



ALPACAS AUSTRALIA

ONLINE

An official publication of the Australian Alpaca Association



Join us for our very popular residential weekend for new alpaca breeders at Flowerdale Estate. These "Introduction to Alpacas" workshops attract participants from all over Australia and New Zealand.

The Program.

Workshops include classroom learning and hands-on sessions in the barn working with the alpacas. Participants learn the basics: halter training, chuckering, weighing, body-condition-scoring, nutrition, mating, spit-offs, birthing, cria care, weaning, shearing, fibre classing, vaccinations, drenching, toenail trimming, business plans and record keeping.



There are sessions on goal setting, genetic advancements (SRS and AGE data usage), selecting quality alpacas, farm plans, pasture improvement, herd development strategies, succeeding in the show ring and marketing alpacas.

The Venue.

Flowerdale Estate is an award-winning, retreat for up to 60 people. Stay in luxury accommodation and let the chefs tempt you with their delicious menus. These workshops have provided a wonderful opportunity for new breeders to network, socialize and have fun. Many lasting friendships have started at these weekends.

The Weekend Package.

Make it a special weekend of learning and leisure. Play some tennis. Workout in the gym. Enjoy a sauna or challenge someone to a game of pool. At the end of the day, relax with a pre-dinner drink and a savoury or two.



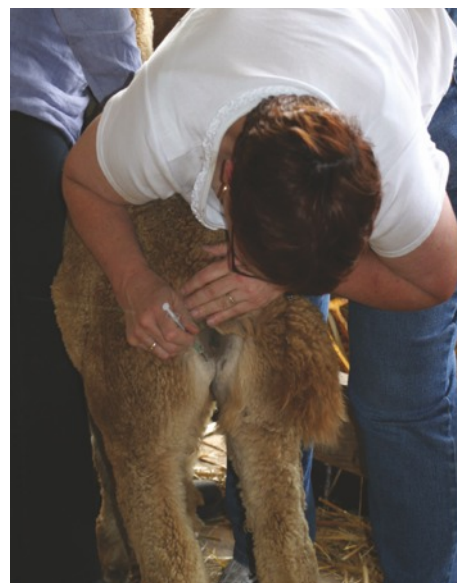
WORKSHOPS FOR NEW BREEDERS.

The complete weekend price per couple is \$625. Singles are \$425. The package includes accommodation for Saturday night, Saturday and Sunday lunch, morning teas, Saturday night dinner, use of recreational facilities, workshop tuition and course materials.

Bookings.

Attendance numbers are limited and fill quickly. Complete details including the weekend program, directions and booking forms are on the website now at www.flowerdalealpacas.net

Or phone Jen on 03 9728 7070.



Details on website

www.flowerdalealpacas.net

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FLOWERDALE ESTATE
ALPACAS



Contents



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Photograph by Penny Pittard

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Greetings from our President

Dear Members,

Welcome to the inaugural online AAA Magazine, an interim measure taken by your Board before we embark again on the road to finding a solution to the production of a hardcopy.

This time of year sees AGM's abound in all Regions, the Show season in full swing and thoughts beginning to fly towards shearing. It is hard to believe that the year is half over.

Exciting times are ahead for the AAA. A new Logo is on its way. Whilst the creation of a new logo was not something we envisaged would be happening a few years ago, circumstances dictated that it was our best option to do so.

A professional group has been appointed to develop the logo and several members of the AAA, all with knowledge in this area will manage its development and progress over the next few months. The membership will be kept informed via e news with the various stages of its evolution and I for one, am looking forward to reading it.



The timeline for the final delivery of the logo to the AAA is currently on schedule and I am delighted to announce that the launch of the new AAA logo will take place at this year's National Show. It will be a new image for our Association; an image that will clearly identify us as an Association of renown. It will be a logo which will confidently take us into the future.

There will be some associated costs as a result of the change but our industry itself has changed from where we were 15 years ago. Now is the time for the AAA to stand up and be truly proud of the unique qualities of Australian alpaca. The Australian Alpaca Association is one that deserves to have an image of distinction. The new AAA Logo will enable us to do just that.

With kind regards,

Jenny McDuffie



Insight Peru Group

Insight Peru



Members will be delighted to know that preparations are well advanced for the 2011 InSight Peru Mission, which will be conducted in Peru, in the name of the Australasian alpaca industry, during October.

Last year, with the support of members of the AAA, Ramsay Hospitals and Quechua Benefit, we sent a team of one GP, two surgeons, an anaesthetist, an optometrist and four nurses to Chivay, in the high altitude Colca Valley, where they saw 360 patients, did 60 cataract operations, and dispensed around 220 spectacles to the indigenous Quechua people. The mission was a resounding success, and there has been great local enthusiasm for it to be repeated in 2011.

It was in that context that the decision was taken to repeat the mission this year, and plans are now well advanced for a team of 12 to travel to Chivay in late October.

This year, a paediatrician, an extra GP, and an orthoptist will accompany the team to better meet the needs of the Quechua people. With a reputation firmly established by the outcomes of the first mission, the second is likely to receive an enthusiastic response from the local people.

We are hoping to achieve around 120 cataract procedures this year, restoring sight to people who would otherwise be unable to appreciate the great beauty of their high altitude environment.

The mission has received financial support from the Nowra Private Hospital, the Shoalhaven Medical Association, and South Nowra Rotary.



Dr Durkin operating with observer

The project, which is conducted in the name of AAA, is still short funded and we would ask members to consider making a donation to support this initiative which was conceived by Dr Ian Davison and the Australian Alpaca Assoc. in 2010.

This year two AAA members - Fiona Martin (scrub sister) and Craig Cameron (optometrist) will be accompanying the team and we thank them for donating their time to this worthy cause.

Any members who wish to contribute to this outstanding cause as a way of thanking the underprivileged people who have shared their alpacas with us are encouraged to do so. Donations can be made online at www.insightperu.org/Donate.html or by direct deposit to InSight Peru's bank account, BSB 012 787, Account Number: 277 077 895.

Funds raised will be spent only on purchase of equipment, medications and airfares; onland costs in Peru will be met by Quechua Benefit.

News

Do you want to sell your fleece or have it processed? Check the [AAA Web Site](#) to see who is buying or processing fleece.

Check the Calendar of Events on the [AAA Web Site](#) to see events near you.

HAVE YOU MOVED?

Please remember to notify AAA National Office of address changes including - telephone, fax, email and web site changes if applicable

Let us know by:
Phone +61 (0) 3 9873 7700
Fax +61 (0) 3 9873 7711
Email: alpaca@alpaca.asn.au

Book Review of new Alpaca Agskills publication

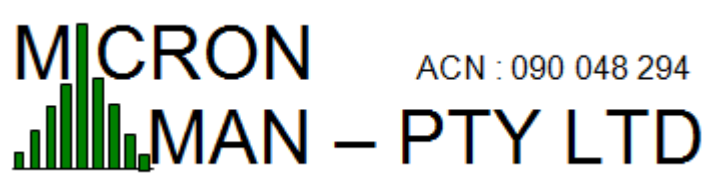
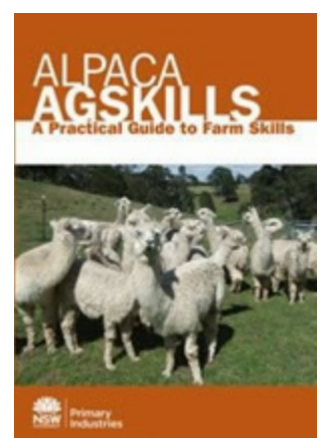
Hot off the press is the new, glossy "Alpaca Agskills" from the NSW Department of Primary Industries. This A4 booklet is 92 pages jam-packed with basic alpaca husbandry and handling information in combination with over 100 close-up colour pictures and diagrams. The clarity of the photography together with the simple step-by-step instructional narrative, often in dot-point style, ensures an easy-to-read and informative publication.

The Alpaca Agskills booklet is a practical and pictorial guide to many basic alpaca husbandry tasks and, unlike many other alpaca publications, is specifically designed for Australian conditions. Compiled by DPI officers with significant input and assistance from knowledgeable alpaca breeders, there are over 20 topics presented including vaccinating and drenching, trimming nails, ear-tagging, eyecare, preparation for shearing, mating, birthing, and cria care.

The Alpaca version of Agskills is one of a DPI series which covers Sheep, Goats, Dairy Cattle, Beef Cattle, Pigs, Poultry and Horses and I believe heralds the recognition of alpaca farming as an acceptable and productive agricultural pursuit, alongside other mainstream farming activities. This handbook is a clear, concise publication designed for newcomers to the industry but is also likely to become a useful additional reference for those of us who've been around a while. Thoroughly recommended.

Alpaca Agskills is available on-line through the NSW DPI (www.tocal.com) or there will be stocks available to purchase for \$25 per copy at the National Show & Expo in Sydney in October.

Lyn Dickson



The Micron Man announces a new Super triple test to aid Alpaca Breeders. As an aid to identifying fibre diameter variability across the Saddle fleece, we have been asked to develop a visually simple unique way to display FD, SD and Micron Profile variation within the Alpaca fleece.

This work is a progression from recent fibre medullation visual displays that we have developed. If staples are taken from the Mid side, Front Shoulder and rump Pin bone area and labelled appropriately then 3 measurements are taken and represented on a triple colour Histogram for easy visual appraisal.

Cost of new mini grid sample test is \$3 + GST including an A4 colour Histogram per sample and sorted printouts. This test is only recommended for the best Alpacas - our normal tests are available, at usual prices, for the rest.

Fleece Tip : If you want to reduce fleece variation over time, then try sampling from the strongest rump area only. This generally will show the highest fibre diameter result and will tend to reduce more variable fleece Alpacas for breeding. This test would provide the biggest improvement in making Alpaca fleece less variable over time.

Email : micronman@iinet.net.au
Web : <http://www.micronman.com.au>

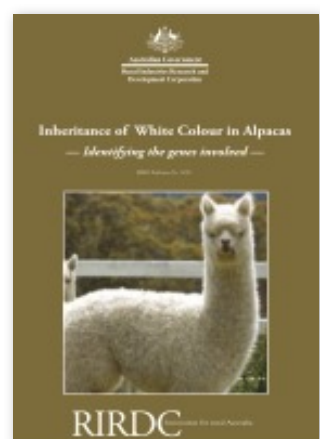
Inheritance of White Colour in Alpacas: Identifying the genes involved

\$25.00
57 pages
Code: 11-074
Published: 29 Jul 2011
Author(s): Kylie Munyard
ISBN: 978-1-74254-258-4

This [RIRDC report](#) describes the research conducted as part of the alpaca colour genetics project to identify the genes involved in the inheritance of white colour in alpacas. Three approaches were used (Mendelian, physical and genetic) in an attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding colour inheritance in alpacas.

This project has successfully identified key mutations in genes that lead to differences in fibre colour in alpacas.

Other genes, which play a role in colour variation in other species, were cleared of involvement in colour variation in alpacas. Through extensive observational analysis a model for Mendelian inheritance of the major colours was developed. In combination, these findings provide breeders with information that allows them to make informed colour breeding choices.





ABC television recently ran an alpaca segment in the popular pre school children's programme Playschool. The segment was filmed at Madisons Mountain Retreat in Kurrajong NSW and runs for about one and a half minutes. Took a lot longer than that to organise and film - ask Debbie Redelman! So a few more small children, and possibly their Mums, know a little more about alpacas. The segment will be re run on **Monday 26th September** on ABC Childrens programme.

Australian alpaca fleece to haute garment! Lesley Shea launches 'Suri House' Diploma of Arts in Fashion (RMIT University)

Stemming from a desire to embellish, and after working with conventional textiles, I creatively explored fibres, yarn styles, weave structures, colour and fabric finishing using earthy explorations of texture and space between warp and weft to produce a contemporary alpaca cloth for a specific garment. Thus, Suri House was born; I wanted to create uniqueness and stand 100% Australian from the ground to haute couture garment.

Beginning with a superb animal and understanding the characteristics and quality of alpaca fleece, creatively applying the fundamentals of art, fashion design and production, understanding the constantly changing trends and goals of the fashion industry, the finished creations address the combination of natural alpaca abilities of drape and lustre, to a structured form of wearable art.

My vision is to showcase what we can exclusively create in Australia, using Australian product-this is truly unique.



10-12th April 2012, Keble College, Oxford
www.alpaca2012.com



Congratulations!!

After seeing the 2010 Natural Fibre Product Showcase held by the International Camelid Quarterly Magazine, Darryl (Beaver) and Fiona Laughton of Beavona Lodge Suri Alpacas thought they would enter their wedding dress in the 2011 competition.

The competition is judged online with the public voting for their favourite item in three different categories. Fashion, Art and Utility. There were over 300 entries in the three categories from which 128 finalists were selected. The finalists in the Fashion category were all of exceptional quality so Beaver & Fiona were very nervous waiting for the polls to close and the results to be announced.

They consider it a real honour to be pronounced winners of the Fashion category and have their lovely gown on the cover of CQ Magazine and look forward to entering again in the future when they have completed another suri garment. They also hope to have some Australian competitors then too!
The competition is open to all so don't be shy.

National Show, Sale & Expo

Welcome to the 2011 National Show, Sale and Expo!

See the cream of Australia's alpacas in the showing, arts and craft and the Expo Plaza - 13th-16th October.

As the new title indicates, we are planning a new look for this year's event. Many regular show participants, together with the AAA Board, believed that the time had arrived for an infusion of some new ideas for our premier national event. With this in mind, three of the NSW regions - Central Coast & Hunter, Southern Region and Hawkesbury/ Blue Mountains - formed a management team to formulate a plan to revitalise the event which was presented to the AAA Council. With their subsequent approval, this plan has progressed to completion.

For the first time in our history we have been able to secure a pavilion at the Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay, NSW. We thank the RAS management for their considerations which will allow us to use this great facility. Some of you will be familiar with the location of the Sydney Royal Show alpaca section and for our National event, the nearby Falkiner Pavilion will provide accommodation for some 650 alpacas together with trade stands, fleece & craft exhibits and a demonstration area for our public displays.

The theme of the event will concentrate on Australian alpaca fleece and its products. Australian manufacturers using Australian alpaca will show and sell their product from a prominent and exclusive display area - the Alpaca Plaza.

Alpaca judging will take place over three days, and will include best colour classes, with fleeces and craft judged over the previous weekend. This will allow additional time for auction animal inspections, mini seminars, shearing demonstrations and other activities planned to attract and interest the public, or as we prefer to view them, potential alpaca owners.

The auction has for many years set the benchmark for both the standard and the price of Australian quality alpacas. It is important for all breeders that this standard is maintained so an updated formula has been developed to attract buyers to purchase the best genetics available and reward the breeders for their achievements.

The attraction for breeders to submit their best alpacas for the auction will be the exclusivity of each lot i.e. only one female and male of a colour will be accepted. The Auction will be titled the "Breeders Choice" - designed for the alpaca that any AAA member believes to be their best for that colour and sex; the alpaca that will have the optimum chance to be accepted to represent the best in Australia for that particular lot, with the potential to maximise their return at auction.

From a possible sixteen alpacas, ten have been accepted for this year's new style auction. They come from as far afield as Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, comprising nine huacayas - three males and six females - and one suri male. An extensive marketing programme is already underway to ensure maximum exposure both locally and internationally.

In order for all the weekend activities to be undertaken, the auction is on Friday evening following the completion of judging that day, with food and drinks available in a casual setting. This will allow members to further view the auction lots and network with friends. All auction lots will be on display adjacent to the vendors'/exhibitors' pens which will be in prominent positions throughout the Show.



The EXPO section of the weekend is officially planned during Saturday and Sunday although it will be open to the public over the four days. These activities will include shearing demonstrations by an experienced shearer, fleece skirting, "Ask a Breeder" info booth, fleece to fabric competition, alpaca nursery & photo opportunity.

Social activities and the comfort levels of participants have not been overlooked; the precinct has four hotels offering varying levels of accommodation and the surrounding suburbs offer additional facilities. Special rates have been negotiated for the event. While food and beverages will be available in the pavilion (in a special coffee shop environment next to the judging ring), restaurants and sidewalk cafes are open in, and adjacent to, the hotels.

The Saturday night dinner together with the popular fundraiser auction and entertainment will be a highlight of the event. For those who wish to party, the night can be extended for a couple of extra hours this year as the AAA Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday night, allowing a little Sunday morning sleep-in time!

The showground is only 30 minutes from Sydney with the Olympic Park train station inside the grounds. Sydney has a population of four million people and with the agreed assistance of the RAS Marketing, we will have exposure to all the RAS Membership, their associated groups and web sites including that of the RAS and "What's on in Sydney" web sites. We hope that many of these people will visit us as they are our potential members, so this is an excellent opportunity to capitalise on the location.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Sydney in October, so start planning your visit for a fantastic time at the National Show, Sale and Expo 2011.

From the 2011 N S S & EXPO Management Team

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Casa Chapi

Llaqtakunaq atipayninwan, teqrimuyuta kuyuchisunchis.

Con el poder de los pueblo's moveremos el mundo.

When the villages work together, we will turn this world around.

A Quechua proverb

Casa Chapi is rising on a terraced Andean hillside in the Colca valley like a giant Condor soaring from its rocky nest on the nearby canyon walls. Alejandro Tejeda, Quechua Benefit's project manager, is leading our team of ten laborers from nearby Chivay who are laying brick, slinging stucco and crafting rock into cottages, a community health center, a kitchen dining room and a bibliotheca.

One mile of water line is complete along with 11 retaining walls, the garage and the shop. There is four hundred and two feet of 10 foot high brick and rock security fence joined at the Incan style front gate. A central spire of black rock stairs forms the spine of the children's village. Next the soccer field, gardens, and plaza will be built not far from the greenhouses. The first phase of the complex will be finished by November 2011.



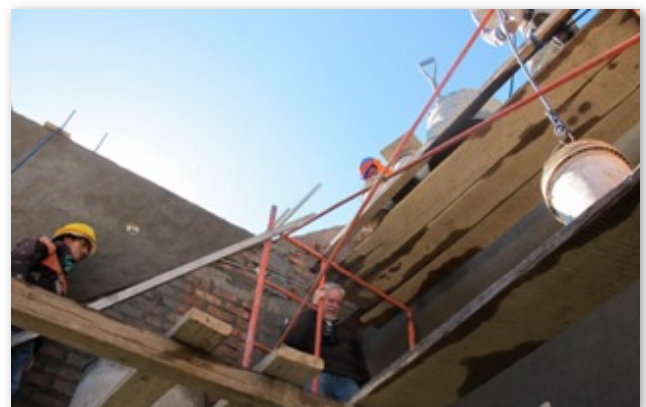
Alejandro Tejeda in front of Central Stairway

The complex has changed as Quechua Benefit's seven member board focused on its future. Ursula Munro spoke with other children's home operators and women's rights advocates working for the Peruvian health agency. They focused on the subject of family violence and alcohol abuse by the potential resident's families. A recent tour of the Milton Hershey School, which was founded in 1906 and is home to 1700 disadvantaged kids, was arranged by our newest board member, Monica Kline. The board learned that a maximum of 12 children should form the family units that inhabit the cottages. This provides the optimum opportunity for a nurturing atmosphere. Each cottage will be supervised by two house parents who play an important role in guiding and supporting the children living in the cottage. This is the same model used by the Milton Hershey School. The results of these investigations required a redesign of the four dormitories into eight family style cottages.



Two of the Children Cottages – May 8, 2011

The completion of construction is really just the beginning of the project. The progress has not been without bumps in the road, detours and frustrating adjustments. If anyone tells you that building a large complex in a remote area of a foreign country is easy I would caution that a small slice of skepticism should be added to your mental file on the information. And rest assured that the Quechua Benefit BOD also realizes that operating the village will not be problem free. There is much to learn and hopefully many friends from whom we will learn it.



The Author crawling up the scaffolding inside a cottage.

The board recently appointed Ursula to be the director in charge of managing Casa Chapi. Her experience as a Registered Nurse and program manager will come in handy as she begins assembling job descriptions, conducting interviews, hiring staff and qualifying the children who will live at the facility. Sandra Carbajal, Quechua Benefits executive secretary, in the Arequipa office, is working with Ursula on this task. During the planning stages the Quechua Benefit board always referred to the complex as an orphanage. This implies that each resident will be parentless. This is not exactly the case. There will be three categories of children living in the village: 1) children of alpaca breeders whose families live in areas so remote it prohibits them from attending school 2) children who are from families or single mothers who lack the resources and support to provide adequate care in a safe environment and 3) children who do not have a living parent.

As the village begins to function and the children take residence the Quechua Benefit BOD realizes that we have the same primary responsibilities as biological parents. First and foremost we must see to it that the children are safe. Then they must be well nourished, become educated and learn the life lessons that will better prepare them for the future. Each one of you who have supported this project is in effect a God parent for the children living there. This is a weighty responsibility and we need each of you to continue supporting the endeavor.

In addition to the social aspects of the project Quechua Benefit is required by Peruvian law to obtain a permit for the facility. The authorities will have inspection and audit rights over the operations. The community surrounding Casa Chapi must be engaged and it is the obligation of the projects management to inspire confidence in the local pastors and community workers.

Many of the residents will need remedial tutoring and some, the native Quechua speakers, will need to learn Spanish in order to succeed at school. We also plan to have vocational classes at the complex's shop and garage buildings. We will build green houses and create small animal husbandry projects to raise rabbits, chickens and cuy for the dining room table. There will be no shortage of chores for the kids as Casa Chapi aspires to become self-sufficient.



The Casa Chapi team at the November 2010 dedication

I remember back when Quechua Benefit was first conceived by a request from Don Julio Barreda for help in his village of Macusani. He told me the Bible said that it was the obligation of the more fortunate among us to take care of society's orphans. For many years he supplied alpaca meat to the Musqa Runa house where 30 young girls lived; all of them separated from their families. I recently came across the following quote in the book of James (ASV) chapter one: "27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.." I think this is the verse that Don Julio had in mind.

Thanks to each of you the dream that gave rise to the children's village we call Casa Chapi is rapidly becoming reality. Much hard work is in front of us and each of you is vital to our success. We welcome your help, donations and expertise please visit our website www.quechuabenefit.org, or our office in Arequipa Peru: Calle Santa Catalina 115 Oficina No. 10, 3er Piso Cercado, Arequipa, Peru or call or email one of our board members.

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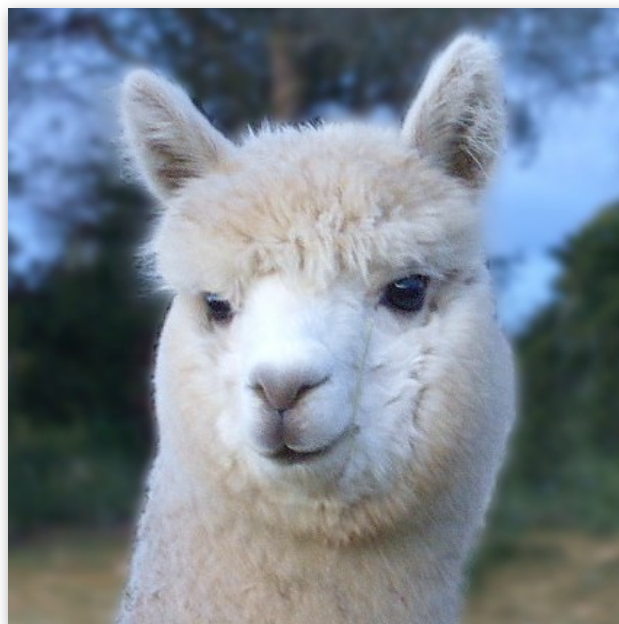
Ian and Angela Preuss
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Fleece Classing

The Australian Alpaca Industry Moves Towards Professional Classing Standards

Since the arrival of alpacas into Australia some twenty three years ago, the industry has largely concentrated on the breeding aspects of the animal and adapting them to Australian conditions. Whilst breeders use fleece testing and the show system to benchmark their alpacas, little attention has been paid to establishing classing lines and standards for commercial fleece production. In more recent years private groups have emerged to collect fleece and assist in the development of a fibre industry, classing the fleece collected to meet the specific requirements of the products they planned to market.

For the Australian industry to market Quality Assured Australian Alpaca it is necessary to set a range of lines that consider the multiple aspects of alpaca. The prime considerations were obvious – breed type, natural colour, micron group, length and style – but other considerations for the processor and the consumer also need to be addressed – guard hair (kemp), SD/CV, VM content, strength (tenderness) and stain to name just a few.



Following consultation with classers, processors and consumers, combined with research into the Australian Wool & Mohair industries, a comprehensive Code of Practice is currently being written. It will be this standard to which we will class Australian alpaca, enabling processors and international buyers to purchase Australian product with confidence knowing that what they are being offered meets the specifications they require.

The next step in this process is to train alpaca classers to a level of competency that will enable them to meet the standard required. To assist in this training we are in discussion with the National Training Council of Australia through TAFE NSW in order to find the best and most efficient way of introducing these training courses.

There are two levels of competency proposed:

- a) the Professional Classer level, which allows a registered, qualified classer to class any grower's fleece
- b) the Owner Classer, which allows for the owner to only class his/her fleece clip.

Providing there are sufficient numbers, these courses could be run in most states and would be on a part time basis over a period of time yet to be determined. The Australian Alpaca Association is committed to support these courses and has allocated funds to supply resource materials.

The alpaca industry is fortunate that there are a number of experienced, registered wool classers who have been working with and classing alpaca for some time. With little training these wool classers could form the foundations for the first group of qualified alpaca classers. They would also be the logical source from which to draw trainers for prospective student classers. A registration and audit system will need to be established for qualified classers in order to offer a Quality Assurance guarantee to potential purchasers. This will include a mechanism by which we will guarantee that the fleece offered for sale is genuine Australian alpaca.

Once all of these systems are in place, members of the AAA will be in a position to brand and identify their QA-classed alpaca with the appropriate registered mark. In turn processors/manufacturers of Quality Assured Australian alpaca will be able to participate in a AAA licensing agreement enabling them to brand their products with a mark officially designated for the content of their product. ►

► Our next challenge is to develop a better collection system either through "cluster groups" or registered classing houses. It would also be possible to use these classing houses to aggregate lines classed in sheds by registered classers. Cluster groups would allow growers who are geographically linked to organise an appropriate collection centre and pay a qualified classer to class and press their fleece ready for sale.

The introduction of this Quality Assured scheme for the classing of Australian Alpaca is a significant milestone for the future development of the industry and will help to maximise the return to the grower, the processor and the manufacturer.

Graeme Dickson,
Industry Development Reference Panel



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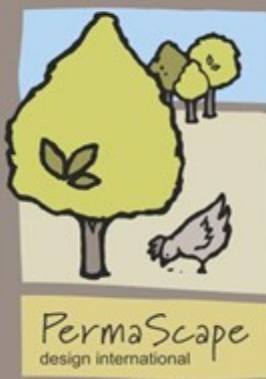
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Farm Shop open first weekend each month — February to December
Saturday and Sunday 10am–4pm

Wethers make their mark

The Saga of the Don Brown Memorial sheep judging day

Well the negotiations had started two months before with my offer to talk to some of the elite merino stud sheep breeders in our state about alpacas as herd guards. To these men and women merinos are the only sheep and some of the studs span 4 – 5 generations of breeders where the stud has been handed from father to son to continue the tradition.

Finally the week before they okayed for me to talk for 20 minutes.

This was arranged to take place at the property of a gentleman I'd spoken to about alpaca wethers as guards and who had subsequently bought 16 wethers. This was convenient as the wethers would be in the yard with the ewes. The day before the event the time was cut to 10 minutes – hardly enough time to do these animals justice but I thought maybe just an introduction was enough.

The time came and the bus rolled up and out rolled some of the most renowned breeders in the district. The alpacas drew a bit of curiosity as the farmers went round looking at the style of sheep this contestant had entered and gradually they started to drift towards the alpacas in the pen behind the ewes.

I was handed the microphone and I was on! At first it was only the younger blokes that came forward and were game enough to ask questions but as my 10 minutes stretched into $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour the older blokes couldn't contain their curiosity and were pressed against the rail quietly asking questions, their prejudices overcome by the potential of these animals as an asset to their stud breeding endeavors.

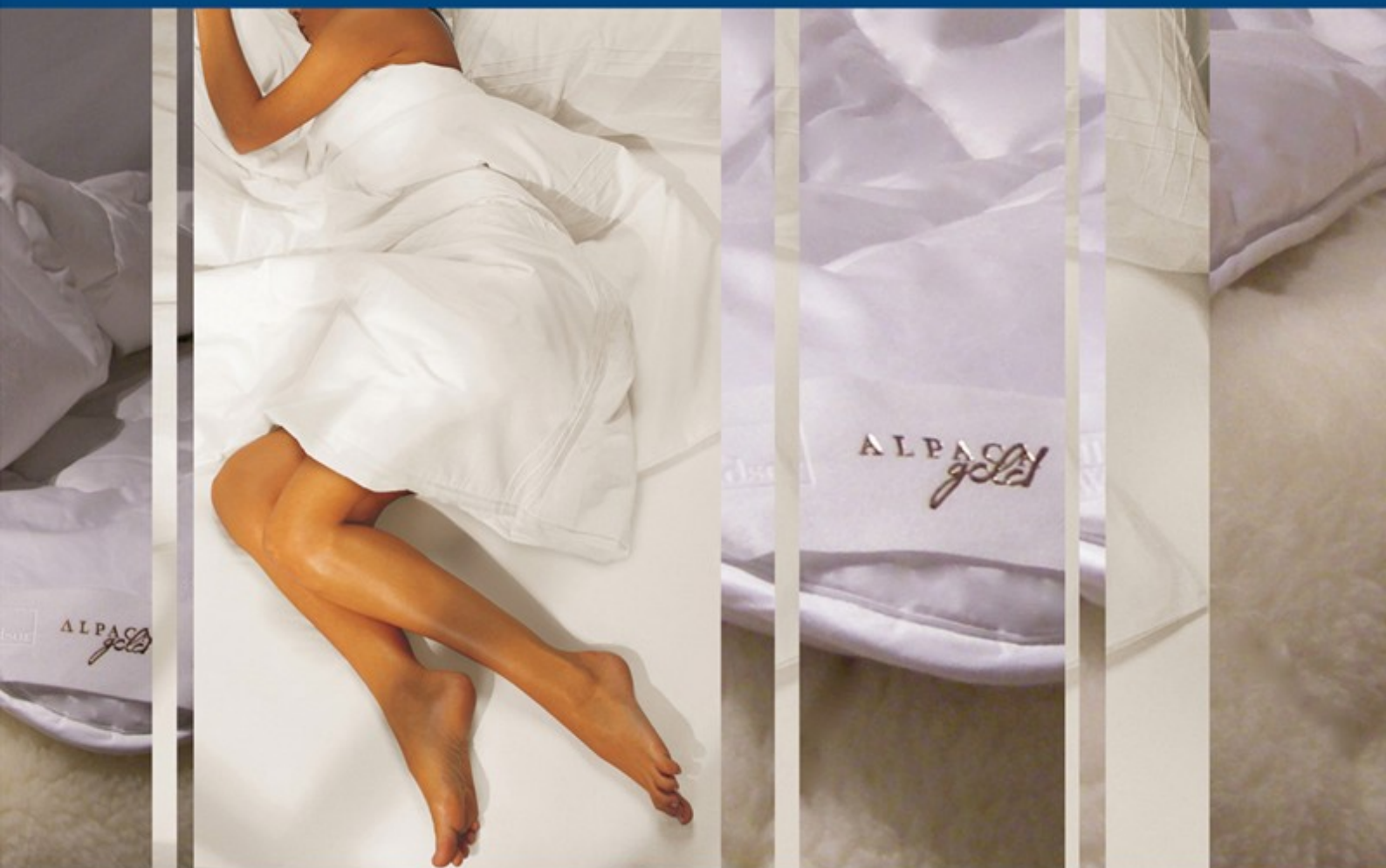


Some of the ladies having a look at the boys while their husbands looked at the ewes that were being judged



The questions came thick and fast and in the end the attendees had to be shooed back onto the bus as they were late for their next stop. I had already been asked to find two for one sheep classer who had a couple of hundred ewes at home.

Over the next week the phone was running hot with large scale farmers looking for Johnes accredited preferably white or light fawn wethers ready to work! I had no wethers for sale so it was a case of handing people a list of our members to have a ring around and see who could help them.



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Walking the Walk



For twenty years and more, the Australian alpaca industry has been talking the talk, explaining how the alpaca industry is a natural fit for Australia's climate and agricultural history, and how one day Australia might be riding the alpaca's back in the same way as we once rode the sheep's back to national prosperity.

Those notions may seem a little old-fashioned, given the rapidly evolving global economy and the new paradigm of ecological sensitivity and sustainability governing our lives, but the alpaca industry is not without its own significant advantages in those contexts, most especially the latter.

But for 20 years and more, alpaca breeders have been extolling the virtues of the alpaca: its silky soft luxurious fibre, its "designer-green" characteristics, its ideal place in an agri-economy that has already 200 years of accumulated expertise and experience in taking a foreign wool-bearing species and turning it into an international benchmark for fine wool. During the last 20 years we, as an industry, have been very focused on improving the species through selective breeding, applying our International Alpaca Registry (IAR) to implement the Across-herd Genetic Evaluation (AGE) programme, and applying scientific methodology in the form of advanced artificial breeding techniques, such as embryo transfer, and the SRS® breeding system, to accelerate the rate of genetic improvement.

All these principles have been applied on the premise that the Australian alpaca industry will inexorably evolve into a viable commercial enterprise, with income based on the sale of product. The focus of that discussion has always been fleece, clearly the most unique and captivating product of the industry, but must eventually include sales of stud stock, meat for human or pet consumption, pelts, and live animal exports. Ultimately, even exports of semen are destined to be a part of that commercial scenario.

Until now, we have just been talking the talk. Realistically, most alpaca breeders have been content to absorb a loss, especially if tax deductible, or have been aiming at profits underwritten by a strong demand for stud stock, stud services, or agistment. Others have been happy to subsidise a lifestyle extravagance, based simply on the enjoyment of showing and networking with like-minded breeders. Fleece production has been something of a by-product, with many breeders choosing to stockpile their fleece rather than selling at a loss.

That scenario is about to change.

With rising prices on offer for quality fleece, and falling demand for stud stock and services, many breeders are starting to think in terms of the value of their woolclip, and what return it can offer on their considerable investment. Meanwhile, breeders are typically finding their fencelines bulging, their feedstock reserves diminishing, and their overheads rising.

Illawarra Alpacas, in considering these factors, has made the decision to walk the walk.

With over 700 alpacas on our 250 coastal acres, we were beginning to feel the pressure on pasture and manpower. Our practice for almost 20 years has been to register every live born alpaca, keeping the males up to our open females in hand matings over two prolonged autumn and spring mating seasons, fleece sampling all alpacas annually, and recording both total and segmented fleece weights annually for our records.



We have, in most years, entered all our two year old progeny in the AGE, and used exclusively those males identified by skin testing as suited to an SRS breeding programme. We have spent large sums of money on manpower to manage and feed our herd of alpacas, on embryo transfer programmes, on veterinary treatments to ailing alpacas, and on trucking in supplementary feed.

For reasons already known and understood by most Australian breeders, that state of affairs had to change following the untimely death of Harriet Davison one year ago. That single unhappy circumstance had, amongst other immeasurable losses, robbed me of the equivalent of two fulltime dedicated and expert employees, without which the very viability of our operation was under threat. The decision was therefore made to change the model.



I sought advice as to where I could find broadacres suited to wool production, but with pasture unaffected by excessive burr and thistle. We all know the annoying habit enjoyed by alpacas of rolling in dust, and I wanted to avoid the vegetable matter which could notoriously contaminate and downgrade alpaca fleeces.

Dr Jim Watts, of SRS® Alpacas International, our breeding consultant, advised me of a small area in the New England tablelands, bounded by Uralla, Walcha and Bendemeer, which was free of fleece contaminants, enjoyed a summer rainfall with reliable pasture, and was the heart of Australia's finest merino wool production.

He referred me to Peter Lytton-Hitchins, a highly successful and enterprising fine wool Merino breeder of up to 30,000 SRS® Merino sheep, on 14,000 acres of high altitude (3000 ft) granite soils and native grasses at Kyabra Station in Kentucky.

I met with Peter during the 2010 Australian Alpaca Nationals, at nearby Armidale, and I immediately sensed a synergy in our respective philosophies and aspirations.

I subsequently visited Kyabra Station after the Nationals, and a plan was born.

The plan was to transport up to 300 alpacas to Kyabra as soon as arrangements could be made, mostly open females, recently shorn, and drawn from the middle two quarters of the herd in terms of age and quality. The plan was to leave the best females at Illawarra for ongoing top end matings, both natural joinings and embryo transfer campaigns, together with an appropriate number of female recipients.

Mothers with cria at foot, and aged females were considered ineligible for transport to Kyabra, as well as weanlings. A number of wethers would be sent for sale off farm to New England sheep breeders as herd guardians, closer to the lambing season. Joinings would be undertaken in the autumn months, when research* has indicated that sperm quality and quantity is at its peak, and would be by paddock matings of certified and SRS® approved males, matched with herds of around 30 females, run separately over an 8 week period. Males will then be withdrawn prior to the onset of winter, and the females run with herds of pregnant ewes and alpaca wethers to guard against foxes during and after lambing.

Shearing is planned to be done over three days in September, timed to follow sheep shearing, and in a dedicated alpaca shearing shed. Midside sampling will be done three weeks before shearing, and fleeces classed into bins as they are shorn, to lines predetermined by potential fleece purchasers. Total fleece weights only will be recorded.

Criaing in Autumn, as determined by prior matings, will be in paddocks close to the station home, but will be essentially unsupervised. Those females which did not fall pregnant, and those having dystocias or stillborns, will be considered for culling.

*The predictive value of semen parameters for outcomes of intracytoplasmic sperm injection and in-vitro fertilization techniques. (MSc. Med. Thesis , 2007, University of Sydney).

Walking the Walk cont.

The annual cost of the operation will be based on a per annum price for alpaca agistment (calculated, adjusted, and paid quarterly, based on a herd census), to which must be added the cost of shearing, medications, tagging, manpower required for any additional activities or treatments, fleece tests and veterinary costs. Transport costs for the initial delivery will be factored in with costs for the first year. Newborn alpacas will not be registered on the IAR, despite being eligible by virtue of their being the product of known joinings between IAR registered females and certified males. Nevertheless, pedigree records of each animal will be kept.

Those animals born at Kyabra and considered to be of exceptional quality will be registered on the IAR and repatriated to the Illawarra herd, whilst any born on farm at Illawarra that are considered to be of less than exceptional quality will be exported to Kyabra. The entire Illawarra herd was ear tagged with Gallagher RFID sheep ear tags prior to separation to better identify and record animal movements, trait data and treatments. Those tags are readable with a Gallagher "wand", which communicates wirelessly by Bluetooth with a portable TSi Gallagher herd management computer and Ruddweigh scales, to be employed on both farms.

Opportunities for commercial sales will be explored wherever and however they arise. Best quality males and females will be offered for export. Culled females and wethered males will be offered for sale as live animals, including herd guardians and pets, or as carcasses for human consumption or pet meat, depending on age and condition. Pelts from sacrificed animals will be collected and tanned, and sold into a separate market. These markets will be underpinned by a continuing and guaranteed supply, which should strengthen as herd numbers rise. Statistics regarding management and development will be shared with the Australian alpaca industry as a potential template on which to model similar commercial enterprises.

An early problem was to answer the question of how best to transport 300 alpacas.

I initially sought advice from other breeders who had transported significant numbers of alpacas within Australia, but could find none who had undertaken overland transport of alpacas in these numbers. It seemed that the only trucking option for alpacas in these numbers was that of traditional cattle crates, the single alternative of sheep crates being too small for their long-necked cousins. The problem was that cattle crates had an open wire mesh set onto the metal floor, good for cattle to secure traction, but unsuited to alpacas with their padded feet, and their preference for travelling in cush. David Hayter, of Hayter Transport, Exeter, had had previous experience in the bulk transportation of alpacas, albeit in lesser numbers, and offered a solution to the problem of wire mesh: a deep litter of sawdust.

The next challenge was choosing between B-doubles and conventional semi-trailers; the latter was the choice enforced upon us by road access up the one kilometre driveway to the holding yards at Illawarra.

The question of how many alpacas could be safely and comfortably loaded onto a two-tiered cattle crate was as yet unanswered, but we allowed for 100 alpacas per semi-trailer, a choice which proved to be just about right. Of course, when eventually we chose to move the alpacas, it was already March, and the animals were carrying 5 to 6 months of fleece. Had they been transported closer to shearing, we may have accommodated an extra 10 to 20 alpacas per truckload.

The final challenge was the process of loading and unloading alpacas into the trucks at Illawarra. We decided to employ our existing cattle race and ramp, which proved surprisingly manageable.



Loading the two tiers on each of the three semis took a little time, patience and effort, especially loading up the internal ramp to the top tier, but was eventually achieved in a little over two hours for the three trucks, with minimal frustration, and without misadventure. Unloading into the Kyabra cattle yards in the first light of the following morning, after the six hour trip through the cool of the night and a further eight hour rest stop at destination, was even easier, and the animals disembarked without apparent stress, and without the feared complication of a fracture or death in transit.

On farm, the wethers and females were managed together as one herd for the first week, and the males, which had been transported separately in their own compartments, were kept in yards, separate from the rest of the herd. All animals were drenched with injectable Cydectin LA on arrival. At one week, each of the 270 animals was drafted into one of 8 predetermined herds, comprising 7 herds of about 30 females each, and one herd of around 45 wethers. One stud male was allocated to each of the eight herds of females, and the herds then turned out into separate paddocks for paddock matings. After eight weeks, the males were withdrawn, and repatriated back to Illawarra.

Thereafter, the alpacas have been run as a single herd of joined females and wethers in the company of ewes and lambs. The herd will be rotated from one paddock to a fresh paddock every three or so days.

A wether sale was conducted in May, to coincide with the beginning of the lambing season, and a total of over 20 wethers have been sold off farm to local sheep breeders.

With the exception of two deaths, one being that of an elderly female, the alpacas have fared well, and tolerated the first half of winter with few problems. They are looking healthy, and recording good body scores.



Together with Millpaca Alpaca Stud, of Berry, we are developing an alpaca meat industry, supplying **Illawarra Prime Alpaca®** to selected restaurants and chefs, and tanned hides to eager purchasers.

We have identified a suitable abattoir in NSW which can guarantee clean and humane slaughter, leased a butchery in Nowra where we can store carcasses or cryovaccated meat prior to sale, and have secured the services of the recently retired, but experienced and enthusiastic, butcher to assist and advise in the assessment, dressing, and packing of the meat.

So it is that Illawarra Alpacas has taken the first tentative steps in walking the walk into commercial production, an experiment whose results we intend to share with the general membership of the Australian Alpaca Association.

We have a fairly good idea of our fixed per capita costs; the challenge is to balance that expense with per capita profits over a twelve month period, based on the sale of the full range of potential alpaca products.

Never before, in the short history of the Australian alpaca industry, has the talk of increased fleece weight and more valuable fleece on sound, well-muscled frames loomed larger; never before has the methodology of selective breeding been more critical to those breeders aspiring to commercial viability.

For those who share Illawarra's goals of commercial viability, now is the time to carefully consider the breeding objectives, methodology, and genetic resources which will lead them in that direction, to establish the foundation for a viable, commercial national alpaca industry which will supply the world with premium alpaca products



Student Education

Treechange Alpacas of Toodyay recently played host to 45 Lockridge Senior High School students by providing the venue for a combined full day excursion incorporating Agriculture, and Business Management & Enterprise learning areas.

Business teacher and alpaca breeder Angela Bartels put together the excursion package highlighting to students many of the business opportunities that the agricultural sector can provide.

Showcasing a 'real life' example of small business and creating cross curricular links with the agriculture department at Lockridge SHS, Angela encouraged students to understand traditional business issues such as finance, marketing and quality of product.

Students were also introduced to other issues pertaining to a stud industry on the verge of producing commercially viable fibre, such as the cost of feed, nutrition, stocking rates, etc.

Assisting Angela was guest speaker Isi Cameron from 1300Alpaca.com who discussed with students the importance of value adding and the benefits of e-commerce in small business.

Students were surprised to hear that Alpacas were first brought to Australia by Charles Ledger in the 19th century. Unfortunately this initial venture failed and alpacas were reintroduced into Australia in the late 1980s and have now been part of the farming landscape for more than 20 years.

Now successfully used as herd guards, protecting sheep, goats and chooks from foxes and other predators, alpacas form part of sustainable farming practice. Alpacas are environmentally friendly leaving a smaller ecological footprint than the native kangaroo and are more efficient feeders than sheep.

Add to that the current price of alpaca fibre which can be as high as \$65 per kilo, the industry has the foundations for a very productive and viable future.

Many of the students had never seen an alpaca up close so the students were provided with some basic knowledge and an introduction to the new arrivals at Treechange: spring cria. Students were given the opportunity to feel the soft handle of the fleece and weigh the cria to ensure weight gain was progressing at the appropriate rate.



At morning tea break, students were treated to home-made alpaca-shaped biscuits (*definitely no alpacas were harmed during the baking process*).

Later students were split into three groups and all were encouraged to take part in the hands-on activities



Safety for both students and livestock was a priority during the day and the first activity involved instructing students on how to hold an alpaca, put on a halter and commence halter training.

The second group were involved in pregnancy testing using both spit-off and electronic methods. The final group became fleece assessors in a mini competition, using their new found skills to select the 'champion fleece'.

Alpacas can be incorporated into Science, Photography, D & T, Business, English, and S & E subject areas.

For ideas on how you can incorporate them into your teaching program please contact:

Angela Bartels Lockridge SHS WA 08 9378 0200.
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Out & About in Alpaca Month

National Alpaca Month Activities in Mudgee

Alpaca owners and breeders in and around the town of Mudgee in the AAA Central Western Region of New South Wales made a concerted effort to promote their alpaca businesses in the area during National Alpaca Week.

The main event was the "alpaca expo" on May 14. This was a relatively informal and low key display aimed at getting interested members of the public up close and personal with alpacas and their owners. The event was sited and timed to coincide with the local Lions Club markets in Lawson Park. Most of the many visitors to the markets took the time to cross Church Street to see the alpacas and shop for alpaca scarves, beanies, fleece and yarn.

We estimate that more than 600 people took the time to pet an alpaca, purchase merchandise or chat to the representatives of the 8 alpaca studs that participated. One measure of the success of the expo was that, just for the day, our site became an impromptu stop on the route of the local winery tour bus service. The expo was organised and promoted by veteran AAA member Judy Kane of East Station Alpacas and I know that all of those who participated would like to give her a well-earned vote of thanks. Dale Brown of Ravenswood Alpacas assisted Judy with promotional material and printing.

The expo was publicised in local papers and on local radio, including a morning interview between Marilyn Nichols of Woodford Farm Alpacas and Andrew Dunkley on ABC Western Plains Radio.

Other promotion included placing notices, brochures and flyers in venues like the local livestock feed merchants and placing banners promoting the event in the main street and on the site for the week beforehand.

Mudgee Library allows local groups in the community to use the library windows for displays to promote their activities and events. A display about alpacas occupied the library windows for the week prior to the expo. The library display was aimed at promoting the expo and providing an insight into the breadth and depth of information available about alpaca health and husbandry, fleece production and value adding.

The 8 participating studs at the Alpaca Expo were: Yarandoo, East Station, Poets Corner, Joleen, Keiana Lodge, Sayantsi, Greyleaves and Ravenswood. *By Melanie Brown*



The Hawkesbury Blue Mountains Region took a slightly different approach to National Alpaca Week in 2011.

Thirteen studs took part by volunteering to open their doors to the public over one or more days in May. Each stud did its own promotion by getting together into local groups and organising advertising in the local press, information centres and wherever else they could leave advertising material.

Since Hawkesbury show took place in May, we decided to take advantage of the huge numbers of visitors to the three day show by displaying alpacas on the Sunday, the day after the alpaca judging.

We had a large marquee to shelter about 20 alpacas, including some cute cria to draw the crowds.

Fortunately, the weather was kind and crowds flooded into the Hawkesbury Showground to enjoy the rides, events and animal displays with their families. ►



►The marquee was overflowing with visitors for most of the day, directed to our area by arrows and large NAW posters. We were kept busy all day answering questions and handing out brochures and fliers. The general plan was to interest people in alpacas and encourage them to come to the Open Days which would take place over the next couple of weeks.

The stud Open days were attended with varying levels of success. Some studs reported far more visitors than others, but most considered NAW to have been a success and would like to participate again next year. Some suggestions for next year included the concentration of the weeks into just one or two rather than the whole month of May in order to allow a more concerted approach to promotion of the Open Days, larger posters and more promotion by the region and AAA.
By Sue Maynard

Alpacas on the green - The residents of Wesley Mission Brisbane's Parkview in Chermside, Queensland were treated to a special visit from a group of friendly alpacas, when the aged-care community celebrated National Alpaca Week recently.

"Alpacas on the Green" was a fun-filled day, giving residents the opportunity to relax in the sunshine in the company of the sociable alpacas.



Parkview is fortunate to have experienced alpaca breeder Mary Silver, of Silver D'arc Alpacas, working as an Assistant Nurse so she was able to organise the day.

"A few years ago I used to take residents on bus trips out to my farm.

They just loved all the animals, the chickens, dogs, cats, but especially the alpacas," recalls Mary. "It's great to bring the animals to them. One resident with dementia said to me that she remembered the black alpaca. They really strike a chord."

National Alpaca Week is held primarily to support the Alpaca industry in Queensland and provide information about owning and breeding the animals to communities and individuals.

"We like to give our residents a bit of spontaneity and fun in their day. Animals are a great way to do that," says Parkview Lifestyle & Leisure Coordinator Kay Crawl.

"It was something really different and families could relax outside with a sausage sizzle and drink and watch the animals," says Kay.

With temperatures dropping as winter comes into full swing, items and clothing made from alpaca wool proved popular as they were showcased throughout the day. The wool spinning demonstrations were also a winner with the crowd, provided kindly by Durunder Alpacas.

Pam Walker, who set up her stall showcasing alpaca-wool shawls and some jewellery items, also presented some felt flowers which were a big hit with the residents. "Pam has agreed to come and give us a demonstration of how to make the flowers, so we can show the residents and teach them to do it as well," adds Mary.

The wider community also got involved with the day, coming out to talk with the residents and enjoy the alpacas' company as well as a barbeque. "We had little goody bags to give out to the children who came, with a bit of information about the alpacas and some pictures," says Mary. The animals were very kindly brought by Buhai Hills Alpacas and Paltarra Park Alpacas, both long-established breeders. Parkview looks forward to celebrating with the alpacas again next year.

By Emma Tucker Marketing & Communications, Wesley Mission



Sydney Royal 2011

Sydney Royal Easter Show 2011

Alpacas were once again a major draw card at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April. The exposure for our industry at this major "city meets country" event is unmatched throughout the country. With over a quarter of a million visitors to the alpaca pavilions we made sure that every aspect of the alpaca world was presented for the information and entertainment of the public.

Of course, there was the usual Royal Show line up of superb alpacas presented to our judges, Jenny Jackson and Kate Mander. A new judging feature this year was the inclusion of Best Colours in Show, performed with an unusual twist. Jenny Jackson was equipped with a headset mike and talked the audience through the inspection and selection process as judging took place. This master class in animal selection was very enthusiastically received by exhibitors and fascinated the wider audience.

The strongly contested Junior Judging competition showed that we have some great young talent coming along to carry the industry forward.

Juniors and seniors were catered for in the revamped Handling and Showmanship classes, presided over by Lauren Shouvin from the USA. Lauren spent many hours over the weekend training a large group of youngsters ahead of the judging events, which were a great hit with the viewing public.

A much loved standard part of the alpaca event in Sydney is the fabulous fashion parade. Organised by Robin Fullerton, this fashion extravaganza attracts huge audiences three times a day and demonstrates in the best possible way the potential of alpaca in the fashion industry.

While all of this was going on the alpaca industry was being examined in detail by a fascinated public in the separate Alpaca Showcase Pavilion. In this venue, for the entire two weeks of the Easter Show, there were displays of alpacas, handling, shearing and processing demonstrations and committed breeders on hand to answer a myriad of questions.

Congratulations to all the winners and a big thank you to all the volunteers who worked so hard to achieve this incredible showcase of all aspects of alpaca.



Supreme suri halter – Kurrawa Man About Town ET (Kurrawa/Shanbrooke)



Supreme huacaya halter – Illawarra Bardot ET (Illawarra)



Supreme huacaya fleece - Forestglen Penzance (Forestglen)



Supreme suri fleece– Kurrawa Jax ET (Kurrawa)

2011 Sydney Royal Easter Show Statistics

Entries

48 suri
309 huacaya
20 suri fleece
160 huacaya fleece

Winners

Supreme suri fleece– Kurrawa Jax ET (Kurrawa)
Supreme suri halter – Kurrawa Man About Town ET (Kurrawa/Shanbrooke)
Most successful suri fleece - Bumble Hill
Most successful suri halter - Kurrawa
Most successful suri exhibitor in show - Kurrawa

Supreme huacaya fleece - Forestglen Penzance (Forestglen)
Supreme huacaya halter – Illawarra Bardot ET (Illawarra)
Most successful huacaya fleece - Alpha Centauri
Most successful huacaya halter - Shanbrooke
Most successful huacaya exhibitor in show - Alpha Centauri

Best Colour in Show

White Huacaya – Shanbrooke Invincible's Silken Lace ET
Light Fawn Huacaya – Illawarra Bardot ET
Med/Dark Fawn Huacaya – Millduck Manhattan
Brown Huacaya – Millduck Nikki-Louise
Roan Huacaya – Cedar House Altitude
Grey Huacaya – Wyona Watermark
Black Huacaya – Lillyfield Spades Are Trumps

White Suri – Kurrawa Man About Town ET
Light Fawn Suri – Kurrawa Hearts on Fire ET
Med/Dark Fawn – Pacofino Midas
Brown Suri – Keiana Lodge Brandie
Grey Suri – Not Awarded
Black Suri – Pacofino Black Sabbath

Champion Junior Judge – Ariana McCauley

Art – Bronwyn Munn

Photography – Alexandra Staples



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Emergency Animal Disease Update

"The Departmental vets arrived in overalls at daybreak, they were polite. By 8 am all the animals were yarded, the atmosphere was tense, the Departmental vets apologetic. No animals, people or vehicles were to move on or off the property, roads were closed – we were quarantined.

School was closed, mail stopped and no supplementary feed was available until cleared by the Local Disease Control Centre – food for the family will arrive when available under the local management arrangements. All appointments off farm were cancelled – we were in limbo!"

The above could be a summary from a sci-fi flick but in fact that is what is likely to happen when a major Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) gets a foothold in Australia.

At least one of our members witnessed a similar scenario in the UK Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001, and those affected by equine influenza in Australia in 2007 will recall the inconvenience of being 'locked up' at horse event venues, and the logistical problems of not only ensuring horse welfare through authorized delivery of feed, but also ensuring the accompanying humans were looked after in a way that didn't spread the disease further.

The social impacts of an EAD such as foot and mouth disease would be much more severe, particularly for the families on quarantined farms; apart from all the inconvenience, they must deal with the possible destruction of their animals and – as a default process – the disposal of those dead animals on their own farm, most likely through burying or burning.

To gain some protection for our members it is imperative that AAA Ltd becomes a member of the EAD Response Agreement. This vision for our Association drove the late Dr. Richard Dixon to achieve our first step in the process by becoming a livestock member of Animal Health Australia.

Having joined up we must now develop a levy system to pay our share of responding to a disease incursion in Australia. The response agreement sets out the formulae and systems for sharing the costs of disease eradication between the Commonwealth, the States and Territories and the livestock industries and the compensation arrangements for affected livestock owners.

If we do not join the Response Agreement, we cannot be certain of compensation; if the disease affected other species, such as FMD would, it would require the agreement of all the other affected livestock industries as well as governments, all of which do pay their share. How would you feel about another industry that did not accept their responsibility yet expected you to pay for them? This not a theoretical possibility, other industries are already discussing a penalty system for non-conforming industries.

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There is another more pressing requirement. If the disease strikes your property before your neighbour's then you may be the subject of a compensation claim for their losses. Being members of the Response Agreement gives member bodies protection from such claims.

Finally, the Response Agreement works on the principle 'who pays has a say'. By signing up, we would be ensured a seat at the table where decisions on the fate of our animals are made. Unfortunately diseases like FMD travel well and with a couple of hundred flights arriving from overseas daily our risk is high.

Australia is the only country in the world that has this unique Response Agreement between industries and governments; as a livestock sector potentially affected by serious EADs such as FMD, we should take advantage of that!

For further information on the Response Agreement, including a set of questions and answers, please follow this link. [Animal Health Australia - EAD Response Agreement](#)



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