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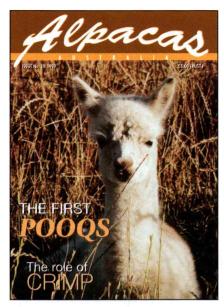
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### A New Year's Resolution

There are only three years to go to the turn of the century — and for me, born in 40s, the year 2000 represents a time once only conceived of in science fiction stories.

In fact, the dawning of 1 January 2000 is the start of just another day. Unless we, or some other disaster, have managed to destroy either the human race or the earth itself, this new day will be as full of joys and tragedies as any other

Nevertheless, we tend to use dates as mile-stones, especially when we are developing new undertakings.

In Australia, the alpaca industry is still new — less than a decade new. We have quoted the 21st century as the time when an industry that is commercially feasible will have emerged from its developmental phase.

So how have we progressed?

Although it is not my prerogative to perform such an assessment, it seems to me that there are three key areas upon which an assessment could be based. They are: increase in animal numbers, progress in fibre quality development and industry credibility.

It is the third area, credibility, about which I would like to comment.

There are thousands of hours devoted to the development of alpaca fibre, involving everything from animal management to scientific work on fibre analysis and development.

In a business sense, this work is done for commercial gain, which is reason enough in itself. The side benefit, in an industry sense, is that success for an individual means a step forward for all.

However, credibility is not gained merely by the achieving of results, but by also making the claims and proving them to the market.

That's why credibility depends so much on good communication. There's no point in making great (or even small) advances if that information is not communicated to people who ought to know. What's more, there's no long term success for commercial enterprise unless that enterprise is perceived to be credible.

Credibility establishes market confidence in an industry and industry confidence in itself. Alpacas Australia is part of that credibility enhancing process. While it is produced for Association members, it can be lent, sold or given away to spread the industry message in the marketplace.

Those of you who have been Alpacas Australia readers over the years will no doubt have noticed that there is a small group of regular contributors. Each in his/her individual way, is an industry leader. These contributors know that information sharing, while it may also be good self-promotion, is crucial to the overall development of the alpaca industry. In other words, it's damn good business practice, especially in a developing industry, where the interests of leaders and industry are inextricably entwined.

In this issue of Alpacas Australia: Trudi Barnett talks with women who are shearers and tells us about their shearing techniques; Jenny Morgan is endeavouring to get alpaca garments in front of bigger and better audiences; and I report my interview with Alan Hamilton and Cherie Bridges on how they set up the first POOQS.

We know there are more stories out there, even though they don't always land on our in-tray. My New Year's Resolution (need you ask?) is to try even harder to seek out every piece of available information on what's happening in the alpaca industry.

Our aim is to turn the industry's incredible success into communicable, credible news.

Happy New Year!

Carol Hosking, Editor

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# Women on the cutting edge

#### by Trudi Barnett

Women are not just there for the cuddly jobs.

Every year, one of the major tasks we have to undertake with our alpacas is their annual shearing. It is the crop, if you like, that our alpacas produce on a yearly basis.

We shear for many reasons and at differing times in a variety of climatic regions. We would aim to shear in a dry climate before the pasture goes to seed, thus eliminating too much fleece contamination.

We take into account the time of gestation for our pregnant females as another consideration.

Whenever we choose to shear and at whatever suitable time of year, there is always an essential component: an experienced and careful shearer.

If the word "shearer" conjures up for you images of sweaty, lithe men in oil-stained blue singlets, then I would like to introduce you to another shearing image.

It wasn't difficult for me to find three women alpaca shearers. Women have a high profile in the alpaca industry. They are certainly not just there for the cuddly jobs.

These three women are not great muscled hulks with protruding biceps. They are, in fact, gentle and elegant and each one has adapted herself to shearing alpacas with competence and calm dexterity. Each employs a slightly different method but in the end the result is the same. Maybe, from reading this, we will all be inspired to take up the shears and have a go. After all, shearing is now part of life for each alpaca breeder, every year.



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#### BARB'S STORY

Barbara Dobson, with her business partner Liz, has been breeding alpacas for approximately five years.

Anyone who has ever visited their property has been greeted by a menagerie of livestock.

At one time I counted a selection of twenty-eight species all living happily side by side. The atmosphere is one of pure indulgence for those who love all animals and enjoy the calming serenity of uninhibited alpacas, llamas, goats, sheep, kangaroos and various poultry family members. (Not to mention a demolition team of two completely unruly galahs!)

Barb is one of those people who has to have a go at everything. Absolutely nothing is too difficult or out of her scope. She applies herself to all endeavours with great enthusiasm and energy. Needless to say she provides her friends with a lot of fun and a wealth of inspiration.



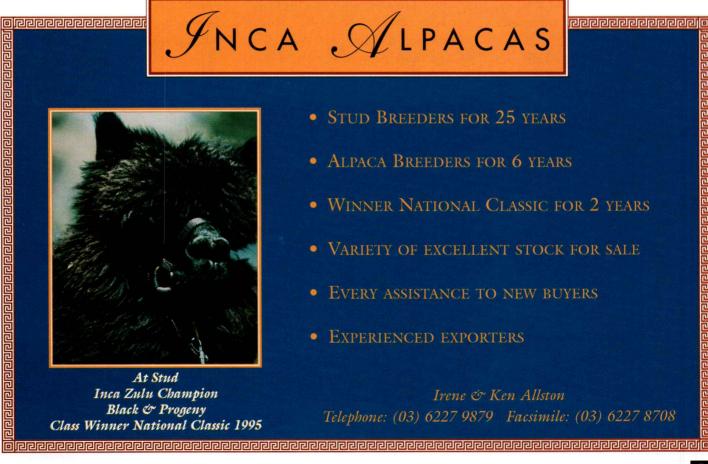
Barb Dobson with her llamas.

Barb's first experience with a shearing handpiece involved the none-tooglamorous occupation of crutching sheep, about ten years ago. It was around the time that she enjoyed a truly Australian experience in a working woolshed.

Fascinated by the actual shearing as she worked with other rouseabouts, she was invited by a shearer to try her hand with the tools of the trade.

This gave her the knowledge, for use in later years, to shear her own sheep.

As a natural progression, Barb then



decided that she would try her hand at alpaca shearing. At first, a contractor was used to shear her alpacas. However it wasn't long before Barb felt confident to tackle the job herself. She found that the fleece of an alpaca came off far more easily than that of a merino. Also the physical stress on the shearer's body was not so intense when shearing alpacas.

Barb based her shearing method on the one she saw demonstrated at the very first National Alpaca Auction with the alpaca lying on its side. She uses restraining ropes and a timber spacer. A yachting cleat is used to draw up the rope and take in the slack.

Barb shears on a timber platform approximately two metres wide and three to four metres long. This gives both shearer and handler enough room to move around the alpaca.

She uses a portable, electric shearing plant with a flexible down tube and a narrow handpiece. With the handpiece Barb uses some narrow stud combs with a slightly raised surface which allows some fleece to stay on the alpaca. It also makes it difficult to accidentally cut the animal.

First Barb shears off the belly area followed by the legs and then the neck fleece off one side, leaving the saddle to last.

The alpaca is turned and its other side shorn in the same fashion, always keeping oil up to the handpiece to ensure it is kept as cool as possible, and moving the handpiece through the fleece.

Once the shearing is complete Barb will undertake any other jobs that need to be done, such as toe-nail and teeth trimming. It's so much easier for alpaca and handler whilst the alpaca is still restrained. The whole operation takes about ten to fifteen minutes.

Barb feels that in a herd situation where a lot of alpacas have to be shorn this is a quicker and less stressful method than having the animals haltered and standing up.

However, for a small number of well trained animals, she also recommends hand shearing. She hand shears her llamas this way as she finds this method more suitable for the larger animal.

Barb is very talented to be able to apply both the hand and the electric method of shearing to suit all members of her camelid family.

#### ANNEMARIE'S STORY

Annemarie O'Connor is a tiny young woman, svelte and graceful, whom you would expect to appear in a Vogue magazine rather than a shearing shed.

Although a fairly new alpaca breeder, Annemarie is a highly accomplished one. With husband Darren she has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience in a very short space of time.

Annemarie was introduced to the art of shearing at a tender age. While still in high school she first tried her hand as a rouseabout in shearing sheds.

The chap who first taught Annemarie to shear was called Boss Carger, who is now in his eighties. Boss felt that women often made better shearers as their hands are more sensitive and they "feel" the fleece and the animal.

Annemarie also did an owner wool classer course as a young girl and was the only woman doing the course!

Annemarie's method of shearing is sectional. After each animal is shorn its fleece is grid tested, weighed and sorted. She is careful to make sure all her equipment is ready and in good working order before starting. Even the alpaca is prepared beforehand! Its fleece is lightly blown the night before shearing and the animal kept on the back lawn for cleanliness.

Both Darren and Annemarie hold the alpaca from one side and quickly flip it over on to its side. They use nylon webbing straps and avoid the use of a spacer.

Darren holds the head with the help of one of their three children. Throughout the shearing process they talk to and reassure the alpaca.

Annemarie starts by shearing the lower legs, followed by the belly and middle leg. Each section is cleared away after being taken off.

Next is the apron. At this stage she stops to oil the comb whilst the children clean up. She then shears the neck



Annemarie O'Connor and assistant, husband Darren.

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Purrumbete Portia

and carefully around the face and ears (leaving the bonnet). The fleece from the wither and around the tail are removed and the saddle is shorn last.

When she gets to the last long blow they all push the saddle as far under the back of the alpaca as possible (she likens it to changing a patient's bed). The animal is then quickly turned over so that she can finish taking the saddle off in one piece.

She finishes off by trimming around the ankles with clippers as they loosen the leg straps.

The O'Connors try to keep the shearing as quick and stress free as possible. Annemarie believes that, as she has become more relaxed about the shearing, so have her alpacas. Because her alpacas know and trust her, she feels she is the best person to shear them, being able to treat each alpaca as an individual.

#### JENNY'S STORY

When I first met Jenny Morgan I knew I'd met a lifelong friend. Jenny's just that kind of person, she's loving, caring and extremely knowledgeable when it comes to animal husbandry and, most of all, fleece evaluation.

They do say that behind every good man is a good woman and in this case (for those of you who have not met Gray's better half) I can highly recommend a visit.

Jenny is a unique alpaca shearer because she opts for the more difficult and time consuming practice of hand shearing. Without question, hand shearing is a definite skill, but Jenny assures me that, with confidence and patience, everyone is quite capable. In fact many of her agisters are encouraged under her accomplished guidance to have a go on their own

As with our other women shearers, Jenny's experience is born of earlier encounters with the back ends of sheep. It seems as good a place as any for us all to start — I know most farmers would be only too happy to offer a few mucky back ends for the cause.

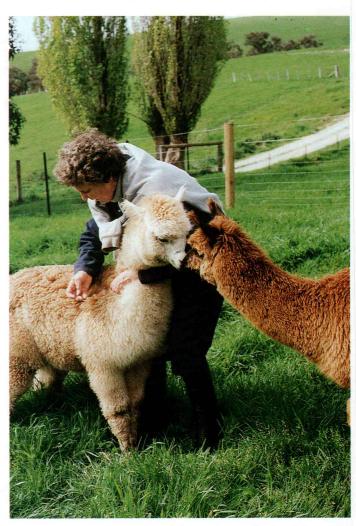
Jenny, as a mohair breeder, has also had a chance to sample more exotic shearing than the everyday sheep. She tells me that mohair goats are very difficult to shear as they move and scream a lot.

Jenny and Gray do get a faithful shearing friend by the name of Gordon Hart to shear all their young stock and boys. It is only the pregnant females that Jenny will not put through the "rack" as she calls it.

For her method of hand shearing she needs a patient friendly "post", a human one who must use the right combination of soothing and remonstrating tones as the moment demands. She whisks over the fleece, removing any debris, as a clean fleece is preferable. She tells me that, as with electric shearing, a wet fleece is impossible to shear.

Jenny's tools of the trade are actually dagging shears. With them, she starts at the tail, cleaning around it as if crutching and, with her left hand, feeling down along the back bone. She makes her first cut straight down the top line as far as the base of the neck.

Working over the animal she follows the fleece down on the right side. Jenny says it's amazing how easily you can tell whether you're cutting fibre or hair, it can be felt through the



Jenny Morgan with two of her beloved alpacas. She hand shears her pregnant females.

cutters in your hand. Cutting fleece "slides like butter", she says. However, cutting hair, "vibrates through your fingers", so that you know when you've reached that hair at the top of the hind leg. She carefully cuts out this piece of hair and leaves it to one side so as not to contaminate the saddle fleece.

She cuts the blanket off on the right side of the alpaca, removes it and starts on the left side.

Again working over the animal, she makes a cut down the shoulder which gives a guideline to where the fleece starts to deteriorate into the brisket. She then cuts from this line down to the tail. This fleece is then collected and she makes sure that no good blanket fleece has been left on the alpaca. As she says,

she then has a beautifully skirted saddle which can be cleared away.

Then the hard bit begins as the belly, legs and neck seem to take twice as long as the saddle. Jenny says this is not her favourite bit of shearing as it's not nearly so rewarding.

As she's shearing stud dams, Jenny doesn't believe the aesthetics are too important as she subscribes to the old saying that there is only one week between a good and a bad haircut!

It may seem to be an awful lot of trouble to go to, but Jenny's priority is the health of stud dams in advanced pregnancy. She freely admits that in the case of a large herd of late pregnant females this method would not be wholly viable.

Much can be learnt from hand shearing. Jenny believes that you learn so much more about fleece from handling it in this way. You achieve a special closeness with each individual alpaca and, if you're confident with the shears, you'll make a good job of it.

One of Jenny's most interesting observations was that when she shears black animals, her hands become jet black. It doesn't happen with any other colour and it's as if the colour bleeds.

Jenny hopes that one day someone will come up with an appropriate stress free method for our old late pregnant

In her own words, "We can put people on the moon, surely we can overcome this small problem".

I personally know of at least one stud that is now performing seasonal matings with their entire herd. This will certainly help with the problem of late pregnant girls at shearing time.

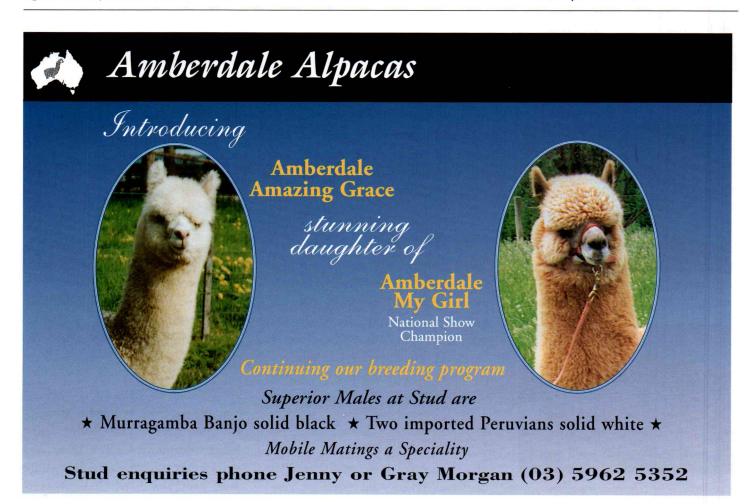
Well, now that you've met the women shearers, I hope they've inspired you all - both men and women. You don't have to be a spring chicken for this job either although, at heart all the above women are.

I take my hat off to all three. I've been through five shearings with my alpacas and, as yet, have not held a handpiece for longer than three seconds!



This year I think I'll just have to strike a blow, if only a small one. My excuse is that I sing better than my husband and naturally, we sing to our alpacas at shearing time. That's why you can't see me in the photo above. But I'm there, just out of picture singing my heart out!

Don't you?





#### REMEMBERING ARRAMURRAGUNDJI reflections on the use of herbs for alpacas

#### By Riki Marten



Lavender (Lavandula augustifolia)



Marigold (Calendula officinalis)



Silver Birch (Betula pendula)



St John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)

Growing and gathering your own herbs is simple, cost effective and healthy for yourself as well as for the alpacas. However, many of us do not have the time in our busy lives to attend to such joys. Proprietory herbal mixes for animals are sometimes available from stock feeders or saddleries, but a good relationship with a knowledgeable and reliable health shop operator can be of great assistance in buying bulk quantities. You can also go foraging and collect herbs (some farmers would almost pay you to come and cut blackberries). But make sure you don't gather from roadsides or any source where heavy metals or chemical residues could contaminate your harvest.

#### Aloe Vera (Aloe barbadensis)

A very ancient plant which now has been rediscovered. It is easy to grow in pots. Cut leaves and apply fresh gel. Can be used fresh on cuts and abrasions, skin tears after birthing, sunburn, exzema, ringworm and rashes. Excellent soothing and healing qualities. I prefer not to use internally, especially not during pregnancy.

#### Arnica (Arnica montana)

The ointment can dramatically reduce swellings and clear up bruising, reducing inflammation and pain. Use for bruises, sprains, strained tendons. Do not use on open cuts or broken skin. I have also found Arnica C6 homoeopathic tablets very effective in arthritic conditions.

## Bilberry (Vaccinium myrtillus)

Has a very good record for treating diarrhoea and is a mild vermifuge. Very

soothing to internal mucous membranes and a recommended nerve tonic. Anthocyanosides, which is among the active components, improves the function of capillaries. Studies have shown bilberry to be effective in the treatment of disorders associated with damaged capillaries and it improves the functioning of the retina. I have found it very useful for eyestrain and mild conjunctivitis, using a course of capsules.

#### Blackberry (Rubus spp.)

Alpacas adore blackberries. When we first put alpacas into paddocks with blackberry covered fences it took less than a month for the plants to have disappeared entirely. Blackberries are high in Vitamin C and organic acids. The leaves contain tannin and fructose and the whole plant is high in fibre. Eases diarrhoea and is a good general tonic especially in pregnancy. If possible, grow it in a contained area within a paddock where alpacas can graze as it grows through.

#### Blessed Thistle (Cnicus benedictus)

Still considered as one of the best herbs for promoting milk flow and it has an antibiotic effect particularly effective against staph infections. It has naturalised in Australia, being known as a weed of waste places, but I usually use powder from capsules and give as drench with yoghurt and honey.

#### Borage (Borago officinalis)

Very easy to grow. Will self seed rapidly. Often used as goat fodder. Dried leaves and flowers are a tonic and nervine. Very good for stimulating milk flow. Star flower oil which is now over-

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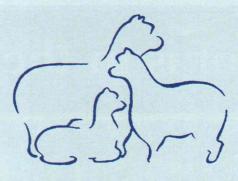
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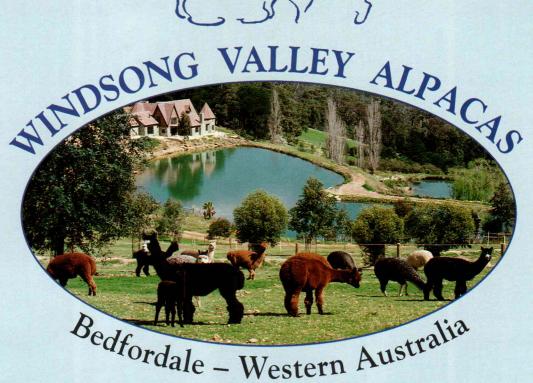


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taking evening primrose oil, is made from borage flowers. Borage contains alkaloid components, so treat carefully, do not overfeed and dry the leaves first.

#### Chamomile (Matricaria chamomilla) (Chamaemelum nobile)

One of the great herbs. Gentle soothing action. Used for gastritis, uterine and ovarian disorders, and as a sedative, blood tonifier and analgesic, antiinflammatory, anti-spasmodic, antiseptic. Especially for use in alpacas under stress: late pregnant females, weanlings and weanling's mums, animals to be trained, shorn or shown and females being serviced. At Samarkand we feed chamomile every day as part of a herbal tea mix used to dampen the feed. A pleasurable bonus is found in our garden and orchard, where all alpaca poo finds its way. Dozens of chamomile plants appear and we can recycle a valuable resource.

#### Comfrey (Symphytum officinale)

Excellent healing plant but, because of its alkaloid content, I recommend mainly external use. Comfrey contains allantoin which can be easily absorbed through the skin and promotes rapid cell growth. Historically it has been used to heal fractures (hence its common name Knitbone). Overseas it is widely used as a stock food and may be again here some day. It is a high quality green manure crop. Use as a poultice or compress with fresh pureed leaves on wounds and sprains.

#### Echinacea (Echinacea angustifolia)

One of the chief herbal immuno-stimulants in use today. Regular use can build resistance to a variety of infections including staph and strep. We use it for crias who are slow to pick up and for animals on antibiotics in a yoghurt, vitamin C, Pentavite and slippery elm drench.

#### Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)



Not to be confused with Hawkweed or other similar looking plants. Look for the Denta Lionis (the lion's teeth) in the leaves.

Most alpacas delight in dandelions. On a summer day in a fresh paddock one can watch the flowers disappearing before one's eyes. Leaves are also relished; they contain >4% potassium (DM). Dandelion is a digestive, kidney and liver tonic. As the alpaca seems to be a liver sensitive animal, this herb should be encouraged in pasture growth. It is also a blood cleanser, which allies it to skin diseases and rheumatism. It is high in vitamins A, B, C, niacin and riboflavin.

#### Elder (Sambucus nigra)



A herb of great antiquity, still widely used in Europe for respiratory complaints. The alpacas graze on the leaves, flowers and berries, and seem to use it as a tonic or bitter herb, never overeating. An infusion of the flowers can be used as an eyewash for conjunctivitis. Leaves can be used as an insect repellent.

#### Eyebright (Euphrasia officinalis)

Use the dried herb or diluted tincture as an eyewash against fly irritation, infected eyelids and conjunctivitis. Cold used teabags can also be held over the eye to help reduce swelling. (Have fun trying!)

#### Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare)

A rampant roadside herb in Tasmania and very easy to grow. Often used in Europe as goat fodder, especially for increasing milk yield. We find alpacas enjoy handfuls of the herb added to feed. Also has a soothing and calming effect on digestive processes.

#### Fenugreek (Trigonella foenum-gralcum)

Another very useful herb for the nursing mother as a milk stimulator and general conditioner after birthing. Use soaked or freshly ground seed (Asian food markets are a useful source of supply). Don't use during pregnancy as it is a uterine stimulant.

#### Garlie (Allium savitum)

No description needed for this one and its many qualities: antibiotic, antihistamine, anti-parasitic and immune booster. 2 -3 cloves per day, finely chopped. If soaked in olive oil the strong burning taste disappears and makes the plant more palatable. I also use garlic oil in yoghurt for crias.

#### Golden Seal (Hydrastis canadensis)

An indigenous North American herb which I find is a very effective antiinflammatory for both internal and external use. Can be used against gastro-intestinal disorders, for treating gastritis, colic, peptic ulceration, for healing the stomach lining, and for restoring intestinal flora. It is also widely used for liver dysfunction. I use capsules and tea. I also find Golden Seal ointment very valuable in treating external cuts and broken skin. Ideal for assisting the repair of tissue damage following an assisted birth.

#### Hawthorn (Crataegus laevigata)



Traditionally considered to have powerful magical properties, hawthorn branches have been nailed to stable, farm and barn doors to prevent lightning strikes.

Hawthorn hedges are endemic in Tasmania and to see them in flower in spring and the autumn berries is a tonic in itself. The leaves and berries (haws) are widely used in helping heart conditions. They are high in Vitamin C and leaves added to weanling feeds are a great tonic.

#### Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris)



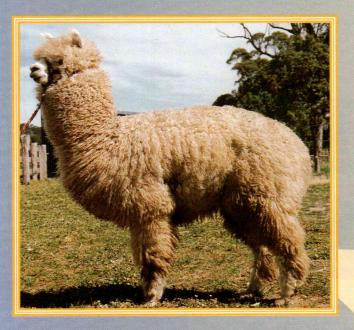
One of the herbs of the Andes we can still offer to alpacas. Fowler lists lady's mantle as one of the herbs commonly grazed by camelids in Peru. It is a blood tonic and anti-inflammatory and antidiarrhoeal. Widely known for use in all female disorders and is said to aid conception when used regularly over a month or two. Easy to grow. Use 1-2 handfuls per day in feed.

#### Nettle (Urtica dioica)

A wonderfully mineral rich plant, particularly in iron, calcium, and potassium, also Vitamin C which allows for ready absorption of the iron content. Many European people will remember young nettle tops served as spring greens.

For animals they are a rich spring tonic. Nettle hay is the most popular way of serving this herb. Horses, cattle, and alpacas are not enthusiastic about grazing growing plants but will eat it dried and mixed with feed. An excellent fleece conditioner and general tonic and milk stimulator for new mothers.

Easy to harvest (don't forget the gloves) when flowering. Dry on racks and use as hay.



Sire PERUVIAN BUENO **Dam PERUVIAN FAWNA** (23.3µ, SD 3.5µ, CV 15%)

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#### Parsley (Petroselinum crispum)

Minerally rich, especially in iron and copper, with Vitamin A and C. Contains apiol which stimulates the blood flow to the mucous membranes, digestive tracts and uterus. Often fed to sheep and goats in Europe to assist against foot disorders and to increase milk flow. I most often use it after birthing in new mum's feed and as a general tonic and pick-me-up.

#### Peppermint (Mentha piperita)

A spike of fresh mint can interest almost any alpaca. Another of the "daily" herbs we use at Samarkand. Peppermint relaxes the muscles of the digestive tract and its effects include anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic and carminative actions. For all gastric upsets and for general digestive well being, especially as alpacas seem sensitive to gastric ulcers. Extra in

the feed prior to shows, shearing or surgery can help neutralize any extra acidic effects.

#### Plantain (Plantago spp. incl P. lanceolata)

Often the bane of gardeners, but a highly respected herb for thousands of years, plantain is a major alternative fodder plant and another key grazing plant for alpacas in the Andes. The whole plant is useful, minerally rich, producing a soothing mucilage against gastric disorders, and also has antihaemorrhagic effects, is a diuretic and an expectorant. The leaves can be crushed and used as a poultice against stings, bites, and cuts. It is an essential part of our pasture and is always extensively grazed by the alpacas.

#### Raspberry Leaf (Rubus idaeus)

Another herb in everyday use at Samarkand. High in folic acid, iron and copper, vitamins A and C. It can be safely used through pregnancy, although not in large amounts in the first trimester. Raspberry leaf tea has a long history in animal and human use as a uterine toner, strengthening the pelvic muscles and ligaments to facilitate birth. Can help prevent retention of membranes and prevents prolapse. Also advised as a tonic for male animals, especially for infertility. The alpacas seem to thrive on it.

#### Red Clover (Trifolium pratense)

Another highly recommended pasture plant rich in iron and copper, an excellent blood cleanser. The flowers have a sedative effect and are also used against respiratory disorders. Also contains anti oxidant (tocopherol) and recent studies seem to indicate that its use reduces breast cancer in animals. Also useful for skin complaints and itching, as an infusion, cooled. Offer red clover hay to

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alpacas and watch the flower heads vanish.

#### Rose (Rosa canina)

Dog rose or wild rose. A pocketful of rose leaves and the alpacas will usually be climbing over each other to get at them. Use rose hips as well, chopped in the feed. Apart from being a well known source of natural Vitamin C, rosehips contain vitamins A, B1, B2, E, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, iron, niacin and biotin. In Chinese medicine rosehips are used as a liver tonic, and they are always useful as a general tonic.

#### Slippery Elm (Ulmus fulva)

The dried powdered inner bark of this North American native is a powerful demulcent (allays irritation) and emollient, extensively used to assist healing of the digestive tract following gastrointestinal illness. Excellent against diarrhoea and bowel inflammations. It can be used to soothe mucous membranes irritated by cystitis and externally as a poultice. Negotiate a bulk amount, eg. 1 kg, at a reasonable price. I find it a very important herb to keep in stock.

#### Valerian (Valeriana officinalis)



High quality sedative herb, also anti spasmodic and antiseptic. Of great antiquity and never out of favour, it was used in W.W.I for the treatment of shell shock victims. Non habit forming and safe to use with pregnant females.

We often use it before shearing or transport and after surgery, eg. gelding or fighting teeth removal. I use between 500 to 2000mg depending on weight range (25-90kg alpacas). Give in powdered or crushed form with 1 tbspn yoghurt/1 dstpn honey/0.5 tspn calcium ascorbate (Vitamin C powder) and drench about an hour before shearing or travelling. Always avoid giving any sedative herbs or drugs over prolonged periods.

#### Willow Bark (Salix alba)

An effective and safe natural pain killer. Willows in general are excellent fodder as trees are rich in minerals and fibre.

#### Varrow (Achillea millefolium)

A widespread field herb, very useful in stopping bleeding. Hold or bind fresh leaves on to a wound. Also anti-inflammatory and antiseptic. We occasionally see the alpacas nibbling on leaves. Used internally as blood tonic and against fever and respiratory disorders. Can be dried and used as fodder herb.

The herbs described here are only a few in the vast herbal pharmacopoeia existing across the world today.

In Europe, a lot of work is being carried out in the field of aroma therapy for animals and on essential oils in general. It is an expanding field and needs a separate article, so I'll just mention a few we find useful.

Tea tree oil for antifungal or antiseptic treatments, in solution or diluted pure oil in almond oil.

For sick or injured alpacas, kept in barn or shed overnight, use a diffuser containing essential oils of thyme, 100mls: marjoram, 150mls: lavender, 300mls: rosemary, 300mls: cinnamon 50mls; and basil, 100mls. This makes a litre. It can be used as a curative and anti stress treatment at a rate of 2-5 mls per hour and the diffuser can be left on continuously. Citronella oil, diluted

with two-thirds baby oil makes a very effective insect repellent.

Last, but not least, we always keep Bach Flowers Rescue Remedy on hand, for ourselves as well as the alpacas. I've seen it work very well in times of crisis, I don't know how it works, but it has a very positive and almost immediate effect on both humans and animals.

I think there will always be a place for alpacas on small holdings. They seem to be almost the archetype of the small holding animal. No doubt, there will come a time when we will see large commercial alpaca herds in Australia, but I agree with the philosophies of Schumacher and Mollison: in order to be sustainable and to develop a more productive and less energy wasteful lifestyle, the "small is beautiful" principle must be cultivated.

In this role I see alpacas maintaining a high profile. And I can't see too many of us who have spent the past few years caring and nurturing and developing a relationship with these animals sending them through the gate with a "Bye, guys, see you twice a year!"

In this context I think many Australians will continue to farm them in small numbers, enjoying the companion element provided, and that there will be a continuing place for the use of alternative fodder plants and natural remedies such as herbal medicine

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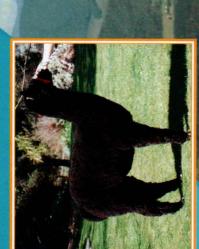
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Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium)



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Photo courtesy Howard & Sons Pyrotechnics Pty Ltd



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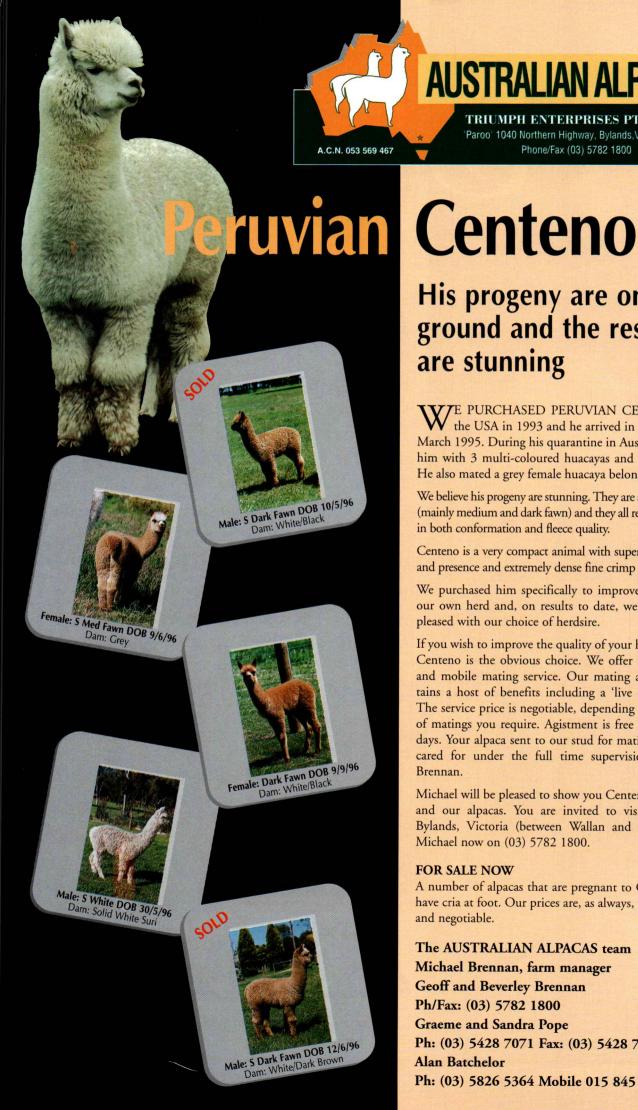
- basic nutrition
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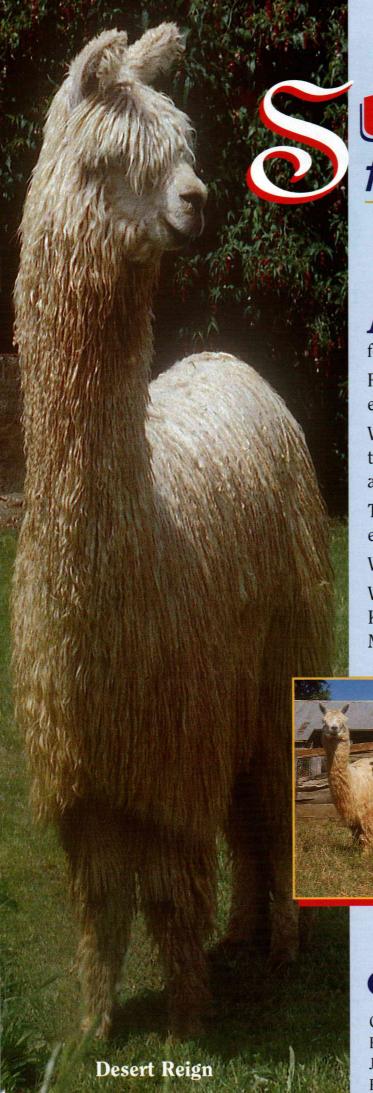
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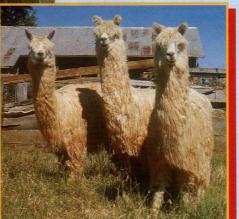
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# THE ROLE OF CRIMP IN THE TEXTILE PROCESS

#### by Mike Safley

A comprehensive review with results of various trials and studies.

The term "crimp" has become a very familiar term to Alpaca breeders. Crimp is defined as the natural wave formation of the fiber, expressed as waves or crimps per unit of length. Visually, crimp is most notable in the well organized staples or locks found in the fleece. Crimp also occurs along the shaft of a single fiber. This has been defined by Cameron Holt, of the Melbourne College of Textiles, as crinkle.

In the wool trade, breeders, graders, classers, and manufacturers have traditionally held the view that more crimp meant finer fiber. This misperception has been codified into the various count systems used to classify the fineness of sheeps' wool. One such system

is incorporated into the U.S. Standard Grades of Raw Wool, issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Grade & crimps in wool

Grades	No. of crimps per inch
Very fine	22 to 30
Fine	14 to 22
1/2 blood	10 to 14
3/8 blood	8 to 10
1/4 blood	5 to 8
Low quarter	2 to 5
Common	0 to 2
Braid	0 to 1

The measurement of fiber has become a very sophisticated scientific pursuit. With the advent of objective



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Jenny and Lindsay Gadsden 24-26 Medhurst Road Coldstream Victoria 3770 Phone:(059) 649 268 Fax:(059) 649 484 measurement of wool by such instruments as the LASER SCAN, OFDA, or air flow machines, it is now well established that crimps per inch is only a rough indicator of fiber fineness. Many of the myths surrounding the processing qualities of certain fiber traits have been disproved by employing these new measuring devices.

Today, it is possible to isolate the measurement of crimp and fiber diameter in the raw fleece and to separately assess their impact on the qualities of finished products. Questions, such as how crimp frequency affects the processing of raw wool and the handle<sup>1</sup> of finished cloth are now being answered by researchers in Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.

Sheeps' wool has been the subject of most, if not all, available research with regards to crimp as a processing characteristic. This research is not, by any means, definitive of alpaca fiber. But understanding the role crimp plays in the textile process could be beneficial to alpaca breeders.

Many fiber bearing animals produce fleece which is utterly devoid of crimp. Vicuna fiber, from the alpacas' original ancestor, has no crimp. Suri alpaca fiber has no crimp. Mohair from goats and angora from rabbits have no crimp. These fibers are among the most desirable in the world. In other words, the existence of crimp is not necessary to define the value of fiber or create fine garments.

Huacaya alpacas often exhibit crimp in their fleece and, if not crimp, then crinkle. The heritability of crimp in alpacas would appear to be very high. Studies of merino sheep indicate a heritability factor of 0.46 for merino flocks selected solely for increased or decreased crimp. If it is proven that a particular type of crimp is a commercially valuable trait, it could easily be selected for genetically, although there may be antagonistic genetic correlations between fleece weight, fiber diameter, and crimp frequency.

Large scale wool processing studies, using a wide range of wool types from different breeds, have demonstrated that 80-90% of the variation in the processing performance, of wool, yarn, and in the quality of fabrics may be explained by variation in the raw fleece characteristics of fiber diameter, crimp, and length. Alpacas have the capacity to produce crimp in their fleece. Assuming that crimp in alpaca is desirable, just as it is in sheep, leads to an investigation into the nature of crimp and the type of crimp which is most desirable to the textile manufacturer.

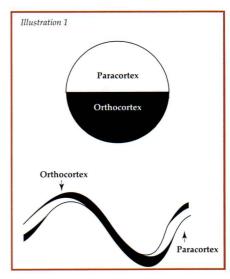
#### THE STRUCTURAL NATURE OF CRIMP<sup>2</sup>

Wool fiber has two cortical cells, para and ortho. In certain coarse fibers a hollow core may be visible (medulla). The cortical cells in alpaca fiber constitute a variable fraction of the fiber mass, being the lowest in coarse and the most in fine fibers where the fraction may be as high as 90%

Cortical cells are the load-bearing elements of the fiber. The cuticle, or outer scale, imparts the inherent aesthetic qualities of the fiber, such as softness of handle and luster. The entire assembly is held together by a glue called intercellular cement.

Wool fiber has a bilateral structure. That is, the paracortex and orthocortex grow side by side. It is this structure which is believed to give wool its crimp. Think of a single fiber as a rope made of two independent strands which are twisted together. When twisted ever more tightly, the rope kinks or "crimps." Research in 1953 by a Japanese scientist found that the orthocortex was always observed on the outside of the crimp curve as shown in Illustration 1.

Villarroel found that fine huacaya alpaca (not suri), like wool, has a clearly defined ortho-para differentiation in the crimped fiber. The medium to coarse alpaca fiber (23-35 microns)

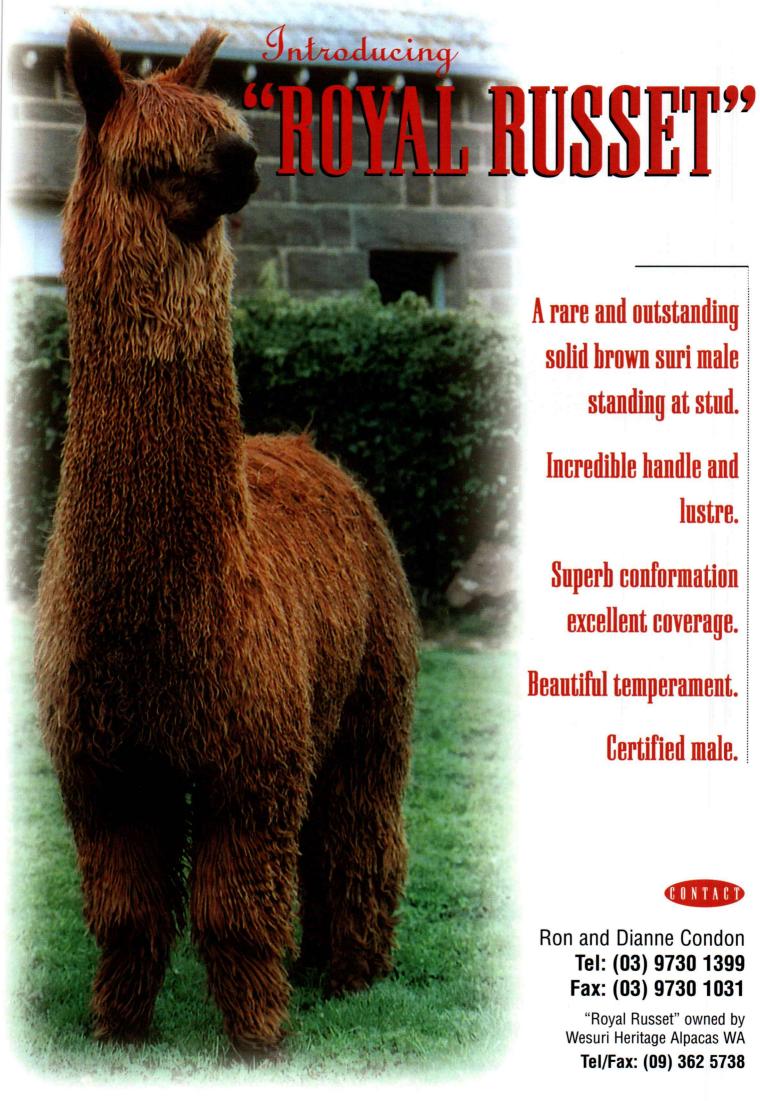


cortex is less distinct and the two types of cells break up into segments. In coarse fibers the ortho segment is seldom seen. Suri fiber has no visible bilateral demarcation.

#### **CRIMP COUNT:** ALPACA VS. SHEEP

The following discussion of crimp's impact on finished textile products in this article focuses on crimp count and, to a lesser degree, fiber diameter. The sheeps' wool used in the processing trials discussed herein ranged in diameter from 16.5 to 22.3 microns, with a range of low crimp frequencies beginning at 4 crimps per centimeter and ending at a high crimp frequency of 8 per centimeter. Four (4) crimps per centimeter translate into 10.6 crimps per inch.

To keep in perspective the information contained in this article, please refer to Illustration 2. The five locks of alpaca fleece pictured have crimp counts beginning with A, at 1.97 crimps per centimeter (5 crimps per inch) and ending with E, at 2.76 crimps per centimeter (7 crimps per inch). These counts are considerably less than those of the merino fiber used in the processing trials discussed below. To better understand the visual relationship of the crimps per centimeter of the sheeps' wool discussed and the alpaca samples pictured, please review Illustration 3.



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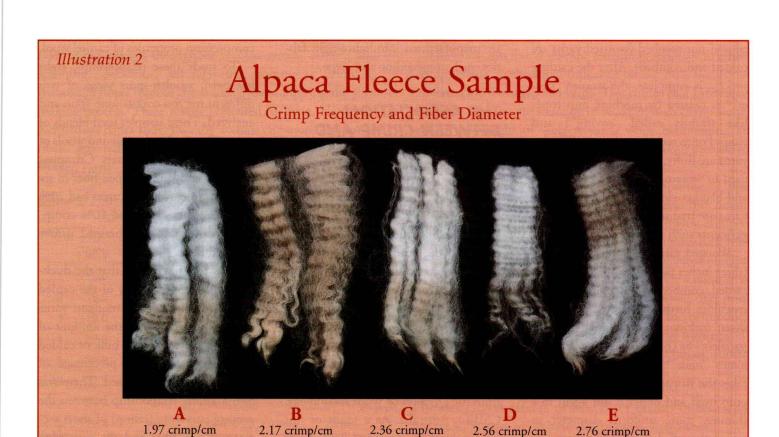
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The samples found in Illustration 2 were measured for both micron count and crimp frequency by Yocom-Testing Laboratories McColl Denver, Colorado. All five of these samples are from male alpacas. Sample D is from a six-month-old animal and the balance of the samples are from older breeding males. These tests provide further evidence that crimp count does not accurately predict fineness.

5 crimp/inch

23.6 microns

5.5 crimp/inch

22.6 microns

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SHEEPS' WOOL AND ALPACA FIBER

Before discussing the implications of crimp in the textile process, it should be made clear that there are substantive differences between sheeps' wool and alpaca fiber. Alpaca fiber has different scale heights — approximately 0.4 microns vs. sheeps' wool at 0.8 microns. The scale frequency of alpaca is more than sheeps' wool — 9 per 100 microns vs. 4 per 100 microns. Alpaca fiber is also much stronger than sheeps' wool.

All of these differences complicate the transposition of information about the processing of sheeps' wool to the processing of alpaca fiber. Some of the information may be pertinent, some may not. Alpaca breeders need to develop research that specifically identifies the commercially valuable fiber traits of the alpaca. The following discussion helps to identify traits which have the potential to impact on the value of alpaca fiber.

6 crimp/inch

23.5 microns

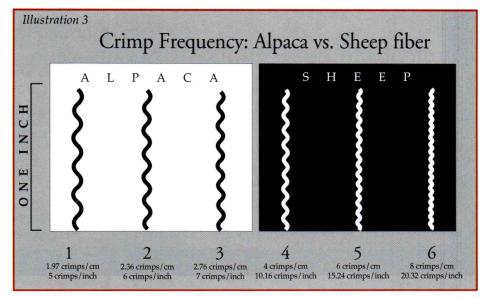
#### **WOOLEN VS. WORSTED**

7 crimp/inch

22.2 microns

Before reviewing the results of processing trials found herein, it is important to understand the difference between the woolen and worsted spinning systems. Crimp imparts different qualities to yarn made from each of these systems.

Woolen fabrics are characterized as being fuzzy, thick, and bulky. They are made from fibers that are one to three inches in length which have been card-



6.5 crimp/inch

18.5 microns



#### **PUCARA ALPACA STUD**

Alpaca for the discerning breeder

Pucara have quietly gone about acquiring the best alpaca genetics available in the world in a quest to breed quality fibre for quality product. Witness the stunning Machos that arrive in March '97: Peruvians, Don Julio, Drambuie and Legend. We are also part-owners of Peruvian Hemingway – 17.8 mic., 3.9 s.d., 21.9 c.v. at 7 years old. His progeny are breathtaking. They have consistently won in the U.S. show rings. At the Denver National Show '96 where shown, his progeny won the junior male and female classes which had more than 20 animals per class!!!

A number of our select Peruvian females bred to Hemingway are for sale. Also available are a beautiful selection of weanlings, male and female, some of Hemingway descent. With them will be an elite group of full Peruvian suris, the quality of which has no parallel in Australia. Soft, lustrous, fine... locked fleeces that hang like curtains of silk.

We haven't neglected colour either. All the Aussie 'experts' said there was no colour in Peru, but of the 5.4 million kgs cut there 35%(\*) is coloured!!! Pucara this year got 50 coloureds in Peru before the Peruvian government shut the door on colour.. ...for ever!!!!

#### 1996 NATIONAL CLASSIC AUCTION

Congratulations Peter and Margaret Bennett for the purchase of Purrumbete Hot Shot from Pucara and Merungle Alpaca Studs, the highest ever price at auction in Australia... Hot Shot is now at stud at Pucara.

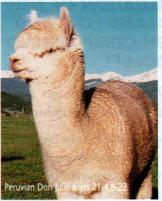
Well done Aymara Alpaca Stud on the \$42,000 sale of a weanling female, the daughter of Pucara's outstanding black herdsire, Pacific Beethoven.

Give us a call, we'd like to hear from you.

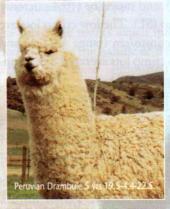
(\*) R. Weatherall, 1995

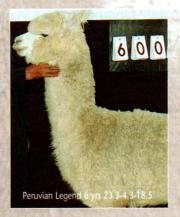
Tel: 0352 633 436 Fax: 0352 633 364 015 525 391 Jude Anderson Alan Cousill

1/2 Owners Shelbory Park Alpacas

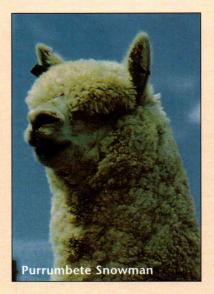


1/2 owners Warralinga Alpacas









#### **PUCARA MACHOS**

(Now at stud)



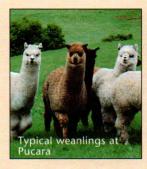


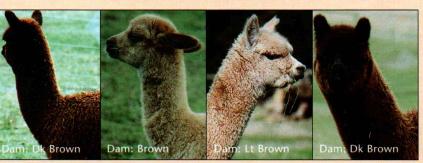
#### **SNOW MAN PROGENY**



'Snowman progeny have won the supreme championship of two largest shows of alpaca in Victoria 1995 and the Royal Sydney 1996.'

#### **CHRIS PROGENY**







#### **BEETHOVEN PROGENY**



#### PUCARA WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE BOUGHT ANIMALS FROM US RECENTLY CONGRATULATIONS №

John and Diane Kuhl Mt Gambier
Jessie Jenkin Geelong
Trevor and Debbie Walker Mt Gambier
Paul and Lesley Tepper Mt Eliza
Laurie and Margaret Binks Albany
Riki and Rainer Marten Staverton
Judy Brear and Lyn Sullivan Martinsville
Helen Fritsch Dural
Rex and Bev Shearer Bega

Geoff and Jeanette Cumming Peterborough
Peter and Judith street Mittagong
Kay and John Cleaver
Kim and Marc Tonkin Bert and Margaret Rijk Silvan
Peter and Erica Bennett Ken Madl Denver
Lynn and Lutz Jacobi Little River
John Simpson and Sue Bourchier Shepparton

Wendy Hotchkie Newcastle
Ted and Meredith Cole Brisbane
Geoff Martin & Sue Curliss Mt. Edgerton
Paul and Pauline Witham Elaine
Sue Wood Albert Park
Gary and Jan Pettit Clarkefield
Geoff Cole & Gary Scarlett Torquay

- 4. Low crimped wools were better suited for light weight clothing.
- 5. Low crimped wools were generally easier and more efficient to process than high crimped wools.

Many of these conclusions are contrary to popularly held beliefs.

#### AN ALPACA BREEDER'S LOOK AT CRIMP

Alpaca has far less crimp than merino wool. Based on the conclusions in the above studies, the low crimp frequency in alpaca fiber may partially explain why alpaca is thought to have superior handle when compared to sheeps' wool of a comparable micron count. Suri, which has no crimp, is thought to have a smoother handle than both the high crimp merino and the low crimp huacaya of a similar micron count.

Alpaca breeders who select for fineness in their breeding programs may also be automatically selecting for crimp or crinkle, due to the increased presence of orthocortex in finer fibers. Crimp has benefits for the breeder in addition to those valued by textile manufacturers. For instance, crimp may visually indicate fineness, density, and uniformity in the raw fleece.

As alpacas age, their crimp tends to broaden and disappear. The fleece also becomes coarser each year. This can be explained by Villorreal's observation that the cortex of coarser fiber is less distinct.

The orthocortex tends to disappear as micron count increases. Breeders should understand this phenomenon and be more reliant on genotype than phenotype when assessing the crimp producing capacity of alpacas, particularly males.

Crimp in huacaya fiber definitely adds to its processing efficiency. Crimpless fiber, such as suri, is often artificially crimped during processing 16 to improve its performance. Suri and other crimpless fiber, such as mohair, are often blended with sheeps' wool to add such

qualities as bulk and resilience.

Dr. Jim Watts, a researcher from Australia, has spent several years studying alpaca fleece characteristics. He had this to say about crimp as a characteristic. "Because alpaca fiber crimps or waves at regular time intervals, faster growing fibers automatically display bolder crimp or wave frequencies. Do not assume that bolder crimp equates to stronger fiber diameter. Bold deep crimp is a highly desirable fleece characteristic of the huacaya. From recent textile research of merino wool it is now known that bold, deep crimping wools are the softest, finest (for their genetic type) and best processing fibers. In the huacaya we should be looking for and breeding these bold, deep crimping wools."17

#### ALPACA FIBER RESEARCH

It is clear that high tech measurement devices and scientific know-how could be of benefit to breeders in researching the processing qualities of alpaca. For instance, it may enhance the value of alpaca fiber to articulate the benefits of its low crimp style fleece to fabric designers and manufacturers. Fleece qualities are highly heritable. Once breeders can determine which traits textile manufacturers value, they can easily select for them.

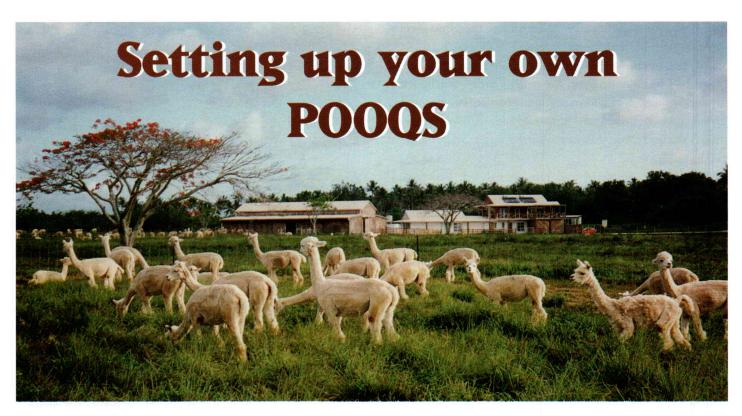
Today we know that fiber diameter, staple length, color, and density all impact on the value of an alpaca's fiber production. Tomorrow, with the proper research, we may determine whether we should be selecting for a particular crimp style or frequency.

One thing is for sure, alpaca breeders will continue to hear about crimp. Judges talk about crimp in the show ring and many alpaca purchasers are searching for highly crimped alpacas. Maybe one day soon we will determine what kind of crimp is our best style.

#### Notes

1. Handle refers to the feel of the fiber or finished product.

- 2. Cameron Holt, Alpaca Production, Melbourne College of Textiles, Australia
- 3. A sliver is a continuous band of carded, or carded and combed, wool in an untwisted
- 4. Roving is a slightly twisted sliver or roll of alpaca fiber (also called the "rove") produced during processing before the fiber is further drawn and spun into yarn.
- 5. Noils are short and broken fibers extracted from the long fibers during the combing
- 6. P.G. Swan, T.J. Mahar, J.P. Kenneday, CSIRO Division of Wool Technology, Sydney, Department of Wool and Animal Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
- 7. P.G. Swan, T.J. Mahar, J.P. Kenneday, CSIRO Division of Wool Technology, Sydney, Department of Wool and Animal Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
- 8. Stevens, T.J. Mahar, Division of Wool Technology, CSIRO, Ryde, Australia
- 9. Hauteur describes the mean fiber length in the top. It is a length biased distribution. Hauteur, as determined by the Almeter, is widely used commercially for the specification and trading of wool tops.
- 10. A top is a continuous band or ribbon of combed fiber, laid parallel in an untwisted condition, all short and weak fibers having been combed out.
- 11. Resilience to compression refers to the force required to compress a standard mass of wool into a fixed volume. This is related to the handle and bulk of the wool and is also positively related to the amount of fiber crimp; i.e. highly crimped wool has greater resilience to compression than low crimp wool of the same diameter.
- 12. T. Wuliji, T. Endo, J.T.J. Land, R.N. Andrews, K.G. Dodds, P.R. Turner, Ag-Research, Invermay Agricultural Centre, Mosgiel, New Zealand and Wool Research Technical Division, Nippon Keori Kaisha Ltd, Osaka, Japan.
- 13. Neps are small "balls" (or aggregations) of entangled fibers ranging in size from "pin points" to approximately 2 mm in diameter which are created during processing. These are mostly removed from the top in the combing process.
- 14. Yield is the amount of clean fiber, at a standard regain, that can be obtained from the greasy wool. There are four core test yields that are normally calculated from the wool base for commercial trading purposes.
- 15. Elasticity is the property of wool which enables it to return to its natural length after stretching.
- 16. Hoffman and Fowler, The Alpaca Book, p
- 17. Watts, J.E., M.V.Sc, Ph.D, "Advanced Alpaca Production, Breeding from Fibre to Fabric", Coolaroo Alpaca Stud, Australia.



As told to Carol Hosking.

Alan Hamilton and Cherie Bridges undertook a daunting task. Here's just a glimpse of what went into a two year project that was completed late last year.

It's never been done before in Australia nor, to our knowledge, anywhere else in the world. That is, until the Hamilton-Bridges team swung into operation and set up the first privately owned overseas quarantine station. In November last year, in partnership with the Inca Group of Peru, they landed 598 Peruvian suri and huacaya alpacas on Niue, a small Pacific island. This early but, undoubtedly, welcome Christmas present of alpacas is now a third of the way through a year-long stay.

The setting up of a POOQS is very much the result of the problems associated with Australia having only one official quarantine (Cocos Islands). The official facility is heavily booked, making the already complicated logistics of importing also dependent on tight timing.

AQIS has supported the idea on the basis that the lack of facilities may be restricting Australian animal import and export. However, as we reported in Alpacas Australia (Spring, issue 16), there have been long discussions and a number of concerns regarding the modus operandi of POOQS.

Nevertheless, Hamilton-Bridges & Associates decided to take the plunge and set up their private station over two

One of the first tasks was to find a suitable location. The largest hurdle was finding an island that did not have a substantial cattle industry. Those that did would not even consider allowing the establishment of a high security quarantine station.

The first choice was Norfolk Island. Indeed, after investigating all the obvious possibilities, it seemed virtually the only location that had the conditions, political stability and facilities to suit a POOQS. Everything that needed to be done was done and it seemed that approval was imminent. Local opposition, however, increased and that allimportant permit was not granted.

What might have been the end of the venture was averted by a suggestion to investigate Niue, made by a research and development assistant working for Hamilton-Bridges.

An independent democracy in Free Association with New Zealand, this 23,000 ha island was known to have no major cattle industry (just 60 on the island) and no major diseases. What's more the Niue government seemed interested in the project.

All the intensive survey work undertaken for Norfolk Island had to be done again for Niue. Carried out by independent professionals, four key areas had to be thoroughly investigated: Animal and Human Health Risk Assessment; Insect Vector Survey; Environmental Impact Study; and an Economic Survey.

These were completed and results analysed. Risk assessment was favourable as was the insect vector survey. Environmentally, one aspect that needed to be taken into consideration was the risk to the local environment posed by the importation of hay. Lucerne pellets, were imported as a substitute.

Economic factors included services the POOQS would need. Could they be supplied and at what cost? Would the island's economy be benefitted? There would certainly be jobs for locals at the station. And a new resort being built on the island would benefit from visitors coming to inspect livestock. One problem was that many local tradesmen would be unavailable to help construct station facilities because they were working on the resort.

A contract was drawn up between Hamilton-Bridges and the Nuie Government for the importation of one shipment of alpacas.

The next step was to secure suitable land.



The shelter sheds, specially designed to allow maximum airflow during Niue's humid summer.

A 30-year lease on Vaiea Farm was negotiated with the Government. This 110 ha property was to be developed into a modern quarantine station virtually from scratch.

Improvements necessary to ensure the well-being and health of the animals were expensive.

Forty-five ha of land was fenced off to secure the quarantined animals.

Large animal sheds were built. These are somewhat better than your average shelter shed. Summer in Niue is humid. Apart from providing shelter for the animals, they had to be cyclone-proof and designed to control the effects of humidity.



An engineer was employed to design a complex that would maximise air-flow and the resultant shelters, unusually shaped but very efficient, were constructed from local timber.

A huge construction was needed to accommodate imported feed - pellets containing essential trace elements and lucerne pellets. Again, the design had to ensure that stored feed would not be affected by humidity.

As on any farm, a machine shed was required. And, because farm managers needed to live on site, a home was built for their use.

A fully equipped veterinary laboratory completed the necessary, and very expensive construction work.

The total cost was \$900,000. One large element was the expense of bringing in Australian builders, plumbers and other tradespeople to do most of the construction work and shipping over necessary building supplies. Unfortunately, while the tradespeople arrived right on time, a cyclone delayed the supply ship by over a week. There were no reports of complaints from the workers about having to hang around, waiting for their materials to arrive.

While the station is run under AQIS supervision, the important task of its day-to-day management is undertaken by Chris and Tasha Leach. The Leaches have spent some years living in Tonga where Chris has been involved in an agricultural aid program. There is close liaison between the managers and the owners who rely on Chris and Tasha to ensure the station runs smoothly and efficiently. Cria care, mating, general animal management and the keeping of herd records are just a few of the tasks undertaken by the managers.

The station has full-time veterinary care available. This is provided by the Bellarine Clinic whose team of vets, including Ewen McMillan, staff the station's veterinary lab on a rotational basis.

Alan Hamilton and Cherie Bridges are pleased with the success of the project, despite the fact that costs were double those original budgeted. The animals are well and AQIS, which is obviously monitoring its progress with great interest, is "extremely satisfied", according to Alan.





The Peruvians, in transit.

Discussing the future of the Niue station, Cherie said Hamilton-Bridges has no plans to import more alpacas. "We believe the expansion of the genetic pool with current imports is very good for the Australian herd, but we don't believe it should be swamped."

The station will be used for the importation of other forms of livestock and will be available for sub-leasing by other importers, relieving pressure on Cocos.

Perhaps more importantly, there is now a working model of a POOQS. Its contribution to defining the standards that need to be set for future ventures of this kind both for Australia and world-wide, should be invaluable.

Footnote: The Inca Group also constructed a quarantine station in Peru to provide facilities prior to the export of the shipment. This was built under the supervision of SAG — the Peruvian quarantine service. SAG had absolute control over how the station was to be constructed and what facilities it needed to contain. Getting it finally approved was a difficult

> and delicate operation. Without the local "savvy" of the Inca Group people, the whole venture may have foundered before it ever really got off the ground.

From left: the white food store and the managers' home, incorporating the veterinary surgery (white downstairs area).

# The globalisation of alpacas

Nick Veltjens discusses the implications for the Australian industry of the increasing globalisation of alpacas.

The importance of creating a business plan is increasingly recognised both by individual breeders and the Australian Alpaca Association. A well-conceived business plan sets a clear path for the future and possesses inbuilt flexibility so that it can be adapted to meet changed business conditions. An ambitious plan could even encompass changing an environment to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Australian industry is ready (some may even say overdue) for an industry business plan. To me, this means much more than marketing and development on a national scale. It also means planning within an increasingly globalised alpaca industry, setting up useful international contacts - even strategic overseas alliances. Assessment of future directions and potential markets will include careful analyses of both demand and supply. To do this effectively, we need to understand the world industry as it is now - and use that knowledge to predict future industry trends and development.

The present situation continues to reflect South America's (Peru in particular) continuing dominance in herd numbers and, perhaps, in quality of animals.

I say "perhaps", because Peru took a conscious decision to increase their white-fibred alpaca numbers some decades ago. Now 39.2 per cent of its national herd is white; a staggering 45.3 per cent are multis. The percentages of coloured animals is very low with black very scarce at a mere 0.3 per cent of the total. Grey animals make up 3.8 per cent; fawn 5.1 per cent; and brown, 6.3

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As can be seen by his exceptional results during his first 12 months of showing, RAVEN is one of Australia's most awarded black males. He has a beautiful lustrous crimpy dense fleece which is incredibly soft, and which cut almost 4 Kg at his first shearing.

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#### 1st in class at:

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- \* Sydney Royal 1996
- \* St. Ives 1996
- \* Castle Hill 1996
- \* NSW State Show 1996 (Fleece)
- \* National Classic Show 1996 (Fleece)

#### Also:

- \* Supreme Champion Portland 1996
- \* Reserve Champion Jnr. Male Hawkesbury 1996
- \* Reserve Champion Fleece Central coast 1996

#### Also at Stud

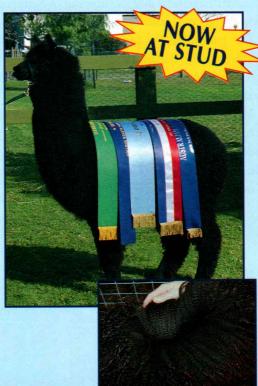
The legendary... Purrumbete DON QUIXOTE (solid light fawn) And stunning newcomer...Cedar House LUCIFER (medium fawn)



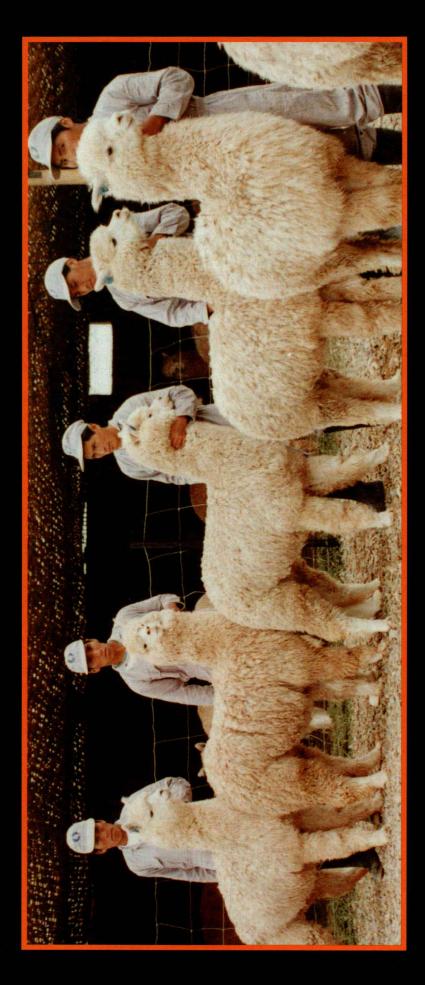
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Fig. 1. Fleece colours as a percentage of total — Australia

Colours					Per	centage c	of Total					
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
White	20.19	18.70	17.85	20.81	20.81	22.56	23.82	24.77	25.48	26.02	26.44	
Light Fawn	4.90	5.09	5.19	5.50	5.50	5.68	5.82	5.92	5.99	6.05	6.09	
Medium Fawn	6.04	6.08	6.09	5.83	5.83	5.68	5.57	5.49	5.43	5.38	5.34	
Dark Fawn	7.38	7.03	6.83	6.54	6.54	6.37	6.25	6.16	6.09	6.03	5.99	
Light Brown	13.65	11.96	11.01	10.54	10.54	10.27	10.07	9.92	9.81	9.72	9.65	
Medium Brown	12.14	10.65	9.81	9.40	9.40	9.15	8.97	8.84	8.74	8.66	8.60	
Dark Brown	7.51	6.57	6.05	5.79	5.79	5.64	5.53	5.45	5.38	5.34	5.30	
Black	14.24	14.12	14.05	13.46	13.46	13.10	12.85	12.66	12.51	12.41	12.32	
Dark Grey	2.54	2.14	1.91	1.83	1.83	1.78	1.74	1.72	1.70	1.68	1.67	
Medium Grey	4.33	3.61	3.20	3.07	3.07	2.99	2.93	2.89	2.85	2.83	2.81	
Light Grey	2.09	1.69	1.47	1.40	1.40	1.37	1.34	1.32	1.31	1.30	1.29	
Rose Grey	4.97	4.44	4.14	3.96	3.96	3.86	3.78	2.73	3.69	3.65	3.63	
Multi		7.93	12.39	11.86	11.86	11.55	11.32	11.16	11.03	10.93	10.86	
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	

per cent. Peru will now not let coloured animals out of the country. It is not clear whether this is for reasons of conservation or whether Peru senses a change in market colour preferences.

Whatever the reason, Peru will not, in my view, be easily able to attain the same dominance in coloured alpacas as she presently has in white fibre. Arguably, she is not the producer of the world's best quality coloured alpacas.

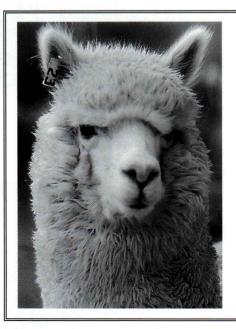
In Central and South Chile, some alpacas are being bred in solid colours

by private entrepreneurs and the Department of Agriculture, according to Peter M. Dietz in an article for the German magazine, Lamas.

He says that at a government experimental centre, Hidango, "over one hundred alpacas are held among some llamas and huarizos. The herds distinguish themselves even from a distance by their singular frame structure and solid colours. The aim is the creation of animals for the use of areas in that region which are endangered by erosion and which, being beyond the moist sea winds are not suitable for reforestation and other uses."

Dietz reports that this robust herd, while containing white animals, also contains blacks, greys and fawns. Blood relationships among the animals are avoided through the regular supply of bloodstock from the north.

While there is no aim to either sell or export these animals, the very creation of a strong, coloured herd must be considered significant in terms of its



#### Peruvian Alpacas

The first shipment of Peruvian Alpacas direct from Peru have now completed a considerable part of their Australian quarantine.

These superb animals were selected by Dr. Walter Bravo from the World's top Alpaca Studs such as Don Julio Bareda (Accoyo), Rural Alianza, Sollocota and Kenamari.

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potential contribution to the world's coloured gene pool.

There is also a station owned by industrialist, Peter Hill called "Huincil" that has a herd of several hundred alpacas, the majority of which are coloured. So far, only stud males have been exported to the United States

I believe that the USA will follow the Peruvian line and concentrate on growing white fibre. This means that they will together continue to dominate the market for white animals and fibre. Consequently, for Australia to concentrate on breeding for white fibre would be counter productive to its aim of becoming a major player in the global alpaca industry. We have an ever improving stock of Chilean type coloured animals and I think it is fair to say that we are among the best (perhaps even the best) breeders of coloured alpacas in the world. Why diminish (in percentage terms) our own rapidly growing source of supply? Better, surely, to exploit a market in which supply of good quality fibre is restricted. I am not alone in predicting that the demand for coloured alpaca fibre will increase, especially if we can produce in increasing quantities, the quality and colour range alpacas are capable of yielding.

It is essential, therefore, that the Australian alpaca industry makes a strategic decision to capitalise on an advantage that we already have. In this globalised market, we should endeavour to form strategic breeding (and, as a result, marketing) alliances with those countries who are also interested in breeding coloured alpacas. Consequently, the strengthening of ties with the Chileans should be a high priority.

The fostering of a strong alliance with European breeders should also begin now. They are importing alpacas from Chile. We can outdo Chile in the production of quality animals, I believe. Although the quarantine

aspects of the bilateral agreement on the movement of live animals between Australia and EU have largely been resolved, there is a serious political wrangle over another aspect of it. Hopefully, this should be resolved before long. However, we should, in the meantime, to do the groundwork on establishing a new export market for quality alpacas.

Central to successfully exploiting that market is the understanding that quality is the key to establishing good European outlets; not just what we think is top quality, but what they see as superior. If we fail in this regard, we ruin our chances of a successful entry into a market of some 250 million people for a long time. We need to capitalise on our already strong reputation as breeders of fine alpacas by "delivering the goods" - i.e. ensuring we market professionally and offer the quality animals that will provide European breeders with continuing confidence in

### FOR SALE

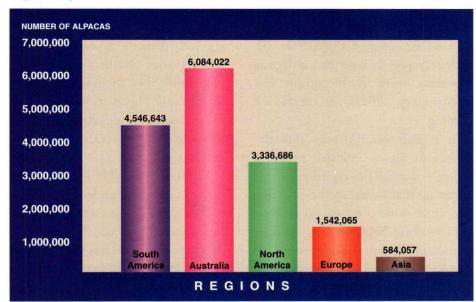
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Fig. 2. Alpaca herds of the world in 2020



Australian herd sires and proven breeding females.

My discussions with overseas breeders indicate they are very interested in obtaining Australian alpacas. Working together, with a common interest, Australia, European nations and Chile should be able to form a strong alternative alpaca fibre market to that presently dominated by the Peruvians. Initially, perhaps, the "colour alternative", in time, it will become a primary market in its own right.

Assuming that the industry finds the proposition feasible, what happens now? Do we immediately stop importing Peruvian alpacas? Do we campaign against the production of white alpaca fibre. The answer is "No" to both questions. The Peruvians bring valuable genetic widening to the Australian herd. It is not expected that there will be uncontrolled imports swamping our paddocks, nor should we allow that to occur. But there is no reason why some Australian white fibre cannot form part of a global coloured alpaca fibre market.

According to the International Alpaca Register, the percentage of white alpacas in Australia has actually fallen from 20.19 per cent in 1994 to 17.85 in 1996.

However, my projections show that with current imports and a continuation on the basis of those already in train, white alpacas could account for

over 26 per cent of the total Australian herd by 2004. With the exception of light fawn, the percentage of all other colours will decline, which means that we are diluting what is our strength in the market place (see fig. 1.).

If we take a longer view over 23 years, to 2020, my projections indicate the total world population of alpacas will be about 16 million. Of these, the "colour alliance" will have 8.15 million (Australia, 6.25 million; Europe, 1.55 million; half of Bolivia, 0.27 million; Chile, 75,000). The white fibre producing countries will have 7.54 million alpacas (Peru, 3.93 million; North America: 3.34 million, half of Bolivia, 0.27 million). Put simply, the number of coloured fibre producing animals will outstrip the number of white animals and continue to grow more rapidly. Other smaller pockets of animals will probably be found in Asia, South Africa and the Middle East.

However, the number of alpacas is not all that matters. Planning, marketing, management and, most of all, quality control, will determine the success of the world industry.

Australia's commercial feasibility can be achieved in less than 10 years from now, i.e. in the medium-term. We need to plan and start implementing our global strategies now, and formalise them as part of an appropriate, industry wide, business plan.

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#### **DEADLINES 1997**

Issue 19 — Winter Due: June 1997

Deadline: Friday 18 April

Issue 20 — Spring Due: September 1997 Deadline: Friday 18 July

Issue 21 — Summer Due: December 1997

Deadline: Friday 17 October

# 

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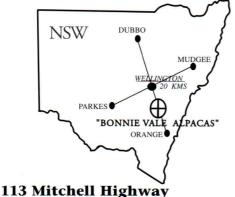


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#### By Jenny Morgan



"Glamour"



"Sunday Best"



"Casablanca"

Whilst fashion designers such as Peter Weiss wax lyrical in the *Financial* Review and fashion rags about alpaca, smaller designers, fabric retail and wholesale outlets rarely carry this beautiful fabric.

Some years ago, I was told, "Alpaca? Sure, it's meant to be beautiful, but we don't hear much about it from our suppliers." From my own experience, I knew we had a classic case of demand and supply: demand hindered by supply — where the high cost of alpaca fabric, lack of promotion, difficulty of access and inconsistency of supply limited alpaca to only the big players.

As the industry developed, so did my wish to expose anew alpaca to the fashion industry. I wanted to wake them up to the uniqueness of the fabric and start them working with it. Communication has changed. We can access the fabric now, as we know alpaca people who are already doing it.

But how could we harness fashion talent to expose alpaca to Australians? Then I remembered the "Gown of the Year" awards. They always receive huge coverage. Maybe look for something similar, but geographically more convenient for the bulk of our fibre growers. My choice was Wagga, slap bang between Melbourne and Sydney, where they stage the "Golden Gown Awards".

The next task was to decide how to actually get some garments. How about fashion and design students? This would kill two birds with one stone: introduce up-and-coming designers to alpaca and get some original garments created.

In the middle of last year, Gray and I went to the Melbourne Institute of Textiles to find out whether our far-fetched idea was too far fetched. No, it wasn't. The institute would be happy to have their students work on an alpaca design project. But if we wanted them to do it, we would have to set it up almost immediately. The Institute was about to make up the 1996 curriculum.

I had already contacted Nicola Forrest of The Alpaca Centre Australia. Nicola was all for the idea and had promised to get us some fabric during her imminent trip to Peru. Now the rush was on! Call Nicola again! Yes, she had returned from overseas, but the fabric would take another three months to arrive and it might not make the Institute's January deadline. But she would see what she could do.

Several days later, she rang back to say that she had ordered 3 × 100 metre bolts of fabric in three colours. It would just make it in time to meet our deadline. We could have 25 metres of each colour at cost price and she would meet the rest of our 85 metre order out of stock on hand.





Left: display of alpaca garments created by the alpaca project students of Melbourne Institute of Textiles. Right: belted jacket looking great with a casual white skivvy.

Coolaroo also came to the party and, when the fabric landed in Australia, shipped our order down to the Institute on time and at their expense. Deadlines were so tight, the fabric went to the students without us even seeing it.

Thank goodness for friends!

In the meantime, I had contacted the "Golden Gown Awards" committee in Wagga. They were very receptive and said they would be delighted to have an additional award for an alpaca garment.

So far, we'd put \$5,000 into this project. Would the AAA put in the \$1,000 for the award? Yes, said the Special Events Committee.

You will have read Subject Co-ordinator, Anne Ryan's letter in the last issue of Alpacas Australia. She was pleased with the project. We received some valuable comments from the students, too. They will be useful for making sure that, when we begin to produce our own fabric, it is what designers want to work with.

At last, late last year, Ros McNicol and I went to see the results — the garments themselves. Anne Ryan (see photo below) set them up in the large workroom at the Institute for

us to admire and photograph.

The topics worked on by the students were:

"Sunday Best" — 50's styling;

"Casablanca" — 40's styling;

"Uniformity & Utility" — 40's styling;

"X-files" — 90's styling with a 40's twist;

"Glamour" — 80's and 90's styling;

"La Vita Italiana" (Italian Riviera) — 50's styling.

The students made up "story boards" — and we snapped some of them, too.

I am convinced that this and (hopefully) future similar projects are the best way to get alpaca out into the fashion world where it belongs, using organisations which are already in place to promote it for us.

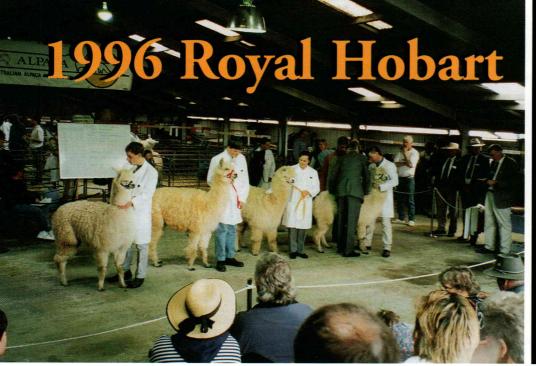
We'll be in Wagga on Saturday 31 May to see alpaca garments at the "Golden Gown Awards". Will you join us? We would hope that there will be a good-sized industry representation to see the first Alpaca Award at this fashion event.

If anyone would like further information on the Alpaca Award to be presented at the "Golden Gown Awards", please contact the AAA office on (03) 9877 0778.

Leftt: Institute Subject Co-ordinator, Anne Ryan set up the display for us in the Institute's large workroom. Right: A superb coat with that typical alpaca "swing" and drape.







# Alpacas make their debut

by Paul Natoli

On Saturday October 26th 1996, forty of our finest alpacas stepped forward into the show arena for the very first time in Tasmania, at the Royal Hobart Show.

Even though most of us were unsure of what to really expect, invaluable experience had been gained six months previously at the Stewards School run by Geoff Halpin and Bill Plunkett, and at a "mock show" in August. This was run along the same lines as those held in Victoria's Western Region and we were shown the finer points of exhibiting by Allan and Carolyn Jinks. On the day, of course, it is different.

Show preparation experience for some consisted of late nights pouring over back copies of *Alpacas Australia* and anything else that could give us the good oil on dry cleaning alpacas.

For many new alpaca owners the confusion was summed up by Alison Brolsma.

"I started preparation a few weeks before, by restricting the girls to a very clean grassy paddock, banning hay without a bib on, and *no* rolling in the dust. Every day I'd go and pick up loose bits of grass and sweep up chaff in the barn.

"Really there is more to life than vacuuming paddocks and discussing the negative aspects of rolling with two determined South Americans. I calmed down a bit when I realised that they were laughing at me." ("Here she comes with the hairbrush, let's spit on each other!")

It was a great enjoyment, being able to view such a collection of fine animals all in one place and hundreds of people were entertained and delighted by the spectacle unfolding before them throughout the day. A number of comments were passed by some of the crowd as to the professional presentation put forward by all concerned. We were also very proud of the young people from Bridgewater High School, who trained for months beforehand at Cremorne Farm Alpacas. They did such a fine job in handling a large number of the alpaca entrants.

Our thanks go to Bill Plunkett who performed above and beyond the call of



Supreme Champion, Royal Hobart Show 1996, Terrabarb Bella exhibited by Terry and Barbara Hanlon.

duty by judging 16 fleeces the day before in somewhat trying circumstances, thanks to an unscheduled cattle judging. He stayed back until after midnight to give assistance and advice on setting up the ring, etc. On the big day he backed up again early as Chief Steward and also gave support to our MC for the day, local TV celebrity John Sidney.

Our thanks also to Geoff Halpin for taking time out to help make our day a success, as alpaca judge.

Apart from a stunning display of the 16 alpaca fleeces, the Show was also complemented by exquisite alpaca garments and beautiful alpaca photographs, courtesy of the AAA, the Alpaca Centre at Berrima and Tasmanian members.

At the end of the day Geoff announced the championship winners.

The Royal Hobart Show 1996 Supreme Champion was Terrabarb Bella exhibited by very proud owners Terry and Barbara Hanlon.



The alpaca display attracted many visitors.

The Junior Champion sash was won by Altamira Rashan exhibited by Vandra Frega, winner of class 3 Junior Male 6–12 months Open.

Reserve Junior Champion was taken

out by class 1 Junior Female 6-12 months Brown winner, Trimax Peruvian Harliquin exhibited by C. Menzies.

In the senior section, class 4 Senior Female 12-24 months Open winner

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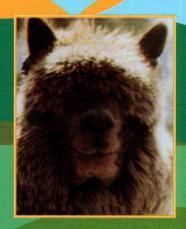
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Dave and Leonie Pearson - Mt Tamborine, S.E. Queensland Ph: 07 5545 1705 Mobile: 0419 773 283 Fax: 07 5545 2858 Terrabarb Bella exhibited by Terry and Barbara Hanlon, won the Senior Champion sash.

Reserve Senior Champion was won by class 8 Senior Male 18–24 months Open winner, *Samarkand Blackadder* exhibited by Rainer and Riki Marten.

Best Wether on the day was *Freddie* exhibited by Peter and Heather Otto.

Champion fleece as judged by Bill was awarded to *Strathelie Running Bear*, winner of class 12 Fleece Alpaca aged 6-18 months. This was a dark fawn fleece exhibited by Claude and Teresa Goudsouzian. Reserve Champion fleece was awarded to *Karoobie*, winner of class 13 Fleece Alpaca aged over 18 months. This medium brown fleece was exhibited by Glen and Kellie Boyd.

At the conclusion of the Show the audience was treated to an alpaca shearing Australian style. Glen Boyd showed no signs of stage fright when he proceeded to shear *Freddie*, and Bill Plunkett supplied a running commentary, throwing in the odd joke for good



On the spot! Local media identity, John Sidney quizzes Bill Plunkett (left) and Geoff Halpin (right) about those mysterious animals, alpacas.

measure. Glen certainly had his work cut out for him as the fleece later weighed in at eight-and-a-half kilograms!

Needless to say, the resulting transformation of this large fleecy animal into the skinny shade of his former self alpaca was rather amusing to those who had not seen it before.

Overall, the debut of alpacas at the 1996 Hobart Show was a magic experience and judged an outstanding success.

Congratulations to the show committee who put it all together, under the guiding hand of our Regional President and Show Committee Convenor, Peter Otto.



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#### AMITY GREEN HAPPY WITH OPEN DAY

Thanks to wonderful weather on Sunday 27 October, Amity Green Alpaca Stud's open day at "Bonfire Hill", Blue Range Road, Mansfield was a great success according to Ken and Robyn Green. Over 50 guests attended and were greeted by the offer of refreshments and some young Alpacas on halters, eager to go for short walks.

During the day, the Mansfield Spinners and Weavers put on a great display spinning alpaca fleece under the trees. Some of the best stud males were also shown off, including Centeno owned by Aust-ralian Alpacas and El Bueno and Blackjack from Pinjarra Alpacas.

At 10.45 it was time for the first speaker of the day, AAA vice-president



Spinning demonstrations under the trees.

Geoff Hargreaves, to talk about the future of the industry. He was kept busy with plenty of questions.

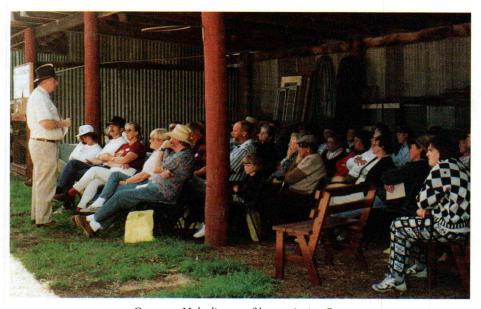
Geoff Halpin, from Capalba Park Alpacas in Seymour, spoke next on

general farm management, followed by Cameron Holt, from the Melbourne College of Textiles, who gave a very informative discussion on fibre.

Lunch was superbly catered for by the Steiner School with Delatite Wines conducting wine tastings and sales. A highlight was Julie Aldous and her two companions from "Cuccanaddie" playing some extremely lovely Celtic music, (Ken and Robyn highly recommend them to anyone for any type of function!)

After lunch it was off to the shearing shed for a talk by Amity Green's vet, Dr Peter Bartram from Benalla on alpaca health. (Peter studied with one of the world's foremost alpaca authorities, Dr Murray Fowler in the USA.)

Guests were divided into three groups and each got to both watch and participate in afternoon activities. These were ultrasounding the alpacas



Cameron Holt discusses fibre at Amity Green.

for pregnancy; alpaca shearing (not many people had seen this before and were highly interested); and alpaca training — a TTeam demonstration by Sandi Keane and Wendy Beer from Pinjarra Alpacas.

The final talk, on insuring livestock, was given by Ken Phillips, representing Wilburtins, one of Australia's largest alpaca insurers. Afternoon tea and informal discussions amongst guests and speakers concluded an excellent day.

Ken and Robyn were pleased with the success of their open day and are planning to hold more. Anyone who is interested in attending is welcome to contact Amity Green. Telephone 057 769 595 or 018 349 421

#### 150 AT TALKA OPEN DAY

According to Nick Veltjens at Talca Alpacas, an alpaca open farm day is an excellent way of attracting the shyer element of the public. They are interested to learn about alpacas but may not wish to make individual contact. At an open day, perhaps, they "dare" to be one of a crowd. An open day also presents a good opportunity for interested people follow up their ideas in a leisurely way.

Following the success of a combined open day organised by four farms on the Mornington Peninsula during Easter 1996, Christine and Nick "went solo" on Australia Day this year.



Nick Veltjens talks with an open day guest about alpacas and financial management.

The publicity was minimal:

- three advertisements in one of the widely distributed local papers;
- · leaflets in shops and under windscreen wipers during the last week;
- direct mail invitations to interested people.

The programme was simple:

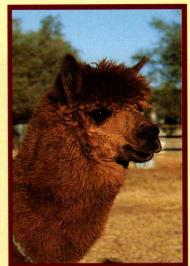
· Lots of animal contact with feeding and hands in fleeces;

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- · talking through some financial farm management aspects;
- · looking at and feeling alpaca products from fleeces: yarn, knitted garments and continental quilts;
- discussions on the long term prospects of the industry.

The result was gratifying and the alpacas were very interested to see so many people arrive. They enjoyed being number one attraction.

About 150 people (around 50 parties) came through in beautiful weather. They were very interested, especially in the prospects of the industry and in alpacas as investment. Some visitors were there, as always, to look at value adding, to buy alpaca products and watch the spinning demonstrations.

One alpaca was sold on the day following the event and other sales are under negotiation.

#### Coming up!

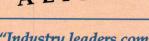
Coolaroo Alpaca Stud and the Alpaca Centre Australia are launching into Australian made! Read the story and enjoy the pix.

# **Alpacas** Australia

**NEXT ISSUE** JUNE 97



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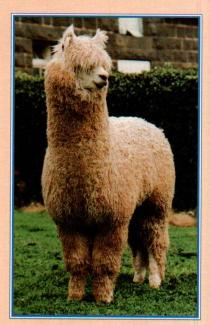
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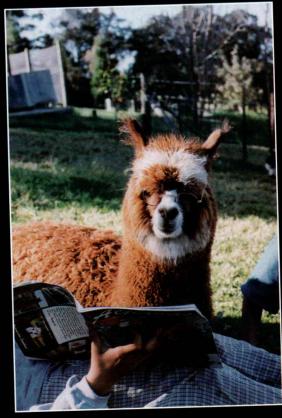


Is this why I have a long neck?

Julana Alpacas, Julie Parker



Can I have some privacy please? Kiah Alpacas, Simone Keene



I could give them a story or two! Watership Down Alpacas, Kim Jenkins



Mmm! Finger-lickin' good! Arcadian Alpacas, Denise Moysey



Hummin' in the rain...
Murragamba, Trudi Barnett



I ain't no daisy! Gerita Alpacas, Gerry & Anita Maas



Will this facial make me bootiful?
Belgrave Park Alpacas, Jillian Nicholas



Bronson – ready for summer Hunter Alpaca Stud, Peter & Narelle Tulip



I've heard of short back and sides, but this is ridiculous! Cartrefelee Alpaca Stud, Peter Otto



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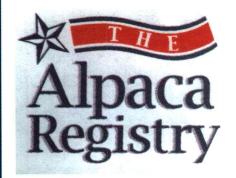
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The Alpaca Registry, currently administered by the International Lama Registry, is the principal registry of alpaca breeding stock in North America. Alpacas that are not the offspring of two registered parents are generally not eligible for registration, although imported alpacas can be admitted if they can pass a rigorous screening examination. However, for any alpaca that is to be imported into North America (or for any Canadian alpacas that are to be imported into the United States), this screening examination must take place in the country of origin so that the importer will not inadvertently import inferior animals into North America. An animal that has not been screened in its country of origin loses its eligibility for registration. In addition, any offspring of such an animal cannot be registered either, even if its other parent is a registered alpaca. For any questions or to set up a screening examination, please contact the Registry's attorney, David Schieferstein, Nineteen Old Town Square, Suite 238, Ft. Collins, CO 80514, (970) 484-8088.

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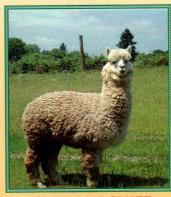


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On April 13 and 14, Coolaroo, located at Berrima NSW, is offering two oneday workshops. Others are planned for later in the year.

According to Coolaroo's Janie Hicks, the stud's Elite Alpaca Production Workshops were an overwhelming success last year, attracting a number of breeders and prospective alpaca investors from all over Australia, as well as from the USA.

The workshops will again be presented by Coolaroo's breeding consultant, Dr Jim Watts.

Dr Watts is a specialist fibre expert, ex-CSIRO and principal consultant to the Wool & Rural Industries Skill Training Workshops.

These workshops will give participants an opportunity to learn about fibre quality and put into practice superior breeding techniques to ensure they breed fleece that is highly processable and end-product directed.

Breeders will learn how to class their own stock and maximise their corrective breeding effectiveness, as well as how to identify characteristics for superior processing performance.

The potential of alpaca as a fibre will be identified and explained and future directions will be canvassed.

Other issues important to breeders will be given coverage by experts, including a session on "Taxation Issues in the Rural Sector", slantted to issues

specifically affecting alpaca breeders.

Anyone who is interested in attending should contact Janie Hicks or Miranda Skinner. Phone: 048 785 266; or fax: 048 785 233. Bookings are essential as numbers need to be limited due to the hands-on nature of the workshops.

Cost per head is \$105 or \$175 for a couple. Each of the workshops begin at 8.30 am and conclude at 4.30 pm and lunch is included. Accommodation can also be arranged.

For those who enjoy a "hands free" trip, you can get to Coolaroo on the Sydney to Mittagong train. If you prefer to drive, the stud is just one-and-ahalf hours from Sydney Airport.

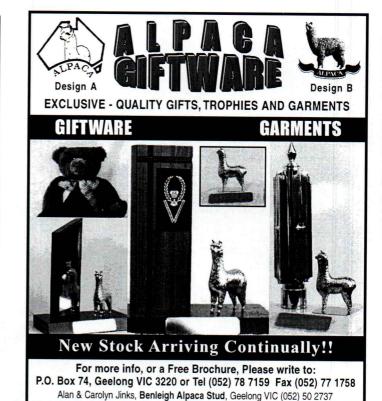
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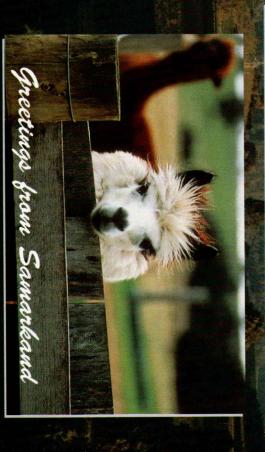
Me at Samarkand – where the grass is always greener – both

sides of the fence! Wish you were here to see the views — smell the air – taste the water! Food's fantastic – everything organic

- no blowouts though - they tell me adult herd average (40)

25.3µ and 19.9% CI! howzat! Hosts great – nothing too much trouble – Tleam people too! Suites (sorry, paddocks) have babies - Hope you can get to see it all - must rush - breakfast super extras – rocks, splashpools, rolling pads and Endless — coming or going! Look forward to wintersports with snow Pasture - Top barn - Rates amazingly low! Girls are gorgeous

Love Always Juran xxx



Send to find out more about the Samarkand magic. ... b. 10 626 Staverton, 748. 7306



#### by Dr Dr Ewen McMillan **Bellarine Veterinary Practice**

#### CAN ALPACAS EAT TOO FAST?

Have you ever considered where all that food goes?

After being swallowed, it has to travel down that long neck until it hits the first compartment of the stomach.

Can things go wrong?

Is a long neck ever a problem?

Those of you who have experience with horses may have seen or heard of "choke".

This is a swallowing problem usually associated with eating dry, often pelleted food, or it simply occurs as the result of an animal trying to swallow food chunks that are too large. It can be a frightening thing to witness and I have had two clients report it occurring in alpacas.

The owner is happily watching the animal tuck into a nice feed when, all of a sudden, eating stops. The animal begins to look distressed and, worse still, coughing starts and froth and liquid appear at the nose.

Panic stations!

What's happening? Phone the vet!

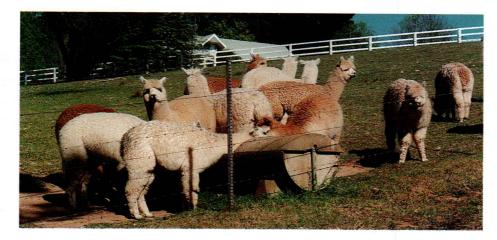
What I have described above is the bad news. The good news is that I have not had to treat either of the cases I was called about. Both resolved by themselves within 10-20 minutes.

How do you know you animal has recovered? The alpaca simply resumes eating.

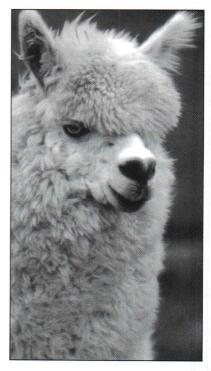
Whilst this event is rare in alpacas, it is worth filing away in your mind the possibility of it happening.

In horses, we are usually able to resolve the problem with tranquillisers and smooth muscle relaxants. The problem is actually a spasm of the oesophagus muscle which stops the tube from working properly.

If you think this problem is affecting one of your animals — don't panic. Go and have a cup of tea or coffee and come to your alpaca with more feed. Only panic if it is then still unresolved.



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# Marty McGee

# Leading as a tool of communication



#### WHY DO WE HAVE **ANIMALS IN OUR LIVES?**

An animal limits our ability to travel freely, costs money and often requires a great deal of work. To be sure, there are animals that earn their keep and are indispensable to their owners. However the vast majority of animals fall into the category of companions and nothing

For many, the answer to why we keep animals is that we want to form a connection with a being of a different species. It is possible to simply enjoy watching animals - witness the popularity of zoos, safaris, bird watching and animals in the media. Living with animals dramatically increases contact and at the same time creates a need for communication. Communication creates a connection unlike any other and the more fully we learn to communicate the more intense the connection becomes.

In the current jargon of the times, our perception creates our reality. Prior to my exposure to TTEAM I "knew" that alpacas had a limited ability to think, reason and communicate. My limited ability to think like a alpaca became their limitation in intelligence. To a very real extent, I "created an alpaca" based on my perception of what I thought possible. Because I didn't look for certain signs of communication, for me, they weren't there.

Linda Tellington-Jones created a training system that honors the nature of the animal and also recognises that animals are able to think and problem solve. The TTEAM method of training recognises that there is a difference between animals and people but, at the same time, assures that communication and understanding are the keys to a successful and productive relationship. Once I began expanding my perception of what was possible with alpacas in particular and animals in general, amazingly, the animals changed. It was almost as if someone had replaced all the alpacas with a new model. They became more complex, more interesting, more intelligent, more sensitive and more logical.

#### **INCREASING YOUR** COMMUNICATION LEVEL

First of all think about alpacas differently. Let them expand. Don't assume they can't understand. Make it your responsibility to get better at explaining what you want.

Think about what is going wrong when you have conflict in your life. It is quite often a communication problem. Communication is not easy between people, so it should be no surprise that communication with animals presents new and different challenges. As you begin to work at communicating and explaining things to your alpacas, imagine you are trying to explain something to a person of a different culture. You don't speak their language and they don't speak yours. If you have ever travelled in a foreign country you know it is very scary not to understand what is happening around you. You also know that without a common language you might seem at first to be a bit onedimensional and perhaps not too smart! In my experience it is the same with animals. When we don't communicate well they seem less than what they are. Once we have a common vocabulary, magic happens!

#### TALKING TO ALPACAS

How do you begin the process of building a vocabulary?

First of all you have to appreciate that we know there is a point to our attempts to communicate. Animals don't necessarily know that we are trying to communicate with them. And they are often so frightened, they can't think. In the beginning it is important to be willing to reinforce behaviour that remotely resembles what you are looking for. It may be much more useful to think of five different ways to 'explain' the task than to get stuck in a rut saying the same thing over and over. Let's look at teaching a alpaca to lead as an example.

You could hook a lead on your student, pull steadily on his head and wait until the alpaca gets tired of the discomfort and comes forward. Just as often the alpaca will stay planted or may resort to lying down. You could tug and release over and over until the alpaca figures out what that means by process of elimination. In any case, pulling on a alpaca's head makes him uncomfortable and tugging over and over is irritating. Additionally, the only thing an alpaca learns from these two approaches is to follow a human in order not to be made uncomfortable. Many people are happy just to have their alpacas follow them.

However, there are definite limitations to the "follow me wherever I go" approach. Many of my students have read or been told that it is a 'no-no' to let your alpaca walk either to the side or in front: that a properly trained alpaca is always two steps behind the handler. Backing up, standing while the handler walks away from or around the alpaca and asking your alpaca to make a subtle shift in stance are all skills that involve a more thorough understanding of signals to the head. These are skills that will obviously serve you in many settings.

I think of leading as communication. I want to be able to ask a alpaca to lower his head and remain standing; take only one step forward shift his weight, either to the side, the front or the back; back up one step or many; lead to the side, directly behind me, or go in front of me. I want my alpaca to negotiate obstacles that I choose not to go over.

#### **HOW DO YOU GET** THERE?

Once an alpaca is comfortable in a halter, I begin teaching the fundamentals of leading. From an alpaca's point of view, refined leading involves shifting balance in response to a signal. There are some important things to remember before you begin to teach leading.

- Make sure you understand the principles of safe and effective halter fit. Your progress will go much faster if you use a halter with rings on the nose band and hook your lead to this ring rather than the one under the chin. If a alpaca is preoccupied with not feeling safe in his halter he cannot think about new lessons.
- Work in a catch pen or an aisle to contain any panicky reactions.
- Use a lead 10 feet or longer. If your alpaca panics, you can throw him line and can avoid pulling on his head. Remember, for his whole life, your alpaca has been able to put his

head anywhere he likes. The first time you attach the lead to the halter is a very strange and frightening sensation. Holding on to his head is only going to prolong any panicky responses.

Use a lightweight lead. This will prevent accidental signs created by the weight of the lead from causing confusion about what is a signal and what is not.

Hook the lead to the halter and spend one lesson letting your alpaca get used to the restriction of the lead before you begin to teach him about signals. Stand 4 to 6 feet away from your alpaca, offer a bit of restriction on the line and let your alpaca sort it out. This may involve a bit of head tossing. If you begin to see panic, put slack in the line, let your student recover and begin again.

Next, with your hand about a foot down the lead, ask the alpaca to allow you to move his head to the right and left and down. Once you can move your alpaca's head around without panic, you can begin to ask him to move his whole body — i.e. to lead.

Use the entire length of the lead so that you are standing 6-8 feet from the alpaca. Hold the lead line in two hands. Pick up contact on the line. Contact is a connection with your alpaca's head that is not yet affecting his balance. If you have contact with your alpaca, anything you do with your hand will be transmitted up the line to the halter. If you have slack in the line your signals are lost. If you are pulling too hard you are already affecting your alpaca's balance by encouraging him to balance off the line.

Give a signal on the line by imagining that you are squeezing a sponge. Relax your entire arm and stand in balance on both feet. The easiest signals for your alpaca to understand at first are signals at an angle to the body, as opposed to those directly in line with the body. Watch your alpaca's feet as you squeeze the sponge and do your

best not to drop contact until your alpaca takes a step.

This is very different from pulling on the head until your alpaca comes forward. In this case the signals are intermittent, designed to create a shift in balance. By watching the feet you can time the signals to cause your alpaca to readjust his balance in the desired direction.

Once your alpaca has taken a step drop contact for a few seconds. Allow your alpaca to think a bit before you begin again. Leading is nothing more than these steps joined together with less and less time between the signals.

The most important part of this process is teaching your alpaca to take a single step in response to a specific signal. There are hundreds of alpacas out there who do not have clue that a signal on their head has anything to do with their feet. They only know to follow the human. If you are watching carefully you will see the light bulb of understanding go on when your alpaca realises what this exercise is all about.

I usually ask the alpaca to take a step to the right, then the left, then right, and so on. The first walk looks a bit like that of a drunken sailor but it is a walk with understanding.

Teaching your alpaca to back up only involves changing the direction of the signal from front to back. You will want to stand up close to the alpaca and give the signal only about five inches down the lead from the halter. Ask your alpaca to stand in balance in the centre of the catch pen. Move a few steps away. If your alpaca begins to follow, you steady him with a signal opposite to the line of movement. Gradually move further and further away as your alpaca remains standing.

The most important step of any journey is the first one. Time taken increasing your alpacas "leading vocabulary" will not make him easier to lead but it will increase the communication between you and increase the connection you want with your alpaca buddy.

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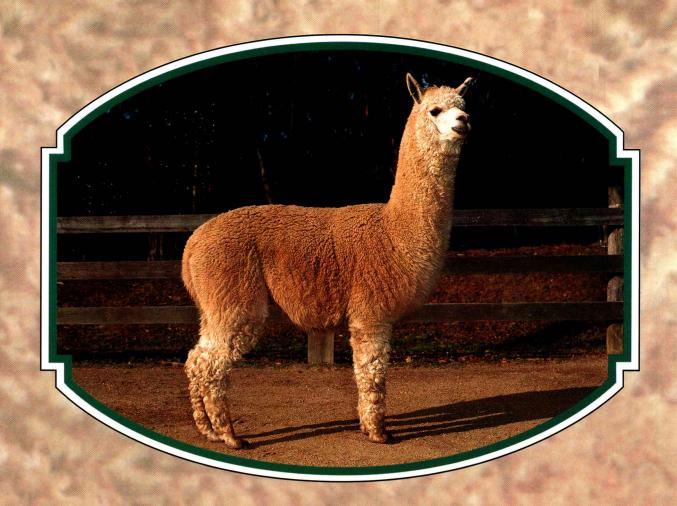
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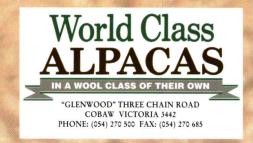
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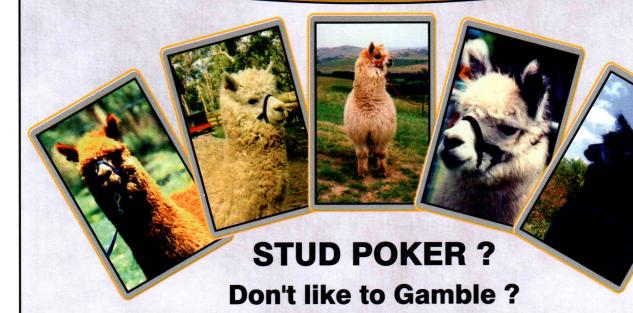


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# **ALPACAS**





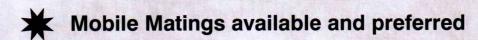
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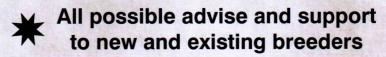
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