

# Alpacas

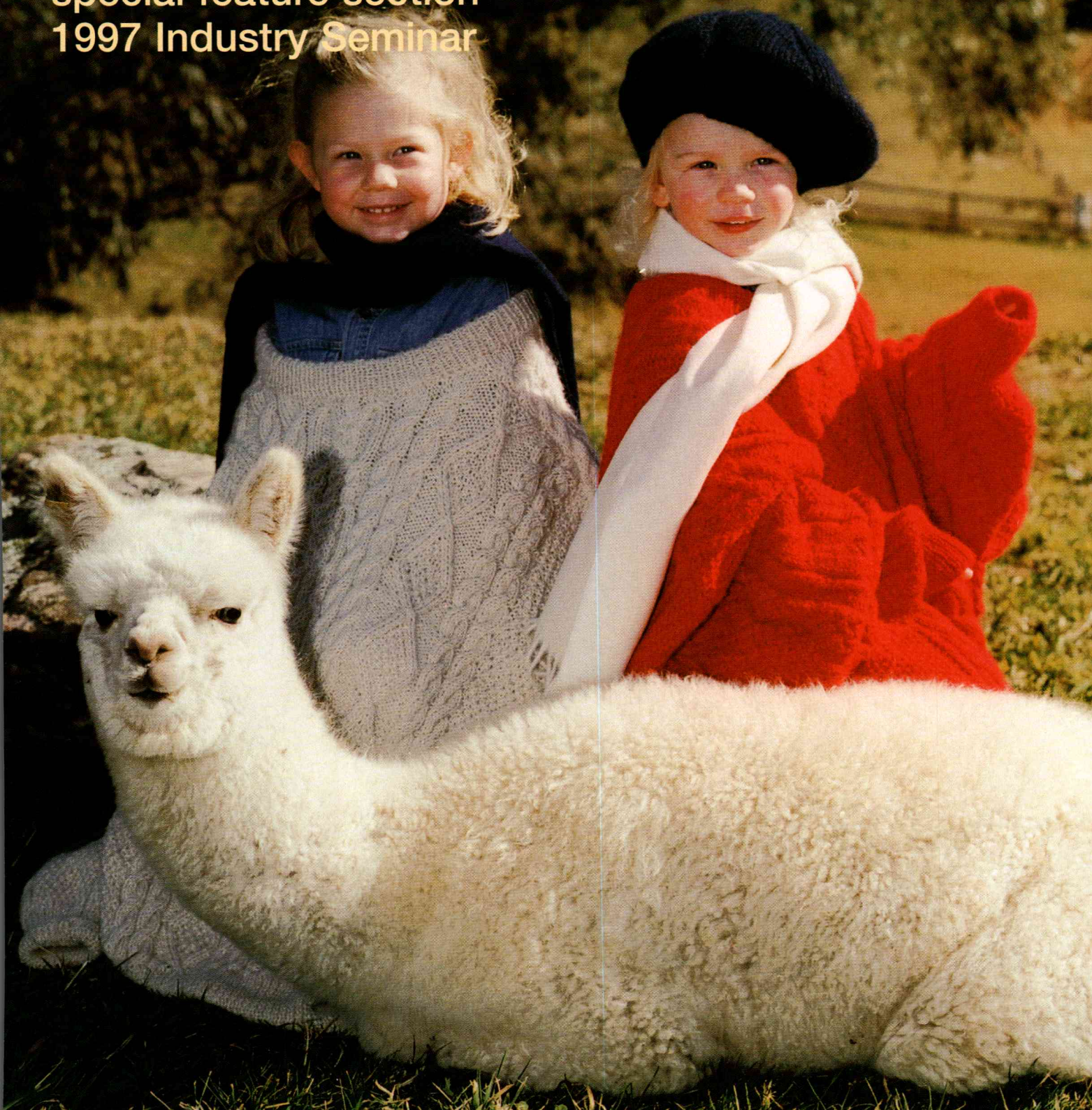
A U S T R A L I A

ISSUE No. 20 1997

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## Shaping *the* Future

special feature section  
1997 Industry Seminar



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PURCHASE

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ALPACAS

ARRIVE IN VICTORIA  
JANUARY 1997

AND

COLOURED PENGELLY  
CHILEAN AND  
AUSTRALIAN FEMALES  
MATED TO SELECTED  
PERUVIAN MALES  
AND OUR OWN  
CHAMPION MALES

INVESTMENT

ATTRACTIVE TAXATION  
ADVANTAGES

PERSONAL SERVICE  
WITH REAL SUPPORT  
TO NEW OWNERS

BOOKINGS BEING TAKEN  
FOR A LIMITED NUMBER  
OF MATINGS  
TO OUR OUTSTANDING  
PERUVIAN DARK FAWN  
STUD MALE

AND

OUR DENSE & FINE WHITE  
PERUVIAN STUD MALES  
READY JANUARY 1997

NOW STANDING AT STUD  
OUR CHAMPION FAWN  
AND BLACK MALES

MOBILE MATING

AGISTMENT

ENQUIRE ABOUT OUR  
EDUCATION DAYS

B&B

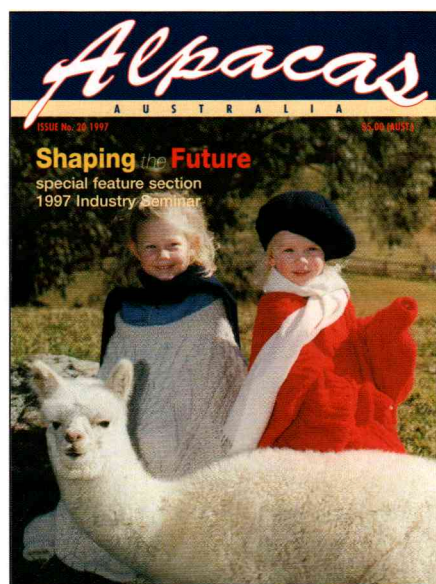
ALPACA WEEKENDS  
AT OLD DAIRY COTTAGE



Christine & Peter Nicolas

Tel: (03) 5422 6540 Fax: (03) 5422 6544

Kyneton Macedon Ranges



Cover photo courtesy Australian Alpaca Centre.

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AA/9/97

lowed every lead towards potentially good purchases and every guideline against potential mistakes. Inevitably I heard different views. I had concerns about conformation and, to my surprise about 'black' being 'black'. I would hear of a 'profoundly black girl' and find her registered as dark brown, looking brownish in a photograph but with a splendidly black fleece sample. Could all this happen in one animal?

I did not have the option of going to see and had to rely on advice from people who were relatively unknown to me and who might have had vested interests. My anxieties on that score proved groundless. These 'alpaca people' gave of their time and knowledge with professionalism and integrity. In those months I learned a lot from this amazing network of generous and knowledgeable people. That I have made no major blunder is due to the soundness of the advice I received.

Once bought, the alpacas remained where they were until, if moved for

mating and by chance, they came closer to other alpacas of mine when agistment arrangements were changed.

Thus, with long term and mating agistment I have had experience of about a dozen alpaca studs in four States; my six breeding females, their progeny and one other young male are now agisted on three studs: in Victoria, South Australia and West Australia.

### EARLY EXPECTATIONS OF AGISTMENT

A dictionary definition (*Concise Oxford English*) of *agist* is 'take in livestock to feed' and another (*Macquarie*) adds 'for money' but most alpaca on agistment seem to receive virtually full care.

Initially I had no defined expectations of agistment beyond a broad assumption that the agistor would feed, water and generally care for agisted animals within the normal farm or stud routine and I would pay what it cost. I did not (and do not) claim any

knowledge of day to day alpaca management which I am sure is best left to the chosen agistor. I had (and still have) my own ideas about breeding – supported by some knowledge of genetics and of animal breeding. I expected to be, and have been, involved in these decisions. I had also hoped to be able to develop individual animal records relevant to later decisions on culling and breeding for improvement but in this respect some of my expectations may be unrealistic.

These notes concentrate largely on issues related to risk, decision-making and responsibility in the context of agistment. Opinions expressed are my own and largely reflect alpaca experience since 1996 and life's experiences for somewhat longer.

### WHOSE RISK?

Agistment is generally 'at owner's risk' except in relation to negligence. Most owners of animals on agistment will

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leave day to day decisions to the agistor. Thus the agistee has *de facto* delegated control to the agistor over most decisions, while accepting virtually all the consequences. This requires considerable trust in the professional competence of the agistor – in some ways comparable to the confidence a person has in their doctor or lawyer but without the professional guarantees.

Normally the agistee's confidence will prove fully justified and the implied or explicit 'owner's risk' situation rightly protects the agistor against being considered liable for unavoidable accidents and illness. The agistee may feel he/she is protected against negligence by the same agreement but I suspect this would be contentious if it came to being tested in the courts.

The agistee then needs to be quite clear that virtually all risk is theirs and includes the consequences of a degree of mismanagement not sufficient to be defined as negligence.

Although the probability of a bad situation arising must be very small the potential loss is big. The risk is minimised by a written agreement and animal insurance.

## WHO DECIDES WHAT?

Decisions related to feeding, water, security and protection from adverse conditions are seen as the responsibility of the agisting stud as are routine care of health (including vaccination), birthing and care of new born cria. These matters are best handled by the agistor who can be expected to keep the agistee informed. This section looks at agistee involvement in decisions about some aspects of health, shearing and breeding.

## Health Care

Under routine health care I include regular vaccination, teeth and foot care, observation for minor illness or injury (e.g. running eyes, drooping ear,

lameness) and importantly, sufficient contact with the animals to recognise more severe injury or illness early – with pregnant females getting a bit of extra watching. This sounds laborious but it is routine practice and there will be few owners or managers who do not see their animals once or twice a day. As an agistee, I would expect to be consulted in management of all non-urgent health problems including delay in a female becoming pregnant. This assumes the agistor's feed supplements are conventional and my animals are not involved in 'fad feeding' or experimental diets without my being consulted.

In the context of agistment, animal health requires special consideration from two important perspectives viz. infection control and emergency care.

Infection control requires careful management by the agistor to prevent infected animals coming onto the farm.

A property accepting animals for agistment will normally be taking precautions to remain free of infectious (communicable) disease.

A prospective agistee should expect to be asked for evidence of the health status of the property their alpacas would be coming from and of the individual animals. If that information is not sought, the agistee should be cautious about assuming their animals on agistment will be adequately protected from infection. Even one case of a significant infection is likely to lead to the property and all animals on it being quarantined. Thus, agisted animals would be exposed to the risk of illness and to the restrictions of quarantine which could be costly to the agistee; the issue of liability may well be unclear.

In an emergency, the agistor is required to take all immediate decisions and to be responsible for immediate action.

The animal's owner must allow this and feel confident he/she will be

informed and consulted as soon as possible once the immediate crisis is under control. While a good outcome from an emergency generally earns praise and gratitude, a bad outcome – such as death of an animal or loss of breeding capacity in a female – may lead to unjustified recriminations and anger against the agistor. Under stress even the most reasonable people can become unreasonable.

Furthermore, alpacas are purchased and agisted for investment by city-reared folk who have little knowledge of the natural risks and realities of animals and of rural life; they may feel more than a little 'litigious' if their investment ups and dies on them without warning. For these reasons it may be wise to have the agistee informed of normal procedures for an emergency in advance of it happening.

## Animal Insurance

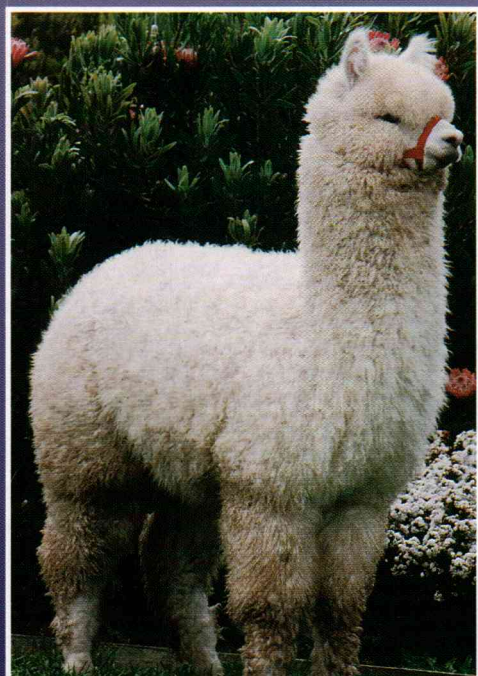
Few people starting out with alpacas will be able to cover their own risks of loss and most will have animal insurance. The responsibility for arranging it lies with the agistee and this includes providing the insurer with the required information on the facilities, experience and history of alpaca illness or mortality of the agisting stud.

Livestock insurers specify certain criteria which, if breached, may invalidate the insurance. These include limiting certain simple procedures (such as injections) to veterinary professionals and providing prompt information about illness, injury or death of an animal. Insurers may request an autopsy and may need to be consulted before an animal can be euthanased.

It is in the best interest of the agistee to give full information to the agistor about all the conditions of their livestock insurance. It must also be in the agistor's interest to have this information and to be authorised to contact the insurers in a crisis if the agistee cannot be found.

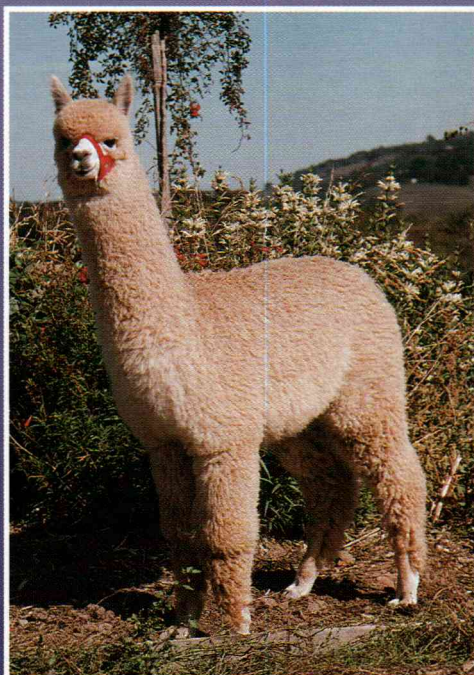
# Shanbrooke Alpaca Stud

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## SHANBROOKE ELITE

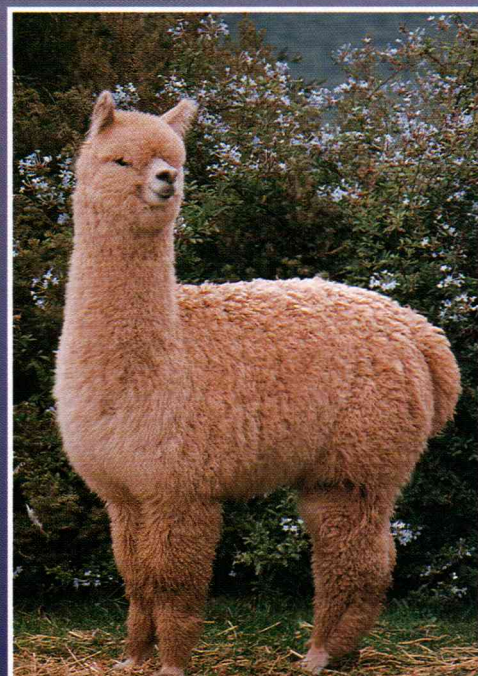
Inter. Ch. Male, National Classic 1996.  
Jnr. Ch. Male, Melbourne Royal 1996.  
Jnr. Ch. Male, State Show NSW 1996.



## SHANBROOKE SOCIETY LASS

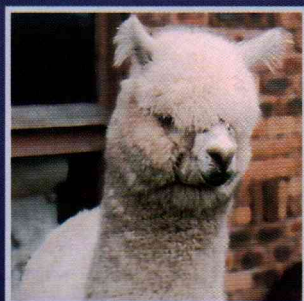
Jnr. Ch. Female, Sydney Royal 1997.  
Jnr. Ch. Female, Geelong Alpaca Fest 1997.

*Canadian judge, Maggie Kreiger:*  
"This female has a fleece to die for."



## SHANBROOKE ENCHANTER

Jnr. Ch. Male, Sydney Royal 1997.  
1st in Class, National Classic Show 1996.  
Inter. Res. Ch., Geelong Alpaca Fest 1997.



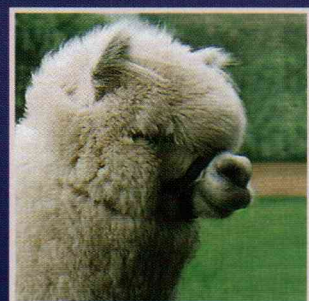
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## Shearing

Arrangements for shearing include those for sampling, testing and disposal of the fleece. The agistor will know the best time for shearing with regard to weather and grass seeds. Unless there is a particular reason to delay shearing, I assume it is best for agisted animals to be shorn at the same time as other animals on the property and am surprised that it does not always happen. Ahead of shearing time the agistor will need to know of any special requirements such as fleece sampling but may not be able to undertake requirements outside of their standard practice. (Extra charges for extra services must be accepted by the agistee.)

## Agisting for breeding

The agistee controls decisions regarding breeding and the usual concerns are those of selecting a sire. Advice sought from the agistor will generally be sound but, in fairness, some caution is needed if the agistor or other advisers have potentially suitable certified working sires; it is not easy to advise against one's own interests!

In addition to routine agistment there are special issues related to mating and pregnancy which need to be considered. Here, written agreements in the context of mating are usual but they are not all comprehensive. An unsatisfactory outcome or very delayed conception is a matter of concern to the owner and allows opportunity for misunderstanding to fester.

Normally, the stud management decides the frequency and timing of mating, checks receptivity at one or two week intervals, re-mates as appropriate and arranges ultrasound at approximately 60 days from the last mating. Generally, this seems to work well but there are exceptions, particularly when conception is delayed. In some cases, particularly if the reported signs of rejection from the female are somewhat indefinite, a thirty day ultrasound should be requested. In this context, adequate information to the owner is more than usually important, particularly if the alpaca is a maiden. There may be a fertility guarantee about which the owner will be concerned.

## Reporting

The issue of documenting and reporting to owners about agisted alpacas is difficult and has not always been satisfactory. In part this is because people agist alpacas for different reasons and require different documentation and recording.

However, assuming most agistees are running alpacas as a small business, they do have the need for information as well as the right to know. On the other hand, the agistor will have standard documenting systems for their own stock. Beyond that documentation becomes an added, and probably unwelcome, chore. The data required is partly animal progress and management recording.

Is it, for example, reasonable to request information on regular weights for adult and young animals, supplementary feeding records, health and vaccination records, dates of weaning, dates of shearing with fleece weights and any sampling done.

Perhaps a three or six monthly report containing the above data and comments could be provided, if requested. I have received records containing most of the above from one stud only. I am not sure what is considered normal record keeping or what an acceptable minimum is and I am sure it varies considerably. This is something that should probably be worked out ahead of agistment arrangement so that the agistee will know what data can be supplied and the agistor can decide if an extra charge for any extra work is appropriate.

## AGISTMENT AGREEMENTS

Allowing for the value of many alpacas, the responsibility the agistor carries, and the reliance placed on the agistor by the agistee, I am still surprised that written agistment agreements are the exception rather than the rule. Equally, I understand and appreciate the trust and integrity of alpaca breeders and owners, and share, with many, an aversion to paper work.

On balance, and in relation to the interests of both agistee and agistor, I think a written agreement is preferable in most situations. In addition to providing somewhat better security,

a written agreement allows the agistor to state the services offered and to identify those which attract additional charges. This both informs and assists the agistee by clarifying reasonable expectations, identifying the extras available, clarifying what records an agistor is willing to maintain and the process of keeping the agistee informed.

With respect to extras, I have had nothing but good will and help for which I am grateful. On a recent occasion I requested and received help way beyond the normal call of agisting duty. This was to tow our sand-bogged and heavy car out of trouble. I am not suggesting this should be 'routine service' but perhaps it justifies a 'miscellaneous charges' section!

A written agistment agreement should reduce the risk of misunderstanding, allow a mutually agreeable working partnership in the best interest

of both sides and of the alpacas, and diminish the risk of litigation.

Do agisting properties protect themselves with insurance? If not, should they? I am too new in the business to know.

Finally, I am sometimes concerned that some agistors may undervalue their skills, the service they provide and the responsibility they carry.

I am also a little concerned that the acceptance of verbal agreements – generally so binding in small and rural communities – may be a little precarious when dealing with valuable animals and with people who may not have equivalent respect for a verbal agreement.

This concern is not based on recent alpaca experience but on life's earlier experiences!

## NEXT ISSUE

More from the  
1997 Industry  
Seminar  
and a special  
fibre feature.

## ALPACAS AUSTRALIA BUMPER CHRISTMAS EDITION

Great holiday  
reading!



## Amberdale Alpacas

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# Chileans, Peruvians and number crunching

.....  
**by Graeme Pope**

*Not everybody is in a position, after having already outlaid money for Chileans, to go out and invest a whole lot more.*

Peruvians are being introduced into our industry and there is a lot of concern among many who own Chileans that, if they don't get into the Peruvian market, their investment may be threatened.

We went into the industry and invested a lot of money in what we considered to be good quality Chilean alpacas in 1991. It became obvious that the Peruvians were going to have a great impact on the Australian alpaca herd.

In 1993, we had an opportunity to buy a group of Peruvians out of a shipment and we were offered a pretty good deal. We looked at it very, very seriously. In fact, we were considering selling all our Chileans to buy Peruvians from this shipment.

Then Alan Bachelor did a bit of number crunching. We would have to put money up front and, even without delays, it would be a few years until we could start being productive again. He concluded it was better for us financially to hang on to our Chilean stock. In this industry, sensible economics has to prevail. Not everybody is in a position, after having already outlaid money for

Chileans, to go out and invest a whole lot more.

As we were not prepared to invest huge capital in new Peruvian breeding stock, we had to ask ourselves: what are our alternatives and is there a future for our old Chilean girls?

We started to do a bit of lateral thinking. We had a hunch that, maybe, if we could purchase a quality Peruvian sire, we could gradually improve the quality of our herd by putting him over our Chilean females.

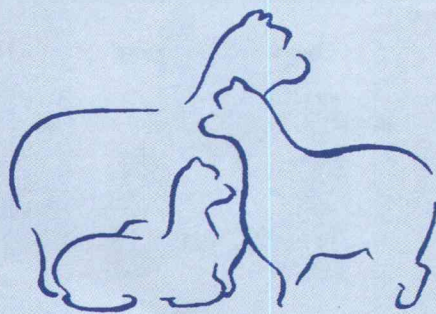
As luck would have it, Geoff Brennan discovered that twelve Peruvian alpacas were about to go from Peru into the United States. Some were to be auctioned and some were to be sold privately after the auction.

We had a look at the photos of the animals that were available for private sale. There was one male that looked very different to the others. We could tell from his photograph that his fleece was incredibly dense and the photo of his parted fleece revealed 'bundles' and 'fibre alignment'. (These are terms which, if you are unfamiliar with them, you should get to know as they will affect the future of breeding fibre.) We decided to buy him, sight unseen.

It wasn't until May 1994 that Geoff and Bev Brennan went over to the States on holiday and were able to have a look at him in the flesh. Geoff's first words to us on his return were, 'We've done the right thing'.

It took us about two and half years to actually get him through quarantine and onto our property. In the meantime, we were breeding from our Chileans using our old Chilean stud males that had been part of a purchase package. This was a mistake and it cost





WINDSONG VALLEY ALPACAS



Bedfordale – Western Australia

## The Picture Tells The Story

Windsong Valley All Blacks



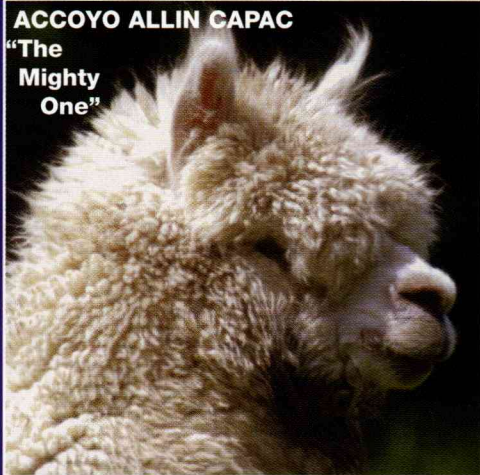
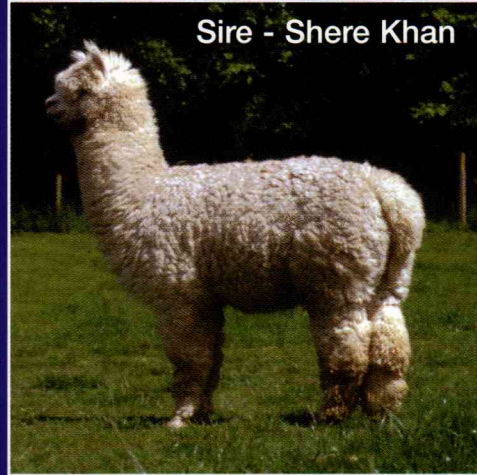
Talisman's Progeny – Like Peas in a Pod  
Perth Royal Show – 1996

1st, 2nd, 3rd – Black Jnr Male Class

1st, 2nd, 3rd – Black Jnr Female Class

Jnr Reserve Champion Male & Female

- Talisman's Yearlings available early 1997
  - Quality Females mated to Talisman
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**ACCOYO ALLIN CAPAC****"The  
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One"****TimberTop  
ALPACAS****Sire - Shere Khan**

Timbertop Alpacas was established early in 1994 as a family business when we first discovered and fell in love with alpacas.

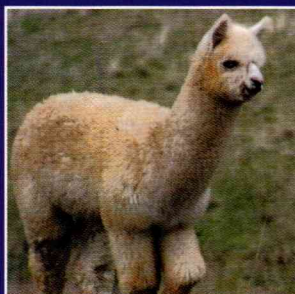
We started with pregnant girls in a range of dense solid colours and searched Australia after a decision was made to use only the

VERY BEST MACHOS. This enabled us to reach our goals of better conformation, greater density and coverage with unique fineness. Looking to improve on this genetic base we ventured to the United States on a mission for superior stock. This led us to Oregon and the home of Pacific Crest Alpacas where Allin Capac was purchased in partnership with Eringa Park Alpacas where he presently stands at stud. A.C. will add pure and dramatic Accoyo presence as well as fibre quality and quantity.

We are proud to offer his superior bloodlines and service to you.

**TIMBERTOP TWIGGY**

Sire - Purumbete  
El Dorado  
Junior Female Champion  
19 Micron  
Medium Fawn Mated to  
Accoyo Ruffo

**TIMBERTOP SNOW-  
DROP**

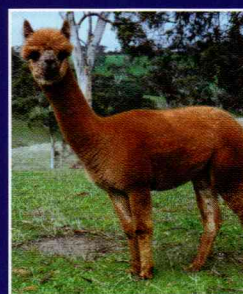
Sire - Purumbete  
Snowman  
White Crimp Fleece  
Perfect Conformation  
Maiden going to Accoyo  
Allin Capac

**TIMBERTOP BELLA**

Sire - Purumbete  
El Dorado  
Tightly Crimped Light  
Fawn Fleece  
Mated to Accoyo Allin  
Capac

**PERUVIAN LYLA**

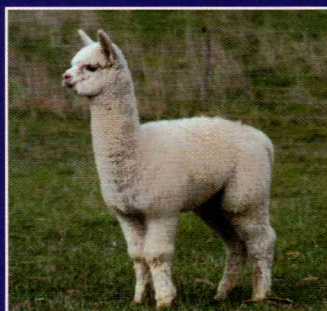
Sire - Peruvian  
Hemingway  
'Superior Quality' -  
White  
Mated to Accoyo  
Allin Capac

**TIMBERTOP RAIN-  
DANCER**

Sire - Purumbete  
El Dorado  
Beautiful Dark Fawn  
Mated to Accoyo  
Ruffo

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Sire - Accoyo Ruffo  
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**TIMBERTOP TRAIL  
BLAZER**

Sire - Accoyo Ruffo  
Extremely Fine &  
Lustrous Fleece  
Certain Future Herdsire

**FOR FURTHER  
ENQUIRES PLEASE  
CONTACT**

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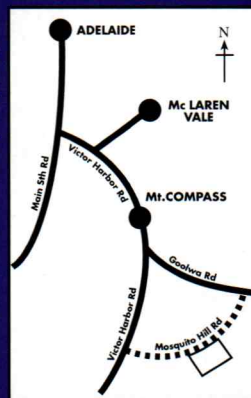
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**PETER BROWN**

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**MARJORIE BROWN**

(08) 8 554 9547



**TimberTop Alpacas**  
Mosquito Hill Road  
PO Box 793  
Victor Harbor 5211  
South Australia

us. We would have been far better off to have sold them as soon as we took delivery of them and put the money into services from top sires.

We know now that buying Peruvian Centeno was the best thing we could ever have done. He has many progeny on the ground and he is throwing very true to type. The results so far have been far better than we expected.

Most of our Chileans are white, yet they have thrown all these solid fawn to solid brown offspring. Nevertheless they are a sought after colour and they are certainly Peruvian-like animals. Our business has turned around for us. We have something to show and sell and have already sold several of his offspring as well as some Chilean females that are pregnant to him. Based on our experience so far, I don't believe that people have to sell their Chileans and replace them with Peruvians. But they can improve by adding Peruvian genetics.

Peru has been breeding lines of white and fawn commercial fibre-producing alpacas in co-operatives for many years. Whilst experience has shown that 'Peruvian' doesn't necessarily guarantee quality over 'Chilean', we are aware that some very superior genetics are available from some of the popular commercial breeders in Peru. They are particularly sought after by breeders here who are serious about breeding quality densely fleeced alpacas.

This business isn't only about breeding the best micron but it is also about staying alive financially by being able to produce an income on the way. Our experience has demonstrated that old Chilean females mated to a quality herdsire produce remarkable improvements in quality in the first cross offspring – impressive, in fact. Cross these offspring with another proven quality herdsire and, we believe, you will produce offspring you won't tell apart from those born through a quality Peruvian line.

There are a lot of good Chilean females around that make good breeding stock. They may not look much by themselves but, by careful selection of a proven sire, they can produce stunning offspring. They have plenty of progeny on the ground to check out; their breeding histories are known; and they can be purchased at much lower prices than imports from Peru. Nobody has to be reminded that trading is an essential part of survival for any business.

Let us assume you purchase a Peruvian female for \$22,000-\$24,000 and put a good male over it. With any luck the progeny will turn out to be good breeding stock. If it is a female, you will probably get your \$24,000 back after that offspring is 14 months old when you sell it pregnant.

On the other hand, \$24,000 will buy three old Chilean girls over which you could put a good Peruvian. The improvement in the quality of the first cross offspring, in my view, brings it very close to that of a Peruvian female offspring.



*From left: Centeno Sunrise, Centeno Duke, Centeno Girl and Enchanted Wood at Australian Alpacas.*

If you were to sell your offspring for even \$15,000 each for the offspring, and if you are fortunate enough to get three females, this could produce a \$45,000 return. Even selling for a little less would still be a far better financial result than the return from one offspring from the \$24,000 Peruvian female. It makes good business commonsense, doesn't it? Trade!

Careful selection of a sire is extremely important to achieve the desired result. Remember not all ribbon winners necessarily throw true to type. Also remember that there are many quality stud males around that are not entered into shows for one reason or another, so shop around. They are advertised. Do your research and know what you are looking for.

Pay that little bit of extra money for the benefit of good genetics to build up quality. Buy a good sire, or pay reasonable money for the services of a good sire. Don't begrudge the extra money you pay for the mating fee. In the end, this could mean the difference between producing an offspring you can or can't sell. Remember, in order to make your business a commercial success, you need to make good commercial decisions.

Marketing is an important part of a successful business. It involves a lot more than spending a lot of money on expensive advertising. If you breed quality stock, it should sell reasonably well. The industry is quite competitive now, so stock for sale needs to be quality to sell quickly or, more importantly, to be priced according to quality. If you find marketing your stock a difficult exercise then tap into someone who can market for you and pay them commission. It is a tax deduction and the sale is cash flow.

In summary:

- a successful business is based on good planning and management of the resources available;
- be focused and don't lose sight of your goals. By all means, be aware of what others are doing, what is going on around you and where the industry is heading. But don't allow yourself to be distracted;
- as in all business transactions, those who want better quality must be prepared to pay for it. Generally, you only get what you pay for.

# Business or Hobby? New Ruling

On 4 June 1997 the Australian Tax Office issued a Taxation Ruling 97/11 on the subject of 'Am I carrying on a Business of Primary Production?'

This subject has been discussed and debated for many years and is of particular interest to those engaged in the breeding of alpacas.

The new ruling is the latest reference on the subject and should be given careful consideration by those who wish to determine their taxation status.

The Ruling, which is voluminous, refers to primary production activities generally, however much of it is applicable to alpaca breeding activities. Here is a summary.

## PRIMARY PRODUCTION BUSINESS INDICATORS

While it is not possible to lay down any test which will be conclusive in determining whether a business of primary production is being carried on, the indicators outlined below provide general guidance.

The Courts have ruled the following indicators to be relevant.

### 1. Whether the activity has significant purpose or character.

In order to show that there is a significant commercial purpose or character, it is suggested that a consideration of the following may help.

Whether the taxpayer has:

- prepared a business plan;
- sought expert advice from the relevant authorities, experienced operators or agents that work in the area of primary production that the taxpayer intends to carry on;
- obtained technical literature on the activity which the taxpayer intends to carry on;
- obtained soil and water analyses of the land that will be used for the activity;
- considered whether there is a market for the proposed produce and looked into potential markets;
- investigated the capital requirements of the venture and has a

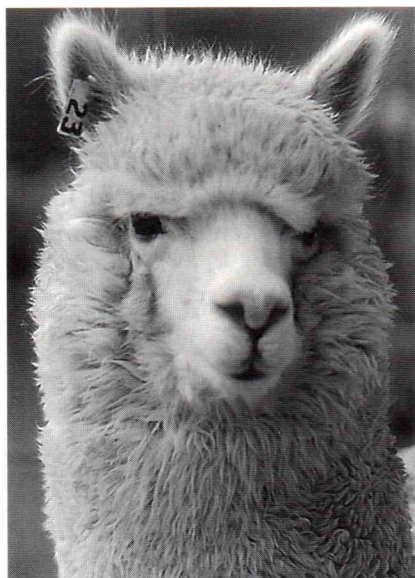
plan that shows how the capital will be obtained and used;

- conducted research into the activity to confirm that profits can be expected based upon the market prospects, the expected level of production and the running costs;
- ensured that the size and scale of the activity is sufficient for a commercial enterprise;
- complied with any legal requirements;
- an intention to make a profit. This could be shown by a business plan;
- a reasonable belief that the activity is likely to generate a profit.

### 2. Whether the taxpayer has more than just an intention to engage in business

This indicator is particularly related to:

- whether the activity is preparatory or preliminary to the ultimate activity;
- whether there is an intention to make a profit;



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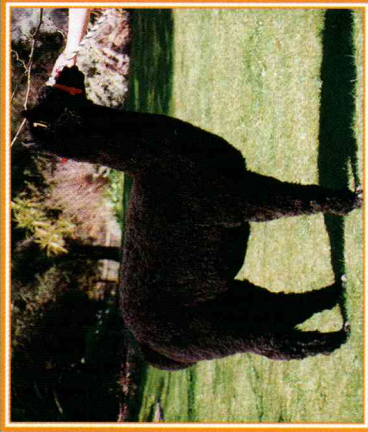
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- whether the activity is better described as a hobby or a pursuit of a recreational or sporting activity.

For example, expenses associated with experimental or pilot activities which do not amount to a business and which do not result in any assessable income being produced are not deductible. Where a business has commenced, expenses may be deductible even if no income is derived in the relevant year.

### 3. Whether the taxpayer has a purpose of profit as well as the prospect of profit from the activity

It is important that the taxpayer is able to show that the activity has a reasonable prospect of making a profit. Where the taxpayer has conducted research into his or her proposed activity, consulted experts and received advice on the running of the business and the profitability of it before setting up the business, there will be stronger evidence of an intention to make a profit. It is not necessary for primary production activities to make a profit in every year in order to be classified as a business. Also, the fact that a profit is not expected in the short term does not necessarily mean that a business is not being carried on.

### 4. Whether there is repetition and regularity of the activity

The repetition of activities by the same person over a period of time on a regular basis will help to determine whether there is the 'carrying on' of a business.

### 5. Whether the activity is of the same kind and carried on in a similar manner to that of the ordinary trade in that line of business

In considering this indicator the following factors might be compared with the characteristics of others

engaged in the same type of business:

- the volume of sales;
- what types of customers purchase the product and the manner in which marketing takes place;
- what sort of expenses are incurred by the taxpayer;
- the amount invested in capital items;
- previous experience of the taxpayer. Where a taxpayer does not have appropriate knowledge or experience he or she may be expected to have sought advice from experts;
- the activity should also be compared with and distinguished from that of a keen amateur.

### 6. Whether the activity is planned, organised and carried on in a businesslike manner such that it is directed at making a profit

It is often necessary to look at whether an activity is being carried on in a manner that conforms with ordinary commercial principles to determine whether that activity amounts to the carrying on of a business. A business is characteristically carried on in a systematic and organised manner rather than on an ad hoc basis.

### 7. The size, scale and permanency of the activity

The larger the scale of the activity the more likely it will be that the taxpayer is carrying on a business of primary production. However, the size or scale of the activity is not a determinative test, and a person may carry on a business though in a small way.

The smaller the scale of the activity the more important the other indicators become when deciding whether a taxpayer is carrying on a business.

### 8. Whether the activity is better described as a hobby, a form of recreation or a sporting activity

Often it will be the case that there is a hobby when:

- it is evident that the taxpayer does not intend to make a profit from the activity;
- losses are incurred because the activity is motivated by personal pleasure and not with a view to profit;
- the transaction is isolated and there is no repetition or regularity of sales;
- the activity is not carried on in the same manner as a normal, ordinary business activity;
- there is no system to allow a profit to be produced;
- the activity carried on is of a small scale;
- there is an intention by the taxpayer to carry on a hobby, recreation or sport rather than a business;
- produce is sold to friends and relatives and not to the public at large.

A taxpayer does not need to derive all of his or her income from the primary production activity and may be employed in some other occupation or profession.

Not one of the indicators referred to above is decisive and there is a need for them to be considered in combination and as a whole.

Whether a business is being carried on will depend on the general impression gained from looking at all the indicators. The weighting to be given to each indicator may vary from case to case.

As a generalisation and subject to all of the circumstances of a case, where an overall profit motive appears absent and the activity does not look like it will ever produce a profit it is unlikely that the activity will amount to a business.

*This information should not be used or relied upon as a substitute for detailed advice or as a basis for formulating decisions.*

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# Peruvian Centeno

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# Live-wire(d) cria

by Dougal Macdonald

Charbon's birth weight of 4 kg tends to confirm our reckoning that his entry into the world on 19 March was about two weeks premature. But once he got going, he bloomed, putting on weight, cavorting around the paddock with the other bubs; and from the moment we first held him, we felt that he was a good one.

The morning of 6 April, we were feeding out to the nursery paddock when we noticed Charbon favouring his off-side hind leg. Whatever it was wasn't stopping him from keeping up with the rest of the young animals, but he was reluctant to put that food on the ground. When we caught him, the explanation was immediately obvious. Somehow, he had fractured his femur.

Tiki and I were about to leave to go to Wyona, so the ever-reliable Gwynfa undertook to handle the little fellow. At Bungendore Veterinary Surgery, duty vet Iska took an X-ray before binding the leg into immobility, while not impeding comfortable urination.

The X-ray (Fig 1) showed that the femur was in three pieces! A triangular piece of bone had come away from the main shaft which had further fractured transversely at its narrowest point.

Next day, Bungendore Veterinary Surgery principal, Jack Laing called the local veterinary orthopaedic specialist to make an appointment. Alas, the earliest time available was the following Thursday. That was too long to wait. So he rang Andrew Dart at Sydney University Rural Veterinary Centre at Cobbity. We had no idea what the cost would be but we decided that Charbon already showed enough promise. He had excellent breeding – by Ian Flemming out of our Negrita, who had won animal and fleece ribbons at the Sydney Show. If we didn't get him fixed we would probably regret it.

During the two-and-a half-hour trip to Cobbity that afternoon, Gwyn held Charbon on her lap in the back of the car while Tiki, at this time only three weeks out of hospital after surgery, drove. Negrita travelled in the float.

They tell me that when Charbon arrived, he captured everybody's heart. It seems that none of the support staff there had previously made first-hand acquaintance with an alpaca so the occasion was something of a milestone. So too, it seems, was the surgery (at the Seminar, I asked LaRue Johnston and he said he had not heard of a similar case).

Charbon now has three wires holding his femur together. As well, Andrew Dart pinned the break (Fig. 2).

We collected Charbon and Negrita on Friday, me driving and Tiki holding him in the back. The recommended convalescence regime was six weeks of confinement before removal of the pin. The autumn weather was mild. We laid down in the earth-floored shed some pre-loved carpet kindly donated by a carpet merchant who would otherwise have dumped it. On the front lawn, I built two pens using the portable panels,

*Fig. 1: Charbon's leg a few hours after the fracture was first observed.  
(X-ray by Bungendore Veterinary Surgery.)*



without which no alpaca farm should be. The second pen was for a companion animal.

So began a period that was not very nice for Negrita but which she endured with remarkable stoicism. She did not get stropy or spitty during the confinement. We are sure she had no understanding of the reason. Each morning, we relocated the portable pens to clean ground then walked Negrita from the carpeted shed to the outdoors pen, carrying Charbon. Then we brought in the companion animal who had spent the night in another pen in the shed. Finally, after feeding and watering them all, we mucked out the shed.

If you put me down beside an elephant that had been a week dead in the summer sun, I couldn't smell it. But the girls assured me that the shed stank. This meant washing the urine out of the carpet every couple of days and spreading lime over the wet spot. At that time, the weather was sunny enough to dry the carpet before nightfall. Later, as the days grew shorter and the weather cooler, I scrounged more used carpet so that one lot was in the shed while the other was drying. The smell became tolerable, but for the animals in there all night, it must have been horrid. But Charbon needed Negrita on hand when he was hungry (he gained weight at about the standard rate) and Negrita needed a companion to share the stress.



*Fig. 2: After the surgery.*

*(X-ray by University of Sydney Rural Veterinary Centre.)*

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Six weeks after the surgery at Cobbity, I held the anaesthesia mask over Charbon's face while Jack removed the pin. It had moved upward, causing Charbon a lot of pain. Probably, it had not served much of a useful purpose for some weeks but Andrew Dart couldn't have been expected to know that when he put it in. Possibly, the pin moved the night I took a chance with moving the animals back to the shed. Negrita should have been following me as I carried Charbon, as she had often done previously, unaltered. She came half the way before deciding that freedom and a roll in some lovely dust meant more than her maternal instinct. The need to enclose her became urgent. I put Charbon down while I ran to shut gates at the front of the house and he, too, relished the sudden freedom, tearing around like a scalded cat.

After a few more weeks of confinement at Wyona where Negrita had gone for mating, Charbon has made a



*Fig. 3: The surgery site about two weeks after the surgery, before removal of the pin.*

*(Photo by Tiki Morgan.)*

splendid recovery. In spring, to prepare him for the show season, we'll have a dog trimmer even his fleece (Fig. 3 shows the site where Andrew Dart shaved him for surgery at age four weeks.) We'll very likely enter him in

the National Show. While you're there, do come and say hello to a brave, well-travelled, well-socialised little animal who, according to Andrew Dart, has made alpaca orthopaedic history – in Australia, if not in the world.

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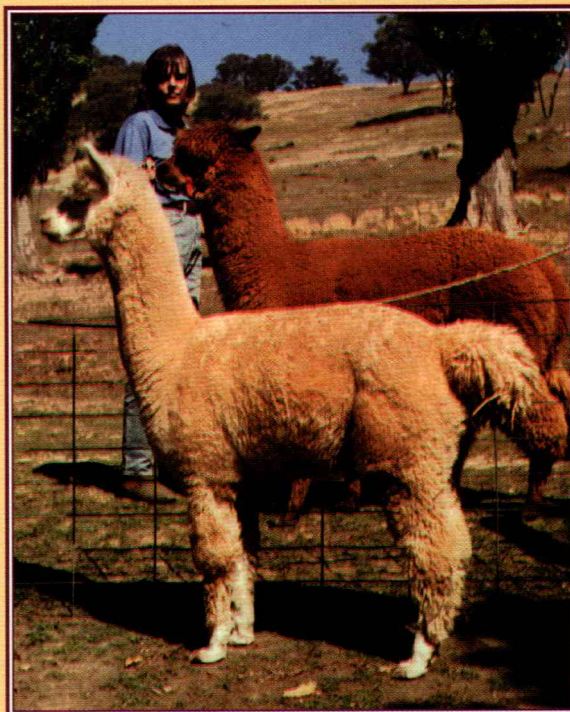
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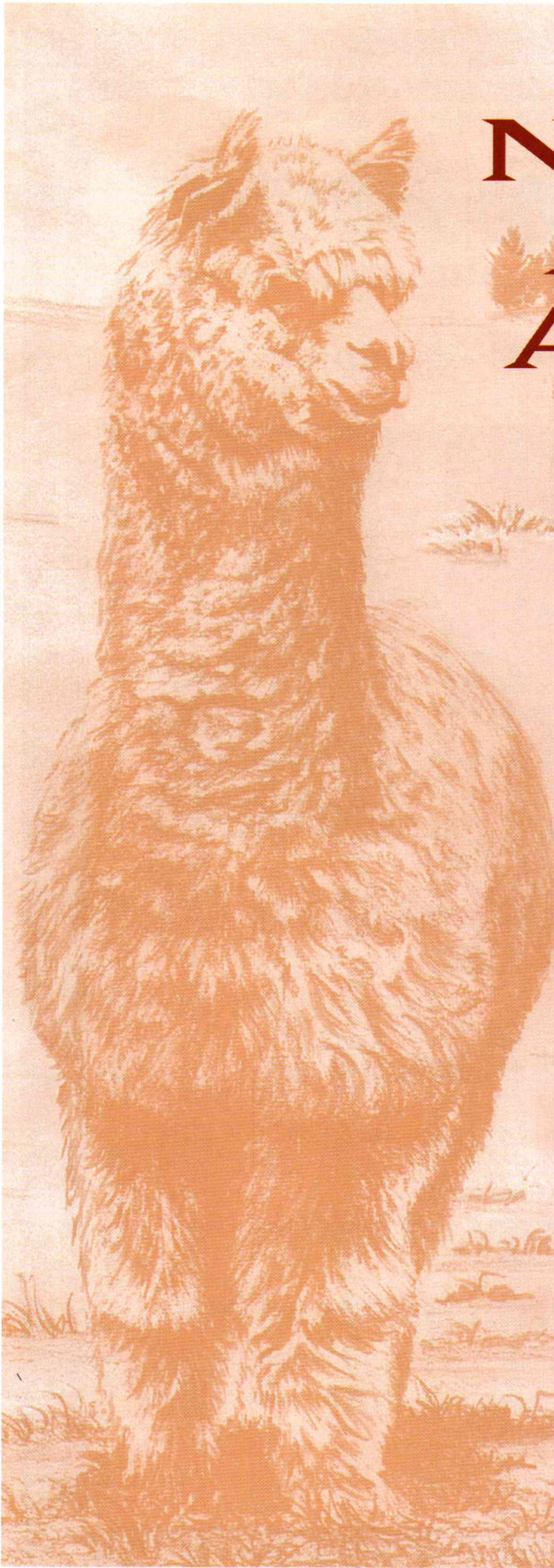
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# 1997 National Alpaca Auction

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Exhibition Pavilion  
Penrith Leagues Club  
Penrith NSW**

**T**his year, Sydney will host the fifth National Alpaca Auction, which features a selection of the finest stock available on the Australian market. Australian animals are fast becoming acknowledged as equal to the best available in the world.

In this Auction, the alpaca industry's most prestigious event, Australia's most saleable animals will vie for a strictly limited number of places. No more than 15 animals, judged as the elite of expected entries from throughout Australia, will be auctioned in the traditional manner.

Pre-auction introduction and parade of animals will commence on Sunday at 10.30 am with the Auction scheduled for 2.00 pm.

The Auction will be preceded by the National Show on Saturday November 15. This day will include both fleece and show judging. There be trade displays along with alpaca merchandise and alpaca related products.

For anyone wishing to purchase alpacas, learn more about the industry or just have a fun time, this week-end should not be missed.

For further information, please contact David Johnson at the Australian Alpaca Association's National Office on (03) 9877 0778.

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# The 1997 International Alpaca Industry Seminar

*not a frosty affair!*

There was a very busy schedule over the weekend for those with a thirst for knowledge. Nevertheless, people found time to socialise and catch up with friends at the Gala Dinner on Saturday night.

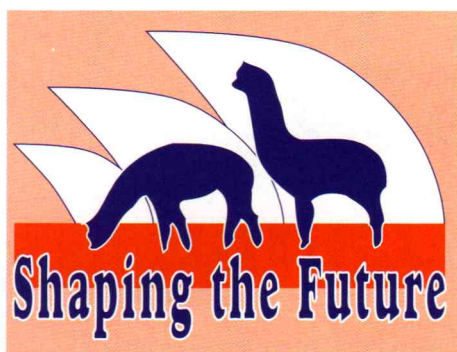
The ice sculpture of an alpaca was truly spectacular. It stood proudly, flanked by flower displays (created by AAA member, Fred Duncan). It watched us – and we watched it, wondering how long it would take to melt. Curiously, while it became less frosty and more transparent, it seemed scarcely to diminish in size. One theory aired was that the alpaca was probably sculptured out of salt water (apparently less quick to melt).

I can assure that person (he will know who he is), that his scientific theory is all wrong. Those of you who may have seen someone associated with this magazine 'tasting' the alpaca will now know why!

Our frosty friend presided over a night of long conversations (commonly about alpacas), song, dance and general jollity.

Those of us who were wise, dutifully trotted off to bed at the conclusion of the dinner. For those who burnt the candle at both ends, it was hard work to be up and running in time for the Sunday sessions. The problem was that the line up of speakers and the subject matter they presented were so good, no one could afford to miss even one session!





# ALPACAS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

## (evolution, biology and use)

### ZOOLOGIC CLASSIFICATION

Alpacas are classified in the taxonomic order *Artiodactyla* (even-toed ungulates) (Table 1)<sup>1-9</sup>. The *Suiformes* (pigs, peccaries, hippopotamuses) have simple stomachs like humans, pigs, horses and dogs. They are only distantly related to the camelids, which follow in the classification scheme. The rest of the artiodactylids have complex stomachs and conflicting classification schemes have been proposed. When similarities and differences between camelids and ruminants are compared (Table 2), it seems logical conclusion that they should be separated.

It may be thought that, because camelids ruminate, they should be considered a ruminant. There is a difference between a digestive strategy and a taxonomic classification and that difference becomes important when considering anatomy, physiology and

disease susceptibility. As applied to animals, to ruminate means to chew the cud (a mouthful of food that an animal regurgitates from its stomach for a second and slower chewing). Camelids are not unique in this strategy, because other non-ruminant species, including some primates regurgitate and re-eat the vomitus.

According to evolutionary taxonomists, tylopods (camelids) and ruminants have been on separate evolutionary pathways for nearly 40 million years, at which time both groups had simple stomachs. They arrived at the

same digestive strategy by means of a process called parallel evolution, but have more differences than similarities (Table 2).

### EVOLUTION

The ancestors of all camelids originated in North America early in the eocene epoch, 40-50 million years ago. The camel branch migrated westward (approximately 3 million years ago) across the Bering land bridge, present during an early ice age, and subsequently evolved into the dromedary

**Table 1: Classification of camelids and other artiodactylids**

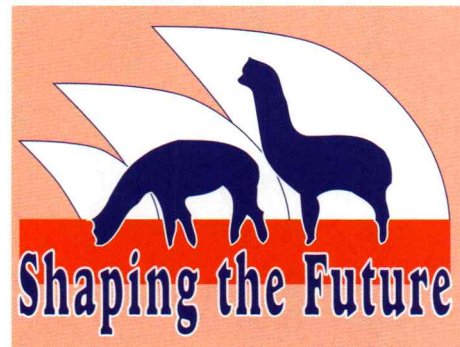
Class: *Mammalia*  
Order: *Artiodactyla*  
Suborder: *Suiformes* – hippos, swine, peccaries  
Suborder: *Tylopoda* – Camelids  
**Old World**  
*Camelus dromedarius*: dromedary camel  
*Camelus bactrianus*: Bactrian camel  
*Lama glama*: llama  
*Lama pacos*: alpaca  
**New World**  
*Lama guanicoe*: guanaco  
*Vicugna vicugna*: vicuña  
    *V. vicugna mensalis* (Peruvian)  
    *V. vicugna vicugna* (Argentinian)  
Suborder: *Ruminantia* – cattle, sheep, goats, water buffalo, giraffe, deer, antelope, bison

**Table 2: Differences between South American camelids and ruminants.**

SOUTH AMERICAN CAMELIDS	RUMINANTS
Evolutionary pathways diverged 40 million years ago.	Evolutionary pathways diverged 40 million years ago.
<b>Blood</b> Red blood cells elliptical and small (6.5 u); predominant white blood cell is neutrophil; leukocytes up to 22,000.	<b>Blood</b> Red blood cells round and larger (10 u); predominant white blood cell is lymphocyte; leukocytes up to 12,000.
<b>Foot</b> Has toenails and soft pad; second and third foot bones are horizontal.	<b>Foot</b> Has hooves and sole; second and third foot bones are nearly vertical.
<b>Digestive system</b> Foregut fermenter, with regurgitation, re-chewing and re-swallowing. <i>Stomach</i> : 3 compartments, resistant to bloat. <i>Dental Formula</i> : I 1/3, C 1/1, PM 1-2/1-2, M 3/3 X 2 = 32. (I = incisors; C = canines, PM = premolars, M = molars).	<b>Digestive system</b> Same (parallel evolution). <i>Stomach</i> : 4 compartments, susceptible to bloat. <i>Dental Formula</i> : I 0/3, C 0/1, PM 3/3, M 3/3 X 2 = 32. (I = incisors; C = canines, PM = premolars, M = molars).
<b>Reproduction</b> Induced ovulator No estrous cycle Follicular wave cycle Copulation in the prone position Placenta diffuse Epidermal membrane surrounding fetus Cartilaginous projection on tip of penis Ejaculation prolonged.	<b>Reproduction</b> Spontaneous ovulator Estrous cycle No follicular wave cycle Copulation in standing position Placenta cotyledonary No epidermal membrane surrounding fetus No cartilaginous projection on tip of penis Ejaculation short and intense.
<b>Respiratory system</b> Soft palate elongated, primarily a nasal breather.	<b>Respiratory system</b> Soft palate short, nasal or mouth breather.

# THE SEMINAR OPENING: KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## delivered by Murray E Fowler, DVM



and Bactrian camels of Eurasia, the Middle East and Africa. A similar migration occurred southward across the Caribbean land bridge to ultimately produce the four species of South American camelids (SACs).

### Lamoid evolution

The first lamoids migrated to South America at the beginning of the pleistocene epoch (approximately three million years ago), when an open land connection between North and South America developed (*Simpson*). The major early lamoid genus appearing in South America was *Hemiauchenia* (*Tanupoloma*), which radiated throughout the flatter regions east of the Andes. During the middle pleistocene, the genera *Palaeolama*, *Lama* and *Vicugna* developed from the long-limbed, flatland adapted *Hemiauchenia*. These genera had shorter limbs more adapted to the mountainous Andes (*Webb*).

Various species of *Palaeolama* migrated back to North America. Fossils have been found along the Gulf Coast and Florida in association with North American *Hemiauchenia* (*Webb*).

### DOMESTICATION

**Table 3: Approximate number of years that animals have been domesticated.**

Reindeer	14,000
Dog	12,000 – 15,000
Goat	11,000
Sheep	11,000
Cattle	9,000
Pig	9,000
Alpaca, llama	+ 6,000
Horse	5,500
Dromedary camel	5,000
Bactrian camel	4,500
Asian elephant	4,000
Cat	3,000 – 4,000

**Table 4: Estimated population of South American camelids.**

Country	Llamas	Alpacas	Guanacos	Vicuñas
Argentina	135,000	400	578,000	23,000
Bolivia	2,022,00	432, 336	54	12,000
Chile	70,363	5,000	27,585	30,000
Peru	989,593	2,510,912	1,600	100,000
Australia	<5,000	>5,000	A few in zoos	0
Canada	>6,000	>2,000	<100 in zoos	>10
Europe	<2,000	<1,000	<100 in zoos	<100 in zoos
United States	>110,000	>9,500	145 mostly in zoos	0
In ISIS registry in zoos*	343	303	397	100

Data from:

1. Carpio, M. 1991. Camelidos Y Socio-economia Andina (Camelids and Andean Socio-economics, in Novoa, C, and Florez, M. A. Producción de Rumiantes Menores: Alpacas, Lima, Peru, Rerumen, pp. 3-16.
2. Torres, H. 1992. South American Camelids: An action plan for their conservation, IUCN/CSE. South American Camelid Specialist Group, Gland, Switzerland.
3. Fernandez-Baca, S.I 1991. Avances y perspectivas del conocimiento de los camelidos Sudamericanos, Santiago, Chile, Organizacion de las Naciones Unidas para La Agricultura y la Alimentacion, Oficina Regional de la FAO Para America Latina y El Caribe,

\* ISIS = International Species Inventory System.

Alpacas are domesticated animals. Table 3 lists a few domestic species and the number of years since domestication. Domestication was a lengthy process in which individual animals from a wild progenitor (frequently immature) were purposefully selected over many generations for traits that were useful to humans (docility, tractability, production of meat, or fiber). Vicuña and guanaco are the only truly wild South American camelids (SAC).

### Alpaca domestication

The cradle of alpaca domestication was the Andean puna (elevation 4,000 to 4,900 m), probably near Telarmachay in north central Peru. Alpaca-type incisors have been found in middens at Telarmachay, dated at 4,000 to 3,500 BC (*Novoa*). Llamas were also domesticated in the Puna, around Lake Titicaca, at approximately 4,000 BC.

Once domesticated, alpaca and llama herding economies spread beyond the limits of the puna and became important in the economy of the Andean people from sea level to high mountain elevations (*Novoa*).

The Inca empire was dependant upon the alpaca and llama for food, fuel, clothing, transport of goods and religious ceremonies. All lamoids were the property of the government, and production of domestic species was rigidly controlled (*Novoa*). The fiber from vicuna was for royal usage only. The maximum numbers and broadest distribution of lamoids developed under Inca rule. After the Spanish invasion of 1532 and the introduction of European breeds of livestock, numbers and distribution of lamoids declined. However, llamas and alpacas survived because they are essential to Andean culture (*Novoa*). They are the most reliable source of food, fiber, and fuel in the high, cool Andean environment.



Alpaca ownership is the primary source of wealth for native people (*Novoa*).

'At the present, all llamas and 80 per cent of alpacas in the Andes are under the control of traditional pastoralists.' (*Novoa*).

Small to moderate herds (30-1000) are grazed on communal lands. The remaining alpacas are managed by large cooperatives (40,000 alpacas) which developed after the agrarian reform program of the 1970s began in Peru.

The two breeds of alpaca – huacaya and suri – have both become popular in the United States. Alpacas are separated on the basis of fiber coat characteristics; 90% in Peru are of the huacaya breed.

Huacaya fiber is shorter than that of the suri breed and is crimped and spongy, giving it the appearance of corriedale sheep wool.<sup>4,11</sup>

The coat of suri alpacas consists of long fibers with no crimp, that hang down alongside the body in ringlets. Alpaca coloration varies from white to black with intermediate shades and combinations. The alpaca is the primary SAC fiber producer of the Andean highland.

Lamoids were exported to other countries from South America in the nineteenth century as zoo animals. Peru enacted legislation in 1843 prohibiting the export of live alpacas.

Approximately 60 years ago, all the Andean countries banded together to prevent exploitation of lamoids by other countries. No legal exportations occurred from then until the 1980s when the ban was lifted from alpacas and llamas (*Franklin*).

North American llamas have expanded from the small population

imported from South America prior to 1930. A few animals have been imported from other countries. Current numbers of North American llamas are estimated to be between 110,000 and 120,000. Alpaca numbers are small, 9000-10,000. Sporadic importation of llamas and alpacas from Chile into the United States began in 1984, after the US Government periodically recognized Chile as free of foot and mouth disease. Subsequently, importation has been allowed from Peru. Approximately 5000 alpacas have been imported since 1990.

Both alpacas and llamas are slaughtered for meat in Andean countries. Lack of refrigeration necessitates immediate consumption, or the meat may be sun dried for storage. Dried meat is called 'charqui,' from which the North American word 'jerky' originated for a similar product.

Alpacas are the premier fiber producing animal in the Altiplano region of the Andes.

The leather is used to make ropes.

The pelts of crias are used to make fine rugs and wall hangings, being sewn together in intricate patterns and designs.

In North America, alpacas serve as companion animals and are being used for breeding, showing and utilization of the excellent fiber for a cottage industry, at present, but with potential for commercial production.

Alpacas have been popular zoo exhibit animals for many years, but during the last decade they have become an alternate livestock species in many countries throughout the world. See Table 4 for an estimate of alpaca population in selected countries.

### **Countries with viable alpaca livestock industries**

Peru  
Bolivia  
Chile  
Australia  
Canada  
United States of America (USA)

### **Countries with moderate numbers of alpacas**

Countries where the population is such that there may be potential for a viable industry include New Zealand, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Israel.

### **Uses of alpacas**

Peru, Bolivia, Chile

1. Fiber production
2. Meat
3. Leather
4. Pelts for rugs and wall hangings
5. Showing
6. Breeding for sale
7. Amulets (stomach stones, dried fetuses)

North America, Australia, Europe

1. Fiber production
2. Breeding for sales
3. Investment
4. Showing
5. Companion animals
6. Social services (visiting convalescent homes, working with emotionally disturbed children and adults)

## Dr Murray Fowler

During his time as a practising zoo veterinarian, Dr Murray Fowler dealt with a very wide range of creatures – everything 'from a hummingbird to an elephant'. Of all his veterinary challenges, it seems that camelids posed one of the most interesting because, 45 years later, they still take up a great deal of his time and effort.

Dr Fowler discerned that alpacas and llamas needed attention. So much was unknown about these animals. Their low economic value meant that there was no development of 'individual' medicine. Consequently, little knowledge about the range of diseases likely to affect camelids was accumulated.

His ongoing work on camelids has earned him international recognition and innumerable invitations to lecture at conferences throughout the world.

Dr Fowler's is no stranger to Australia. He has travelled extensively almost everywhere ('except Darwin and the north-west') and has probably seen more of the country than most Australians. He says Australia is 'the best place we have ever been' and somewhere he would 'come to any time'. Part of this enthusiasm is attributable to the fact that he believes that the Australian people's 'psyche' is similar in many respects to that of Americans. He gives the impression of being very much at home here.

Comparing the Australian and US alpaca industries, Dr Fowler commented that there is a more realistic approach in

Australia to commercial utilization of fibre. With a well-entrenched sheep wool industry, Australians have been able to draw on accumulated knowledge and apply it to alpacas. He also believes that Australia is ahead in possessing basic industry mills for processing.

In common with other overseas visitors, he referred to the friendliness of Australian alpaca industry people, and to the extent to which information is shared.

In particular, he is impressed by the amount of scientific information available – mentioning Bill Beresford's presentation on sporodesmin – and by the quality of the veterinarian input into broadening knowledge about alpacas. (Dr Fowler also attended the annual veterinary conference held in Canberra a week before the seminar.) He is familiar with the work of many Australians, including Ewen McMillan, Denis Ryan and Adele Feakes.

On marketing, Dr Fowler said that in the USA, much effective work has been done on creating a positive image for American alpaca as a specialty fibre in the minds of consumers. Good monetary returns are being generated on sales of fibre.

Apart from delivering the keynote address at the opening of the seminar (see above), his large contribution to the weekend included sessions on first aid and emergency care, congenital and hereditary conditions, and infectious and parasitic diseases.

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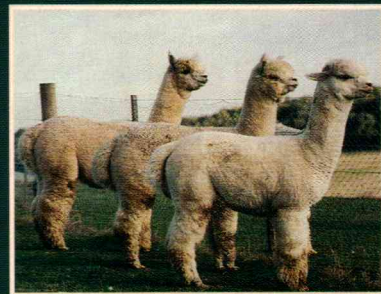
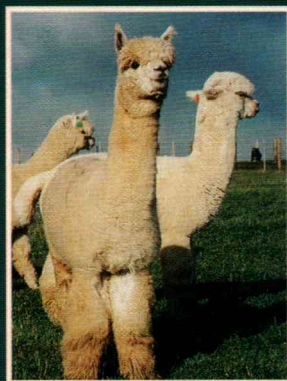
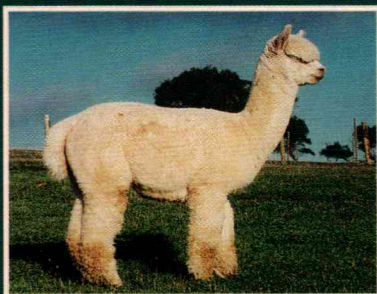
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*Don Julio Bareeda amongst his suris*



*Females at Pucara*

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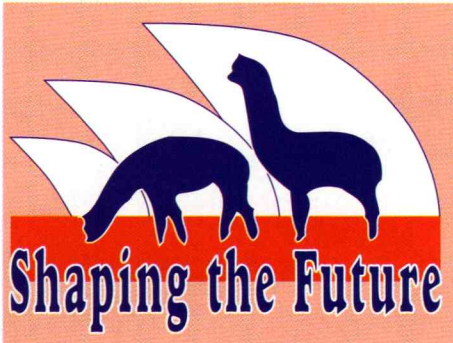
Witness the beautiful suri hembras and machos for sale, some are the progeny or are selected from the royal suri herd of Don Julio Bareeda's Accoyo. Some coloureds are available. See the progeny of the famous coloured Peruvian herdsires, Accoyo Durazno from Castle Hill Farm and Peruvian Elar, Fuego and Americo from Alpacas of America. See white Accoyo herdsires Amador, Borrajo and Cadete.

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Congratulations Jen & Pete McDavitt for your purchase, sharing the vision.



# WHERE ARE WE ALL GOING?

Some industry observations by Robert Pearce

Robert Pearce has had a long career in textiles. In 1976, with his wife Gwenda (a textile teacher and retailer), he founded Woolshed Yarns Pty Ltd, a firm that pioneered the early stage processing of mohair and alpaca fibre in Australia. After selling the company in 1996, Robert became a Textile Processing and Marketing Consultant. He is also a member of the Rare Natural Fibres Advisory Committee of the RIRDC.

Towards the end of his presentation on fibre processing to the 1997 Alpaca Seminar, Robert voiced some very interesting opinions and predictions about the future of alpaca and the fibre industry as a whole. Some of his opinions were also given in conversation after one of his lectures.

He listed a number of advantages Australian fibre growers enjoy. These include animal husbandry, fibre classing and harvesting skills; access to world class genetic, veterinary and processing research facilities; excellent training facilities; and readily available accredited testing for stud, trade and product development. He also said Australia enjoyed a world class reputation for innovation and flair in both fabric and apparel design.

Nevertheless, he did not underrate the amount of shrewd planning and hard work necessary to establish a viable commercial fibre industry. Of crucial importance is the development of a united industry, able to present itself in a strong, co-ordinated manner to government, processors and customers.

At the top of his list of industry goals is the achievement of price competitiveness for the industry. Without it, he commented, Australian fibre will not be able to compete in export markets. What's more, any new developments or local market gains are likely to result in

benefits to overseas producers rather than Australian alpaca fibre producers. Surplus, stockpile and forced sales would be the end result.

Product development is another important element in building a successful fibre industry. He warns that 'intermediate processors', particularly in spinning and knitting sectors of the textile industry are not known for their innovative approach to product development. Robert believes that growers should build close relationships with the markets for which their products are destined. Growers need to know their products reflect quality and satisfy consumer demands. They must also be in a position to react quickly to market shifts.

In Robert's view fibre volume must reach a 'critical mass' to enable the industry to provide processors with viable processing lots, to sustain sufficient numbers of competing brokers and to allow efficient transport and handling.

He believes that a total annual fibre production of 500,000 kg is necessary to achieve this critical mass. He commented that predictions on animal numbers are of little use if these numbers are not complemented with expected fibre production figures. (Note that Cole and Wall have predicted a total alpaca population of just on 500,000 by 2010 of which half are likely to be female. While they have not dealt with likely fibre production from these animals, they note that the females are not expected to be the source of heavy quality fleece.)

While Woolshed Yarns can process fibre in minimum 100 kg lots, fibre lots for export needs to be far larger. The Australian industry needs to ensure that it can supply discrete lots of adequate size, eliminating the need to supple-

ment from imported sources. Robert also noted that colour is not a processing factor except in the case of dyeing. The range of colours obtainable from over dyeing coloured fibre is limited and colour fastness more difficult to obtain than for wool. Noting that up to 12 colours have been suggested for Australian alpaca, he also comments that any naturally occurring shades can be obtained from blending, using basic colours of white, black and tan.

The increasing sophistication of synthetic textiles is continuing to influence consumer demand. The percentage of the market share of sheep's wool has declined to an extent that Robert believes wool is now also becoming a 'rare' or exotic fibre and its market increasingly 'high end'. China, looked upon as a prime market, will upgrade its quality and increasingly concentrate on production for export to obtain foreign exchange. This will impact on Australia's wool exports and may cause wool to further encroach on the 'high end' market. In other words, wool is already competing with alpaca, mohair and cashmere and this competition may be expected to increase. On the other hand, 'if you can't beat them, join them' may well provide part of the marketing answer for many of the natural fibre industries. Note wool's entrance into the cotton denim fashion area, for example.

The closing words of Robert's presentation are cautiously optimistic and worth repeating.

'I realise that the production of alpaca fibre in Australia is in the early stages of development, but this is surely the time to ensure efficient structures and vision are in place to serve the future needs of an industry with so much potential.'



*'Hmm! Are you sure it's a cria in there?'*

## THE NEO-NATAL WORKSHOP

The neo-natal workshop was a hive of activity. Birth and instant post-natal care were the matters at hand. An ingenious construction of chipboard 'hind quarters', large 'uterus' bags, plenty of padding, and a support frame provided the perfect set of birthing alpacas!

Dr LaRue Johnson, aided and abetted by Drs Ewen McMillan and Andrew Miller did their best to baffle the participants with an array of *in*



*utero* positions. Donning rubber gloves and plastic sleeves, the eager birthing assistants launched into 'assisting' the 'births' with a vengeance!

No wonder the neo-natal workshops are always among the most popular. Apart from being extraordinarily informative and giving valuable 'hands on' experience, there's always a laugh to be had when something doesn't quite go as planned.



*'So far so good!'*



*'It's stuck!'*



*'Some stronger contractions should do the trick!'*

## PARK VIEW RAVEN

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- \* NSW State Show 1996 (Fleece)
- \* National Classic Show 1996 (Fleece)

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

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# THE LAST WORD...

*At the final plenary session of the 1997 Alpaca Industry Seminar, David Johnson, General Manager of the Australian Alpaca Association, delivered the closing address. Here is a transcript.*

As our industry moves from being animal based to one based on fibre production, it is important to realise that alpaca fibre is an internationally traded commodity and has been for many centuries.

## How, then, do we address the future of the industry in Australia?

We need to look at the future: short, medium and long term.

To do this, we need to have a *vision statement*: 'an imaginative insight into future reality'.

Through the *mission statement* – 'the tasks to be performed' – we will be able to work toward the vision.

It is my role to coordinate the plan for the future in consultation with the

members, the National Committee and the Executive. This plan will take us into the next stage of our development.

Along the way, we will need to build strategic alliances. These will include:

- research and development organisations. Several are represented at this seminar and are already working with the industry;
- other countries (we are already working with New Zealand and the USA) to create a global industry;
- other fibre industries – perhaps!

These alliances will help give us the competitive edge.

## When will we be at the stage of being fibre based?

To quote Robert Pearce, who has spoken here, at the Seminar, 'it is necessary to reach a critical mass of fibre'. He suggests that we need to have a national clip of 500,000 kg. This will give us the economies of scale necessary to sus-

tain competition for fibre, cost effective handling and transport and provide viable processing lots for the processors.

In time terms, David Hubbard's research suggests seven to eight years.

A long time, you say? No. We do have time, but not much.

An aside to this is the fact that we don't really know much about the make up of our national clip. We need to address this issue so we can plan for the future.

## How do we deal with our annual harvest? We need to learn from other experiences

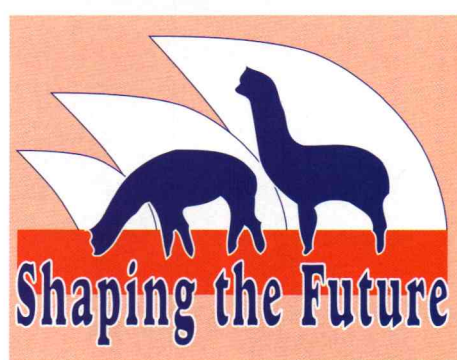
I would, today, like to draw on some thoughts of a wool grower, Charles Massy. He wrote a series of articles in the *Farm Journal* last year. These thoughts give us an insight into another fibre producing industry and its problems.

He suggests that wool growers are like those in many other agricultural fields – forced into the role of increas-



# CLOSING ADDRESS

## given by David Johnson



ingly impoverished production units supplying to the real profit makers further down the chain.

An example: \$10 of wool (to the producer) appears at the retail outlet as an Italian suit selling for \$2000. To this extent, wool growers have become fibre peasants, impoverished producers of a commodity for modern agricultural capitalists.

Furthermore, given this commodity culture, woolgrowers are at the whim of international market forces, being tossed about like corks on the ocean.

He illuminates on various options. One I suggest we need to think about is value adding the fibre product through differentiated marketing and quality management.

Massy also suggests growers need the ability and capacity to differentiate their product. Growers need to be able to show initiative and individuality.

I suggest we need to bear in mind that this costs money!

Perhaps we should be mindful of his suggestions for the wool industry and ensure that our fibre is allowed to be differentiated and graded into higher value niches.

To do this, we need – as Massy suggests – not to become shackled to the commodity culture but to have constructive initiatives permitting the full flowering of market differentiation.

In conclusion, he suggests the wool industry needs to show a semblance of vision and to act boldly and imaginatively to change course and to create market differentiation with all its exciting potential.

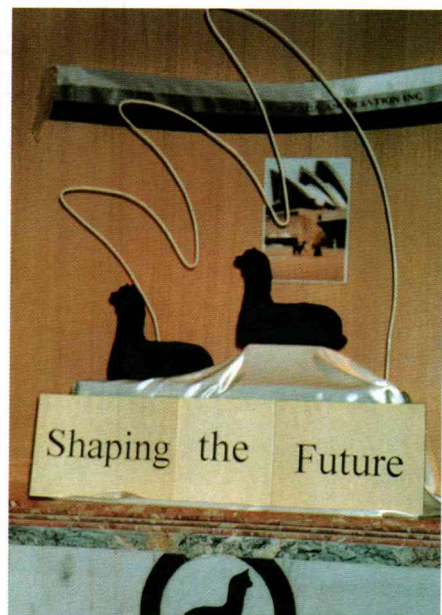
We have this window of opportunity.

I will conclude today by saying that we need, in such an embryonic industry, to look, listen, learn.

As an industry, it may be best to provide in the plan for the future for the producers to share in the fruits of successful vertical integration.

As one great marketer says: 'The future belongs for those who plan for it.'

Let's remember the experiences of others when we plan the future of this wonderful, rare and precious fibre in Australia, because it truly is 'the fibre of the gods'.

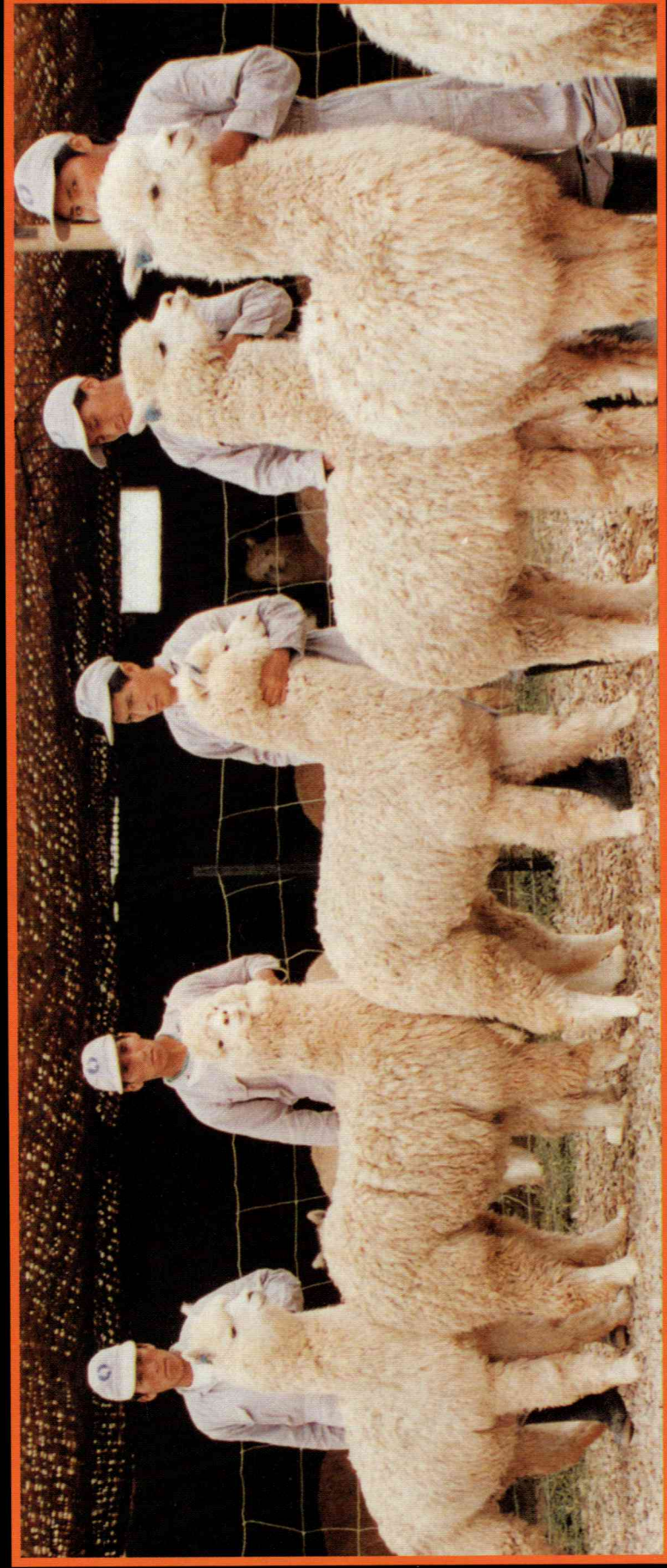


*Far left: Parts of a superb display created for the seminar by Lorraine Cooper from donations of merchandise and display material from many studs and organisations.*

*Above: The centre piece of the display.*

*Left: One of the many trade displays at the Seminar. The displays were very conveniently located in an open area close to both the lecture rooms and buffet meals areas.*

# ELITE GENETICS



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# Workshops in the West

In late July, two Coolaroo Elite Production workshops were hosted by Hope Downs Alpacas in Western Australia. According to stud manager, Dolly van Zaane, they were a great success.

This is the first time workshops have been held away from Coolaroo. Although a 'new chum' to the industry (Hope Downs was established in November last year), the stud is wasting no time becoming highly involved with the industry.

The workshops were led by Dr Jim Watts and Tony Madeley. Coolaroo's breeding consultant, Jim Watts is a specialist fibre expert. He has undertaken extensive research for the merino industry that has led to outstanding improvements in fleece quality. Tony Madeley is a textile scientist who is working with this improved merino fleece.

Over 70 people participated in the hands-on workshops, many travelling from as far away as Geraldton, some 500 km north and Busselton, 300 km south. Some of them were long-standing alpaca owners, others were looking into the industry and using the workshop to learn more about the animals.

The workshops cover a morning of theory and analysis of different wool types, first of fleeces on the wool table and then of fleeces on animals: weaners followed by adults and sires. Jim Watts' aim is to enable participants to identify fleece characteristics of a variety of stock which exhibit both good and poor processibility. Familiarisation is achieved first by the look of the fleece – standing back and examining the exterior surface; then by feel, opening the fleece itself. This exercise is reinforced by overheads which further explain why certain characteristics affect processing performance. Participants are also given an understanding of the biology of the skin and fleece of alpacas and its contribution to processing.

The study of sire types is led by Dr Watts and Judy Street. It incorporates an in-depth session on the importance of a hardy and sound constitution. To emphasise this, Coolaroo brought Solomon to the workshops. This stud sire has travelled from the US to cover Australian females at Coolaroo. According to Coolaroo's Janie Hicks, this animal is a 'text book example of a frame sire' with physical qualities that create a strong animal: wide chest, good bone, good heart room and strong straight legs. With excellent productivity, such a sire is likely to produce sturdy progeny including sound female breeders capable of coping with the stress of carrying crias in a variety of tough Australian environments and weather conditions.

The afternoon session begins with classing. Between 20 and 30 females are presented to participants who are asked to

class them into fleece types according to characteristics identified during the morning sessions. These include fibre character, crimp frequency, lustre, and true density. The constitution and frame quality of each animal is also taken into account.

The improvements that can be made to progeny through selective breeding are highlighted by a presentation of dams which exhibit plain fleece qualities, accompanied by their cria. Participants are invited to see for themselves improvements to fleece, frame and constitution that can be achieved in just one generation by understanding important characteristics and applying selective breeding principles.

Tony Madeley demonstrates how fleece types affect the quality of the finished product. These products are made from merino fleeces of the same micron, but with differing characteristics. He is presently trialing the processibility of alpaca fibre for Coolaroo.

In his demonstration, Tony asks participants to feel and evaluate fabric samples made from 18 micron merino. There is a high quality sample manufactured from traditional merino and another, immediately apparent as softer, lighter, more lustrous and more vibrantly coloured. This second sample is manufactured in precisely the same way as the first, but from a fleece type that has been developed largely through the research efforts of Jim Watts.

Hope Downs manager, Dolly van Zaane commented that it was gratifying to have a number of merino breeders also attending the workshops. One, a third generation sheep breeder, was even heard to admit he had learnt from the sessions.

Several of the major WA studs contributed animals to the workshops which, according to Dolly, 'just shows that people

*Dr Jim Watts (centre) fields a question from a workshop participant.*



# ERINGA PARK

## ALPACA STUD

EST. 1993

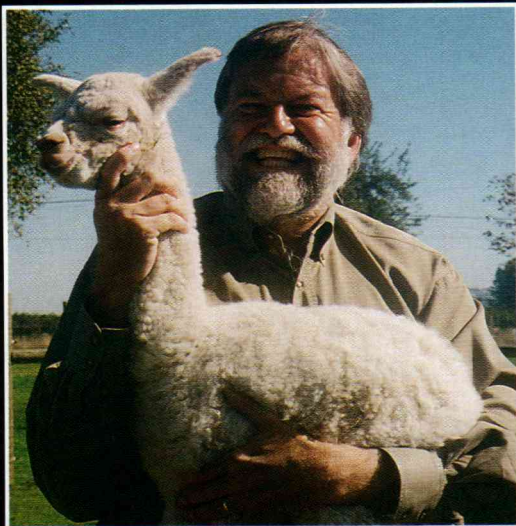
*World's Highest Priced Alpaca  
'RUFFO'*

*Purchased from Mike Safley's Northwest Alpacas, Oregon U.S.A.*

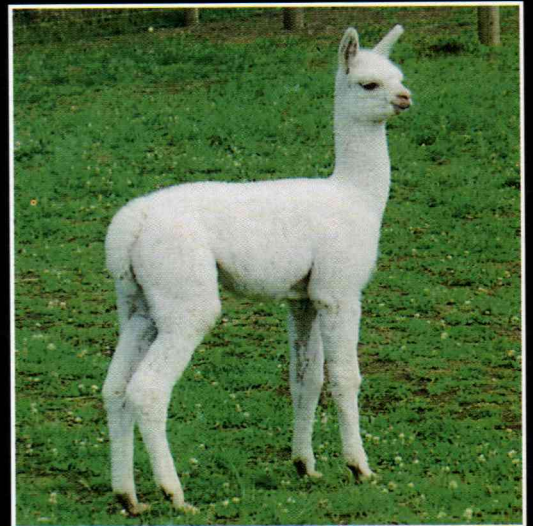
**STANDING AT STUD**



Pure White Accoyo Macho, number one pick of the 1994 Peruvian Elite Sale.  
Pictured with Roger Haldane, Don Julio, K.C. and Charlie.  
18.8 micron, 3.7 SD and 19.7 CV at 3.5 years



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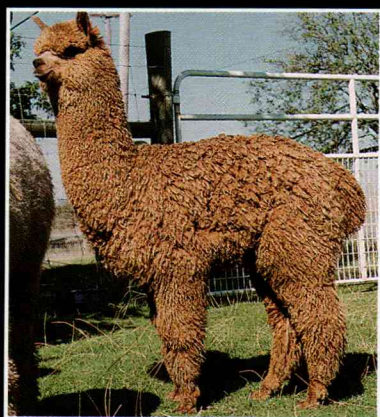
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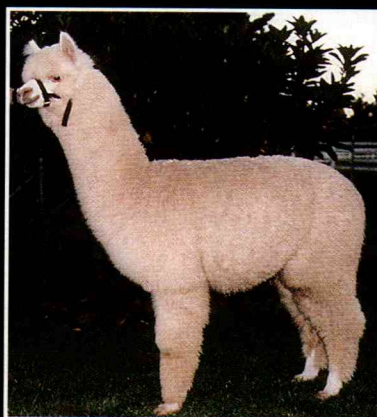
Son of 'Hemmingway'

**'Peruvian Don Corleone'**

Solid White

21.8 micron 4.3 SD

19.7 CV at 12 months

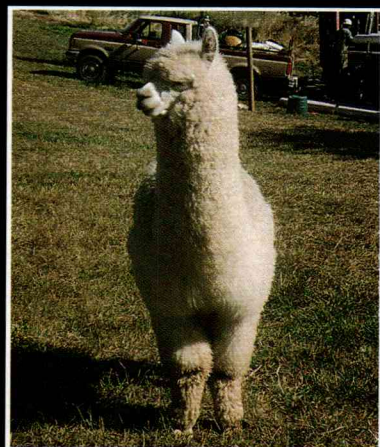


**'Peruvian Baldermero'**

Solid White

Full Accoyo Male

22 micron 17.6 CV at 12 months



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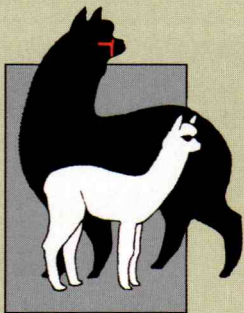
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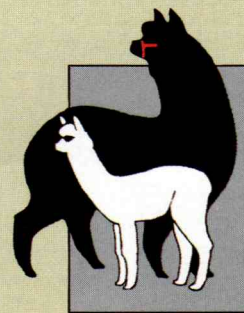
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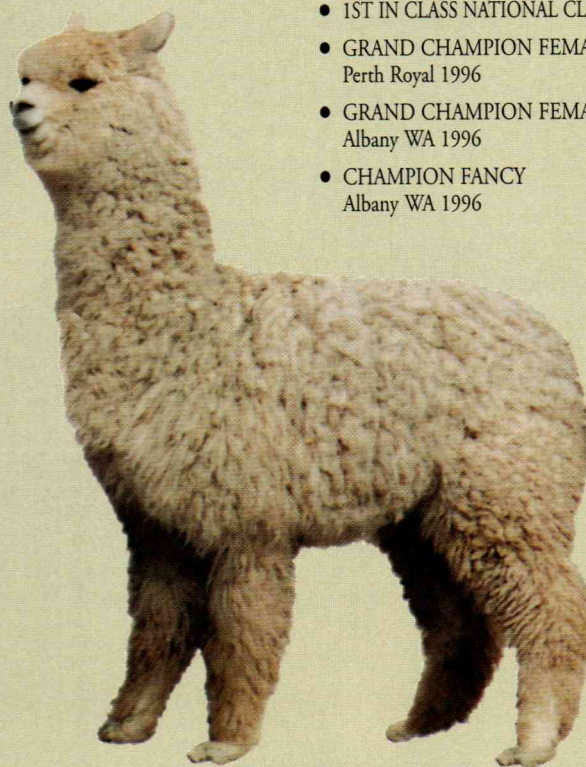
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1996 State Championships NSW
- INTERMEDIATE CHAMPION MALE  
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1996 Albany Show WA

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*Fibre and fabric samples are the subject of Tony Madeley's lecture to workshop participants.*

can work together within the industry so that everyone benefits'.

Dolly reports that Hope Downs has welcomed its first cria and says that the stud is determined to follow the principles of selective breeding. 'We're choosing our sires with extreme care', she commented. 'There's no short cut to success, but a long term road to inter-

national recognition of producers of elite fibre.'

She is nothing if not optimistic about the industry's future. 'We don't have to repeat the mistakes that crept into the wool industry. Our expertise as a fine fibre producing nation will put us up front as producers of elite alpaca fibre.'

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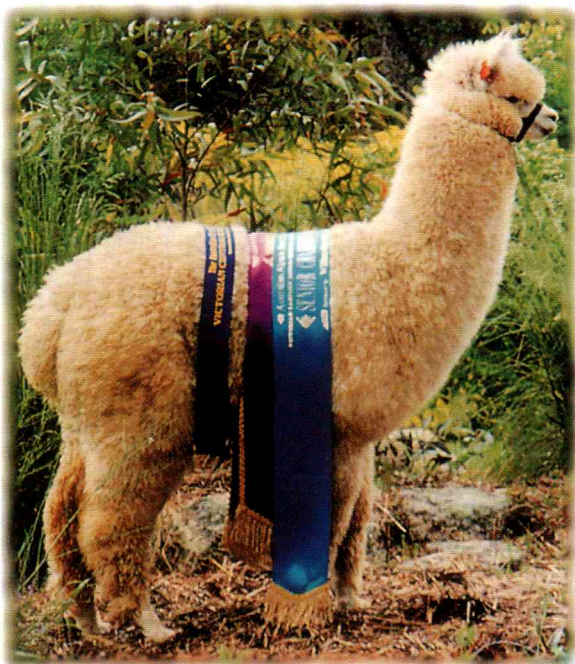
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# Frankly with Franklin

by **G. Fitz Cariño**

*Bill Franklin has spent over 30 years studying vicuñas, guanacos and their main predators, the Patagonia pumas.*

*Fitz Cariño is a llama packer and llama trainer living temporarily in Sydney. An outdoor enthusiast and animal lover, she enjoys being one of the huge herd of volunteers at Taronga Zoo.*

There is a certain wildlife ecologist from Iowa who is quite sought after. He's sort of a celebrity amongst various llama and alpaca associations because of his extensive studies. A natural educator, Dr. Bill Franklin is quite generous with his enthusiasm and knowledge of South American wildlife. His frequent speeches and presentations are sprinkled with dry wit and sarcasm. His enthusiasm and knowledge come from a long road of research.

During a love affair with wildlife spanning three decades, Dr. Franklin

has been studying vicuñas, guanacos and their main predators, the Patagonia pumas. Bill views himself as a bio-detective. Over the years, he's been trying to discover everything possible about, in his words, 'What is a natural wild lama? What is an unmanaged animal in its own environment?' But each new piece of knowledge makes a new question come to mind. This love affair started way back in graduate school when, he says, vicuñas stole his soul. He always wants to know more, so the research projects continue today.

The first research trip took him into Peru in the late 60s. In the 1970s, fresh out of UC Davis with a degree in animal husbandry, Bill's research journey continued. He discovered that getting to the research sites was a journey in

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itself. Leaving North America heading south, Bill and his family drove 1400 kilometres in 12 weeks just to get started. They began in the north, spending three and a half years in Peru studying vicuñas. The journey continued until they'd eventually gone about as far south as you can go and still be in South America. They lived on Tierra del Fuego during some of the early years of his guanaco research. This time was naturally some of the early years for their young family as well. Bill is still welcomed as family by the warm Chilean people.

Señor Bill's long-time love is still the wild guanaco. South American herdsmen, over thousands of years, bred lama family to create the two bloodlines that we know today as domestic alpacas and llamas. The native herdsmen created one line for its fine fleece and created the other line for packing and meat. These lines became the domesticated species, but the wild guanaco still lives free.

What is a wild camelid like? What are the benefits of knowing this critter? A fair share of what we know about our alpaca and llama herds has been gleaned from field research done over the decades. Many of these discoveries were made through Bill's research. They include insight into maternity, behaviour and body language, herd numbers, bloodlines and genetics, predator/prey relations, and more. Education feeds curiosity. The more we know about our critters, the more we want to know. Information from studying genetics can help us



*Fitz Cariño reading ear tag numbers on a herd of wild males.*

better manage our domestic herds. Thousands of years of select breeding brought us the fine fleece of the alpaca.

But these forefathers, the guanacos, are also prey to the Lord of Land's End, the Andean mountain lion. Bill studied the mountain lion intensely for five years. This cat's favourite dinner is fresh guanaco. He'll savour a kill for several days if the condors don't spot it. Bill's informative cat research has

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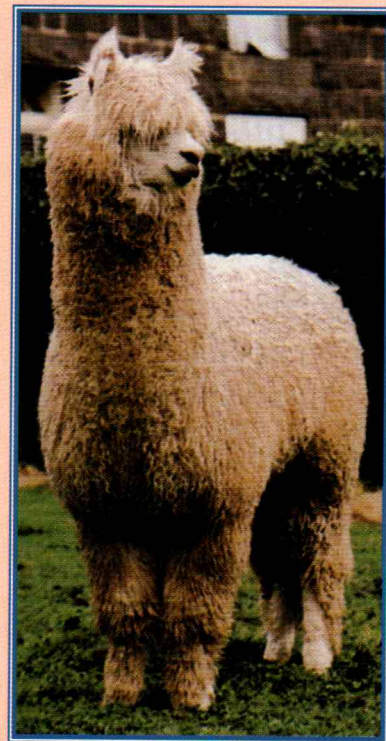
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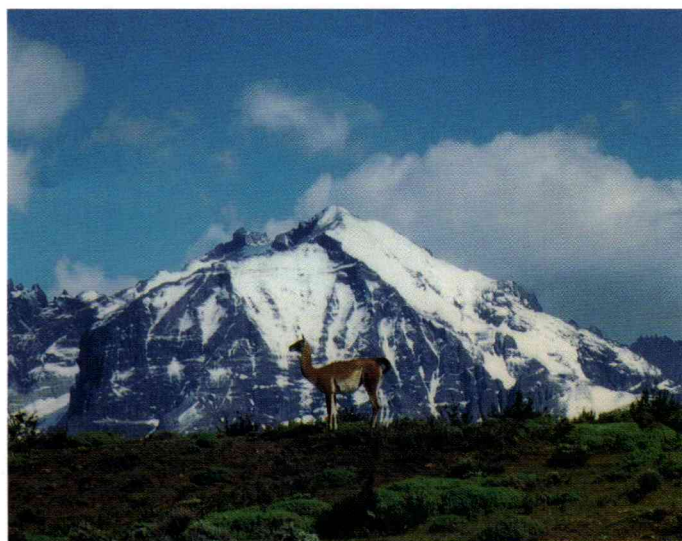
*WORTH A TRIP TO W.A.?*

been the subject of numerous magazine articles and television specials. Over the years he's written about a wide variety of animals for *National Geographic*, *Nova*, scientific journals, television, kids magazines and more.

Older and wiser ('not slower' says Bill) now than in the puma years, Bill continues to study the guanaco. With the help of 'Oh Great Guardian Of The Guanacos', these endangered animals in the study area have increased from around 100 individuals in 1975 to over 2,000. Current research shows the number of wild individuals has dropped down to about 600. But more research is needed and more volunteers are needed.


Each southern spring, Bill leads a group of volunteer researchers into the wild Patagonia region, balanced between the Andes and the sea, at the southern end of South America. Patagonia is best described as the uttermost place on the planet. It is a windswept place where steep mountains knife the sky. The winds ensure there are few trees. Bill and his researchers tie their tents behind the calafate bushes to keep them from blowing away. Sometimes it snows. Springtime brings warmer temperatures and warmer temperatures bring on the birthing season. But the birthing season is both a time of beauty and a time of danger. Pumas roam the hills while condors search from the sky.

The research base camp is strategically located within Torres del Paine National Park. An accurate description of the



*A lone male keeps watch for mountain lions.*

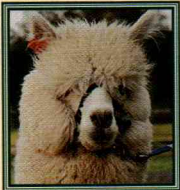
scenery here is unbelievable until you've camped and hiked in Patagonia yourself. Massive geologic features take your breath away as you hike out each day to conduct wildlife research. This daily research trek takes you into places closed to the few people who ever venture this far south. Most of those few people are there to climb or circuit-hike the Torres del Paine. Only a very few are there to do volunteer field work. Those who do may spend the day watching and following a wild herd, keeping count of herd numbers or perhaps watching



# MERUNGLE ALPACA STUD

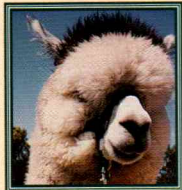
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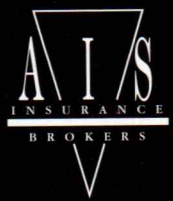


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and counting births. Some volunteers put radio collars and ear tags on new-born chulengos (wild guanacos), if they can catch them. Others may sit atop a high hill with a radio and an antenna to 'read' the radio collar signals.

If you're lucky enough to get on one of Bill's research teams, be aware – this is no free vacation. Volunteer research members must work in the field six days out of seven each week. Each team member must also cover a share of the expenses. They help finance the research while they help do the research. Because doing 'wildlife research in the field' is an exceedingly fun experience, this is absolutely the best value in adventure travel. The volunteer experience, in Patagonia or anywhere, is an opportunity not to be missed. Raising funds to finance research is always a nightmare for the people who organise such things. But here's where volunteers can help.

As a holiday choice, Patagonia Research Expeditions is a great way to experience the grandeur of southern Chile. You happily volunteer for field work and make a donation toward wildlife research. Your work in the field adds valuable data to the efforts of Bill and his graduate students. This also gives you a perfect guilt-free excuse to go to Patagonia. The scenery is spectacular and the food is good but you go in the name of furthering research.

Is it possible to separate Bill the man, from Bill the researcher? The research discoveries are inseparable from Bill's efforts. This certainly is a man who loves his job. His contagious enthusiasm soon rubs off on those around him. Never one to sit still for long, Bill and his research have recently taken a turn north. Even as this is written, he's gone off on his first research trip after wild Bactrian camels in Mongolia. A destination he describes as where the Gobi Desert meets the



*'Gumby Legs' (Fitz) working the antenna in the wind. The antenna is for listening to the radio collars from the top of 'the conglomerate'. The researchers have carried rocks to the top for a wind break. They need more rocks!*



*Patagonia – a place where glaciers calve into the sea.*

Altai Mountains. He called it a dot on a map where snow leopards, camels, wolves and antelope live wild — a uniquely Asian combination of wildlife. Add a backdrop of amazing textiles and tough Mongolian horsemen. With northern summers in Mongolia and southern summers in Patagonia, frankly, I think Franklin's figured out how to get two summers each year.

When asked to reflect on his life well spent, Bill waxes happily about gratitude toward all the people he's worked with world-wide. Bill heaps lavish praise and thanks on all the graduate students, research assistants, veterinarians, expedition participants, and warmth of the Chileans, friends and family. But most of all, he thanks the guanacos.

## Recommended Reading

*National Geographic*, 1981, 'Living with Guanacos: Wild camels of South America'. Photos & text by Bill Franklin

*National Geographic*, January 1991, 'Patagonia Puma, The Lord of Land's End'. Photos & text by Bill Franklin

## Videos

National Geographic Special, 'Puma – Lion of the Andes', 1996.

Nature, 'Treasure of the Andes', BBC TV 1993.

Nova, 'Land of the Llamas'.

*If anyone would like information on the next research expedition (14-30 November 1997) or those planned for 1998, contact:*

*Patagonia Research Expeditions,*

*1310 Idaho Ave.,*

*Ames, Iowa 50014 USA.*

*Tellfax 0011 1515 292 8384*

# Fabulous Hats

## FROM NECKS AND LEGS

---

**Karen Pirie**



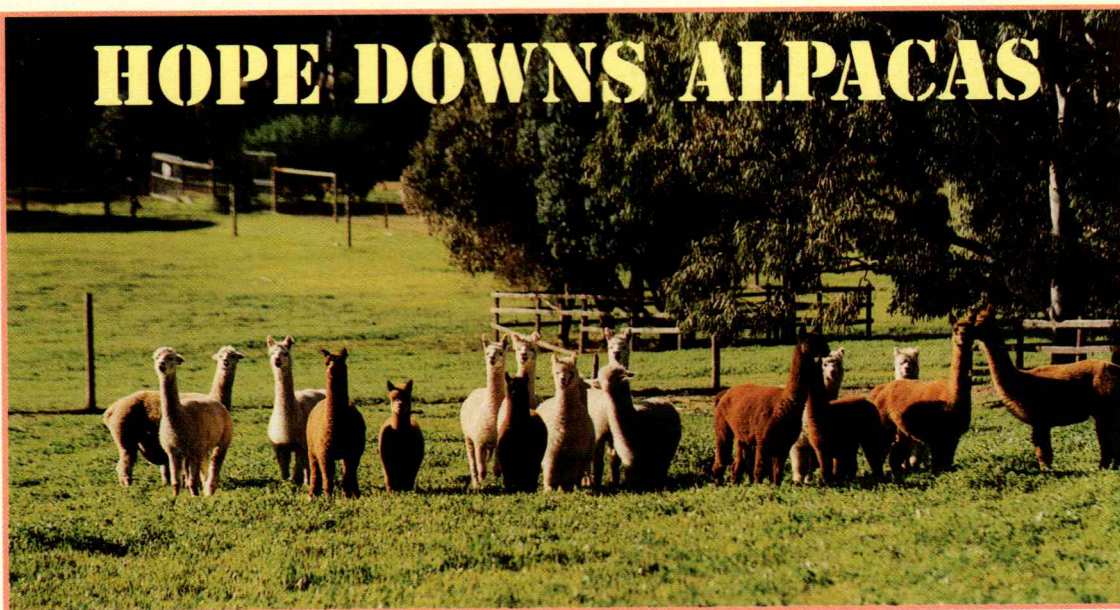
Felting is an ancient craft dating back to the bronze age. I don't know what a bronze age is but, in terms of history and dates, that's 2700-3000 BC!

There are heaps of stories about how felt was actually discovered, but the favourite theory is that a shepherd found his favourite animal from the flock dead, having been eaten by wolves. He was so attached to the animal that he began to cry and caress the animal's fleece. As his tears fell onto the fleece, he noticed the fibres were felting together in his hands. Soon, the villagers were manipulating this natural process of felting to make all sorts of garments and even shelters (yurts) using the fibres from their animals.

Like most Australians, I have no great need for a yurt, but I have been making felt hats from alpaca fibre for five years now.

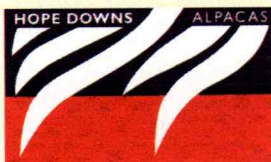
Many alpaca growers have an amount of fibre lying around

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and may like to try their hand at felt making. It's not too difficult. Just get some fibre in your hand, pour on some water and a small squirt of detergent and begin to rub. Soon you will see and feel the fibres going hard. This is basically the felting process.

Making a hat from fibre requires a little more time and technique as the fibres need to be felted into a 'cone' or 'hood' and then pulled hard over a hat block to be shaped. But the basic process relies on the naturally occurring phenomenon of felting.

The good news about felting alpaca fibre into hats is that I can use fleece other than the saddle. I have had so many people tell me they can't find a use for the neck and leg fleece. I have been experimenting with this part of the clip for two years and have found it can be good for making hats which are subsequently stiffened and blocked into a traditional Australian style. It is still important to have clean fleece, no shorter than 2 cm – but the results are excellent.

A lot of alpaca fibre growers are keen to promote their animals and have asked me to make them a hat from the fleece of a favourite animal. I find it exciting to work at this end of the industry, especially in the infancy of fibre enlightenment. The majority of Australians have probably never seen an alpaca, and least of all know that this beautiful fibre can be used to make such a practical item as a hat.





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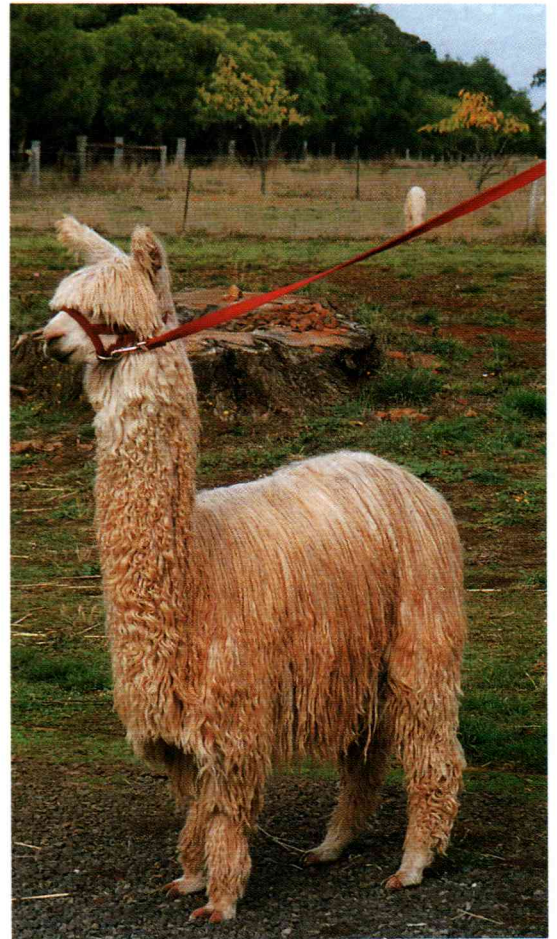
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**Tenders close 31 October 1997**

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## Snap shot

Carl and Wendy Dowd wanted live-stock for their 100 acre property at Healesville in Victoria that would yield a high profit margin. After 9 months of research, they decided on alpacas and purchased 6 Peruvian females.

Their farm manager, John Butterworth has many years experience in sheep breeding. He is instrumental in helping assess and select the animals for Carl's herd. They plan to acquire more animals over the coming months.

Among the Association's newest members, Carl and Wendy attended the Sydney industry seminar.

I had originally planned to record the couple's impressions of the industry and seminar. A phone call to their home resulted in quite a lengthy conversation with Carl. He had obviously found the seminar very useful and informative. He said he was also impressed by the number of people of 'quality and intellect' within the industry. In his view, the Association is 'very much alive and well'.

However, what emerged during our conversation is that Carl has a connection with fibre and apparel that goes back many years. In fact, there are few Association members and probably relatively few Australians, who have had Carl Dowd's breadth of experience in the apparel industry.

Carl is a third generation clothing industry member. His grandparents founded Dowd Associates in the 1940s

## THE CUT OF HIS CLOTH...

which owned the Hickory Intimate Apparel label. After 10 years as Marketing Director of that company, he formed The Clothing Company of Australia over 25 years ago.

The Maggie T Concept and Retail Group was also founded by Carl over 15 years ago.

He still owns these companies in partnership with John Blood, who is one of Australia's most experienced clothing and textile executives. He is involved with the Cotton Research and Development Corporation as Chairman, Bruck Textiles, Bradmill Undare Group, Australian Weaving Mills and numerous private companies, with prior involvement with the International Wool Secretariat, Sports-craft and Macquarie Textiles.

Carl founded Dowd Corporation 12 years ago and built a successful corporate apparel business, supplying major organisations such as ANZ, National Australia Bank, AMP, Australia Post, Medibank, and OPSM.

Last year, Dowd Corporation purchased all Peter Weiss' corporate apparel division, which included Westpac and Ansett.

Yakka bought Dowd Corporation from Carl two years ago and he remains as Chairman.

Like Robert Pearce (see page 32), Carl believes there is a need to put into place a long-term marketing plan extending over 5-10 years. Its first task should be to establish what are con-

sumers' current perceptions of alpaca fibre; and its second, to develop a 'brand identity' based on the fibre's positive qualities: luxury, exclusiveness, prestige, etc. The plan should include research into all aspects of fibre production and into the characteristics of the fibre that can be most successfully commercially exploited (dyeing qualities and blending potential were two Carl mentioned). Effective end product development will depend on this information. In Carl's view, it will be a costly exercise. The industry will need to employ 'the right people' and not skimp on the provision of adequate financial resources.

'We cannot have a situation where we have breeders but no buyers', he observes, 'and maybe a levy per head of alpacas is one way of raising the necessary capital.'

He believes that, with the introduction of the Peruvians, the industry is at the crossroads. It has the potential of getting good fibre and plenty of it. However, that will take a lot of knowledge about what is required and by whom – from the cottage industry right up to the high end users.

For his own herd, Carl sees the opportunity to develop a good stud herd of commercially valuable fleece animals. He plans to stick with white fibre and breed for fine micron and high density. His ultimate aim is to 'breed a merino type alpaca'.

*Carol Hosking*

### What do alpacas eat?

Lesley Beards is compiling a list of foods that alpacas eat and to share that information with other breeders.

In a short period of time, she has come up with a very interesting array of alpaca munchies. Among them are: carrot peelings; pine needles (from a small branch or dry); peaches (alpacas spit out the stones, according to one

owner); lettuce leaves; Bangalow palm fronds (alpacas chew the tops from a row planted just outside their paddock); coral tree bark and dead leaves; and Powton tree leaves.

Lesley also has some more conventional feed mixes on her list. To contribute to her list (and to find out what's on it) write to her at, 5 Wombourne Road, Tea Gardens NSW 2324.

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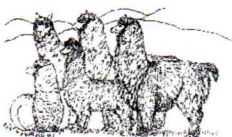
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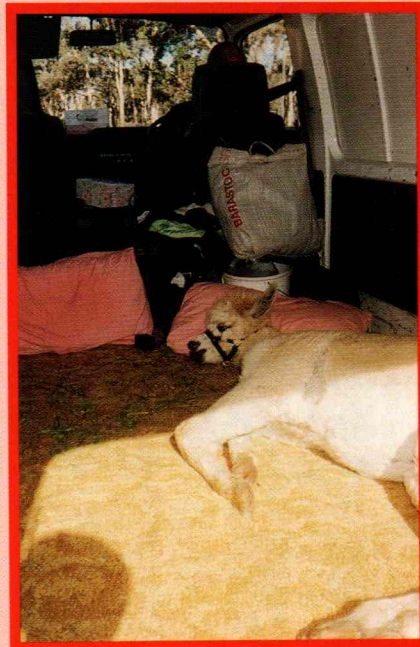
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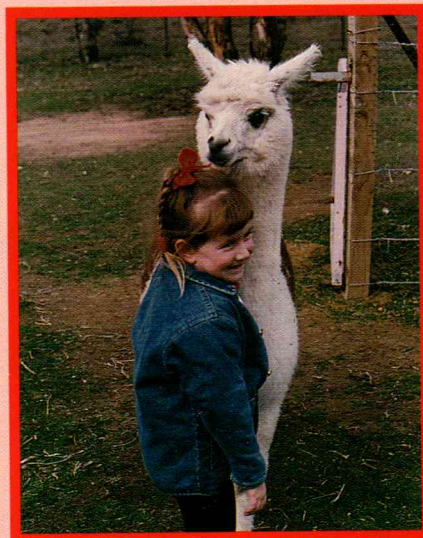
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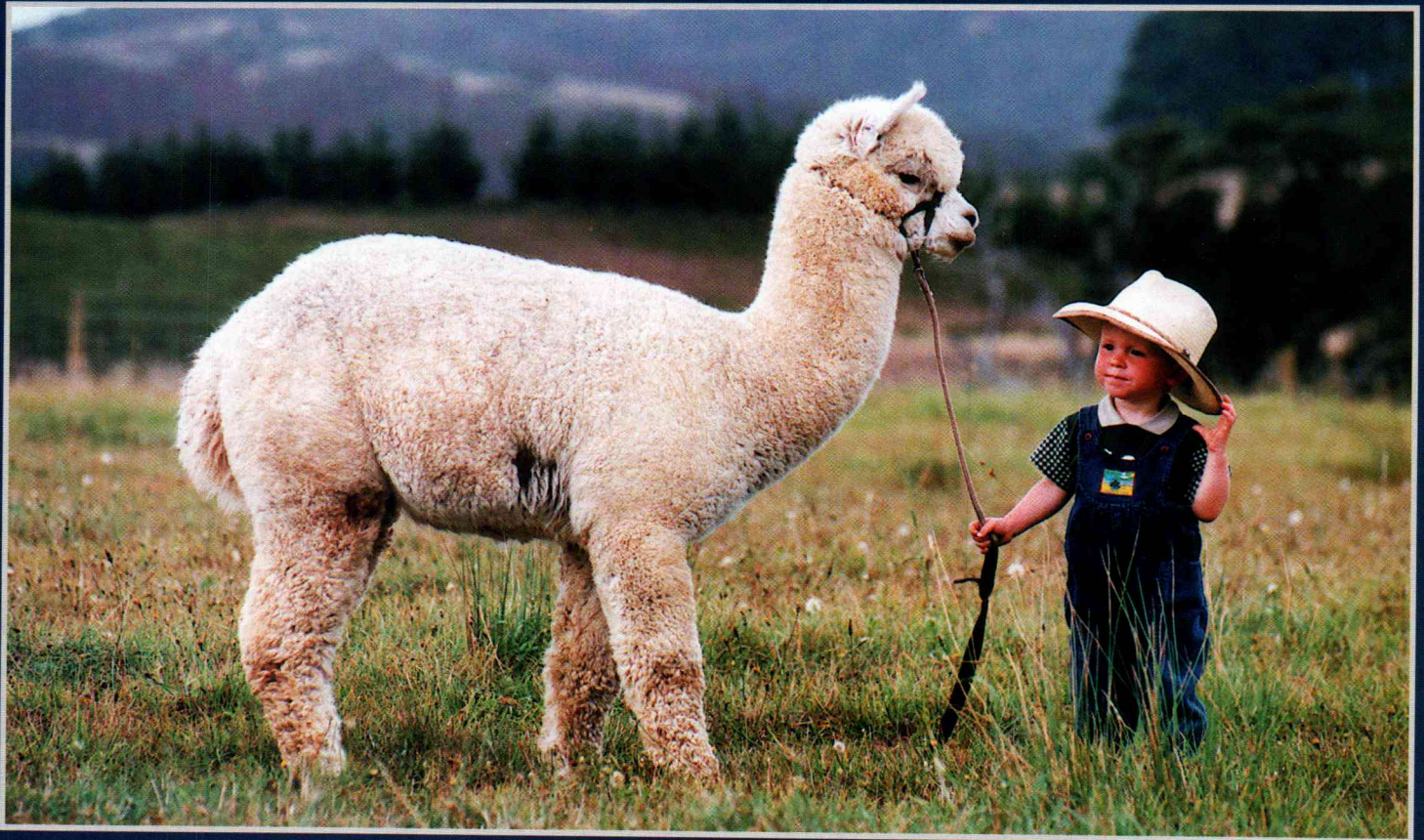


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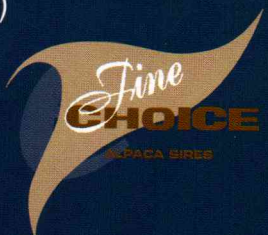
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# When your alpaca dies

.....  
**by Marty McGee**



Death is often referred to as the last taboo in Western society. Few aspects of animal ownership are less understood and discussed than the death of an animal friend. The relationship of pets to people and their effect on our lives has been studied very little. The effect of their passing has been studied even less. Perhaps it would be best not to compare the human relationship with animals to that of our relationships with people. One is neither better than, nor less than, the other – simply different. For many people, the relationship is one of immense importance. We humans grieve when we lose something of great value. Grief over animal death has been with the human race for a long time. The Egyptians shaved their eyebrows following the death of a cat and Caligula, Emperor of Rome (37-41 AD) built a temple to his horse.

Owning an alpaca is different to owning any other animal. Living with and getting to know alpacas is not quite like anything else. In many ways, alpacas are neither fish nor fowl when it comes to being a companion animal. Alpacas generally do not live in the house, but they can and do live in closer proximity to us than other barnyard pets. They can come in the house and they can ride in our vehicles with us. They live much longer than more traditional animal companions. Alpacas normally don't solicit human attention, but when they finally do accept and trust us, the relationship seems that much more precious.

One only has to attend a meeting of alpaca enthusiasts, talk to a few new owners and see their scrap books complete with baby pictures, to appreciate the emotional (not to mention financial) investment many people have in these animals. For many, alpacas are a substitute for children or an answer to the empty nest syndrome of later years. To be sure, many people have experienced the loss of an alpaca. However, with the alpaca phenomenon barely 10 years old, few alpaca owners have experienced the loss of an alpaca that has shared their lives for many years.

Many people who own alpacas also breed them. Raising alpacas and experiencing the birth of young inspires a special relationship. More than a few alpaca enthusiasts come to this endeavour with little experience in breeding animals of any kind. The reality of raising animals means that you will lose them. Many alpaca enthusiasts learn this the hard way with their first sick baby. It is devastating to lose a long time companion; it can be just as devastating to nurse a sick baby only to lose it days or weeks later. Alpaca owners take it harder and the feelings last longer when they lose a baby. The babies have so much potential and so much ahead of them. What hurts as much as anything is that the mother grieves too. When we have to take the baby away to take care of it and it dies, the mothers seem to blame us. Some mothers really take it hard and there is no way we can explain it to them.

The more joy alpacas bring us when they are alive, the more sorrow we are bound to feel at their passing.

Understanding grief doesn't make it go away, but it may help an individual to cope with the process. Part of the grieving process is talking about the loss.

There is a new willingness to discuss death and grief, due, in part, to the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, noted for her work on death and dying. However, many people find it difficult to talk about the profound feeling involved with pet loss. One reason may be that the individual may feel silly for taking the loss of an animal so hard. Many times, when a bereaved pet owner confides in someone, he/she may get a less than sympathetic response – something like, 'When are you going to pull yourself together and get over that silly animal?'

Another reason for difficulty in expressing emotion regarding the death of a pet may be the general discomfort that most of us feel about death in general. Given the fearful emotional climate around death, it is easy to understand why a bereaved pet owner may feel reluctant to share feelings of loss over just an animal. In the case of alpaca owners it may be doubly difficult, first to discuss the matter and, secondly, to find an appropriate person with whom to discuss the loss. Most people don't know what it is like to own an alpaca, much less to lose one. It may be comforting to turn to members of

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the alpaca community when faced with the loss of your alpaca friend.

According to the book *Loving Bond*, edited by Phil Arkow, a typical grief reaction may include both physical and emotional disruptions. The individual may feel exhausted and experience drastic alterations in eating and sleeping patterns. He or she may feel very nervous or irritable, may experience breathing difficulties or may sigh a great deal. Nightmares and hallucinations involving the lost animal are not uncommon. Many newly bereaved pet owners report seeing or hearing their lost pet. They may cry a lot, be unable to concentrate and may lose interest in people or the things in which they are normally involved.

Most persons knowledgeable in the field of thanatology (the study of death) agree that there are certain common characteristics of grieving individuals. Commonly, the literature will cite the states of grief as numbness and denial, painful feelings and acceptance. Not all owners will experience all stages or in the same order, but most people experience some aspect of the grieving process.

Numb and denying owners may seem dazed and ask questions or make comments that indicate that they are unaware that the animal has died.

The second stage of grief normally involves anger of some sort. Quite often, the owner may direct anger toward the veterinarian but, just as often, the anger is directed toward the animal, however unreasonable that may be. Guilt is usually present and the owner may feel, reasonably or unreasonably, that there was something he/she should have done differently.

The final stage of grief is that of acceptance or recovery. Given enough time, the owner will reach a stage where there is no more anger, guilt or intense pain about the animal's death. The individual can think about the animal without experiencing 'grief pangs'. It is possible to reminisce and not feel much pain.

The intensity of the emotions involved in companion animal loss will certainly vary depending on an individual's life situation, the circumstances surrounding the death and the emotional make-up of the individual. Generally, the grief experience for animals is intense but brief. The stages of grief over a pet run through rapidly, like a film speeded up. Disturbances in eating and sleeping generally last only a few days at most. Many animal owners reach the stage of acceptance in a few weeks.

One of the reasons that the mourning period is shortened is that the death of a pet does not normally otherwise disorganise the life of the individual and there is rarely a change in the individual's social life. When the animal is central to the lives of its owner(s) the grief experience can be much more intense and longer lasting.

There are ways to lessen the burden of grief both for yourself and others. First of all, give yourself permission to feel grief. It is also helpful to reminisce. Looking at photos and remembering good and bad times shared with your alpaca will help. It is important to have a sense of closure. Some sort of memorial or memorial service may be comforting.

One of the most difficult decisions an animal owner is called upon to make concerns euthanasia. It is sometimes very difficult to determine when euthanasia is appropriate. One way to make the decision easier is to address the situation before it occurs.

A suggestion I picked up at a workshop on pet bereavement is to enter into an informal quality of life contract with your companion animal. Decide on those things that truly bring your animal pleasure and make his or her life worth living. Write those things down when your animal is healthy and save the list. It may contain items such as eating normal food, or grazing; it may be making it up to the highest point in the pasture or keeping up with the herd. When you find yourself wonder-

ing if it is time to think about euthanasia, this list may make it easier to come to a decision. It may also be helpful to have your veterinarian explain specifically what is involved in the procedure and what to expect when the injection is administered.

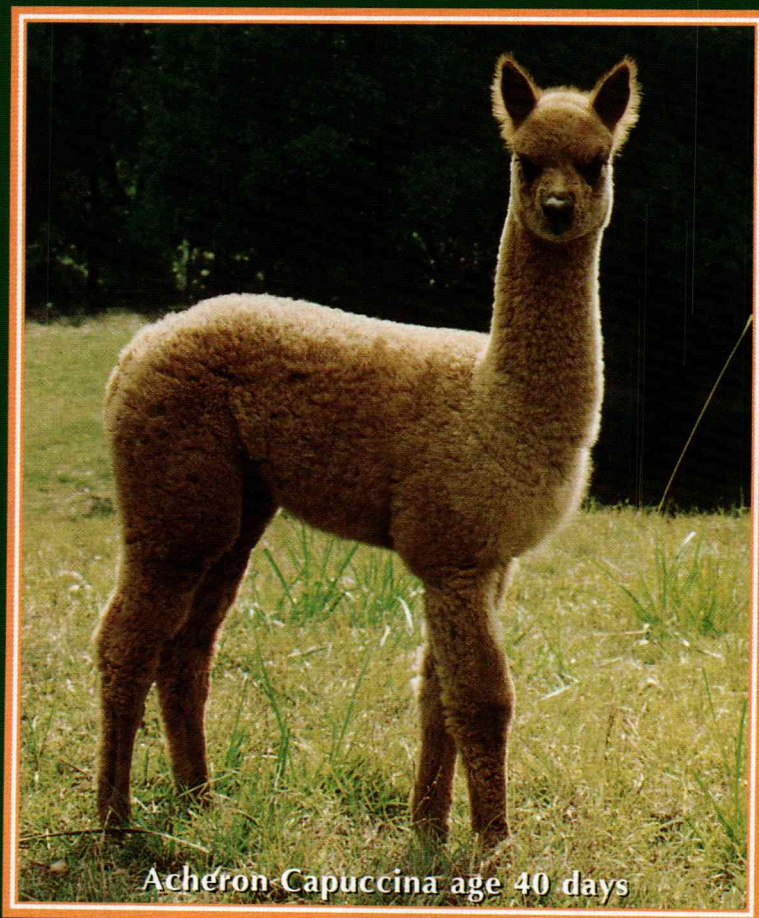
Jean Footit is a social worker at the Hospice Franklin County Medical Center, where she specialises in bereavement counselling for people. On the side, she acts as a grief counsellor for people having difficulty dealing with the death of an animal.

Jean told me, 'We make the choice in the case of euthanasia and feelings of guilt and grief are very normal. We, as human beings can predict the future, animals cannot. We can make a decision based on information that the animal doesn't have. We may know that the animal will get worse and suffer. In the case of euthanasia, we are their guardians. Actually, we are their guardians all along. The animals are our teachers when it comes to grief, especially for children. We learn from their passing how to grieve and that grief is a process that ends. In this sense, their passing is a real gift to us. We may not see it that way at the time, but it is. Veterinarians obviously pay an important part in this decision. Don't hesitate to talk to your vet and, if your veterinarian is reluctant to discuss these issues, go to someone else. More attention is being paid to the issue of euthanasia and grief in veterinary schools and veterinarians are taught to respond appropriately.'

A survey by the American pet industry found that 23 per cent of former pet owners said that grief over a pet was the reason why they no longer had one. People who wish to enjoy the wonders of living with alpacas will have to face the death of these animals that we love so much.

The alpaca community is a wonderfully supportive group of folks. We can help each other with this final aspect of sharing our lives with these magical animals.

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## Alpaca Breeders Birthing Handbook

While Hoffman and Fowler's *The Alpaca Book* is an extremely useful resource, there is a shortage of smaller books on specific issues relating to alpacas. It is particularly hard to find issue specific books that are easy to read and offer commonsense information and advice based on practical experience with alpacas.

Ewen McMillan (Bellarine Veterinary Practice) and alpaca breeder, Carolyn Jinks (Benleigh Alpaca Stud) are planning to fix all that. They have launched into print with the first of a planned series of handbooks.

The *Alpaca Breeders Birthing Handbook* was released in time for the Industry Seminar in Sydney. It is a slim paperback that is easy to read, has a centre-page spread of extremely useful photographs and contains a glossary of terms.

The cover sketch and page illustrations are by Shelley O'Brien.

The book has been written in response to a stated need for a 'ready reference' on the topic of alpaca birthing and cria care. Its aim is well described in the preface: 'We have set out to give you the necessary basics to confidently and successfully breed your alpacas, and to realise when you need help'.

Carolyn reports that proofs were given for evaluation to three people who knew nothing about alpacas. Those readings were of immense help in tidying up the manuscript and removing such gems as, 'if there is no bonding occurring, move the cria close to the dam'. (Or a pond, at a pinch?!)

In an association that has now lasted over eight years, Carolyn and Ewen have accumulated a great deal of knowledge about alpaca birthing. Information has been carefully documented and upgraded as new knowledge has emerged. It is upon this solid experience that the book has been based.

You can buy the *Alpaca Breeders Birthing Handbook* from the AAA for only \$22.00. (See order form p. 60.)

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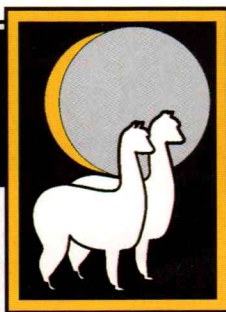
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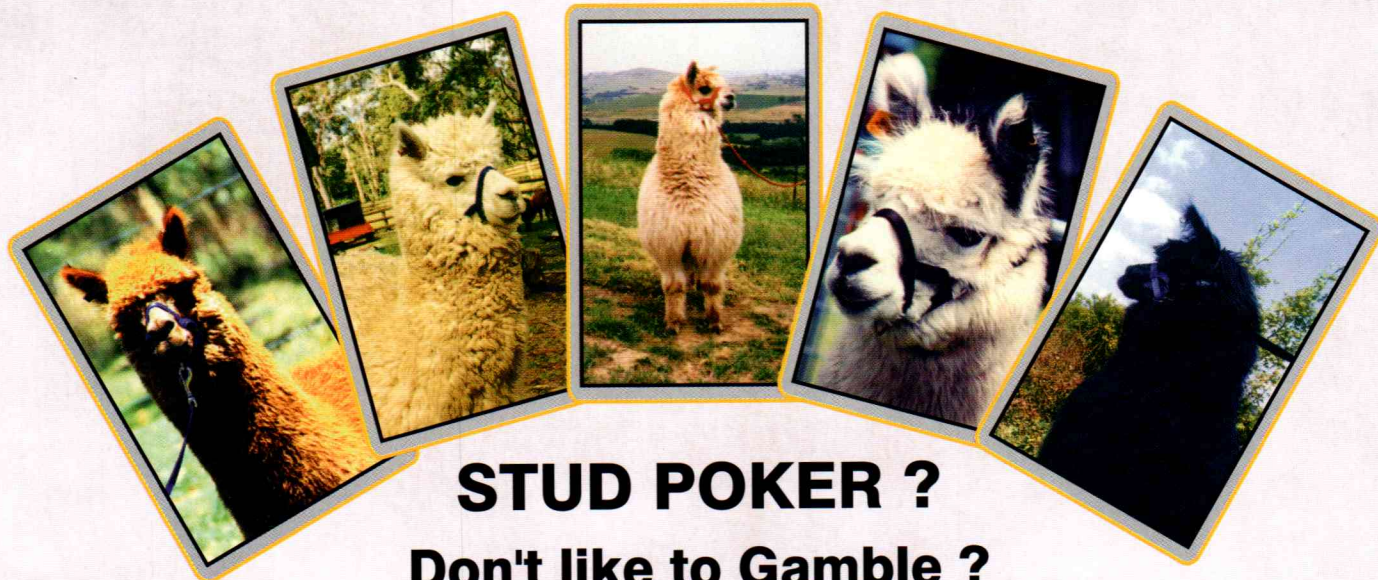
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