Alpaca Advice

A year on the farm with eAlpaca

With thanks to Fiona Vanderbeek

The AAA's introduction of the revolutionary new on-line alpaca registry and show system, eAlpaca, in November 2017 has transformed the way the individual breeder can manage all their alpaca transactions. This advice sheet provides a broad overview of the way eAlpaca may be used through the year. Not everyone will use all the features, and we all vary in when we do things through the year. This advice presumes that you have cria born between September-November and/or March-May, and register your cria when they are around six months old…

July-September

The start of the financial year, and it is winter, heading into spring by the end of the quarter. A relatively quiet time on many farms, so a time to catch up on some administration.

Check your browser (no, not the alpaca browsing in your paddocks….)

To ensure eAlpaca functions at its best for you it is important you use an up-to-date browser, such as Google Chrome, Firefox or Safari…. Please do not use Internet Explorer…. This is an old and unsupported browser and you may experience difficulties with how eAlpaca functions.

Have you renewed your AAA membership?

By now you will have received a renewal notice (1 June) and a follow-up reminder (last week of June) from eAlpaca. You can quickly and instantaneously renew your membership via eAlpaca. If you haven't renewed your membership by 1 July, you will only be able to access eAlpaca to renew, transfer animals out of your herd or issue sire authorities (the latter two features are permitted to allow those leaving the industry to sell down their herds, and remain activated for 12 months after a membership has lapsed). For all your on-line eAlpaca transactions you will need a debit or credit card; transactions are processed via the secure NAB Transact facility.

Are your membership details up to date?

Use the Manage Account page to check and edit your membership profile – this includes your email addresses, website, property address (including your PIC), postal address, phone numbers and your privacy settings. You can also upload a copy of your logo and a photo to personalise your Member Profile page.

Are your herd details up to date?

It is ideal to update individual alpaca's details whenever needed but at least once per year it is recommended you do a Herd Inventory, found in the Manage Herd section of eAlpaca. This feature allows you to go through your entire herd and quickly update colour changes and changes to the animal's status (eg. Dead, Sold, Non-Breeding, Exported). **Note** *"Sold" should only be used for alpacas which have been sold "off register" – that is, to someone who is not going to be using them in a future breeding program – typically those sold as pets, herd guards or for meat. If you sell an animal to a non-AAA member, but who is considering joining the AAA in the future, you should use the Animal Transfer process. "Non-Breeding" can be used for males being castrated or females considered unsuitable for breeding.*

Q-Alpaca annual return

Now is also the time to renew your Q-Alpaca membership including your annual stock return. You can pay your renewal fee and do your annual return via eAlpaca. You just need to print the paperwork for signature by your vet and submission to the AAA office for final approval.

Disclaimer: The advice given here is of a general nature. More detailed information for your area may be provided by an agronomist, veterinarian or other expert with local knowledge.

Tax returns

From My Account, select View Financials and you can view or download tax invoices for all your eAlpaca transactions.

Start planning the next breeding season

Now is the time to start planning the next season's mating combinations. Assume that this season you are initially going to use your own males, but want to check the mating combinations to be sure they aren't too close, but do perhaps include a degree of line-breeding (up to 12.5% is generally considered acceptable). Using the Linebreeding Calculator, you can either select one female from your herd and then enter up to three possible sires (Dam with Sires), or enter one certified male and up to three possible females (Sire with Dams). If you are new to interpreting Inbreeding Coefficients, there is a summary of what the numbers mean, and to make it very clear any Inbreeding Coefficient over 12.5% will be displayed in red, to show that this combination may be too closely related.

October-December

It's spring, the weather is warming up, and life on the farm is getting busy with cria being born, matings underway and shearing season upon us.

Have you got enough IAR tags?

With new cria being born, and the previous season's drop ready to register, you are going to need enough IAR tags. To order more tags, go to Manage Herd and then select Order IAR tags; these tags will then be allocated to your herd for use in registering cria under your prefix(es).

Registering your cria

Just go to "Register animal" from your dashboard screen and fill in the form. If you don't own the sire of the cria, there may already be a sire authority ready for you to apply, or if not you will be asked if you'd like to send a request to the owner of the sire; you won't be able to complete the cria registration until this has been approved. You will need to have enough IAR tags allocated to you to register your cria; you cannot register a cria without assigning it an IAR tag number from those allocated to your herd. You can check your tag allocations in Manage Herd.

Remember that the more cria you register in each financial year, the greater the discount you will receive!

If you have males that are not likely to be used for breeding or entered in shows, you can record them, free of charge, by selecting "Inactive Male" as the animal's sex. An Inactive Male must not have an IAR tag inserted in its ear as it is not a registered alpaca; they should be identified by your own herd management ear tag. If at a later date you decide to register an Inactive Male you can pay the relevant registration fee and upgrade him to Active; at this point he will need an IAR tag inserted and recorded in eAlpaca.

If you have a large number of cria to register and don't want to enter them one at a time, you can use the Bulk Upload button at the top right of the Register Animal page… this will allow you to upload data from a csv file and will be a considerable time saving if you have a large herd.

Issuing and approving sire authorities

If you have a certified male whose services you sell to other breeders, you can create the necessary sire authorities (previously known as "A4s") in eAlpaca, so that when the cria are born the dam's owner can register them without delay. Select Register Sire Authority from the dashboard and fill in the form. The owner of the female will receive an email confirming the creation of the sire authority and it will be stored against that female's name for use in registering the subsequent cria (even if the dam changes ownership before birth of the cria).

As described above, if you don't create a sire authority in advance, when a cria is born, its owner may request that you create one. In this case you will receive an email with a link to eAlpaca; you simply need to select Approve and the sire authority will be created (and the person who requested it will receive notification that it is approved).

Shearing

Spring time is shearing time! This is often the time when we realise an alpaca's colour has changed from when it was registered, or we perhaps discover it has a previously unnoticed spot. You can edit these details either from the individual alpaca's Animal Profile page or via the Herd Inventory (in Manage Herd).

If you want to print a list of your animals to help manage your shearing you can do this from My Animals. If you want to sort the order of your animals before printing the list (perhaps to sort them by colour, or age) you can do this by clicking on the relevant heading in the My Animals table.

January-March

It's mid-summer and heading towards autumn. Time to think about buying some new animals, selling some others, introducing some new genetics and entering some shows.

Research before you buy

Whether you are buying animals privately from a breeder, at auction or responding to an advertisement, it is always good to do some research before you go and inspect the animal. eAlpaca offers plenty of features to help you with this.

If you want to know more about a particular animal you have seen listed for sale, the first thing is to enter the name or IAR number in the Search Animals – Basic Search tool and bring up the Animal Profile page. Here you will find all the current information on the alpaca, including its full pedigree and its progeny.

If you are concerned the animal you are looking at may have too much in-breeding, use the Linebreeding Calculator to look up that particular animal and check its Inbreeding Coefficient (remember, under 12.5% is a good rule of thumb).

Then if you decide to go and view the animal you may like to print off a copy of its pedigree history to take with you – you can do this from the animal's Profile page.

The Sales Listing, where any AAA member can list animals for sale at a small fee is available. As all the pedigree information is retrieved from the registry, entering an animal for sale is extremely quick and simple.

Alpaca transfer

Now you've selected those animals to buy, the owner will need to initiate their transfer to you, using Transfer Animal on the dashboard. If you have purchased multiple animals from the same breeder, they can all be added to the one transfer using Add This Animal after each animal to be included in the sale. The vendor will then indicate who is paying the transfer fees to the AAA if they are paying, they will go straight to the payment gateway and the transaction will be complete. Both vendor and purchaser will receive emails confirming the transaction is complete. If the purchaser is to pay the transfer fees, they will receive an email notifying them that this transaction is ready to pay for. In the meantime the animals which have been sold will appear in the purchaser's herd, but will be deactivated (and coloured red) until the fee has been paid. If payment is made within 30 days, the Early Bird discounted transfer fee will apply. There are also discounts for purchases of 20 or more Active animals from one vendor, in one transaction – good when you are getting started or buying the herd of someone who is scaling down.

Obviously the same process applies for animals which you sell to other AAA members. So, what happens if you sell an animal to someone who is not a member of the AAA? If the animal you are selling is likely to form part of a breeding program in the future – perhaps the purchaser is new to alpacas and has not yet joined the AAA – you should still use the Animal Transfer screen, and when you reach the question "Is the buyer a member?" select "No". By entering their name and email address (plus location) we will be able to identify them when they do join AAA and link the purchased animals to their name (they will also then need to pay the relevant transfer fees at that time to activate the animals in their new herd).

Selling as herd guards or pets

If the alpaca you sell is likely to be used in a breeding program now or in the future, you should use the Animal Transfer feature to ensure it remains active on the registry. If, however, you are selling animals as pets, herd guards or for meat there is no requirement to transfer them into new ownership; for these alpacas simply go to the animal's Profile and change its Status from Active to Sold.

Create shares in an animal

Thinking of buying shares in a new stud male, or selling shares in one you own? This is done from the Animal Profile page, by selecting the Create Ownership Shares feature. From here you can add the name of a new co-owner, and indicate who is to be the nominee owner. You can also remove the name of an existing owner – this, of course, requires that person to give their permission. In fact all changes to co-ownership require the permission of the other owners in the syndicate, who will receive an email advising them of the requested change in order that they can log into eAlpaca and approve it.

Planning some outside matings?

Perhaps you feel it is time to bring in some new genetics to your herd by purchasing some stud services or leasing a male. First thing is to look for a male who meets your requirements – try using the Advanced feature in Search Animals. You can use this tool to build up a detailed profile of exactly what you are looking for – for example, a grey huacaya certified male, aged less than 6 years, and located in WA. Then, if you find what you are after you may want to contact that breeder in the hope you can purchase some stud services.

And if you find a male (or indeed a female) that you would really like to use in your herd, did you know that you can set up a lease in eAlpaca? If you and the animal's owner agree to a lease arrangement it will mean that for the period of the lease you can use the animal as though it is yours – so, if it is a certified male, you will not need sire authorities to register his cria, and if it is a female, the cria born would have your herd prefix. You can find the lease feature in Manage Herd.

Show Time!

Shows happen throughout the year and across the country… and almost all use eAlpaca as the show entry system. You can see the shows that are open for entries via the dashboard in eAlpaca, where you will find show results listed. To enter a show, select the show from the Shows Open for Entry screen, and follow the instructions… it really couldn't be easier and will only take moments to enter your show team (and it will automatically place the animal in the correct class, based on breed, colour, sex and age).

April-June

There are still a couple of other features to explore in eAlpaca… did you know you can set up an agistment agreement with another breeder?

Agistment agreements

This feature can be found in Manage Herd and is particularly useful both in true agistment arrangements – where someone else's animals are kept on your property and managed by you – and also for breeders who work very closely together and want to be able to do things such as share IAR tags or register cria on behalf of someone else. When setting up an agistment authority in eAlpaca, remember that you are giving the agister the right to: edit and update inventory of your alpacas, register cria on your behalf and issue sire authorities on your behalf. They cannot, however, transfer your animals or set up multi-ownership partnerships.

Ordering DNA and male certification kits

Remember that you need DNA kits for a variety of reasons – to certify a male, record an ET donor female, for sire/cria verification checks, or to record a female with an unknown pedigree or an imported alpaca. You can order the various kits via Manage Herd.

Male certification

This is one of the final features to become fully integrated into eAlpaca, as we first need to get vets set up as users of the system. Before long, however, you will be able to indicate the male for certification on eAlpaca, get the vet to complete and submit the form and pay for the certification. Once received, the certification will be authorised.