

Alpacas

A U S T R A L I A

ISSUE No. 24 1998

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October 31 - November 1



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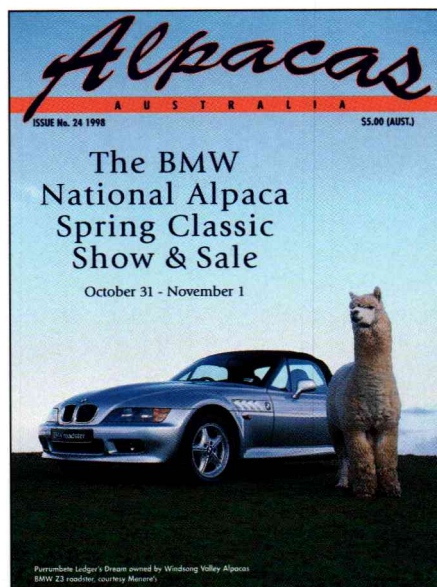
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David Johnson Reports

The Conference

Since last writing, much has happened within the industry. A most successful National Conference has been conducted in Fremantle.

Speakers, international, national and Western Australian helped make it, by all accounts, the most successful yet. Of course, it goes without saying that the 250 delegates made a fine contribution to the event's excellence.

Marketing

A number of new initiatives to do with marketing have been commenced over the past three months.

A pilot series of industry seminars targeting potential members (breeders) have been well received with excellent response in Brisbane and Hobart. These seminars will be held in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne in September and October.

The Marketing Program continues to attract excellent response to consistent advertising in *Australian Country Style* and *Australian Way*. Response on a dollar for dollar basis has been far more effective than our traditional print press advertising.

Each enquirer has received an information kit, which also includes an Industry Directory.

It is now up to individual members to promote the great future of the industry to the enquirers. Whilst the

Association is in a position to promote and market the industry, members need to promote and market the animals they wish to sell.

BMW Classic

Planning for the BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic Show and Sale is in full swing. What an event this promises to be! The sub-committee has secured a substantial level of sponsorship from both within and outside the Association.

The Melbourne Exhibition Buildings are sure to be a sight to behold on 31 October and 1 November.

Education

Other interesting initiatives that will be taken over coming months include a stock and station agents education/information course aimed to ensure agents are equipped to deal with our emerging rural industry.

China

We also look forward to finalising the initiative to market alpacas into China – for the benefit of any members who wish to participate.

Given all these events and a busy regional showing season, it is going to be a 'classic spring' for alpacas.

David Johnson

Alpacas
AUSTRALIA

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ORGANISING AN ALPACA SHOW

A training day in South Australia was well attended by AAA members interested in learning how to organise an efficiently run alpaca show. The show stewards and convenors course was run by Bill Plunkett, a highly experienced chief steward.

Every alpaca show needs an organiser, a person who can manage the process of planning and liaising with a show society whether it be a small country show or something as large as one of the capital city Royals. That organiser is generally the chief steward.

In May, an excellent roll up of members of the South Australian Region learned how to efficiently plan and smoothly conduct an alpaca show.

AAA judge and experienced senior steward, Bill Plunkett took participants through the whole process, from the earliest planning stages to the final post-show tasks.

The Show Stewards and Convenors Course (marketed as 'The One Testicle; The No Testicle; and The Multi!') was held on Saturday 9 May, at the Oakbank Area School.

The main aim of the course is to equip members to take on the task of organising alpaca shows.

However, as organiser Denise Moysey commented in her circular to the region, any member interested in fully understanding show procedures would find the course extremely valuable.

So, what's involved in being a chief steward? Here's a rundown, based on Bill's lecture notes.

ORGANISING THE SITE

Normally, the chief steward will meet with the show secretary, visit the show site and have a look at the facilities on offer: the size of the allocated space, provision for parking, etc. From this inspection, the steward will be able to

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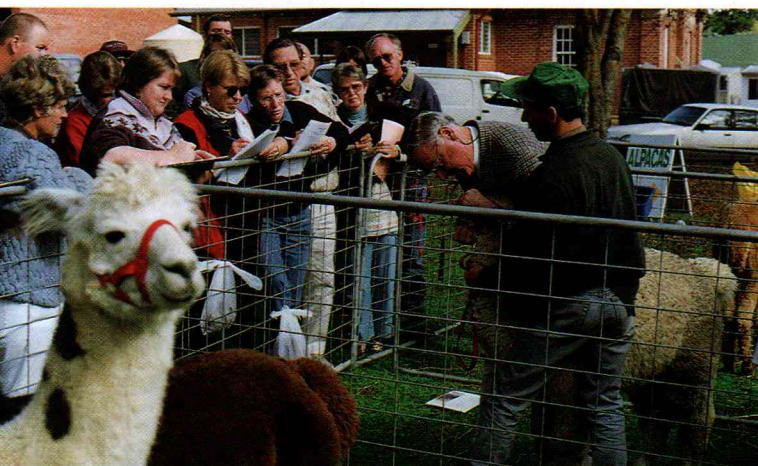
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Fleeces are checked for correct classing. They are weighed and, if required, weight for age conversions calculated.



Brushing up on show ring procedure was part of the Show Stewards and Convenors Course at Oakbank Area School, SA, in May.

estimate the number of alpaca exhibits required for the space available.

The next step is for the chief steward to meet with the show committee to verbally request facilities needed for the exhibits,

such as shed or marquee of adequate size; pen panelling or number of stalls, straw or bedding; and prize ribbons. Authorisation by the show committee to accept alpaca classes marks the beginning of a great deal of activity.

The chief steward must be familiar with the rules of every show he or she organises. While there's probably not a great deal of variation from show to show, there are traps for the unwary – such as a rule that prohibits the holding of raffles.

BEFORE THE SHOW

Organisation

The classes of exhibits have to be worked out; conditions of entry and entry forms for animals and fleece exhibits written; and mailing lists drawn up. These conform to AAA guidelines, but are distributed by the show committee.

Then there's the job of organising staff: helpers for penning day (normally one day prior to the show); stewards, inspectors and a judge; and ensuring there is a vet in attendance (either through the Association or the show society).

Having worked out the logistics of the exercise, the chief steward then makes a formal written submission of requirements to the show secretary. As a general rule, the main requirements are:

- marquee (if no shed or pavilion);
- pens/stalls with straw or bedding for alpacas;
- anti-slip floor matting for walk ways and the show ring (depending on the ground surface);
- ribbons for classes, championship sashes, trophies (can be from show society or AAA);
- lapel ribbons for judge(s) and stewards;
- trestle tables for fleeces and fleece baskets or boxes;
- tables for promotional material;
- board for recording results and chalks;
- PA system and other promotional aids (if applicable);
- extra lighting, if required, for show ring and fleece areas;
- electricity supply for blowers;
- broom and shovel.
- gate passes for judges and stewards.

The chief steward supplies to the show society the names and addresses of judges and stewards and, if there are sponsors, details of which classes are sponsored and by whom.

The number of entries received by the stipulated deadline will determine whether or not those who have managed to miss it will have their late entries accepted. (Consequently, it's best not to miss the closing date!)

At this stage, sponsors should be finalised; a gift for the judge should be at least chosen (if not purchased); the judge should be re-contacted (a friendly reminder); helpers should be organised and confirmed; and white coats organised for officials.

Catalogues

Final classing of exhibits is completed and the catalogue is compiled, normally by the AAA region or committee responsible for staging the show.

Allocation of pens

A plan of the penning area is finalised. Normally, there is one animal per pen, although in smaller shows, younger animals may be penned together. Exhibitors' numbers are incorporated into the plan and checked against catalogue listings.

Promotion

Positions are allocated for promotional display and personnel recruited.

The day before the show

Pens, each marked with an exhibitor's name, are set up according to the site plan and straw or bedding organised.

The assembly and show rings are set up and tables are put in place for

fleeces, trophies, catalogues and promotion.

The results board should be ready – don't forget chalk!

Last minute checks are made with the show secretary on availability of a working PA system; and that all the award ribbons and award cards are ready, along with lapel ribbons for judges and stewards.

For the fleece competition, scales and tray, score cards, pencils, rubbers and calculators need to be on hand.

Ensure any extra lighting requested for show ring and fleece areas has been installed.

The supply of white coats should be confirmed and a check made that the person whose task was to buy the judge's gift actually remembered to do so.

THE BIG DAY

The chief steward obtains from the show secretary ribbons, silks, award

cards, luncheon tickets for the judge and stewards and ensures that the PA system is ready for reporting all the action.

It is the chief steward's responsibility to brief all the other stewards and the M.C. There are stewards for the ring, marshalling, cataloguing, results board, shed and fleece. Note that chief, ring and inspection stewards are not permitted to show animals at shows where they are officiating.

The shed steward is kept rather busy on a number of tasks. They include:

- welcoming exhibitors, advising on pen locations, helping with parking;
- ensuring refreshments are available (hot water, tea, coffee);
- selling catalogues;
- organising white coats;
- placing fleeces in position;
- organising promotional table and setting up trophy table;
- arranging seating for sponsors;
- advising inspection time.

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Inspection

Competitors must be in attendance at their pens for inspection of their exhibits. This is the time when the inspection steward checks all animals for any abnormalities that may disqualify them from taking part in the show. It is also a time for any last minute adjustments to classes. For example, a colour check may reveal an animal has been placed in an incorrect class and must be transferred to another.

Fleeces

The fleeces are checked for correct classing and allocated numbers only (no competitor's name appears with a fleece). A score card is also allocated for each fleece. All fleeces must be weighed and, if required, weight for age conversions done. For larger shows, fleeces are grid tested to ascertain micron size and coefficient of variation.

The fleece steward's role is to pencil in results for the fleece judge.

Final cataloguing

After inspections have been completed, final alterations are made to the catalogue to accommodate combining of classes, withdrawals or incorrect classing. Stewards are advised of the changes.

Greeting the judge

The chief steward greets the judge, ensures refreshments are provided and introduces the judge to the stewards. There is an exchange of information between the judge and the chief steward during which the judge makes known any special requirements and the chief steward advises the judge on any relevant issues.

The judge should have no contact with exhibitors prior to the show and any exhibitors' queries should be channelled through the chief steward.

Exhibitors' meeting

The chief steward welcomes the exhibitors, introduces the judge and other stewards, advises any show catalogue changes and notes any variations to normal show procedures.

Showing

The marshalling steward ensures that animals are ready to enter the ring promptly by bringing exhibits into the assembly area two or three classes ahead of their scheduled appearance time.

It is important that handlers are ready with their animals well in advance of their classes to ensure that there are no hold-ups in the judging.

This applies particularly to those whose animals are selected to compete for championship awards.

It's useful to remember that second place-getters may be eligible to compete for championship awards. Exhibitors of these animals need to be ready to take their places in championship lineups if necessary.

After the presentation of trophies, the chief steward thanks the judge with a gift and acknowledges the efforts of the stewards, exhibitors and other contributors to the success of the day.

At the end of the day, it is up to the chief steward to ensure that all animals have left the area (yes, the odd one has been forgotten by its exhibitor) and that all fleeces have been collected.

Any unused ribbons or award cards should be returned to show society officials.

Follow up

The chief steward ensures that the judge is reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses (e.g. travelling) and sends formal letters of thanks to the judge and stewards.

ALPACAS AUSTRALIA EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING DEADLINE FINAL ISSUE FOR 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.

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**DEADLINE
ISSUE 25**

Issue 25 – Summer

Due: December 1998

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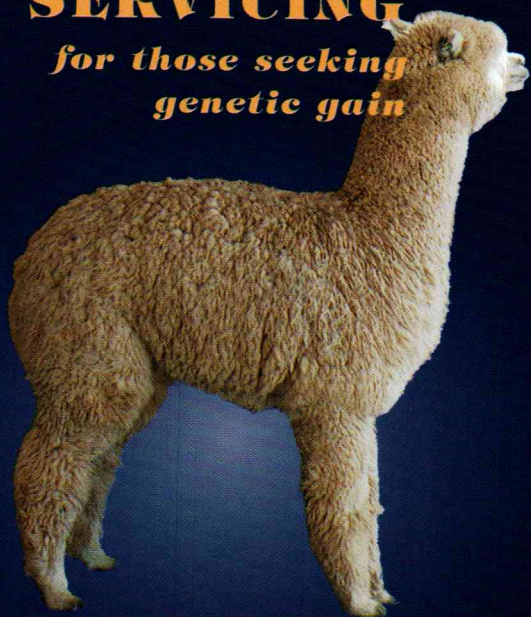
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Oscar the outsider

by Josephine Jakobi

Some animals, like some people, get off on the wrong foot right from the beginning. They always have to do things the hard way. There is no easy path for these individuals. Life is a battle and they are ready for it.

Oscar is one of those unfortunates. He came to join our Bungalook herd when his owners were forced to reduce stock due to the drought in East Gippsland. He is a lanky, angular alpaca with attitude. The only lesson this wether had ever learned was to fight like fury against any form of restraint. His previous owners were quite desperate to find a home for him but could not, with a clear conscience, wish him on to an unsuspecting buyer. We knew him because Rick had shorn him a couple of times – not an experience to be forgotten easily. Never have we struck an alpaca like Oscar.

When caught, he would charge backwards, roaring. It was all one could do to keep up with him long enough to get a headstall on him. Once that was done, he would spring forward in terror, throwing his head at the ground. He seemed to think that, if he bashed his head hard enough, the headstall and handler would go away.

Since we bought our first alpacas back in '91, my proud boast has been that there is nothing that has to be done with these animals that I cannot do myself. They are so easy. After many years of horses and cattle, I found alpacas to be an absolute breeze. Then came Oscar. I took one look at what this animal could do to Rick and decided that this was a battle way out of my league.

Poor Oscar! There seemed to be no way of preventing him from beating his head against the ground every time he was caught. Poor Rick! In his efforts to stop Oscar from hurting himself he was pummelled all over by that lashing head.

After Oscar's first week with us, both he and Rick were battle weary and retreated to nurse their wounds. We decided to let well enough alone for a while. After all, Oscar had now been drenched and toe trimmed, so we felt that we had scored a point or two, at least.

Time went by, with Oscar leading a peaceful life with the other wethers. If any had to be caught, we were careful not to involve him in the action. But, of course, this could not go on forever. Eventually there came a time when all toes needed trimming again.

It so happened that this job was to be done as part of an information day for the local fibre spinning group. This is a regular event at Bungalook. The spinners and knitters arrive in the morning with their wheels and needles and set up in our living room. I make a huge pot of soup and lots of hot buns. The ladies bring wonderful cakes and we all talk a lot. Not much work gets done but we all have a very good time. We usually try to include some animal husbandry to round out the day. After all, people just love alpacas.

I was nicely focused on the domestic part of the day and had quite forgotten about the Oscar problem when Rick came in and announced that he was ready to demonstrate toe trimming. We all trooped up to the cattle yards where

the wethers were neatly tied to the rails in a long line. Two or three visitors, who were just ahead of me, marched up to the rails and thrust their hands through for the inevitable attempt to stroke those appealing faces. As I hurried forward to explain again that alpacas don't like that, I was amazed to find that Oscar was there in the ranks, looking a bit startled, but standing calmly. I edged the visitors towards the more predictable of the boys and cast an inquiring eye towards Rick, who was looking smug. What had he done to bring this about?

Since he had intended to catch all the wethers that day, he had run them all into the small yard. He was determined to prevent Oscar from driving his head into the ground, so the moment he got a headstall on him, he tied him to a high rail. It seems that this simple action broke the pattern and allowed poor old Oscar time to reflect. By the time he had stopped pulling back in panic, the other alpacas were all lined up each side of him, unconcerned. So he gave up the struggle and followed suit.

Three things had happened. First, he was unable to hurt himself in the usual way; secondly, he was surrounded by his friends, all of whom were in the same situation as he; thirdly, even though he was restrained by the headstall, there was no handler close to him.

Animals learn lessons very easily. So easily, in fact, that we sometimes teach them the wrong lesson without being aware that we are doing so. It seems that Oscar had learned early in his life that if he hurt his head badly, he would

be left in peace. Perhaps, during his first encounter with a headstall, he had flung his head to the ground and cut his lips. This produces blood, dripping from the mouth; a horrifying sight.

It's not hard to imagine caring owners giving up at once and removing the headstall. So the lesson has begun. If the same thing happens next time he is caught, a pattern is established and the lesson learned.

We have found that if horses have learned bad habits, they can be re-educated by examining each step of any task and dividing these into separate actions. For instance, if a horse throws his head up as the bridle is removed, he hurts his mouth quite severely. The memory of the pain stays with him, so that the next time the situation arises, his anxiety makes him throw his head again. Thus, he comes to believe that removing the bridle is a painful business he must try to dodge. To have him unlearn this lesson, one must separate

the actions of removing the bit from the mouth and taking the bridle from the head, allowing the horse to realise that there is no pain involved.

Oscar believed that the handler and the headstall combined to cause him grief. By tying him to the rail and walking away, Rick let him find out for himself that the headstall is quite harmless,

though invincible in a struggle. Oscar has almost given up fighting with it and so is able to pay attention to handling and toe trimming lessons. Much easier all round!

Oscar doesn't like people much and we will probably never change that. But at least he no longer believes that he has to damage his head to get rid of us.

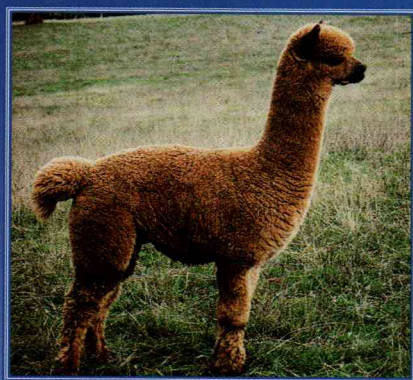


That's Oscar – the alpaca whose red halter is tied to the high rail.



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Field Report

FIRST ALPACAS AT BALLARAT SHOW

For the first time alpacas took their place at the 117th Ballarat Sheep Show and their popularity and success was outstanding.

The Ballarat Courier

This quote summed up a wonderful day on Sunday 26 July when the inaugural showing of alpacas in Ballarat took place at the showgrounds.

To organise the event, Victorian Central Region members worked in conjunction with the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society which was more than helpful in providing the spacious venue, animal pens, straw, gas heaters and additional lighting above the show ring and the fleeces (a feature sadly lacking at some venues).

On the day, the venue looked most impressive, thanks to the preparation and hard work put in by a small band of Central Region volunteers the previous day. New green matting in the show ring, a whiteboard (kindly lent by Western Region), sash stand with wooden alpacas at each end and clusters of balloons along the walls all added to the presentation.

During the day, 70 animals were judged very capably by Cherie Bridges, assisted by associate judge, Brian Worcester. The crowd of spectators was swelled by visitors to the local 'Trash & Trivia' market, which is also held at the showground each Sunday morning and which, on a good day, attracts crowds in excess of 3,000 people.

Alpaca knitwear was displayed in the craft section and in the fashion parade at the Sheep Show.

Secretary of the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society, Barry Halsall is

confident of having an even bigger showing of alpacas next year. So, all you alpaca owners out there, mark July 25 down on your 1999 calendars and join us for a great day in Ballarat.

HAWKESBURY BLUE MOUNTAINS REGION 1998 ALPACA FIESTA AND AUCTION

Every May, for the past four years, the Hawkesbury Blue Mountains region has held its AlpacaFest, a one-day field day for all things alpaca. This year the event grew substantially, became the 1998 Alpaca Fiesta and Auction – and was held over an entire weekend.

May 23 and 24 saw Hawkesbury Racecourse at Richmond, NSW transformed into a showcase for the alpaca industry in the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains district.

The goals of the Fiesta were to:

- promote the joy of alpacas and the industry in the region;
- educate prospective and existing alpaca breeders in alpaca husbandry;
- provide information and assistance to those researching prior to investing in alpacas; and
- provide an opportunity for regional breeders to promote their studs and to sell their animals, either by auction or private pen sales.

Brilliant, sunny weather on the Saturday, no doubt, encouraged the continuous throng of visitors, thirsty to learn about the alpaca. Each demonstration of shearing, toenail clipping, vaccination, drenching, halter training and ear tagging was keenly attended. Questions came thick and fast.

Also popular were the lectures: 'Taxation and investment in alpacas',

delivered by Guy Pounder; and 'Farming alpacas: considerations for new breeders', a symposium headed by Lyn Dickson, Sherryl Riley and Michael d'Apice.

Spinning and felting demonstrations completed the picture by showing how alpaca fibre can be processed.



The 26 breeders participating in the Fiesta with pen displays were kept busy throughout the weekend answering questions and showing off animals.



A variety of trade and merchandise attracted attention and business. There were alpaca garments and jewellery, farm machinery, alpaca transport and stock food supplies. Alpaca agility trials, camel rides and music from South American band 'Tinkuna' provided



The Proof is in the Progeny



Acheron Valley Alpaca Stud

in conjunction with Mount Peerless Alpacas

Peruvian Primero

In his 1st season his progeny have confirmed his quality, winning over 50 individual ribbons, including 7 championship ribbons and 2nd place in the Sires Progeny Class at the Royal Melbourne and National Shows. The improvement that Primero can make in just one generation is exceptional. Over 80% of clients have chosen to remate to Primero — a sure sign of satisfaction.

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entertainment for the whole family. Many of the children in attendance handled alpacas for the first time in the agility trials.

An even larger crowd turned out on Sunday for a program that included three highlights: the stud male and fashion parade; the draw for the winner of female alpaca, 'Sweet Caroline'; and the auction.



Kelly Hitchcock (River Ridge Alpacas) models a beautiful alpaca gown kindly lent by Sherryl Riley. Kelly was escorted by Mark Agnew (Almaray Alpacas) in a superb black overcoat by Alpaca D'Oro.



Sherryl Riley (Shelbory Park Alpacas) cuts a smart figure in a pink Antara jacket and black Longreach skirt. A striking Andes Craft Intarsia sweater is worn by Stephen Brown (Alleena Alpaca Stud).

The superb white stud male is Don Julio.

Rebecca Gilling, well known actress and TV presenter hosted the innovative parade of stud male alpacas combined with a parade of wonderfully designed alpaca. The collection of alpaca apparel – high chic, alternative attire and classic cuts – was paraded alongside 20 stud

sires that stand in the Hawkesbury Blue Mountains region. The collection delighted the spectators as they saw more fashion choices in alpaca than they had realised were possible. The line up of stud males was impressive, highlighting the quality of the genetic pool available in this part of New South Wales.

Ms Gilling also drew the winning ticket for 'Sweet Caroline'. It belonged to a relatively new alpaca breeder from northern New South Wales, Amanda Senior of Cobaki Creek Alpacas.

The culmination of the weekend was the auction of female alpacas – quality animals in a variety of colours. Of ten lots offered, the hammer dropped on seven and one lot was sold immediately after the auction. The eight animals sold realised a total of \$68,250 at an average of \$8,531.25. Top price was paid for Lot 2, 'Gunnamatta Giselle', bought by Max and Marilyn Mosher of Collaroy Plateau, for \$11,250. Peter Kelly of Bellawood Alpacas in Goulburn was an active bidder who purchased two black females: 'Kurraview Harmony' and 'Prestige Mystique', for a total of \$15,000. This most successful auction was conducted by Century 21 Real Estate.



Prestige Mystique at auction.

All in all, the first Alpaca Fiesta and Auction was an overwhelming success. There was a larger than expected attendance of around 1,200 and an excellent auction result. A number of females and wethers sold privately and many new people considering entering our industry.

The success of the weekend suggests a strong resurgence of interest in alpaca investment. It's an interest that needs to be nurtured if we are to see our industry grow and develop.

SUNSHINE COAST SHOW, NAMBOUR

Yes, the sun did shine at the Sunshine Coast Show at Nambour on 12 June 1998 when judge, Margaret Hitchcock from Ebenezer, New South Wales had to consider the characteristics of 53 animals and 20 fleeces. Again, as at Warwick, someone had to lend the judge a hat. Enthusiasm abounded. The fine weather, as usual, brought out smiles in a friendly competitive atmosphere while Margaret worked her way skilfully and with constructive commentary through the various classes.



Judge, Margaret Hitchcock with George Rose whose alpaca, Rosemount Xanadu won Supreme Champion.

Just when she thought it was time for lunch, she was confronted with the Nambour entries of a new class we have introduced in Queensland: The

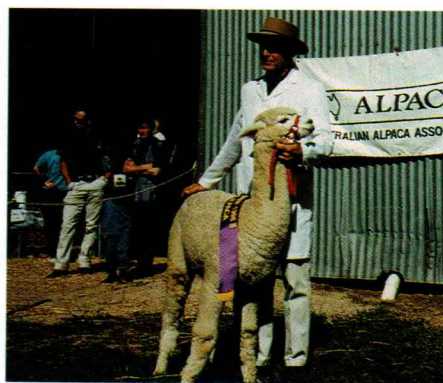
Queensland Alpaca of the Year. This class is restricted to alpacas born in Queensland and points are awarded to the place-getters over four Queensland shows starting at Nambour. The winner receives a \$500.00 prize, a perpetual trophy donated by Noosa Alpaca Stud and \$1,500.00 assistance in attending and exhibiting at the National Classic Show and Sale. Obviously, Queensland is serious in



Ineke Beck, Sunshine Alpacas, with Queensland Alpaca of the Year – Nambour Entries: Sunshine El Champ.

moving ahead and the region has taken on a dynamism that could one day be hard to beat.

After lunch, Margaret again went back to work, assessing the fleece entries. At the end of the day, it was agreed by all that she had worked hard and done well. With the expected increase in entries next year, it is proposed to alleviate the judge's burden by assessing the fleeces on the day prior to the judging of the animals – giving the judge some time to soak up the



George Rose, Rosemount Alpacas with Supreme Champion, Rosemount Xanadu.

Queensland atmosphere. The business of the Queensland show season continues with the Cooroy Farm Expo in July and the Brisbane Royal and Gold Coast shows in August.

Major award winners

Champion Male

Rosemount Xanadu, Rosemount Alpaca Stud.

Champion Female

Grindon Cleopatra, Grindon Alpacas.

Reserve Champion

Grindon Cleopatra, Grindon Alpacas.

Supreme Champion

Rosemount Xanadu, Rosemount Alpaca Stud.

Reserve Champion Fleece

Ravensholme Lightning, Ravensholme Alpaca Stud.

Champion Fleece

Wyona Soloman, Wyona Alpaca Stud.

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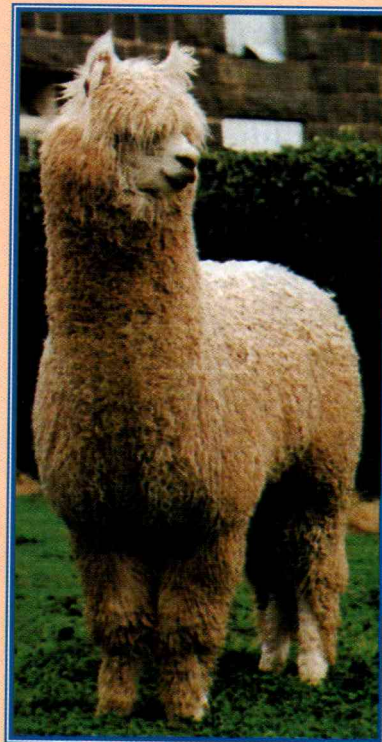
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WORTH A TRIP TO W.A.?

THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

by Carolyn Jinks

The Western Region in Victoria has a strong focus on education and promotion. It is a small yet active region and, in fact, was the 'cradle' from which the Association's regional system stemmed.

We recognise the need to hold alpaca shows at venues where the public can witness the spectacle of excellent stock and, what we lack in membership numbers is made up by enthusiasm and teamwork.

While important for breeders, shows are not noted as long-term crowd entertainment, so there is an ongoing challenge to incorporate additional, new 'public friendly' ideas.

'Farm Vision' is the venue the Western Region utilises for its major show. The \$7,000 site fee is formidable and stretches our fundraising to the limit. However, we strive to make the three days memorable for the estimated 35,000 visitors, giving them an opportunity to learn about alpacas and meet breeders.

In an effort to develop and grow, each year the Western Region improves the Association's image with new 'props'.

These have included a light weight 5-panel display kit, complete with educational pictures and information, a quality fleece display and samples of alpaca fabric.

This year, the show was enhanced by the manufacture of a results board complete with professional signwriting, which gave a totally professional image to the weekend.

But it is not just the static displays that grow – things need to be happening to keep a crowd. A few of our innovative ideas may provide inspiration to other regions.

The 'Shear to Scarf' competition begun in the Western Region has now been adopted at the Royal Melbourne Show.



Western Region's snazzy new results board.

The title 'scarf', if not a misnomer, is definitely a loose definition, as teams of frantic spinners work against the clock to provide the knitters with enough yarn to cast on 20 stitches and commence knitting. The texture and ply can only be imagined and the final results are decidedly unique!

At least the demonstration of shearing prior to the commencement of the spinning is professional and educational for the audience.

Amid much laughter, teams from the three Victorian regions (with such unlikely names as 'The Spinouts') compete each year for the trophy and, as an extra crowd pleaser, a well known celebrity such as Geelong footballer, Billy Brownless acts with the MC, asking questions about alpacas.

Although there is a lot of fun involved, some serious messages about the animals and their management are given to the crowd.

Shear to Scarf: while the knitters and spinners wait with eager anticipation, the shearing team begins its work. In this team, the shearers are Allan Jinks, Noel Laity and Jodie Kentish.



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MALE SERVICE COMPETITION: ANOTHER REGIONAL FIRST

A draw for a free stud service to a male of choice was another successful fundraising idea.

All Victorian breeders were invited to submit details of their stud males. A colour brochure giving details of the pedigree and histograms of these males was sent to all AAA members in Victoria. With only 150 tickets available they were soon snapped up. Not only did the competition give excellent exposure to the males involved, but the anticipation as the winner was drawn from a Bingo barrel added a highlight to our Annual Dinner. There's no doubt this event will be a regular on the Alpaca Fest calendar.

HANDCRAFT HIGHLIGHTED

Remarkable talent for using alpaca fleece was evident with the Inaugural Handcraft Competition.

The winning garment – a felted coat featuring embroidery using natural dyes – was superbly created.

Felting workshops, which had been held during the year in the region, gave participants an opportunity to display their skills and various shaped berets and vests were judged by well-known craftspeople, Joan Dever.

Cuddly teddy bears made from alpaca, knitted items and handspun skeins also provided an eye-catching display.

Entries for the competition came from as far away as London. With such interest, the event has added a new dimension of growth to Alpaca Fest.

As craftspeople throughout Australia become aware of the standard exhibited, we look forward to many entries in future competitions.



Erin O'Connor, winner of the inaugural Junior Judging Competition at Geelong, modelling the award winning felted alpaca coat, a felted alpaca beret and holding another exhibit – a cuddly, alpaca fleece teddy.

SCHOOLS EXHIBITION

A competition is also run for local schools to provide an awareness of alpacas. Alpaca fleece is provided by members and it is left to the imagination of the students as to how they utilise it.

The results have been quite stunning. Sometimes a South American theme has given a geographic dimension. This year, a more local theme of the sea was the winner. But every year, the message about alpacas is spread.

The impact and importance of regions cannot be underestimated. We are the grass roots who have the best opportunity of educating the public.

HOPE DOWNS ALPACAS



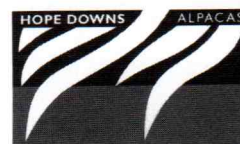
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An Elite Alliance



The BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic

The BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic, to be held on Saturday, October 31 and Sunday, November 1 at Melbourne's historic Great Hall in the Royal Exhibition Building, promises to be the most exciting event ever staged by Australia's alpaca industry.

Recognising the alpaca industry's potential and elite reputation, leading car manufacturer, BMW has signed on as the event's principal sponsor.

The BMW Classic will see com-

merce combine with creativity in an exhibition highlighting the industry's 'cria to catwalk' potential. A series of entertaining and informative lectures and practical 'how to' seminars delivered by a field of industry experts will present a comprehensive overview of the industry.

The pinnacle of the event will be the International Alpaca Fashion Show, where the latest international alpaca designs from Europe and America will combine with the first 'all-Australian'

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO ATTEND A TRULY EXTRAORDINARY EVENT

Hundreds of the nation's finest alpacas housed in one of Australia's architectural treasures...

I'D LIKE TO VISIT THAT!

A fashion extravaganza to rival the parades of Paris, featuring a \$25,000 vicuna cape - the first vicuna to be seen in Australia in 30 years...

I'D LIKE TO SEE THAT!

A diverse social agenda coinciding with Melbourne's electric Spring Racing Carnival...

I'D LIKE TO ENJOY THAT!

A chance to enhance your herd's genetics by bidding for some of our best bloodlines...

I'D LOVE TO DO THAT!

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garments in a breath-taking endorsement of the end-product.

The focus of the BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic is, of course, the magnificent alpaca – Australia's best livestock investment.

Since its inception 10 years ago, the Australian alpaca industry has established itself as an alternative industry with a future.

Originating in the rugged Andes region of South America, the alpaca is steeped in history, its fleece described for centuries by the South American Indians as the 'fibre of the gods'.

Australia, with its unrivalled tradition of fibre production and marketing, is in a prime position to tap into the vast global opportunities for alpaca fibre. Not content to merely be a player on the world commodity stage, Australia has already developed a specialist processing facility at Geelong to ensure producers' returns are max-

imised by value-adding the fibre into a myriad of products. The team from Elite Fibre and the Alpaca Co-operative Ltd. will be at the trade exhibition to share their vision with visitors.

But alpacas are much more than a sound financial investment. The BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic will also highlight the numerous lifestyle benefits offered by this affectionate animal. A docile companion for children and a fierce protector of other livestock, the delightful alpaca is an easy-care addition to other rural pursuits.

For the first time, this year's event will include a Lifestyle and Country Living Exhibition, where patrons can discuss everything from growing lavender to the latest barns. There will even be a rural real estate specialist who can find you that longed-for stone cottage in the hills.

The BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic also offers plenty of opportunities to sit back and relax – and where better than in Australia's entertainment capital, Melbourne and its cultural hub, Carlton. Plan a visit to cosmopolitan Lygon Street, Melbourne's Italian quarter or extend your stay to attend the Melbourne Cup, Australia's premier tourism event on Tuesday 3 November.

Because of its enormous public appeal and the timing, the Classic is featured this year as part of the Spring Racing Carnival calendar.



PROGRAM UPDATE

The program for the weekend is shaping up to be a very exciting one. Because of the interest already shown by people wanting trade displays for the Country Living Exhibition, we have decided to rent the entire area of the Great Hall.

This will enable us to open the hall at both ends, thereby attracting public from Rathdowne Street to the western entrance which is adjacent to the new Imax Theatre. (The Imax reportedly attracts about 450 people per hour!)

We will also have enough space to hold our 'Industry Insights' lectures immediately inside the western entrance, opposite the AAA corporate display.

Industry Insights will be given by Guy Pounder, Alan Hamilton, Cherie Bridges, David Johnson, Ken Phillips, Sherryl Riley and Mike Safley of Northwest Alpacas, USA. All aspects of

Proposed Program

Saturday	10.00 am to 6.00 pm	National Show	Main Ring
	10.00 am to 6.00 pm	Industry Insights Lectures	Theatrette
	10.00 am to 6.00 pm	Country Living Exhibition	Main Hall
	Time to be confirmed	Marty McGee	Carlton Gardens
	7.30 pm	Members' Dinner	Cafe area
Sunday	8.30 am to 10.00 am	Junior Judging	Main Ring
	10.00 am to 10.45 am	Judging Clinic – Dr. Sumar	Main Ring
	10.00 am to 2.00 pm	Industry Insights Lectures	Theatrette
	10.00 am to 6.00 pm	Country Living Exhibition	Main Hall
	11.00 am to 12.00 noon	Marty McGee	Main Ring
	12.30 pm to 1.00 pm	Parade of Champions	Main Ring
	1.00 pm to 2.00 pm	Event to be announced	Main Ring
	2.00 pm to 2.30 pm	Parade of Auction Animals	Main Ring
	2.45 pm to 3.15 pm	Fashion Show	Main Ring
	3.30 pm to 4.45 pm	Auction	Main Ring
	5.00 pm to 5.30 pm	Garment Auction	Main Ring



Fashion photography: Alejandro Balaguer



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out a first place
and two seconds
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(Below)
Australian Centeno
Sunrise
Reserve Junior
Champion Female,
1997 Royal
Melbourne Show
Second in Class,
National Classic
Show

Sire: Peruvian
Centeno
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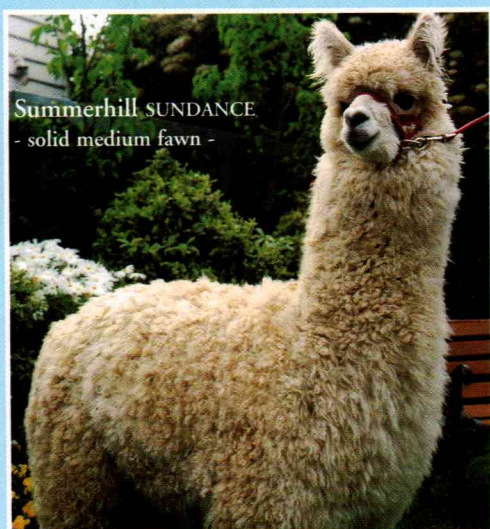
PERUVIAN CENTENO



ALPACANDES ALPACAS

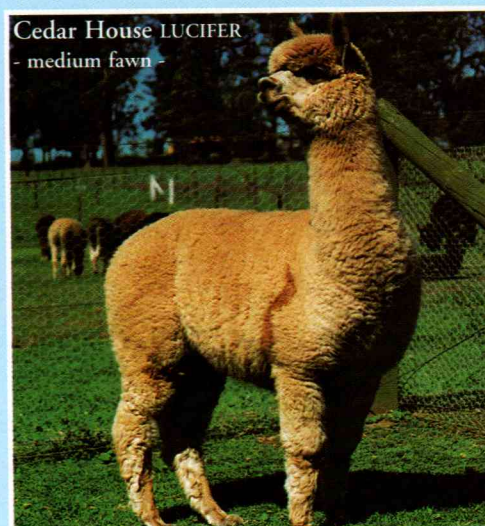
Your choice of outstanding *PROVEN* stud sires
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Mobile services – drive bys – on farm matings
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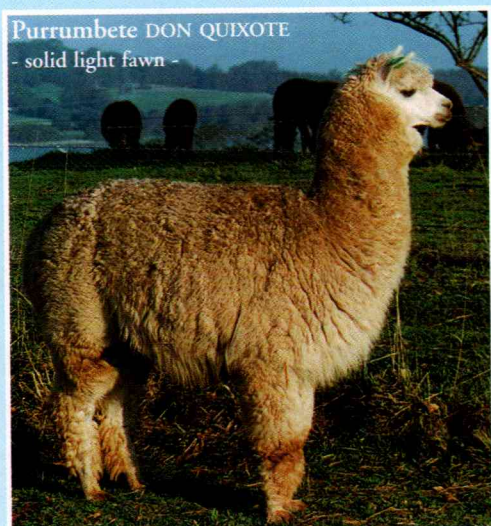
Summerhill SUNDANCE
- solid medium fawn -

SUNDANCE, a beautiful upstanding young male by Purrumbete El Dorado & out of Purrumbete Flamingo Sunrise (Purrumbete Showpiece). This boy oozes style, density, coverage, crimp & a lovely soft fine fleece. We are confident Sundance will add some outstanding genetics and stunning cria to any herd.



Cedar House LUCIFER
- medium fawn -

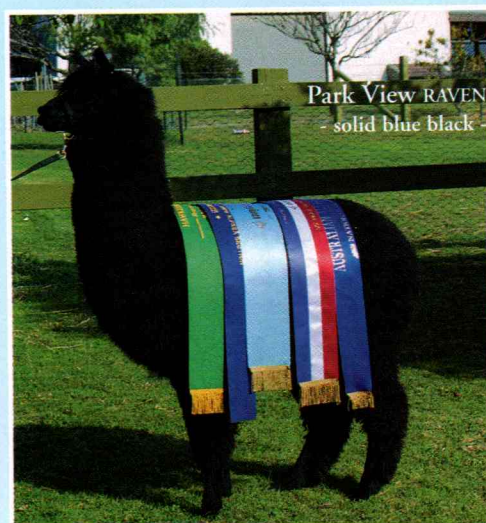
LUCIFER (son of the famous Purrumbete Highlander) has stunning apricot fleece with beautiful character, density & lustre. His recent show results prove it – Champion Senior Fleece Sydney Royal '97, Champion Fleece Castle Hill '97, Supreme Champion Picton '97. His first cria on the ground are superb.



Purrumbete 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 -

the industry will be covered. The lectures will run continuously during public hours from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm on Saturday and from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm on Sunday.

THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS

We have set a new record for sponsorship this year with almost \$80,000 confirmed, as we go to print, in cash and 'in kind'.

The natural synergy between the luxury and eliteness of alpaca and BMW has inspired a twelve month collaboration with BMW Australia Ltd and Menere's, Melbourne's most established BMW dealership. We have called the collaboration an 'elite alliance'. The Classic is the first of the joint ventures.

An innovative approach to promotion for both organisations, the collaboration should prove very beneficial.

Another 'first' this year was to sign up a leading sponsor from amongst our own members. Terry and Tina Wheeler of Windsong Valley Alpacas have set a wonderful example with their substantial contribution.

Windsong Valley Alpacas was established in 1991 at Bedfordale, W.A. and is run as a family affair. Its herd of both huacaya and suri alpaca is the largest solely owned herd in Western Australia. Windsong's well-known stud sire, Purrumbete Ledger's Dream sired the current National Supreme Champion and has a string of other champion offspring to his credit. He is featured on the front cover of this edition together with the BMW Z3 roadster.

We would also like to make special mention of our other major sponsors whose commitment and vision have helped us to cut new ground in staging an event of this scale.

Our first thanks go to Jolimont Alpacas who will be donating part of the proceeds from the sale of their nominated auction animal, a full Peruvian female.

Pat and Rosa Viceconte have been raising alpacas since 1989 after importing a herd of 100 alpacas from New Zealand. In 1993, they imported a group from Chile and, in 1996, imported the first direct shipment of alpacas from Peru. One of the progeny born in quarantine on Cocos Islands was Jolimont Conquistador who took off the Supreme Championship at this year's Sydney Royal.

Another major sponsor is the fledgling but highly active Suri Club which is sponsoring the Industry Insights Lectures. Well done Suri Club! We hope to see a great line up of suris at the Classic – especially as this will be the first show with separate classes for Coloureds!

We are still seeking another major sponsor to co-host the lectures. Any takers? This would be a great one for the Regions. The benefits are considerable. Ring Sandi for further details on 03 5768 2549.

We are also deeply indebted to our 'in kind' sponsors whose services represent a substantial saving of almost \$20,000 on artwork, design and printing.

Our grateful thanks are extended to RMIT University (Tony Fry) and Dux Freelance Management (Sandra Brownbill) for co-ordinating the photography. Romello Pereira and Natalie Walker are the two talented young students responsible for the superb photograph on this edition's front cover. The work being done by RMIT University not only represents a considerable saving to the AAA but, hopefully, will provide further opportunities for work to the students and graduates involved in the project.

We also owe our thanks to Jeff Gittus, whose company, Active Display Group, has taken on responsibility for printing. This represents a substantial saving to the AAA and we are extremely grateful to Jeff for his generosity and vision.



Jolimont Conquistador, Supreme Champion, 1998 Sydney Royal, with handler, Kate Tulip.

MEMBERS' DINNER

Tracy Emerson has organised a superb menu (see below) for our \$32, but numbers are limited! Book early.

The meals and snacks that will be available during the two days look just as wonderful! The prices range from \$3 to \$6. The event will be licensed with some great Victorian wines featured.



Gold suri – one of the superb coloureds.

This year's Classic is an event for everyone, not just those who go home with a trophy. No animals to show? Provided space is available, you can still promote your stud by booking a farm display or stud pen.

You can also promote your product by taking a trade display, or by sponsoring an event or prize.

The possibilities are endless and the bottom line is that everyone benefits.

If you'd like to get involved by lending a hand, then that's another great idea.

We could certainly do with your help. Contact the convenor of the BMW National Alpaca Spring Classic, Sandi Keane on 03 5768 2549.

Sandi Keane and Duncan Brown



Buffet Dinner Menu

Fresh Fish of the Day with Red Thai Curry

Pasta with Bacon, Cream and Chives

Eye Fillet of Beef

Leg Ham with Brown Sugar and Stout

BBQ Chicken Legs with Chilli and Soya

Smoked River Trout

Mediterranean Salad

Small Potatoes with Sour Cream Dressing

Tomato and Basil Salsa

Green Salad

Dressing Condiments & Assorted Breads

Fresh Fruit Salad & Berries

Chocolate Port Cake

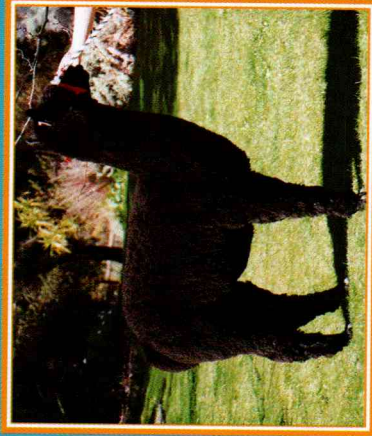
Lemon Tarts

Cheese Plate

Tea and Coffee

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Reserve Champion
Geelong AlpacaFest '96
"the best black male I've
seen anywhere" ...
leading A Grade judge



"COALMINER" (KAIZEN
BLACKJACK) - blue/black



PERUVIAN VIGILANTE
- white -

Sired by the US star
"Hemingway" with the
same miraculous fibre.

"a black Suri is priceless"
... Billy Bohrt
At stud for the first time in
Victoria to a strictly limited
number of females.



WALZING MATILDA SILQUESTA
- blue/black Suri - (no mobiles)



BOHRT ROYAL LINE BYRON
(Bolivian Suri)

"I haven't seen a better Suri lately" ... Billy Bohrt.
Remarkable corkscrew ringlets and pearl-like lustre.

Also at stud the well known Suri —

CHAMPION CEDAR HOUSE KINGSTON
Australia's most decorated suri.



CH. CEDAR HOUSE DESERT PRINCE
- dark caramel -

Major wins National '97,
Sydney Royal '98.

Suri Sire and dam. Well
defined lock architecture
which twists all the way to
the backbone and a lustre
which dazzles.



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140th anniversary: Charles Ledger at Liverpool (1858)

by Christine Raszewski, Liverpool Regional Museum

1998 is a milestone in the history of the alpaca industry in Australia. It is 140 years since the introduction of the first alpaca flock from Peru to NSW.

Plans are under way to celebrate this significant event at Collingwood, Liverpool, where the flock was depastured for twelve months from December 1858 until late 1859.

Alpaca farmers from the Hawkesbury/Blue Mountains region of the Australian Alpaca Association have joined with the Liverpool Regional Museum to organise the Inaugural Charles Ledger Show at Collingwood on Sunday 25 October 1998. The show will also include Peruvian cultural activities, craft stalls and food and the Museum will present an exhibition about the alpaca story.

The mid nineteenth century was an age of scientific discovery and there was great interest in natural history. In Australia a group of businessmen, farmers and politicians became interested in the acclimatisation of exotic plants and animals to Australian conditions and formed the Acclimatisation Society. The Society was responsible for the importation of many exotic plants and animals which are now considered to be pests, such as rabbits and Paspalum.

An English merchant from Peru, Charles Ledger was asked by the NSW government to bring a flock of alpacas to NSW. Ledger spent seven years selectively breeding alpacas and llamas and preparing them for the long sea voyage to NSW. Because the Peruvian government discouraged foreign interest by prohibiting movement of alpacas within 40 miles of the coast, Ledger herded them 2,700 kilometres across the Andes through Bolivia to the Pacific port of Caldera in Chile. He faced great hardship during the journey and many animals died. The story of Ledger's epic journey is one of the great unknown adventures in world history. However, a graphic account survives in the form of 33 watercolours held by the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

From an original flock of 570 animals, only 276 alpacas, llamas and vicunas survived and they arrived in Sydney on 28 November 1858. Following a brief stay at the Domain, they were moved to Collingwood and Sophienberg, two adjoining properties belonging to Mr James Henry Atkinson MLA, a supporter of the acclimatisation movement. While Sophienberg House and property no longer exist,



Collingwood House, Liverpool, New South Wales.

Collingwood House survives and forms part of the Liverpool Regional Museum on the Hume Highway, Liverpool.

While at Liverpool the animals were shorn, the first recorded shearing of alpacas in Australia, but the staple was short because they were shorn too early. Five bales of alpaca wool, two crossbred, and five llama wool bales were exported to England. The shearing was quite a social event. In attendance were 300 dignitaries including the Premier, the Hon. Charles Cowper. Guests were honoured with a huge picnic banquet which included roast alpaca and alpaca soup. The soup was very politely declared to be 'very rich, and to keep it down [the guests] were obliged to take lots of fizz and brandy'. Ledger became a celebrity and was invited to lecture to numerous learned societies.

The flock was moved to Arthursleigh, a property owned by Thomas Holt, politician and acclimatisation advocate, near Goulburn in 1860.

Seven stuffed alpacas were sent to the International Exhibition in London in 1862 where Ledger won the highest award, the exhibition gold medal, for his pioneering work in breeding alpacas.

However, Ledger started to experience problems with the NSW government. Promises made to Ledger by Governor Fitzroy in 1853 were not honoured. These promises included the reimbursement of all costs incurred and a reward of 10,000 acres of land where he could complete experiments in the acclimatisation and cross-breeding of alpacas. An attempt to form a public company failed. After years of wrangling, the NSW Government eventually purchased the flock but for less

than half its value. Ledger was given the position of Superintendent of the Alpacas on a meagre salary. He was left with enormous personal debt.

The Acclimatisation Society of Victoria asked Ledger to procure some alpacas for them and advanced him a sum of money for the purpose. Trouble over accountability for this money resulted in an enquiry and Ledger was suspended from office. A protracted battle between Ledger and the Government ensued over his salary and the future of the alpacas. When the matter was finally settled, the flock was put in the charge of Mr Edward Payten of Wingello. The government decided to sell off the flock in small lots, which Ledger opposed on scientific grounds. As nobody was inclined to buy them, they were given away to squatters. Some ended up in lunatic asylums for the amusement of the inmates; others went to the Brisbane Zoological gardens and Taronga Park Zoo.

All Ledger's plans and dreams for an alpaca industry were destroyed.

Returning to Peru, this indefatigable entrepreneur exported seed from the cinchona tree (from which quinine is extracted). He successfully cultivated the trees in Java and was given a small Dutch pension for this extraordinary achievement. However, he died a virtual pauper in Leichhardt in 1905.

A Liverpool alpaca farmer, Peter Walton approached the museum curator with this extraordinary story, only to discover that the museum had also been researching the breed's association with Collingwood.

The forthcoming show is the result of the unique relationship which has developed between alpaca farmers in the Sydney area and the museum. The show provides an opportunity to raise the profile of the industry and promote Collingwood as a historic site for the alpaca industry in Australia.

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THE ALPACA INDUSTRY Research & Development

.....
by Carol Mathew

*There's a new project for
the alpaca industry being
funded by the RIRDC –
but will there be others in
the future?*

All successful and progressive enterprises have research and development programs. This article reports on alpaca research and development through the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation-Rare Natural Fibres Committee (RIRDC -RNF).

First, some information about the RIRDC-RNF Committee. It comprises representatives from the mohair, cashmere and alpaca industries. The Mohair and Cashmere industries have two representatives each and I am the sole alpaca industry representative.

Recently, a five-year R&D plan was produced by the Committee; this is available through the AAA. The major focus of the research is on the mohair and cashmere industries as they raise a

levy from their members which matches the government funding.

Two major alpaca projects have so far been funded by the RIRDC program. The first involved the establishment of some base data on Alpacas [*see reports on interim findings, conference feature, this issue*]. The second is the focus of this article and has only recently gained funding.

THE NEW PROJECT

'Improving the Efficiency of Reproduction and Breeding in Alpaca' is a three-year project for which the research is being supervised by Professor Michael D'Occhio of the Central Queensland University. The

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expected outcome of the research will be to provide a practical and effective treatment that will increase fertility and conception rates in female alpacas. This will be called an *Oestradiol Mating Protocol*.

Background

As we are aware, for ovulation to occur in alpacas, there needs to be present a dominant ovarian follicle which is mature. It will produce an egg after the stimulation of mating. There is only a small period of time during which this can occur in the ovarian cycle.

During initial research in Peru Professor D'Occhio and his team established that oestradiol injections caused regression of the dominant follicle in female alpacas. This project will take the research further and develop an oestradiol regimen which will re-program the ripe follicle status of a female alpaca and therefore have her ready to ovulate at the time of mating.

This is important for all in the industry as it means we will be able to predict when females will be receptive when we book matings. For the industry it will mean that more breeders will be likely to travel to use superior males if they know that probably only one trip is needed. The researchers estimate that, at present, reproductive failure in alpacas causes an annual loss to the Australian industry of \$3-4 million.

Later in the research program it is planned to use the technology developed to aid egg collection for embryo transplants in alpacas.

Present status

Professor D'Occhio is developing a team to carry out the research.

Jane, Vaughan, a Ph.D. student has been appointed to carry out much of the day to day research. Readers may remember that Jane spent 12 months tending the Jolimont Alpacas imported herd of Peruvians during their quaran-

tine on Cocos Island station in 1996. She is also a part owner of an alpaca.

A number of practising alpaca veterinarians have already joined the project. They include Drs Richard Potter, Ewen McMillan, Dennis Ryan and David Hopkins of Victoria. Alpacas from stud farms that they are involved with will be used as livestock. Vets in other states will join the project shortly.

There will be progress reports as the research proceeds.

FUTURE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The AAA is presently completing its business plan. It will then be opportune to develop a research and development plan. R&D can be very expensive and not produce good returns for the money invested if the focus is not clear and consistent. At this early stage of our development, it is important to focus on the areas we can't afford to ignore rather than things we are interested in.

It is suggested that there are three broad areas which could form our focus: market research, animal husbandry and fibre processing. Then we need to consider how to fund the necessary research and development of these areas.

As it stands, we are unlikely to get any further funds through RIRDC, unless we follow the practice of other industries and have a levy in place.

The RIRDC-RNF fund is over \$200,000 p.a. and has generated a lot of interest among alpaca breeders. In fact, for the last round of funding the majority of applications were from alpaca breeders. Some of the problems with the alpaca projects submitted for consideration were flawed methodology – often the samples of animals proposed were too small to elicit scientific proof. As well, most applications claimed support of the AAA, although the proposals had not been officially considered by our committee.

To preserve the industry's enthusiasm for R&D it will be useful to have a focused plan so that future proposals meet our objectives and, therefore, are more likely to receive funding support.

For the information of breeder, here are the vision and mission of the RIRDC-RNF five-year plan

Vision Statement

To achieve profitable rare and natural (animal) fibre industries which are based on international competitive standards of highly productive animals, efficient marketing, and increasing value-added processing and manufacturing of finished products in Australia.

Mission Statement

To be professionally organised and coordinated industries working to world's best practice by:

- increasing financial viability for all sections of the industries;
- marketing fibre at a volume and price which maintains viable industries;
- fostering increased productivity, quality and profitability from improved fibre production systems;
- increased fibre processing and finished product manufacturing in Australia;
- improving organisational integrity, leadership and nationally coordinated infrastructure sensitive to all facets of the industries;
- increasing promotion, education, research and development for all aspects of the industries.

The National AAA office has a copy of the complete Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation-Rare Natural Fibres committee R&D plan for those members who are interested in knowing its details. Further information on aspects of this article can be obtained by contacting me, Carol Mathew on 03 5429 1316.

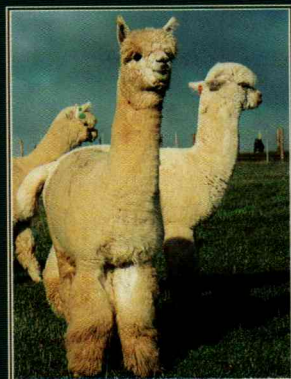
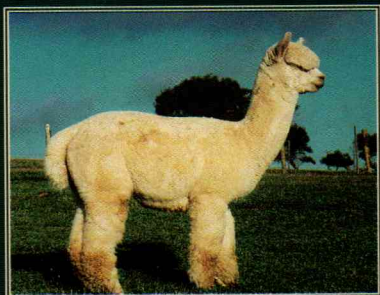
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Purrumbete Snowman (white) and Purrumbete Hot Shot (fawn).

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

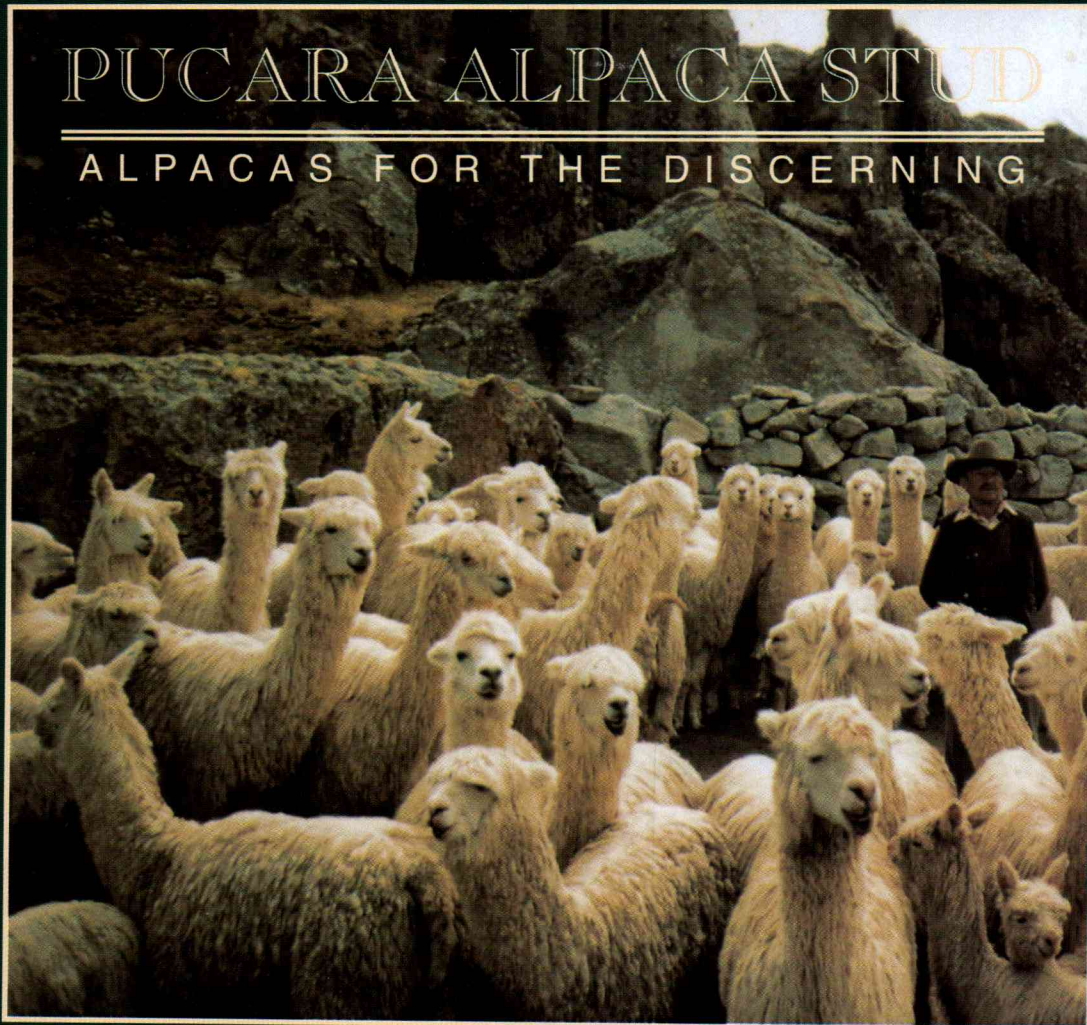
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Congratulations Jen & Pete McDavitt for your purchase, sharing the vision.

Topical Times

SECOND HANDBOOK JUST RELEASED

Following the success of their *Alpaca Breeders Birthing Handbook*, released last year, veterinarian, Ewen McMillan and breeders, Allan and Carolyn Jinks have produced a second publication.

According to co-author, Carolyn Jinks, the *Alpaca Breeders Reproduction Handbook* has 'more guts' and will assist more experienced breeders as well as those new to the industry.

As with the *Birthing Handbook*, the combination of veterinary and alpaca husbandry skills of the authors provide a fine blend of biology and practicality to tell the reader not only 'how' but 'how to'.

This is a slim, compact volume that really is an extremely useful portable ready-reference. At \$27 per copy (incl. postage), it's also extremely good value.

WA CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Hailed as one of the most informative ever held, the 1998 Alpaca Industry Conference featured the best of international and Australian speakers. Under the theme 'Crossing Boundaries', the conference took participants on a varied journey, exploring everything from advanced breeding technology to promotion on the Internet.

The papers given at the conference have been compiled into an information-packed publication that can be purchased now from the Association.

If you missed out on the conference, don't miss out on the proceedings. Authors include Deirdre Bourke, Julie Koenig, Derek Michell, Ian Knox, Geoff Judson and many others.

For a modest \$28, including postage, it's a steal!

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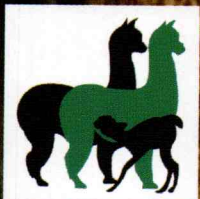
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CROSSING *boundaries*

**WE CROSSED! WE SAW!
WE WERE CONQUERED!
... AND TOTALLY ALPACA'D IN FREO**

More than 250 alpaca breeders converged on the port city of Fremantle from across the nation – and the globe – for the 1998 International Alpaca Conference. Their aim, apart from having a good time, was to evaluate the progress of the industry – now a decade old – and to map a common path forward into the 21st century.

Business executives and professionals rubbed shoulders with seasoned farmers for a weekend of seminars and socialising.

The one thing participants had in common, according to conference organiser Rhonda Perpoli, was an unswerving belief that they had become

involved in the world's best livestock investment.

'We are all serious about taking this industry forward to realise its excellent commercial prospects.'

Rhonda said the conference theme, 'Crossing Boundaries' was indicative of the industry's proactive approach to such diverse areas as artificial breeding, genetics and marketing. It was also reflective of the efforts made by eastern states breeders to cross the Nullarbor and attend the conference.

The weekend also offered a rare chance for WA breeders to showcase their animals, innovations and enthusiasm to their eastern colleagues and they

made the most of their opportunity. A line-up of high-profile, international speakers was testimony to their commitment.

Leading United States animal scientist, and now consultant specialising in genetics, Dr Julie Koenig from Oregon offered guidance on genetic selection of alpacas for improved fibre production and colour.

While, on paper, her presentation looked like a recipe for information overload, Dr Koenig's colourful and interactive presentation style left most observers in a position, not only to understand, but also to apply the information to their own operations.



Getting acquainted at the cocktail party on Friday night.



Conference convenor Rhonda Perpoli and National office manager, Jenny Jones.



While it wasn't all work and no play – there actually was a lot of learning to do!

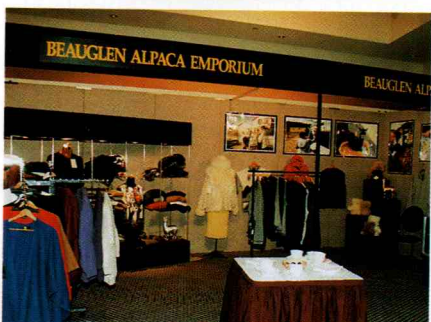
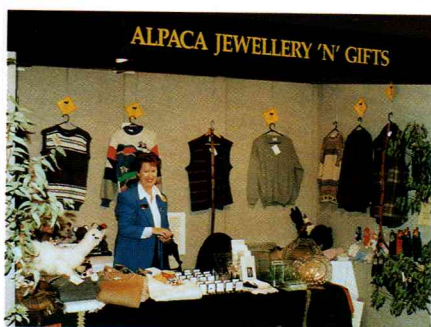
Dr Deirdre Bourke from the Rowett Research Institute in Scotland outlined the major advances in artificial breeding technology. The global marketing picture was presented by Derek Michell from Peru. Mr Michell challenged breeders to join Peru in raising the global profile of alpaca fibre and increasing production.

Offering home-grown input were Australian experts versed in everything from tax to textiles. A highlight of the seminar was the presentation of preliminary findings of the first scientific evaluation of the alpaca ever undertaken in Australia.

Balancing these seminars was a range of clinics where delegates could gain valuable hands-on experience. These included husbandry and clip preparation workshops.



Teeth trimming at the husbandry workshop run by Jenny Jackson and Lance Cummings.



There were plenty of trade displays to tempt and interest everyone at the conference.

But far from being all work and no play, the conference included a lively social agenda. The cocktail party on the first night provided the ideal opportunity to relax, revisit friendships and catch up with industry news.

The definite highlight was the Saturday night alpaca banquet at Fremantle Town Hall. The entertainment value of the totally unexpected appearance of historical alpaca industry icon, Charles Ledger, was superseded only by that of the hilarious debate entitled 'It is the size of the testicles that counts'.

Taking time out from wherever it is he now inhabits, Charles Ledger acted as moderator. On the 'yes' team were AAA stalwarts Jill Short, Sherryl Riley and Jenny Jackson. Taking a 'might is right' approach, the women insisted that (in stud male alpacas, at least), 'what you see is what you get'. The male opposition, Chris Williams, Ian Knox and Ewen McMillan, drew on somewhat intimate personal material, endeavouring to persuade the moderator that performance was not necessarily related to size. Their anecdotal evidence won the day!

The conference culminated in a stunning fashion parade showcasing the latest in alpaca fibre products.

A highlight of the parade was a range of innovative alpaca garments designed by students from the West Australian School of Art, Design and Media.



This stunning outfit was one of a collection designed by students from the WA School of Art, Design and Media.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1998 INTERNATIONAL ALPACA INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

According to all reports, the conference was one of the most informative ever staged. And no wonder, given the wide range of topics covered, not to mention a truly superb line-up of international and national presenters.

Warm congratulations are due to convenor, Rhonda Perpoli and her Western Australian team.

This *Alpacas Australia* special feature has been compiled to remind participants of some of the highlights – and render those who couldn't make the conference green with envy of those who did.

Reporter: Duncan Brown
Photography: Dolly van Zaane

KOENIG & CAMELIDS

AN ENDURING LOVE AFFAIR



A great mix of skills makes the Koenig's love affair with camelids not only emotionally satisfying, but profitable as well.

With PhDs in genetics, animal science and marketing between them, Julie and Hal Koenig should be in prime position to cash in on camelids. And this is certainly the case, as they run a profitable llama enterprise at Oregon in the U.S. – in addition to raising two children and full time work commitments.

Dr Julie Koenig has established herself as America's leading geneticist and animal scientist specialising in camelids. Her parents are at least partly to blame for her passion. After gaining her degree from Cornell University, New York, Koenig went on to complete her masters and PhD at the University of Nebraska, majoring in animal science breeding and genetics with a minor in reproductive physiology. She then headed west to Oregon State University where she was on staff for a couple of years. Around this time, her parents started breeding llamas, moving from the heart of New York to a 40 acre ranch at Oregon. Julie was soon recruited to assist and her passion for camelids was ignited.

'Although in Nebraska you are being taught cattle and pigs and so forth, in my mind I was always applying the principles I learnt at school to my parents llama breeding program.'

Julie soon discovered that an animal science PhD, knowledge of, and interest in, genetics *and* hands-on experience with camelids were a rare combination and she became hot property on the American camelid circuit.

'Breeders were asking me to come out and set up their breeding programs, help them with their breeding objectives and colour genotyping. It got to the point where I had to decide whether I was going to be a consultant

or continue at the university, because I simply couldn't do both. And that was before kids and our herd became quite large. I decided to go out on my own and I haven't looked back on that decision.'

Julie and her husband usually run between 35 and 45 llamas and are prominent on the US show circuit, where their versatile animals shine – but not too much. The Koenigs are reluctant to base their breeding schedule on show-ring success which has often been dependent on an ability to pursue the latest 'fad'.

'That's dangerous. People fall into the trap of believing the most heavily promoted animal or the one that sells for the highest price or the one that wins in the show ring... are connected with the best genetics. More often than not, that's not the case. The show ring tends to create trends that might not be good for the industry. The question people need to ask is. "Will this particular fad be good for the industry in the long term?"'

While some breeders have chased the latest fads, the Koenigs have remained committed to breeding 'multi-use' llamas.

Their animals are in demand with recreational packers while, at the same time, they are capable of producing a fleece of fine quality – largely the result of the solid performance of their latest 21 micron sire.

'I guess the lofty goal would be to produce the ultimate animal whose fibre is high alpaca quality, whose disposition would allow you to drop a leader rope into a five year old's hands and who, once sheared, could pack ten miles carrying 100 pounds.'



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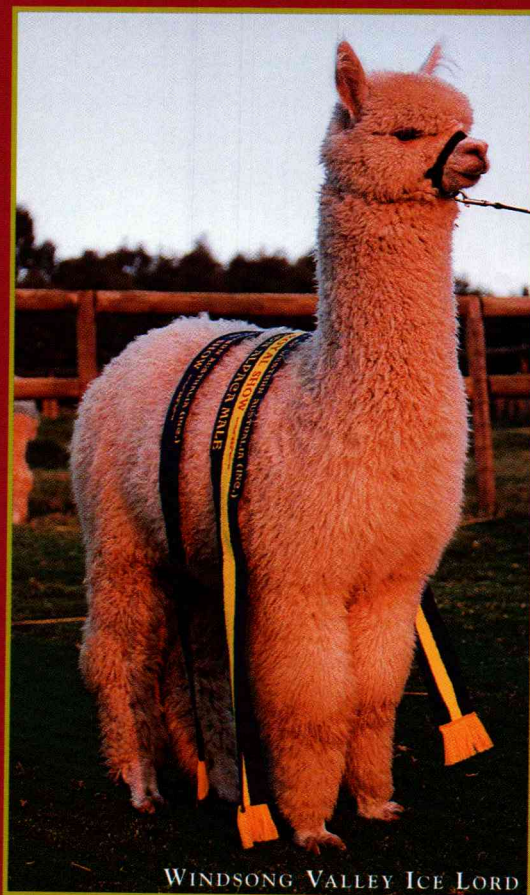
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– Windsong Valley Romany

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Breeding for fibre production

A BALANCED PERSPECTIVE

Leading American geneticist, Dr Julie Koenig urged Australian alpaca breeders to adopt a 'scientific approach' to breeding. A keynote speaker at this year's International Alpaca Conference at Fremantle, Dr Koenig also warned against focusing solely on fibre at the expense of other 'more important' traits. Breeders need to adopt a multi-trait selection philosophy, the animal scientist and geneticist said. While fibre production was the focus of her message to delegates, Dr Koenig began her address by encouraging delegates to put the pursuit of fibre excellence in perspective with the 'big three': general health, reproductive fitness and conformation.

'Without those three things nothing else really matters. If they [alpacas] can't reproduce effectively it doesn't matter how good your fibre is because you won't be producing it. If the animal is not healthy it doesn't matter how good your fibre genes are because they won't be producing enough of it. And if they aren't conformationally correct, it doesn't matter if you have the best stud [male] in Australia, he won't be doing his job for very long.'

Dr Koenig pointed out that genetically improving fibre production was the easiest thing to do because of its relatively high heritability.

'It's a fear I have with the alpaca industry – that they will get so focused on producing lots of good quality fibre that they will ignore the fundamental issues that are, number one, more important and, number two, far more difficult to improve.

'Changing the quality and quantity of fibre – since it's highly heritable – is one of the easiest things to do.

Concentrating exclusively on that is neither impressive nor having lots of foresight for the future. If industry people want alpacas to be treated like any other livestock, then focusing on fibre is the way to go. If they want longevity in the animals and the industry then they've got to hit the conformation, the health, the reproductive fitness and probably the disposition as well.'

A scientific approach, Dr Koenig commented, starts by setting breeding goals and objectives, a practice sometimes neglected by her American colleagues.

'You are going to get the most improvement and fastest improvement in your herd if you establish your breeding objectives and actually breed by what I call a scientific approach. Many people simply select by saying, "I think I like this one and I think I like that one. Let's pair them and see what kind of cria we get".'

Most breeding decisions in the US are made on what Dr Koenig referred to as a 'phenotypic formula' where breeding combinations are determined largely on a visual basis. An animal's phenotype is determined by a combination of the genetic make-up and environmental influences which include housing, climate, parasite load, health and nutrition.

With the breeding objectives established, the next step is to practise scientific animal selection. The ability to choose directly impacts on the genetic progress of a breeder's herd, according to Dr Koenig. This involves the development of an objective evaluation system for each trait.

'What you need is some unbiased scientific system which allows you to

decide which is the best and which is the worst. The remaining challenge is to find breeding pairs which will optimise these objectives.'

ESTABLISH BREEDING OBJECTIVES AND GOALS FOR FIBRE PRODUCTION

Develop an objective evaluation system for each fibre trait

Quantity

Total yield: a function of both density and staple. Weigh sheared fleece and record in kilograms.

Staple: measure the length of the fibre with a ruler.

Density: relative score = weight (kg) divided by staple. The larger the number the greater the density.

Quality

Fineness: measure fibre diameter in microns.

Uniformity: plot histogram of diameters from sample standard deviation.

Crimp: amplitude – measure the height of the wave; and frequency – measure number of waves. Tighter crimp generally has a lower amplitude and higher frequency.

The ability to improve animals is dependent on a breeder's ability to keep records, Dr Koenig says. Accurate record keeping relies on the minimisation of non-genetic factors. This means separating the genetic influence on a trait from the environmental influence and determining the contribution of each. The higher the genetic contribution, the higher the heritability of that trait and the better the chances of improving that trait through breeding.

Dr Koenig says it is possible to evaluate each animal consistently and move down the track to objective selection, minimising – but not excluding – the environmental influence which should be fairly consistent within a herd.

Evaluate each animal consistently

Quantity

Keep in mind the number of months of fleece growth. Fleece weights are not compared truly if the fleeces have not been growing over the same period. Therefore it is important to keep consistent the growing period of the fleece, although variations between animals can be corrected based on growth per month.

What's being weighed – the blanket portion or the whole fleece? This must be constant across the animals. Cleanliness of the fleece must also be considered. There's no value in selecting animals with a heavier fleece if it is caused by

dirt collection. Age can also have an impact. An adult animal has more surface area than an alpaca that is being shorn for the first time.

Quality

The sex of the animal can have an impact. Fibre diameter on intact males is often broader because they are producing testosterone.

It is not always fair to compare a juvenile with an adult or a male with a female.

It is not always accurate to compare an animal's first shearing with its subsequent shearings. As the animal ages its fibre tends to get coarser.

Take into account the fleece cleanliness when evaluating by hand. The cleaner the fleece the better it will feel, even if the quality is not as high as on a dirty fleece.

Nutrition plays a part. Overfed animals tend to produce a slightly coarser fibre while feed-stressed animals tend to grow a finer fibre. The plane of

nutrition needs to be consistent across the animals being compared. This is easy to do within a herd but harder to achieve across herds. Parasite densities can also have an effect. The same sample site should be used on each animal and micron should be measured by an independent laboratory.

'As long as the evaluations are done in a consistent manner – i.e. all micron measurements done at, say, 18 months of age – then in-herd animal comparisons should be accurate.'

Heritability

Animals having been ranked, the next step is to separate the animal's genetic value from its phenotype. This is the function of heritability which is the proportion of the difference between two animals' phenotypes that we expect to see in their offspring. While it is relatively easy to assess which animal is best if the environment is constant, Dr Koenig says heritability allows you to determine 'best by how much'.

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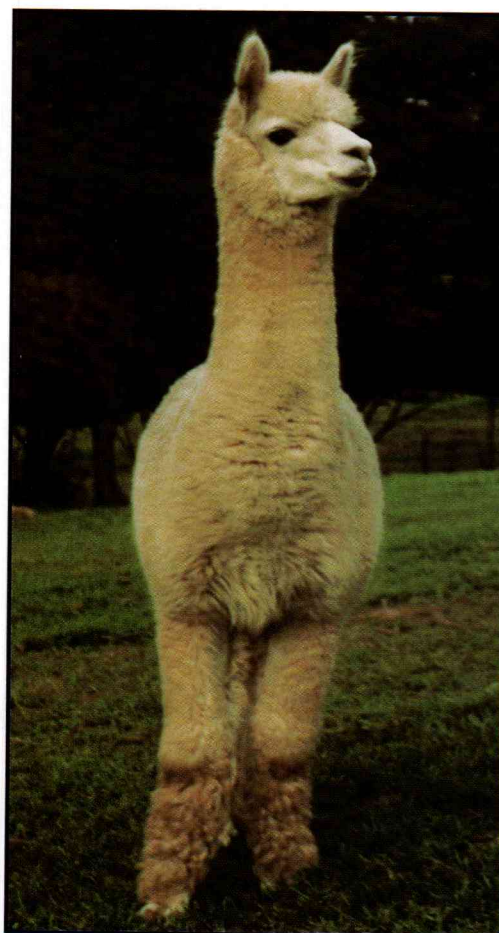
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The larger the heritability, the smaller the environmental component in that trait. If there is a trait that is unaffected by the environment then the phenotype is an accurate reflection of the genetic make-up. But if the trait is greatly influenced by the environment, then the amount of the animal's phenotype caused by genetics is minor. The larger the environmental variation the smaller the heritability and the smaller the heritability the harder it is to breed in changes.

Since heritability is a fraction, the heritability value will always vary between 0 and 1. A heritability of 1 means there is no environmental factor. A heritability of 0 means the phenotype is caused exclusively by the environment. Traits such as reproduction are called lowly heritable traits because they are subject to huge environmental influences. However Dr Koenig says fibre traits are highly heritable. Scores like 0.6 or 0.7 indicate high heritability, meaning it is possible to change the fibre production propensity of a herd dramatically and quickly, 'if you know what you are doing'.

Compare animals using genetic values, not their phenotypes

Breeding value (BV) is the genetic value of an animal as a parent, disregarding environmental factor. In order to determine BV, the breeder must use the following calculation:

$$BV = \text{heritability} \times (\text{phenotypic value} - \text{average of herd})$$

Trait	Sire A	Sire B	Herd 1 Ave	Herd 2 Ave
Weight	4 lb	5 lb	3.5 lb	4 lb
Diameter	20 mic	25 mic	30 mic	25 mic

Fleece Weight (assume $h^2 = .6$)

Herd 1	Herd 2
BV, Sire A = $.6 \times (4 - 3.5) = .3$	BV, Sire A = $.6 \times (4 - 4) = 0$
BV, Sire B = $.6 \times (5 - 3.5) = .9$	BV, Sire B = $.6 \times (5 - 4) = .6$

Fibre Diameter (assume $h^2 = .5$)

Herd 1	Herd 2
BV, Sire A = $.5 \times (20 - 30) = -5$	BV, Sire A = $.5 \times (20 - 25) = -2.5$
BV, Sire B = $.5 \times (25 - 30) = -2.5$	BV, Sire B = $.5 \times (25 - 25) = 0$

Comparing BVs estimates genetic differences among alpacas. Phenotypic comparisons can over/underestimate an alpaca's value.

In herd 1, B's fleece weighs 25% more than A's (phenotypically, they're 25% different), but *genetically*, B is three times (300%) better than A. Also in herd 1, A's fleece is 25% finer than B's, phenotypically, but *genetically*, A is twice as good as B.

This approach allows comparison between breeding values and an accurate comparison between animals, not merely a ranking.

While breeding value indicates the superior animal for a particular trait, it does not tell you which animal is best overall.

Develop and use a multiple trait selection system

Once the heritability of traits is established and the breeding goals set, Dr Koenig suggests establishing a minimum level for each trait which each animal must meet or exceed.

It is also possible to rank animals from best to worst using an equation which considers all your breeding objectives at once.

This process requires:

- prioritising traits;
- assigning larger weighting factors to traits with higher priorities; and
- calculating animal's ranks using the following formula:

$$\text{Animal's rank} = (W_1 \times P_1) + (W_2 \times P_2) + (W_3 \times P_3) + \dots (W_n \times P_n)$$

OPTIMISING MATING PAIRS


Dr Koenig concluded her address with some practical advice on optimising mating pairs:

- Avoid inbreeding: don't recommend mating animals that share more than one common grandparent.
- Avoid pairing animals that share common faults since this greatly increases the probability that the offspring will be worse than the parents.
- Pair animals to maximise the probability of obtaining improvement.

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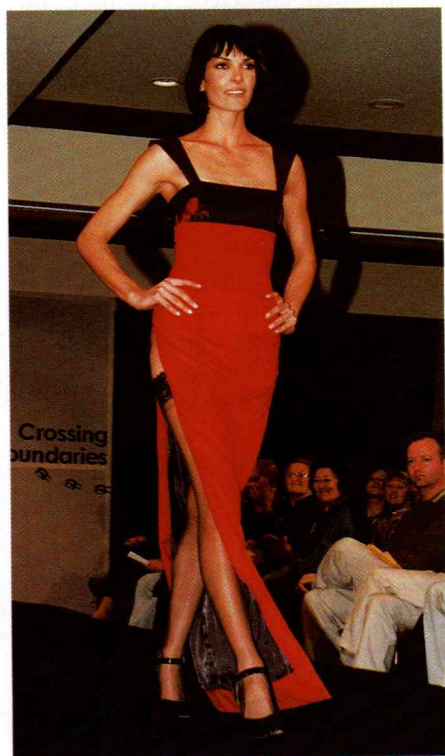
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'Let's work together!' urges Derek Michell

'If we are experiencing strong demand now with no real promotional effort, imagine what a cohesive marketing campaign would achieve.'



The world's largest alpaca fibre processor has urged Australia's industry to join an international push to raise the global profile of alpaca.

Director of the Peru-based Michell Group, Derek Michell, believes the alpaca industry needs a united marketing push and that Australia, with its fibre growing and marketing expertise, has a major role to play.

Mr Michell told the conference that alpaca fibre would be viewed in the same revered light as cashmere if the industry could work together in a concerted marketing and production push. He also indicated that his company will buy any Australian product – but preferably baby and white – in an effort to satisfy international demand. (Michell's is a major breeder of alpaca and exporter of tops and yarns to the world's largest consumers, including Italy and Japan.)

'If we are experiencing strong demand now with no real promotional effort, imagine what a cohesive marketing campaign would achieve.'

'At the moment, alpaca is not known in the world. You go to Europe... and one person in 15 will know what alpaca is. We need to go into the world and make it more well-known, that is the only way to increase demand.'

Derek reported that representatives from all major alpaca breeding countries have begun meeting together to devise a uniform standard for alpaca, similar to the IWS Woolmark, but with tighter quality standards.

'We all have to raise the profile of alpaca to make it a classic and tradi-

tional item and to do that we need to look at the baby and FS [first shearing].

We can't look at the coarse.

'Just imagine a jumper made with 40 per cent acrylic, 30 per cent wool and 20 per cent coarse alpaca. If it's itchy and marketed as alpaca, the alpaca goes out of business. We must focus on the finer side and try to make it into a traditional item. You will still have price fluctuations but at least it will be in demand all the time, like cashmere.'

Derek believes that alpaca fibre production (currently at around 4,000 tonnes a year) will need to double before it will be able to command the same attention as cashmere and insulate itself from the volatile fibre commodity cycles. But with countries such as Australia and Canada coming on line, this was achievable.

'Making alpaca known and having more available will bring more buyers into the market and better prices. Today, \$US9.00 a top of FS and \$US16.00 a top of baby are normal. But looking ahead, we could easily be getting \$US35.00.'

Despite being in consistent demand with prestige cloth makers such as Piacenza, Agnona and Loro Piana of Italy, alpaca fibre is still regarded as a fashion item and therefore heavily influenced by trends.

Derek suggested that the solution lay in making alpaca into '...a classical item that is in demand when other fibres are not being sold. For that to happen we must focus on the finer end.'

THE LONG ROAD TO AI

The 'boys' and a lack of funding are letting down the side in the push to develop artificial breeding technology in camelids.

Scientists are at least five years off developing simple, affordable semen collection and freezing procedures capable of fast-tracking genetic progress in alpacas, despite the tireless efforts of scientists in Britain, Europe and North and South America. And it's the unique reproductive characteristics of male alpacas that are causing most of the headaches.

This update was delivered by world authority on the subject, Dr Deirdre Bourke (Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen Scotland) to the conference. Artificial breeding would help compensate for the slow reproductive rate of camelids, Dr Bourke said, but scientists were encountering their fair share of hurdles. In particular, mimicking the unusual natural mating characteristics of the male camelid is stretching the resources and imaginations of scientists trying to collect semen. These characteristics include: a prolonged mating period; patterns of penetration of the penis into the vagina and cervix of the female; and deposition of semen in small pulses rather than the single thrust ejaculate that is typical in bulls.

'In terms of getting to a stage where the cattle industry's at, where you can just phone up and order really high quality embryo and semen, we are still a long way away and highly dependent on the amount of money that is being invested into the future,' Dr Bourke says.

A lack of funding is also restricting progress, with authorities in the United Kingdom still refusing to classify alpacas as 'domestic livestock'. This means no tax incentives and no real desire to breed the animals.

'Unfortunately there is not a huge amount of money being invested in camelid research. Within Europe, governments are telling researchers that camelids are not significant.

'Until numbers increase dramatically, this will not change. And for that to happen there are a lot of attitudes that have to change.'

However, Dr Bourke's own work – focusing on developing affordable techniques for multiple ovulation and embryo transfer in females – has been far more successful. The pinnacle of her efforts has been the birth of several llamas to recipient mothers after non-surgical embryo collection and transferral and natural joining to a male.

'The advantage of this is that it allows us to select on both the maternal and paternal side by identifying superior donor



Deirdre Bourke.

females and stimulating them to produce multiple ovulations. By mating to superior males it allows us to select simultaneously on two sides and have multiple offspring from separate recipients.'

Dr Bourke says the development of transrectal ultrasound technology was crucial in developing these technologies, enabling detailed observation of normal ovarian activity and monitoring of ovarian responses to hormone treatments.

Once the ovulation period was identified using ultrasound, a non-surgical embryo transferral technique could be used.

'We wanted to develop a non-surgical and relatively non-invasive technique to allow us to do it repeatedly without the risk of long-term damage to the female.'

The collection procedure involved inserting a catheter through the vagina into the uterus. The catheter had a balloon attached to it which was inflated just in front of the cervix. From this embryo recovery fluid was dispensed into the uterus to flush out embryos, which were collected. This procedure elicited a 60 per cent recovery rate for single embryos. Embryos were successfully transferred to synchronised recipients using an instrument which passed through the vagina and cervix and into the uterus. Natural joining resulted in pregnancy rates of up to 50 per cent.

Scientists are edging closer towards commercially viable artificial breeding technology for South American camelids. But, Dr Bourke says, the alpaca industry will need to develop consistent breeding criteria if it is to gain the maximum benefit from the technology.

'At this stage it is probably not worthwhile because the alpaca industry has not really selected its criteria... Advanced breeding techniques offer tremendous potential for genetic improvement but if you get it wrong you can make a mess. The selection criteria are so important and there is great variety within alpacas. You must begin by establishing what a superior alpaca is.'

With the camelid funding having 'dried up' at her institute, Dr Bourke is now working as a veterinarian clinician with sheep and other livestock. But camelids remain her 'number one take home animal' and she visits them every day.

LAY DOWN YOUR GUNS!

Alpaca breeders have been urged to lay down their drench guns and take up their shovels in the fight against parasites.

Senior pathologist with the South Australian Research and Development Institute, Dr Ian Carmichael says findings from the first Australian study into parasitism in alpacas endorse a conservative approach to drenching.

He warned that excessive drenching will further jeopardise the effectiveness of drenches on the market.

'There is a real potential to select in alpacas worms resistant to ML (macrocyclic lactones) drenches which could seriously affect the industry. The MLs have justifiably become the treatment of choice for internal parasites in alpacas and because of their value to the industry, it is essential that they are preserved for the future.

'Before drenching alpacas, one needs to be convinced that this is absolutely essential for the well-being of the animals. In most cases a conservative approach, associated with regular monitoring of parasite levels, can avoid a large amount of unnecessary drenching without compromising the health of animals.'

Preliminary results of the RIRDC trial revealed that adult alpacas were relatively unaffected by worms, even when exposed to high counts on pasture. And there have been no clinical signs of worm infection in this country, Dr Carmichael assured conference participants. The issue was not the cost of drenching – which is minimal considering the cost of an alpaca – but preventing the increase of parasite resistance to the limited range of effective drenches. Australia and New Zealand

already have among the highest levels of drench resistance in the world.

'The cost of drenching really doesn't come into it with alpacas. The danger is that continual use will increase the rate of selection for resistant parasites. At the rate we're going, the life of a drench could be shortened to three to five years.'

Dr Carmichael said the best strategy for combating parasites was faecal monitoring of susceptible stock, such as crias up to seven months of age, twice a year. Animals with elevated counts should be treated individually as opposed to whole herd drenching.

'In this way, undue selection for drench resistance will be averted and the continued maintenance of a natural immunity in the herd assured,' he said.

Dr Carmichael's advice is based on results just released from a major

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research initiative coordinated by the South Australian Research and Development Institute with funding from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and Australian Alpaca Association. Parasite levels of alpacas on five farms in southern Australia were monitored by examination of faeces collected four times annually. The data gathered is being used to provide the baseline for an internal parasite profile of alpacas in southern Australia.

According to Dr Carmichael, alpacas are susceptible to cattle and sheep worms while specific alpaca worms have not yet been found in Australia.

Young animals are generally more affected by worms than older animals. But if exposed to worm burdens at an early age crias usually develop an immunity which will prevent any further problems. Dr Carmichael suggests testing about ten crias during the rainy season.

'If the tests return positive, treat the crias but don't treat animals over one-and-a-half to two years.'

The trial found females to be far more susceptible than males due to their long gestation period and consequent need to be kept on a rising plane of nutrition.

'Stress always lowers the animal's resistance. This can be brought on by a lack of feed, although this is rare in Australia because people look after their animals. If the females' egg counts go up, they can pass eggs on to the pasture which are available to the highly susceptible crias.'

Another factor in alpaca exposure to parasites is the tendency of breeders to concentrate animals in small areas, often close to the homestead. The area can become heavily contaminated and heavy grazing can exacerbate the problem. Not only is parasite uptake increased by alpacas grazing to low pasture height, insufficient rotation time can have alpacas back grazing paddocks

before worm larvae die off. In these circumstances, the common latrines used by alpacas also work in favour of increased parasite exposure.

'They graze closer and closer to those latrines which function as a tremendous source of infection should the season change or the irrigation be turned on.'

For the most effective prevention of parasites and worms, Dr Carmichael advocates an age-old ritual involving a fair degree of elbow grease.

'There is an obvious and very simple thing to do about it and that is to remove the dung. It is done as a routine in most well set up thoroughbred breeding establishments. This should be done before the rainy season in the south - an April clean-up.'

The danger times are May and October, in the winter rainfall period, when most of the larvae are likely to be available for intake. Consequently, animals born between January and June are most at risk.

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NEW REFERENCE LIMITS FOR ALPACAS

The release of the first benchmarks for minerals, trace elements and vitamins in alpacas will help breeders and vets avoid costly husbandry mistakes. The reference limits were gathered from an exhaustive trial conducted by the South Australian Research and Development Institute with the cooperation of other state organisations. The results (see table) will transform the way alpacas are treated and supplemented, according to project coordinator Dr Geoff Judson.

The study also found that alpacas in southern Australia were at risk of vitamin D deficiency which restricted the intake of phosphorous, resulting in reduced growth rates.

Dr Geoff Judson says reference limits provide accurate benchmarks against which veterinarians and breeders can compare samples. This is far better than relying on other livestock parameters.

Reference limits are vital to any industry, regulating the dosages of a range of treatments.

'If you went to a doctor and he suspected you had selenium deficiency, he would take a blood sample and send it to a laboratory for analysis. It might come back with a value. If he didn't have a reference range against which to analyse it, it would have no meaning.

'Alpacas have lower copper and zinc levels than sheep and cattle. If a vet is not accustomed to working with alpacas he will look at sheep and cattle values and, for zinc and copper, give an incorrect diagnosis.'

The survey, conducted on five healthy alpaca herds – two in South Australia and three in Victoria – also revealed animals to be at risk of vitamin D deficiency.

The herds were predominantly huacayas on four farms and suris on the fifth farm. Alpacas selected for sampling were from four age groups, crias (under six months), weaners (six to 12 months), tuis (12-14 months) and adults (under 24 months). Blood samples were collected from 20-30 animals on each farm on five occasions in 1994-95 and the procedure was repeated on four farms in 1995-96.

The vitamin D deficiency – which is caused by the combination of both a lack of exposure to sunlight and of access to green feed – also contributed to reduced phosphorous intake. Dr Judson says vitamin D (which is more correctly described as a hormone) is required for effective absorption of phosphorous from the gut.

When there is a deficiency, the rate of phosphorous absorption is restricted and insufficient calcium and phosphorous are

deposited in the bones, causing rickets. Marginal deficiency can reduce growth rate.

Dr Judson says young growing animals are particularly at risk of vitamin D deficiency leading into winter and should be treated with an injection of 1,000 international units per kilogram of body weight followed by a second dose mid-winter.

Older animals were found to have adequate levels of vitamin D at the end of autumn because they had built up reserves over summer, but they showed signs of depletion by mid-winter.

To prevent this, Dr Judson suggests giving females an injection of 1,000 international units per kilo body weight to cover them for the late-winter, early-spring period.

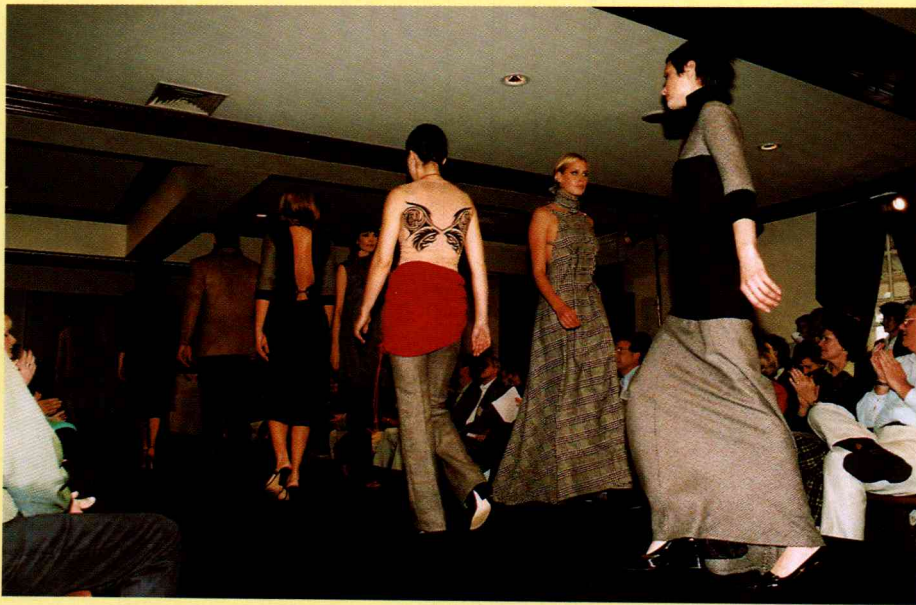
For the trial, he used Forte, a 3-in-1, including vitamins A and E.

Dr Judson warned against a wait-and-see approach which could see growth rate slowed. 'It is these marginal deficiencies that are often more costly because they go unnoticed.'

Means, medians and reference limits of trace elements and vitamins in alpacas.

Constituent age groups	Number of samples	Mean	Median	Reference limits
<i>Plasma copper, µmol/L (normal values: sheep > 8; cattle > 8)</i>				
Cria	133	6.8	6.4	4.7-10.3
Weaner	162	7.3	7.3	4.8-9.9
Tui	133	8.1	7.8	5.3-11.5
Adult	549	8.7	8.5	6.1-12.3
<i>Plasma zinc, Mmol/L (normal values: sheep > 9; cattle > 9)</i>				
All ages	962	4.5	4.3	2.9-6.4
<i>Blood selenium, µmol/L (normal values: sheep > 0.5; cattle > 0.25)</i>				
Cria	132	1.32	1.33	0.49-2.21
Weaner	158	1.39	1.30	0.53-2.67
Tui	133	1.83	1.77	0.59-3.34
Adult	546	1.89	1.93	0.66-3.13
<i>Plasma vitamin E, mg/L (normal values: sheep > 0.5; cattle > 2.0)</i>				
All ages	929	2.3	2.1	0.9-4.5
<i>Plasma vitamin A, mg/L (normal values: sheep > 300; cattle > 300)</i>				
All ages	923	703	675	439-1050
<i>Plasma vitamin B12 Mmol/L (normal values: sheep > 400; cattle > 50)</i>				
Cria	136	389	290	160-960
Weaner	164	323	245	100-890
Tui	134	237	185	80-690
Adult	544	348	220	80-980

The Fashion Parade



Aly May (West Leederville, W.A.) not only reduced her normal fee, but put in many hours above and beyond the call of duty, to organise a quality parade. Thank you.

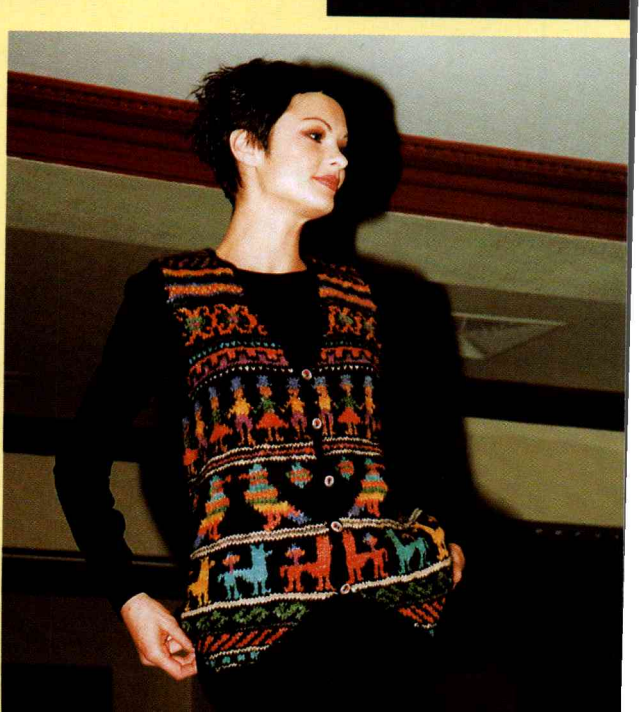
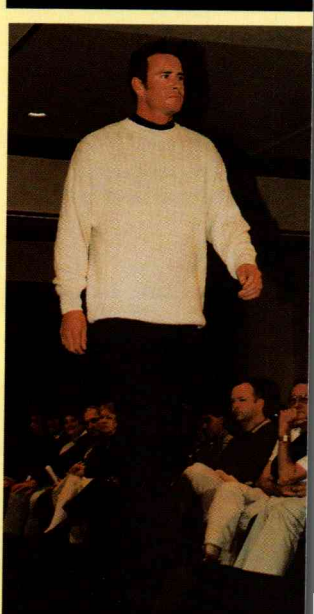
A special mention should also be made of the efforts of Aly May and Nicola Forrest in negotiating with the Western Australian College of Art, Design and Media. This resulted in some spectacular garments being shown on behalf of students, who had been involved in a competition to promote alpaca fibre and its uses. Teachers, Alex Vintella and Di McGinn provided excellent support.

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*'Having a go' at alpacas...
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When my friend of 16 years rang and said 'I've sold both my properties, quit my job and moved to the country to breed alpacas', my only response was, 'Al-what?' In a way, it didn't surprise me. Mena Schnizler has always been inclined to 'have a go' and put into practice her theory that life is for 'learning and experiencing' so that if you really want to do something – what's to stop you. At this point, she was looking for ways to simplify her lifestyle.

Armed with a vision of a better future and her enormous range of skills, she embarked on this new adventure of breeding alpacas. Those skills, by the way, are quite remarkable, including driving a heavy articulated timber truck all over Australia; setting up computerised ticket sales systems and marketing ski holidays at Mount Hotham;

and taking on high powered, high stress administrative work in Australia and overseas.

Of course, the decision to have alpacas did not come as easily as I have suggested. Mena looked at a dozen other challenging ways of earning a living on around 40 acres of land. They included breeding miniature cows, growing commercial herbs or carrots, breeding emus, ostriches or goats, running a bed and breakfast and milking sheep!

Mena's Greenwood Alpaca Stud is surrounded by beautiful hills, and situated on the Midland Link Highway in Mansfield – a flood plain with natural grasses, which also influenced her decision to breed alpacas. Other considerations included the fact that alpacas can be handled by one person – Mena.



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After travelling to Young for the 'Fade to Black' event with Mena and meeting some fascinating, enthusiastic and very nice people, I became quite intrigued with the whole 'alpaca thing'. Mena had also found dealing with alpaca people very helpful with everyone more than willing to talk about their wonderful animals. I say 'wonderful' because these animals really do give you a great feeling. When Mena has had a busy day, to make a cup of tea and sit with the alpacas in their paddock is just the thing, so I'm told. (Somehow, I can't imagine her doing that with emus or ostriches – certainly not with a paddock full of carrots!)

So, how has it all been up to now? Hectic, according to Mena's hasty notes.

'The first purchase of an alpaca took place on a Saturday, only 6 months ago – a wether named Mr Rusty Bismark. The next day came Ember and her two-month-old cria, Isabella and Ember's son – our "show pony" – Prince. From there the search continued for one more black female, hopefully pregnant. We found an entire herd in South Australia! Tilly (alias "Granny Three Legs"), Melantha, Marissa, Minerva, Letitia and two boys, Magnus and Lothar.

'The alpacas in South Australia were in keeping with Greenwood's breeding direction: minimum 2nd generation solid black colour, low s.d. and low c.v. The word "solid" now takes on a whole new meaning: a mere five letters, but I can now relate to the expression "rare as hens' teeth". Anyway, we persevered and (yippee!) they've been found and purchased from a wonderful lady.

'The words: "micron, fantastic handle, wonderful conformation, good strong bones, magnificent coverage, crimp to kill for, lustre, dense' – they all sounded like a foreign language. Very tricky for the uninitiated, but here's where the infamous learning curve grabs you on the back of the neck and says "gotcha!"

'More learning. Off to Sydney Royal Show with one half of my two mentors [Wendy Hart and Ross Delmenico of Wyterrica Alpacas in Cobram]. They answer endless questions – and I didn't even buy an alpaca from them! The experience "will be good for you" said Wendy, so we set off. We navigated new roads not in our street directory and weathered torrential rain. The show scene – what an experience and a wonderful place to network and learn. And the getting up before the crack of dawn, mucking out pens, getting feed ready, walking and grooming alpacas and biting fingernails while waiting for judges' decisions. The blue ribbon awarded to "our" Wyterrica Casper was fantastic. Not only was it fun, I am sure it was good for me.

'One comment made by legendary non-stop organiser, Pauline Nugent really impressed me: "There's no such thing as a small breeder, only small herd owners..."

'I learned something else, too. If your feet are sore and swollen at the end of the day, don't take your boots off. They sure as heck won't want to go back on the next day – and fluffy slippers at the Royal is not a good look. Next year, good padded socks inside the fashionable mandatory black boots will be the go. Wendy very graciously lent me a pair of hers this year.

'April 24. Zali born (little tinker was two weeks early, but all went well even without what probably would have been our interference – we were in Benalla!). Zali is a beautiful fourth generation solid black female.

'Sitting on the porch with a cuppa, watching the sun go down and wondering who the heck to mate our ten girls to. The addiction continues. Life is really tough in the alpaca industry.'



Mena's granddaughter, Taylah, putting Minerva and Isabella through their halter training paces.

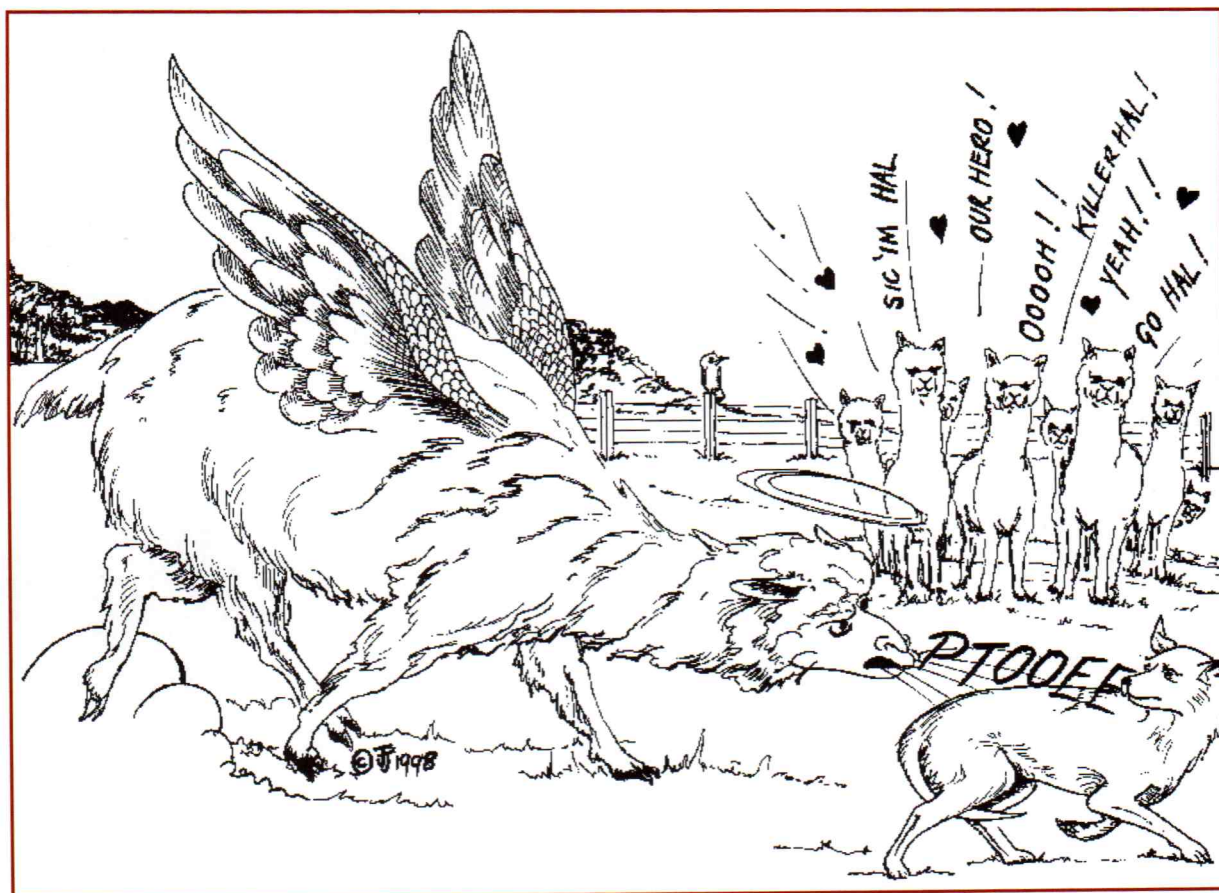


Mena with Minerva.



Looking like a healthy cria – ears up and alert – Zali at four hours old.

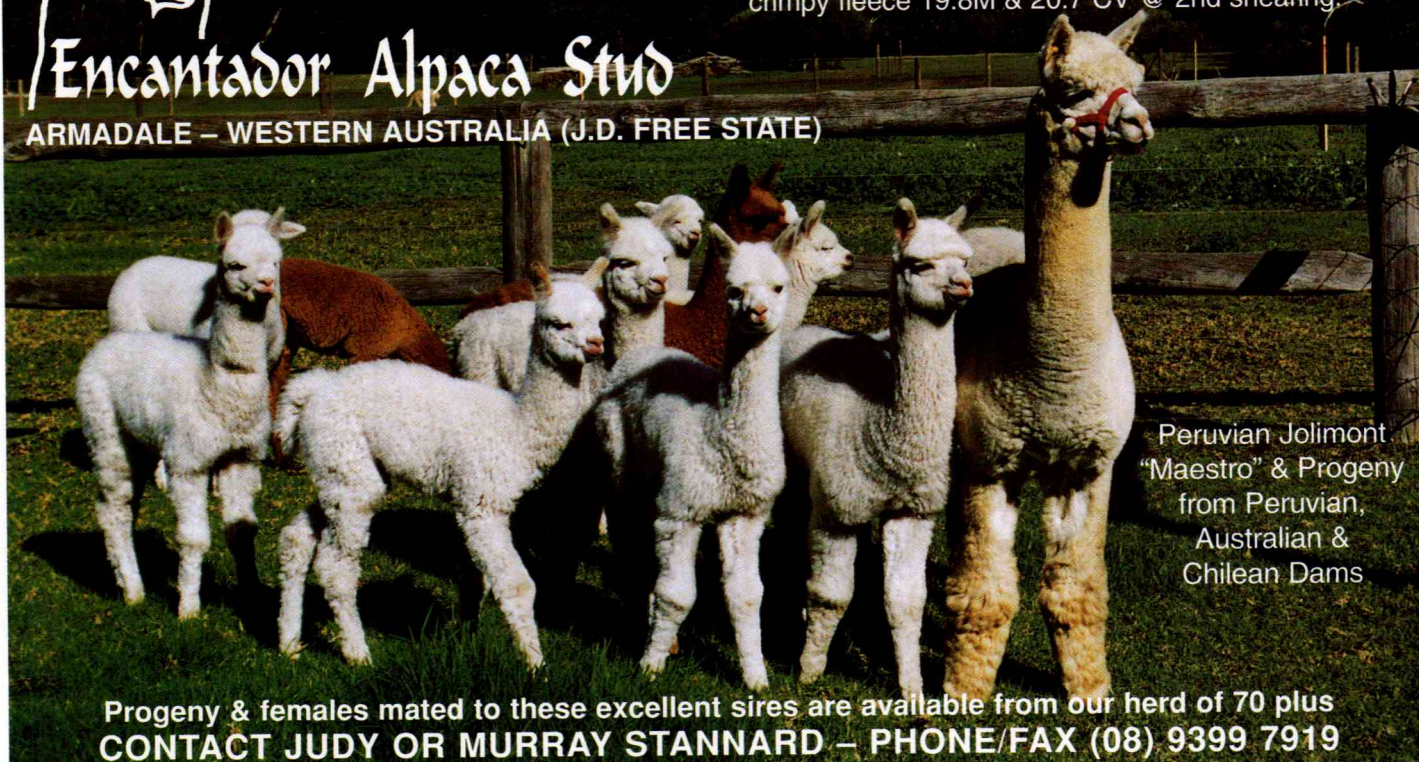
~ Hal the Heavenly ~



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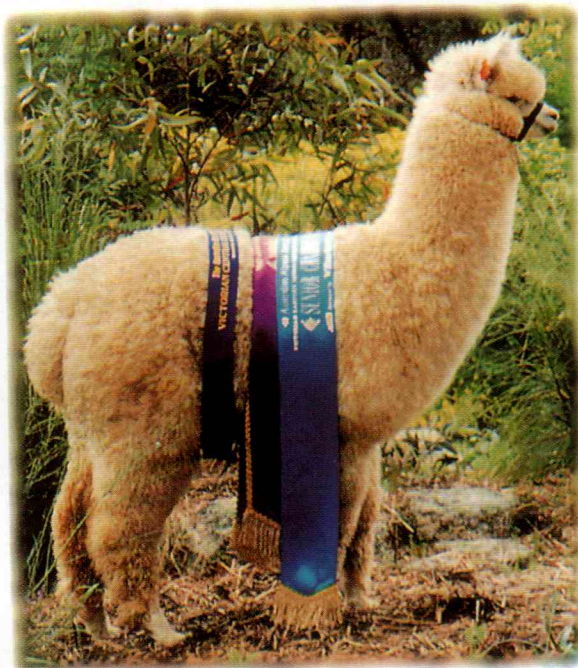
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*It's not the reaching
of your destination
that's important, but
how you manage the
journey...*



Tania and Crackerjack – Graham and Jenny Froud, Kingdale Alpacas, Dignams Creek, NSW.

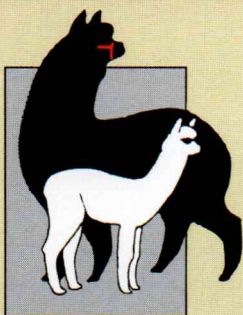


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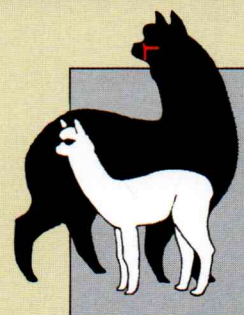
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♣ *Pick of the Pack* ♣



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Angela Fox, Zorro Alpacas



...and Mum said it was dry on the Altiplano!
Alison & Bill Sims, Warinda Alpacas

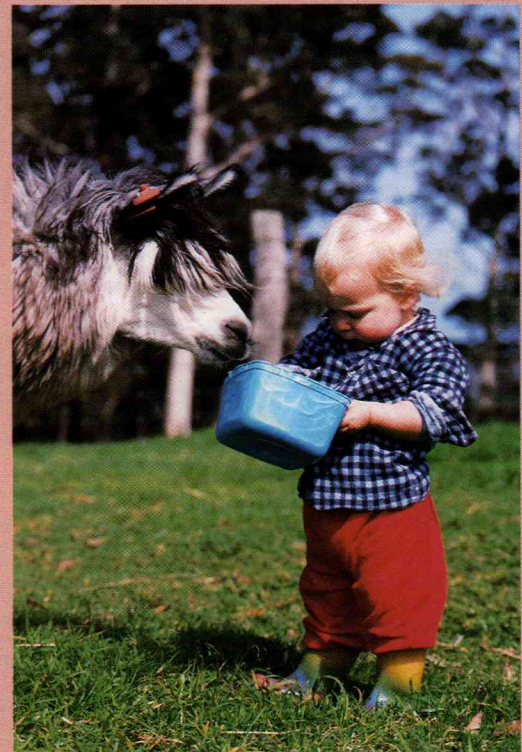


Ahhh! Sheer relief...
Gerry & Anita Maas, Gerita Alpacas

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One for you... one for me...
Stephen Maddams, Pentland Alpaca Stud & Tourist Farm



Don't be shy! Just a quick peck while nobody's watching.
Simon Underwood, Clifton Springs



Showing is such tiring work.
Samantha Clifford, Koyaanasqatsi Alpacas



Contentment...
Niki Brand, Farmhouse Alpacas



Who has taken the soap?
Larissa Bradbury, Querida Park Alpacas



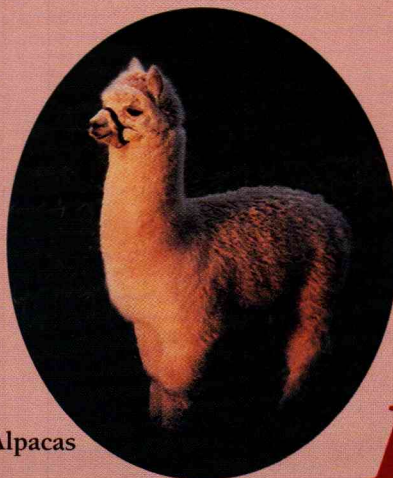
This sun is sooo good!
Sam Cumming, Windsong Valley Alpacas



I knew she was busting, but not this bad!
Suanne Marx, Sharuss Downs Alpacas



In the dog house.
Wendy Summerell, Starwood Stud



What a beautiful sunset.
Bob & Cheryl Kovarskis, Nat-Lee Park Alpacas

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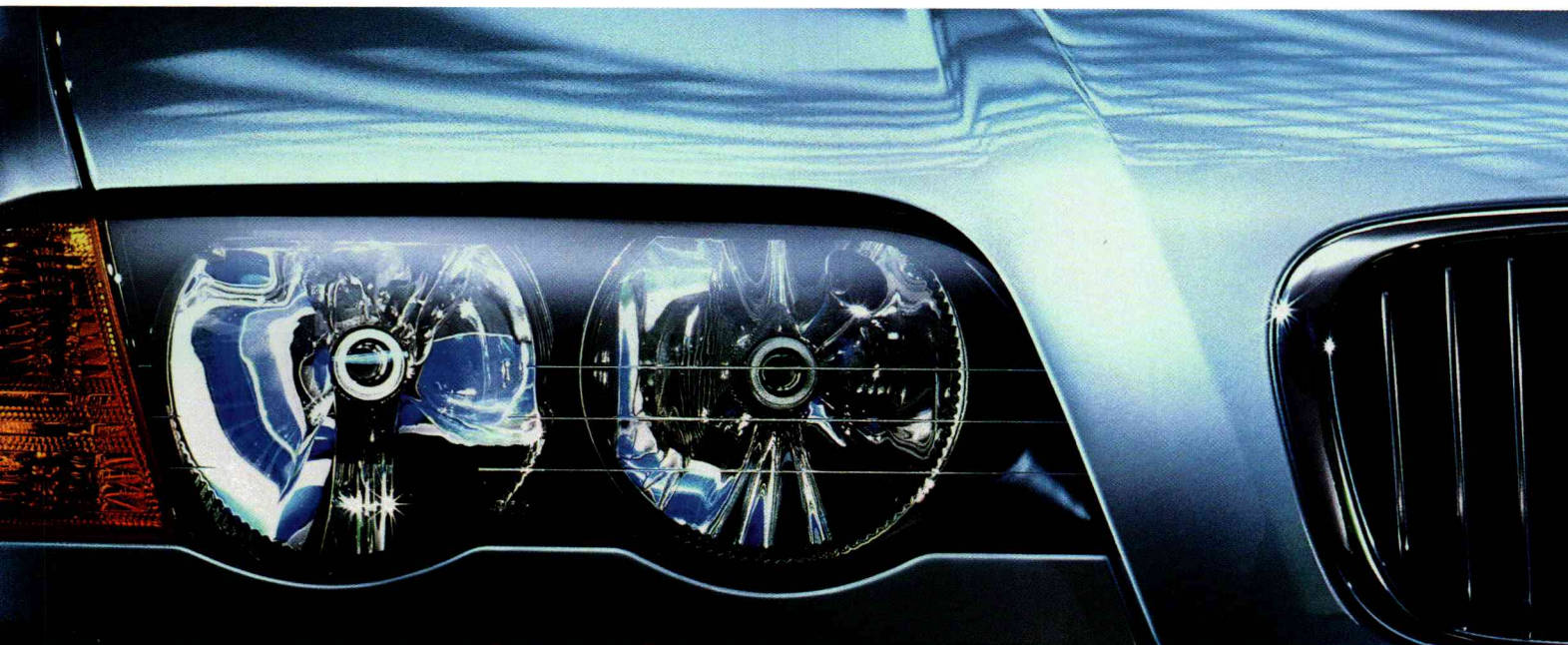
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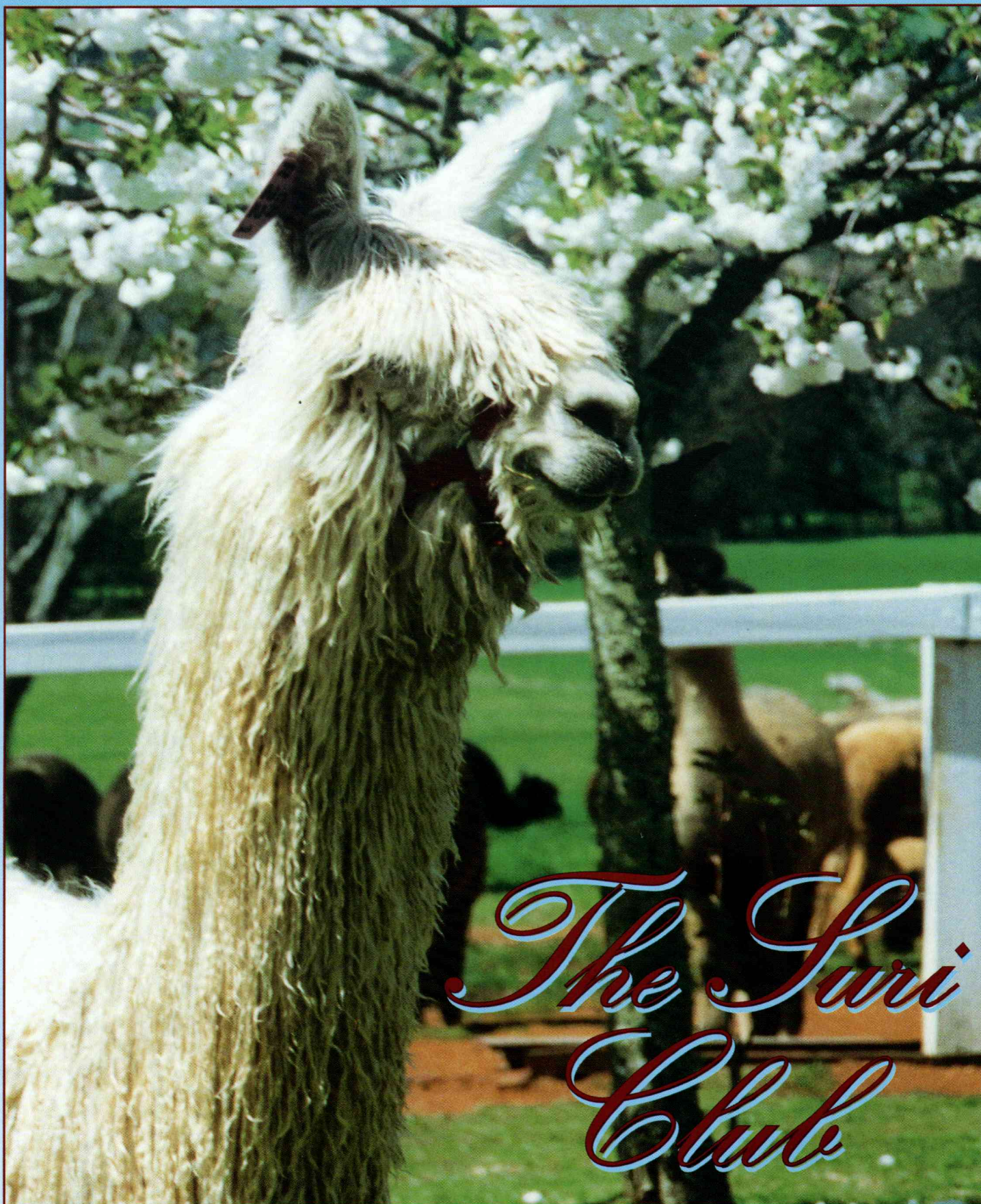
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