

Alpacas

A U S T R A L I A

ISSUE No. 22 1998

\$5.00 (AUST.)

SPECIAL
International
Festival of
South American
Camelids

A woman with dark hair and large earrings is shown from the waist up, looking over her shoulder. She is wearing a long, patterned dress with a red and black geometric design and yellow stars. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some architectural elements.

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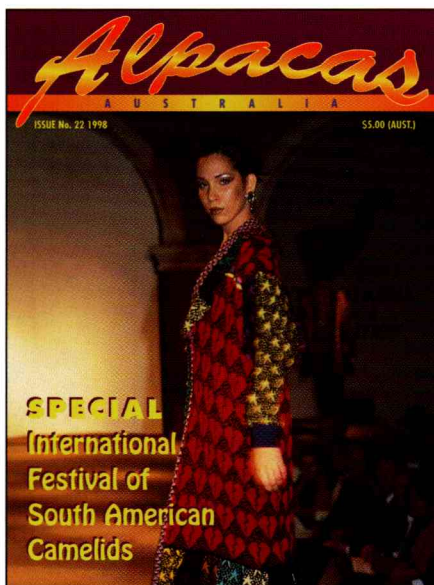
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Cover photo: Alejandro Balaguer

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David Johnson Reports

What an experience! A year as GM and it has been one of the most challenging and stimulating times of my life. A multi-faceted role, you say? That's an understatement!

If it wasn't the National Show and Sale, it was the National Conference, the Business Plan, a new Marketing Program or the issue of screening, or preparation for a National Committee meeting. These tasks, with the trip to Peru and a presentation on the Australian industry meant there was never a dull moment.

Given all this and more, I firmly believe that, whilst having so much yet to achieve, there is a real opportunity for the Australian Alpaca Association to steer this industry into being a successful 'elite' fibre industry. What new, 'diversified' agricultural industry in Australia can lay claim to the fact its product has been traded successfully on international markets for over 140 years? We can join this success, in time, with a strategic approach.

This year, 1998, is the tenth anniversary of the modern day alpaca industry in Australia. Look at other 'diversified' industries ten years on! The essential elements

are in place – 'end to end fulfilment' for the product.

Ten years on, the industry is seeing new and exciting developments.

- Finalisation and release of the Business Plan.
- Launching of a new and strategic Marketing Program.
- Release of a new corporate promotional video.
- A new logo to reflect a whole new approach to promoting the industry.
- Development of new animal marketing strategies to assist the smaller breeder.
- New and improved Association member services and benefits.
- A new office to fit in with changing needs of a growing Association.

Finally, I would ask members to have their say. Let the National Office know of any issues you believe need addressing. Any constructive criticism is always gladly taken on board. The National Office is also always keen to hear of any suggestions for improvement of member service.

I look forward to the next twelve months with excitement and confidence.



The Australian Alpaca Association not only has a new logo – it has new, larger offices, too!

We've moved!

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Alpacas
AUSTRALIA

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TIPS ON SHOWING

by **Bill Plunkett**

It is pleasing to see an increasing number of new exhibitors at regional and the larger shows.

However, through inexperience, new exhibitors can be unaware of show etiquette and, sometimes, there can be the odd, small problem.

Show schedules

Many believe that they are automatically on the mailing list for all shows. This is not so. If you have shown at a particular show in the previous year, in all probability you will receive notification, but on many occasions would-be exhibitors have missed out because they did not receive their schedules.

If you want notification, it is up to you to request it.

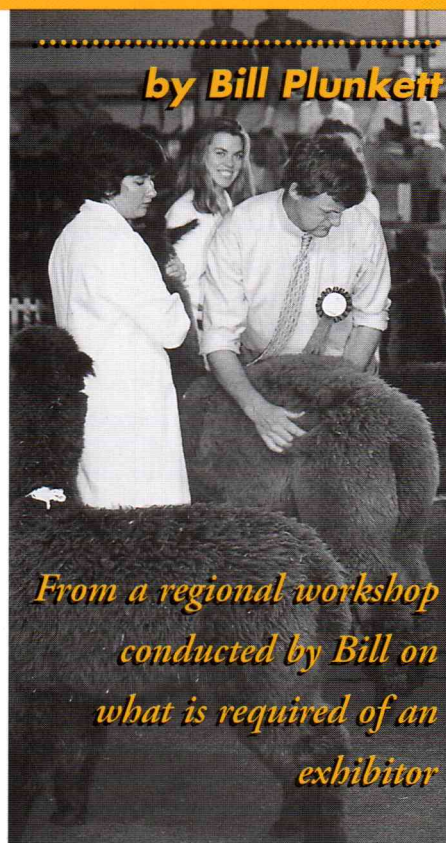
Entries close for the Melbourne Sheep Show and Royals about two

months prior; regional shows sometimes two weeks prior. Watch for dates in your regional newsletter or local press. If you do not receive a schedule, you can obtain one from the local show secretary (AAA regional committee members will have a telephone number).

Show Regulations and AAA Showing Guidelines

Before filling out your entry, read everything! You will receive copies of both general regulations of the show as well as AAA showing guidelines. On occasion, one can override the other so you must understand guidelines and regulations and comply with them.

If in doubt, consult the Chief Steward.



From a regional workshop conducted by Bill on what is required of an exhibitor

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Filling in the entry form

Class number

Make sure you put the correct class number on the form. If you select an incorrect class for your animal, stewards have to reshuffle your animal at the show.

Name of animal and prefix

The prefix is the name in front of your animal's name: i.e. *Biella* Elenor. It must always be included on the entry form when you fill out the names of your animal and its sire and dam.

Make sure the IAR number you enter corresponds with that on the animal's registration. Double check before you come to the show. If you've made a mistake, the animal will not be allowed to be exhibited.

Date last shorn

If the animal has not been shorn, put a dash. If it has been shorn back to the skin, enter the date of the last shearing.

Date of birth (DOB)

This is very important. From time to time, we find people have put the animal in the wrong age class. Note that there is a relationship between an alpaca's DOB and the date of the show. For example, for a 6-12 month age class, an alpaca must be older than 6 months and less than 12 months at the date of the show.

Colour

This is less of a problem than it used to be. Whites and light fawns, dark fawns and light browns, however can be a worry. To determine the correct colour class, consult your colour card and take your animal's true colour as that of the fleece nearest to the skin. You will find that surface fleece will be slightly different.

Multis or fancies are classified if animals have unusual or a striking difference of colour – different saddle marking, for example.

At a recent show, an exhibitor put her animal the multi section because it had one white sock and a 3 inch white patch on the apron.

Colour definitions for solid versus fancy have changed. All the details can be found in the Association's *Showing Guidelines* manual.

Fleece classes

Check the correct class for your animal's age (see DOB above). Then calculate the age of the fleece. For example, if your animal is 20 months old, and was shorn 4 months ago, the age of the fleece is 16 months. Both these pieces of information need to appear on your fleece class entry form.

Name of exhibitor

The name of the owner must appear as the name of the exhibitor.

If you have an animal agisted on your property and the owner wishes you to show the animal, you must

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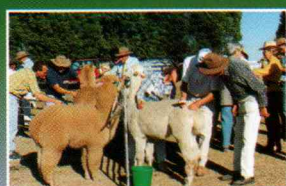
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- ☐ Coolaroo Alpacas
☐ Elite Alpaca Production workshops
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place his/her name on the entry form as exhibitor, not yours. While the stud name of the owner must also appear, the address can be listed as c/- your address. In effect, if you are showing on behalf of someone else, you are the handler, not the exhibitor of the animal.

Form of declaration

Royal Shows and the AAA National Show require a statutory declaration to accompany your entry form.

Note that to knowingly make a false declaration is perjury and a prosecutable offence.

Return of entry

Always send your entry back well before the deadline. Last minute panics could mean mistakes in your entry form or missing the deadline for return of entries. In this case, your animal does not get to be exhibited.

Interestingly, the worst offenders in our regional shows are the 'old' competitors.

If you wish to have animals penned with those of another exhibitor, request this on your entry form.

Confirmation of entry

If you want confirmation that your animal has been entered in a show, send a stamped, self-addressed envelop with your entry form and request a receipt of entry.

At the show

When you arrive at the show, find the shed steward (normally at the AAA promotional table) and obtain your numbers. It's also a good idea to get your white coat at the same time. Buy a catalogue and confirm that the numbers given to you correspond with those shown in the catalogue. If they don't, tell the chief steward.

Exhibitors should follow the classes in the catalogue to ensure they're ready for their classes. Some don't and rely on stewards to find them. This is not only asking too much of the stewards, it's

risking missing your class. If you can't be found, then the show goes on without you and without your animal.

Fleeces

Place your fleece on the tables provided and attach your number to the fleece. Don't forget to take your fleece home!

Prior to showing

Always attend the exhibitors' meeting prior to a show. This meeting will give you final information about how the show will operate. There may be joined classes (i.e combined classes due to insufficient numbers) that may affect your animal.

Inspection

Exhibitors must be present when inspections are taking place. The stewards need immediate access to details of your animal. Problems can easily arise and there is simply not the time for stewards to be looking for owners of animals.

Inca Alpaca Stud

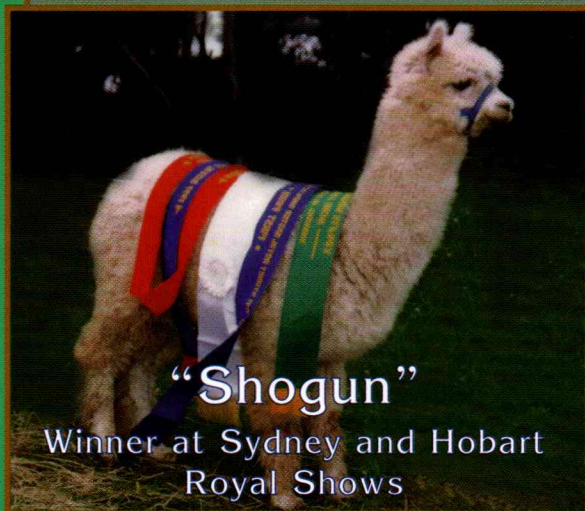
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Check your animal over thoroughly on the day prior to the show. Check the ear tag. Also check testicles. This may sound odd, but it has happened that an animal was entered for showing that had one big – and one very small – testicle. Sometimes a testicle can remain in the abdomen, undescended. In such a case, the animal concerned would be rejected for showing.

Ear Tag and Registrations

An ear tag must be present in the ear of the alpaca and must correspond with details on the animal's registration certificate. If its ear tag has been ripped out or lost, an alpaca cannot be shown unless its owner provides the Chief Steward with official Association confirmation that application has been made for a replacement ear tag. It is up to you to request confirmation in writing from the AAA office.

If you need to register an animal, make sure you apply for registration well in advance of the date on which you propose to show it. Registration takes a little while to process – do not apply only a few days before the show...

The show ring

Be ready ahead of time. You should be ready to step into the show ring three classes ahead. This is particularly important if there are only a couple of animals in the class ahead of you. The stewards may call up two classes outside the show ring: one in the holding bay and one standing ready to enter.

Don't enter the ring too soon

There are a few problems about entering the ring too soon. Usually, the marshalling steward will watch the judge and, when he/she is ready, will allow you to enter the ring. Even if your number is announced by the MC, don't go until the judge or steward gives you the OK. This is important, because the judge watches carefully as the animal walks toward and away

from him/her as part of assessing the animal. The judge will not be looking at your animal if you have entered the ring before he/she is ready.

Ring attire

The standard showing coat is mandatory. Tee shirts etc, are not acceptable.

Numbers

Numbers must be worn in the ring. If you have animals in consecutive classes, avoid rushing to pin on the second animal's number by pinning the second number under the first.

The line up

Try and keep the line straight. The industry is on show and should present itself smartly. Some competitors have been known to deliberately place their animals forward of the main line in an effort to attract the judge's attention to their animals. This is an old and well known strategy that doesn't work.

Always leave space between yourself and the next competitor. If an animal plays up, there's less chance of disturbing other animals in the line if there's sufficient space between each one.

Always watch the judge and be ready to obey his/her requests.

The Reserve Champion

There seems to be a great deal of confusion about the choosing of this animal.

Put simply, if the Supreme Champion is the winner of a class in which your animal was awarded second place, your animal is eligible for selection as Reserve Champion.

Efficient stewarding will ensure all second placegetters are ready and standing by as championship classes are judged.

Some dos and don'ts

- Be at the show early, unload as quickly as you can and move your vehicle out of the way to make room for others.

- Do not confer with the judge in the show ring. If you have a problem, speak to the steward.
 - Always advise the chief steward of a withdrawal as early as possible. There is nothing more irritating than to be waiting for an exhibit that is finally found to have been withdrawn.
 - Have your animal trained to a halter. An uncontrollable alpaca is a hazard to yourself and to others. A well-trained alpaca will always stand out against a cringing, frightened and untrained exhibit.
 - It is considered bad manners to talk to other exhibitors in your line-up. You should never open the fleece of another competitor.
 - The judge's decision is final and must be accepted even though you may think it unfair. Maybe you think your animal should have won or been placed. It's worth taking the trouble to approach the judge after the show and ask him/her to comment on your animal. This may assist you not only to understand his/her decision, but also to better understand the good and bad points of your animal. This is very valuable knowledge.
 - Do not remove your animals from the show until the steward gives the OK to depart
 - After the show, load your alpacas and get your vehicle out of the way quickly. You may be able to help other competitors, or assist if pens need to be dismantled and stacked.
- If we all remember these courtesies, we will ensure that, not only do our shows proceed smoothly, but also that the public sees a smartly turned out and professional industry that deserves its place in any show ring in the land.
- [*Showing Guidelines* is an Association manual, available only to members, that contains guidelines and other useful information for those who show alpacas. The manual has been designed to be updated as required. Cost is just \$A19.00. See order form, page 60.]

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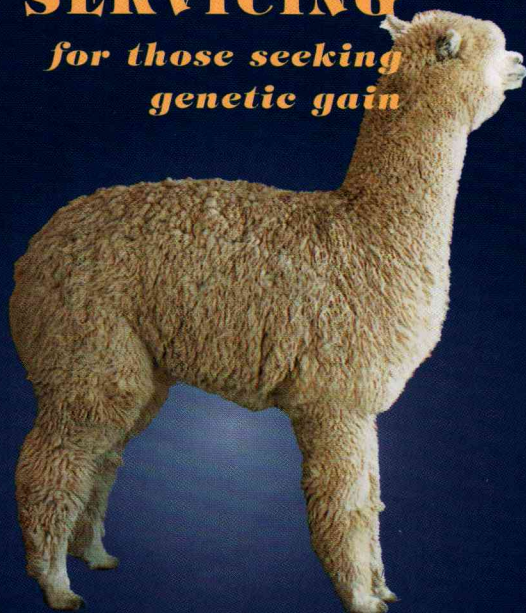
- **SUPREME CHAMPION**
Shanbrooke High Society
- **Junior Champion Female**
- **Junior Champion Male**
- **Intermediate Champion Female**
- **Senior Champion Female**

Melbourne Royal 1997

- **SUPREME CHAMPION**
Shanbrooke Society Lass
- **Junior Champion Female**
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- **Intermediate Champion Male**
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Shanbrooke High Society; Shanbrooke Society Lass; Shanbrooke Enchanter

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LEADING AT LAKES

.....
by Josephine Jakobi

*We had failed to recognise
the vast difference
between people who have
been alpaca trained and
those who have not.
Consequently, we set
about designing the
perfect alpaca headstall.*

Summer time at Lakes Entrance, on the south east coast of Victoria, is a very busy time. When city folk arrive here ready to relax and enjoy their summer vacation, the locals at this seaside town are rolling up their sleeves to be sure that the best of service and entertainment is available for the six weeks of the summer holidays.

Here at Bungalook Alpaca Farm, just out of town, we had an idea for involving our alpacas in the fun. People want to learn about the bush, enjoy picnics and just love alpacas. Perhaps we could take visitors for alpaca escorted bush walks, with a neat little pack for each animal to carry – a simple picnic for small family groups.

I made up a set of packs and, with the help of our grandchildren, we began leading our alpacas down through the paddock, across the bridge, through the rain forest, up the hill and home again. The alpacas were a bit reluctant at first, but soon settled into their practice walks. It all seemed trouble free, so we invited our neighbours to lend themselves to the experiment. They were happy to oblige and brought their grandchildren to join in.

To our surprise and consternation we found that our tractable and placid 'pacas didn't like these newcomers and objected to the children. We had failed to recognise the vast difference between people who have been alpaca trained and those who have not.

The alpacas could spot the difference instantly and reacted with alarm. We did the walk. Our neighbours seemed to enjoy themselves; the children certainly did, but the alpacas most certainly did not. They behaved badly, pulling on their leads and lurching about, trying to stay as far as possible away from the new people. Obviously,

we would have to introduce many strangers to our animals before they would resign themselves to being handled by the uninitiated.

The most worrying aspect of this experience for us was to see the discomfort caused by the headstalls we were using when the animals behaved badly. We have always regarded headstalls on alpacas as something of a problem, particularly during the early stages of training young animals. Every alpaca owner must be familiar with the problem of nose bands pulling on soft tissue when placed too far down the nose, or sidestraps riding too high on small heads and putting pressure on eyes.

These factors are an uncomfortable distraction to early training sessions and have often caused us to remark that alpacas really need to have a headstall especially designed for them.

We had read Marty McGee's article, 'My Alpaca Just Won't Lead' in the Fall '95 issue of *Alpacas* magazine (USA). Her observations about the problems of halters on alpacas strengthened our convictions. In the hands of untrained people, this problem was much increased so that, although we were sure that our animals could be trained to accept handling and leading by inexperienced strangers, we felt that the headstall problem was likely to go on causing the animals discomfort.

Consequently, we set about designing the perfect alpaca headstall.

Rick and I both have a long association with horses and, for many years, trained the youngsters we had bred here at Bungalook. One of the basics of training young horses is to have a good understanding of the animal's body structure and centre of gravity to gain the advantage, when needed, over an animal that is far more powerful than

any human. The horse has a strong body, rectangularly based, with a leg on each corner, making him very powerful in forward and backward motion. Because of his elongated base, sideways movement is less stable and more awkward. He also has a long, flexible neck. If we place our control rope at the head end of that long neck and keep our body positioned 90 degrees in relation to the horse's spine, we can fairly easily push him off balance if he begins to struggle. He is soon convinced that we have hidden powers and that struggling is fruitless. If we move our control rope to the end of the horse's long, bony head, we multiply the leverage effect that this principle gives us. That is why headstalls for horses are designed the way they are, with the point of control as far along the neck-head lever as possible. This design has simply been moved across to other animals, so that all headstalls look pretty much the same.

Consider, then, the alpaca – still rectangularly based with a leg on each corner – but small and lightweight with a delicate head at the end of a very long and flexible neck. Do we need to take advantage of the lever effect by attaching our point of control at the extreme end of the neck-head lever? No, of course we do not. We can easily control any alpaca by using just the neck. All we need to do is to position our lead rein at the top end of that long neck and secure it there.

We began experimenting with carefully shaped leather straps and found that the alpacas agreed with our theory.



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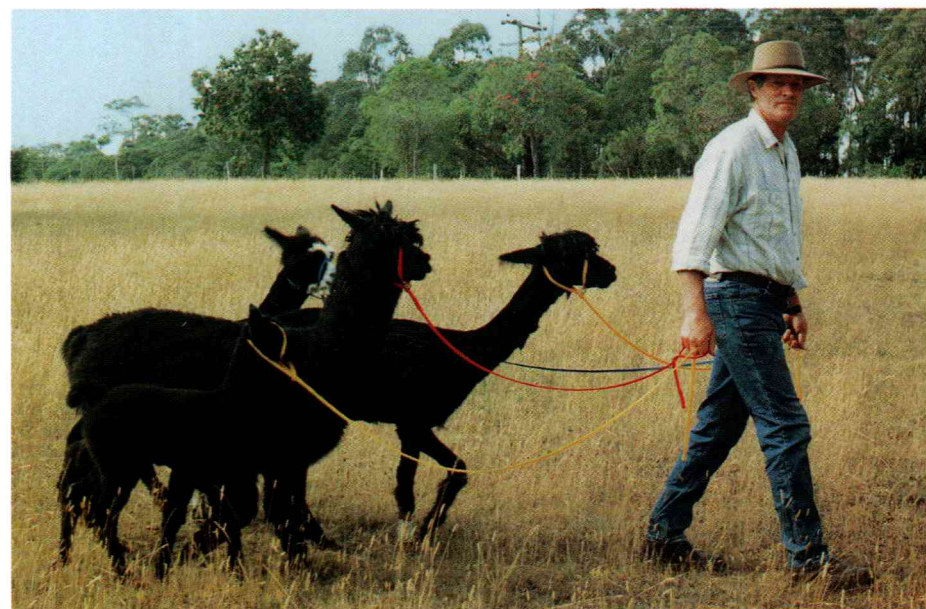
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Leading is a much more enjoyable activity if there is no pressure on the head at all. We invited more neighbours to come alpaca walking and found that, although the animals sometimes rudely objected to strangers, the new headstall never caused them any discomfort or distress and offered every bit as much control as the old standard ones did. The new design can even be used on two and three week old cria, so they are able to learn leading at an age when it causes them the least aggravation, trotting happily alongside mum with a tiny headstall fitted neatly to the little head.

The latest models are made of lightweight synthetic material in a range of colours to suit all tastes.

Having solved the headstall problem to our satisfaction, we looked again at the summer of '97 and came to the conclusion that it was shaping up to be the longest, hottest, driest and most fly-



infested summer season that we have seen for quite a while. Maybe taking people and 'pacas for walks in the bush is not such a pleasant thing to do under these conditions. It seemed prudent to shelve the idea for a cooler, greener season. Easter might be better, or the

spring holidays in 1998. In the meantime, we have developed what we believe to be a very good alpaca headstall that, at least, makes leading more comfortable for the animals and, at best, makes the training of cria possible and even pleasant at a very early age.

Peruvians arrive in Queensland

by James Oliffe

Queensland saw the birth of alpaca madness some five years ago, with the arrival of approximately 300 Chilean alpacas into our beautiful state. This alpaca migration into Queensland was headed by two main studs: Purryburry Alpacas and Maleny Park Alpacas.

Since then, there has been a steady flow of alpacas coming into Queensland from around Australia.

Montclair Alpaca's was born approximately four years ago with the purchase of 40 acres of land at the top of the Blackall Ranges, near the popular Sunshine Coast hinterland tourist destination of Mapleton.

Over a three year period, I had one goal in sight: to set up Montclair Alpaca's for the purpose of farming my

own alpacas, which at that time numbered just nine.

Christmas 1996 saw all this change. Animal numbers jumped from nine to 120 with the help of alpaca breeders and investors agisting their animals at Montclair Alpaca's.

The next few months were spent finding out what the majority of alpaca breeders in Queensland were wanting to achieve with their breeding programs. The main point that came out of this exercise was not surprising: a yearly improvement of breeders' progenies' fleece and frame structure over their foundation stock.

December 1997 saw the next major influx of animals into Queensland. Approximately 50 of Peru's finest qual-

ity alpacas arrived at Montclair Alpaca's.

This is the beginning of the second phase in the alpaca industry in Queensland and we believe that we now have the ability to produce the quality progeny that all alpaca breeders are aiming for.

The morning the shipment arrived, new owners were lining up at the front gate to get their first glimpse of their animals as they ran and jumped down the ramp of the transporter.

The quality of alpacas has exceeded expectation and those responsible for the care and handling of the animals over the past two years should be congratulated.

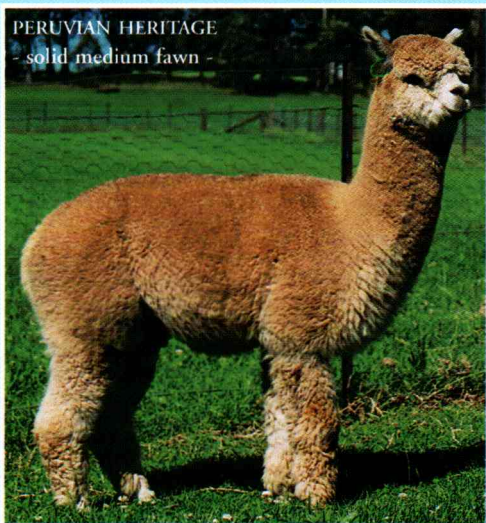


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Your choice of outstanding *PROVEN* stud sires
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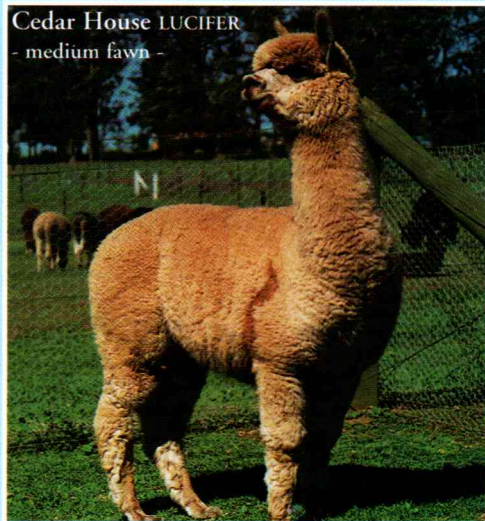
Mobile services – drive bys – on farm matings
Discounts for multiple bookings

PERUVIAN HERITAGE
- solid medium fawn -



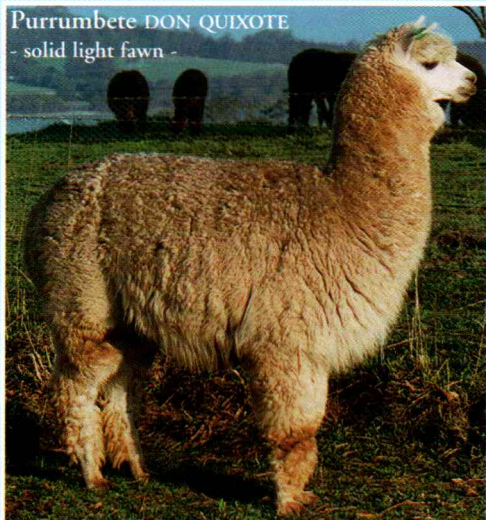
With outstanding coverage & density, HERITAGE is one of the few pure Peruvians to have progeny already making their mark in the show ring, including Champion Female Picton '97, Reserve Champion Junior Male Sydney Royal '97, 1st Progeny Class Sydney Royal '97.

Cedar House LUCIFER
- medium fawn -



LUCIFER (son of the famous Purumbete Highlander) has stunning apricot fleece with beautiful character, density & lustre. His recent show results prove it – Champion Senior Fleece Sydney Royal '97, Champion Fleece Castle Hill '97, Supreme Champion Picton '97. His first cria on the ground are superb.

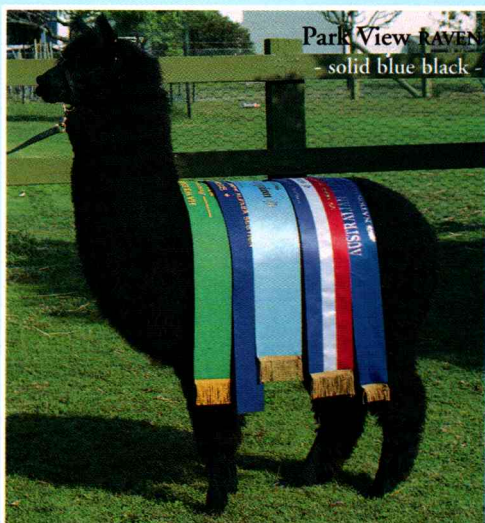
Purumbete DON QUIXOTE
- solid light fawn -



The legendary DON QUIXOTE needs little introduction. His outstanding fleece qualities can still be seen in his offspring, proving that at a regal 14 years of age he continues to impress.

Now 3 years old, RAVEN still retains the beautiful soft, lustrous, crimp & dense fleece which has brought him numerous blue and Championship ribbons at shows up to National levels in '96 & '97. Watch for his first cria in the '98 show scene. You won't be disappointed.

Park View RAVEN
- solid blue black -



PEACE OF MIND



Alpaca breeders frequently choose VACC Insurance. Here's why.

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Peruvian – "Pride of Allianza" – white



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dams giving the
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Suri offspring*

Peruvian – "Boyne Lad" – medium fawn



*Personally
selected by the
previous owners
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Haldane*

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- * Mobile/drive through mating service is available
- * View "Pride of Allianza" progeny at our stud

For more information on these exciting breeding opportunities, contact Helen or Geoff Shephard on

(02) 4572 3437 phone/fax

The Proof is in the Progeny



Acheron Valley Alpaca Stud

Our Superior Light Fawn Stud Male

Peruvian Primero

Has confirmed his quality with 3 Ribbon Winners and 2nd place in the Sires Progeny class at the Royal Melbourne Show '97. These progeny are all bred by Acheron Alpacas from Chilean Dams.

Peruvian Primero

- Fine, even, dense crimp fleece
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- 70% solid dark fawn cria to date
- Live Cria guarantee
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Precious alpacas

Ourimbah Alpacas syndicate members, Denise Burden and Robert Hain have pooled their talents to create a fascinating range of alpaca jewellery.

Interested in the clean lines and conformation of the alpaca, Robert, a manufacturing jeweller sketched his original alpaca onto one millimetre thick sterling silver to create a stunning brooch which is reminiscent in its simplicity of some of the early Inca pieces.

Due to the interest of other local alpaca breeders, Robert and Denise have extended their range to include earrings, pendants, charms, stick pins and tie tacs.

Robert, who lives north of Sydney on the Central Coast, has owned and operated his jewellery store, Robert's Jewellery, since the early seventies. The 'specialty' jewellery Robert produces for his shop is hand crafted, as are all the pieces in the alpaca range. He became involved with alpacas in 1995 when Ourimbah Alpacas purchased their first female alpaca.

'Alpacas interested me initially, as an alternative to goats, and I have enjoyed the challenge of creating them in silver and gold,' Robert comments.

The syndicate now owns three breeding females, a black stud male, Mikaylangela Nero, which they purchased in 1996 and a small fleece herd.

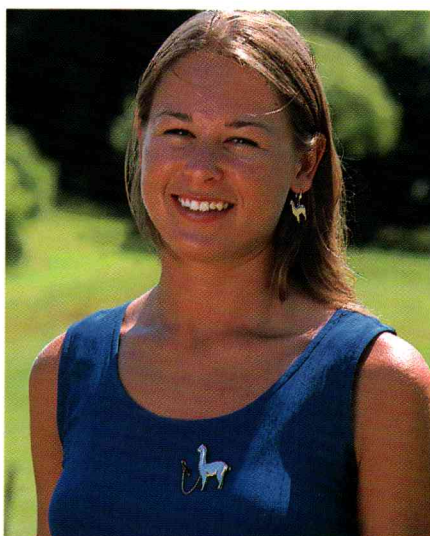
The jewellery made its debut at the Wyong Show in October last year and was also on show at the National Classic at Penrith in November. 1998 promises to be a big year for Denise and Robert as he utilises his creative ability to add more styles of jewellery to the range.

'I am not interested in mass production of these pieces,' says Robert. 'Each piece is individual. I intend to create more styles and I am happy to make items to order.'

The range will feature at the Australian Alpaca Association Conference in Perth later in the year and be available by mail order. It is crafted in a variety of finishes: satin, polished, brushed or textures and can be made in 9ct or 18ct gold, rose gold, gold plated or sterling silver.

The photographs of the jewellery have also been taken by one of the syndicate members, Brad Page, at the Burden's property in Ourimbah, truly keeping their latest venture 'in the syndicate'.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the range can call Denise Burden, phone/fax (02) 4362 2493.



Sterling silver brooch and earrings.



Sterling silver stick pin and earrings.



Gold plated pendant and earrings.



Sterling silver brooch.

When we moved out – the alpacas moved in

At the industry's biggest ever National Classic Show, 1997 – which attracted over 200 animal entries – Dianne and Ron Condon scooped the pool. Shanbrooke Alpaca Stud animals won five of the possible six Championships.

Champion Junior Male:

Shanbrooke High Society

Champion Junior Female:

Purrumbete Eagles Feather

Champion Intermediate Male:

Purrumbete Monarch

Champion Inter. Female:

Shanbrooke Society Lass

Champion Senior Female:

Purrumbete Compass Rose

Shanbrooke High Society was

also awarded Supreme

Champion.

On the same weekend, this 10-month-old male was also sold for a record price.

So what does it take to reach this level of success? We asked this question of the Condons recently. The result is this story by Dianne Condon.

Ron was a rigger, putting up cranes on high city buildings, working seven days a week, 14 hours a day. I owned a hair-dressing salon and also worked long hours, six days a week.

We had originally become interested in breeding animals through a few of my clients, who would come in to the salon and tell me about their Angora goats.

We decided to have a go. In 1981, we bought ten acres, some Angoras and headed to the outskirts of suburbia. I became so involved in Angoras that I sold the salon and worked full time on the farm. We began showing and started to build a reputation in the industry.

Ron continued to work on the cranes. However, he had been bitten by the breeding bug as well, so we decided to go back to school and take a 12-month night course at the Melbourne School of Textiles to learn about fibre classing, shearing and animal husbandry.

It was a very hot day, a year before ash Wednesday – 43° with strong northerly winds – that found us on the way to the beach. On the car radio we heard a report that there was a bushfire in our area. A little concerned, we stopped and rang a neighbour who told us the fire had started in front of our farm.

When we arrived back at the farm, our house was still standing but everything else was gone – sheds, animals, equipment and fencing. The fire had burnt right up to the eaves of our house. To say the next few days were depressing is a very large understatement.

That we achieved any sense of calm at all was very much due to the efforts of local people who helped us a great deal. In the months that followed, it emerged that an SEC power line had sparked the fire and a quick-thinking neighbour had not only witnessed it but had also taken a photograph.

We were compensated for our losses – including our 60 goats. If there was any bright side to this disaster, it was that our compensation funds enabled us to buy six top stud animals at the largest stock sale ever held for goats.

Although we now only owned a small number of animals compared to our previous herd, we decided that breeding for top quality was to be our goal.

Over the next few years we became one of the well-known studs, selling top priced animals at auctions and achieving successes in the show ring.

It was during this time that we first met AAA president, Alan Hamilton who was also in the Angora goat industry.

We needed more room for our goats – and our family – so we moved to a larger property in the Yarra Valley with panoramic views of green rolling hills. If one could live on a view, we'd have been very rich. As it was, we didn't have a house on the property. We moved into a tin shed and started building.

Our first alpacas

Again through our association with Angora goats, we met Geoff and Nancy Halpin. And it was during a visit to their farm that we first saw (and fell in love with) alpacas. There were

very few alpacas in Australia at that time (around 1989) and they were certainly way out of our price range.

Some months later, Ron read an advertisement about alpacas being offered for sale on Torrens Island. We rang about them and a bubbly Cherie Bridges organised for us to go and look at them. We jumped in the car and drove all night, deciding we'd buy two. After seeing the animals, we couldn't resist them, borrowed some money and bought six.

Both our families thought we were mad!

'All that money! What if they die?'

'What will you do with them?'

'How will they adjust to Australia?'

All good questions, but we had decided we'd take our chances. After all, if we could put up with living in a tin shed with three kids, no frig and no stove (cooking in a hole in the ground is fascinating!), we could manage anything.

What really threw our plans into disarray wasn't anything to do with buying alpacas. It was my discovery that I was pregnant. Our third child had been born seven years before – the last, so I thought. Our house-in-progress had been meticulously planned for a family of five!

Well, it was going to be six now, and we were too far advanced in construction to make any changes.

Maybe I was starting to show signs of stress at this stage, as kind neighbours actually let us borrow their caravan until our house was completed. It was good to have a stove and a few mod cons!

Within a year of acquiring our alpacas, all the questions shot at us by our families were answered. Alpacas were hardy; they weren't going to die and they certainly liked Australian conditions. We weren't mad, after all.

We had discovered that there were alpacas in New Zealand that were going to be imported into Australia. Alan Hamilton was bringing them in. We wanted to buy more, so Ron flew to New Zealand to have a look at them and decided to buy another six animals.

Because there were still relatively few alpacas in Australia, we travelled a lot around shows and field days, promoting them. It wasn't hard! We had people coming from everywhere wanting to see and touch these superb animals, asking questions, wanting to buy. I particularly remember going to the Lilydale Show – we had prospective buyers galore by the time the show was over. Alan had provided us with a list of animals available for sale and we sold from the list. People were so keen to get alpacas, they bought sight unseen. Later, Alan was able to give us photographs so that prospective buyers could actually see what they were getting.

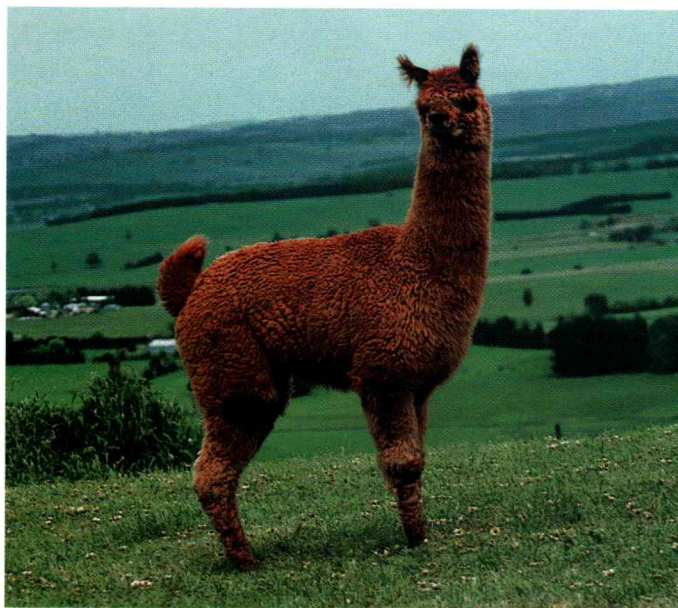
We had continued to breed goats but, after 18 months we realised that alpacas were much less labour intensive and more suited to our now wetter area in the Yarra Valley. Reluctantly, we decided to move the goats on. I still love Angoras, and it was very hard to part with them, especially the show animals.



Our home for a while at Shanbrooke. When we moved out, the alpacas moved in.

We became involved with the Haldanes with whom, over the years, we have formed a strong association both personally and in business. With them and others, we were at the meeting in 1990 that formed the Australian Alpaca Association. I was fortunate enough to be on its very first committee and our first alpaca 'supplier', Cherie Bridges was the 'foundation' Secretary. The following year I took over the job and remained as Secretary for two years.

One of my first tasks in the Association was to contact alpaca owners and persuade them to show their animals at the Royal Melbourne and smaller agricultural shows. My aim was to get 50 animals for that first Royal. I spent hours on the phone, drumming up entries. 'I don't care what they look like – just put 'em in!'



One of the Torrens Island alpacas, Shanbrooke's first purchase. In the background, the superb view from the farm.

I put my money (or in this case, alpacas) where my mouth was. It paid off, too – because we got Champion Female at that first Royal Melbourne showing of alpacas. She was a Chilean and one of our first six purchased from Cherie Bridges.



The first time – Champion Female at Royal Melbourne with Shanbrooke I'm a Dream.

With a prize in the bag, a dozen alpacas, a house built for five and a family of six, we began to work on building our alpaca stud. Today, while life with alpacas is very much different, some things remain the same. I still do a little hairdressing for a few old friends and I still love alpacas as much as I did when I first saw them at Geoff and Nancy Halpin's farm. We still have our tin shed, too. The alpacas moved in after we moved out.

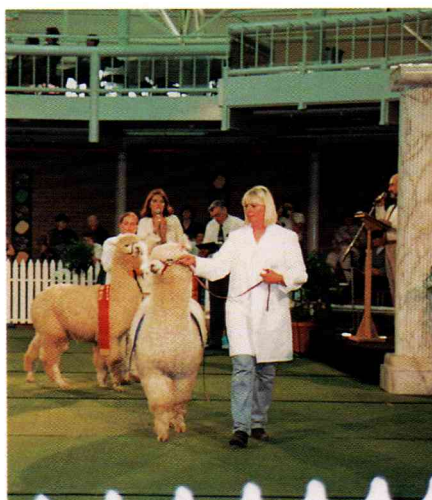
Like many other breeders, we've had the usual number of ups and downs. We've certainly learned a great deal and welcomed opportunities to be involved in projects that have taken us to many interesting places around the world.

Ron was heavily involved in the Hamilton-Bridges importation of Peruvian alpacas. The herd, quarantined in the first POOQs set up by Alan and Cherie, finally arrived last year and are now well settled into their Australian homes. Ron and Kelvin Maude made several trips to Peru to choose the animals for the shipment.

Last year, Ron and I went to the AOBA Conference, where the Americans also held their largest show and

auction. Then it was off to Peru to the International Camelid Festival on a tour organised by the AAA. As an AAA judge, I was very pleased to be able to take part in the judging of 60 young males with Dr Sumar. This judging opportunity and being able to attend the vicuna roundup were definitely the highlights of the trip.

We've now won Championships at every Melbourne Royal at which alpacas have been exhibited (except one, which we didn't attend).



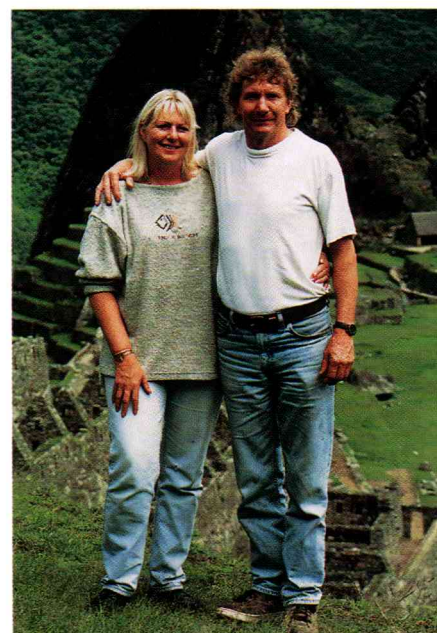
In the ring at the 1996 National Show.

I would have to say that 1997 has been our best year so far. Apart from our success at the National Classic Show, we also won three championships at the Melbourne Royal as well as Supreme Champion with Shanbrooke Society Lass.

You could say it was all a big gamble that paid off – getting involved with alpacas. We borrowed to buy those first animals because we had faith in the future of alpacas in Australia. Nothing has changed that faith.

I see the industry heading into a very exciting phase and, as an investor in Elite Fibre Australia and also the Fibre Co-Op, I am very optimistic about the development of Australian alpaca end product.

After our recent visit to Peru where we saw so many alpaca products – including a top class fashion parade with collections from all over the



Dianne and Ron Condon at Macchu Picchu, Peru during the 1998 International Festival of South American Camelids

world, including Australia – I realised how much can be achieved with this versatile fibre.

It was really exciting, seeing fine men's suiting made from royal baby alpaca, and the beautiful, flowing full length ladies' coats made from royal baby suri were absolutely spectacular.

I believe that, with the superior genetics now in Australia, every breeder can achieve genetic gain and improve the fibre of the Australian herd. With our scientific knowledge and fibre expertise, we definitely have the opportunity to become one of the world's best alpaca fibre industries.



When she's not in the ring herself, you may find Dianne in the judge's seat!



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Melbourne Show
1997*

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CROSSING *boundaries*

INTERNATIONAL ALPACA INDUSTRY SEMINAR 10-12 JULY 1998

**FEATURED
TOPIC
'Advanced
Breeding
Techniques'**

**Papers,
workshops
and clinics
from leading
science and
industry
alpaca
experts**

This year's international seminar promises to be very hands-on, with a variety of clinics from which to choose. They range from animal husbandry, fibre assessment and neonatal right through to manufacturing, marketing development and using the Internet as a marketing tool.

This conference aims to cater for everyone with an interest in alpacas, from those who are considering investing in alpacas to those who are established alpaca farmers.

What's more, there is *one* registration that allows you to attend all clinics, luncheons, coffee breaks and the trade exhibition.

Crossing Boundaries will open up possibilities, promote discussion, stimulate thought and help the industry advance.

Crossing Boundaries promises to have fresh ideas that have been designed to keep participants interested until the last work on the final day!

CROSS THE BOUNDARY INTO WONDERFUL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The conference will be held in the picturesque port town of Fremantle. Just south-west of Perth, Western Australia's capital, Fremantle is charming, cosmopolitan and rich in history (remember the America's Cup!). The main conference venue is the Esplanade Hotel in the heart of Fremantle. It is within walking distance of the harbours and ocean, the alfresco cafes, shops and markets (not to mention the Maritime Museum and the Duyfken replica shipbuilding project).

Most of the seminars, lunches and dinners will be held at the Esplanade Hotel. This luxurious, international-style hotel has great atmosphere and will provide you with ample opportunities to meet with other conference-goers in its various social areas.

Clinics requiring animals will be held at the old Fremantle Prison, a short distance away. The prison was constructed by convicts in the 1850s and, until 1991, it was a maximum security prison. Now a popular tourist attraction, it is well known for its 'candle light' tours that take you to the gallows and other macabre attractions.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AUSTRALIA

DR DEIRDRE A. BOURKE is a veterinarian with Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen Scotland. Specialising in advanced breeding techniques in South American camelids, Dr Bourke and her colleagues have, since 1989, carried out innovative research on the control and manipulation of reproduction in South American camelids with particular emphasis on understanding their unique reproductive physiology and developing advanced breeding techniques. Using llamas, alpacas and guanacos, these studies have included identification of patterns of ovarian follicular activity and development of methods to control ovulation, development of superovulation and synchronisation protocols, embryo recovery and transfer techniques. Semen collection and artificial insemination have also been studied.

Dr Bourke was awarded the Winston Churchill Scholarship in 1993, the Philippe Benevides Trophy in 1995 (for her outstanding contribution to the knowledge of llama reproduction and management). She is also Chairman of the British Veterinary Camelid Society.

DR JULIE KOENIG earned her Masters and Ph.D. in Animal Science Breeding and Applied Genetics with a minor in reproductive physiology from the University of Nebraska. Her undergraduate degree is in Animal Science from Cornell university in New York.

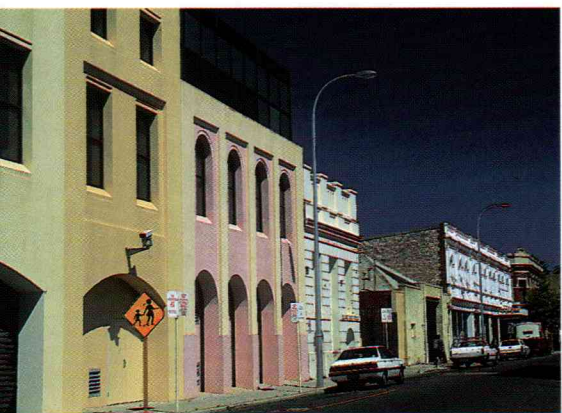
Dr Keonig has participated in camelid research with Dr Brad Smith at Oregon University. She is a regular speaker at ILA Conferences, LANA Expos and regional conferences and a regular contributor to *Llamas* and *Llama Banner*. Much of Dr Keonig's time is spent travelling the USA speaking on llamas and alpacas, conducting regional workshops and providing private breeding and genetic consultancy. Involved with the camelid industry since 1983, Dr Koenig is a llama breeder and trainer.

DEREK MICHELL is the grandson of the founder of Frank Michell, who came to Peru from Britain in search of chinchillas. He found alpacas and their luxurious fibre. Today, the Michell name is synonymous with the production of quality alpaca fibre, although Michell group interests extend to many other areas. Derek Michell manages the Arequipa office of the Michell company. He has a wealth of knowledge to share about alpaca fibre with special emphasis on preparation for industrial processing. (If you missed Mike Safley's article on Frank Michell and the founding of the Michell dynasty in the last issue of *Alpacas Australia*, go read it now!)

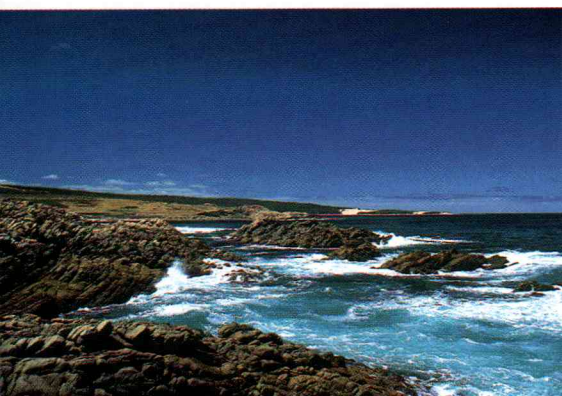
CROSSING
boundaries



The Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle.



Streetscape – Fremantle.



Coastline, Margaret River



An aerial view of the city of Perth.

It's *BIG* in the West

Western Australia is the largest state of the land Down Under and Perth is said to be the most isolated capital in the world (Melbourne is 3000 km to the east across the Nullarbor Plain). But this big state is no backwater. It has a reputation for producing entrepreneurs and exudes confidence – a real 'can do' ethic exists here.

Perth and its port, Fremantle are truly the gateway to some extraordinary places to visit – ideal for those interstate and overseas participants who want to combine conference business with touring pleasure. (We can organise tours, depending on interest shown.)

Just a short distance north of Perth are the unique Pinnacles – a desert with ancient exposed pillars in the yellow sand.

A little further north, on the coast are Monkey Mia and Shark Bay National Park. At Monkey Mia, the dolphins come to the shoreline and mingle with the tourists.

The great south-west region, south of Fremantle, has the Margaret River district and its world famous wineries, while further south, towards Albany (a former whaling station), you'll find superb Karri forests.

Closer to the city of Perth is the Swan Valley wine growing region and, in Perth itself, the Western Australian Museum, right next door to the Art Gallery and SciTech for hands-on science. Nor should you miss visiting the zoo, which is only 15 minutes away from Fremantle.

In the south-west, the Swan Valley and throughout the Perth outer suburban areas there are many alpaca studs to visit. Tours (combined with sightseeing, if you wish) can be arranged.

Trade Displays

The conference offers a unique opportunity for alpaca breeders and industry providers to display their wares. Trade displays will be held in the Convention Centre of the Esplanade hotel as well as at the Old Fremantle Prison – the latter being ideal for larger displays.

A variety of sponsorship packages are also being offered.

Members will receive full details about conference arrangements shortly. In the meantime, make a diary date now to cross the boundary into the West, 10-12 July.





Our programme of acquiring Elite Stud Sires to enhance our solid base of breeding females has achieved outstanding results with Windsong Valley winning the Most Successful Exhibitors Trophy at the Perth Royal Show 1997.

From 127 entrants 14 Windsong Bred animals won 26 Ribbons.

Grand Champion Female & Junior Female
– *Windsong Valley Summer Snow*

Reserve Jnr. Female
– *Windsong Valley Romany*

Jnr. Champion Male
– *Windsong Valley Ice Lord*

Reserve Jnr. Male
– *Windsong Valley Champs*

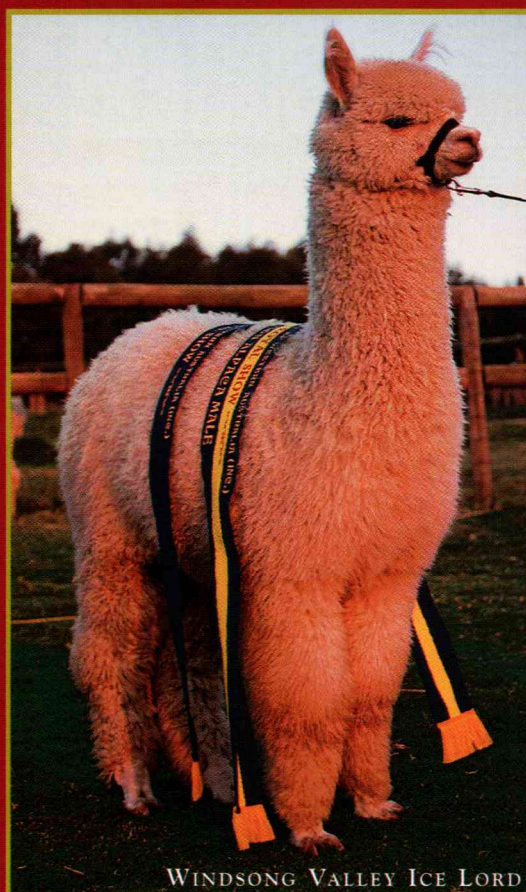
Best Black
– *Windsong Valley Romany*

Best Fawn
– *Windsong Valley Tanami*

Reserve Intermediate Male
– *Windsong Valley Morocco*

Champion Suri
– *Peruvian Conquistador*

Progeny Class 1st & 3rd
– *Aymara Talisman*



WINDSONG VALLEY ICE LORD

OUR ELITE SIRES

Aymara Talisman
Purrumbete Ledgers Dream
Purrumbete Highlander
Peruvian Conquistador Suri
& arriving from Nuie
Windsong Valley Royal Inca
Windsong Valley Snow Legend
Windsong Valley Gothic King



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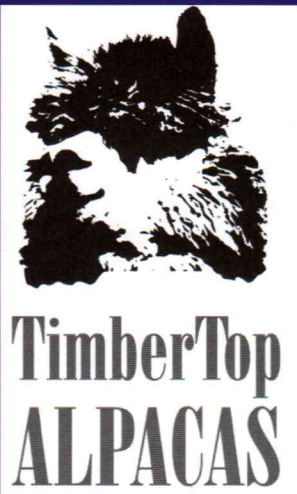
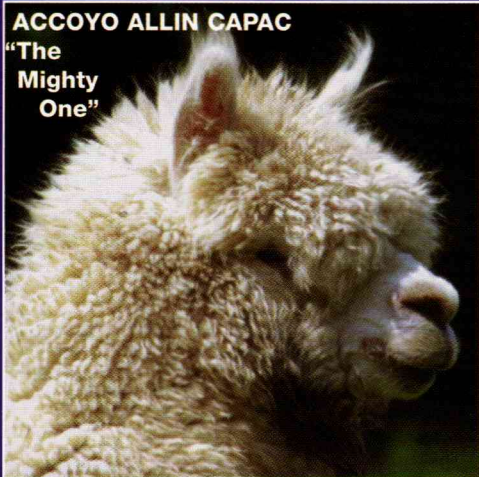
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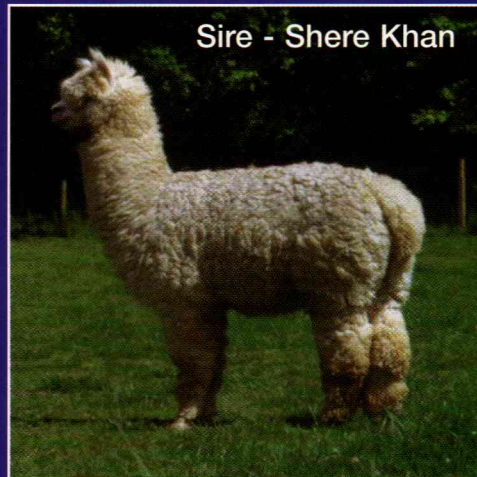


ACCOYO ALLIN CAPAC

"The
Mighty
One"



Sire - Shere Khan

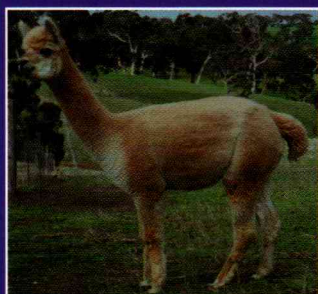


Timbertop Alpacas was established early in 1994 as a family business when we first discovered and fell in love with alpacas.

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

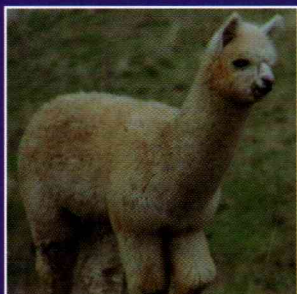
VERY BEST MACHOS. This enabled us to reach our goals of better conformation, greater density and coverage with unique fineness. Looking to improve on this genetic base we ventured to the United States on a mission for superior stock. This led us to Oregon and the home of Pacific Crest Alpacas where Allin 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.



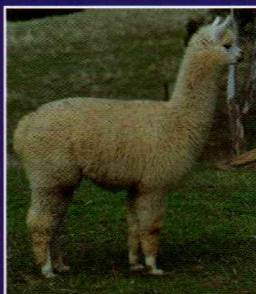
TIMBERTOP TWIGGY

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



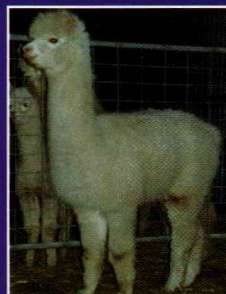
TIMBERTOP SNOW-DROP

Sire - Purrumbete
Snowman
White Crimped Fleece
Perfect Conformation
Maiden going to Accoyo
Allin Capac



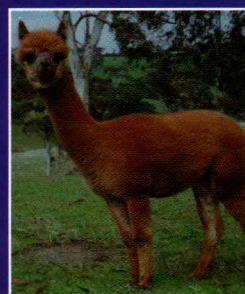
TIMBERTOP BELLA

Sire - Purrumbete
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



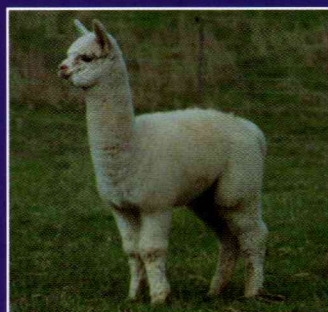
TIMBERTOP RAIN-DANCER

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



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Sire - Accoyo Ruffo
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Amazing Dark Brown Fleece



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Sire - Accoyo Ruffo
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Lustrous Fleece
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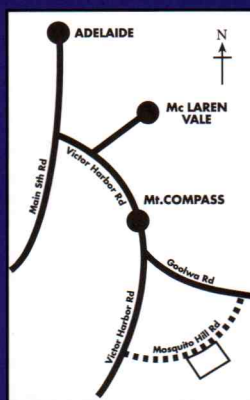
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MAKE A WORTHWHILE SIRE SELECTION analyse his SDR and/or EBV performance

by A.A. (Al) Charry Ph.D.
The University of Sydney, Orange Agricultural College

Alpaca stud breeders of the future have to come to terms with the demanding need to organise objective improvement programs at the herd level. This means that when breeders make mating decisions, the individual strengths and weaknesses of the animals will be taken into account in order to ensure superior generation of animals with each breeding season.

On the other hand, an exercise of considering such characteristics will enable breeders to offer an animal in the stud breeding market from which its genetic quality is known and enhanced by objective information in the traits of economic importance. These traits are body weight, fleece weight, fibre diameter, fibre length, age at first pregnancy and/or scrotal size.

Traditionally, stud breeders start the selection of their animals with a visual (phenotype) evaluation at an early age (i.e. at least at weaning time) and continued up to two years of age. There are functional methods for evaluation of critical

characteristics (i.e. fleece quality and fleece yield) to support this selection by physical conformation. One of these methods is the Soft Rolling Skin (SRS) approach (Watts 1997) which, undoubtedly, offers an excellent reference point for selection of superior animals.

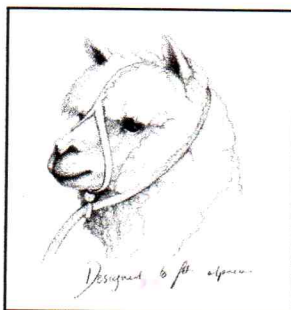
However, in the case of alpacas selection, the overall process goes beyond the opportunities that the SRS approach offers. This implies that complementary to the available visual evaluation techniques for obtaining superior animals, it is necessary to use quantitative methods that offer objective information of performance of stud animals in the traits of critical importance from the market point of view.

The Australian Alpaca Association has available for all AAA members a Technical Report written by A.A. Charry, J.W. Lawrie and D. Johnson, 'Alpacas Selection: A Performance Recording Program'. This Technical Report is supported by a



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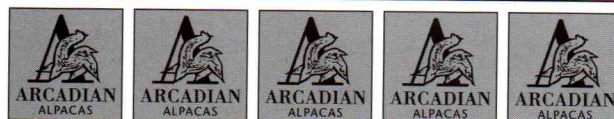


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user-friendly, simple computer spreadsheet that enables the stud breeders to perform the analysis by simply inputting the basic information on body weight, fleece weight, fibre diameter, fibre length, age at first pregnancy and/or scrotal size of their animals. The computer performs the computations and ranks the animals as per performance within herd or within larger groups, depending on the values of reference used.

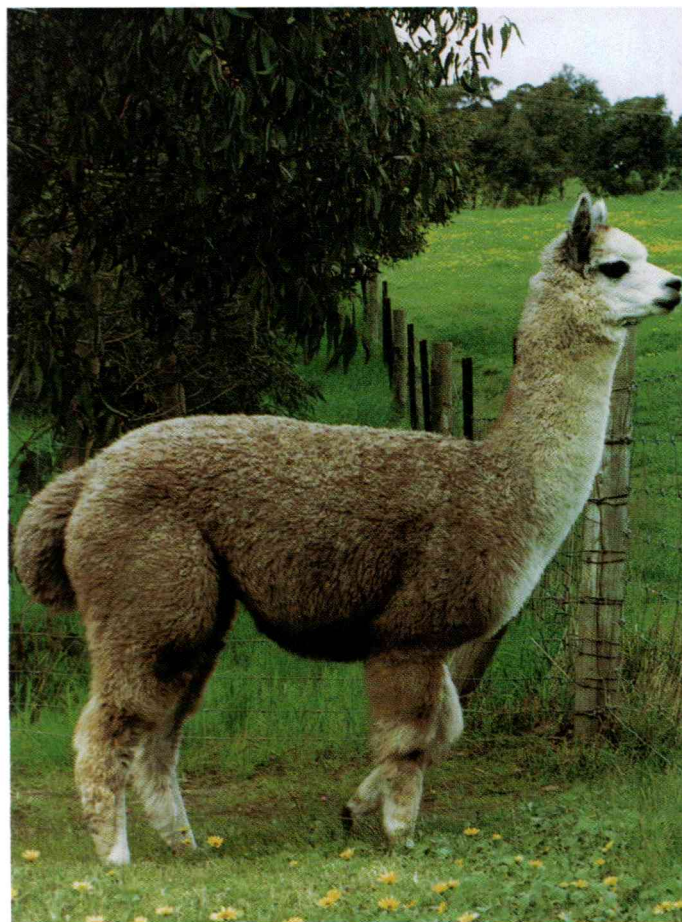
The proposed tool for evaluation of stud animals is mainly 'Standard Deviation Ranking' (or SDR values). SDR is simply the opportunity that the stud breeder has to rank his/her animals comparatively with other animals, using some particular values of reference. If the values of reference are those average values within his/her own herd, the animals will be ranked within herd. If the values of reference are those of the Australian alpaca population, the ranking of the animals will be within the Australian herd, and so on. This means that SDR method offers the flexibility to the breeder to select the values of reference against which to compare his/her own animals.

Undoubtedly, the SDR method is a powerful technique that can be used not only for making mating decisions at the herd level, but also, importantly, for marketing purposes. The time is coming when stud breeders (mainly those who offer sire hiring services) should offer their animals not only with information about the show ribbons won by it, but also by presenting the SDR values (alternatively or additionally, on-farm EBV – Estimated Breeding Values) in such a way that prospective clients may be able to objectively evaluate the genetic value of the offered sire and match him to the genetic characteristics of their females.

As an example, information from a sire, Nyroca Park Icarus (DOB 14 Jan 1996) standing at Arcadian Alpacas, Mt Barker, SA, whose performance has been kindly made available for the purposes of demonstrating the value of the SDR method, is used here. The values of reference to be used to compare N.P. Icarus are those initial national values proposed by Charry, Lawrie and Johnson (1997) in their AAA Technical Report (p. 8), found also in *Town and Country Farmer* magazine, 14(4):36. The performance of N.P. Icarus at 2 years of age (i.e. 730 days) is as follows:

Body weight	80 kg	SDR for body weight:	+0.26
Fleece weight:	2.5 kg	SDR for fleece weight	-4.00
Fibre diameter	20 microns	SDR for fibre diameter	+1.50
Fibre length	112 mm	SDR for fibre length	+0.00
Scrotal size	4 x 3 cm	SDR for scrotal size	+3.06

Observing SDR values, N.P. Icarus is a sire to be used by stud breeders who want to improve, not only body weight (average ranking above 75.8 kg of reference), fibre length (average ranking above 112 mm of reference), but mainly fibre ranking (very good ranking above 30.6 microns of reference) and fertility (superior performance above 2.8 x 1.9 cm of reference). He is a sire not to be used by breeders who want to improve fleece weight.



Nyroca Park Icarus.

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Marketing seminar at Noosa

A recent National Committee Forum with Queensland breeders resulted in Alpaca Co-operative director, Jude Anderson and National Committee member, Alan Cousill spending a day addressing a group of 30 at the home of Chic and Jo Wilson at Noosa Alpaca Stud.

Former editor of the *Brisbane Telegraph*, Doug Flaherty was to have been a speaker but he became ill at the last minute. Fortunately, his discussion paper on 'Media Message' was able to be printed for participants.

Al and Jude shared many practical examples of successful marketing and



Susie Chandler, Queensland region president and 5 day old Stella.

the event was highlighted by coverage on radio 4GY and a colour front page photograph in *Noosa News* prior to the seminar.

A local journalist and photographer joined the alpaca owners for afternoon tea. This resulted in a page 3 article and photo in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* the following day and front page coverage (colour shot of President, Susie

Chandler with five day old cria) in *Noosa News* the day after.

The real lessons learned were how easy it is to obtain publicity for anything to do with alpacas and that marketing means work if we are to succeed. Al Cousill put it in a nutshell: 'The harder I work, the luckier I become.'

Photo courtesy *Sunshine Coast Daily*



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The twins just after birth - Snugglepot and Cuddlepie. The alpaca with the bandaged leg, Cuddlepie on the left, had difficulty feeding and weighed only 4.3 kilograms.



The twins at 3 1/2 months - Cuddlepie weighs 16 kgs and Snugglepot 24 kgs- with Di-Vetelact being a major factor in their thriving good health



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ALPACAS AUSTRALIA

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING DEADLINES, 1998

Editorial to Carol Hosking

If possible, all editorial contributions should be typed. Visual material can be colour photographs or transparencies. We will endeavour to return all photos and slides.

Advertising to Suzanne Charles

Rates and specifications are available on request. We can accept camera ready material or will produce advertising material to specification.

We cannot guarantee inclusion of late advertising material.

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Fax: (03) 9428 2728

during business hours.

Please address all editorial and advertising material to:

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Unit 9, 663 Victoria Street
Abbotsford 3067 Victoria

or email

carol@ptw.com.au

suzanne@ptw.com.au

DEADLINES:

ISSUES 23, 24 & 25

Issue 23 – Winter

Due: June 1998

Deadline: Friday 17 April

Issue 24 – Spring

Due: September 1998

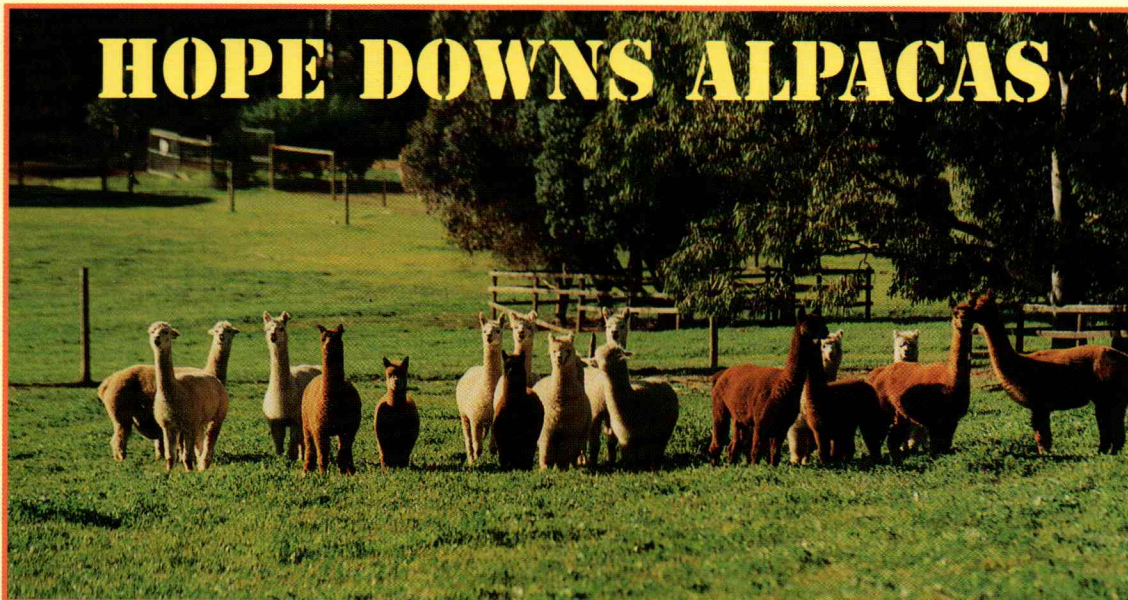
Deadline: Friday 17 July

Issue 25 – Summer

Due: December 1998

Deadline: Friday 16 October

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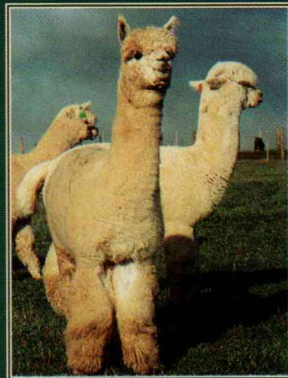
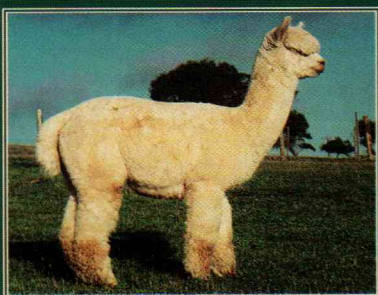
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Purrumbete Snowman (white) and Purrumbete Hot Shot (fawn).

Congratulations to the Bonavias and the Baglieris on the purchase of the
magnificent Peruvian macho, Chubasco.

Jude Anderson
Alan Cousill
Pt. Addis, Vic

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Many thanks to Margaret & Jim Brewster, Calgary Canada for our recent export!

PUCARA ALPACA STUD

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Don Julio Bareeda amongst his suris



Females at Pucara

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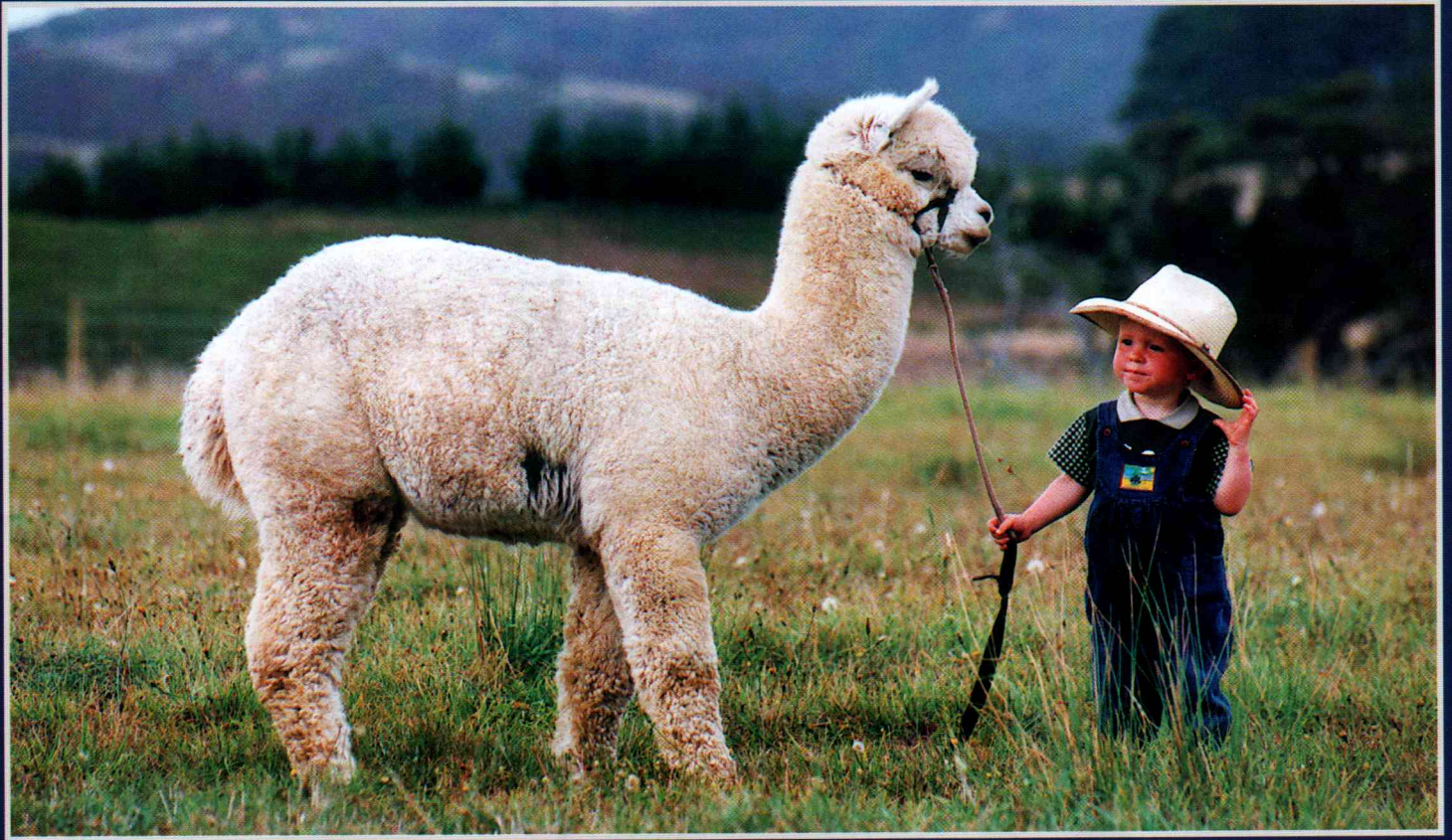
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Photograph courtesy of The Advertiser

From Barreda's renowned Accoyo herd,
Peruvian Auzengate
has arrived in Australia.

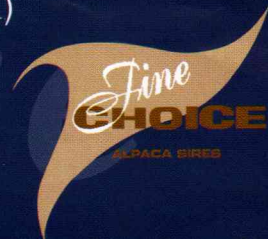
His dense and crimped adult fleece tested at a low 19.5 microns (SD 4.5)

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Third International Festival of South American Camelids

Association members attended the Festival which was held in Arequipa, Peru, over the week of 2-9 November last year. They returned to Oz brimming with enthusiasm about what they had seen and the people they had met.

This special feature brings to life an event that was not only colourful and exciting, but which also strengthened the links between the alpaca industries of Australia and South America.





ALPACAS AND PERU

.....
by Carol Mathew and Jill Short

It was the chance of a lifetime and a first for many of the Australians who visited Peru in November for the Third International Festival of South American Camelids.

Thirty Australian alpaca devotees joined the tour organised by AAA General Manager David Johnston with all states, except Tasmania, being represented.

Peru has a most unusual geography and climate. The coast is very dry and desert-like with little rain. Inland are the towering snow-capped Andes which, amongst other things, give rise to the mighty Amazon river. The Peruvian Andes are home to millions of highland Indians, descendants of the Incas, who still speak the ancient tongue of Quechua and maintain a traditional way of life. The verdant Amazon Basin, which occupies half of Peru, is one of the world's top ten biodiversity 'hot spots' – a species-rich area of tropical rainforest.

It is in the highlands that you find the llama, alpaca, guanaco and vicuna while the eastern slopes of the Andes are home to the jaguar, spectacled bears and tapirs.

We were lucky to gain a snapshot of this unusual diversity during our short stay in Peru. First stop was Cusco, the archaeological capital of the Americas and the oldest continuously inhabited city on the continent. Nestled in the Andes, Cusco has the architecture of Spain but the people and memories derive from the Incas. Cusco was the old capital of the Inca kingdom and its legacy as the hub of the Inca Empire is readily apparent. Most of the city streets are lined with Inca built stone walls and crowded with their Quecha-speaking descendants. The city has magnificent repositories of colonial art such as the cathedral (begun in 1559) on the site of the ancient Inca palace and the Merced Church.



From Cusco we travelled west to the mystical Machu Picchu, an amazing religious site of the Incas set high in the mountains, so inaccessible that the Spanish Conquistadors never found it. This 'Lost City of the Incas' remains for us to marvel at and wonder how this ancient civilisation once lived. It is also exciting to see how the native Indians have survived the conquest of the Spaniards, adopted English bowler hats as head-dress and, thanks in part to the alpaca, display a cohesion and continuity which seems to have overcome many of the negative effects of colonialism.

The sense of Inca survival was also evident as we travelled to Arequipa for the beginning of the Festival. Nicknamed the 'white city' Arequipa is



Locally made from locally produced fleece – knitting alpaca at the Festival.



Two small Inca boys...



surrounded by spectacular mountains, including the volcano El Misti. A feature of the city is its many beautiful buildings made of a light-coloured volcanic rock, called sillar.

The Convent of Santa Catalina, considered perhaps the most fascinating colonial religious building in Peru, was until recently home to almost 450 nuns.

During our visit, the Convent hosted the International Alpaca Fashion Parade which we were lucky enough to attend. [See report page 40.]

Whilst Arequipa is very Spanish, the majority of faces are Indian. This is not to romanticise the place of the Indians in Peruvian society. Although only constituting 12 per cent of the Peruvian population, the Spanish appear to run the businesses and government, along with some adventurous gringos. Into this latter category fall two of our most hospitable hosts: the Michell family

who run the Michell Group of textile manufacturing and are the largest alpaca producers in the world; and the Pattheys family who run the Inca Group of textiles promoting themselves as experts in the finest fibres: vicuna, guanaco, royal alpaca and suri.

The elder sons from both illustrious families told us of the extraordinary forbears who founded their dynasties. The Michells from English roots and the Pattheys from Swiss.

THE FESTIVAL

Two hundred breeders from 14 countries and 1,003 animals from all over Peru (but primarily Puno, Cusco and Macusani) gathered for this first truly international festival put together by the textile industry, breeders and the government of Peru at a cost of US\$0.5M. Huge prize money (approximately \$A10,000 per class) attracted a large

turnout of animals with quality ensured by each exhibit being required to have gained a previous first show placing.

The Festival took place at a military complex on the outskirts of town. Security was quite evident with military police checking visitors in and out each day due, no doubt, to the recent Japanese embassy siege which lasted nearly three months. It was a strictly international affair with locals, with the exception of the workers and VIPs, being denied access.

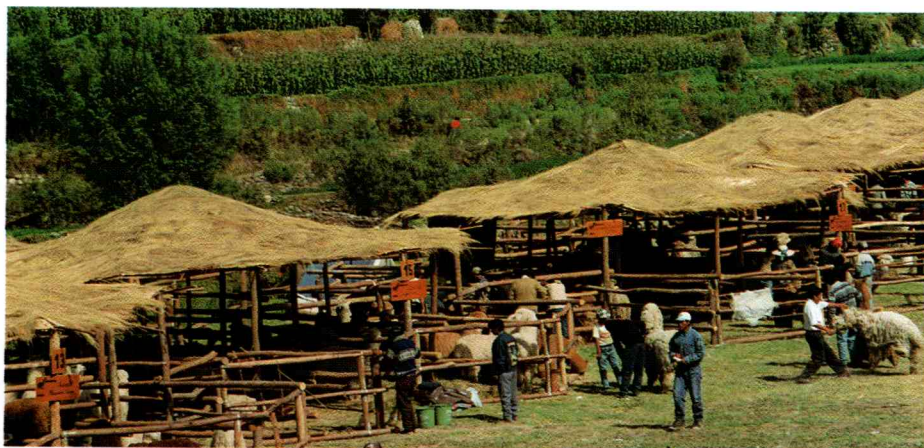
Despite the security at the showgrounds, most of us felt quite at ease walking into town at night for dinner at a local restaurant or to shop at the ever present street stalls. Indeed, once inside the Festival grounds the atmosphere was reminiscent of a country fair. The animals were penned in thatched open-air compounds and were well looked after with daily walks, fresh feed and plenty to drink.

Some of the women attending the herds had small items of alpaca knits for sale. The love the Indians have for their animals was very evident.

Judging

Judging took place over four days with classes of 25 and more being the norm. Huacayas just outnumbered the suris and all judging was done by renowned Peruvian judge, Dr. Julio Sumar.

A number of Australians had the good fortune to participate in the judg-



The animals were penned in thatched open-air compounds...

ERINGA PARK

ALPACA STUD

EST. 1993

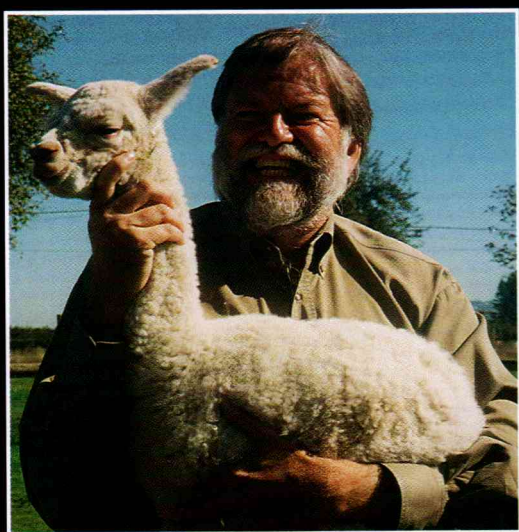
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ing ring with Dr. Sumar. He appeared to adopt a holistic approach to judging, rather than using a structured check-list method, assessing the class firstly for fibre and then reassessing those he allowed to remain in the ring for conformation.

When judging huacayas he paid particular attention to guard hair and chalky fleeces, rejecting these animals immediately.

In judging the suri classes, Dr. Sumar placed special emphasis on the architecture (style of lock) and independence (definition of lock) of the fleece. Lustre and fineness were next and superseded conformational aspects. Interestingly, with the suris, he rejected any animal that had previously been shorn, saying the suri should only be shown in its first fleece. Needless to say many of the animals being judged had at least two years of growth.

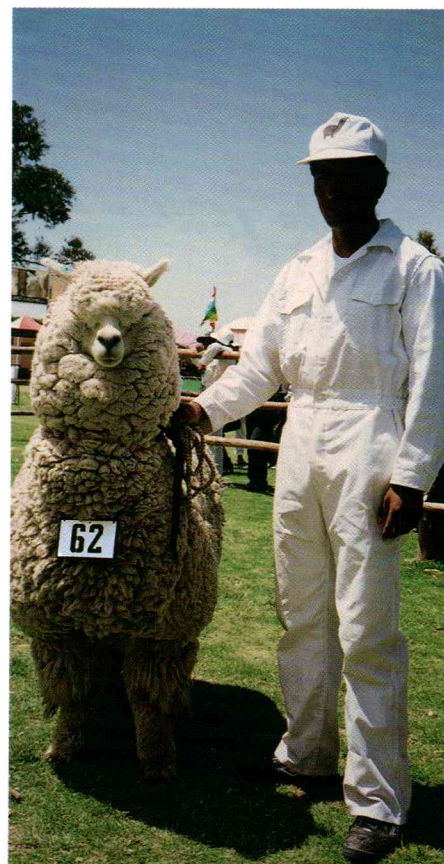
The Aussie 'ring side' judges generally endorsed the judge's choice. It was

widely agreed that the quality of the winners was very good, although there was a great variation in quality when animals from each class entered the ring.

Not surprisingly, the Peruvian whites were of a very high quality while coloured animals varied considerably in standard. The Grand Champion was a handsome white huacaya male who looked like a huge merino with fleece rippling over him.

Seminars and presentations

Alongside the judging a series of seminars and scientific papers were presented. These varied in standard. Although nothing startling was presented at the conference it was good to see an international body of knowledge slowly building up on various aspects of the alpaca industry. Australia was well represented with presentations by Bruce McGregor and David Johnston.



Supreme Champion at Arequipa, 1997.

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Highlights

Two particular highlights of the Festival were the opening ceremony and the llama races.

The Wasis

Featured in the opening ceremony were the Wasis, the magical suris of Peru never previously exhibited in public. The Wasi is the protector of the herd. Selected at birth this animal is never shorn. It is believed that as long as the Wasi stays healthy the herd will prosper. It was easy to see why these magnificent animals, with fleece to the ground, are so revered.

Llama races



The Peruvians are very attached to their llamas and the llama races were a very colourful part of the festival. Each race involved a group of six highly decorated llamas being laden with sacks of grain, raced around the field, then being unladen and having the grain weight and time checked. It is surprising that some enterprising Aussie didn't start running a 'book' to add to the excitement of the races – perhaps at the next Festival!

FACTORY FIELD TRIPS

Interspersed with activities at the venue were field trips to the factories of Inca and Michell. Five hundred tonnes of alpaca are processed annually in Peru to supply the current world market. Ninety per cent of this is huacaya; ten per cent is suri. Suri commands the highest price, followed by baby alpaca (huacaya under 22 micron).

Gathering of the fibre has become a very complicated business due to terrorism and political instability which has also seen the number of producers fall dramatically in the past few years. Until now fibre has been purchased purely on weight with the result that a large percentage of the collection is weighed down with dirt, tar and other foreign matter to make it heavier. Middle men have started to appear between the producer and processor as buyers adding to the costs and problems of collection.

Sixty per cent of the fibre processed in Peru is white and light fawn with sorting occurring in three steps: separation of colours; classification into colour groups; and revision (or classing).

The sorting sheds are very unsophisticated. Fleece of all colours and quality are dumped on the sorting shed floor and then manually sorted by a team of workers many with their children at foot.

Nearly all fleece is dyed, although often to natural colours. This is considered necessary to gain uniformity and predictability of colour which must match the company's colour shade cards.

Once sorting is complete the fibre is processed on very sophisticated (mainly Italian) equipment. It was interesting to see the large quantities of worsted fabric being processed as either pure alpaca or, in the majority of cases, as alpaca/wool blends (usually 75% alpaca, 25% wool).

We were also privileged to see garments made from vicuna, guanaco,



royal suri (under 22 micron and not dyed) and baby alpaca. Visits to the stores of both Inca and Michell's provided an insight into the commercial value of these fabrics.

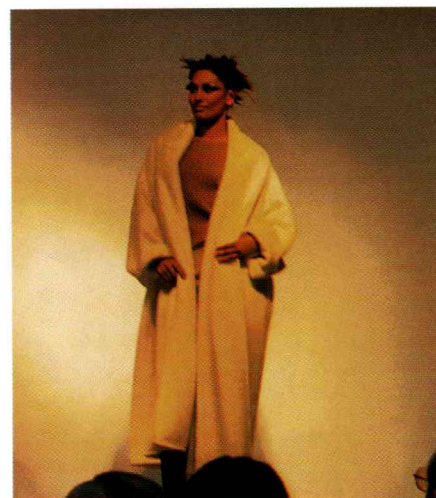
Top of the list was the vicuna retailing for US\$1,888.00 per metre. This was followed by royal suri (US\$100); baby alpaca (US\$59); suri (US\$59); and alpaca (US\$18).

Guanaco, although on display, was not for sale at any price. A royal suri coat purchased wholesale for US\$1,100 retails for US\$2,900.

Whilst a lot of the fibre processed in Peru is manufactured into finished product, much leaves the country as fabric or yarn to be made up internationally. The two main buyers in recent years have been the Japanese and Italians. In Japan, ladies' alpaca coats have proved increasingly popular whilst Italy still leads the way with high fashion alpaca items.



Fleece is sorted manually by workers, many with children 'at foot'.



This superb suri coat was modelled at the Festival's International Alpaca Fashion Parade.

So much more could be told of our adventure in Peru: the friendships formed over luncheons and dinners, the spectacular fashion parade, vicuna round-up and more... But what does it all mean for the Australian alpaca industry?

The Festival certainly reinforced the adaptability and world market acceptance of this unique fibre. Despite Peru's superior genetics and skill in processing it is very obvious they will find it hard to compete with countries like Australia in the areas of selective breeding, husbandry and superior harvesting of fibre. We in Australia, however, need to keep a far closer watching brief on international manufacturing and processing techniques if we wish to value-add to our fibre by processing domestically.

The goodwill generated between the participants, breeders, and processors can only improve our combined thrust into



Carol Mathew (left) and Jill Short.

the world's fibre markets and this was a theme of the Festival, summed up well by American, Mike Safley. In his presentation, Safley spoke of what the various producing countries had to offer world development of alpaca: Peru, its genetics; Australia, fibre knowledge; and the US, marketing skills. By combining our knowledge and strengths and working with the fashion houses of Europe and Asia we have the chance together to raise alpaca to its deserved place in the international fibre/fashion arena.

It's back to Peru in the year 2000... and we'd love you to join us.

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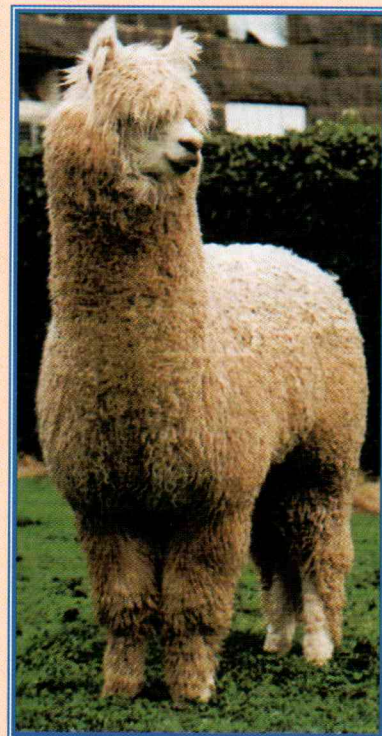
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WORTH A TRIP TO W.A.?



Australia on the International Catwalk

by **Adrienne Clarke**



When a slide of the Sydney Opera House appeared at the rear of the catwalk as the symbol of Australia at the International Camelid Festival in Peru, the Australians in the audience watched eagerly to see how their country would be represented. For Frank Spinelli (Spinelli Knitwear) and Chris Williams (Ambersun Alpacas), both from South Australia, emotions were a little more intense as they nervously awaited the display of garments from their fashion label 'Alpaca Classica'.

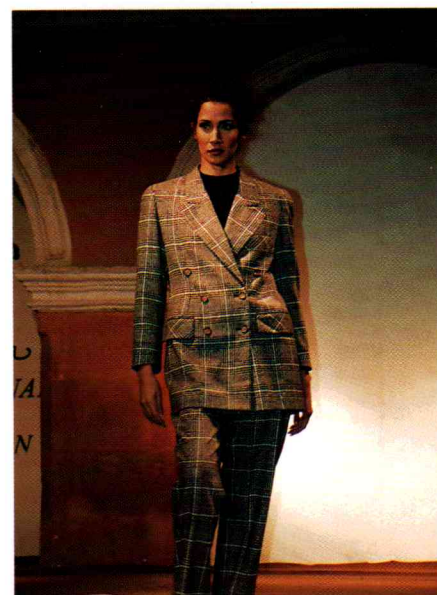
An audience of 600 crowded the beautiful and historic Santa Catalina Monastery in Arequipa. Invited guests included participants of the International Camelid Festival, officials, delegates of the Peruvian Government and the social circle of Peru. The atmosphere was electric. The vast array of reporters and photographers, television cameras and journalists from a range of international magazines including Italian *Vogue* helped to create the air of excitement.

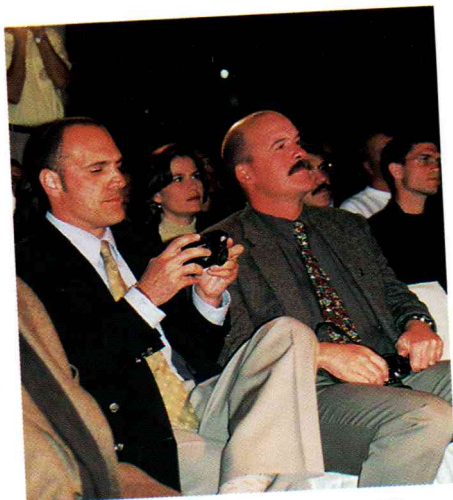
The audience was not to be disappointed. The parade was truly spectacular! Casual and formal collections, children's wear, coats and accessories all made from luxurious alpaca. With subdued tones of lighting and a selection of music characteristic of each nation, the 15-piece Australian Alpaca Classica range was modelled along with collections from France, Italy, Canada, North America and, of course, the host nation, Peru.

Before the parade began, both Chris and Frank were feeling apprehensive, having their Australian range of clothing bordered by the collections from France and Italy, both accepted as the innovators and leaders in worldwide fashion design.

The pressure was on for the Australian designs to reach a truly international standard.

The sophisticated and elegant styles of the Classica range did more than just hold their own. In particular, the applause received for a stunning red





Frank Spinelli (left) and Chris Williams photographed at the International Alpaca Fashion Parade in Arequipa.

knitted dress in the collection showed overwhelming acceptance.

It was a very proud time for both Chris Williams and Frank Spinelli in having their collection recognised among the world's best and receiving acknowledgement from their peers in the fashion industry. The Australians in the audience also passed on their

delight at having Australian alpaca designs represented at an international level.

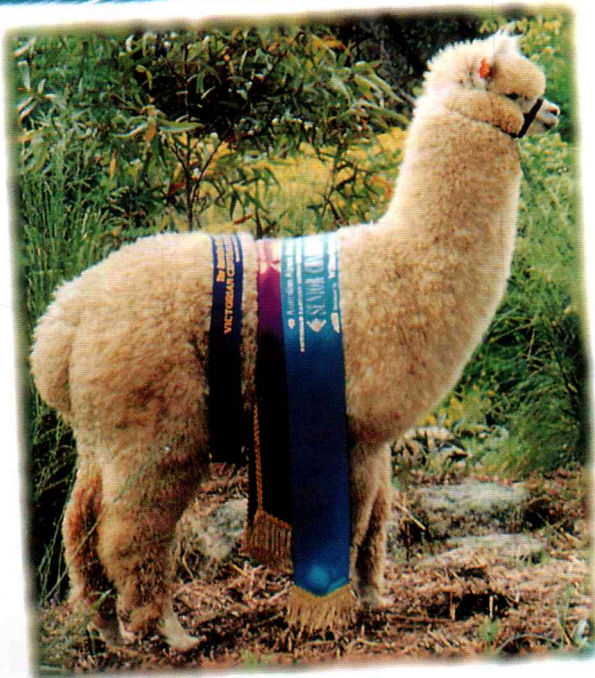
As the name implies, Alpaca Classica is a collection of classic styles. Designs feature elegantly cabled, ribbed and very lightweight knitwear styled into a range of ladies' dresses, jumpers, skirts and suits. The woven fabric blazers, skirts and trousers can be worn as suits or separates. The men's range is comfortable and casual and includes cabled sweaters, lightweight vests, jerseys and polo shirts. Every item is hand finished as a guarantee of its quality.

The designs primarily utilise the natural tones of the alpaca which, Frank Spinelli believes, 'captures the essence of the animal earthy tones'. Alpaca Classica has also recently diversified into dyed colours. The common 'thread' among Alpaca Classica garments is that they are all made from the softest, silky, 100 per cent baby alpaca yarn.

Dedicated to the development of the alpaca industry, Chris Williams introduced alpaca fibre to Frank Spinelli in November, 1993. Similarity in age, marketing interests and their appreciation of the enormous potential of the fibre have developed both a perfect partnership and an exquisite range of alpaca products. Alpaca Classica is currently being exported to Japan, Switzerland, Canada and the US, with negotiations proceeding for export to Italy. It is also available in selected specialty shops in most states of Australia.

To boost confidence in the growth and development of our local industry, Alpaca Classica is proudly made in Australia. It represents the infrastructure required to develop the Australian alpaca fashion industry once quantities of the finest grade alpaca yarn can be locally produced.

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ALLAN JINKS JUDGING SURIS WITH SUMAR



One of the main reasons I attended the Third International Camelid Festival in Arequipa was to take up the opportunity of working with Dr Julio Sumar in the Show Ring. As an alpaca judge and Chairperson of the Judging and Breed Standards Committee, I deemed it a privilege to work with Dr Sumar.

In Australia, the suri is appearing more frequently in the show ring and my intention in observing Dr Sumar's judging of the breed was to learn and to bring that knowledge home to be shared with other Australian judges.

My observations of suri judging criteria

Fleece/conformation

The fleece was 70 per cent of the judging criteria (even higher on some occasions) with 30 per cent for overall appearance and conformation.

Fleece

Dr Sumar prefers the tight pencil type curl of lock that hangs down from the body and feels that the broader, loose lock tends to tangle causing the fleece to become matted. The closer the curl to the body the better. He calls this the 'architecture of the fleece'. This architecture should be uniform all over the body, from the ears to the toes.

Lustre was tested by opening the fleece in three places: at the shoulder, midside and rump areas. Dr Sumar checked both lustre and sheen by feeling with the back of his hand. It was

noticeable that, in some alpacas, the lustre did not carry through in the three sites and these animals were immediately put further down the line.

Appearance

In this area, Dr Sumar looked for 'true to type', checking the head (the nose should not be too long) and ensuring that the architecture of the fleece was uniform with good coverage.

Conformation should be good with the animal alert and upstanding with strong legs (as with the huacaya).

He does not like to see cross breeds in the ring. His opinion is that the suri is a unique breed and should be kept that way.

Dr Sumar gave a clear picture of his judging criteria, all of which consolidated the views of those who have already judged suris in Australia. It is important that people with world acknowledged expertise, such as Dr Sumar, are prepared to share their valuable experience and to allow others to work closely with them.

In my opinion, this bonding of ideas can only strengthen and further unite our international goals for breeding the best quality alpacas, both suris and huacayas. I am sure that others who participated, as I did, came away with increased confidence.

I look forward to planning workshops for Australian judges to familiarise themselves with the suri which has a small but growing population.



FIBRE AND PROCESSING

Cameron Holt interviews Charles Pattheys
Project Development & Research Manager, Inca Tops, Peru



Over recent years many comments have been made regarding processors requirements for alpaca fibre production. Whilst in Peru for the International Festival of South American Camelids I was fortunate to have some private time with Señor Derek Michell of Michell and Cia, and Señor Charles Pattheys of Inca Tops.

During this time I took the opportunity to clarify some of the 'much discussed' areas of fibre processing. To do this I posed a series of questions to both Charles and Derek who were most obliging and generous with their answers and time during such a busy period for them. The following is the first of these interviews.

Q. What do you consider are the main (important) characteristics in huacaya fleece that you require for processing?

A. Fineness: to make a yarn that is soft handling and free from the influence of medullation found in the stronger fibres that are harsher handling.

Colour: to try and avoid contamination of the odd colour that is different to the bulk.

Length determines whether the fibre is processed on the worsted or woollen system.

Q. What characteristics do you consider to be less important than those above?

A. Soundness; lustre (sheen) – not as lustrous as suri; and crimp.

Q. What do you consider are the main (important) characteristics in suri fleece that you require for processing this fibre?

A. Fineness; length; and handle which is influenced by medullated and coarse fibres.

Q. What characteristics do you consider of less importance than above?

A. Lustre; no crimp. We would like a wave in the fibre in preference to it being dead straight, when making short fibred top but straight fibre is OK for overcoats and cloths.

Q. What importance, if any, is crimp (staple crimp/crinkle) in the processing of the huacaya fibre?

A. We prefer to have a more even crimp but can use a percentage of non crimped fibres in with the

good crimp (staple crimp) (non crimped here refers to individual fibres being crimped – crinkle) We only tolerate up to 30% of these fibres in a batch.

Q. Would you purchase huacaya fleece without crinkle (crimp in individual fibres)?

A. Yes, but at a discount and would only put the fibre into a low quality line.

Q. Does a well defined crimp (in the staple) mean anything to you in huacaya fleeces?

A. Yes – they appear softer.

Q. If there were enough fibre available would you prefer to process good well defined crimped fibres to those fibres that were plain (no crimp)?

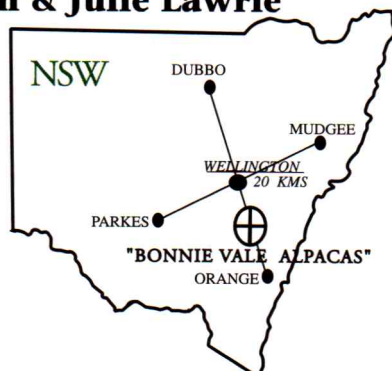
A. Yes, we would prefer these wools.

Q. In suri fleece do you prefer the individual fibres to be straight or would you prefer a fibre with some wave (not crimp)?

A. As mentioned earlier a wave is preferable but would still use straighter fibred types.



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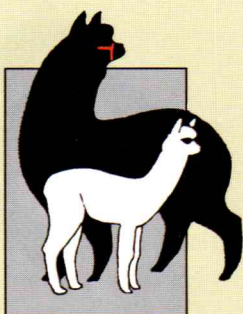
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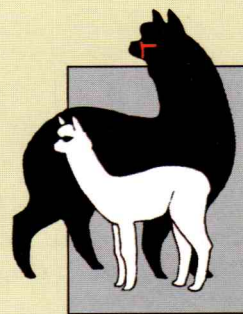
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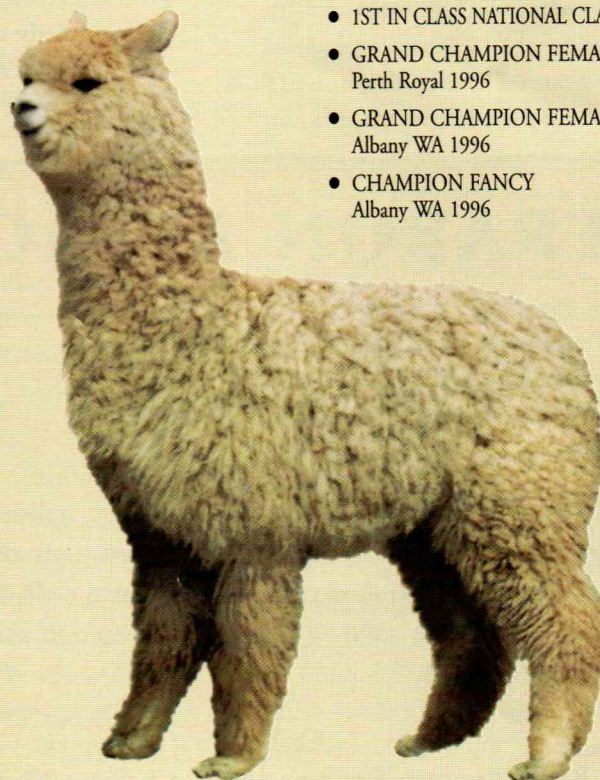
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- INTERMEDIATE CHAMPION MALE
1996 State Championships NSW
- INTERMEDIATE CHAMPION MALE
1996 National Classic Melbourne
- SUPREME CHAMPION
1996 Albany Show WA
- SUPREME CHAMPION & CHAMPION FLEECE
1997 Royal Perth Show
- RESERVE CHAMPION FLEECE
1997 National Classic NSW

Other Show Results include

- 1ST IN CLASS NATIONAL CLASSIC 1996
- GRAND CHAMPION FEMALE
Perth Royal 1996
- GRAND CHAMPION FEMALE
Albany WA 1996
- CHAMPION FANCY
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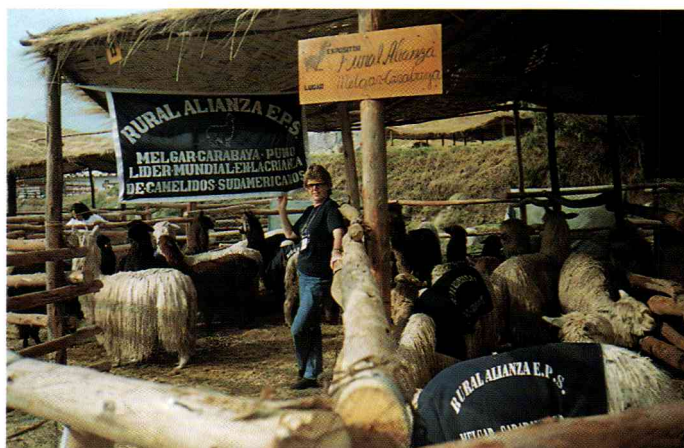
Purchased recently from Hamilton Bridges' own reserved stock on Niue. Superb Fleece (18.6 micron at 2^{1/2} yrs) and conformation. Jointly owned by: M. Hutchinson, R & K Raynor and R & R Reid.

breeders and handlers spoke no English. When you share a common interest, necessity often finds a way and we got to exchange greetings. One particularly interesting breeder I met was Santiago from Nueva Esperanza (Macusani) Stud in the Puno region. His success in the judging could be attributed to the care and attention that he bestowed upon his animals. His willingness to share his success found him and I sitting in the corral with a shoe box of fleece clippings neatly wrapped and labelled. It was a case of look at and feel the sample and then be shown the animal in his herd. If I never knew what I was aiming for before, I certainly do now.

I shall never forget the feeling of stepping over one rail to another, from corral to corral: one minute admiring Rural Alianza, the next Macusani, and then shaking hands with Julio Barreda amongst his herd. This, to me, felt like 'alpaca heaven'.

Particularly interesting opportunities were tours of the Michell & Co and Inca Group mills who, between them, supply the greater part of the world's commercial alpaca.

The Santa Catalina Monastery hosted the First International Alpaca Fashion Show where we were treated to a theme of 'Alpaca Around the World'. Included were collections from France, Italy, Canada, USA, Peru and, of course, Alpaca Classica from Australia. The parade attracted international press coverage and fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *D'Fashion*.



For a unique cultural experience we were guests at an exhibition depicting The Andean Heritage. Here we marvelled at the exhibition of a two thousand year old Paracas robe and a one thousand year old llama mummy, extremely well preserved and showing unbelievably fine hair.

The people of Peru should be congratulated for providing us all with such a wonderfully rewarding experience.

Over the last few years, I've learnt as much as I could about alpacas. Now, after my experience in Peru, I am more convinced than ever that a viable agricultural Australian alpaca industry is well within our reach.

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The commercial future of alpaca fibre



By Luis Chaves Bellido
Edited by Mike Safley

I recently attended the International Alpaca Festival in Arequipa, Peru. There were a number of lectures presented which were of great interest. The alpaca perspective from an international point of view was informative.

Lectures in Spanish were simultaneously interpreted into English via headphones. One of the most interesting presentations was by Luis Chaves of Grupo Inca, one of the world's largest processors of alpaca.

I spoke with Luis after the presentation and inquired whether his speech was in written form. It was, although appropriately enough, in Spanish. I had the speech translated into English. I have edited presentation into the subject matter of this article, with the author's permission.

Señor Chaves' biography includes the following:

Mr Luis Chaves Bellido currently works as the General manager of the company Inca Tops S.A., which is a member of the Grupo Inca. He attended elementary and high school at the San Jose school and also obtained a degree in Industrial Engineering, focusing on mechanical engineering from the Catholic University of Peru. Furthermore, in 1984 he attended a course in Management at the University of Lima and in 1992 enrolled in an international course in Developing Managing Skills offered by the Business School of Valparaíso of the Adolfo Ibanez university. His work experience has been gained in Arequipa, where he has acquired great experience in the textile industry, not only in the wool fields, but also cotton.

Mike Safley

Alpaca is important on the world market for specialty fibres due to a number of unique commercial properties it possesses. The industry faces a number of problems which need to be addressed if alpaca is to maintain a prestigious place in the hierarchy of available textile products. These problems are largely the result of the current production system in Peru.

Before discussing the problems and some recommendations for correcting them, there needs to be a brief description of the fibre's textile properties, classification, the collection system and the production system, both animal and textile.

ALPACA'S TEXTILE PROPERTIES

1. *Softness (hand):* the alpaca fibre's structure makes it very soft to the touch, allowing it to be compared to wool of three to four microns finer.
2. *Prestige:* together with vicuna, cashmere and mohair, alpaca fibre is considered one of the most exclusive in the fashion world.
3. *Visual appearance:* especially for coats, the fabric has an excellent drape, appearance and touch, remaining elegant over time.
4. *Colours:* the alpaca is the only animal that produces a great variety of colours (up to 28 natural colours) making it very attractive, especially considering the current environmental tendencies toward all things natural.

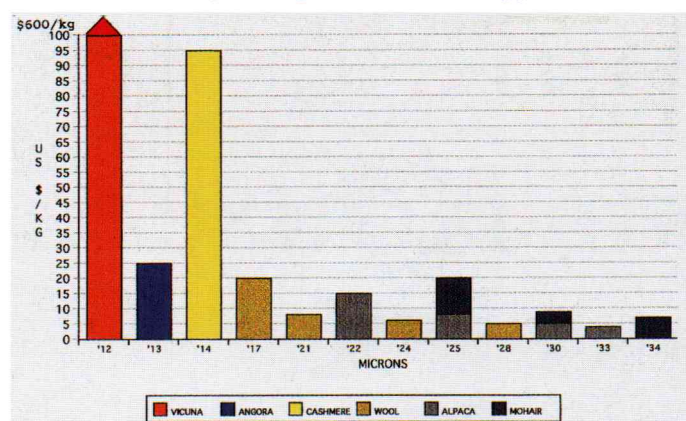
5. *Thermal properties:* the structure of alpaca fibre makes it a very good insulator which also makes it desirable in different weather conditions.
6. *Felting:* the alpaca fibre has less tendency to felt when compared to wool or other animal's fibre.
7. *Hygroscopic properties:* absorption of humidity from the air is low.
8. *Elasticity and resistance:* alpaca fibre has very good elasticity and resistance when comparing it to wool and other animal fibres.
9. *Flammability:* the fibre does not catch on fire unless it comes in direct contact with a flame.

THE COLLECTION SYSTEM

Historically, alpaca fibre has been purchased by the export and processing companies through a purchasing house, which utilised a system of local and regional fairs as collection points to accumulate fibre. This required a system of advance payment to intermediaries. This method has many problems, not the least of which is the inability to react quickly to the demands of the market place.

More recently, during the era of the Shining Path, safety and security became a significant concern in the highlands. The Sierra lacks dependable roads and communication can be a problem. As a result, the industry has become more dependent on *Alcanczadores*, or reachers and rescuers. This system has several problems, not the least of which is the addition of contamina-

Exhibit 1: Fibre price by fineness and type



tion and adulteration to increase the weight of the fleece by the intermediaries.

More recently, the textile houses have begun buying by fraction or according to quality, not just weight. This system allows the purchaser to pay for fineness, according to cleanliness and by fleece type. Hopefully, this system will encourage the producers to produce finer and cleaner fibre.

COMMERCIAL CLASSIFICATION

The quality or grade of alpaca is determined by micron count. The Peruvian alpaca companies have each established their own grades or classes as follows.

Fineness (microns)	Inca Tops	Michell Y Cia	RSA	Public sector
21.5–22.5	Baby (BA)	Baby (BL)	Baby	X
25.0–26.0	Superfine (SF)	Fine Spinning (FS)	Arequipa Fleece (AF)	AA
29.5–30.5	Huarizo (HZ)	Huarizo (HZ)	Huarizo (HZ)	A
32.0–34.0	Thick (CA)	Thick (AG)	Thick (CA)	
30.0 –	Mixed Pieces (MP)	Mixed Pieces (MP)	Mixed Pieces (P)	LP

Colours are also specified by each company, using either numbers or letters.

Note: American breeders use a system of letters which are adopted from the Peruvian system. See the Alpaca Registry Color Chart.

Michell Y Cia.	Inca Tops S.A.	RSA	Public sector
100	B	B	B
201	FX	LF	LFX
203	FY	FY	FY
205	PZ	LFZ	FZ
206	PC	PC	PC
207	PCX	PCX	PCX
408	GC	GC	GC
410	G	GI	GI
301	CC	CC	CC
32	COM	COM	COM
360	CON	CON	CON
401	GX	GX	GX
403	GY	XY	GY
404	GZ	GZ	GZ
501	NM	NM	NM
500	N	N	N

Currently, the International Alpaca Association is attempting to create a uniform/universal system which would identify the grade and the colour of alpaca tops. Each company would then sell based on the universal classification system, much the same as the wool trade.

PRODUCTION SYSTEM – ANIMAL

There are many contradictory claims about the annual volume of alpaca fibre production. A recent publication estimated production at 3,100 tons in 1990 and 2,730 tons in 1995. The industrial sector estimates that there are about 5,000 tons of alpaca fibre produced each year.

This production comes from three primary sources:

1. Cooperatives: 9%
2. Medium and small farms: 7%
3. Farming communities or communal associations: 84%

These cooperatives and medium size farms came under attack during the time of Alan Garcia's government and the period of terrorism that accompanied it. Many co-ops and larger producers dissolved. This has negatively impacted the quality of the available fibre.

PRODUCTION SYSTEM – TEXTILE

The industrial capacity of the alpaca firms in Arequipa is as follows:

1. *Sorting*: this operation is carried out entirely by hand. One woman can sort 800 to 1,000 pounds of white fibre and 600 to 800 pounds of coloured fibre per week. The cost is approximately 12 cents per pound.
2. *Washing or scouring*: 2,486,000 per month.
3. *Combing*: 1,342,000 pounds per month.

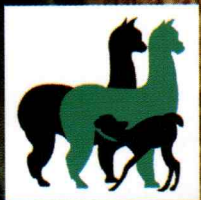
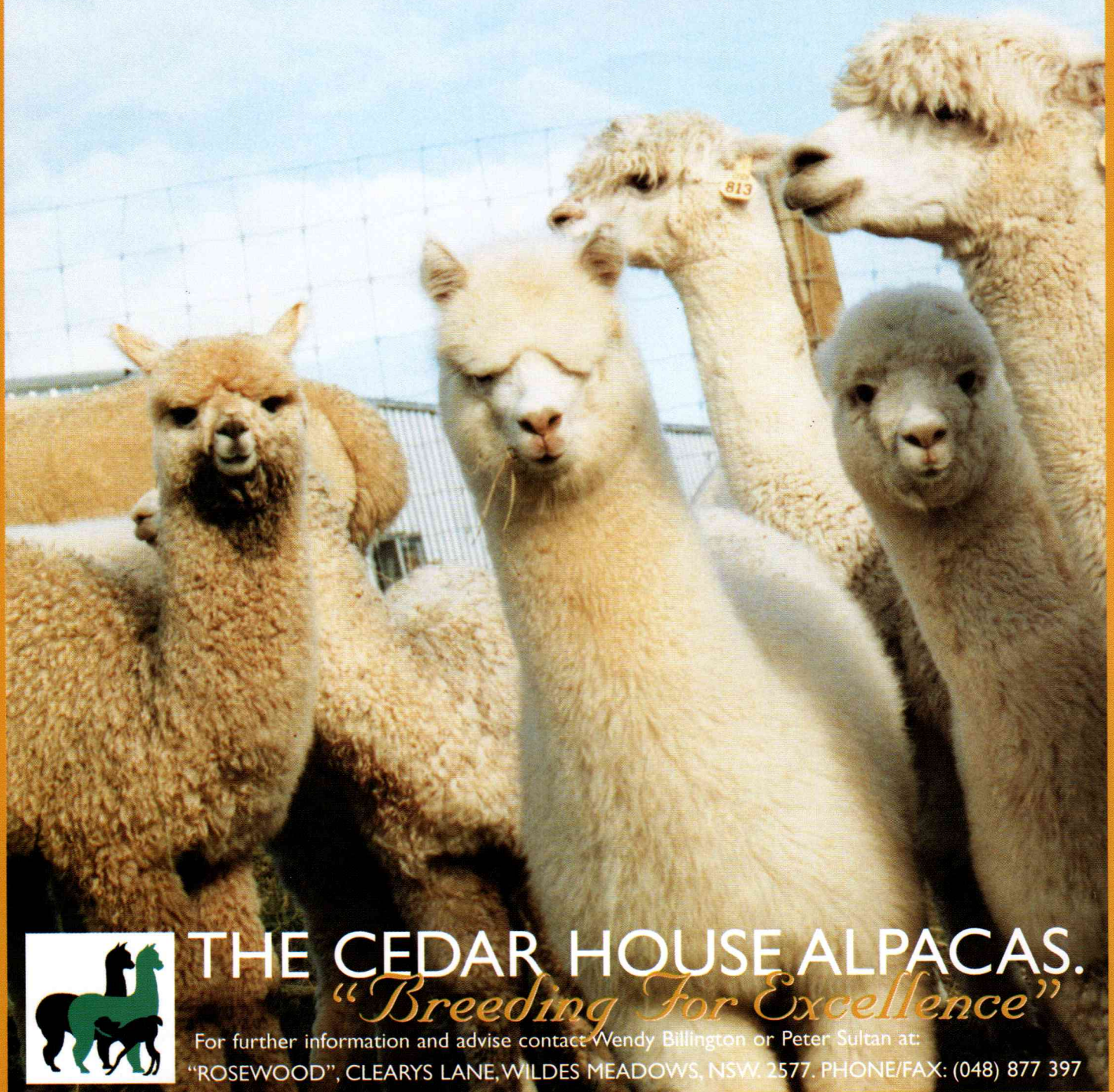
There has been considerable discussion of moving sorting and classification from Arequipa to the production zones. This is not practical due to the economies of scale and the lack of quality control available at diverse sites in the highlands.

INDUSTRY WIDE PROBLEMS

Many of the problems affecting the value of alpaca fibre can be traced to the animal production end of the chain of value. These problems include:

1. Herd size: again the economies of scale dictate that larger herds are more commercially viable. They can be more readily improved through genetic selection and producers can more readily afford to pay for and adapt to modern husbandry practice.
2. The presence of kemp or guard hair in the fleece.
3. The lack of uniformity with the fleece, i.e. high standard deviation. (See Exhibit 2.)

Can you afford **not** to talk to Cedar House?

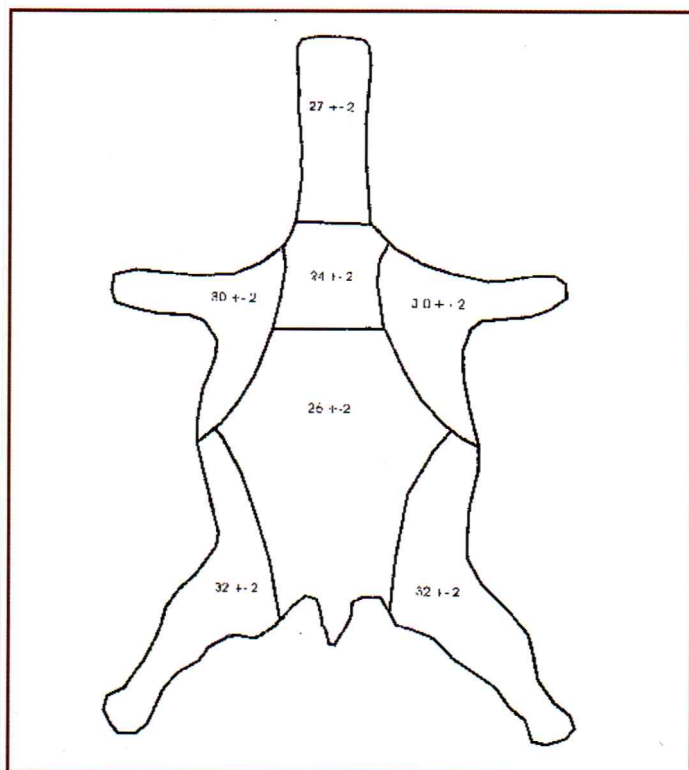


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Exhibit 2: Fibre diameter in an adult alpaca fleece by micron



4. The purity of colour, which includes problems such as black hair in white fleece, different tones of colour over the entire fleece and from animal to animal.

These problems in the field are transferred to the textile manufacturing process in the following ways:

1. *Dyeing*: the presence of kemp or guard hair in the fleece makes it difficult to dye in pastel or brilliant colour.
2. *Wearing*: the lack of uniformity or the presence of kemp or guard hair creates a prickly factor in the fabric or products.
3. *Knitting*: the weight of a garment is critical, both in comfort and cost. Alpaca lacks sufficient curl or crimp, which is present in sheep's wool and adds volume to a yarn or garment without adding weight. Lack of uniformity and a disproportionate share of coarse fibres also make a knitted garment itch.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First, our industry needs to produce finer fibre. Exhibit 1 at the beginning of this article demonstrates the impact of fineness on price. Finer fibre would benefit everyone in the chain of value.

Currently, the Peruvian government is searching for ways to increase the value of alpaca fibre for the producers. The policy they have implemented involves the purchase of fibre at advantageous prices directly from the grower. The problem

with this approach is that the solution has no relationship to the market place.

We would all do better to examine ways to increase the size of the economic units of production, improve the genetics of the producers' animals and pay the producers more for the increased quality of their fibre. For instance, the manufacturers can deal more directly with the farmer, reduce the need for the middleman and pay more for his high quality fibre and less for the poor quality.

We also need to find ways to correct the problems of kemp and hair colour impurities. We need to address the problem of excess weight caused by lack of curl (crimp) so that light weight garments can be manufactured, thereby extending the selling season into spring and summer. Light weight garments are more comfortable for the consumer to wear.

Finally, we need to add more technology to the system so that we might more adequately assess alpaca fibre for fineness and uniformity. To do this we must first create a laboratory with advanced equipment that will allow us to determine quality and assess progress. For these and other changes we need the assistance of government.

The challenge for everyone in this business is productivity at all levels. We must engage the problems now, if we are to prosper.



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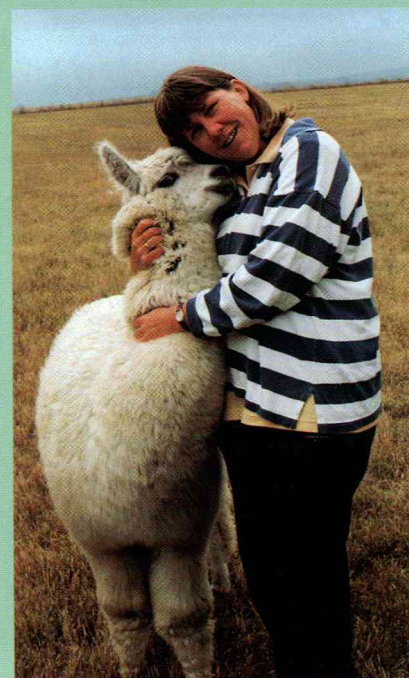
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'Am I the "push-me" or the "pull-you"?'
Amelia Leeman, Ampleur Alpaca Stud



'Hmph! No crimp!'
Kathleen Benson, Trentham



'Could this be love?'
Elizabeth Paul, courtesy
Greenvale Alpacas



'Life sure is rosy for me!'
 Kate Holzberger,
 The Hermitage Alpacas



'Naa... can't be bothered.'
 Jill Short, Warragaburra Farm



'Looking to the future.'
 Ian & Cathy Proctor, Wallaby
 Ridge Alpacas



'Odd looking guards in this playpen!'
 Julie Lamb, Jewel Estate Alpacas



**Apricot harvest heavy.
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 the alpacas!'**
 Ian & Marie French,
 Our-Paca Park



'Heads or tails?'
 Lorraine Padgett,
 Lake MacDonald Alpacas.



'What are you? You only have two legs!'
 J. Crowl, Homlea Alpacas

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Pacas



Shearing...

South American style



by Chris Williams

SHEARING DISPLAY

The IAA provided an elevated platform for the shearing, located in an area central to the proceedings of the festival. I was appreciative of the proximity to the 'cervesa' (beer) marquees, although warm beer is not my ideal form of refreshment.

I started each demonstration by briefly describing the total shearing process: the techniques of restraint of the animal during the shearing process; equipment used; and how we separate the different parts of the fleece while we shear to eliminate coarse fibre contamination of the saddle area. I am not fluent in Spanish (in fact, a novice in the language would be an exaggeration). Consequently, the information was translated into Spanish for the many locals who attended by Alonso Burgos, the Festival's president. Each demonstration was attended by between 200 and 300 people from Europe, North America, Japan, Canada and Australia. The many Peruvians in attendance were intrigued by the foreigner shearing on their turf and were keen to learn more about our technique. In fact, after the demonstrations of shearing, I received several offers from the Peruvian shearers for my shearing handpiece!

Using ropes, the alpacas were shackled fore and rear.

Thanks to the assistance provided by Allan Jinks and Alonso Burgos, the alpaca's head was held firmly to the floor. For those unfamiliar with alpaca shearing, an alpaca in full restraint remains relatively calm and the assistant holding the alpaca's head can comfort an animal distressed by the process.

With the alpaca laying on its side, the fleece was removed in halves. Coarser fibre from its lower legs and belly were shorn first and cleared from the shearing area. The main saddle was then shorn and removed. Fibre on the neck was removed last, skirting the coarser fibre growing through the brisket area. The alpaca's head was lifted and the animal rolled so over for shearing the other side.

The fleece was bagged in to three logs: skirted saddle, neck and skirtings (legs, belly and brisket). Not including the time taken to restrain and release the alpaca, shearing usually takes between five and eight minutes.

Our alpaca herd at Ambersun Alpacas was shorn later than usual last season, as I headed for Arequipa, Peru for the International Camelid Festival during November.

I was invited to the seminar by the International Alpaca Association (IAA) to provide shearing demonstrations and information on alpaca clip-care 'Aussie' style. My invitation came about from discussions with delegates from the IAA earlier last year in Arequipa, who were intrigued by the technique and time taken to shear alpacas in Australia and the emphasis placed on the skirting of fleece at the time of shearing.

With shearing combs sharpened and a new handpiece supplied by Heineger (of whose sponsorship I am most appreciative) I departed for South America. Including time spent in an array of airports between Adelaide and Arequipa, the epic journey took around 41 hours. We were escorted by officials from the seminar from Lima onwards, yet still managed to experience an apparently random system of flight bookings, seat allocation and lengthy delays in airports. Anyone who has travelled in Peru can probably relate to this experience.



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SHEARING PERUVIAN STYLE

The techniques used for shearing, and time taken to complete an animal, vary within Peru depending on the region and, in particular, whether there is access to electricity. The main difference between the Australian and Peruvian techniques is the way in which the fleece is removed. In Peru, the premium saddle fleece is combined with and contaminated by the coarser fibre from the legs, belly and brisket. No skirting is done during shearing. The total fleece is sent to the warehouses where continually stooped Peruvian women grade the fleece for quality and colour, handful by handful.

The Peruvian shearer at the Festival used my electric handpiece. The alpaca was laid on its side, but an assistant restrained the animal by firmly holding its ears and front legs while its back legs were held by ropes and shackles. The alpaca was shorn from the back legs through to the ears. The fleece areas were not separated so all fibre qualities were mixed together on the shearing floor. The unskirted fleece was placed in a single bag.

Away from the seminar, the Peruvians typically use an overhead shearing plant. For power, a generator is often used. In the more remote areas of Peru and Bolivia, I witnessed shearing using more primitive equipment. The shearers in one village used a sardine tin with the lid sharpened to a knife-edge, and the bulk of the tin moulded to fit into the hand. Hand shears are also often used. When this 'equipment' is used, shearing time is between 30 and 40 minutes.

Shearing at the vicuna roundup

The highlight of my South American experience was shearing the elusive vicunas high up in the mountains. I was invited by Alonso Burgos to shear the vicunas at the ceremonial roundup

— *chaccu*. I was told it would be the first time that a white man would take part in the ceremony. Not surprisingly, I was very flattered, though somewhat nervous, to be accorded this honour.

Seminar participants took a four hour bus trip along dusty and bumpy roads, high up into the mountains to where the vicunas lived. Some visitors required oxygen to make their trip more comfortable.

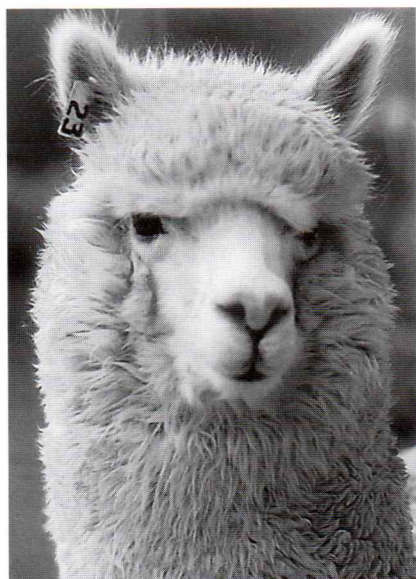
This region was particularly arid where the grasses were coarse — not unlike our spinifex — and in very short supply.

Participants, standing around three metres apart, formed a human chain and held ropes tied with colourful streamers. The vicunas were contained by this mobile fence which stretched over two kilometres. When the vicunas neared the rope in an attempt to break free, we would shake it to thwart their attempt. The vicunas were pushed towards a funnel-shaped fenced area where they were temporarily captured to be shorn.

The process was coordinated by the two Peruvian 'directors' who shouted instructions. I was a little daunted by the



The human chain.



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fact that they were armed during the chaccu. It was certainly an incentive to properly look after one's section of the rope! The vicunas are owned by the government and the whole process was overseen by government troops armed with machine guns.

Prior to the shearing, a vicuna fertility ritual was performed. A male and female vicuna were laid face to face, with front legs intertwined. They were sprinkled with coca leaves, tobacco and beer. Their ears were cut and the blood from each blended together. People standing close to this ritual had blood wiped onto their cheeks. The vicunas' blood was then mixed with beer which many Peruvians drank, to complete the ritual.

During shearing, only the dark fawn part of the vicuna's fleece is removed. This fibre is amazingly dense and finer than you can imagine. Tests show that it averages between 10 and 12 microns. The remaining white fibre is much coarser and is left on the animal. The shorn fleece is about 50 mm long and represents two years of growth. The vicuna fleece is skirted immediately after shearing to remove any obvious guard hair. The removed fleece normally weighs only around 230 grams. I felt under enormous pressure to shear with-



Only the dark fawn part of the vicuna's fleece is removed.



Chaccu – the vicuna roundup.

out any 'second cuts', so as not to waste a single precious fibre.

The roundup is a large communal experience and reason for celebration.

Following the shearing, the vicunas are released and the party begins with a feast (including alpaca meat), dancing and ceremonial costume. I found the chaccu to be the most amazing part of the festival and brought me closer than I had ever been to the real culture of native Peru.

Following the Festival, I stayed on and worked with government officials in Puno, helping them to improve and refine methods of harvesting the vicuna fibre. The fibre is treated like gold – which is not surprising when I learned that its value is US\$900 per pound, with fabric selling for approximately US\$2,000 per lineal metre.

I have been asked to return to Peru later this year to conduct workshops

with local shearers to improve alpaca fibre harvesting methods. It is a real honour for someone who has been in the alpaca industry for less than 10 years and who has no background in sheep shearing. I developed and modified my shearing technique on the alpacas in our own herd (150 animals) with my partner Adrienne, who usually sorts and skirts the fleece as soon as it falls from the animal. A good feel for the fleece certainly helps with the skirt-ing process and the quality of the finished product. I get most of my shearing practice outside of our own herd with the many alpacas I shear as part of a mobile alpaca 'maintenance' service we provide to breeders in South Australia.

There is some irony in taking this shearing technique to a country that has had domesticated alpacas and shorn them for thousands of years.



The tiny vicuna fleece – dense but averaging only between 10 and 12 microns.

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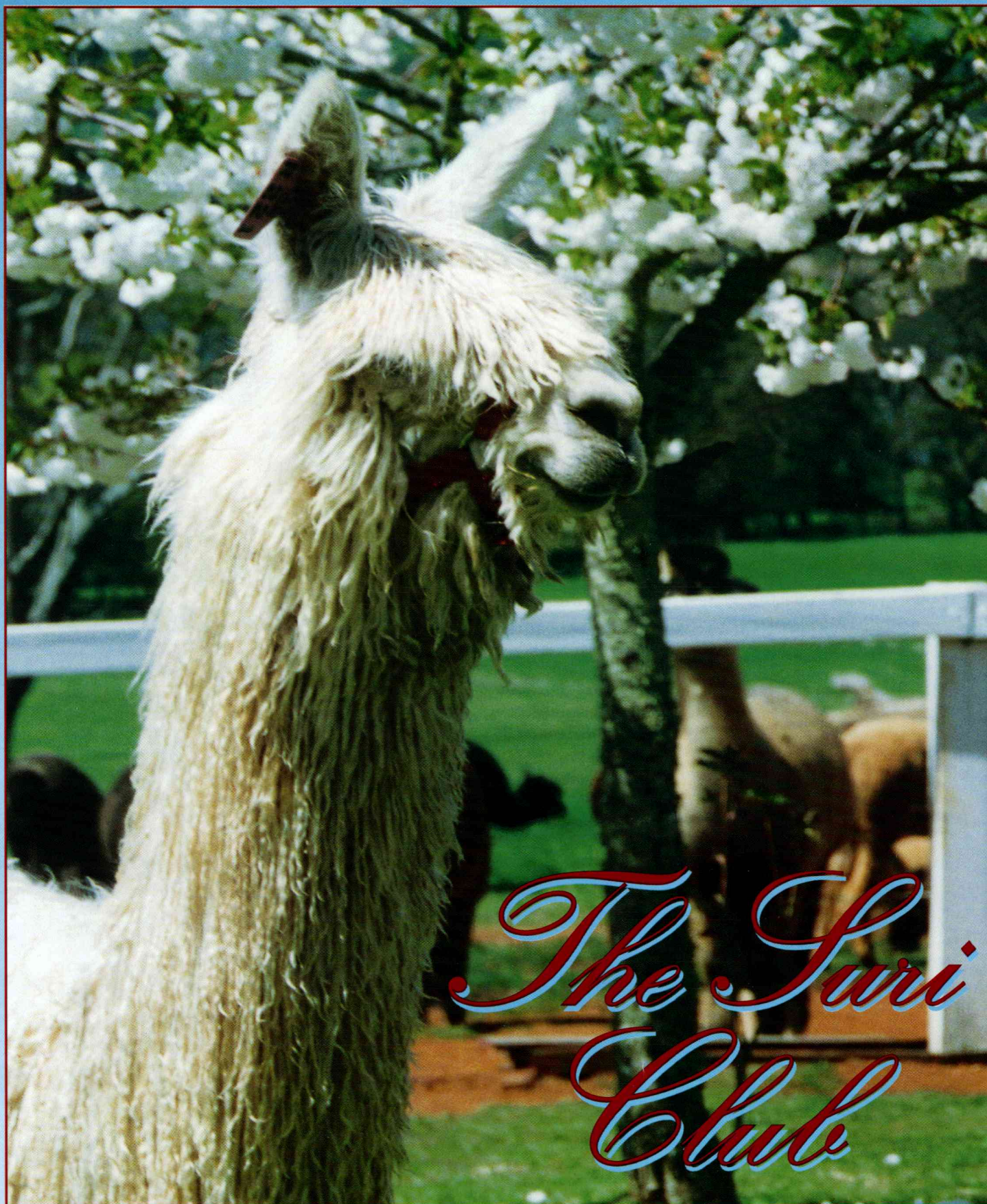
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