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ISSUE 47 • WINTER 2005

The official publication of the Australian Alpaca Association Inc.



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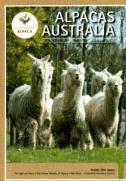








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Courtesy Jill Short, Surilana Alpacas Vic. Photograph: Michael Nicholson

Also see suri articles pages 13 and 36

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Mariah Hill Alpaca Ranch

# A Message from the President

The drought has been very tough across Australia and particularly recently in Eastern Australia requiring the sourcing of supplementary hay etc. at ever increasing cost. However it would appear that Western Australia has had some good rain, which was most welcome.

The spring shows are almost upon us leading up to our industry showcase event, the National Show and Sale. This year we will gather in mid October at historic Bendigo, Victoria at the brand new facility at the Bendigo Showgrounds. This 'National' promises to be the biggest and the best in the experienced hands of Convenor, Glenn Sutherland backed up by all three Victorian Regions.

Newer members and prospective members are encouraged to make the trip to Bendigo because apart from being a great tourist destination and a really lovely city in the classic Victorian tradition,

the National exposes members to the best the industry has to offer. In addition to animals there is the fleece show and the craft competition, which has proven a very popular innovation for the National.

A new feature to the program this year is the Art and Photographic section which will provide a further opportunity for exhibitors to showcase their alpacas ... and their own talents.

By now your entries are in and you have the job of keeping the animals fit and healthy so that they are in peak condition in October. More than likely you will be entering other shows before the National to gauge the likely success of your entries in the very strong fields at the National.

My very best wishes to all who enter and attend to make this the premier event of our calendar.

Kerry Dwyer, President

### Unique Student Research Opportunity

In a first for the Australian Alpaca Industry, the AAA and the University of Tasmania (UTas) are to sign a cooperative research agreement to investigate cria mortality. The project is to be undertaken between December 2005 and March 2006. It will be based at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), a world-class research centre in the School of Agricultural Science at the University.

This is the first project to be undertaken at such a centre of excellence in an Australian university. It is also the first project to be equally funded by the AAA and an Australian university. Our expectation is that this project will lead to further research collaborations at TIAR involving Honours and higher degree students.

The project will be supervised by Dr Aduli Malau-Aduli, a highly experienced animal geneticist and animal scientist who recently joined the University of Tasmania from the National Institute of Livestock and Grassland Science, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan. AAA members who are interested and can contribute will also be invited to do so through a working group to be chaired by Dr Raymond Haynes, a member of the Research and Development Sub-committee of the AAA.

This project provides a unique opportunity for a bright and enthusiastic student in their third year of an Agricultural Science degree to start working in alpaca studies at the University of Tasmania. It will expose you to a wide range of animal husbandry practices.

Our expectation is that the Cria Mortality Project will lead into fascinating new areas of research for a possible Honours Degree and possible PhD studies. The AAA and the UTas are working towards a longer-term research collaboration for the industry.

If you are a talented student with a suitable background or know of a suitable student with the right background to work on this project please contact us as soon as possible.

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- > Dr Raymond Haynes AAA, R&D Sub-committee, 5 Ellington Rd, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7005 Tel: 03 6225 5306 or 03 6226 2717, Mob: 0402 428 044, Email: rhaynes@iinet.net.au

# Briefly Speaking

### AAA Inc. Judges' School

Around 20 aspiring alpaca judges attended the weekend Judges' School held in May 2005 at the property of accredited AAA Inc. Judge, Bill Robbins. Participants were put through a rigorous regime which ultimately saw five new apprentice judges being appointed to the AAA Judges' Panel. Pictured below are four of the new apprentices. L-R: Angela Preuss (Vic), Steve Ridout (WA), Andrew Brown (SA) and Peter Kennedy (Vic). Absent from the photo is Joanne Ham (Vic). Participants took away from the course a more comprehensive knowledge of the judging system and an increased appreciation and respect for the judges in the difficult job they perform.



### Marketing Sub-committee opportunity

Victorian AAA member, Prue Walduck has reluctantly resigned from the AAA Inc. Marketing Sub-committee due to other commitments. On behalf of all on the Sub-committee we wish her the best in her endeavours and thank Prue for her help, insight and clear thinking which has assisted the marketing team over the last few years - she will be missed!

This however, opens the door for another AAA member who can bring further expertise and complement existing Marketing Sub-committee team members.

Anyone interested in joining the AAA Inc. Marketing Sub-committee can contact the Sub-committee chairperson, Nick Veltiens, Tel: 03 5978 8666 for due consideration.

### Have you moved?

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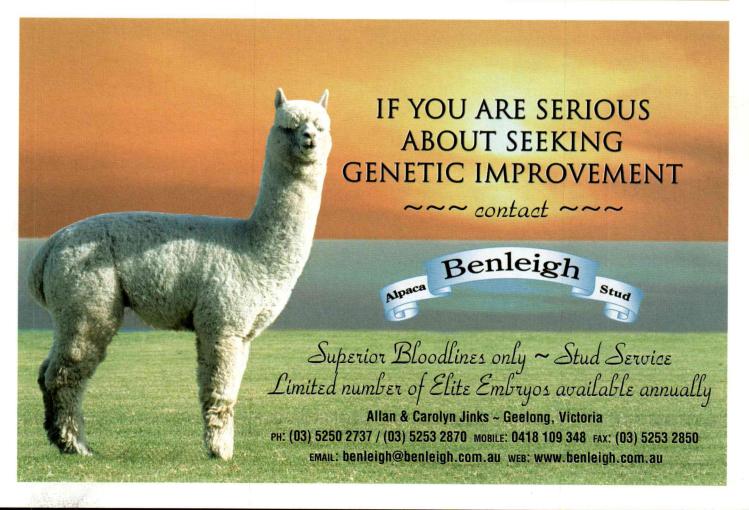
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A vital source of information on alpaca events, alpacas for sale, latest industry developments and much more! The AAA web site is vibrant and dynamic and is an important communication link for AAA members and nonmembers alike.

Do you have an interesting story to tell? Are there any topics that you would like to read about in Alpacas Australia? Please send your articles and ideas to the Editor. We'd love to hear from you.



# Frank and the Green Eagle

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Pam Davidson-Mahomed > Luamber Alpacas, VIC

When South Gippsland farmers Darren and Bec Avery were offered a white alpaca wether named Frank to guard their sheep flock they said, "Yes, please!" Darren worked off shore and Bec was home with two small children and after many losses of lambs to foxes they thought this could be the answer to their fox problems.

Frank proved to be so good as a guardian that there were no lamb losses except for those lost to natural causes and these dead lambs remained in the paddock, the foxes not game to enter. After many years of raising orphan lambs, this time they didn't even have one for their little girls to raise as a pet. However the Averys were delighted and the ewes seemed more content even though foxes were still seen occasionally skirting the paddock.

One morning Bec happened to look out the kitchen window to see an awful sight. The 150 ewes and their twomonth old lambs were in a circle on the side of the hill and hovering just above them was a huge wedge-tailed eagle, ready to strike. But where was Frank? At first Bec thought he must be lying down amongst the sheep - or was he dead? But no, suddenly Frank appeared over the brow of the hill at a gallop scattering the sheep. The eagle was alarmed at his sudden appearance and began to attack his back. Frank was screaming (far worse, Bec said, than when he was being shorn) and spitting green regurgitation defiantly over his huge predator.

The eagle, obviously not expecting this 'big sheep' to retaliate, flew off complete with new green colours and a perfume to match. Bec was so relieved to see Frank unharmed that only then did she realize what an amazing scene she had witnessed and if only she could have captured it on video.

Frank is an amazing alpaca in many ways; not all alpacas are like Frank. I have a special interest in him, as I own his sire, Tranquillity Adonis, so I went to the Averys to get a photo of him and his sheep and to get his story first hand.

When we entered the paddock the Averys went on ahead with the feed dish to call Frank. While I stayed back at the side of the 4-wheel drive, Frank came up for his feed. Then he saw me. His ears went up and he immediately started for me at a gallop, coming to a screeching halt in front of me. I stood stock-still, I knew Frank had a big reputation. He then commenced to sniff me up and down as only a dog can do, then apparently satisfied that I posed no threat, he went back to the feed dish.

Frank is an outstanding guard alpaca indeed and according to the Averys he's not for sale at any price!



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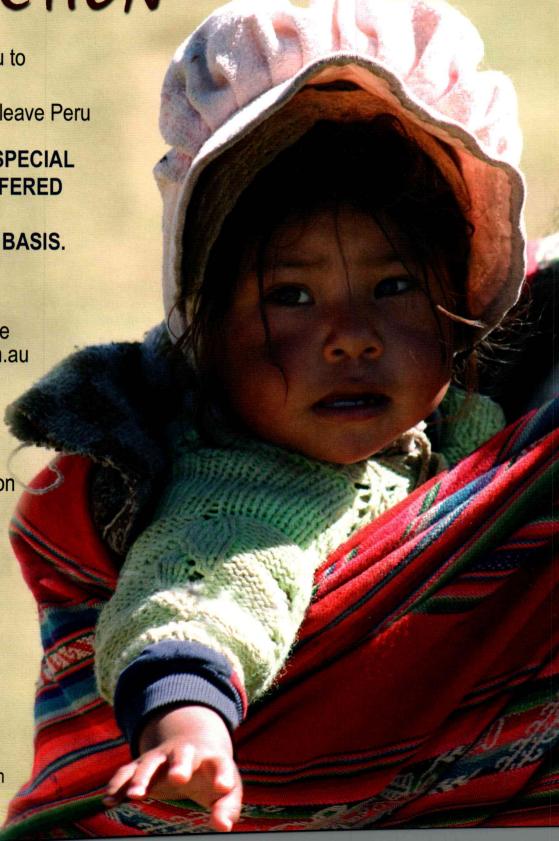
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# The Global Reality of Alpaca Fleece

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Michael Talbot > Managing Director, Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd., VIC

The world alpaca fleece industry, while currently depressed still has a wide appeal for the fine and superfine lines. The current price cycle will change, as it always does, and as there are so few exotic fibres in the world, I believe we must be ready to take the opportunity to push *Australian Alpaca* forward as the finest premium line in the world market.

Thanks to support from the New Industries Development Program (NIDP) via the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry I was given a scholarship to visit Italy, China, Peru, Chile and New Zealand to study and report back on the following:

- > Investigation of the alpaca industry and market in Peru.
- > Investigation of fine worsted spinners and exotic fibre market in Italy.
- Selection of a fine worsted spinning partner and merchandising directions for upholstery.
- > Investigate design applications for alpaca fine worsted fibre into upholstery.
- > Connect with a New Zealand partner with design merchandising concepts, and a selected overseas fine worsted spinning partner.

This project has been going on for the past six months and gave me an opportunity to study what is happening around the world in regard to alpaca fleece, yarn and fabric.



First of all I'd like to put into context what I found out about the alpaca fleece industry when visiting Peru, where the majority of the world's alpaca fleece is sold and processed.

- > There is a shortage of under 20 micron alpaca, which gives the Australian industry a big opportunity provided we continue to develop the quality and quantity of white superfine fleece with the right characteristics: style and character, softness of handle, evenness for micron and length.
- > The international alpaca fleece industry has been depressed for the last four years in relation to world sales, because the fleece from alpaca is treated as a fashion item, not a commodity product like wool. This has a big bearing obviously on the world price of alpaca, which is why it fluctuates as it comes in and out of fashion.
- > The fleece purchased in Peru from two of the largest buyers of alpaca in the world is approximately 90% white and 10% coloured.
- > One of these suppliers is currently stockpiling coloured fleece, which they bought in top form at a very low price, \$US 6.50 per kg, and anticipates holding it for two years because of the very low demand at present.
- > I was impressed by both the professionalism and the level of expertise and equipment that the two major Peruvian players presented as I moved around their plants. I guess this is not surprising as they have been processing alpaca for so many years. However their country's third world status is certainly not evident in relationship to the value adding of alpaca fleece where they are world leaders, and in my opinion still well ahead of the Chinese.
- > They are concerned about the threat of the Chinese market, but are putting in place a number of measures to combat this, namely:
  - Having their own range of shops i.e. going vertically integrated.
  - Keeping up with the latest technology in processing to compete with a cheaper labour rate in China.
  - Flexibility in relationship to supplying the world market i.e. minimum processing quantities much lower than China.
  - Ensuring that their expertise in top making, spinning and yarns is world class and that the quality standards are accepted world wide in Europe, Japan, etc.
  - Supplying alpaca products for a number of world recognised labels to keep up the volume in their plants.

- The other area that really impressed me was the quality of their baby alpaca (= fine) fleece, i.e. softness and handle, lack of guard hair. This is the quality line that they heavily promote, especially in their own shops.
- I believe there is a real opportunity to have a strategic relationship with one or both of the major suppliers, where we can exchange ideas and opportunities.
- Suri fleece now represents 10% of the alpaca market and this proportion is climbing. In the past suri used to be much more expensive to purchase than huacaya, but it is now only \$US 1 to \$2 per kg more than huacaya in the world market.



One of the intentions of the scholarship was to develop a fine worsted spinning line with an Italian mill in Biella. Much to my disappointment I found that a lot of the textile industry in Biella has moved to China. In fact, whilst I was in Italy there was a big drive to try to relaunch Biella and recapture what this area was producing years ago. Unfortunately, Italy, like Australia and other western countries, is suffering the consequences of a rapid change to a global textile industry, where it is impossible to compete on a level playing field with countries with lower labour costs. Although I did not see in China the fine worsted woven fabric that Italy is renowned for, this will happen as their experience develops.

The major world alpaca processors cannot exist solely in alpaca fleece, therefore they buy and value-add other natural fibres to supplement their product volume: typically prima cotton, cashmere and mohair.

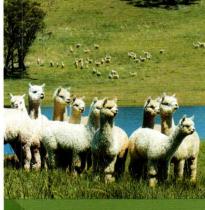
Like the Peruvian producers a number of the large Italian players in the alpaca industry have opened up mills in China to utilise the local opportunities that exist there, especially in the cost area. Increasingly their markets are supplied with finished goods directly from China instead of from their home base.

For example, I saw some beautiful cashmere jumpers being produced in Beijing, in the latest colours, using some of the finest cashmere available in the world. They are sold under an internationally renowned label, with "Made in China" printed on the country of origin label. Today it seems, providing the quality is right, people really don't care where the product is made.

I foresee not far down the track alpaca knitwear made in Peru, from Australian alpaca fleece, sold in China! This is where the global opportunities are going.

New Zealand represents another opportunity for us and certainly much closer to home, where we have developed a jacquard line of throw rugs as well as a fine upholstery range, both using suri fibre, which we are currently testing. I'm hopeful these developments will provide an opportunity to use our natural colours, with suri and also huacaya. Through the NIDP grant I've also been able to employ a textile designer who has developed what I call a 'café latte' collection, using natural fawns, rich browns and ecrus.

### and



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# Preventing Sand Colic in your Alpacas

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE ARTICLE by Fran Haslin > Elysion Alpacas, NSW

Having recently heard of some other studs experiencing problems with what appeared to be sand colic and knowing that we had this problem last year Alpacas Australia has asked me to write an article on the subject. Alpacas, the magazine of the USA Alpaca Owners & Breeders Association (AOBA), published an article in the Summer 2004 edition entitled, "Does your Alpaca Eat Dirt?" which I have quoted from as appropriate. If you can get hold of this magazine it gives a very detailed description of the experiments conducted and the treatments used to combat sand colic.

During the winter of 2004 we had an unusually large number of animals displaying colic type symptoms, lying on their side, kicking a leg in the air and generally looking very uncomfortable. We treated them for various possibilities such as ulcers, constipation etc. with some success but the symptoms kept recurring in some of the animals. Coincidentally our copy of the AOBA magazine arrived and when I read the article about eating dirt the penny dropped!

After more than two years of drought our animals were nibbling very sparse pasture virtually on dry sandy dirt. They were also eating their hay and chaff mixes out of troughs that were standing on bare dirt so anything that fell over the sides was being eaten off the dirt.

In "Does your Alpaca Eat Dirt?", the author, Noreen Vaughan writes, "Shouldn't the dirt and grit just pass through the gut? There is mounting evidence that it all doesn't. Dirt and grit have been found settled in the digestive pockets of the primary stomach. This grit settles into the pockets, cuts and slices the lining of each pocket, and may result in an ulcer or worse - it could even rupture the stomach. It has been known to overwhelm the complete digestive system, which leads to colic symptoms and possibly death." 1

The article goes on to describe how to check if your animals are passing sand or grit by taking a sample from the poo pile or directly from an animal, placing it in a plastic bag with some water and allowing it to sit for 15-20 minutes. If there is sand in the bottom of the bag then your animal is passing it through and will no doubt have more internally. Even without doing a test if you have animals on very dry, sandy paddocks it is a pretty safe bet they will be ingesting a fair amount of grit and sand. Some preventative measures up front could save you and your animals a lot of pain and heartache. In addition to the measures outlined below a quick and safe way to soothe the pain from sand colic is to administer Mylanta® (about 20 mls for an adult animal) for a few days.

Our vet has advised us to administer paraffin oil to an animal with obvious sand colic symptoms as a first line of treatment, the paraffin won't hurt them and should purge most of the sand. Psyllium drench, preferably in the form of Metamucil®, can be given with more paraffin over a few days to clear out a large build up of sand.

In our recent experience the first thing we did was give our whole herd treatment with psyllium, in our case we used the product made for horses called Sandlube®. We normally feed Alpaca Tucka® (a locally made chaff mix) to our alpacas each morning so we added approximately 12 grams of Sandlube® per animal to their mix one morning. We added water to the mix to dampen it and ensure there was enough moisture to help the Sandlube® move through the system. If you are familiar with the human-use product Metamucil® (which is made from psyllium) the Sandlube® works in much the same way. About 7 to 10 days later we repeated the whole process. After having numerous cases of apparent colic we had no more occurrences for months.

As our pastures are in much the same state now as they were at the same time last year, this year we will be treating our herd with psyllium before it becomes such an issue. This time we have purchased bulk ground psyllium husks, still expensive but not nearly as much as the Sandlube® and they should achieve the same result.

In the American article a different pattern of treatment was described i.e. a quarter of a cup of psyllium per day for seven days every 30 days for a period of about 12 months. A maintenance program was then followed every three months. The article also suggests making a paste of the psyllium and water and squirting it in the mouth of each animal, this would ensure you get the correct amount per animal as mixing it with the feed will mean some will get more than others, and some may even get none if they don't like the taste or change in texture of their feed with the damp psyllium added.

The other measure we took to try to minimise the amount of dirt the alpacas ingested was to put their feed troughs on a hard surface that can be kept swept clean. This includes brick paved areas or concrete. As this wasn't an option for us we bought large sheets of conveyor belt rubber approximately 2 metres by 1.2 metres, heavy enough to not lift up or blow away in the wind!

Please note that the American article warns that if an animal's digestive system is already severely compromised due to sand colic then administering psyllium without supervision of your veterinarian could lead to complications and even death so please consult your own vet before embarking on any program of treatment such as this.

Noreen Vaughan, Alpacas, Official Journal of the Alpaca Owners & Breeders Association, USA, Summer 2004 edition



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### Zilla

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Glen Riley > Kankinya Ridge Alpaca Stud, NSW

# Zilla probably wasn't meant for this world – but there's a lot of people out there who are glad that he made it.

He was in all sorts of trouble even before he was born. His Mother, an ancient black Chilean, developed a cancer in her neck/throat in her third trimester. I checked old Quilla at 4 am one crisp April pre-dawn and since she had two weeks to go, I felt comfortable about leaving her. Then I set off for a business meeting in Sydney.

The 'pacas were being overseen by Peter Beckman and Nada Travica of Esprit Alpacas, guests on our property while they searched the real estate market for a place of their own. Nada phoned me at 7.30am while I was fighting traffic on a Sydney freeway. She'd found old Quilla far from the feed pen, sitting down with a frozen dark lump next to her.

The bare facts trickled through the ether – it was a suri, it was a boy and it was dead. I told Nada to put him in the shed and I'd bury him when I got home that night. I could hear Peter in the background saying: "Hang on, I saw a twitch." Nada said, "Gotta go" and she got down to work.

They peeled the 'plastic' off the frozen lump and warmed him up in a sunny spot with hot water bottles and a hair dryer. His rectal temperature was too low for a reading but he slowly came good. Not strong enough to get his colostrum from Mother but he was able to take half-strength 'Impact' from an eyedropper. Eventually old Quilla managed to feed him for 10 days or so until she succumbed to her own dire problems.



So Zilla was an orphan at three weeks of age – a useless first-cross, suri, male orphan. And his troubles grew – he got an infection. The vet said he had phalangeal arthritis – an infection in the bone of one toe. Since circulation is poor in this location, he needed a daily antibiotic shot for three weeks. Zilla sure didn't like me and I didn't think much of him at that time with six months of bottle-feeding staring me in the face.

Then his luck changed – almost. A good neighbour, Jan Knutson of Molonglo Alpacas had a choanal atresia cria put down, and she still had the placenta. We smothered poor little Zilla with the placenta and rubbed him down with the dead cria. His new 'Mother' was highly suspicious but nevertheless begrudgingly allowed him to suckle. She didn't really like it – after all, her cria had been pure white and Zilla was a mid-brown bay. After a few days, she rebelled and wouldn't feed him but she was prepared to mother him and they slept side by side.

So Zilla ran with the herd, slept with his adopted Mother and was bottle-fed for six months. He became very people-oriented and would run to complete strangers in the paddock with his welcoming 'nuck-nuck' sounds. Halter training? It took about ten seconds!

Zilla clearly wasn't any future herdsire but he had many positives not found in your usual fox guard. I liked his wonderful outgoing personality and I didn't see why other people wouldn't like it too. So I phoned up a local retirement home and asked if I could bring an alpaca in to them.

In that first visit, Zilla was a class act. He strode into the lounge/activities room with aplomb and greeted each of the 30-40 occupants with a cautious sniff, sometimes his 'nucknuck' and occasionally a kiss for some old dear. He seemed quite unphased about wheelchairs, walking frames and crutches. My contact was a Diversion Therapist who was an active member of the Canberra Diversion Therapy Group and now Zilla and I get phone calls asking us to visit.

So far we have visited retirement homes, low and high care aged facilities, nursing homes, hospitals (including acute-care wards) and the Hospice. At The Canberra Hospital, we started in the Geriatric Ward and were not allowed to leave until we had visited the Children's Ward – on the fifth floor. Zilla had never been in an elevator before. It didn't seem to worry him – he just splayed his legs when it jolted into action.



(above) Zilla with friend, Ryan Bol from the Canberra Hospital

(right) Zilla gets a real 'hands-on' from Daphne and Sava



With the kids, he was superb. They, of course, couldn't believe their eyes when they saw him coming down the corridor. He was happy to be patted and even tolerated stroking on his head. I was able to take him into rooms where children were too sick to get up and they smiled when he did his 'nuck-nuck'. Zilla always seems sensitive to his surroundings and has a remarkable ability to connect effortlessly with people.

I know some people begrudge the (not inconsiderable) effort it takes to hand-rear an orphan. But there can be rewards – you might get one like Zilla. If you do, be sure to spread him around as much as you can. Just phone your local retirement home, or nursing home or hospital - they'll jump at the chance of a visit.

### Here's a few useful tips:

- Get on-side with the Diversion Therapist or Activities Officer
- Check access ahead of your visit; avoid the noise and panic of ambulance areas
- Try to avoid the complications of revolving doors
- Get your alpaca to use the dung pile before entering the facility
- In hospitals, go for Geriatrics and Rehabilitation - they have non-slip floors
- Acute hospitals commonly have polished, and perhaps slippery floors
- Stand back from elevator doors until they open, then walk through quickly
- If there are mirrors in the elevator, get someone to stand in front of them
- Keep your alpaca away from trolleys
- Strange hospital smells might cause your alpaca to sneeze (and frighten an oldie)
- Don't, at any time, get out of eyesight of your alpaca he'll be very anxious
- Ask ahead of time, that patients don't clap loudly when the visit is over.

# Canadian National Alpaca Sale & Futurity

SHOWING AND JUDGING ARTICLE by Julie Bird > AAA Inc. Accredited Judge > Gorge Alpacas, NSW

Upon receiving an e-mail back in November 2004 inviting me to judge at the Canadian National Alpaca Sale and Futurity at Red Deer in Alberta on 22-24 April, 2005, I could not know what a wonderful experience was about to unfold. This invitation was a great honour and something which I consider a privilege. Not only was I getting the opportunity to travel to Canada but I was to judge the biggest show held in that country.

Upon landing in Vancouver it became clear to me that I was about to explore one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. The journey to Red Deer presented an array of majestic scenery from snow capped mountains to crystal lakes and streams, much like those you would find in a travel magazine.

After arriving in Red Deer it was an action packed three days starting with a seminar presented by Dr Dorian Garrick on 'Genetics of Fibre Production' and 'Developing a Breeding Program'. Dorian's presentation on genetics successfully simplified what I consider a complicated subject, by interpreting definitions into easy to understand terminologies. For the first time I walked away understanding something of genetics. The seminar was pleasantly followed by an exhibitors' dinner filled with much laughter provided by the talented and ever astounding Canadian breeder, Cathy Merkley.

Over the next two days Rick Hodgson, my capable co-judge and I meticulously judged 250 alpacas, of which nine were Suri. There was no judging of fleeces at this Futurity.

For those who have never experienced a Futurity: A *futurity* is a non-profit show for juveniles (6-12 mths) and yearlings (12-24 mths) with prize money financed by a Stud Service Auction which is posted on the internet 6 months prior. Interestingly, this year raised \$88,000 from 67 stud males which was then distributed as prize money throughout the show. No alpacas, other than the progeny of the 67 stud sires are allowed to compete in the show. There is an award for the sire of the highest performing progeny. This year's honour was awarded to *Jolimont Peruvian Alpamayo* owned by Rainbow Forest Acres.

In each class Rick and I were instructed to place one half of each class plus one, for example in a class of eleven alpacas, seven were placed and awarded prize money; the champions taking home \$CAN 1,500.

I was impressed with the standard of the alpacas, the majority possessing correct conformation with very few faults. A high percentage displayed good growth for age which suggests the alpacas thrive well in the beautiful Canadian prairies. As a whole the fleeces exhibited two outstanding traits, those being *fineness of micron and* 

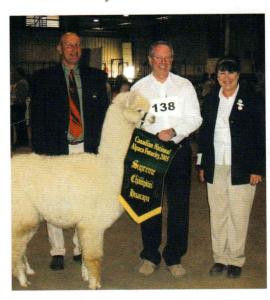
good length of fleece (for months of growth). This in turn presented a very soft handle. Over all there appeared to be a big variation in character and style of the fleece, and density 'sorted the men from the boys' as we would say in Australia. Amongst the hustle and bustle of the Futurity there were Trade and Breeders' displays all weekend.

On Saturday night the Canadian National Select Sale started off with a dinner followed by an auction sale of 22 quality alpacas. Females sold for an average of \$CAN 11,781 which was a pleasing result considering the border between Canada and USA was closed at the time, restricting buyers to mainly Canadians. The auction was alight with a buzz of excitement provided by Cathy Merkley with her description of the sale lots in between the auctioneer's banter, which made an enjoyable night for all.

Sunday finalized the big weekend with the awarding of the Supreme Champions. The Huacaya award going to *Casper AOC*, owned by Alpacas of Canada and the Suri award going to *HCLA Pebbles*, owned by High Country Llamas and Alpacas.

The Futurity was a wonderful success under the guidance of extremely capable organisers. I would like to thank the CNAF Committee, mainly Jill MacLeod and her family for their hard work and hospitality. I enjoyed this experience immensely and took great pleasure in judging the Canadian alpacas as well as meeting the breeders. In the future, I look forward to seeing Australia and Canada continue the good relationship our two countries possess.

Editor's Note: Together with fellow AAA Inc. Judge, Bill Plunkett, Julie will be judging the alpaca section at this year's AAA Inc. National Show to be held in Bendigo, Victoria from Friday 14 - Sunday 16 October. See page 34 for more National Show information.



Julie Bird (right) with co-judge Rick Hodgson (left)

### Suri Fibre Project to Yield Important Data

SURI ARTICLE by Julie Wilkinson > Suri Sub-committee

To ensure meaningful results the involvement of as many suri breeders as possible is required in this suri fibre research project.

### **Objectives**

- To develop a descriptive definition for the different locking styles of suri fleece.
- To determine if different locking styles relate to different internal structure of the individual fibre.
- To determine if a. and/or b. above relate to other desirable fibre characteristics such as fineness or lustre.

Purpose of the Research Project: As breeders, we need to know if we are focusing on the most important fleece characteristics in our breeding program and if different fleece styles have greater levels of lustre, are finer and have softer handle. The identification of suri fibre characteristics that contribute to lustre may enable breeders to tailor their breeding program toward always selecting for lustre, while still improving other characteristics. There is some suggestion that the different locking styles relate to different internal structure of the individual fibre. Whether this structure then relates to other characteristics, such as lustre, fineness or handle or whether specific locking styles produce finer fleece are important to determine.

Research Method: Julie Wilkinson (R&D portfolio, Suri Sub-committee) is the principal researcher and has experience and expertise in the scientific methods to be used in this research. Suri breeders will be asked to send their mid-side samples from this year's shearing for analysis (description of locking type, lustre measurement, photographic recording and microscopic cross-section analysis and photography (for some samples)). The samples will then be sent for fibre analysis (micron, SD, CV, SF, etc.) to a Fleece Testing Laboratory. Fibre analysis data will be returned to Julie for correlation analysis and histograms will be sent to the animal owners. Protocols for fleece handling and analysis are being developed to ensure consistency and repeatability of results. While identification of individual animals (IAR number) will be necessary in order to correlate fibre analysis with locking and lustre analysis, no identification of animals or studs will be included in any reports. The reports will undergo stringent peer review to ensure integrity of the results.

Outcomes: Research results will be disseminated to the AAA membership (and the broader community) through a range of publications, the AAA web site and at the National Conference. There is also opportunity to provide hands-on workshops to reinforce the findings of the research. The data collected will feed into Stage 2 research projects to determine the processing needs and outputs and for determining objective measurement protocols for lustre in alpaca fibre (possibly in partnership with the mohair industry, thereby optimising funding). Instructions and fleece sample labels will be posted on the AAA web site. For further information, contact Julie at: jwilkinson@baarrooka.com.au or telephone 03 5790 5288. Samples should be sent to Julie Wilkinson, PO Box 20, Strathbogie VIC 3666. ■

### LOURED SURI SAI





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- Breeder Details (stud service terms, agistment details, backup and support)
- Diary Dates (event, venue, website address, date, description)

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# 'Uniquely Alpaca' - pass it on

MARKETING ARTICLE by Michael van den Bos > McGregors International, NSW

The AAA has more than 2,000 members, who all love alpacas and are well placed to preach the alpaca gospel.

A little old lady walks into a department store and asks for a product; shock-horror, the store does not stock it. A few days later, a young man walks into the same store and asks for the same product. What is this? A clever plan! A marketing tactic of old is to generate demand by sending people into a store that did not stock your product. This tactic uses people to spread the word.

### To help spread the word, there is a range of marketing resources available for AAA member use including:

- > Alpaca Notes easily downloaded from the AAA web site: www.alpaca.asn.au
- > National Alpaca Review
- > "Managing Alpacas in Australia" booklet
- > Membership application brochure
- > National Industry Directory
- > "Alpacas Australia" Magazine

Not only that, you can use the media, arrange a visit to your local school (taking an alpaca along with you, of course), deliver presentations or demonstrations at appropriate gatherings, participate in shows, conduct open farm days, help new breeders ... the options are many and varied.

### Another idea is to create a web site for your stud.

Much of today's research and purchase decision process is web based.

With more than 2,000 alpaca devotees spreading the word we are creating a better environment in which your alpaca venture operates, so it pays to have your ducks, or alpacas, in a row when it comes to marketing.

### One area that often gets overlooked is pen displays.

Simple and clear is the answer. Pen displays sometimes have hand drawn material, together with different size photos stuck randomly on boards, portraying a non-professional look. If you want to attract top prices you need to communicate a professional image. Engage visitors - an enlarged laminated photo neatly displayed will provide more instant appeal than a series of pictures that aren't clearly visible. A good idea is to display ribbons won and stud signs, making sure they don't impede the visibility of adjoining pens.

As well as clear and good-looking material on your pen, you can have a small table or brochure holder that can be attached to the side of the pen, to display your stud brochure.

It is important to be able to provide potential buyers with material they can take away - once again, the brochure needs to have a professional look that is consistent with the look of your other promotional material.

Needless to say, while a 2,000 strong army is out preaching the alpaca word, marketing will continue to be conducted on a national front. The more touches target markets receive on the topic of alpaca, the better.

As mentioned in previous *Alpacas Australia* articles, one of the best ways to generate positive 'word of mouth' about the industry is through publicity.

This involves generating free editorial coverage in magazines or newspapers, or being talked about on radio and TV.

Packing in the alpaca In the period July-December 2004 there were a total of 11,122,257 media impressions about alpacas (the total was calculated by adding up the circulation figures of all the publications in which alpaca articles appeared). During the same period, 168 members joined the Association. Of significant note is that in the July-December 2004 period, the AAA received 636 membership inquiries compared with 497 inquiries received during the same period in 2003.

Drawing on the Australian wool industry experience, in the last decade the rural sector has lost nearly 20% of its share in the world textile markets and the industry is seeing promotion as the key to gaining back some of this lost ground. The best form of promotion is word of mouth and getting the alpaca industry in front of people, with the right messages, as much as we can!

Sunday Mail - (Adelaide) 17 April 2005

This only leaves one more thing to say ...

'Uniquely Alpaca' - pass it on!

# Alpacas Included in Short Courses for New Farmers

EDUCATION ARTICLE by **Marcello Mastroianni** > Corporate Relations Officer, Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria Ltd, VIC

As the interest in alpacas continues to grow, the demand for small farming blocks near the major towns also grows. Many part-time farmers and lifestyle block owners buy their properties without any thought of what enterprises they will run on it. Alpacas are clearly a very attractive option for all the reasons members of the Australian Alpaca Association understand; but there are many times when alpacas are not the best option, and new farmers need to know how to make this important decision.

The University of Melbourne and The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria are collaborating to offer courses exclusively for new part-time farmers that will address this and other issues. Unlike many training providers The University of Melbourne acknowledges that part-time farmers are legitimate users of rural land and deserve quality training opportunities as much as any other farmers. They manage very large amounts of valuable land mainly on the periphery of major cities and their activities have both positive and potentially negative influences on the environment and the welfare of the area.

It is logical therefore that they be offered the training that will assist them with their decision making and farm skills.

The 2005 series of 20 courses commenced on 18 June and will run until mid October and are a mix of Saturday practical sessions and Monday evening introductory sessions. This is the second year they have been offered, and the strong demand in 2004 encouraged the partners to offer the program again this year.

The courses cover a wide range of topics that include Choosing Enterprises, Pasture Management, Beef Production, Calf Rearing, Setting up for Horses, Olive Production, Establishing an Orchard and Fencing.

Of course, 'Alpacas on the Lifestyle Block' is also on the program, and is delivered by experienced alpaca breeder, Robbie Cuthill.

Robbie gives the course participants the benefit of his long experience with alpacas and introduces the reasons why they may or may not be the enterprise of choice for their farms.

He also covers the different fleece types, and their value, the day to day management, animal health, marketing and, importantly, the cost of establishing a herd and the returns that can be expected.

"Last year I was in the dark about what people wanted to learn from the course but I soon found out from the questions that these were mostly people thinking about a change of lifestyle. Participants were mainly from the city, a couple with alpacas on agistment or as pets, some buying or looking at small properties and thinking about putting alpacas on the land", said Robbie. "In the three hour lecture I covered everything from fencing to shearing and I will be ready this year to point out the pros of alpaca farming and the possible pitfalls".

Robbie complements a team of experienced presenters who have excellent practical and business knowledge as well as sound presentation skills.

These courses, which are held at the Royal Agricultural Society's offices on Royal Parade in Parkville, Victoria assume participants have little or no knowledge of agriculture and therefore start with the basics and build to a more mature understanding of the topic.

All those who own or are planning to own lifestyle blocks are encouraged to attend.

For more information and a brochure call the RASV on (03) 9914 2426 or email: education@rasv.com

To enrol, call the University of Melbourne's Glenormiston campus on 1800 808 542.

# Alpaca Agistment and Mating Agreements

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Roger Curvey > Waratah Alpacas, NSW

Alpacas may be agisted for a variety of reasons, i.e. mating, veterinary care, or on-farm care, and therefore the owner of the alpaca/s may need to consider several issues before agisting the animal/s.

### Agreement

The owner of the alpaca/s and the alpaca stud owner should enter into a written agreement, whether it is a contract or simply an acknowledged e-mail, to cover the terms of the agistment. The agreement should list the services, responsibilities and any liabilities that are required by the owner, and what is to be provided by the stud owner, and the cost, if any, of these services.

### Services

- > Does the agistment fee cover any supplemental feed, worming/vitamin injections, veterinary costs (if required), ultrasound for mating confirmation, or will there be additional fees and at what rate?
- > Is the agistment account payable: in advance, monthly in arrears, or at the end of the agistment period?
- > Is a mating fee payable in instalments or in full at confirmation of pregnancy, and is some form of live cria guarantee provided?
  - Note: if the animal is being agisted for on-farm mating to a certified sire is a period of agistment provided as part of the mating fee?
- > The owner should discuss with the agistment provider where on the property the agisted animal/s is/are to be kept, and ensure this is acceptable and adequately fenced with shade and water available.
- > Are agisted animal/s to be kept separate from stud owner's animals, i.e in a quarantine paddock, or will they be run in a herd?
- > If they are to be run in a herd check that the AlpacaMAP and/or the Q-Alpaca Program status is acceptable.
- What access will the owner have to inspect the agisted animals?

### Responsibilities and Liabilities

- The agreement should clearly state whether or not the agisted animal/s is/are insured, and also cover the area of responsibility for notification in the event of illness or death, including agreement to incur veterinary fees in an emergency if the owner cannot be contacted.
- Does the stud owner carry Liability Insurance in case of animal death, wild dog attack or animal theft, or is this the alpaca owner's responsibility?

This article is a general overview of areas that have been experienced in our brief time in the industry.



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# Selling Alpacas by On Farm Auction

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Paul Haslin > Elysion Alpacas, NSW

As alpaca breeders, most of us reach the time when we want, or need, to sell some animals. At Elysion it has always been our preference to sell our stock on a one to one basis, giving us the opportunity to get to know our customers and understand what they are looking for. However, after three years of drought and a rapidly growing herd, it became clear that we needed to lighten the load on our property by reducing stock.

Our first consideration was to hold an on farm field day with pen sales but observation of such events shows that it is difficult to achieve more than a few actual sales on the day. This may be a great way to build client relationships but it lacks the all important "buying imperative". It's far too easy for would-be purchasers to go home to think about it and the opportunity to close the deal is lost.

So, with some reluctance, we decided that the only way to have an effective clearance of some stock would be an auction.

A major advantage of running a private auction is the ability to offer a varied selection and to put up the lots in a balanced sequence without someone feeling disadvantaged because they are first, last or whatever. So we pulled a bit of everything from our herd - some superfine weanlings, pregnant females with cria at foot, some older cheapies and a couple of stud males - something for everyone, as the saying goes.



We mailed the auction catalogue to all AAA members, with the exception of WA, as we felt that selling unassessed animals to WA was logistically difficult. Now that Elysion has embraced the Q-Alpaca scheme we may review that thought in the future. The balance of our advertising budget was spent on advertising in a couple of rural publications, to capture non AAA members. We offered a free BBQ lunch and a lucky draw for a stud service to encourage attendance and bidder registration. Every additional bidder means a possible additional bid - and that's the name of the game!

Elysion is very fortunate to be a part of a close-knit group of breeders who rallied around to help with preparations and the activities of auction day. With the marquee up and the sausage sizzle going there was something of a carnival atmosphere. Alpaca breeders love the opportunity to gather and chat, so by sale time a good sized and good humoured crowd was in attendance.

With our volunteer helpers managing the barn and marshalling the alpacas into the ring, the progress of the sale was very smooth. We opted to do our own brief introduction of each lot, thereby keeping the brakes on the auctioneer's natural habit to rush proceedings - auctioneers seem to live by the credo of "a fast sale is a good sale" and we have to remind them that alpaca buyers are different to cattle buyers. Many are first time bidders and are unsure how to go about this auction business. However, all in all, the auctioneer and his team did a great job. Although some prices were a little lower than we had hoped we achieved 100% clearance as we were determined to create some space on the property for the new season's drop.

On reflection we considered the on farm auction to be a very successful part of our marketing mix. It provided a good sales result within a defined time period as well as exposing our stud to a range of new customers.

The essential elements to running a successful auction would seem to be:

- Plan well ahead
- Produce an easy to read, good quality catalogue
- Provide a weather proof venue
- Carefully identify each lot and pen them so that they can be easily inspected
- Be realistic in your price expectations
- Pray for sunshine!

### My Shed ...

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Ian Davison > Illawarra Alpacas, NSW

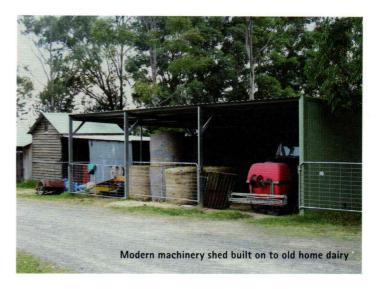
### Every Australian boy needs a shed ...

So the song goes. And alpaca breeders have taken it to heart. If anything, it understates the case: we need lots of sheds. And one doesn't have to be too far into raising and breeding alpacas before one's mind turns to building a brand new, purpose-built, you-beaut shed.

To begin, it is often the garage or the old machinery shelter that is reincarnated to serve as the new alpaca shed. Shiny cars and brawny tractors may be abandoned to the mercy of the elements to more comfortably accommodate the objects of our passion. (Our own first shearings were done on a tarpaulin stretched over the floor of the old slab shed that began its life as a home dairy.)

But as time moves on and alpaca numbers increase, we look for economies of scale that seemed irrelevant when we were handling just a few animals, and one inevitably yearns for that purpose-built shed that will accommodate all the functions required by a growing alpaca enterprise.

In touring around the country visiting alpaca breeders, one cannot help but be impressed by the variety of ways in which breeders have met this challenge. The variety of sheds is even greater than the variety of alpacas for which they are built, and the facilities and ideas that they boast are often novel and ingenious. No single article can hope to do justice to all these innovative solutions, and I am hopeful that this article may inspire a rush of aspiring alpaca journalists, all extolling the virtues of their own creations in a series of articles entitled simply and unashamedly, My Shed ...



### There is no shortage of reasons for a shed

Often, the primary need is for a SICK BAY to house a sick animal or a weak newborn cria. SHELTER can be a godsend, especially in times of profoundly inclement weather, such as that tragically experienced by many Victorian breeders in early 2005. SHOW PREPARATION is so much easier with a shed to prepare and shelter animals. SHEARING is virtually impossible without a shed to protect fleeces from wind and dust. STORAGE of implements, equipment and feed is another vital function. SKIRTING fleeces, and SORTING fleeces into bales, can only be done in a shed. The vet will often claim your shed as his SURGERY when called upon to do various procedures on your alpacas. Finally, you may wish to secure one part of your shed as a STUDY (or office), in which to keep your records, library, telephone/fax, computer, microscope, etc., close to your workplace, but secure from dust, wind and spit.



### In planning your shed, your first consideration must be the proposed site

Level, or gently sloping ground is best, and the latter may facilitate the easier disposal of alpaca droppings or skirtings if you are considering a slatted floor as used in sheep shearing sheds. Ideally, the shed should be close enough to the main house to be visible and easily accessible in all weather, with the added advantage that this will probably facilitate the relatively cheap connection of power and telephone lines. The shed should be incorporated into the main corridors for movement of livestock around the farm, preferably with several alternative routes for moving stock into and out of the shed. It should have vehicular access from one side, for loading and unloading animals and fleece bales, and for easier access for your vet. One must consider prevailing strong winds and the direction of morning and afternoon sun in planning the shed, so as to maximise light, but to minimise exposure to excess summer heat and strong winds.

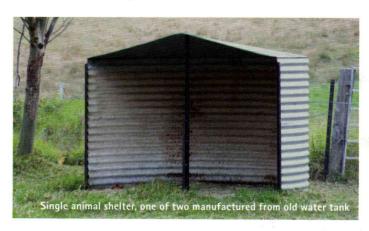
### Construction is the next consideration

Construction materials will vary widely, but steel frame and corrugated iron walls provide durable, sturdy and secure construction that is versatile, weatherproof and affordable. Flooring is very much a personal choice, varying from earthen flooring, to concrete, to wooden slats, with perceived advantages in each. We have chosen slightly roughened concrete, which is durable, reasonably easy to clean, is not too slippery for alpacas, and permits the use of straw bedding without the dust of an earthen floor. Windows, doors and skylights can be positioned to take advantage of natural light, and to control air movement, and ceiling vents can assist in ventilation. Sliding external doors are best, easily manoeuvred in strong winds, allowing infinite variability in controlling air movement, and requiring minimal unencumbered space to open them. Consideration should be given to collecting the rainwater from the roof and reticulating it to water troughs and basins.

Added features might include a lockable office space, either as a mezzanine or on ground level. A mezzanine can offer the advantage of convenient storage.

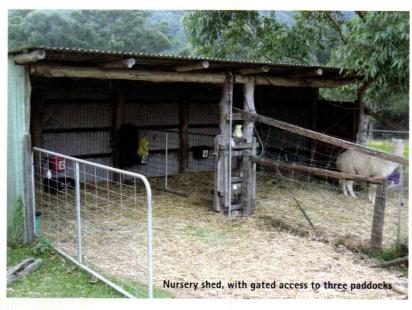
The size of the shed will be dictated by available space, available dollars and perceived need. Farm sheds are frequently laid out in 12 foot square units, a convenient unit that can accommodate a standard stable. Two units will accommodate most tractors. Whatever your decision, presume that the shed will grow with you, and that extensions may become necessary as your herd grows.

Modular fencing in the shed is mandatory, making use of lightweight steel or aluminium fencing panels that are equally useful in the paddock, or even when on the road. They can be used to advantage in independently penning animals for open days, grouping herds together in preparation for routine procedures, isolating a sick bay, creating a race for purposes of weighing or draughting animals, or creating a chute for loading alpacas onto transport. They can even be used to create a makeshift alpaca crush.



Before committing to your shed, take advantage of the experiences of your fellow breeders and visit as many as you can, taking photographs of their sheds for future reference. Adopt their best ideas, and be careful not to repeat their mistakes.

And when you're done, write to Alpacas Australia, and tell us what you've learnt in an article called My Shed ... ■



### Uses for an alpaca shed

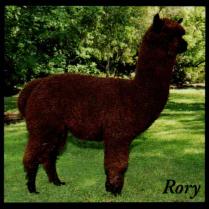
- Sick bay
- Shelter
- Show preparation
- Shearing
- Storage
- Skirting fleeces
- Sorting fleeces
- Surgery
- Study

### Next issue:

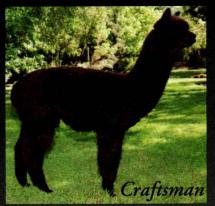
Ian Davison kicks off the series "My Shed ..." in an article describing the innovative shearing shed designed for Illawarra Alpacas by shearer, Chris Powers.

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### Alpaca Garments hit the Catwalk at Mercedes Australian Fashion Week

FASHION ARTICLE by Kim Donaldson > McGregors International, NSW







Alpaca takes a bite out of summer fashion

In the previous edition of Alpacas Australia, you may recall an article about a young Chilean designer by the name of Lorena Laing who uses Australian Alpaca fleece in a wide range of her designs.

A few months on and Lorena is continuing to show her support for our growing industry. In early May, she was invited to showcase her Spring/Summer collection at the prestigious Mercedes Australian Fashion Week in Sydney.

The event was open to fashion industry representatives only, including international and Australian buyers as well as key fashion media. 'Lorena Laing' garments were featured on Monday 2 May 2005 as part of the Ready to Wear 1 parade - one of the opening shows. With approximately 500 people in attendance, the fashion industry was pleasantly surprised about how alpaca fleece can be used to create lightweight knits and lace, as well as blending it with other fabrics.

Most of the stunning garments paraded were made predominately from alpaca fibre. Three outfits caught the eye of everyone in attendance - one was an oatmeal coloured suit featuring a 1950's style jacket with boning detail and wide leg-trousers in lightweight alpaca suiting, with a hand beaded copper sequin capelet (above right). The second was a blue/black double-breasted jacket in lightweight alpaca suiting over a tulle and French lace top combined with a gentleman's cuffed trouser (above centre). The feature piece at the end of the parade was a pleated skirt with tulle underlay and foiled lace appliqué in lightweight alpaca suiting paired with a fitted jacket in cotton lace and matching parasol (above left).

These beautiful garments epitomised the characteristics of alpaca fleece and the delegates appreciated the way this unique fibre lent itself to fashion. To provide further information about the alpaca industry and this exceptional fleece, the attending invitees and fashion industry VIPs were given an information package to take away from the show. This kit included a sample of fleece contained in a wooden box, a flyer about Australian Alpaca and a background document about AAA Inc. involvement in the fashion industry. These packages were well received by delegates and remaining kits were given to TAFE fashion students.

The audience was pleased with the parade and the interest in Lorena Laing's designs was encouraging. The range has been shown to a number of interested independent local retailers in Australia including one of the big department stores. In addition, an international buyer from New York will be viewing the range following her expression of interest at the parade. Overall, the amount of interest indicates a very positive outlook for Australian Alpaca fashion.

## Non-believer Sheep Farmers in NSW Central West Converted

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Debbie O'Neill > Signature Alpacas, NSW

### Once upon a time there was ...

Well, yes, I'd like to say that becoming owners of alpacas was part of a fairytale but the raw truth is more like a Stephen King novel to begin with although it does have a happy ending.

My husband (long suffering) and I (a NZ sheep farmer's daughter) and our two young children, moved back to Condobolin in the Central West of NSW to be closer to my husband's family and their family farm, and to escape the rat race and buy a property of our own. We arrived at the end of 2001 at the start of the drought (not that we knew it then) and bought some older ewes in lamb to Dorset rams and duly awaited lambing to commence.

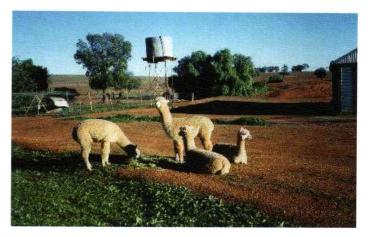
About a fortnight before the ewes were due to drop, the fox population nearly doubled - we had baited from a month prior to lambing but the foxes were still moving in for the main event - the lambing feeding frenzy. We put out over \$1,000 worth of fox baits for no apparent effect other than to feed the blighters!

We were losing up to ten lambs a night and that was only accounting for those that were left behind not those that were 'takeaways' as is the foxes' habit. During one evening's shooting my husband witnessed seven foxes working the sheep like a pack of dogs, circling them so that the lambs manoeuvred to the outside of the group could be taken by the nearest fox! (This is the Stephen King novel bit).

The upshot of this was a lambing rate of 63% - pretty pathetic considering the expense and effort that had gone in.

Out of this frustration was born the idea that there had to be a better way of controlling foxes. I didn't like the idea of using dogs; left unattended with their natural food source was asking for trouble. The idea to use alpacas came into its own (I can't even remember where I first heard about them) and I started to research these exotic creatures and the more I learned the more I was convinced that they were part of the solution to the problem.

Next was the sales phase where I had to convince my partner in life and in business that this was the way to go. Working in a very conservative rural farming area didn't help the cause too much either - to cut a long story short I was 'allowed' to purchase two wethers to trial. They had to be white and at least MN2 as we are living in an OJD/BJD exclusion zone.



Juan, Carlos, Pepe and Pedro during a brief moment when we had some green about - ewes are in the yard so boys are relaxing.

Finding wethers turned out to be a bit harder than we thought, especially with the requirements that we had, but Juan and Carlos (yes, Grand Prix weekend, Mr Montoya would be proud!) were duly brought home and placed with the maiden ewes, as all our older ewes, like so many others in the district were on agistment.

The two boys spent the first month travelling the fence line and the neighbour jokingly suggested that they were doing a good job with his sheep over the fence. With the size of the area that needed to be patrolled we sourced two more wethers to top up coverage of the paddock - just on 400 acres - and a fortnight before the ewes were due to lamb the alpacas started camping with the ewes at night.

That season we lost eight lambs from fox attack. With the help of the boys the lambing rate was 81% and there was only the occasional very hungry, mangy fox in the paddock so the boys must be doing their job and had paid for themselves in the first year - not many investments will do that! Last year we had all the ewes home - still in drought conditions and feeding stock and with the boys having just cut their 3 year old teeth we managed 87% + 7% hand reared lambs = 94%.

The ewes often form a nursery group around where the alpacas are camped under a tree during the middle of the day so the boys get to play babysitter while the ewes go off to graze. The alpacas won't leave an area until all the lambs are with their mothers. The boys patrol the paddock during the day and will check out any new additions as they arrive, they also tend to hang around the vicinity of lambing ewes.

I am still able to take my little sheepdog bitch into the paddock with me but I have to show the boys that she is with me so they don't chase her, but they still watch her every move.

I have seen the alpacas on several occasions gently pushing a lamb up to its Mum as she is walking away from the feeders, where the lamb has been asleep and not realized that Mum has finished and is heading off.

This year, when checking the lambing ewes in the twin/ multiples paddock one day, I found a lamb that belonged to a set of triplets which had become separated from its siblings and Mum. I realized I was being monitored by Juan and Pepe who were on lambing duty in this paddock; they watched me as I put the lamb down then they pushed it up to the ewe who acknowledged it and let it suck. The two alpacas then nudged the three lambs up after the ewe as she walked off - the poor ewe won't get any time out with these two paddock Nannies on duty.

My husband is a bigger advocate for the alpacas as fox guards than I am now and we have just bought our first three girls (yes, those big brown eyes and their gentle intelligent nature have got us hooked) so we will be breeding our own fox guards and girls for a while to come.

We still bait for foxes but are only using between \$30 and \$40 worth of baits during the lambing season, a far cry from the \$1000 worth of bait and no real results. Alpacas have proved to be a far more sustainable and ongoing solution to our fox problem.

A neighbour down the road came and asked me about them the other day and he has just invested in some wethers for his breeding ewe flock so the word is spreading. Maybe one day soon alpacas running with sheep will be the norm and all the foxes in the Central West will be forced to relocate ... maybe.

... And they all lived happily ever after!

### World's First Supreme Champion ET Alpaca

Report and photograph by Bob Garnant, Countryman Newspaper, WA

The 2005 Alpaca Autumn Show held in April at Whiteman Park, WA attracted 37 Suris and 158 Huacayas. Margamon Prince Regent won Supreme Suri and the Suri progeny class went to Wesuri Heritage Prince Allianza. There was much interest in the Huacaya classes when an ET junior male was awarded Champion Junior Male and placed into the final line up.

"It has been a long time since I have awarded a junior alpaca the Supreme title," Judge Bill Robbins said as he sashed Banksia Park Khan ET. "This animal says it all to me. His standard is excellent".

Banksia Park Khan ET, the world's first embryo transplant alpaca to win a Supreme title, was also part of the winning Huacaya progeny class which made for a very successful show for Banksia Park Alpaca Stud. The stud, in Serpentine, WA is conducting one of the world's largest alpaca ET programs with 150 transfers currently involved. A full sister of Banksia Park Khan ET also won Junior Female Champion putting a stamp of approval on their ET program.

The Champion Huacaya fleece award went to Encantador Anastasia and the Champion Suri fleece was awarded to Surilana My Lady Joanna.

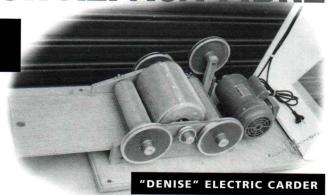


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# Sad Day for Victorian Central Region

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Meddwyn Coleman > Lee Carrow Alpacas, VIC. On behalf of Vic Central Region Committee

February 2nd 2005 started like any other February day and gave no early clue to the extreme temperature drop we would experience by nightfall. Unprecedented weather conditions hit our herds with a rapid and extreme temperature drop, gale force winds, hail, and rain. Late shorn alpacas were particularly vulnerable but there was no predictable pattern identifiable when losses due to hypothermia were calculated the next day.

Many of our studs lost several animals to those horrible conditions; some lost almost their entire herd. But, and this is important, there was no predictable pattern to which alpacas were most at risk! Even those breeders who recognised the dangerous conditions and took preliminary precautions (such as shedding those animals that were frailer than others) still lost robust fleeced animals when morning light came. Other breeders were more fortunate. Many alpacas were saved by quick thinking and rudimentary knowledge of general first aid principles once their owners found them in distress.

The following day e-mails began to arrive on our network outlining some of the losses. This was such a sad day. Our Regional Committee recognised the need to respond but just what response could we make? What we would have liked to be able to do for those who suffered losses was not possible. We couldn't restore their animals, nor could we replace them. What we set out to do was to learn as much as possible from this experience with a view to ensuring that it hopefully won't catch us so vulnerable in future.

Shortly after the magnitude of the event became clear, our Regional Committee initiated an investigative response. After discussions with representatives of the Department of Primary Industry (DPI) a survey was circulated to every stud in our Region. Questions on the survey were determined by advice from DPI as to what kind of information would be relevant in the event that we, as a primary industry, would be in a position to seek financial compensation for our breeders. This survey form was picked up by both Victorian Western and Victorian Eastern Regions and was subsequently circulated to their membership as well.

From the survey forms returned information relating to the extent of the losses was compiled. The survey was voluntary and confidential.

Information to hand to date indicates that 60 animals were lost in Victorian Central Region with an estimated value of approximately \$270,000. We recognize that these figures are conservative. Many breeders chose not to return the survey form for personal reasons. Of over 170 survey forms distributed in our Region only 24 were returned. Verbal reports suggest that the figure lost was more likely to be about 200 animals. Also, the survey form was only sent to registered studs so there can be no estimate of the number of herd guard and pet alpacas lost that night. Figures which are also impossible to collate relate to stillbirths and abortions as a result of the event.

Obviously this has been a significant event from many perspectives. Once we move beyond the sadness and examine the lessons learned positives can be gleaned. From my personal perspective, this has been a wake up call for our industry to consider itself as a fully fledged primary industry. No more 'hobby farmer' mindset. We are a legitimate arm of Australia's livestock industries and are entitled as such to access services available to us from relevant government agencies.

My contact with representatives of the DPI has been instructive. I learnt that the weather conditions of February 2nd were not considered to be an emergency. That meant that no financial support was likely to be forthcoming from the government. Initially we had considered liaising with other livestock bodies in an attempt to present a joint submission for assistance to the DPI. To do this I attempted to contact a representative of the Victorian Farmers' Federation but was not able to do so because I was not personally a member of that organisation. That put an end to any thought that we, as a committee representing our members, might be able to participate in any joint submission. When I asked to be given information on how I might become a member I was put in touch with the regional membership co-ordinator who made the relevant enquiries on my behalf. This person was as helpful as he could be but in the end the information he fed back to me was that the VFF doesn't seek restitution for such situations because it is deemed to be a farm management issue.

Approaches to our own governing body (the AAA) resulted in a waiver of the transfer fee for animals bought by members affected by the weather conditions to replace lost stock.

From the mist of confusion clarity began to emerge. Positive directions began to become clear. Recommendations endorsed by our committee included:

- > The inclusion in alpaca health training programs of management strategies for hypothermia. This is to include risk recognition and management. Appropriate products to assist in treatment of hypothermia are being researched and information is being relayed to our membership.
- > The establishment of a pool of donated stud sire services to be made available for affected studs as a gesture of assistance in helping these studs to recover. (This has been done and information relating to these donations has been circulated to members who returned the survey form).
- > A recommendation to the AAA that the possibility of an organizational level membership of relevant farming organisations be explored.
- > That our Committee investigates any government assistance available for members to assist in the establishment of shelter belts and funding possibilities for fencing and shedding. (In our Region these services are available through our Regional Water Catchment Management Authorities).
- > Liaison with representatives of DPI to clarify what services are available to our members as primary industry participants.

These processes will be ongoing. As information is to hand our membership will be informed via announcements and articles in our Regional newsletter 'The Yarn'. Keep watching this magazine for relevant information. Given that services available may vary depending on state and regional issues, I would recommend that each Regional Committee contact local bodies pertinent to their state and Region to ascertain what resources are available locally.

### Graeme Dickson Awarded Life Membership of the AAA

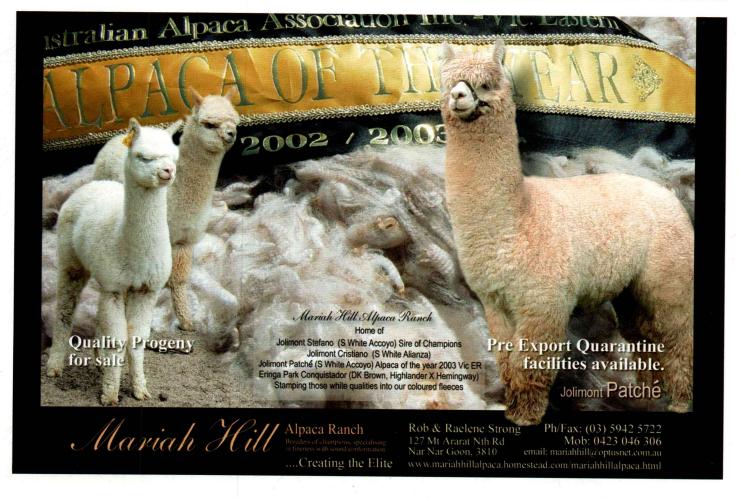


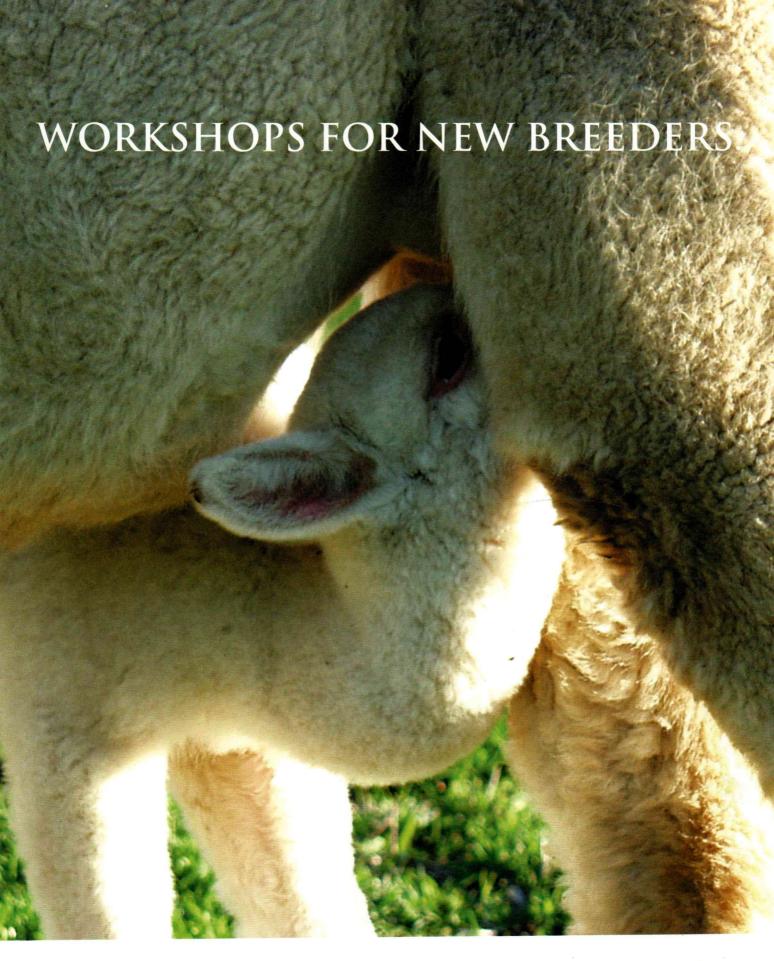
At the Ordinary General Meeting of the AAA Inc. in May 2005, Graeme Dickson (above left) of Warralinga Alpaca Stud in NSW was awarded life membership of the AAA. The award was made in recognition of Graeme's contribution to the Association.

Joining the Association in 1992, Graeme together with his wife, Lyn played a key role in the formation of the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains NSW Region and has held numerous committee positions in the years since, including several terms in the roles of Regional President, Vice President and Treasurer. Graeme is the current Regional President and continues to be an active participant in Region activities, most notably in the initiation and development of the annual Hawkesbury Fiesta and Auction.

In 1995 and again in 1998-1999 he also served as AAA National Vice President.

Graeme is now proud to be in the company of other AAA Life Members, Ken Allston of Tasmania and Victorians Roger Haldane, Allan Jinks and Bill Plunkett.





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# What Price a Champion?

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Matt Ridley > Blaydon Alpacas, NSW

The sale of *Prestige Valentino* for \$112,000 at the Hawkesbury Fiesta in May provides yet another highlight in the career of the brilliant dam...

Purrumbete True Perfection.

Valentino has been an outstanding success at stud, particularly for Illawarra Alpacas of Cambewarra on the NSW south coast where he stood on lease, and it was no surprise to see that stud leading the syndicate that purchased him from Pam and Barry Thomas of Prestige Alpacas of Kurmond, NSW after a keen bidding duel.

His dam, *Purrumbete True Perfection* was one of the amazing 28 "Haldane Chileans". A solid white girl born around 1991, she had just four registered crias, but they have all been outstanding show performers and, particularly via her daughter *Purrumbete Minty* (by *Purrumbete Highlander*), True Perfection has left an indelible mark on Australian alpaca breeding.

Her first cria was *Purrumbete Minty*, another solid white, who has had a cria each 12 months or so since 1998 for Forestglen Alpacas of Milthorpe in the NSW central west. Minty's impact has been quite stunning: she was an outstanding show performer herself in fleece classes – including a Supreme Championship at the 2000 Sydney Royal and a blue at the National that year; and six of her seven crias have been to show (and look out for *Forestglen Seventh Heaven* towards the end of 2005) for innumerable championships at the highest levels. Incidentally, Minty has been to seven different sires in the seven seasons since she went to stud and, even allowing for the high standard of the males covering her, she has certainly stamped her own class on the progeny.

Minty's first cria was Forestglen Maestro, a white son of Purrumbete El Dorado (SMF) who won blue at the 2000 National and a fleece championship at the Sydney Royal a few months later. But it was as a sire that he has been even more successful, with firsts in nine Sires Progeny classes to May 2005. His progeny have starred across the eastern seaboard, with his classy son Forestglen Pendragon a standout at show before being sold to the UK for \$75,000 late last year.

Forestglen Prima Donna, a 1999 daughter of Purrumbete Monarch (SW), is yet to meet the standard of the rest of

Minty's progeny, but there is time yet – and she has a blue at the 2001 Tocal fleece show to her credit to establish her credibility.

Next for Minty came Forestglen Patriarch, a solid white son of Peruvian champion Cedar House Peruvian Ayaviri (SW). Again a multiple championship winner, including the Nationals of 2003 and 2004, Patriarch perhaps suffers from Forestglen's surfeit of stud males, for he has had few chances at stud yet so his value here is difficult to estimate. On genetics alone, he should do well.

Forestglen Sheer Bliss came along as Minty's 2002 cria by ILR Ppperuvian Auzengate 6010 (SW) and she maintained the standard. Supreme Championships at the Central Coast-Hunter and NSW Southern Regionals of 2002 were amongst several broad ribbons for that year, including one at the National Show. And her son Forestglen Shahzaam (by Shanbrooke Accoyo Yavari (SW)) already has three broad ribbons to his credit at major shows.

Minty was joined to *Jolimont Warrior* (SW) in 2002 to produce *Forestglen Song of Joy* in early 2003. She has nine championships as well as a Supreme Fleece Championship at this year's Sydney Royal to her credit.

Minty's 2004 son was *Forestglen Royal Mint*, this time by *Shanbrooke Accoyo Tulaco* (SW), and he has several ribbons to his credit already in the junior classes.

So Minty has been an amazing producer, to a multitude of sires.

True Perfection would find it hard to produce another Minty, and anyway her next two crias were males. Both were outstanding show performers. True Perfection went to *Purrumbete Ledgers Dream* to produce *Prestige Rudolph*, a good performer at shows in 1996 and 1997 before tragically dying prematurely from heat stroke before establishing a reputation at stud. Many good judges had rated him at least the equal of his younger half-brother Valentino.

### Purrumbete True Perfection (SW) 2407 (F Imp Chile (Haldane)). Dam of:

**Purrumbete Minty** (SW) 2372 (F by *Purrumbete Highlander* (SW)) 27/11/94. Reserve Champion Huacaya Fleece C-N (NSW) Reg 1999; 1st HF30+All C-N (NSW) Reg 1999; 2nd HF30+All C-N (NSW) Reg 1999; Grand Champion Huacaya Fleece Sydney Royal 2000; 1st HF30+W Sydney Royal 2000; Champion HF30+ Sydney Royal 2000; Champion Adult Fleece Tocal Fleece Show 2000; 1st HF30+W Tocal Fleece Show 2000; 1st HF30+W National 2001; Reserve Champion Fleece 30+ Sydney Royal 2001; 2nd HF30+W Sydney Royal 2001; 2nd HF30+W National 2001; Champion Adult Huacaya Fleece Tocal Fleece Show 2001; 1st HF30+W Tocal Fleece Show 2001. Dam of:

Forestglen Maestro (W) 30040 (M by *Purrumbete El Dorado* (SMF)) 25/11/98. Reserve Champion Junior Male CC-H 1999; 2nd M6-12W CC-H Reg 1999; 2nd M6-12W H-BM (NSW) Reg 1999; 5th M6-12W Charles Ledger (NSW) 1999; Champion Male Bathurst 2000; 1st M12-18All Bathurst 2000; 3rd M18+W C-W (NSW) Reg 2000; 3rd M18+W Charles Ledger (NSW) 2000; 1st HF18-30L National 2000; 2nd M30+W National 2000; Champion Fleece 18-30 mths Sydney Royal 2001; 1st HF18-30W Sydney Royal 2001; 3rd M18+W C-W (NSW) Reg 2001; Supreme Champion Huacaya Fleece Tocal Fleece Show 2001; Champion Intermediate Huacaya Fleece Tocal Fleece Show 2001; 1st HF18-30W Tocal Fleece Show 2001; 3rd HF9-18W Tocal Fleece Show 2000; 4th HF18-30W National 2001; 1st Sires Progeny Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002; 2nd Sires Progeny CC-H Reg 2002; 1st Sires Progeny H-BM (NSW) Reg 2002; 2nd Sires Progeny Melbourne Royal 2002; 1st Sires Progeny Castle Hill 2003; 3rd Sires Progeny Castle Hill 2003; 1st Sires Progeny C-W (NSW) Reg 2003; 2nd Sires Progeny Charles Ledger (NSW) 2003; 2nd Sires Progeny CC-H Reg 2003; 3rd Sires Progeny Hawkesbury 2003; 2nd Sires Progeny Castle Hill 2004; 3rd Sires Progeny Sydney Royal 2004; 1st Sires Progeny C-W (NSW) Reg 2004; 1st Sires Progeny HBM (NSW) Reg 2004; 1st Sires Progeny Sthn (NSW) Reg 2004; 2nd Sires Progeny CC-H (NSW)

Forestglen Prima Donna (SW) 38388 (F by Purrumbete Monarch (SW)) 12/11/99. 1st HF9-18W Tocal Fleece Show 2001

Forestglen Patriarch (SW) 46572 (M by Cedar House Peruvian Ayaviri (SW)) 6/2/01. Champion Junior Male CC-H Reg 2001; 1st M6-12W CC-H Reg 2001; 1st M6-12W Charles Ledger (NSW) 2001; 2nd HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2002; 5th M12-18W Sydney Royal 2002; Reserve Champion Intermediate Male Hawkesbury 2002; 1st M12-18W Hawkesbury 2002; Reserve Champion Intermediate Male C-W (NSW) Reg 2002; 2nd M12-18W C-W (NSW) Reg 2002; Champion Intermediate Fleece Sydney Royal 2003; 1st HF18-30W Sydney Royal 2003; Reserve Champion Fleece 18-30 National 2003; 2nd HF18-30W National 2003; Champion Fleece 30-48 Mths National 2004; 1st HF30-48W National 2004

Forestglen Sheer Bliss (SW) 55391 (F by ILR Ppperuvian Auzengate 6010 (SW)) 3/2/02. Supreme Champion CC-H Reg 2002; Champion Junior Female CC-H Reg 2002; 1st F6-12W CC-H Reg 2002; 1st F6-12W H-BM (NSW) Reg 2002; Supreme Champion Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002; Champion Junior Female Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002; Champion Junior Female H-BM (NSW) Reg 2002; 1st F6-12W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002; Champion Junior Female Charles Ledger (NSW) 2002; Best Fawn Charles Ledger (NSW) 2002; 1st F6-12W Charles Ledger (NSW) 2002; Reserve Champion Junior Female National 2002; 2nd F6-12W National 2002; 3rd HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2003; 4th F12-18W Sydney Royal 2003; Champion Fleece 9-18 National 2003; 1st HF9-18W National 2003; 3rd HF18-30W Sydney Royal 2004. Dam of:

Forestglen Shahzaam (SW) 72210 (M by Shanbrooke Accoyo Yavari (SW)) 11/2/04. Champion Junior Male HBM (NSW) Reg 2004; 1st M6-12W HBM (NSW) Reg 2004; 1st Champion Junior Male Sthn (NSW) Reg 2004; 1st M6-12W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2004; Reserve Champion Fleece 9-18 Mths Sydney Royal 2005; 2nd HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2005

Forestglen Song Of Joy (SW) A 62116 (F by Jolimont Warrior (SW)) 18/1/03. Champion Junior Female C-W (NSW) Reg 2003; 1st F6-12W C-W (NSW) Reg 2003; Champion Junior Female H-BM (NSW) Reg 2003; 1st F6-12W H-BM (NSW) Reg 2003; Champion Junior Female Sthn (NSW) Reg 2003; 1st F6-12W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2003; 8th F6-12W National 2003; Champion Intermediate Female Hawkesbury 2004; 1st F12-18W Hawkesbury 2004; Reserve Champion Junior Female CC-H Reg 2003; 2nd F6-12W CC-H Reg 2003; Reserve Champion Fleece 9-18Sydney Royal 2004; 2nd 1st HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2004; Champion Intermediate Female Boorowa 2004; 1st F12-18W Boorowa 2004; Champion Intermediate Female Bathurst Royal 2004; 1st F12-18W Bathurst Royal 2004; Supreme Champion Fleece Sydney Royal 2005; Champion Fleece 18-30 Mths Sydney Royal 2005; 1st HF18-30W Sydney Royal 2005

Forestglen Royal Mint (SW) 72205 (M by Shanbrooke Accoyo Tulaco (SW)) 14/1/04. 2nd M6-12W C-W (NSW) Reg 2004; 5th M6-12W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2004; HC M6-12W Charles Ledger (NSW) 2004

Prestige Rudolph (W) 17456 (M by Purrumbete Ledgers Dream (SW)) 25/12/95. 2nd M6-12W NSW Combined 1996; 2nd M6-12W CC (NSW) Reg 1996; Supreme Champion Albion Park 1997; Champion Junior Male Portland 1997; Champion Male Albion Park 1997; Champion White Maitland 1997; 1st M12-18All Portland 1997; 1st M12-24W Maitland 1997; 1st M12-24All Albion Park 1997; 1st M12-24W St Ives 1997

Prestige Valentino (W) 17464 (M by Purrumbete Sir Titus Salt (SW)) 31/1/97. Supreme Champion Albion Park 1997; Champion White CC-H Reg 1997; Best White CC-H Reg 1997; 1st M6-12W CC-H Reg 1997; Reserve Champion Junior Male National 1997; 1st M6-12W National 1997; Supreme Champion Huacaya Fleece H-BM (NSW) Reg 1998; Champion HF9-18 H-BM (NSW) Reg 1998; 1st HF9-18W H-BM (NSW) Reg 1998; 3rd M18+W Charles Ledger (NSW) 1998; Best White Maitland 1998; 1st M12-24W Maitland 1998; Supreme Champion Portland 1998; Champion Junior Male Portland 1998; 1st M6-12W/F Portland 1998; 1st First Fleece W Hawkesbury 1998; Champion First Fleece Hawkesbury 1998; Supreme Champion Campbelltown 1998; Champion First Fleece Hawkesbury 1998; Reserve Champion Senior Male Hawkesbury 1998; Supreme Champion Campbelltown 1999; Champion Senior Male Campbelltown 1999; 1st M18+All Campbelltown 1999; Supreme Champion Hawkesbury 1999; 2nd M24+W Hawkesbury 1999; Supreme Champion H-BM (NSW) Reg 1999; Supreme Champion CC-H Reg 1999; Champion Senior Male CC-H Reg 1999; 1st M18+W CC-H Reg 1999; 1st M18+W H-BM (NSW) Reg 1999; 2nd M18+W Charles Ledger (NSW) 1999; Reserve Champion Senior Male C-N (NSW) Reg 1999; 2nd M18+W C-N (NSW) Reg 1999; Champion Senior Male H-BM (NSW) Reg 1999; Reserve Champion Senior Male Charles Ledger (NSW) 1999; 4th M30+All National 1999; Reserve Champion HF30+ Months Sydney Royal 2000; 2nd HF30+W Sydney Royal 2000; Supreme Champion Fleece Hawkesbury 2000; 1st HF30+L Hawkesbury 2000; 1st 3rd HF30+All Canberra Royal 2001; 3rd HF30+W Sydney Royal 2001; 1st Sires Progeny Canberra Royal 2002; 1st Sires Progeny Castle Hill 2002; 1st Sires Progeny Canberra Royal 2002; Sires Progeny Robertson 2002; 2nd Sires Progeny Hawkesbury 2002; 2nd Sires Progeny Robertson 2003; 3rd Sires Progeny Moss Vale 2003; 2nd Sires Progeny Castle Hill 2003; 1st Sires Progeny Canberra Royal 2003; 1st HF30+W Hawkesbury 2003; 2nd M30+W Hawkesbury 2004; 3rd Sires Progeny Hawkesbury 2004; Champion Mature Male Bathurst Royal 2004; 1st M48+W Bathurst Royal 2004; Champion Fleece 60+ Tocal 2004; 1st HF60+W Tocal 2004

Prestige Arabesque (SW) 31187 (F by *Purrumbete Brigantine* (W)) 4/3/99. Reserve Champion Intermediate Female CC-H Reg 2000; 1st F12-18W CC-H Reg 2000; 1st F18+L (S) Canberra Royal 2001; Champion Senior Female Hawkesbury 2001; 3rd F30+L National 2001. Sold \$34,650 Nov 2001. Dam of:

Forestglen Elegance (SW) 55390 (F by Shanbrooke Elite (SW)) 30/1/02. 3rd F6-12W H-BM (NSW) Reg 2002; 2nd F6-12W Charles Ledger (NSW) 2002; Reserve Champion Fleece Sydney Royal 2004; 2nd HF18-30W Sydney Royal 2004; 3rd HF18-30W National 2004

Forestglen Warlord (SW) 62118 (M by *Jolimont Warrior* (SW)) 26/1/03. 3rd 1st HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2004; 2nd M18-30W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2004

Forestglen El Cid (SW) 72212 (M by Shanbrooke Accoyo El-Prado (SW)) 13/2/04. 3rd HF9-18W Sydney Royal 2005

Going to *Purrumbete Sir Titus Salt*, True Perfection next produced Valentino in January 1997. With a brilliant show record himself, and being the sire of over 20 Supreme Champions and almost 100 other championship winners, Valentino ranks amongst Australia's leading sires in our short history. He is said to have produced an amazing one show ribbon winner for each three crias on the ground, a feat that rivals that of Danehill or Redout's Choice in the thoroughbred world. Little wonder he brought a high price at sale.

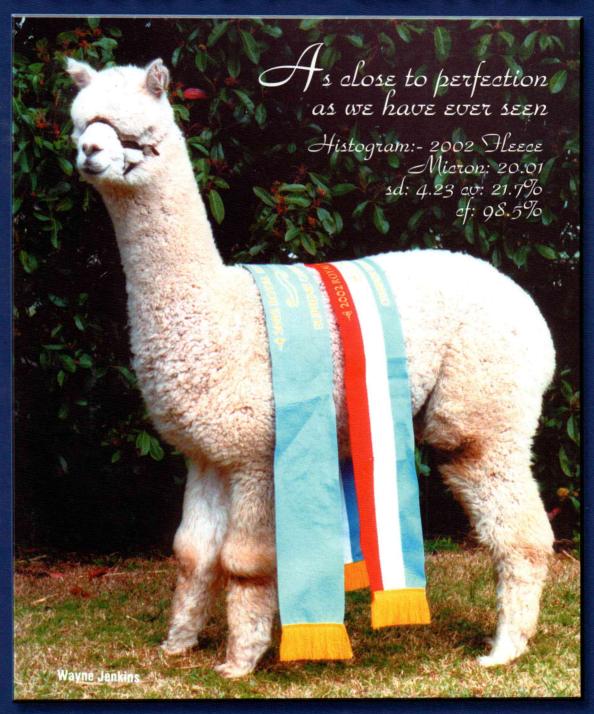
True Perfection's 1999 cria was *Prestige Arabesque*, by Highlander's best sire son in *Purrumbete Brigantine* (W).

Arabesque won two broad ribbons during 2001 before being sold at the National Auction in November that year. Forestglen's Maureen Carey, already privy to the quality of the family, went to \$34,650 to secure Arabesque, and so "corner" the family. Forestglen Elegance (Reserve Champion Fleece Sydney Royal 2004), Forestglen Warlord (a blue at the Sydney Royal of 2004) and Forestglen El Cid (3rd at Sydney Royal this year) have been Arabesque's progeny to date.

So the legend of True Perfection lives on, and on, and on...

Valentino might yet prove to be quite a bargain buy. ■

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Ultimo is unique as a mature male He holds a remarkable and even fleece ~ density, fineness, crimp, and lustre ~ with an eye-catching aristocratic presence

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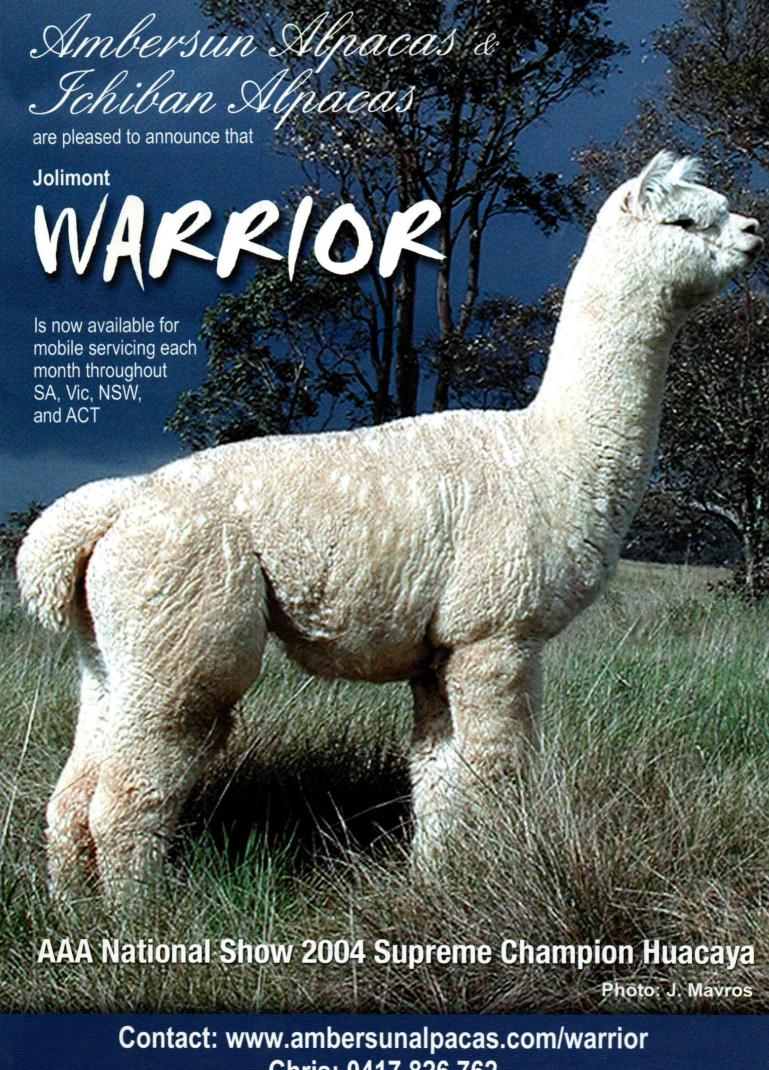
Adelaide Royal Show, 2002 Melbourne Royal Show, 2002 Ballarat Sheep and Wool Show, 2002

Strathalbyn, 2002

Clare, 2002

Adelaide Royal Show, 2003 Hamilton Show, 2003

www.finechoicealpacas.com or phone Chris Williams 0417 826 762



Chris: 0417 826 762

# Showcasing our Future!

SHOWING AND JUDGING ARTICLE by Michael van den Bos > McGregors International, NSW

What do the Gold Rush, a talking tram and one of the largest sheep districts in Australia have in common? They're all associated with Bendigo – the location for this year's National Show and Sale to be held Friday 14 – Sunday 16 October.

Moving from Canberra to a new, purpose-built venue in Bendigo, the Australian Alpaca Association Inc.'s (AAA) National Show and Sale is guaranteed to attract international interest, including visitors and buyers from New Zealand and UK.

This year's event is expected to be the largest alpaca show ever held in Australia!

Internationally-accredited Australian judges Bill Plunkett and Julie Bird have been given the task of nominating the best animals in Australia and with an unprecedented number of elite alpacas expected to take to the ring, the results will be closely watched by breeders and visitors alike.

There will also be a variety of exciting, new attractions at this year's event including an art and photography exhibition, and a fashion parade featuring garments from Chilean-born designer Lorena Laing. As the new Ambassador for the Australian Alpaca industry, Lorena will donate a garment for auction prior to the main sale!

Also, for the first time, the National Show and Sale will have a licensed bar and will be able to serve alcohol during the Show in conjunction with several wineries offering tastings. All this is in addition to the gourmet BBQ on Friday, and the Gala Dinner on the Saturday evening.

The weekend will culminate in the National Classic Auction scheduled for the final afternoon of the Show. Capitalising on the success of the 2004 National Show and Sale where two separate stud sires achieved the top price of \$75,000 (one of which was purchased by a UK breeder) the Auction will again feature a number of blue ribbon winners from the Show, which are sure to attract international attention.

In a move to secure additional animals for the Auction, the organizing committee is providing all AAA Inc. studs with the chance to become a gold sponsor for the National Show and Sale. With only five places on offer and a series of great benefits for the accepted studs, this opportunity is an ideal way to promote your stud in conjunction with this premier Australian Alpaca industry event.

The National Show and Sale is an excellent way to find out more about current developments within the Australian Alpaca industry. With a 17 percent increase in national herd numbers and fleece collection up by 31 percent, the Australian Alpaca industry is recognised as a world leader in alpaca breeding. The versatile fleece, combined with intensive breeding programs, has helped to develop the industry and the national alpaca population now stands at over 60,000 animals, the largest registered herd of alpacas in the world.

To accommodate all the entries, a reworking of the schedule will see all animals penned on the Thursday prior to the Show. Judging will commence at 10.00am on Friday 14 October.

The increasing fascination with the Australian Alpaca industry is expected to see those interested in pursuing this agribusiness, visiting many of the alpaca studs holding open days on their properties in the days following the Show.

Alternatively, existing breeders may, on their way home from the Show, like to call in to see how other alpaca owners run their property – something that always proves to be a valuable and interesting experience.



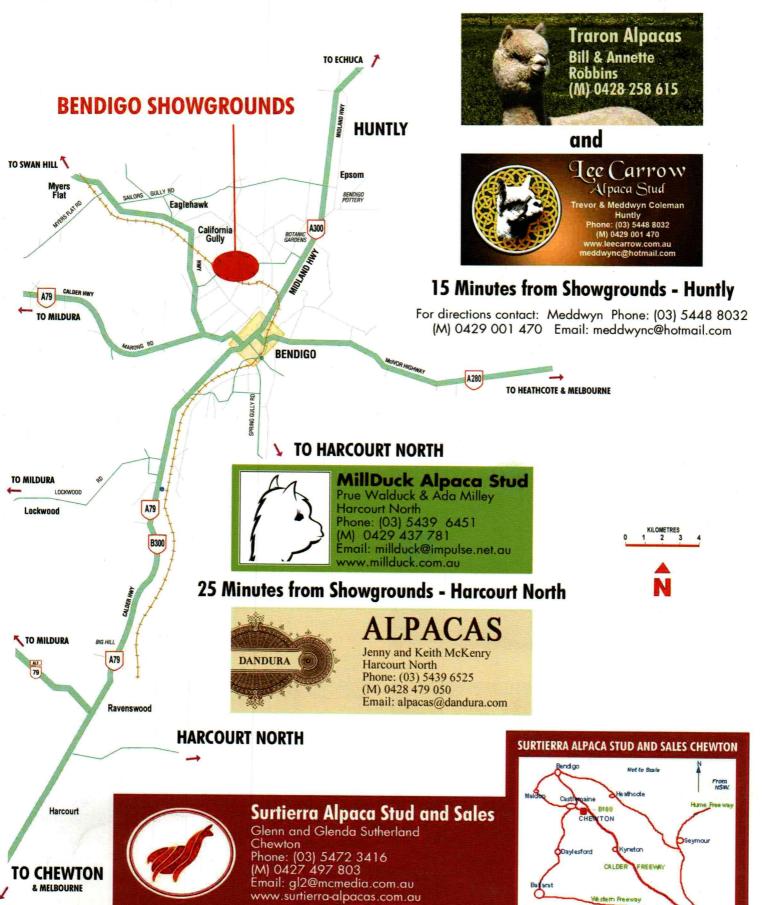
Everyone is very welcome to attend the 12th National Show and Sale - a rare opportunity to come face-to-face with all aspects of this rural lifestyle phenomenon under the one roof. The Show will take place at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre, Prince of Wales Showground, Bendigo. Entry is free and there is plenty of parking available. If you would like further information contact Glenn Sutherland, Convenor, on +61 3 5472 3416 or email gl2@mcmedia.com.au ■



### No Matter Which Way You Look

WE WILL BE OPEN On Monday 17th & Tuesday 18th October.

Following the Australian Alpaca National Show and Sale



40 Minutes from Showgrounds - Chewton

### The Spin on Suris and how they differ from Huacayas

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Cameron Holt > International School of Fibres

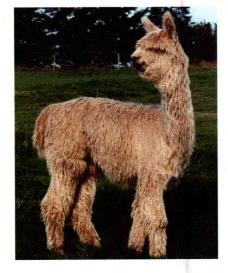
### Introduction

Alpacas come from the Genus Llama family, which also includes llama, vicuña and guanaco. They come under the umbrella of the camel family, their old relations. The alpaca and llama it is thought, have descended from the guanaco.

### THE SURI DESCRIPTION

- Fineness 18-35 microns (has a soft silky feel)
- Length average 100-200mm (4-8 inches) in 12 months
- Fleece weight 1.5-4.5 kgs (3-9 lbs)
- No crimp (straight fibre). The fleece has curly staples
- Lustrous
- Medullation (less visual guard hair types)

The suri should grow a very lustrous silky dense fibre, which hangs in individual locks, vertical to the body (similar to that of a mohair goat). These locks come in various types, with the ringlet formation and the wave with twist being the most popular.



Although the face is open it may be covered with short fine lustrous fibre. The topknot area of a suri grows fibre, which hangs down, similar to a fringe over the forehead, falling down onto the face. The style/character in the fleece should be maintained from the forehead all the way down through the body to the lower leg.



There will be an increase in micron in the apron area. Guard hair (medullated fibre) may also be found in this area (suri fibre contains less medullation than huacaya).

### Conformation

The ideal functional suri should be correctly balanced and proportioned (squared off appearance) displaying a proud and alert presence and should "walk tall".



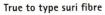


The neck should be approximately 2/3 of the length of the backline with the legs being approximately the same length of the neck. The legs should, when viewed from the front and rear, appear relatively straight. When viewed from the side the front legs should be relatively straight with the rear legs slightly bent (slightly sickle hock).

### Fibre Type

True to type suri fibre will be dense to feel and will have a cold sensation when handled. The bulky intermediate fleece type, sometimes associated with cross breeding, will have an average density and will be warmer to touch. It is quite noticeable the difference between the two types as the true to type suri will hang close to the body, giving the illusion that the suri is thin, whereas the intermediate type will be more rounded giving a fatter appearance.



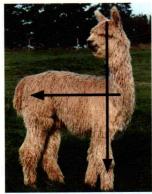


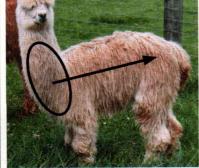


Bulky intermediate type fibre

### **Evenness**

The fleece should be even from head to lower leg and front to back.





Very even across the body

Varies from neck to britch

### Independence of Lock

The locks should be independent and free flowing.



Suri does not exhibit any crimp but is a relatively straight fibre in comparison to huacaya. A very low wave/twist is desirable when looking at the individual fibre as compared to a very straight fibre. V

A hybrid type sometimes referred to as a "chili" or "huasu" is highly lustrous exhibiting a broad crimp like structure and grows in a suri lock like formation. This fibre is undesirable in suri.





The alpaca population comprises of approximately 94% huacaya and 6% suri.

Alpacas have upwards of 20 recognised grades of colour.

### Fibre Structure

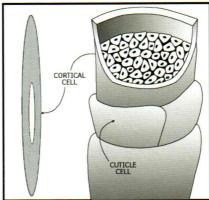
A complex protein called Keratin forms the composition of the fibre. Keratin is composed of the elements, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and sulphur.

The fibre itself is a complex assembly made up of an innumerable number of cells. The fibre consists entirely of rounded elongated and spindle shaped cells, thick in the middle and tapering away to a point at each end.

### **OUTER CELLS (CUTICLE)**

The OUTER CELLS (CUTICLE) are hard flattened scale-like cells which do not fit evenly together. The edges of these cells protrude from the fibre shaft giving the fibre a serrated edge (SERRATIONS).

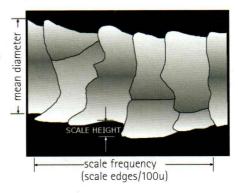
Serrations are an aid during processing as they help the fibre grip together to form a strong yarn. These are a greater aid to huacaya fibre than suri.





Basic cellular structure inside (Cortical)

Microscopic examination of the scale pattern enables us to identify groups of similar fibres. Micron, scale frequency and scale height can be measured using this technique.



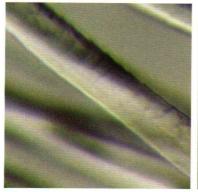
Research has shown that the cuticle cells on wool fibre protrude approximately 0.8 micron from the shaft whereas alpaca and mohair protrude approximately 0.4 micron.

Villarroel (1959) also observed a difference in scale heights between wool and alpaca but suggested the differences became less with the finer fibre.

It would therefore be simple to conclude that the softness of alpaca, of a given micron over that of wool of the same micron, is due to the scale height (protrusion). Having been able to identify the wool from alpaca due to this scale height we may need to go to the scale frequency of alpaca to distinguish it from mohair.

Mohair had a frequency of 6-8 compared to alpaca (huacaya) that had a mean frequency greater than 9 (per 100 microns).

Villarroel suggests that cuticle cells of the huacaya protrude slightly more than the suri. This is demonstrated in the photos below.





Huacaya

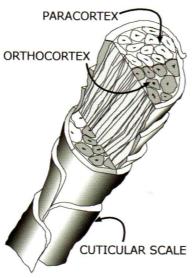
Suri

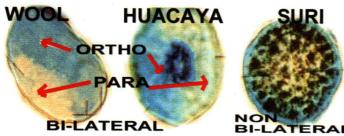
The suri fibre having less cuticle cells than the huacaya, makes the suri more slippery to feel and more lustrous than the huacaya.

### CORTICAL CELLS

Shown right is a cut away sketch of a surerfine huacaya fibre showing the major components of the cortical cell.

As you can see the fibre has two cortical cells. Para and ortho. In certain coarse fibres a hollow core may be visible (medulla).





Under the microscope (Holt 1996)

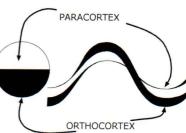
Villarroel (1959), Holt (1994) found that huacaya alpaca (not suri) like wool has a clearly defined ortho-para differentiation in the crimped fibre (fine). In the suri fine fibre no visible bilateral demarcation was evident.

However Holt (1997) found a difference in the corticle cells in the outer edge of the fibre of suri tight ringlet fibre (above right). This was similar to Maddocks et al (unpublished) findings in the ringlet type of mohair fibre.

### Huacaya / Suri Fibre Differences

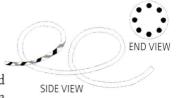
The first difference found between huacaya and suri is in the internal cortical cells of the fibre. The huacaya has a bilateral structure (not unlike sheep) and the suri does not. Villarroel (1959) and Holt (1994) identified this. Bilateral structure is made up of the orthocortex and the paracortex. These cells grow in their groups next to each other (see previous sketch: Cortical cells).

The bilateral formation is responsible for the crimp/crinkle in the huacaya. Research in 1953 by Japanese scientists found that the orthocortex was always observed on the outside of the crimp curve.



Because the suri has a helical coil structure (like mohair) the fibre is relatively straight.

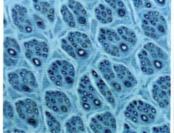
The suri fibre has less cuticle cells (outside cells) than the huacaya (over a given length, e.g. 100 microns). Hence the suri is more slippery to feel and more lustrous than the huacaya.

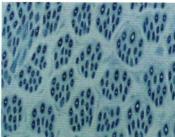


Stapleton – (1992) said, "The cortical cells in alpaca fibre constitute a variable fraction of the fibre mass, being lowest in coarse and highest in fine fibres where the fraction may be as high as 90%. Cortical cells are the load-bearing elements of the fibre, whereas the cuticle imparts the inherent aesthetic qualities of the fibre such as softness of handle and lustre. Other functions of the cuticle concern water repellence, felting during washing, and resistance to chemical and physical attack. The entire assembly is held together by a glue call intercellular cement."

The follicle formation of the suri is not unlike that of the huacaya in the skin, but due to its cortical cells has a different appearance in its lock structure. The huacaya has a crinkle like appearance in its fibre growth and in the staple (lock) a crimp (like a small deep wave) forms.

Suri

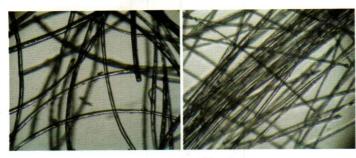




Huacaya

Huacaya has a wave or corrugated appearance known as a crimp. The suri fibre grows basically straight, and locks may have a ringlet appearance, slight wave with twist or can be quite straight.





Notice the curve in the huacaya fibres above, compared to the straighter suri fibres.

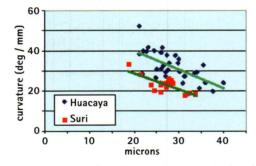
Huacaya and suri also have processing differences due to their individual fibre structures. Suri is basically more difficult to process. Firstly the machines are set at a lower speed than for the huacaya. The suri fibre lacks cohesion (due to its cuticle cell structure and straightness). There is slightly more fibre wastage when processing suri fibre.

When spinning a yarn of a smaller thickness and a given micron, there will be more fibres required in a suri yarn than that of a huacaya. This is due to the straightness of the suri compared to the crinkle in the huacaya, which gives more bulk. The suri yarn would therefore be heavier.

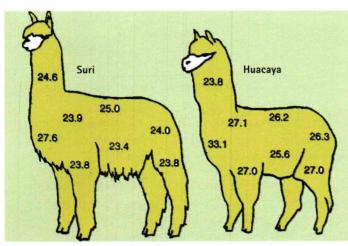
Not surprisingly, measurements for fibre curvature in the suri were much lower than that of the huacaya. Curvature in suris tended to give a range from 17 to 35 with the huacaya showing a range from 30 to 55. (OFDA)

NOTE: Care should be taken when comparing results from LASER and OFDA machines A difference of approx 17.8 degrees was found in a trial of huacaya (Holt/Davison 2004) OFDA - ave 35.58, LASER - ave 53.39.





Research by the writer has found that the spread of micron (evenness) over the suri is similar to that of the huacaya. Coefficient of variation for micron, prickle factor, was also similar.

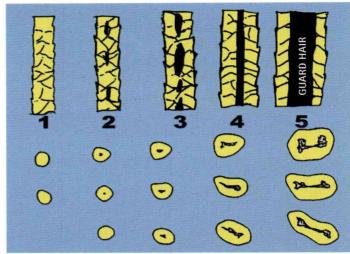


#### Medullation

Medullation in the huacaya was greater than for the suri fibre.

Micron	Huacaya	Suri
20	12.9%	4.7%
26	36%	16%
36	60%	42.4%

Alpaca fibre depending on micron, has some medullation. The medullated types are defined into five categories.



(adapted from J. Villarroel)

Types of medulla and typical cross-section shapes in white alpaca fibres.

- 1 Non medullated fibres, 15-20 micron diameter
- 2 Fragmented, 20-30 micron diameter
- Interrupted, 30-40 micron diameter
- Unbroken medium wide, 40-60 micron diameter
- Unbroken very wide (near to lattice type), 60 or more micron diameter

Group "5" is undesirable in alpaca fleece.

### True to Type Suri Fibre

There is much discussion on what constitutes a true to type suri (pure). Just because the two parents are "suri looking" does not mean the suri progeny is true to type. It will depend on:

- pureness of parents and lineage
- correctness of lock type and style
- > trueness to breed type

Many "suris" coming from South America have no traceable ancestry. They may be from a homozygous male and a huacaya female (let alone a heterozygous male). The suri could look relatively true to breed but have a questionable fleece type.

There is an old saying:

"If it looks like a duck and walks like a duck it is a duck".

But, how many suris "look like a suri and walk like a suri", but when you open the fibre they are not as true to type as you think. >

#### TRUENESS TO TYPE

Trueness to Breed: Displaying characteristics laid down for a specific breed of animal. Possessing the most desirable characteristics of the breed (correct fibre type). A suri with straight plain fibre and chalkiness (no lustre) would be said to be "not true to breed".

**Trueness to Type:** A term used more by buyers and processors. It reflects the trueness to the actual requirements of manufacturers of alpaca fibre. e.g. Fibre which is even and regular within the specifications of a certain type (impurities have an effect on this evaluation).

Example: Fleece exhibiting the best of all its characteristics and free of vegetable matter would be considered to be "choice or extra super style", whereas a fleece with a lot of dust and vegetable matter and poor in all its characteristics would be considered "poor or inferior style".





True to type

Not true to type

A paper by Dr. Mick Carrick (1996) suggests that the suri is dominant over huacaya. His findings are similar to Dr. Raul Ponzoni (1997). Ponzoni, based on research in Australia, found when huacaya was mated to huacaya it gave 145 huacaya progeny with no suris. Based on his hypothesis he assumed that the huacaya gene was recessive.

Where a suri male was used over huacaya females, there were 13 huacaya and 11 suri progeny. This fits the hypothesis of suri dominance if that male was heterozygous.

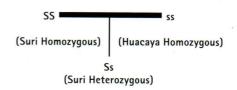
When suri males were used over suri females, the result was 6 huacaya and 29 suris. This was consistent with the suris used being heterozygous.

Carrick, in his paper concludes that the same results (as the hypothesis of a single gene) could be obtained by a group of very closely linked genes.

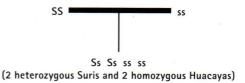
Suri genetics can be demonstrated with simple models based on probable outcomes.

### Example:

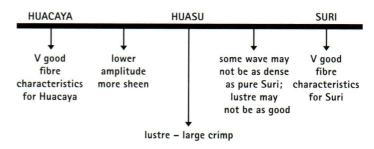
Anecdotally it appears that the better the suri male and huacaya females then the better the suri types on the ground.



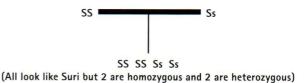
When a heterozygous suri male is used over huacayas the following appears.



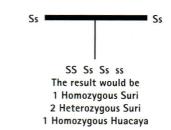
The writer has seen a number of these crossings and has noted that the fibre type varies. The fibre type appears to range within each breed group.



The other possible result is the mating of suri to suri. Using a homozygous male over heterozygous female or vice versa.



Using heterozygous male over a heterozygous female

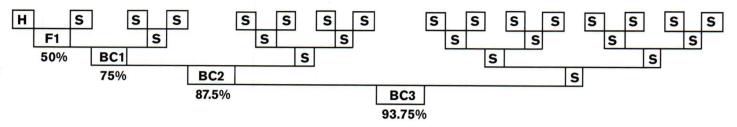


So how do we know when the suri is homozygous? Just because they come from Peru or Bolivia does not make them homozygous as many have found out.

If you test mate your suri male to 15 huacaya females the result should be all suri progeny (if the suri is homozygous). One or more huacaya would indicate a heterozygous male. Unfortunately we cannot lift up the tail for an answer.

A very good example of "percentage of suri blood" can be seen in a breeding scarla diagram by Dr. Pierre Baychelier. Here there is one huacaya and seven pure suris involved in the example.

Pedigree of a backcross 3 The figures in % represent the percentage of suri blood (H huacaya, S pure suri, F1 first filial generation, BC1 backcross 1, BC2 backcross 2, BC3 backcross 3) - F1, BC1, BC2 and BC3 exhibit the suri phenotype. (Reproduced with permission of Dr Pierre Baychelier)



From a purely personal point of view, I believe that cross breeding is a legitimate form in any breeding program. It was used in Australia in the angora goat industry when there were few pure angora goats available and it was also used when up grading cashmere goats although the cull rate in the cashmere program was up to around 70%. Cross breeding was also used to breed carpet wool sheep where the matings of Tukiedale and Romney Marsh sheep were used. The Tukiedale is the dominant gene similar to the suri, but the fibre was predictable unlike suri. I think it is fair to say the sooner we can breed with some trueness to breed type, the sooner the predictability of the progeny can be made.

The importance to me at this stage is not so much the genetic pureness, which we can estimate, but are the "pure" suri progeny true to type?

I would strongly recommend that all males that are not true to type should be culled from the herd and castrated.

### What are the Main Traits for Suri Fibre?

#### LUSTRE

This is the main trait. Good lustre is the most important characteristic for suri fibre as this is what is required in a finished garment of suri or suri blend yarn. It is therefore important for the breeder to be able to identify chalky type fleeces and either breed this fault out or sell the animals concerned. Breeders should record fleece as:

- High
- Good
- Average
- Dull/Poor (Chalky)



### MEAN FIBRE DIAMETER

This is one of the main attributes. This is expressed in microns (1 micron = 1 millionth of a metre) and is a most important characteristic of any fibre. The micron determines the fineness of the yarn and when using fine micron fibre, soft lightweight fabrics can be produced.

Micron accounts for approximately 70/80% of the value of alpaca fleece.

The fineness of fibre you are breeding in your herd must be considered if you reflect on what end product the fibre is to be used for. Breeders should be aware of the average micron of each animal in their herd not only to identify those finer or superior types, but those that are undesirable for the owner's breeding goals. The fineness of the micron will determine the final use of the fibre and in some cases how the fibre is to be processed i.e. whether the alpaca is to be blended with another fibre e.g. wool or processed by itself.

#### HANDLE AND SOFTNESS

Closely linked to fineness, these are in my opinion one of the main assets of alpaca fibre. The softness is usually due to the micron of the fibre but when comparing alpaca with wool we have a major difference. The cuticle cells (outer) on wool protrude approximately 0.8 of a micron (scale height) compared to alpaca that protrude approx. 0.4 of a micron. This gives a feel of around 2/3 microns finer (softer) than the equivalent micron in wool. With lustrous suri fibre you can get also a more slippery feel due to the scale frequency per 100 microns being lower, and with superior fibre being cylindrical. These characteristics are advantageous to alpaca not only from the softness angle but also from the ability to wear alpaca fibre on the skin. You would assume that the prickle factor which applies to wool with 5% of fibres over 30 microns, may not be as severe on the equivalent alpaca fibre, although if the yarn has a lot of coarse fibres through it this may not be the case. Coarse fibre ends touching the skin triggering pain receptors just below the epidermis layer cause the prickle factor. A low CV fibre usually has fibres more similar in fibre thickness, therefore being softer to handle.

### **STYLE**

Suri fibre is basically a straight fibre and is used like mohair for specialised fibre production. One of the main difficulties when processing suri, (like mohair) requires some twist in the sliver so it will not pull apart during the drawing process. This is due to the lack of cohesion when spinning caused by the low, smooth cuticle scale structure. Processors have suggested that they prefer a fibre with a slight wave in preference to a straight fibre. From a breeding perspective, Dr. Julio Sumar would prefer the ringlet type followed by the lock with twist and wave.

Many variations of suri lock type exist. However, in the USA and Australia five types are commonly identified. These range from a tight ringlet, wave and twist ringlet (sometimes known as curled ringlet), corkscrew ringlet and large wave with broad lock. These four would be the most common of the five types with the other one being a straight fibred lock.



1. Tight ringlet



2. Wave and twist ringlet



3. Corkscrew ringlet



4. Large wave, broad lock



5. Straight lock

- 1. The lock twists into tight ringlets almost to the skin.
- 2. The lock grows showing a small wave with twist. It also grows in a ringlet formation. The best locks will almost twist and wave to the skin.
- 3. The lock grows in a corkscrew-like curl. It also grows in a ringlet formation. The lock can be small or large.
- 4. The large wave with the flatish broad lock is a much thicker looking lock than the above three. The thickness does not necessarily mean density.
- 5. The fibre grows straight showing no signs of ringlet, wave or curl.

Within the above four main types many variations can be seen. These variations can be affected by the trueness to type of the fibre and can be changed, e.g. fanned ringlet, when the fibre becomes excessively over long.

Another type of lock sometimes found when breeding suris is that with a crimp-like wave along the length of the staple. This is a much bolder and wider crimp/wave than found in the huacaya fibre. This not desirable.

### STAPLE LENGTH

This is also an important characteristic. Length basically controls the method of processing alpaca (woollen or worsted), i.e. the shorter length fibres will be processed via the woollen system (2"-4", 50-100mm) and the longer (4"-6", 100-150mm) by the worsted process. The mean (average) length in the top contributes to yarn strength by increasing adhesion of fibres during spinning.

#### **PROCESSING**

Suri fibre is all processed on the worsted system. It is noticeable in Peru that the processors have their machines set for different lengths compared to Australia and USA. This is due to the higher nutrition levels in the latter consequently growing longer fibre.

The process starts with:

Scouring: This is the first stage of actual fibre processing. Scouring is carried out to remove the dirt, wool grease and suint. The fibre usually passes through a set of four bowls during the



cleaning process. Here it is washed with warm water and detergents and rinsed in the final bowl. Alpaca fibre has a very low grease content.

**Drying:** After washing the fibre is passed through rollers to remove the water content. The fibre then is passed through a drying system where it is dried at around 48 degrees celsius.

**Carding:** This is the first stage in yarn production. Here the fibre is put through a series of rollers of different sizes travelling in different directions and at different speeds. The wire card removes entanglement of fibres



caused during the scouring process (alpaca is usually less entangled than sheep wool due to its low scale protrusion). The fibre is partially aligned (short and long fibres) and delivers what is called a carded sliver. A large amount of the burr and seed content is removed during this carding process.

Gilling: Here the sliver is straightened and various slivers are blended together to obtain a uniform sliver of thickness and weight.

**Combing:** Combing is the process of removing those very short fibres (noil) and to place the fibres in a parallel formation. This produces what is called a "combed top." During



this process any vegetable matter not removed during carding is separated from the fibre. The top may also go through a further gilling process to make it more even.

**Drawing:** Here the "top" is passed through a set of "drafting" rollers. The front set of rollers have a faster surface speed than the back rollers. This has the effect of reducing the top thickness to a size



that can be used in the spinning process. This is called a roving. This process is carried out a number of times until the desired thickness of roving is obtained.

**Spinning:** The spinning process continues the drawing process, usually bringing the thickness down to around 35/40 fibres in the cross section. A twist is given to the fibre to give the yarn more strength.



Breeders should select animals that do not have short fibre growth over 12 months (compared to other alpacas on the property). If all are short you probably have a nutritional problem.

The breeder should record length. This will enable you to identify any animal not producing commercial length fibre. All you need to do is select at random 10 staples per fleece and measure with a standard ruler, and average the measurements.

### **DENSITY**

This is basically not of interest to processors, but very important to breeders for total fleece production of a given animal. Density not only helps keep out vegetable matter and dust but contributes to fleece weight. Improved density is obtained by an increase of follicles in the skin over a given area.



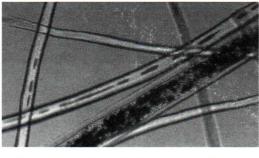


average density

poor density

### LACK OF GUARD HAIR (MEDULLATION)

Medullated fibres called "guard hair" are not desirable in the finished product. They are stiff and hollow



with pointed tips. They reflect light differently to solid fibres and are hard to control when spinning. Medullation (guard hair and continuous medulla) is also considered a disadvantage because of fibre breakage. Partial fragmented medulla has little effect on fibre tenacity. Medullation (guard hair) also creates non-uniformity of colour levels in the dyed fibre. A large number of these fibres are removed during the carding/combing process but a number still remain and these are a contributor to the coarse edge, which gives the "prickle factor" (now known as the "comfort factor") in garments. Being stiff they will protrude from the yarn.

Breeders can measure the numbers of medullated fibres including those partially medullated, using an O.F.D.A. (white only). A histogram of medullated fibres is superimposed over the solid fibres and records the various diameters and spread. Dark coloured fibre is more difficult to calculate and results for these colours are not as reliable.

A visual assessment can be made on the coarse guard hair fibres and the fleeces are rated as: free or nearly free, light, medium, heavy.

As noted before, medullation in suri appears lower than that of similar microns for huacayas. (Holt/Scott 1998). It was noted that as the fibre became stronger in micron there was an increase in medullation.

#### CLEAN FLEECE WEIGHT

This is of great commercial value to the breeder. The more weight of a given micron the more return in dollars. The processor pays by the lb/kilo and is not worried how many animals it takes to produce the weight.

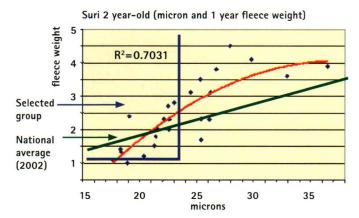
Fleece weight is a most important factor in your breeding program as you need to identify those animals which are below the herd average as well as identify those superior animals with top fleece weights.

Fleece weights and micron are traditionally, in the goat and sheep industry, two of the important selection characteristics along with conformation, of course. Clean fleece weight is affected by:

- > Micron
- > Staple length
- > Follicle depth (related to staple length)
- > Follicle density

An example of using these two characteristics in your selection based on your goals may be demonstrated below.

Your goal is to breed 2 year-old adult suris of finer than 24 microns and total fleece weights of above 1.00kg. NOTE, a herd of 25 suris.



You can select those animals, which are above 1.0kgs and finer than 24 microns, or you can select those above the average for weight up to 24 microns. Of course there are many other traits to be considered, like fibre type, length, density, lustre etc.

### Summary

#### **DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS**

(Not in order)

- > Lustre
- > Fineness
- > Density
- > Lock formation (no crimp)
- > Evenness of lock formation
- > Coverage e.g. legs, head
- > Absence of guard hair



Suri locks should open freely and not be tangled or matted. In other words the integrity of the lock should be maintained.

### **NEGATIVE FLEECE TRAITS**

- > Tender weakness in staple
- > Lack of uniformity of fineness
- > Lack of lock density
- > Lack of coverage
- > Brittle/coarse fibre
- > Cotting (matting)
- > Excessive guard hair
- > Tip damage
- > Suint stain
- > Chalky fibre
- > Short fibre (12 months growth)
- > Suri highly crimped

### Identifying Superior Suri Alpaca Fleece

Much is said about what a superior fleece should look like, and does it mean more money. Well the answer in *my* opinion is:

- > An elite fleece will hopefully be lustrous, finer and softer due to its low C of V, denser and longer therefore having a greater fleece weight. Finer and more fleece weight = more money.
- > Will the mills pay more money for excellence? Yes, there is a given price based on micron and style and the overall return per fleece is subject to the total fleece weight.

EXAMPLE: AAFL Fleece Prices (effective 1st October 04 to September 05)
All prices are \$ per kilo greasy incl GST \*\* CARE LENGTH and MICRONS

		Suri (good style)	No second style
Super Bale	Micron	A&B length **(80-120mm)	
Super Fine (White Only)	<20	100.00	

		Suri (good style)	Suri (second style)
	Micron	A&B length (90-150mm)	A&B length (90-150mm)
Fine	<23	35.00	12.00
Medium	23.1-28	20.00	8.00
Strong	28.1-32	8.00	6.00
Extra Strong	>32	3.00	3.00
Overlong		1.00	1.00

### So do we breed for the average?

NO!! Definitely not. You should always select for excellence because in time that will be the "norm" and those with average fleece will be left behind.

So how do we recognise superior fleece? Look at all the characteristics and breed for the best of each characteristic.

- Lustre
- Acceptable fineness
- Softness (handle)
- Density of lock
- Good staple length over a 12 months growth period
- Lack of medullation
- Well nourished fibres
- Free flowing locks

### SUPERIOR TO GOOD STYLED FLEECE



Good twisted ringlet



Good tight twisted ringlet



Superior - large wave and broad lock - good lustre



Superior wave and twisted ringlet



Superior corkscrew ringlet



Good - large wave and broad lock - good lustre

### AVERAGE TO POOR STYLE FLEECE



Average ringlet, lacking twist, some lustre



Average ringlet, lacking twist and lustre



Plain with some lustre



Large wave and broad lock. no lustre



No style or lustre

### SUPPLY / DEMAND / END PRODUCTS

The total production of alpaca fibre worldwide (supply) and the demand from international fashion industries (demand) are the major factors in the final value of the alpaca fibre in general.

Whilst supply is low and demand is maintained, a premium should always be available for this "fibre from the gods".

Breeders of alpaca fibre should keep in mind that the premium prices are normally paid for the finer fibre, suri fibre still commands a good price for medium /fine microned fibre.

Processors are now also looking for good styled suri fibre so as to maximise the softness and general behaviour of the fibre in the end product.

Products that help create demand could be:



### Brushed suri cloth

- > Womens & mens overcoats
- > Blazers & jackets
- > Rugs
- > Woven cloth

### Fine micron under garments High fashion fabric

- > Designer clothing
- > Luxury apparel, sweaters

### Specialty fabrics

- > Interior
- > Textiles

#### FIBRE DIAMETER

As mentioned earlier micron represents somewhere between 70% and 80% of the value of the fibre, and therefore has a big influence on the buyers' price when calculating how much they will pay when purchasing the suri fleece.

Graph below shows the values per micron as well as yearly fluctuation.

Note the position suri holds with the other fibres.

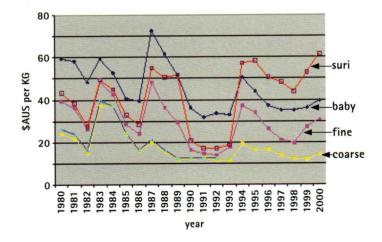
The estimated percentage for micron is:

20 / 22.5 microns 20%

24.5 / 26 microns 35%

balance 45%

Peru Prices \$AUS (per KG)

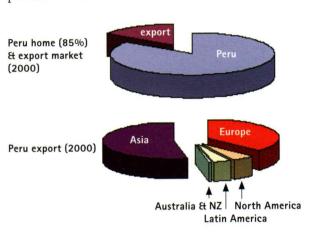


### **COLOUR**

In the general fibre industry processors pay a premium for white fibre. This enables them to use pastel dyes and colours of their own choice. Some suri coloured fibre can also command a high price, but the premium is more likely to be found in the "cottage industries". With current worldwide demand for natural fibres and natural colours it would seem appropriate to develop lines of "sought after" coloured alpaca suri fleece as well as white.

To get a perspective of **supply**, looking at the Peru production of alpaca fibres will help in seeing the overall global scene. South America has an estimated 3 million alpacas that are thought to represent 90% of the world's population. Peru produces an estimated 3.5 million kilos of alpaca fibre. This would translate to suri fibre production of around 210,000 to 350,000 kilos.

Remember that suri is only around 6% / 10% of this production.



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About the Author: Cameron Holt has had some 40 years in the fibre industry as a wool broker, judge, educator and also in his semi retirement continues with alpaca research. He is currently judging for the Australian Alpaca Association and in his role as Senior Fleece Judge and trainer for AOBA, has been involved in the training of their judges as well as judging. Cameron, a leading alpaca fibre expert, continues his educational clinics and lectures throughout the world.

### 2005 Sydney Royal Show

SHOWING AND JUDGING ARTICLE by Jan Crosby > AAA Hawkesbury / Blue Mountains NSW Region

Once again, the alpacas had a new venue this year at the Sydney Royal Show. The building was one of character and charm with exposed beams and a mezzanine level for breeders to meet. Breeders could also be accommodated in the building as pens were lined with turf instead of straw, alleviating the risk of fire. The show ring was also laid with turf that successfully withstood the rigours of continuous animal movement.

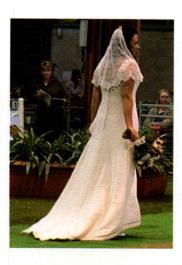
A field of some 320 alpacas entered the show ring this year comprised of approximately 250 huacayas and an impressive showing of 70 suris - this year's feature breed. Fleece exhibits were of a high standard, and 132 were presented for judging.

Jenny Jackson, judging her second Sydney Royal Show, commented that the overall quality of animals had improved dramatically, with greatest leaps being made in fineness and density.

On the days of judging Jenny moved through the classes, selecting her placegetters with smooth efficiency, assisted most ably by the stewards and marshals selected and organised by our hardworking RAS committee led by Richard Bird. Special thanks go to Helen Fritsch who took over as Breed Captain during Show time, while Jeanne Brown was in hospital.

Congratulations to all placegetters and entrants in this year's show - a fabulous field of entries.

Supreme Champion Huacaya, Patagonia Celtic Triumph, shown by Cathi McMullen and Ian Braithwaite of Patagonia Alpacas, NSW and Supreme Champion Suri, Surilana Nicholas shown by Jill Short, Surilana Suri Alpaca Stud, Victoria, were truly deserving champions.











The Supreme Huacaya Fleece award went to Forestglen Song of Joy exhibited by Maureen Carey, Forestglen Alpacas, NSW with Jill Short, Surilana Suri Alpaca Stud having further success in winning the Supreme Suri Fleece award with Surilana Nickelsby. It was great to see so little difference in marks awarded to fleeces, indicating continued progress towards consistency within the industry.

One of the highlights of the show was a wonderful fashion parade held as a prelude to judging day. We were treated to some fabulous alpaca garments ranging from elegant race wear, evening wear and a wedding dress to colourful capes, knitwear, coats and suits to "teensy weensy" alpaca bikinis. The elegant models presented the clothing with professionalism and style befitting the high quality of the garments displayed. Thank you to Robyn Fullerton for undertaking the challenge and presenting an excellent parade.

Congratulations to all the organisers from our show committee. Royal Shows are never without their challenges and enormous demands. The breeders gain huge benefit from the hard work and it is greatly appreciated.



For full show results visit AAA Inc. web site www.alpaca.asn.au

### **Growing Strong**

BREEDER PROFILE by Rob & Raelene Strong > Mariah Hill Alpaca Ranch, VIC

Mariah Hill Alpaca Ranch looks at its achievements and the quality lifestyle it enjoys, that this industry has given it and is very glad it took up the challenge in 1991 of breeding alpacas.

At that time, we were living a quiet life on less than two acres in Hastings, Victoria with our family of four children aged between 3 and 10 years. As all four children were severe chronic asthmatics, Raelene's time was devoted to the children and yet we had to work out a way that Raelene could also contribute to the family income, working from home. We looked at many ventures, and one day while visiting an ostrich farm and being told that our \$10,000 could be a deposit on two eggs due to be laid in about 10 months time, with no guarantee that the eggs would be fertile, no knowledge of what sex the chicks would be nor even if the chicks would survive to breeding age, we thought there must be something else for us to look at.

The ostrich breeder then said to us... "Well, what else could you farm on small acreage but alpacas?" We both looked at each other, and said, "What are alpacas?"

At this stage the industry was very young, and we were told there were only about 300 animals in the country. We asked around, and discovered an alpaca farm close by. We asked a few more questions, did a few sums, and within a week had purchased two pregnant females and a weanling male.

At the same time, a neighbor purchased two ostriches, spending the same amount of money on the two birds as we had on our alpacas. By comparison, we bought our animals and just put them in the paddock, where the people out the back spent a fortune and many months preparing their land for the livestock investment.

Before long, our small herd had grown to about 13 alpacas but with three of them pregnant, we needed to move. We had also discovered that the area we were living in was contributing to the children's asthma, so we spent weekends looking for a suitable property, with the main aim being that the air was clean for our children to grow up in.

Picturesque Nar Nar Goon, nestled in the foothills at the gateway to Gippsland, proved to be that spot. Not only did this 25 acre property give us room to expand but it also gave us a chance to agist animals for prospective buyers.

We also had the opportunity at this stage to be involved in the first Peruvian import in 1995, which saw Raelene going to Peru to view the quality of these animals first hand. Later we both visited the animals while they were in quarantine in Cocos Island.

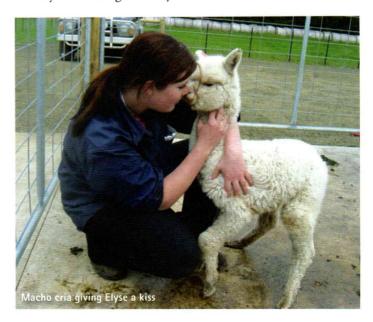
Within one year of moving to Nar Nar Goon, we were farming over 125 alpacas, and again needed more land,

as most of these animals were pregnant females. We were able to lease land from a neighbor, which meant that we could still grow. Animal sales were still very healthy, and while the land was still good carrying, we knew that we would outgrow this property before too long and so it was time to move again.

We discovered a very run-down, historical property just off the Princes Highway that needed a lot of care and attention, but we could see through all the thistles and fallen down fences, and knew that this was the place for us.

This 100 acre property was one of the oldest farms in Victoria, and had a unique hand made brick station house where we lived while building our present house. We could see that the historic property had so much potential. We had always wanted to open a tourist farm with the alpacas and the homestead would be an added attraction. We also added a wallaby reserve. The whole venture proved very successful, gaining us an award for the Best Home-based Business in the Shire in the year 2000.

As the venture was going so well, another decision had to be made. The tourism aspect was taking up so much time that we could not enjoy the alpacas as much as we would like, so we decided to sell off the tourism side of the farm, which meant we could spend more time with the alpacas and the family, as all this time we had been working 7 days a week. At this stage, we felt we needed to have time out as, whilst we were still farming a herd now numbering over 200, we were steadily re-building this very old run-down farm.



Nevertheless we would visit as many shows as we possibly could to promote our stud males, and the progeny that they were producing. In 2003 our hard work was rewarded when we won the Victorian Eastern Region Alpaca of the Year with *Jolimont Patché*. The prestigious award brought recognition of our breeding program which we had concentrated so much on to improve the overall quality of our herd.

The two eldest children enjoyed showing, but as they got older, they had other interests to distract them and that is when our youngest, Elyse took over in the show scene, and found her destiny in life. Elyse loved showing alpacas, assisting with the matings, and general farm management; it was just a natural progression for her to enter Junior Judging at the Royals and the Nationals. She has now visited South Australia, NSW, and country Victoria showing alpacas, and entering Junior Judging competitions.

Elyse was keen to go straight into farming alpacas as her career, but we really wanted her to experience other forms of work before she dedicated herself to alpacas. She secured an apprenticeship in horticulture at a wholesale nursery which specialized in exporting overseas. Elyse gained quarantine procedure experience, caring and preparing plants for export, and was educated in the importance of chemicals, recognition of bacteria and disease and the isolation and sterilizing techniques. Without knowing it, Elyse's newly acquired knowledge and experience in the export field would pave the way in the not too distant future for our next alpaca venture ... pre-export quarantine isolation and preparation of alpacas for exporting to any country in the world.

Before long, Elyse's close connection to the animals meant that she wanted to work full time with the alpacas, and so the next opportunity arose, an apprenticeship. We had made a few enquiries into an apprenticeship for alpaca management, and although the course was not yet fully completed and approved, we were given all the subjects that would be needed to complete the diploma. We approached the University of Melbourne, McMillan Campus, which was very willing to assist Elyse in completing her course. This has been a bit challenging even for the teachers, because although general farming practices for the Diploma of Agriculture are the basics of the course, other units like animal management and alpaca wool classing are still being developed. However both McMillan, and the Gordon College of TAFE, have been so helpful, and willing to develop this new direction in farming.

Elyse also gained experience in wool classing by helping out at the Australian Alpaca Co-operative Ltd. (now Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd.) from time to time, being taught by some of the best in the industry.

While in New Zealand in 2004 to attend the Alpaca Association of New Zealand industry seminar in Rotorua, Elyse and Raelene met prominent international alpaca industry identities like Mike Safley and Marty McGee Bennett and this further heightened Elyse's enthusiasm for the industry.

Later that year Elyse and Raelene visited Peru, a trip that did not really turn out to be as successful as we hoped, as both Elyse and Raelene fell ill while in Peru. Elyse suffered food poisoning at the beginning of the trip, and on the last day Raelene was hospitalised which eventually saw Rob flying over to assist. Four weeks later Raelene was given the go ahead to fly home. This experience was life changing for all concerned, but out of something bad always comes something good.



To come home and see the babies we had missed birthing whilst away was the best experience you could ever have; this is when you really appreciate where you live. Although this did dampen Elyse and Raelene's trip to Peru, there were also many memorable highlights; the vast landscape, meeting these ancient breeders of alpacas and experiencing their farm life, visiting remote villages, the ancient ruins and cities, and the people, was an experience that they would never forget.

On 1 December 2004, the Australian Government passed new legislation, and from that date only licensed Exporters can export any animal overseas. In accordance with this legal requirement, through extensive study and research Raelene gained her Export Licence becoming the first alpaca breeder in Australia to hold this honour.

Rob worked tirelessly with Elyse to build the state of the art, AQIS approved purpose built quarantine facility, which is run separate from the main farm. This facility has been considered by AQIS as the best facility they have seen in Australia, and is nicknamed the 'Alpaca Hilton'.

At the moment Raelene has had to take a back seat for a while. Elyse is now managing the herd of almost 400 alpacas on the property, with Rob now working part time, and also putting in some hours each day to help manage the farm and the quarantine facility. Raelene can still contribute by working in the office, which has seen her being nominated for the Telstra Business Woman of the Year 2005 (yet to be judged at time of writing).

Now in its 15th year of breeding alpacas, Mariah Hill Alpaca Ranch employs three family members full time and one family member part time and is boasting a base herd of 350 animals. Both Rob and Raelene look back at their journey through this industry and are very proud to be part of the history of alpacas in Australia.



### Camelid Handling Secrets

EDUCATION ARTICLE by Marty McGee Bennett > TTeam

The information in this article really should be classified "Top Secret." You shouldn't be able to know these things until you have paid your dues. By rights, you should be pitched into the dung pile a few times, wear a lot of spit, and know the feeling of being dragged around the paddock on your face once or twice before you gain entry to this inner sanctum.

But fortunately for you, I never could keep a secret! These simple tips and techniques will make you look like a veteran animal handler as soon as you try them. You need not begin at the beginning or keep reading until the end. You don't have to understand or agree with any particular philosophy.

The following list is a compilation of tricks of the trade that will help you work magic with your animals immediately. Newcomers to the alpaca business will want to laminate this article and put it in the barn.

If you have been at the alpaca game for a while you may already know some of this secret knowledge but read carefully - you may find one or two new nuggets of wisdom to add to your "toolbox."

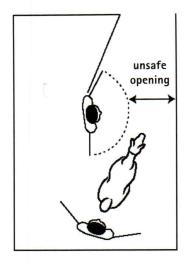
### Herding

> Using a special word, noise, or whistle to call your alpacas into the barn at mealtime is a great way of getting them in the barn but be aware of the dangers of creating a "calling pattern." Periodically, call the alpacas in at two in the afternoon or ten at night (or some other time that is different from their normal feeding time) and give them food when you do. You won't be faced with a group of alpacas looking at their watches and shaking their little heads when you holler the magic word at the wrong time of day.

- > When threatened, an animal's first choice is to get away - the flight response. All mental circuits are focused on finding an escape route. Herding a group of animals is actually the same as creating an escape route for the animals that suits you. Camelids will instinctively orient themselves so that they have a forward escape route relative to any perceived threat. Before you begin herding, look at the process from this perspective and block all exits except the one leading to the desired location.
- > When moving animals into or through small spaces, and particularly when moving around frightened or shy animals, be aware that you are larger than you think. Remember... to a camelid, you are as big as the physical space that you occupy and your reach (reach = your body and the length of your arms). You will make major points with your animals, especially nervous ones, if you keep yourself at a safe distance as you work around them.
- When sorting animals, it is very helpful to have two or more levels of confinement. Small catch pens that join a slightly larger area are much more useful than a single tiny catch pen in the corner of a huge pasture. It will be much easier to herd the animals into the secondary container. There will always be those animals that sneak by when you are working them into the smaller catch pen, but with an intermediate container you will not have to start over in the big field.



Figure 1: Herding tape allows a single handler to manage a bigger space without chasing



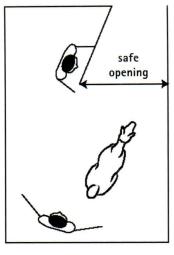


Figure 2: Simply moving to the opposite side of a gate can make your animals much more comfortable going through a gate.

- If your pasture is too big to manage alone, you can build a temporary fence in the middle of the pasture to create an area in which you can work. Fiberglass fence posts and nylon tape makes a visible barrier and can be taken down easily for pasture maintenance. You may be able to manage smaller pastures with a length of rope or flat nylon tape (40 feet works well). Simply tie the rope or tape to the corner of the pen, walk out with it, and round up the animals. (figure 1)
- When herding with more than one human, both herders must remember the effect of their reach. Gate tenders should stay as far out of the way as possible. You would be amazed at the difference one giant step backwards will make. At clinics, I have helped someone move an animal that was absolutely stuck - simply by asking a bystander to move back a bit and open a gate slightly. Your alpacas are acutely aware of human anatomy and will pass easily if the human is more than an arm's length away from the path the animals must take. It is also better if your gate tender is standing behind the gate instead of on the animal's side of the gate. The alpacas feel safer in passing through a gate if the gate itself is between the human and the animals. (figure 2)

### Catching

- > Use a catch pen! Build or buy panels to create a sturdy, safe, confined area approximately 10' x 10' in a convenient spot accessible from your pastures. Herd your animals to this pen each time you halter or work with them. If you have any trouble with a particular technique or task while working in the pen, try making it smaller by stacking bales of hay inside the pen.
- Try catching difficult animals (wild or spitty animals in particular) in the catch pen by tying a rope to the end of a stick (a four-foot dowel will work). Use the stick to guide the rope over the head. Once the rope is around the neck, you can control the head but still allow your animal to move within the catch pen. Use the rope to steady your animal as you walk up to him with the halter. (figure 3)

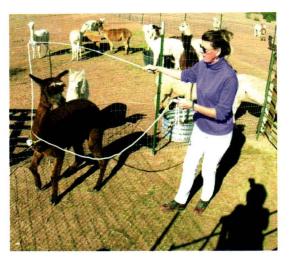


Figure 3: Handler is using a rope tied to a wand to catch this alpaca.

### Haltering

- If your animal is having difficulty with initial halter training, try this: buckle the crown piece of your halter on its largest hole and offer this large opening as if it were the noseband of the halter. Sometimes a few practice attempts with this much larger opening can pave the way for actually putting the noseband over the nose.
- Check your halter fit! Halters that don't fit are dangerous, create behavioral problems and don't work well for their intended purpose. Your halter is probably lacking if the noseband cannot be adjusted. A properly fitting halter rides up high on the nose bone close to the eye and stays there regardless of what the animal does or doesn't do. A properly fitting halter is safe and comfortable. The noseband rests firmly on bone and stays there NO MATTER WHAT. There is enough room in the noseband for the animal to chew without interference.
- Before you put any halter on, always open the noseband so that it is larger than you think you need. Snug up the crown piece. Tighter for animals with smaller heads. Take the slack out of the noseband. Larger animals need more room. Always physically examine the nose bone before you put a halter on an animal you don't know, as some animals have shorter-than-average nose bones. Re-check halter fit after about ten minutes.

### Leading/Loading

> If you pull steadily on your alpaca, he will pull steadily back. You and your animal will be counterbalanced. No productive movement will result from this counterbalance. Alpacas learn very quickly to widen their stance, drop their head and grow roots. Alpacas commonly learn to cush as a reaction to the steady pull. Use intermittent signals with a "mini-release" in between each signal, and continue giving them until the alpaca loses his balance and moves.



Figure 4: This is an ideal set-up for initial leading lessons. A long lead in a long narrow pen.

- Use a longer lead for initial lead training. I like a lead that is about 17 feet long. Getting further away makes your alpaca feel safer and he will be more likely to try walking with you. If he does bolt, you have more time to react with a longer lead. (figure 4)
- If you have a long narrow aisle way, use it for your first few leading lessons. You can keep control of your animal more easily and leading in a long narrow pen encourages your animal to walk in a straight line behind you, rather than all over the place.
- Loading a difficult alpaca. Most alpacas would rather not go into a confined space with a human and will load in a trailer or other conveyance much better if they can get into the trailer themselves without being led in. Spot the trailer by the entrance to a barn and use panels to block any exit other than the trailer door. Herd the alpaca into the trailer. It will be much easier to herd a group of animals into the trailer releasing the ones you don't need rather than trying to load a single frightened animal.
- When showing an alpaca, help him stand still by watching for weight shifts in the front half of the body. Pay very close attention to the front feet and use your lead to keep the weight evenly distributed on both front legs. If the alpaca's weight is more over the right leg, move the head and neck to the left and release. Weight over the left leg - move the head and neck over the right leg and release. You must correct and release or your animal will begin to lean on the lead rope and you will end up fighting with him. Your alpaca will be much more likely to stand still using this technique than if you try to hold him still using force.
- Do you have an alpaca that has trouble paying attention on the lead? Try walking him over five or six parallel poles on the ground that are spaced about three feet apart. This will often help a scattered animal learn to slow down and focus.

### Management

- Try giving subcutaneous injections using the group method. Cram as many alpacas as you can into your catch pen - the alpacas will feel safer in a group, making the job easier from a purely psychological point of view. But the advantages don't stop there. With enough animals in the pen, you don't have to restrain the alpacas as you give the injection. The shot recipient can't move very much because of the crowd of other animals. Stand behind the animal's eye on the side of the animal closest to the center of the pen and use an injection site in the front half of the body - the crease of the neck works well. This is not only easier for the animals but a real time saver for the manager.
- Add a butt board to your chute! Tie a frightened alpaca in a chute by the head and he will more than likely throw himself around, flip over, end up forward of the shoulder restraints or lie down. An alpaca's long neck makes it difficult and dangerous to restrain him by the head. Add a rear barrier to your chute, tie your animal loosely, and your chute becomes a very tiny catch pen instead of a restraint device. Alpacas will remain calmer when contained than when restrained. \*\*\*Always double check halter fit when using a chute! (figure 5)



Figure 5: A butt board transforms a chute from a dangerous restraint device to a small container.

- Don't have a chute? If you have a trailer, use it for the chores that you would normally do in a chute.
- Are you nervous about giving an injection for the first time? Forget the orange - practice on a chicken! Get a whole chicken at the grocery store with the SKIN ON. Practice both sub-Q (subcutaneous) and IM (intermuscular) injections with a variety of substances soy sauce is just about like Tetanus C/D, honey is very similar to Ivermectin. Try a variety of needle sizes. You will get a much more accurate idea of what to expect on a real animal. You can even bake and eat your chicken after you practice.

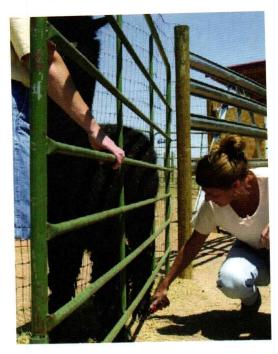


Figure 6: The alpaca can stand quietly and eat while the handler trims the nails without the need to pick the foot up. The rail provides a margin of safety should the alpaca kick out.

Difficulties picking up feet to trim toenails? Don't bother picking up the feet at all! Stand your alpaca on a rubber mat or concrete pad and trim the long parts of the toenail while the animal stands on his feet. It may not be the perfect answer, but it is possible to do a fair job of trimming toenails this way and this technique can keep you out of a fight with your alpaca. A helper can steady the animal as you squat down and work, if your animal kicks you may want to use a panel as a boundary, reaching under the bottom rail to trim. Another alternative for quieter alpacas is to steady the animal by putting your hand on the shoulders or hips while reaching down with the other hand to trim. When using this technique, it is best to nibble away at the nails rather than taking off big hunks. Pruning-style toenail trimmers work best for this technique. (figure 6)



Figure 7: This "teat pump" can save both alpaca and handler a great deal of frustration when a female must be milked.



Figure 8: Notice that the baby is standing in balance accepting the touch of the handler. This is much different from holding a baby still and forcing him to submit to touch.

### Husbandry

- If you ever have to milk a female alpaca, this trick comes in very handy. Cut off the needle end of a 20cc syringe and insert the plunger in the wrong end - the end you just cut off. You now have a breast pump. You can put the smooth end with the rim up against the teat, draw back with the plunger and you are milking away. (figure 7)
- Work with your babies early (three to four days old) and often (once a week) in the first three months, five minutes per session is enough. Work in a catch pen with the mother present; handle the mouth, tail, and legs while the baby stands in balance unrestrained. Allow the baby to move freely in the catch pen and move with him as you work. (figure 8)
- Correct young alpacas that don't respect proper boundaries. Male or female alpacas that pull on your clothes, make physical contact with you, or stand in your way without yielding the right of way are heading down a dangerous path. Don't encourage this behavior and learn more about how to respond appropriately.
- Whatever you are doing, remember to breathe!

From haltering and leading, to toenail trimming and shearing, Camelidynamics training methods allow handlers and animals to interact with a minimum of stress for both parties. Since 1981 Marty McGee Bennett has devoted her professional life to the well-being of llamas and alpacas and the education of camelid enthusiasts. Marty brings a variety of experience and qualifications to her work with camelids, including a B.S. in Animal Behavior. Contact her at www.camelidynamics.com or marty@camelidynamics.com

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### Alpaca Breeding in Peru and Perspectives for the Future

INDUSTRY ARTICLE by Jorge Reyna > Centre for Advanced Technologies in Animal Genetics and Reproduction, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, NSW

### Introduction

The worldwide alpaca population is 3,611,730, comprising 87% in Peru, 9% in Bolivia and the rest distributed between the USA, New Zealand, Canada and Australia (INIA, 2004). Around 95% of the Peruvian population is located in the Andes and managed under a traditional extensive system characterized by low productive and reproductive parameters (Ministry of Agriculture, Peru, 2004). The following regions in Peru are important in terms of alpaca population: Puno (1,712,110), Cuzco (400,877) and Arequipa (384,000). Eighty-five percent of the alpaca population is from the type called Huacaya and 15 percent are of the Suri type (CONACS, 2004). In socio-economic terms, alpacas are bred in the Andes for meat production (local market), for fibre that provides 82% of the worldwide demand and for sires sales, and it provides income for more than 500,000 families in high altitude areas (Ministry of Economy, Peru, 2004). Additionally, faeces are utilized as a good fertilizer.

The natural alpaca habitat in the Andes is confined to the fragile Puna ecosystem located 3,800 to 5,000 metres above sea level. In this region the nutrient content of the pastures is very low due to poor soil composition, erosion and drought caused by overgrazing and improper pasture rotations (Flores, 1977). Alpacas have become well adapted to these predominant conditions. They can be fed with pastures that contain high levels of tannins; they tolerate low temperatures and weather inclemency, and have been reported to be more resistant to parasite infestations than cattle and sheep. Under these adverse conditions, alpacas can thrive and produce meat, fibre and skin, where other farm animal species are not viable.

### Problems Of Alpaca Breeding

The difficulties that confront alpaca breeders in the Andes are the product of several variables that cause low productive and reproductive performance. These have been studied by several social investigators during the late 1980s-1990s (Bonavia, 1997; Flores, 1988; Agreda, 1988). One of the main problems is the limited number of sires of good quality due to the high degree of inbreeding (30-45%) which causes malformations and low fertility (Huanca et al., 2004). Another problem is the lack of use of reproductive management in communal farms and of reproductive technologies like artificial insemination in farms that are managed under an intensive productive system.

Genetic improvement and sanitary programs are also areas that require attention. Alpacas and llamas have been hybridized in order to obtain a heavy fleece, as the textile industry pays for fibre by weight rather than diameter or fineness (Wheeler et al., 1992). This has resulted in low fibre quality over 28 microns in 70% of the herd (Carpio, 1991).

There is also a high incidence of parasitic disease, including external parasites such as ticks, commonly called "sarna", that damage the fibre and the skin, and internal parasites like Fasciola, Haemonchus and Taenia. These parasite infestations make the animals more vulnerable to infectious diseases such as Clostridium, E. Coli, Spherophorus and Streptococcus that cause high mortality in crias (27%), reducing the supply of young replacement animals and thus limiting genetic improvement. Additionally, the reproductive characteristics of the alpacas are a limiting factor: these include a long gestation interval (11.5 months) (Hafez, 2003) and a long interval between birth and sexual maturity in males, as the prepuce adheres to the glans penis until the age of 2-3 years (Olarte and Melo, 1988; Vivanco, 1985; Pinares et al., 1985). These limitations make it difficult to achieve genetic gain, particularly within the traditional breeding systems.

The social and political environment contributes to make it worse for the development of the alpaca industry in the Andes. In the sociological aspect, the Andean inhabitant has an "aversion to the risk". This terminology was proposed in the late 1970s for social researchers to explain a characteristic inherent to the Andean inhabitant that is the product of broken promises of the politicians in the past. Andean people prefer to keep their current technology and not try something new, as they are afraid of adverse results. In most cases they do not have economical resources to afford antibiotics or basic treatments for parasites. In the political area, legislation has been created to promote the breeding of species like cattle and sheep and the resources available were oriented to develop techniques in these species failing to remember the importance of the camelids for the Andean inhabitant. Additionally, extended periods of drought and extremely low temperatures that destroy native pastures produce adverse conditions for the alpaca industry in the Andes.

In summary, all these variables make it difficult to develop the alpaca industry on a technical level, and they involve a conjunction of social, political, economic and environmental issues.

### Institutions

For a long time, Peru has lacked any form of national long-term plan to develop basic technologies for alpaca breeding due to political reasons and lack of resources for research. The resources available were used in generating technology for the cattle and sheep industries and this reflected a lack of recognition of the importance of the alpaca to the families that live in the Andes. This situation has changed during the last decade with the creation of CONACS (The National Council of South American Camelids) as an institution supported by The Ministry of Agriculture that promotes the repopulation of camelids in the Andes (alpacas, llamas, guanacos and vicunas) and the development of breeding strategies. The objective of this program was to promote alpaca breeding in new areas as an alternative way to increase the income of the Andean inhabitants.

CONACS has established 272 reproductive alpaca breeding centres with high quality males. These sires were selected from communal enterprises that have been using a selection program for phenotypic characteristics like conformation, fleece fineness and reproductive performance in natural mating. Every breeding centre has five males, and farmers situated nearby bring their females to be served, with the aim of improving the genetics of their herd. The repopulation of alpacas was completed in 2004 after an 8 year project to move 33,070 alpacas to areas that had the potential in terms of pastures and climatic conditions to develop an alpaca industry as a new economic activity. This project benefited around 435 communities around the Andes.

One of the most successful activities of CONACS was to establish a pedigree register of alpacas in 1997. There are now seven regional councils in charge of alpaca registration, with approximately 60,000 alpacas registered and 15,646 breeders identified.

Additionally, CONACS and the Ministry of Agriculture implemented legislation to permit alpaca breeders to export their animals. This put an end to the illegal trade in animals through Chile and Bolivia and provided breeders with the opportunity to get high prices for their animals from the United States market (from US \$200 up to US \$1,200 per animal). Since 1995, CONACS has been responsible for the inspection and control of alpaca and llama exports from Peru. Recently CONACS in recognition of the work that is being done by "Rural Alianza", one of the most important and largest alpaca farms in the world situated in the south of Peru, gave 750 microchips and two portable electronic identification devices. These microchips were introduced into the skin of high genetic merit alpacas and it will help to follow up genetic improvement programs and to avoid illegal commercialization through Chile and Bolivia. In the future the pedigree register will use the microchip technology as a routine for every animal and it will make easier the follow up process.

### Research Activities

Research on alpaca production commenced in Peru during the late 1960s at Universities and research centres, with programs studying management, behavior, nutrition and feeding, genetic improvement and reproduction.

However, most of this research was conducted in isolation from the industry, with a lack of long-term planning focused on its development. This approach to research was exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of how important alpacas were for the people who live in the Andes. In the early 1980s this misconception changed and camelids became of great interest overseas because of their extraordinary fibre quality.

In the area of reproduction, the first experiments on artificial insemination in alpacas were conducted by Fernandez-Baca and Novoa in 1968 at the University of San Marcos. One of the main technical problems inhibiting progress with the technique was the lack of a reliable method to collect consistently high quality semen from males. Collected semen has been reported to be high in viscosity, and is characterized by low motility and poor concentration of spermatozoa in comparison with other formed species like cattle and sheep. The average weight of a fully developed testis in the alpaca is only approximately 17g, and the daily production of spermatozoa is very low (Hafez, 2003). These characteristics of the ejaculate are common to all the species of camelids.

Nevertheless, comparisons of male alpacas with the bull and ram may not be valid as all camelids are induced ovulators, and the chance for a female to conceive may be greater than for animals that present an oestrous cycle. Thus, there may be no need to produce a high concentration of spermatozoa from the male, as insemination is synchronised with ovulation. In the case of cats, which are induced ovulators as well, poor quality of the ejaculate has been reported, which may indicate that this is a common characteristic of species that do not ovulate spontaneously.

On the other hand, other factors may have reduced the quality of semen produced by alpaca males, such as the high level of inbreeding, hybridization between llamas and alpacas and/or deficient nutrition during puberty.

The most satisfactory current technique for semen collection from alpaca males is the use of a mannequin (dummy female) fitted with an artificial vagina, which has been described by Sumar (1991), Huanca et al. (2003) and Vaughan et al. (2003). Despite a number of studies on semen characterization and preservation in alpacas, there is no reliable technique to consistently obtain high quality ejaculates (McEvoy et al., 1992; Bravo et al., 1994; Huanca et al., 2001; Vaughan et al., 2003). ➤

Despite this limitation, there have been a number of reports on pregnancies in alpacas after artificial insemination (Bravo et al., 2002; Huanca et al., 2003; Vaughan et al., 2003).

The National Institute of Agricultural Investigation (INIA) in Peru has initiated a research project over the next 5 years with the objective of promoting alpaca breeding, using new technologies to improve production and productivity. The aim is to produce sires of high genetic value to be used in artificial insemination programs. INIA and San Marcos National University (UNMSM) have been collaborating since 1998 in an attempt to improve the technique of artificial insemination with fresh semen.

Research has been conducted on the techniques for collection, processing and preservation of semen, and on the effects of nutrition, hormonal treatments and collection methods on the semen quality, with the aim of establishing a technology for artificial insemination of alpacas with preserved semen.

A group of ten scientists under the direction of Dr. Teodosio Huanca at the Experimental Station of Illipa in Puno, south of the Andes, developed the technique for semen collection using the mannequin and artificial vagina, and evaluated semen parameters like color, concentration, and motility.

This group has reported the successful use of artificial insemination in alpacas, reporting pregnancy rates of 50% (Huanca et al., 2004). This was achieved under the conditions prevailing on small farms in the Puna, providing evidence that artificial insemination may be feasible technology to be applied under field conditions.

In the area of meat production, preliminary results from a crossbreeding program between alpacas and llamas, called "Huarizo", suggest that carcass yield from the crossbred animals is 29% more than for pure alpacas (INIA, 2005).

In the period before the Spanish conquest, the Incas consumed alpaca and llama meat exclusively. Nowadays, camelid meat consumption is restricted to the Andean population, especially in Arequipa, in the south of Peru.

It is common to find dry alpaca or llama meat called "Charqui" in the local markets in the Andes. The name for this meat comes from the Quechuan (Andean dialect) word "Ch'arki", and it is usually prepared in an exquisite dish with an Andean tuber staple called "Olluco" (Ullucus tuberosus). There are few studies that demonstrate the advantages of alpaca and llama meat in comparison with beef and lamb in terms of protein composition (21-24%) and low levels of fat (5.5-6.0%) (Hack, 2001).

Since 1998, CONACS has been promoting alpaca and llama meat consumption in order to improve the income of the Andean farmers.

Additional studies have been conducted at the Faculty of Food Technology at The National Agrarian University La Molina (UNALM) in Lima in the area of alpaca meat processing, in order to obtain sausages, hot dogs, alpaca chops, and canned by-products, with interesting results and acceptance in the local market.

Phylogenetic studies are currently being conducted in order to study the evolution of the alpacas and llamas and the degree of hybridization. A genome library of coloured alpacas is being created by INIA in order to identify and rescue alpacas of unusual colours that are in danger of extinction.

In summary, Universities, institutes and public institutions are putting a significant effort into the generation of the technology necessary to improve the alpaca industry in Peru. The aim is to increase productive and reproductive parameters to improve the income of the people who live in the Andes under conditions of extreme poverty.

### Perspectives

The next step in the development of alpaca breeding in Peru is to consolidate the artificial insemination technique, promote its use between breeders, and to create a nucleus of sires of high genetic merit. This may require the purchase of males from alpaca communal farms in the south of Puno that have been conducting genetic selection programs for several decades. An aggressive genetic improvement program is required, making this technology available to alpaca farmers through an extension program from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Additionally, it would be desirable to work in the area of semen preservation and freezing to speed up the dissemination of quality genetics, thereby increasing production and productivity of alpaca herds. Current techniques to freeze alpaca semen in Peru have only achieved low levels of post-thaw motility of spermatozoa, so that it is not possible to apply them on a commercial scale (Valdivia, 2003).

Additionally, the development of multiple ovulation and embryo transfer programs in alpacas would be desirable, to further increase the rate of genetic gain from the maternal side. Such plans need to be put together as an integral part of a plan that also covers improved nutrition and control of diseases, pasture management and legislation to promote the alpaca industry, possibly providing financial incentives for entrepreneurs who wish to invest in this industry.

In the long term, the aim is to benefit the more than 500,000 families which currently live under conditions of extreme poverty.

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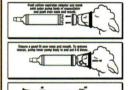


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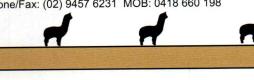
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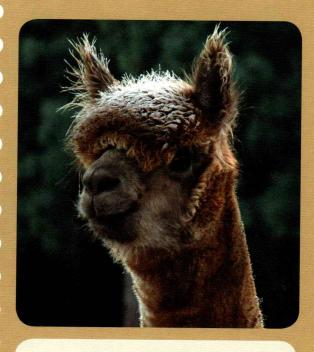
Send your photos to: The Editor, Alpacas Australia, PO Box 1076, Mitcham North, VIC 3132. Email sandra@alpaca.asn.au





< My pool!>

Cora Zyp Coraz Alpacas, QLD



< Feeling a bit frosty today >

Anne Jelinek Charisma Alpacas, VIC



< Get it while it's fresh >

Mary & Maurice Fabietti Vineyard, NSW



< I know you're hungry, but wait 'til your father's finished >

Ian & Chris Benporath Karakia Alpacas, WA



< I'm not waiting 'til I grow up >

Lyn Koitka Liffey Falls Lodge B&B Alpaca Farm, TAS



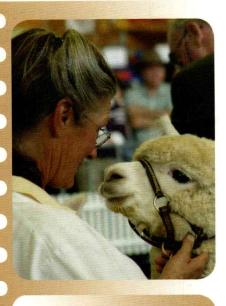
< Can I do that too?>

Joan McStravick Darjon Alpacas, VIC



< Using solar power to re-charge the system >

Ron Raynor Ellen Vale Alpacas, WA



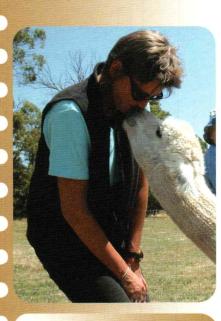
< I love you too rascal >

Diana Stewart-Koster Resurgam Alpacas, QLD



< It's so hard to say goodbye >

John Holman & Jocelyn Newman Morgan Beach Alpacas, VIC



< A special kiss for a visitor >

Ann Jelinek Charisma Alpacas, VIC



< We're going to a show today straight from the paddock >

Frances & David Harding Cinderella Alpacas, WA



< Quick! Look the other way. He's got the camera again >

John & Elaine Williams Echo Valley Farm, WA



< Any milk here? >

Jan & Glenn Knight Headline Alpacas, QLD



< I'm taller than you >

**Odette Mayne** Currumbong Alpacas, ACT

### **Upcoming Events**

### August

11-20 Royal Queensland Show: QLD

Venue: Brisbane Showgrounds Highlights: Fleece judging (18 August) Alpaca judging (19 August) Contact: Camilla Smith (07) 3266 9822

13-14 Fairbridge Village & Peel Region Alpaca Show: WA

Venue: Fairbridge Village, Pinjarra Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Darryl Sherman (08) 9530 1284

14 Hawkesbury Spring Show: NSW

Venue: Hawkesbury Showgrounds, Clarendon

Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Chris Taylor (02) 4579 7228

27-28 Totally Alpaca Field Days & Regional Auction: NSW

Venue: Goulburn Showgrounds

Highlights: Pen sales; Trade stall & displays;

Lectures & workshops; Alpaca auction (27 Aug)

Contact: Field days & promotional display -Nestor Ellinopoullos (02) 4821 5678

Auction -

Geoff Shephard (02) 6227 6202

### September

1-3 Gold Coast Show: QLD

Venue: Gold Coast Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca judging (3 Sept) Contact: Shayne Barnett (07) 3800 0585

2-10 Royal Adelaide Show - SA

Venue: Adelaide Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Jolyon Porter (08) 8568 5254

3-4 Spring Colourbration Carnival: VIC

Venue: Lancefield Park Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Jillian Holmes (03) 5429 2158

8-11 Springtime Flora Festival Alpaca Show: NSW

Venue: Mt Penang Parklands Highlights: Alpaca judging (10 Sept) Contact: Paul Thibault (02) 4930 6043

9-10 Beaudesert Agricultural Show: QLD

Venue: Beaudesert Showgrounds Highlights: AgEd sessions (9 Sept); promotional display (10 Sept) Contact: Wendy Summerell (07) 5543 0207

11 Alpaca Sale & Craft Day: WA

Venue: Gidgegannup

Contact: Sue Leitch (08) 9296 4626

15-25 Royal Melbourne Show: VIC

Venue: Melbourne Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging

Contact: Geoff Hargreaves (03) 5773 2494

17 "Alpacas And You" Seminar: QLD

Venue: Brookfield Highlights: Educational seminar

Contact: Graeme Smith (07) 5445 9492

17-18 Charles Ledger Show: NSW

Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Heather Vickery (02) 4885 2852

24-Oct 1Royal Perth Show: WA

Venue: RAS Showgrounds, Claremont Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Ron Reid (08) 9296 4888

### October

1 Burnie Show: TAS

Venue: Burnie Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Therese Badcock (03) 6432 3613

1 Seymour Agricultural Show: VIC

Venue: Seymour Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Rod Sales (03) 5433 3789

3 Strathalbyn Show: SA

Venue: Strathalbyn Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Trudy Stanley (08) 8534 4204

4-6 Elmore Field Days: VIC

Venue: Elmore Field Days Site Highlights: Promotional display

Contact: Meddwyn Coleman (03) 5448 8032

8 Sunbury Agricultural Show: VIC

Venue: Sunbury Showgrounds Highlights: Promotional display Contact: Pam Baxter 03 5360 8210

8 Royal Launceston Show: TAS

Venue: Launceston Showgrounds

Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Glen Boyd (03) 6397 3007

14-16 AAA National Show & Sale: VIC

Venue: Bendigo Showgrounds
Highlights: Alpaca craft competition;
Photography/Art competition,
Fleece judging (Thurs 13 Oct),
Alpaca judging (Fri 14 - Sat 15 Oct)
Judges: Julie Bird & Bill Plunkett
Contact: AAA National Office (03) 9873 7700

15 CLARE SHOW: SA

Venue: Clare Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Trudy Stanley (08) 8534 4204

15-16 Murrumbateman Field Days: NSW

Venue: Murrumbateman Showgrounds

Highlights: Promotional display

Contact: Odette Mayne (02) 6230 9192

18-20 Australian National Field Days: NSW

Venue: ANFD Site, Borenore via Orange

Highlights: Alpaca display & expo Contact: John Lawrie (02) 6846 7292

19-22 Royal Hobart Show: TAS

Venue: Hobart Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Alan Froome (03) 6266 6092

22-23 Stringybark Bush Festival: VIC

Venue: Stud Park Shopping Centre, Rowville Highlights: "Alpacas in Focus" Show (23 Oct)

Contact: Ian Earle (03) 5772 3339

30 Warrnambool Show: VIC

Venue: Warrnambool Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Maree McCosh (03) 5565 9413

### November

4 Colac Show: VIC

Venue: Colac Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca and fleece judging Contact: Maree McCosh (03) 5565 9413

5-6 Whittlesea Agricultural Show: VIC

Venue: Whittlesea Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging

Contact: Jeanette Williams (03) 5780 1555

5-6 Fibre Conference & Fleece Judging: QLD

Venue: Ewen Maddock Dam Recreation

& Environment Centre

Highlights: Fleece judging

Contact: Jeff Willis (07) 5445 0882

11-12 Farming Small Areas Expo: NSW

Venue: Hawkesbury Showgrounds, Clarendon

Highlights: Promotional display

Contact: Sandra Vella (02) 4578 2657

11-12 Albany Show: WA

Venue: Albany Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging

Contact: Diny Monaghan (08) 9764 1061

12 Alexandra Spring Classic Show: VIC

Venue: Alexandra Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Ian Earle (03) 5772 3339

12 Huon Valley Show: TAS

Venue: Ranelagh Highlights: Alpaca judging

Contact: Tiffany Kelly (03) 6297 1111

26 Traralgon Show: VIC

Venue: Traralgon Showgrounds Highlights: Alpaca & fleece judging Contact: Ian Earle (03) 5772 3339

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### Material

Editorial Material: If possible, all editorial contributions should be typed and preferably submitted electronically or by floppy disc in Word format. Visual material preferably supplied as colour photographs or transparencies. If supplying digital photography ensure that it is in high resolution of at least 250 dpi. We will endeavour to return all photos and slides.

Advertising Material: Please supply electronic artwork on disc to correct size. Preferred Macintosh programs InDesign, Illustrator or Photoshop. Alternatively save your adverts in high resolution pdf, jpg, tif or eps. Include all screen and printer typefaces, high resolution pictures, logos etc associated with the adverts. For full page adverts please allow 5 mm for bleed.

Colour adverts to be supplied in CMYK (not PMS or RGB). Please supply hard copy proof in colour or mono (as applicable) for printing reference. We cannot guarantee inclusion of late adverts.

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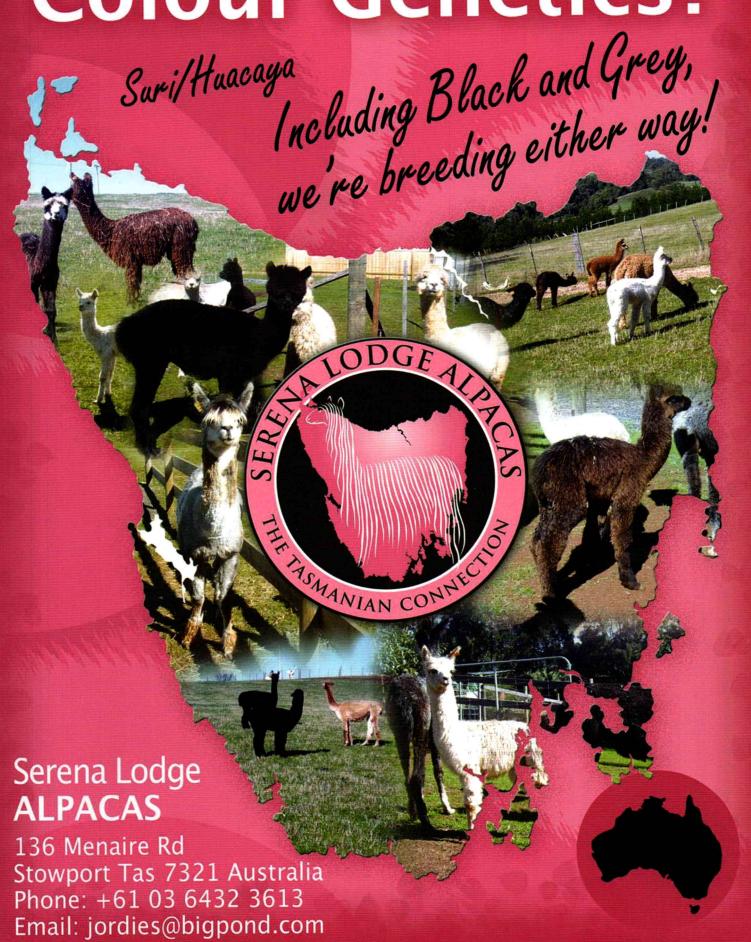
### Deadlines

Issue 48: Summer Due: December 2005 Deadline: Friday 7 October

Issue 49: Autumn Due: April 2006 Deadline: Friday 10 February Issue 50: Winter Due: August 2006 Deadline: Friday 2 June

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