and Supreme Champion Huacaya were both white females, the suri winning the Champion Intermediate Female award and the huacaya coming through as the Champion Senior Female; both were of exceptional quality.

Left - Supreme Huacaya - Ambersun Que Sera
Right - Supreme Suri - Surilana Bella Vista

The Supreme Champion Huacaya won the title from a very competitive array of Champions, male and female, with a number of other superior alpacas also in close contention.

The Supreme Champion Suri was a standout in her field.

We both agreed that the halter show provided a magnificent display of stud stock (around 440 exhibits) over three solid days of judging and we were honoured to have the opportunity to judge the National Show on this occasion.

From the Fleece Judge
By Natasha Clarke

This year I had the pleasure of judging the fleeces at the 2016 AAA National show. It was a busy 3 days of judging but most enjoyable to see the quality of fleeces presented.

In the suri fleece section there were some high quality fleeces that were displaying the most important traits we are looking for in suri.. Those traits are lustre, fineness & handle, lack of guard hair, density and lock structure.

I was very pleased with all the winners including the best colours but the Supreme suri fleece just had that edge combining all the positive traits in the one fleece.

With the huacaya fleeces I was extremely impressed with the depth of quality running through all the classes. Most of the fleeces that were being presented for judging, had fine microns with some excellent weights, consistent character & style throughout the fleeces, and some were better than others in the lack of guard hair. Most were skirted well which was very pleasing.

The winning fleeces and the best colours were of a high standard but I couldn't go past the Supreme huacaya fleece. This fleece came out of the 60+ month white class and was still displaying great fineness & handle, excellent character and style, brightness, lack of guard hair and had a good weight with all the positives we look for in fleeces.

For the most valuable commercial huacaya fleece there were not a huge number of entries but what was exhibited was of a very high quality and represented the commercial fleece class well. The fleeces ranged from different weights and microns but the winning fleece had a heavy weight with a fine micron that was well presented and when calculated was the highest priced fleece.

I would like to thank the hard working fleece team for their professionalism and efforts. If theses fleeces are an indicator of what alpaca breeders can produce Australia has a bright future ahead.

Most Commercial Fleece - Kurraya Legends Challenge - Faversham Alpacas

Art/Craft/Photography
By Convenor Sarah Wheeler

As usual the Art, Craft and Photography section of the show was up to its usual high standard. It is always a pleasure to convene this part of the show and see just how talented those are that enter.

Both the judges enjoyed the challenge of their job and would have liked to have seen more entries. We received only about 50% of the exhibits entered which was rather disappointing. Congratulations go to Cynthia Hall for most successful craft exhibitor and Anne Marie Harwood for supreme champion craft exhibit.

The winning artwork came from Sharon Dawson, and winning photographer was Mel Semmler. A special mention needs to be made of Bethan Hartill who received champion junior craft exhibit, champion junior art and champion junior photograph.

Champion Senior Photograph

Champion Knit/crochet exhibit

Champion Junior Photograph

Matched Matings

by Steve Marshall - Stansbury Alpacas.

Introduction

Most alpaca breeders have experienced the excitement and feeling of accomplishment when they inspect a new born cria and find it has exceeded all expectations. As a cria of a week old it displayed the most amazing fine, lustrous wool that was so crimpy it looked like tiny knots. As it grew out the expectation of this young alpaca was that it would be a show winner. However, for better or worse, some characteristics change as the alpaca grows up. It might have grown not quite enough, or too tall. It might have extremely fine wool but not the crimp or character in the staple expected. With great expectations, what was considered the perfect alpaca at a week old now starts to look a little compromised. Not measuring up in one small area or a relatively minor fault is often the difference between a stud male and a wether. If it is a female, how should the breeder select a suitable stud male to address any deficiency she exhibits?

There are a number of different breeding systems that could be considered, however, in this article I intend to explore the concepts of both positive assortative and negative assortative mating.

Negative Assortative Mating

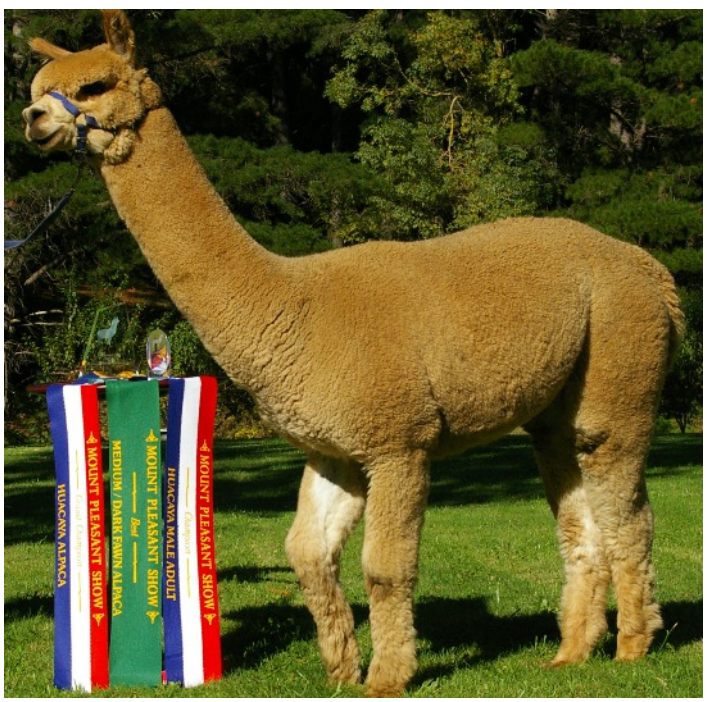
Often named Corrective Mating this system is commonly seen in the alpaca industry. Breeders identify the strengths and deficiencies of each particular female and try to match her to a male that is outstanding in the area that the female is deficient. The most common examples are mating a female that lacks fine fleece to an extremely fine fleeced male or perhaps a female that has a lightweight open fleece to a stud male which has outstanding fleece density. Sometimes breeders will compromise on other selection criteria so long as the male is outstanding for the trait or characteristic where the female exhibits a deficiency. In this case the breeder is hoping to produce an offspring that is of approximately half of the genetic merit of the female and male combined. In theory it all sounds fine, however, in practice it can go dramatically wrong.

Sometimes the offspring will inherit the worst traits from each parent such as the coarser micron and the less dense fleece. One major problem with negative assortative mating is that it leads to greater genetic variation and less consistency within a herd. This then results in less predictability and alpacas that are less likely to breed true to type. Any individually matched mating is to some degree a gamble, however later I will explain how to stack the odds in your favor with alpacas that are prepotent for selected traits.

Positive Assortative Mating

Breeding like to like is Positive Assortative Mating and will lead to more uniformity and consistency within a herd. Normally this would involve mating the best to the best within a specific group. This approach is often used in conjunction with linebreeding where the aim is to narrow the genetic diversity that can cause so much variation in the appearance of an alpaca.

Owners of elite stud males commanding high service fees often suggest to the owners of an elite female that it should be mated to their male if expecting continued improvement in the next generation. While this is often true, the measure of these elite males quality is sometimes overestimated. This is because the high proportion of superior progeny produced is often due to many breeders around the country only using their elite females for outside mating with the so called elite stud male. Mating the best with the best should produce elite quality offspring which are then paraded through the show ring. Of course this perpetuates the belief that the stud males with high service fees are of elite quality. If service fee price is not necessarily a guide to the quality of a stud male then how does one determine the best within a herd? Sorting and ranking alpacas is a separate issue and it is not the purpose of this article to analyse that now. However, it may involve using EBV's Estimated Breeding Values, the Australian Alpaca Association AGE program or a similar evaluation system. Whatever the system used it should be reliable and consistent to be of value.



Stansbury's H4 Alexander - Supreme Champion 2014 Mt Pleasant Show with 4 generations of linebreeding is highly likely to be prepotent for exhibited traits.

Prepotency

In both Negative and Positive Assortative Mating Systems it is important to consider the level of prepotency each parent has for identified traits. Through the assessment of their progeny, some stud males have been identified as having great impact in adding crimp, lowering micron or adding fleece weight.

They would therefore be considered prepotent for one or more of the traits which they influence greatly. In the past it has been difficult to assess a female's prepotency for selected traits due to the low number of progeny. However, with embryo transfer technology available, it is now possible and indeed important to accurately identify which traits if any a female is also prepotent for. Possibly the easiest way to achieve this is through the Australian AGE program, however there are also more sophisticated systems which potentially provide a greater level of accuracy if the collection and integrity of data is of a high standard.

Prepotency for exhibited traits is often considered stronger for alpacas that have some degree of linebreeding. Second and third generation alpacas from a linebreeding program should more consistently breed true to type and can be of great benefit in achieving consistency within a herd. It is taking a little of the gamble out of a matched mating and staking the odds in your favor. If using a stud male with specific traits for corrective mating the use of a line bred male increases the odds of success due to the higher level of prepotency.

Using a scientific approach to selection for mating increases the level of reliability and consistency. Pedigree does matter and using the AAA, IAR database for a quick check back through the pedigrees of potential stud males will sometimes enable a breeder to find and select a highly prepotent alpaca to make a difference in their breeding program.

Steve is the author of many articles on alpacas and was a speaker on line breeding at the 2006 AAA Conference. They commenced breeding alpacas in 1997. Expanded to a larger property in 2004 He and his wife run a small herd of high quality white and light fawn alpacas in South Australia.

Correction

In Issue 80 of Alpacas Australia on page 28 in the article entitled 'Canberra Royal' the caption for the Supreme Huacaya should have read:

Supreme Huacaya - Alpha Centauri Kittery - Alpha Centauri.

We apologise for any inconvenience this error may have caused.

Consistent Quality Alpacas

by Steve Marshall - Stansbury Alpacas.

Most alpaca breeders have experienced at some stage mating two alpacas to produce an outstanding offspring. Having achieved a good result the first time it seems reasonable to expect the same again. Some breeders have gone as far as to duplicate the combination multiple times through embryo transfer. However, due to a random combination of genes the second attempt was disappointing with a less than satisfactory result. Observing inconsistent results from various breeders led me to focus on developing a strain or line of quality alpacas that breed true to type as one of my foundational breeding objectives.

At this stage, I should make it clear that I am not a geneticist. Nor do I have any formal qualifications in animal breeding. I am simply an alpaca breeder with a desire to breed quality alpacas consistently. My interest in linebreeding stemmed from observations of Australian sheep and cattle studs with paddocks full of livestock that looked identical. I couldn't help but be impressed with the consistency of the livestock they breed. Upon closer inspection I found that each stud breeder had developed a clearly identifiable trait, type or strain within their breed. These breeders developed bloodlines that are respected within their industry and genetics that are sought after by others. My goal was to achieve this for Stansbury Alpacas. My wife Joanne raised the concept of linebreeding presenting me with examples. It wasn't too long before I was hooked, researching and reading everything I could find on linebreeding. I found information on linebreeding everything from mice to dogs, horses, cattle, sheep, alpacas and even cheetahs. Examples of inbreeding and linebreeding various animals such as dogs, cattle, goats, sheep and horses are able to provide us with the benefit of years of experience and knowledge that we can apply to alpaca breeding. At this stage, it is worth remembering that linebreeding is not an exact science. Total control is not obtainable however predictability may be greatly increased through a scientific approach and a sound breeding plan.

Linebreeding - what is it?

By definition, linebreeding is a concentration of the genes of a specific ancestor or ancestors through their appearance multiple times in a pedigree. In essence it usually involves choosing a specific target ancestor and selectively breeding so that the target ancestor appears multiple times in a pedigree. Inbreeding can be similar but involves the breeding of extremely close relatives. Some would argue that linebreeding is inbreeding, but to a lesser extent. However, I think it is important to recognize the difference because some of the problems I will highlight later are clearly associated with inbreeding but not linebreeding. Keeping track of the inbreeding coefficient and maintaining a coefficient of 12.5% or less is a safe and simple way to check that you are linebreeding and not inbreeding. With multiple generations of linebreeding you may approach 20% but it is wise to achieve no more than a 12.5% gain in any one generation.

Examples of linebreeding combinations

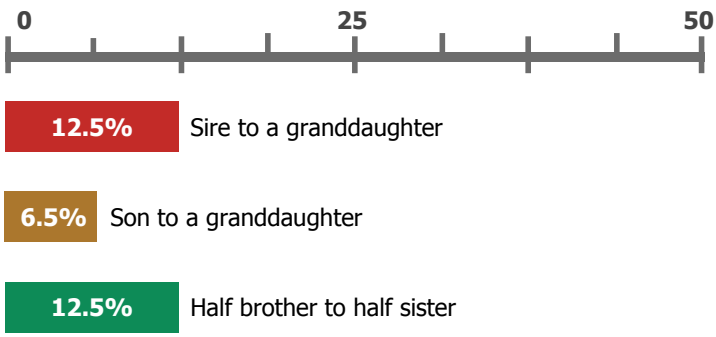
Sire to a granddaughter would achieve a 12.5% inbreeding coefficient.

This is particularly useful to breeders that own a stud male of exceptional quality that they wish to use as a target ancestor to fix certain traits in their herd.

Son to a granddaughter would achieve a 6.25% inbreeding coefficient.

Half brother to half sister would be a 12.5% inbreeding coefficient. These last two examples may be achieved without having access to the target ancestor. Any breeder can identify a particular target ancestor that they don't necessarily have access to and line breed to it. You can even linebreed to an alpaca that is dead or in another country so long as you have access to a significant number of progeny.

Inbreeding Coefficient

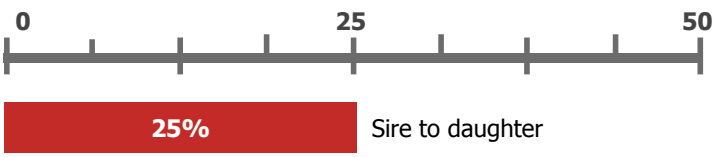


Examples of inbreeding combinations

Sire to daughter achieving a 25% inbreeding coefficient.
Full brother to full sister would also achieve 25% inbreeding coefficient.

I do not recommend inbreeding. As you can see the percentage inbreeding coefficient rises very quickly if mating very close relatives and is likely to reveal severe faults with little warning that you are developing an unsustainable line or strain. Keeping track of pedigrees, monitoring levels of inbreeding and various traits is extremely important and there is a variety of software available to achieve this. An understanding of Wright's Inbreeding Coefficient and Galton's Law of Ancestral Hereditary is also very useful in making decisions about any breeding program.

Inbreeding Coefficient



Why linebreed? The advantages:

The most obvious reason is to develop consistency and uniformity within a herd. By selecting and breeding the best progeny of a specific target ancestor it is possible to set or fix those desired traits and characteristics within a herd. Linebreeding causes an increase in the proportion of like genes and therefore increased uniformity. In fact with linebreeding you are increasing homozygosity for various selected characteristics.

As homozygosity for various traits increases through linebreeding a breeder is able to more accurately and reliably predict what the offspring will look like. A carefully considered breeding plan can be a wise investment on what genetic material is passed on to the next generation.

Selective linebreeding can reduce the odds in your favour and assist you in achieving your breeding objectives with more reliability. When a pedigree develops with the target ancestor appearing multiple times, homozygosity for desired traits increase and the phenotype more closely matches the genotype. That is, the physical appearance of the alpaca more closely matches the genetic make up. This is a very important factor that can easily be underestimated. Environment can play a huge part in the physical appearance that is the phenotype, of an alpaca. I have heard of figures estimating up to 60 or 70% being environmental influence. It's a little scary to consider investing a lot of money on a particular alpaca based on its appearance alone. Does it have the genetic background to have the consistency to back up its appearance? Was it a biological fluke due to a random combination of genes that can't be repeated? If used as a stud male will it pass on the desired visible traits or is it a Pandora's Box with the genetic diversity to produce virtually anything?

A carefully planned linebreeding program can stack the odds in your favour with alpacas that have a physical appearance more closely matching their genetic make up or genotype.

If it isn't enough to have alpacas that look like they are meant to according to their pedigree, then consider prepotency. Some stud males of exceptional quality are prepotent for their exhibited, desired traits such as fleece type and quality, while others are not. If prepotent they are likely to pass on the desired characteristics to their progeny. Having a look at the show results for the progeny of a particular stud male can provide you with some trends. However, this can easily provide a distorted picture due to differing levels of show participation by various breeders. Prepotency for desired traits is an important selection criteria when considering any stud male.

As a linebreeding program progresses and the target ancestor appears multiple times in a pedigree an alpaca is more likely to carry genes for selected traits in a homozygous form. That is pairs of genes that are the same for selected traits. Through linebreeding we have the ability to reduce the variety of genes, therefore increasing an alpaca's prepotency for selected traits. This is one of the factors that really swayed me towards linebreeding.

Linebreeding has provided me with the ability to produce alpacas that are more likely to exhibit and pass on the characteristics that are important to my breeding goals. Increasing prepotency for selected, desired traits will give a breeder the ability and confidence to more accurately and reliably predict the phenotype, physical appearance of future generations.

Inbreeding problems and disadvantages

The gains of consistency and uniformity within a herd due to linebreeding are because of a reduction in the variety of genes. As the variation within the gene pool of a herd becomes smaller, hybrid vigour is reduced and therefore a corresponding increase of inbreeding depression occurs. A carefully planned linebreeding program can to a large extent avoid the effects of inbreeding depression through wise selection. However, mating of extremely close relatives, that is inbreeding, will lead to inbreeding depression and reduce hybrid vigour within a few generations.

Inbreeding depression is linked to reduced resistance to disease and infection, lack of fertility, increased mortality rates and the appearance of genetic faults. Outcrossing is a very simple method of increasing hybrid vigour and maintaining robust, healthy alpacas which I will discuss a little later.

An alpaca carries 37 chromosome pairs inheriting 37 from the dam and 37 from the sire. If the two genes an alpaca carries for a particular trait or fault on a chromosome pair are the same it is said to be homozygous for that trait or fault and will pass on this genetic information to its progeny. Defective genes responsible for the appearance of genetic faults are usually recessive and masked by a dominant counterpart. The practice of linebreeding does not create defective genes responsible for a particular fault any more than mating two highly unrelated alpacas. Linebreeding and inbreeding does increase the likelihood that recessive genes responsible for a particular fault will be uncovered due to increased homozygosity and the reduction of gene combinations. If both parents pass on a recessive gene for a defect then the offspring will exhibit the defect.

Selection and culling

Selection has a major role to play in any breeding program and has great influence in future generations. It is usually not appropriate to choose a stud male for instance based on a superb fleece or fantastic conformation or a good looking head, in isolation to other traits. It is easy to be influenced by the success of currents fads, but to achieve uniformity within a herd a breeder must stick to breeding objectives and stringent selection criteria. Culling works hand in hand with selection in a breeding program and is equally important. Culling may be achieved through, not breeding from particular alpacas, using females that exhibit undesirable traits as recipients for embryo transfer recipients, castrating males that do not match breeding objectives, etc, etc. A breeder who is willing to remove animals from a breeding program that do not match the breeding objective will achieve whole herd genetic gain quickly.

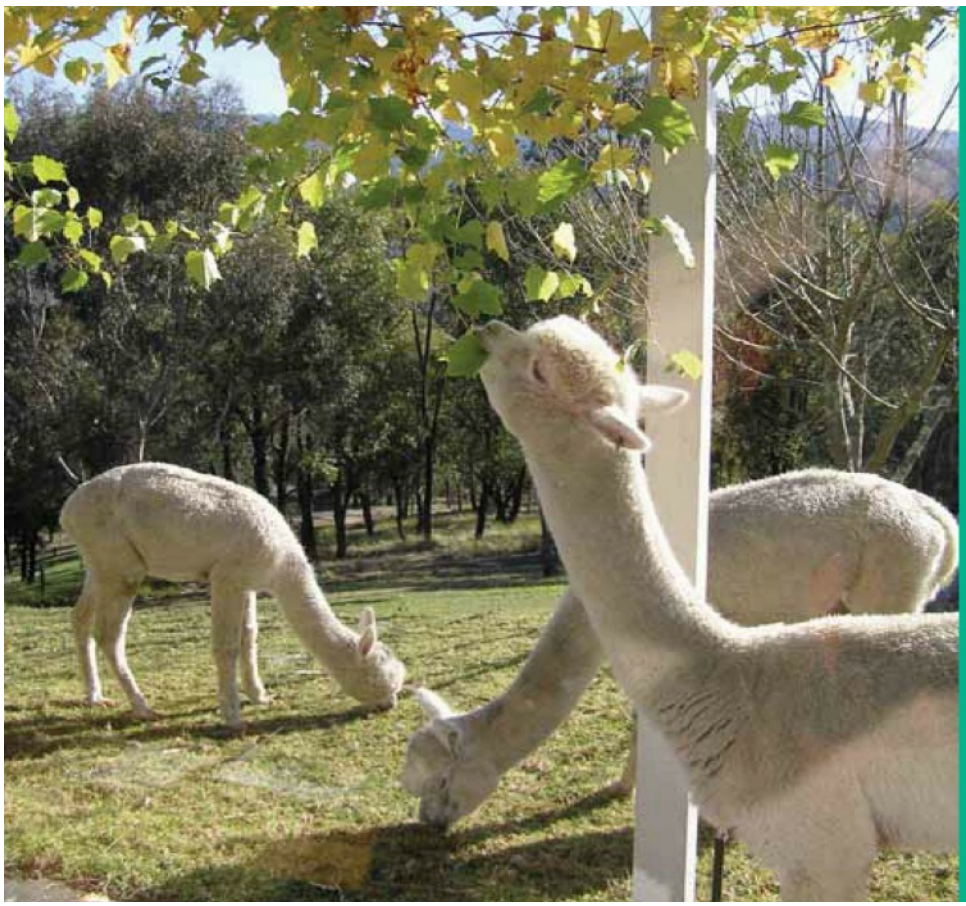
Outcrossing

If a breeder is not happy with the alpaca they have produced outcrossing is frequently used to bring in different genes and reduce homozygosity. By breeding to an unrelated line new genes and new traits are immediately brought into the mix. The new genes can also increase hybrid vigor and address any areas affected by inbreeding depression in one generation. There are different ways to outcross. However, if your goal is to maintain consistency and uniformity it is a good idea to outcross to an unrelated line that has some degree of linebreeding while also exhibiting the traits you desire. Uniformity within a herd can still be maintained when crossing two lines that have some degree of linebreeding, however, these uniform alpacas are unlikely to produce uniform and consistent progeny. Therefore it is important to either continue breeding back to the original line or continue with the new line to maintain uniformity and consistency in future generations.

The future

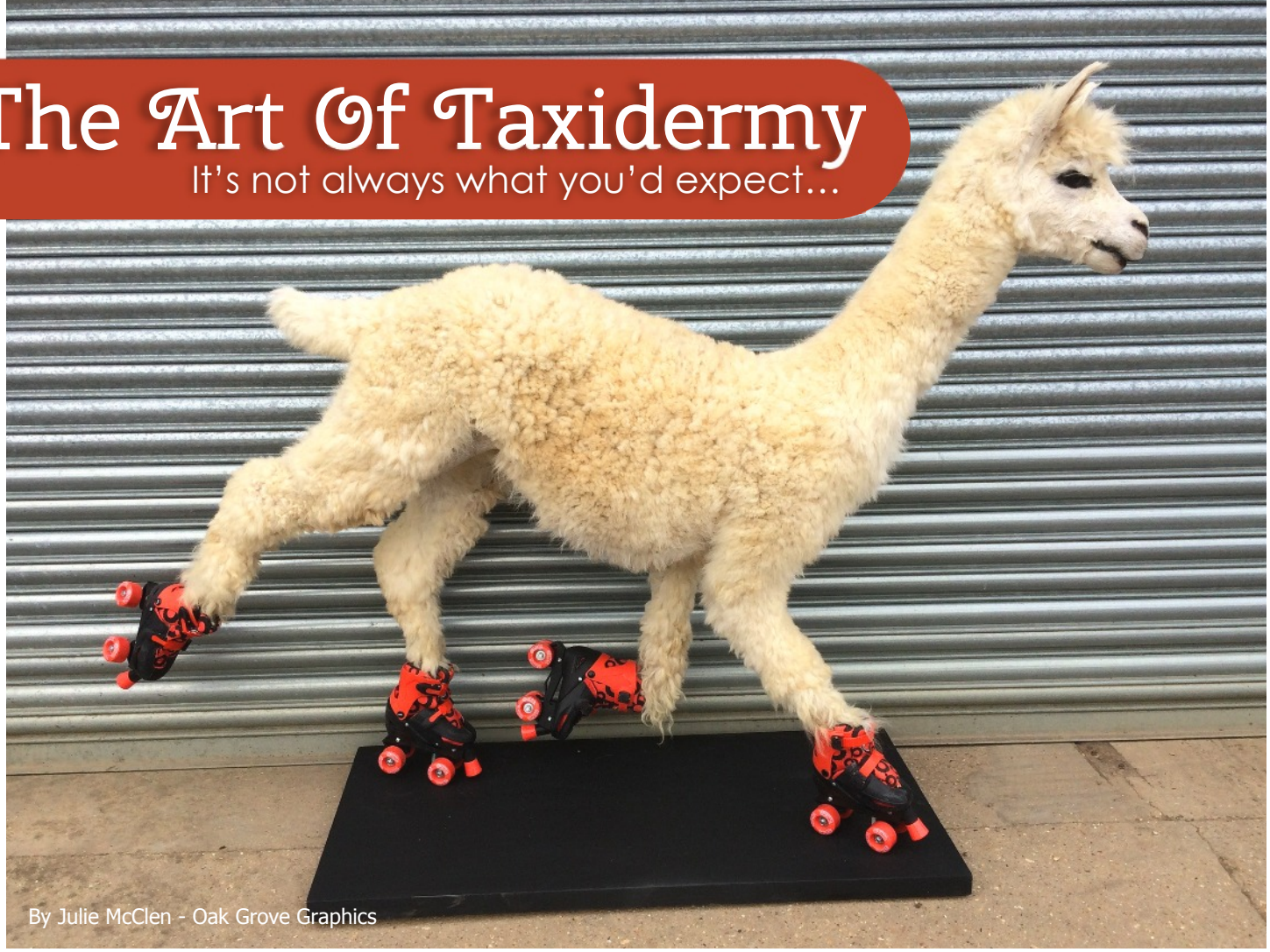
An alpaca with several generations of linebreeding, as seen in a number of alpacas at the National auctions, is often worth considerably more than one that has a good phenotype achieved through outcrossing. This is due to the higher level of prepotency, that is, the likelihood of passing on visible traits and years invested in planned linebreeding. Linebreeding is a slow process and requires the breeder to have very clear goals and selection criteria for success.

Most alpaca breeders in Australia are continually outcrossing, mating as far as possible unrelated alpacas. This practice will generally mask or hide faulty, defective genes allowing them to be propagated in the carrier state and spread widely among the Australian Alpaca population. While I am sure no one wants to breed alpacas with genetic faults, inbreeding and to a certain degree linebreeding will allow a breeder do identify alpacas and bloodlines that carry recessive defective genes and eliminate them from a breeding program. The ultimate goal would be to have developed a line or strain that is genetically sound, free from recessive defective genes that cause faults. Current DNA research in alpaca genome mapping has huge potential and could be very valuable step forward in identifying alpacas that carry genes responsible for faults before they are using in a breeding program.



The Art Of Taxidermy

It's not always what you'd expect...



By Julie McClen - Oak Grove Graphics

What do Harry Potter, high fashion and a roller skating alpaca have in common?

They all use the unique talents of Simon Wilson of Animatronic Animals Ltd.

Simon Wilson is the company director of Animatronic Animals Ltd. He started doing taxidermy as a hobby at 9 years old and went on to run the biggest taxidermy company in the United Kingdom.

He has vast experience in all aspects of taxidermy and will take on projects others say are impossible. Twenty six years working in the film industry has taught him that not many things are impossible. He will take on any project from a mouse to an elephant.

As a result of working on movies with taxidermy and training live animals he discovered animatronics. Where they were always models made from artificial materials he thought that he could do the same thing but with real skins. He has experience dealing with skins through taxidermy where all other model makers had not. This led to Animatronic Animals Ltd being formed which has since led to many projects all over the world combining taxidermy, animatronics and live animals for the movie industry and museums.

At present there is a TV company planning to make a series on Simon and his company, following him on various projects.

The story behind the Roller Skating Alpaca

Over the past 5 years Simon had been asked to do many art installations, the most famous in the UK is a huge Giraffe hanging from balloons in a stately home.

There have been a lot of people doing art involving taxidermy in the UK recently but it is always small animals like mice and rabbits and they are all pretty much the same. Simon is the only taxidermist in the UK doing the larger animals, so he thought why not start doing something along those lines but big and impressive. That is where the hanging giraffe came from and it all started from there.

A client of Simon's had seen the giraffe and other work and contacted him about some projects she had in mind - one of those was a rollerskating alpaca. He said "yes, anything is possible", so he went looking for a skin.

All of his animals come from zoos and private collections where they have died naturally so he put the word out that he was looking for an alpaca for a project. It wasn't too long before someone contacted him to say they had one that just died. He went to collect it and over the next few weeks processed the skin and sent mock up images to the client to confirm exactly the position and how she wanted it to look. Once the position was confirmed Simon started to carve the body shape from polyurethane foam to the exact size to fit the skin on and fit the glass eyes. This took about a week to make then two more days to fit the skin on the form. It was then left to dry out.

Simon with some of his larger taxidermys.

While this was drying he went on the hunt for roller skates to fit. Kids skates were ideal he thought, so he went to the local Toys-R-Us to look. They had a perfect pair the exact size he needed but only one pair in that colour. Alpacas have four feet so he obviously needed two pairs, so he hoped the store could order the second pair in that colour. This was easier said than done as the sales assistant just kept saying they can't order anymore as they cannot guarantee what colour they will be and kept trying to sell him one of the other colours they had in stock already.

After some time she asked why it mattered so much, as they are all the same skates, So he had to tell her they were for an alpaca who was going to wear them. She looked at him like he was crazy and when he told her it wasn't alive but stuffed she looked at him like she thought he was even more crazy and looked a bit panicked. Simon was getting ready to be thrown out the shop! But in the end it was sorted and they found another pair the same at another shop.

That's the story of that how the roller skating alpaca came to be and it now sits in the client's house with other crazy stuff like a giraffes head looking out of the attic hatch.

Simons next unusual project is a Polar bear sitting on a toilet in a old red London phone box!

Simon also worked with the fashion designer Alexander McQueen for many years, working on many of his creations and creating amazing designs that had feathers and bird wings incorporated into them. Simon feels it was a real privilege to have worked with him and to know him, and considers him a genius in design.

Alpaca process - Form created to hold the skin

Skin applied to form and below the finished model being mounted

The Company

Simon formed Animatronic Animals Ltd in 1987.

They supply taxidermy and models of animals in either rigid fibreglass, flexible rubber or natural skin for the film and television industry and museum exhibitions.

They also supply animatronic animal creations using the real skin so the resulting model is very realistic, taxidermy that moves.
They always have a range of models and taxidermy in stock and can create any animal from a mouse to a full size T- Rex as a static model or a fully animatronic creation

With 40 years experience in taxidermy and experience in the feature film industry covering 25 years supplying taxidermy and animatronic animals, there isn't much the company can't do in the field.

In addition they also supply all species of live trained animals for feature films, TV and photo shoots.

Simon did a big add campaign in 2015 for Energy Australia using animatronic owls.

With Harry Potter, Simon worked mainly as part of the animal training crew. His company trained all the animals you see on camera such as the famous Hedwig the owl and handled them on set. He also supplied feathers for the animatronic creatures the special effects department were building. They would build a mechanism of say an owl then they would attach feathers one at a time to a synthetic skin to make it look like the actual bird.

For the movie Tomb Raider 2 starring Angelina Jolie, Animatronic Animals trained a Spanish fighting bull to run across a big set with Angelina Jolie riding it, well a stunt version of her that is. They had three bulls and 10 heifer cows to attract the bulls. They would put the cows where they wanted the bulls to run to, then let the bulls go like a stampede one at a time. As they got more and more used to it they started to put the stunt rider on the bull. This went on for months then the production would tell us she needs to be firing a gun between the horns of the bull. So we add a gun and get them used to that. Next thing they want a helicopter flying over the bull as it's running. Six months of training and three days of shooting it, then it was cut in the final edit.

In Robin hood starring Russell Crowe, Simon's company supplied all the live animals and lots of taxidermy. Wolves, cows, sheep, pigs, geese etc., everything live and dead apart from horses.
Simon really enjoyed the opportunity to work with Riddley Scott on some massive impressive sets.

Animatronic Animals also install dioramas in museums and supply taxidermy for the exhibits. Set up dioramas in zoo's which involves building enclosures for live animals with natural and fake habitat. Restore of antique taxidermy and fabricate replica animals like whales, dolphins, rhino, elephant and gorillas.

Animatronic Animals has been involved in many well know feature films, exhibitions, music videos and fashion events. This by no means comprehensive credits list reads like a who's who of the entertainment world!

For more information visit www.animatronicanimals.com

MOVIE CREDITS

ENTRAPMENT
ALEXANDER
THE CORE
BROTHERS GRIMM
AGENT CODY BANKS
HARRY POTTER 1~2~3~4
101 DALMATIANS
102 DALMATIANS
ROBIN HOOD PRINCE OF THIEVES
SECRET GARDEN
FIRST KNIGHT
PRINCE VALIANT
INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE
MERLIN
BATMAN
ABOUT A BOY
KANGAROO JACK

EXHIBITIONS & FASHION CREDITS

OLYMPIC GAMES BARCELONA
ZEPHUR WILDLIFE BELGIUM
MASAI GALLERY BELGIUM

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN
VIVIEN WESTWOOD
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ZATORSKI + ZATORSKI
KELLY McCALLUM

MUSIC VIDEO CREDITS

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Inducted into the Australian Shearer's Hall of Fame in 2015. Ian will shear alpacas, llamas, small lots of sheep and goats in the Canberra and Southern NSW regions for farmers, breeders and hobby farms. He also provides shearing training and demonstrations for shows, fetes, community promotional events.
Email: elko6322@hotmail.com Mobile: 0417496815 Website: elkinsalpacashearing.com.au

MICK ELKINS

Mick will shear alpacas, llamas, small lots of sheep and goats for farmers, breeders and hobby farms. He also provides shearing training and demonstrations for shows, fetes, community promotional events. Available for shearing in the Canberra and Southern NAW districts. Willing to consider travel to other areas on request.
Mobile: 0408665228 Email: mick@elkinsalpacashearing.com.au Website: www.elkinsalpacashearing.com.au

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Contact: Anne Marie Harwood Email: anne@echobeachalpacas.com.au
Website: PO Box 1600, Mt Barker SA 5251
Mill address: 32 Summit Fire Track, Mt Barker Summit, SA 5251 Ph: 0417 672566

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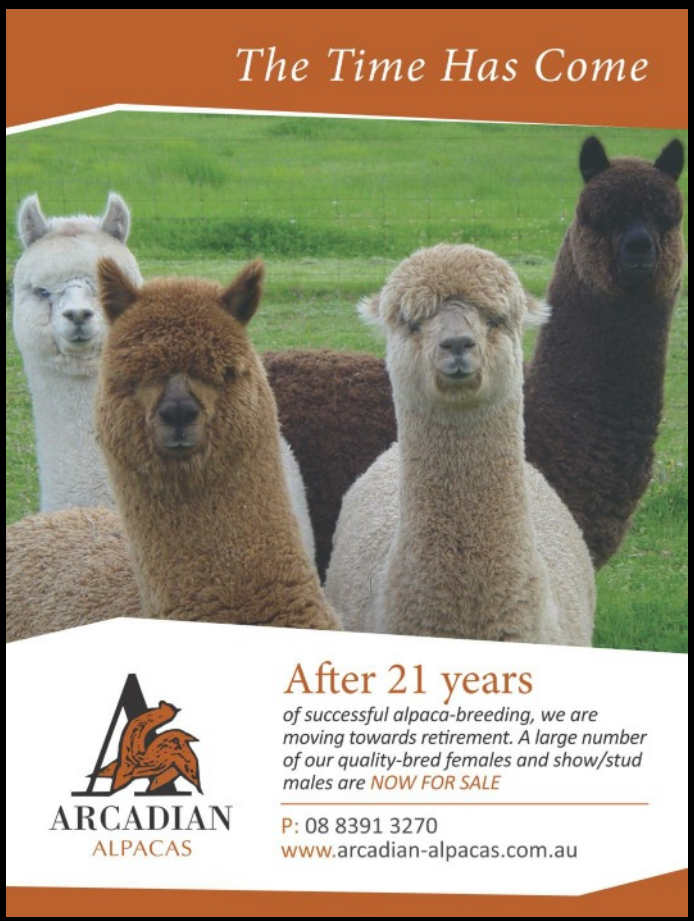

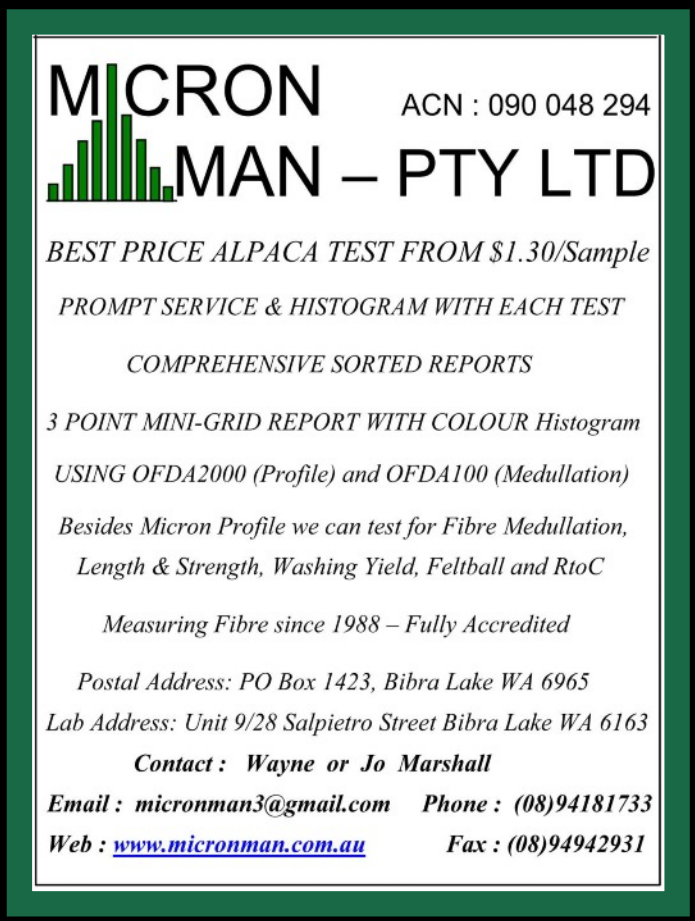

The Royals Round Up

Royal Melbourne Show

By Rochelle Veitch

The focus was to be on suris this year at the Royal Melbourne Alpaca Show held at the Melbourne Showgrounds on the weekend of the 9th & 10th July. The cold weather was no dampener to the event, with lots of energy going into both catching up with friends as well as enjoying the competition.

With an increase in focus on suris this year, it was pleasing to see the increased number of them on show.

The judges, Angela Preuss and Steve Ridout, commented on the quality of the animals in the competition as they awarded Suri Supreme to Pichingga Ridge Soleil and Huacaya Supreme to Yenaminut Evokateur. RASV would like to thank Ann Clark of Kurrawa Alpacas for their generous donation of a high quality suri mating to the winner on the Suri Supreme and to the other supporters without whom the show would be difficult to run.

The RASV also offered breeders of fancy alpacas who entered this year the opportunity of inclusion in the line-up for both Supremes. This increased the level of interest for not only those breeders, but also for the watching public who saw all types on display.

Supreme Suri Pichingga Ridge Soleil - Pichingga Ridge Alpacas

The public was also clearly attracted to the training and competition days for the Alpaca Youth Paraders. We had 45 Youth Competitors, 18 in Open division and 21 in Preliminary division. Our Judge Katie Thomas from NSW ran a very challenging competition. The Alpaca Youth Paraders enthusiasm, professionalism and willingness to collaborate has secured their place at this major event in the Victorian Alpaca Calendar.

Feedback from the event has already been injected into the committee's planning for an even bigger and better event next

Supreme Huacaya Yenaminut Evokateur - Yenaminut Alpacas

2016 Royal Adelaide Show Report

By Lea Richens
Councillor, Royal Agricultural & Horticultural Society of SA Inc
Supervisor, Alpaca Section 2016 Royal Adelaide Show

Despite fewer exhibitors, lower alpaca numbers in the championship classes and the absence of a Suri fleece competition, the 2016 Royal Adelaide Show hosted another successful Alpaca Show. Thankfully, after weeks of unpredictable and changeable weather leading up to the Show and compared to the cold, wet, dismal post Show days, the weather Gods were relatively kind to animals and show-goers alike.

In contrast to declining age group and colour class numbers, the Composite Classes, saw increased interest, with a high standard of animals presenting the Judges with a somewhat different and challenging task.

A Society initiative designed to present opportunities outside the normal stud competitions, this section sees the alpacas judged and scored, then shorn, their fleeces judged following normal score charts and the alpacas then re assessed. The three scores are totalled to determine the winner/s. As usual, the shearing component of this competition attracted crowds of on-lookers, as did the transformed, strange looking creatures back in their pens next to their fleeced counterparts. This is certainly a Section which is gaining in momentum, support and reputation.

Similarly the Junior Sections, judged on the Sunday, were a highlight of the Show - increased numbers of young alpaca enthusiasts displaying ever improving skills in handling and judging, and doing themselves, their schools and the industry proud. Congratulations to all involved.

Grand Champion Suri Marquez Luciano - Marquez Alpacas (Right) and Best Opposite Sex Suri Meridian Mahla - Meridian Alpacas

The Fleece Section ran smoothly with an eye catching display of fleeces featured for the duration of the Show. Special thanks to Sue Drogemuller for setting up an impressive and educational Suri display from raw fleece, through the many stages to finished product.

2016 saw the introduction of the specially designed Royal Adelaide Show trophy for those awards valued at $100 or more. The Alpaca Section was fortunate to be able to award 12 of these impressive and unique trophies to appreciative recipients.

To our 2016 judges, Karen Caldwell and Bronwyn Munn – a huge thank you for your expertise and for the valued feedback and commentaries which ensured a good atmosphere throughout. Thanks also, to all the stewards, marshals and officials – a highly professional team of well respected, hard- working volunteers who ensured everything ran smoothly. Special thanks to the Urrbrae students for their valued assistance in many areas over many days, to our generous sponsors, to the two breeders who provided alpacas for the second half of the Show. Finally, special mention of Jolyon and Kerry Porter for their extraordinary contributions as exhibitors, stewards and sponsors and for their continued support and presence throughout the ten day duration of the Show.

Congratulations to all ribbon and award winners and in particular Ambersun Alpacas (Supreme Champion Huacaya and Most Successful Exhibitor), Marquez Alpacas (Grand Champion Suri), Yaringa Alpacas (Grand Champion Fleece) and Horizon Christian School (Most Successful New Exhibitor).

Supreme Champion Huacaya Goldleaf Chivalry ET - Ambersun Alpacas

Brisbane Royal Show 2016

By Di Baker - Convener

We have once more completed our Royal Brisbane Show (EKKA) and the many aspects of alpaca showing that takes place during the two week period have been completed successfully.

It was disappointing to be highly affected by the clash with the National Alpaca show with our halter classes down by over 40% and the same with our fleeces. It was also noted that the quality of some of the animals was down on previous years as breeders took their better animals and fleeces to the Nationals. That having been said, those that did compete seemed to enjoy themselves. We overcame some of the bump in and out issues that had been experienced in previous years.

While the premises for halter judging are not flash, we have been told that plans are well underway for the development of a new facility. There will be a meeting with the RNA Management shortly to find out more.

Fleece Judging

We undertook the fleece judging prior to the EKKA commencing and the tasks were ably undertaken by the Fleece Team – Pauline Glasser, Di Smart, Bruce and Lehanne Robinson . Many thanks to Jillian Holmes for stepping in to do the judging at the eleventh hour. The fleece display was top notch. The winners of the fleece competition are Supreme Suri Fleece – Ambleside Merlin owned by Wahgungurry and Supreme Huacaya Fleece – Sunline Legend owned by Sunline Alpacas. Congratulations to both breeders.

Supreme Huacaya Shahrizai Indiana - Shahrizai Alpacas

Supreme Suri Golden Charm Moscato - Golden Charm Alpacas

Grand Parade

We had six alpacas walk in the Grand Parade. Many thanks to Calvary Christian College students for their excellent handling skills with the alpacas during the parade. There was one cria in the group who had only just been weaned and we were a bit worried he might find it all a bit much so we were on hand to rescue him mid parade. He surprised us by wanting to lead the animals all the way. Born to lead!

Halter Judging

As mentioned earlier, numbers were down but there were some very high standard animals shown. The judge, Karen Caldwell kept things moving along well. In her summation speech she also mentioned that she felt that some of the quality was down due to some breeders having sent their best animals to our Nationals. Congratulations to the two Supremes - Supreme Suri, Golden Charm Moscato owned by Golden Charm Alpacas and Supreme Huacaya, Shahrizai Indiana owned by Shahrizai.

RNA Junior Judging

Wow we were overwhelmed when we saw the crowd of young junior judges arrive to judge the alpacas, all forty of them. Karen Caldwell liaised with the RNA Junior Judging stewards and all went smoothly and efficiently. This is the biggest group we have had do the RNA Junior event with the alpacas that I know of and we have been told that this number is likely to grow.

Karen spent some time with the stewards after the judging, suggesting ways to improve the process, which they very much appreciated. It is so important to keep this event in play as it introduces alpaca to our future farmers. Congratulations to our very own Hannah Doyle who took out the Championship against some strong competition.

Youth Paraders

Youth Paraders took place on Sunday with ten entrants.

Thanks to Cheryl Cochrane who judged this event. Wade Phillips won Open Division Supreme Champion Parader, Supreme Trainer and Katelyn Holznagel won Preliminary Division Supreme Champion Parader. Once again this is a very important part of the EKKA, dealing with children as young as seven. These children and young adults are our future.

WOOL CLASSING: SPROUTING FLEECE

By Jennifer Findley

I'm still fairly green to the alpaca industry, only five years experience in animal husbandry with a modest flock of alpacas on a little bit of east coast dirt. Nevertheless it has created a fascination for me to read and delve into the alpaca industry from the paddock to table. Like many Australians and a plethora of Americans, I'm working vertically - growing, harvesting, manufacturing and selling via local and Internet communities in the cottage niche.

Once my reading about fibre industries began, I found its depth and breadth intriguing and endless. So I started looking for courses and studying further. It was very fortunate for me to be one of the four beneficiaries of a Commonwealth Government grant organised by the AAA, to assist with my Cert IV Wool Classing TAFE expenses. Thank you to Fiona Vanderbeek for the tremendous effort in dealing with government paper work.

I've started my studies this semester and am getting my hands dirty on work experience in the sheep sheds. The Wool Classer course is completely focused around the sheep industry, they do mention other animal fibres but only as a contaminant to clip.

However there is no better place to learn about fibre than in these high quality Australian workplaces. I do feel a bit like a fox stealing the lamb or is it a wolf in sheep clothing - purloining from sheep growers. Be that as it may, diversity is essential and the alpaca industry is here to stay.

The story of domestication of sheep began 6000 BCE, legends of farming which evolved cultures, who create opportunity, strived in competition, hostilities then conflict.

With a reliable supply of food, and fibre cities grew and craftspeople developed. Population increases demanded new territory, then it was the invasion of the world by humans and sheep.

In the decades after the first fleet the British government sent sheep, rapidly establishing a thriving pastoral economy. By 1845 squatters settled in NSW with 9 million sheep, 12 million a decade later, devastating the endemic ecosystem. These sheep harvested up to 2Kg of wool. Now superfine merinos harvest 5.5kg (adult ram) and the coarser fibre carpet breeds harvest up to 8kg bi-annually. With meat sheep weighing up to 120kg and producing around an 85% lean meat yield.

Wool Harvest Responsibilities

Grower - eliminate contamination risk, shearing order, preparation of shearing shed and staff

Harvest Team - uniformity in lines, contamination free, correctly packaged, correctly described, accurately document.

Sheep wool harvest is quite a feat. Teams of shearers, roustabouts, recorders, classer, pressers, handlers - all moving in rhythm impelled by the whirl of the shearing drive shaft. And the sheep, thousands of them. Doltish eyes submitted to their fate, frightened hoofs scutter across wood, their funk falling between the floor boards.

Shearing is the time when the mobs are sorted and corralled so every sheep can be clipped, inspected, wool allocated to lines and prepared for sale - the harvest. The wool classer handles each fleece individually, examining using eyes, hands, ears and nostrils. The classer explains "This year [2016] has been a tough one. I've never seen anything like it before." He can see it in the sheep's dusty backs, the last 12 months has been dry. A higher harvest of tender wool will drop the price on the market place.

I'm starting my work experience as the board sweeper, that's the next hands on the wool after the shearer. Everything that the shearer shears off I have to pickup putting it in the right butt; and it ain't just wool. Wool faults have to be removed before the fleece is skirted on the table.

Sweep out the shanks, dags and locks. Skirt out the belly to remove brisket, skin and stain. Mop up blood and excrement with stained wool as the shearer drags out the next sheep. Pick up the fleece, hurl it over the table. Every two minutes for two hours a run for four runs a day across two shearing stands - 400 sheep a day. Bend, step, lunge, sweep, squat, reach, throw - I would never have to do an aerobics class again in this job.

Now I can't wait to get back, it's a total immersion of task, body and team.

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