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- Temperature & Cria Sex Ratio
- Alpaca Gestation
- Stay Warm This Winter
- Selling Online
- Importance Of Shearing
- Sydney Royal Roundup

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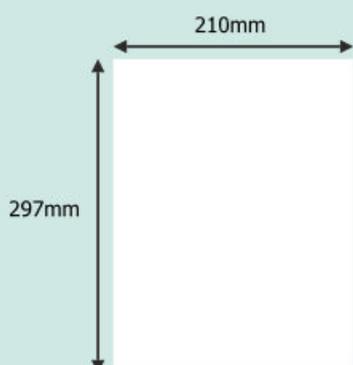
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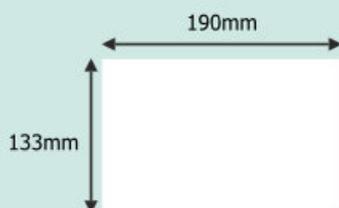
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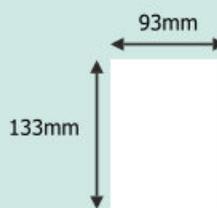
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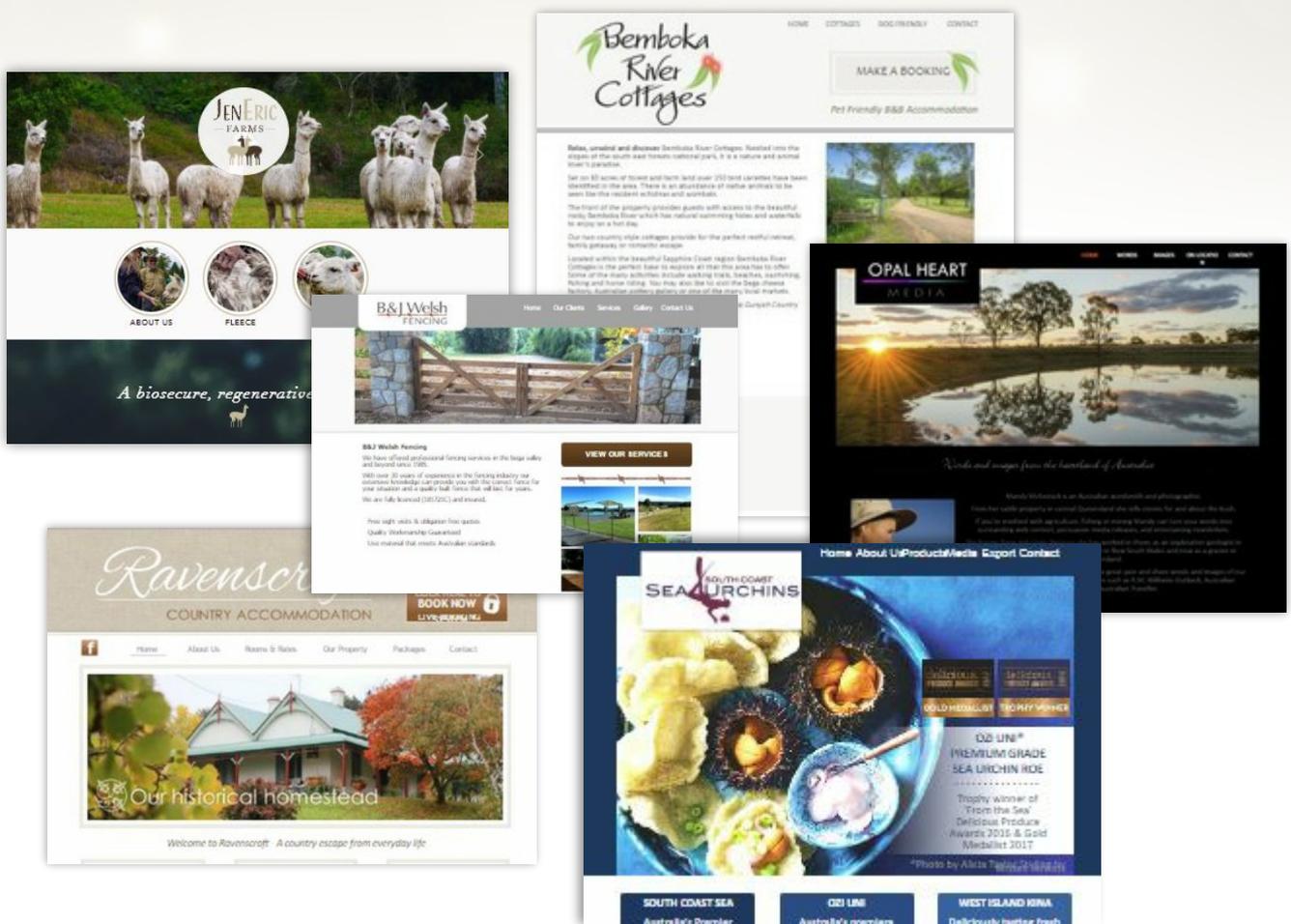
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Cover Image: Snowmass Alpacas USA

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Welcome to Camelid Connections

Winter seems to have followed very quickly on the heels of an extended wet season in most areas so out with the Winter woollies! If you need some extra warmth this winter have a look at our "Stay Warm this Winter" pages perhaps you can find an alpaca blanket, rug or article of clothing that you just have to buy to keep the chill at bay.

If you want to try your hand at weaving your own beautiful alpaca wool products you may find the article on Inkle Weaving can give you some insight into this centuries old craft.

On page 16 we have an important article to ensure you are organised for shearing this year. There is a shortage of shearers all around the country and you need to be organised to make sure you don't miss out.

Don't miss out on our articles on "Selling Online" and "Value Adding to your Alpaca Business" we can't expect to sell our alpacas or alpaca products if we don't have the necessary marketing in place. Like any business your alpaca business needs regular marketing input to bring results.

Lynn Edens from Snowmass Alpacas in the US has done some interesting research into the effects of temperature on the alpaca cria sex ratio and shares it with us in this issue - thought provoking for all serious breeders.

AAA members have been busy with the Sydney Royal Show and their "Fleece to Fashion" promotion and share some of the highlights with us and we are also printing some information from the AAA regards scams affecting the alpaca industry, so make sure you take care if you are buying from social media sites.

Thanks to all our advertisers, we really appreciate your support and ask our readers to support these businesses who support our industry.

If you haven't advertised with us before then maybe give us a go, we offer some of the lowest cost advertising in our industry and have an ever expanding list of dedicated subscribers as well as many casual readers - your advert is always current as back issues are free to read online.

Meet The Team



Esme Graham - Editor

My husband and I have bred suri alpacas for over 20 years, I was heavily involved with both regional committees and the national board of the Australian Alpaca Association for a number of years and had the honour of being selected as a life member of the Association.

My major interest has been in marketing and education and to this end I was editor of Alpacas Australia magazine for six years and I hope that the experience I gained editing that publication can be extended to educate and inform a wider range of alpaca and llama breeders who are not necessarily association members but have a love of all things camelid.



Julie McClen - Designer/Editor

A breeder of ultrafine Huacaya alpacas for over 20 years at Oak Grove Alpacas, I have a passion for fine fibre and the genetic connection to the most diminutive and finest of the camelids - the wild Vicuna.

I strongly believe that education in any industry is the key to success, so with Camelid Connections we hope to provide interesting and informative articles to assist all camelid owners in getting the most out of their animals and businesses.

I also own Oak Grove Graphics a web and graphic design agency which is producing this magazine, and also allows me to connect with many different people in the camelid related world through my design and web work.

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WHAT IS MELIODOSIS?

Melioidosis is a disease caused by bacteria known as *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. The bacteria live below the soil's surface during the dry season but after heavy rainfall are found in surface water and mud and may become airborne.

How is it spread?

The bacteria that causes melioidosis usually enters the body via cuts and sores in the skin or via inhalation of dust or droplets and very rarely by ingestion of contaminated water. The disease has been found among some domestic and farm animals. Although the disease is considered zoonotic Melioidosis does not usually spread from one person to another or from animals to humans.

Where does melioidosis usually occur?

Melioidosis is found in tropical areas throughout the world, particularly in South East Asia and northern Australia. In Australia cases typically occur in the Top End of the Northern Territory (NT) and in far north Queensland and the Kimberley region of Western Australia. However, in recent years alpacas have contacted Melioidosis in SE Queensland, Central Queensland and more recently in WA not far from Perth. All of these outbreaks occurred after heavy rainfall events.

The above, while uncommon, is perhaps something that alpaca owners should keep in mind due to the amount of rainfall that is occurring in many parts of Australia at present. For more information go to the Camelid Connections magazine library, issue 2 to read more about the disease. https://issuu.com/camelidconnections/docs/camelid_connections_issue_2_dec_201/16

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THE EFFECT OF TEMPERATURE ON THE ALPACA CRIA SEX RATIO

By Lynn Edens - Snowmass Alpacas USA

Some years back we were ruefully joking about the “boys of summer” —the run of male cria births that seem to arrive like clock-work every July —when it occurred to us that we were collecting enough data from our growing breeding effort to see if this was indeed a pattern, and if so, possibly determine why it was happening. We started what would become a multi-year effort to determine the impact of temperature - both ambient temperature and animal body temperature -on the sex ratio of the crias born on our farm.

Our study showed that at our farm in southern New York state, hot weather on the day of breeding is associated with a statistically significant increase in the ratio of male versus female cria produced: We have recorded 64% male births from breedings that occurred on days when the high temperature was 80° F degrees or greater, versus 48% male births on days when the high temperature fell short of 80°. (For the statistically minded: $\chi^2(1, N=258)=4.09, p=0.04$).

Temperature effects on sex ratios have been found in other

mammals. For example, a nine-year study of beef cattle in south Texas revealed that about 1.5 times more bull calves than heifers were born when conceived in the hot summer months relative to the rest of the year.¹ Similarly, research on a herd of dairy cows in New Zealand revealed that the sex ratio of the dairy cows’ offspring increased (that is, shifted in favour of males) following periods of higher temperatures, greater evaporation, or both.² A laboratory-based study to determine the effects of elevated ambient temperatures on the pregnancy outcomes of rats revealed that higher ambient temperatures both at the time of conception and beyond biased sex ratios in favour of males.³ Only the female rats were exposed to higher ambient temperatures in this experiment.

Heat stress affects animals in a variety of ways that may in turn influence offspring sex ratios. Heat stress-induced changes in the function of the endocrine system may affect the viability of x versus y chromosome bearing sperm in the female reproductive tract, for instance, or the timing of the

induced ovulatory response to mating. Heat stress may also differentially affect the viability of female versus male embryos.⁴ Effects from correlated environmental differences are also possible.

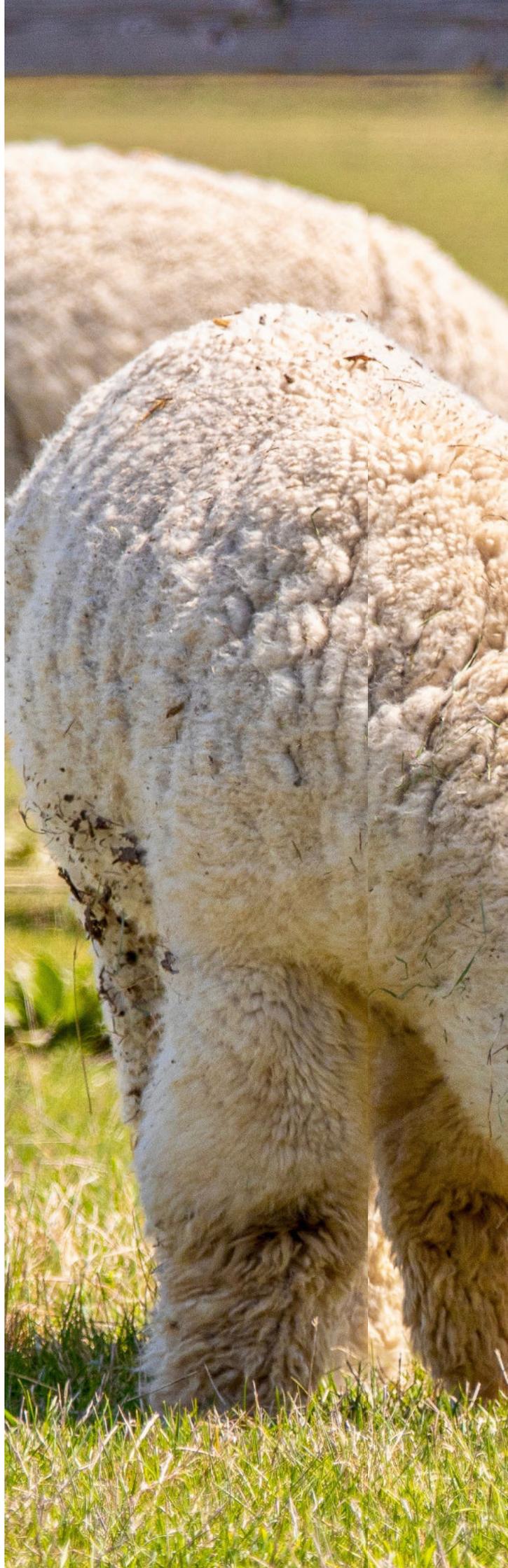
A review of our own breeding results suggested that we needed to look beyond the weather for sources of heat stress: In our data we could see intimations that heat stress was likely affecting our animals at times when ambient temperatures were more moderate than those of mid-summer. A higher sex ratio (more males) from conceptions that occurred in the month before spring shearing led us to think that our fully-fleeced animals were possibly experiencing heat stress at a time of year when we were still typically wearing our winter coats. We saw a similar result from pregnancies conceived on what we would experience as pleasantly warm but not hot days in the late fall.

We knew, too, that our animals' temperatures varied as a function of other factors, including differences in housing, shade availability in their pastures, and individual behaviour, as well as differences in physiology. Finally, we knew that environmental conditions varied on other farms in ways that would affect the predictive value of the impact of ambient temperatures on sex ratios at our farm for results at theirs. For these reasons, in late 2016 we began to record the body temperatures of dams and sires at our New York operation immediately before breeding, rather than relying on ambient temperatures to infer the presence or absence of heat stress in our animals at that moment.

We understood that even body temperatures would incompletely represent the females' temperatures during the period between breeding and conception: While alpacas are induced ovulators, we don't know how soon after breeding ovulation and conception occur. Many hours could pass between our body temperature assessments and the fertilization of the egg, with the females' temperatures varying over that time. In addition, we knew that any variable impact of high ambient temperatures on the numbers or independent viability of x versus y chromosome bearing sperm produced by the male would be only indirectly captured at best by his temperature at the moment of breeding via the seasonal correlation in daily temperatures.

To date, 196 cria from breedings where body temperatures were recorded have been born at our farm. The correlation between dam and sire temperatures observed at breeding was 0.67. We found no statistically significant link between male body temperatures and the sex ratio of the resulting cria.

However, there was evidence that female body temperatures do affect the sex ratio. Of the 39 crias resulting from breedings where the female's body temperature was 101.3° or greater, 64% were male, versus 50% of the crias born from the 157 breedings where the female's body temperatures was less. ($\chi^2(1, N=196)=2.61, p=0.11$).



However, there was evidence that female body temperatures do affect the sex ratio.



These percentages look relatively close to those observed when the high ambient temperature for the day was 80° or higher versus below those levels. However, our statistical confidence in the result is less. In the temperature analysis discussed previously, the results indicate that there is a 96% probability that ambient temperatures of 80° or greater result in a higher sex ratio on our farm than do lower temperatures. But, for our body temperature study, the confidence interval implies only an 89% probability that female body temperatures of 101.3° or higher result in a higher sex ratio. That said, while falling short of a scientific standard of confidence, this result was still notable enough that we felt it valuable to report, especially in the context of the established impact of ambient temperature on gender ratio.

Why do we have less statistical confidence in the predictive value of elevated female body temperatures on the sex ratio? The most important reason is that we have fewer observations in this study: If we had the same number of observations backing the female body temperature results that we did in the ambient temperature study, the probability that higher female body temperatures were in fact shifting the sex ratio in favour of males would rise to 94%.

Implications for Breeding Management

Keeping females cool during breeding and for a period thereafter is easier said than done in many areas of the country. Shifting the breeding season to fall and/or winter when the animals are often (though not always) cooler can create incremental costs, including modifying existing facilities to better accommodate cold weather births, enhanced shelter and coats for crias who experience winter conditions at a young age, and so on. There is even an implied time cost associated with waiting to breed or rebreed a female. But at the same time, cooling females in the summer heat is not always possible.

We had long been curious whether belly-shearing our dams in mid-summer might help keep heat stress at bay. We tried a small experiment with six dams in early August 2019, when the temperature and humidity was predicted to be consistent over a two-day period. We took our females' temperatures at 8:00 a.m. and noon on the first day, belly sheared them in the early afternoon, and then took their temperatures at 8:00 a.m. and noon the next day. The females' temperatures were 90% correlated at 8:00 a.m. and 83% correlated at noon, day over day. The average temperature recorded dropped by 0.8° in the two days between shearing. However, the primary change day over day was in the 8:00 a.m. temperatures recorded, while the noon temperatures declined by relatively little, perhaps because our females derived their primary cooling benefit from belly shearing when they were pushed. Something else we contemplate is whether our animals' susceptibility to heat stress will be affected over time by our breeding goals. As one example, the Accoyo

America white program is largely focused on producing animals with genotypes for increased density and staple length. If those traits also make our animals less able to tolerate warm weather without experiencing heat stress, we would expect a number of deleterious effects in addition to a trend towards higher sex ratios. However, increased density and staple length might also make our animals less susceptible to heat stress: Research in wool sheep has demonstrated that denser animals and those with more fleece growth actually stay cooler in hot weather because their denser wool creates a more robust solar radiation barrier, and also traps more air next to the skin that provides additional thermal insulation. We have just begun to study these interactions in our own herd, and at this time can only note that these phenotypic issues are complex and, in the context of climate change, a subject of intense study in other livestock breeds, which may yield information useful to alpaca breeders.

In the meantime, to help minimize the number of male crias produced by your breeding program, we recommend avoid breeding on hot days and when your animals are in full fleece prior to shearing. If this is difficult to do in your region, as it can be in ours, we recommend spot checking your dams' body temperatures throughout your breeding season to help you understand how your females are managing the heat in your farm's unique environment. This will help you assess both the desirability of making changes in your farm's structures and/or operation to help your females stay cooler, and the cost and potential benefit of making such changes.

1 (Lukefahr, S.D., "Characterization of a composite of beef cattle in subtropical south Texas and the effect of genes for coat type and colour on preweaning growth and influence of summer breeding on sex ratio", *The Professional Animal Scientist*, 33:604-615, 2017.)

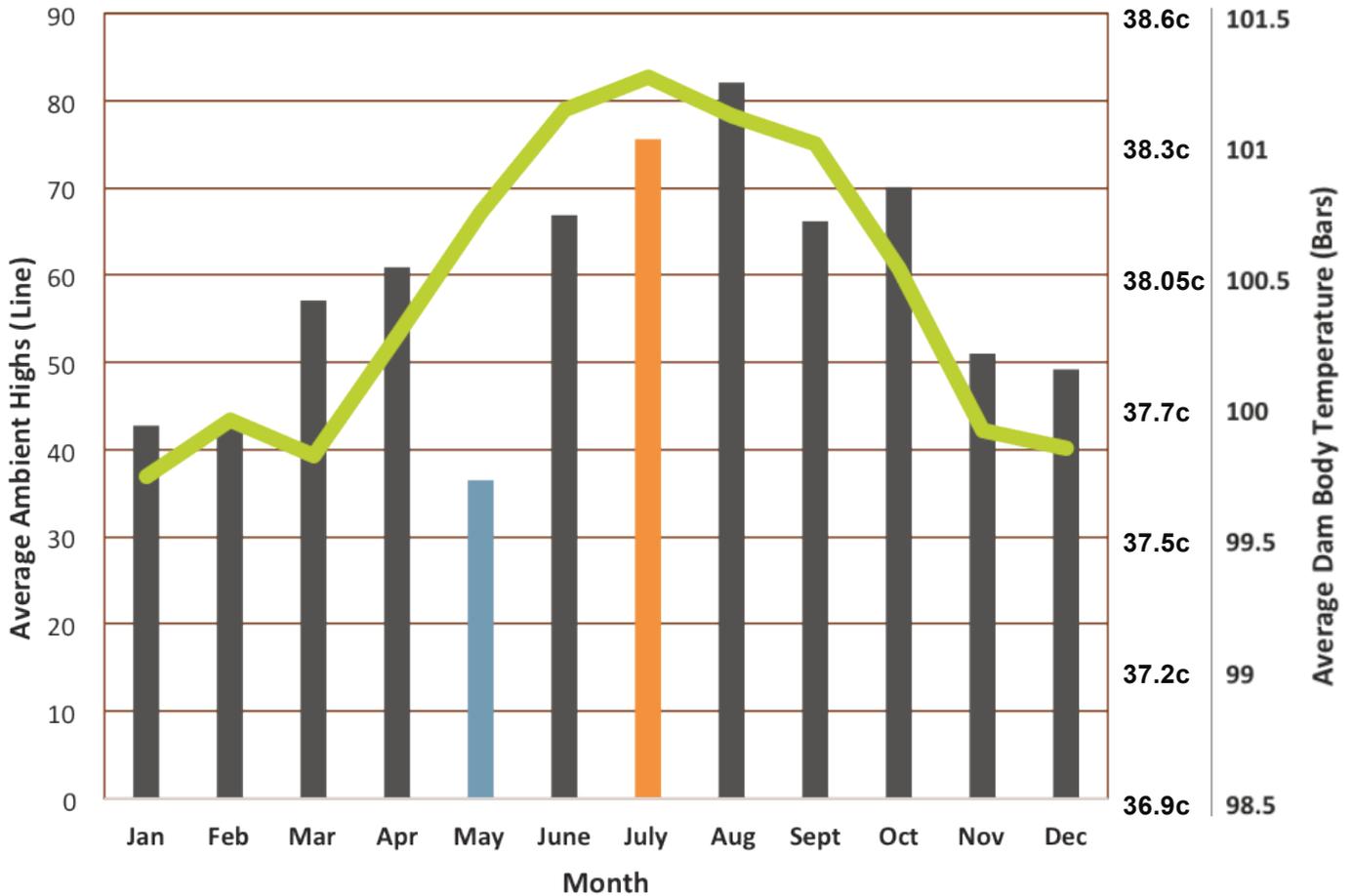
2 Roche, J.R., Lee, J.M., and Berry, D.P., "Climactic Factors and Secondary Sex Ratio in Dairy Cows," *J. Dairy Sci.* 89:3221- 3227, 2006

3 Hamid, H.Y., Zakaria, Z., Meng, G.Y., Haron, W., and Mustapha, N.M., "Effects of Elevated Ambient Temperatures on Re-productive Outcomes and Offspring Growth Depend on Exposure Time", *The Scientific World Journal*, Volume 2012

4 For instance, periods of heat stress might broadly correlate with other environmental factors that affect sex ratios. For example, other research has documented a link between female condition and/or changes in her condition and sex ratios, with females that are either in good condition or gaining condition more likely to produce males than are females who are losing condition or are of average or poor condition to start with. If warm summer temperatures are linked to improved conditions in our animals, this could also be affecting the sex ratio of their offspring. That said, to date we have not observed a residual seasonal bias in our sex ratio after adjusting for temperature.

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Three-Year Average Breeding Day Ambient High Temperatures and Dams' Body Temperatures by Month



Over three years, we recorded the lowest ratio of males (36%) from breedings conducted in **May** (**November in Australia**) after shearing. And over the same interval, we recorded our highest ratio of males (70%) from breedings conducted in the month of **July** (**January in Australia**), when body temperatures at breeding are high and ambient temperatures reach their peak in our region.

ALPACA GESTATION

Female alpacas are ready to breed when they reach approximately 75% of their adult weight which usually occurs between 12 and 24 months. Sexually mature females are induced ovulators and do not exhibit estrus cycles typical of most domesticated animals. If not pregnant, a mature female is almost constantly “open” or receptive to breeding.

Males mature more slowly typically becoming ready to breed between 2 and 3 years of age. Since a few females have become pregnant as early as 6 months and some males may be precocious as youngsters, it is important to separate open females and intact males soon after weaning at 5 to 8 months of age.

Breeding is done in the prone position and takes at least 15 minutes since the male dribbles, rather than ejaculates, semen into the female uterus. While breeding, the male makes a continuous “orgling” noise and occasionally moves his front legs along the sides of the female. The mating process induces the female to ovulate so she can become pregnant.

The gestation period is approximately eleven months but can vary quite considerably with individual alpacas and the season they are birthing in. Matings almost always results in the birth of a single, healthy baby called a “cria.” A cria usually weighs between 6 and 8 kgs and stands and begins to nurse within minutes to a few hours after birth.

The calendar at right can help you to estimate the due date of your new cria.



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ALPACA GESTATION TABLE

Sample of approximate due dates based on 335 or 345 day gestation

Date Bred	335 Day Due Date	345 Day Due Date
Jan 1	Dec 2	Dec 12
Jan 6	Dec 7	Dec 17
Jan 11	Dec 12	Dec 22
Jan 16	Dec 17	Dec 27
Jan 21	Dec 22	Jan 1
Jan 26	Dec 27	Jan 6
Jan 31	Jan 1	Jan 11
Feb 5	Jan 6	Jan 16
Feb 10	Jan 11	Jan 21
Feb 15	Jan 16	Jan 26
Feb 20	Jan 21	Jan 31
Feb 25	Jan 26	Feb 5
Mar 2	Jan 31	Feb 10
Mar 7	Feb 5	Feb 15
Mar 12	Feb 10	Feb 20
Mar 17	Feb 15	Feb 25
Mar 22	Feb 20	Mar 2
Mar 27	Feb 25	Mar 7
Apr 1	Mar 2	Mar 12
Apr 6	Mar 7	Mar 17
Apr 11	Mar 12	Mar 22
Apr 16	Mar 17	Mar 27
Apr 21	Mar 22	Apr 1
Apr 26	Mar 27	Apr 6

Date Bred	335 Day Due Date	345 Day Due Date
May 1	Apr 1	Apr 11
May 6	Apr 6	Apr 16
May 11	Apr 11	Apr 21
May 16	Apr 16	Apr 26
May 21	Apr 21	May 1
May 26	Apr 26	May 6
May 31	May 1	May 11
Jun 5	May 6	May 16
Jun 10	May 11	May 21
Jun 15	May 16	May 26
Jun 20	May 21	May 31
Jun 25	May 26	Jun 5
Jun 30	May 31	Jun 10
Jul 5	Jun 5	Jun 15
Jul 10	Jun 10	Jun 20
Jul 15	Jun 15	Jun 25
Jul 20	Jun 20	Jun 30
Jul 25	Jun 25	Jul 5
Jul 30	Jun 30	Jul 10
Aug 4	Jul 5	Jul 15
Aug 9	Jul 10	Jul 20
Aug 14	Jul 15	Jul 25
Aug 19	Jul 20	Jul 30
Aug 24	Jul 25	Aug 4
Aug 29	Jul 30	Aug 9

Date Bred	335 Day Due Date	345 Day Due Date
Sept 3	Aug 4	Aug 14
Sept 8	Aug 9	Aug 19
Sept 13	Aug 14	Aug 24
Sept 18	Aug 19	Aug 29
Sept 23	Aug 24	Sept 3
Sept 28	Aug 29	Sept 8
Oct 3	Sept 3	Sept 13
Oct 8	Sept 8	Sept 18
Oct 13	Sept 13	Sept 23
Oct 18	Sept 18	Sept 28
Oct 23	Sept 23	Oct 3
Oct 28	Sept 28	Oct 8
Nov 2	Oct 3	Oct 13
Nov 7	Oct 8	Oct 18
Nov 12	Oct 13	Oct 23
Nov 17	Oct 18	Oct 28
Nov 22	Oct 23	Nov 2
Nov 27	Oct 28	Nov 7
Dec 2	Nov 2	Nov 12
Dec 7	Nov 7	Nov 17
Dec 12	Nov 12	Nov 22
Dec 17	Nov 17	Nov 27
Dec 22	Nov 22	Dec 2
Dec 27	Nov 27	Dec 7

STAY WARM THIS WINTER

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Why is regular shearing important?

By James Wheeler - Kobler Alpaca Shearing Services

It should come as no surprise to anyone reading this that alpacas are a fibre animal. They have been specifically bred, and continue to be bred, to produce more fibre per animal. The luxurious fibre the alpaca produces grows all year round and does not cease to grow. This means that without shearing the alpaca's health can be compromised by its own fleece.

The question that is often asked is, if shearing is so critical how do alpacas manage in the wild? The reality is, that much like many wool sheep breeds, the alpaca is a domesticated species and as such unable to care for themselves without human intervention.

Issues associated with not shearing

Welfare

Alpacas are widely recognised as being vitamin D deficient. The vitamin D cycle is stimulated by ultraviolet light reaching the skin. As alpaca fibre is such an efficient insulator, it reduces the amount of ultraviolet light reaching the skin. One of the common side effects of vitamin D deficiency is rickets, particularly in younger stock or alpacas of darker colours (Judson, GJ et al. 2008).

As an alpaca fleece grows, it can cross fibre and matt, commonly known as coting. This can appear as if the fibre is felting in place on the animal. When coting occurs around moving parts e.g. legs and tail, this can cause the alpaca significant discomfort as it results in the skin pulling with each movement. Where this occurs around the tail it can, in extreme cases, cause the alpaca significant challenges with

urinating and defecation, potentially leaving the alpaca prone to flystrike and urine scald.

With the continual growth of fibre, as already noted, the weight of fleece an alpaca must carry increases, particularly when wet. This additional weight when wet can become life threatening if the alpaca becomes cast (*unable to get up*).

Due to the very nature of shearing, it is a brilliant time to get a good look at every alpaca. Many major and minor health issues can be hidden under all that fleece. One very common observation from owners is not realising how thin (or fat) the alpaca is under the fleece. Shearing also provides a great time to administer yearly vaccinations and any vitamin/mineral supplementation.

Legal

While it is acknowledged that within Australia the animal welfare laws are state specific, there are states where it is considered an animal welfare offence for any fleeced animal not to be shorn at least every 24 months.

Economic

The alpaca fleece industry, within Australia, has never been as buoyant, but it is currently limited by the amount of available fibre, with the likes of alpaca fibre.com.au, Waratah and others regularly calling for more fibre. One of the most important criteria for fibre value is length, typically with the most valuable fibre being between approximately 80mm-140mm for both huacaya and suri. When alpacas are not shorn yearly, most Alpacas (except the very old) will

produce in excess of 140mm, significantly devaluing the fibre. Even if the fibre does meet this length criterion, the fleece is now likely to suffer from other devaluing traits as a result of extended weathering including, but not limited to, crotching, fleece rot, tenderness, and excessive contamination.

Sheep producers who utilise alpacas as guards have experienced declines in lamb weaning rates when the alpaca is in more than one year's fleece, compared to yearly shorn alpacas. It is hypothesised that this is to do with the potential discomfort when mobile and or thermal regulation issues.

Challenges to regular shearing.

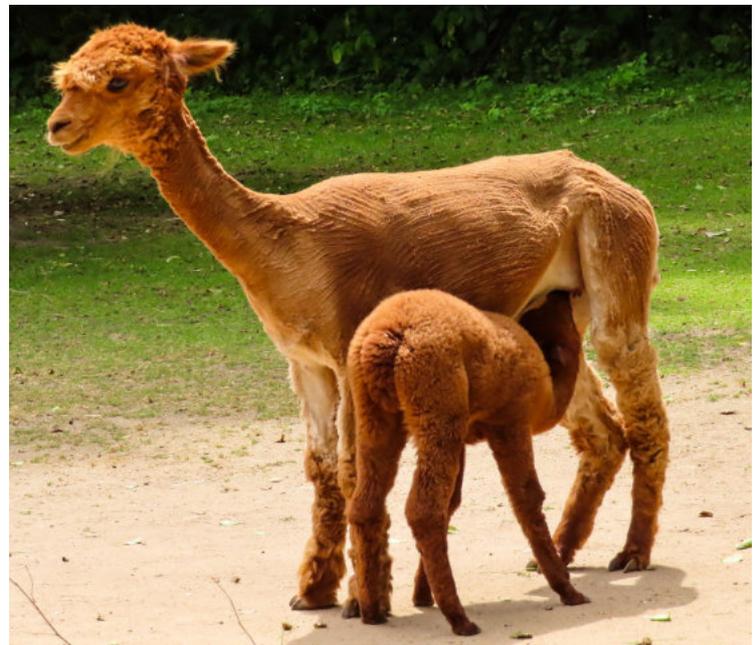
Australia is in the midst of a shearing crisis. There are simply not enough shearers to go around meaning clients have to be increasingly flexible with their shearing arrangements. Contacting shearers early is important, in the height of the shearing season appointments need to be booked months in advance. Many shearing teams will do runs, in the likes of Queensland and more remote areas, whereby once a team has been through once, they will not be returning until the following season.

Inclement weather can pose significant challenges to shearing schedules. Most shearers will not shear wet stock. There are many reasons for this including both animal and shearing team safety. Wet animals are harder to handle, shearing wet animals can have negative effects on shearing teams health, and particularly for smaller jobs with alpacas, shearers tend to use an electric handpiece, so electrical safety must be considered. Finding ways to maintain dry stock is hugely important, follow the weather forecasts up to and during shearing. If stock are wet, let your shearers know before they turn up, save them the travel, they may be able to fit someone else in. Shearing team members typically make the majority of their year's income during the season, they don't want downtime.

I've never had my alpacas shorn before what do I need to do?

It's important to contact your shearer to find out their expectations as all teams will be slightly different. Some will shear on the ground while others use tables. There is nothing wrong with either method, the alpaca is safely restrained in each case. Trying to shear alpacas like sheep can be very hazardous. While there are differences between teams there will be many things in common.

Find out how much help you are expected to provide. Have you booked just a shearer or do they come with additional help? Are you willing to help restrain your alpacas? And if so are you capable of doing this? Shearers will require power and somewhere flat to work as close as possible to the penned alpacas. Alpacas should be penned prior to the shearing teams arrival.



Do not supply the alpacas with an endless quantity of food, it is not comfortable to be stretched out on a full stomach. Have a plan for where the alpacas are going once they have been shorn. Know in advance what is happening with the fleece once it is removed. Have a supply of old towels or rags to clean up spit and urine with.

Shearing should be an enjoyable, stress-free time harvesting the years fibre and ensuring your animals' welfare for the next twelve months.

Any advice within this article is of a general nature and not specific to any individual or farm and may not be considered veterinary, legal or financial advice.

Judson, GJ. McGregor, BA. Partington, DL. 2008, Factors Associated with Low Vitamin D Status of Australian Alpacas, Australian Veterinary Journal, 86 (12), p. 486 - 490, Blackwell Publishing, Melbourne, Australia



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THE MECHANICS OF Selling Online

By Julie McClen - Oak Grove Graphics



As both a web designer and an alpaca breeder I have the unique experience of seeing both perspectives of promoting my alpaca stud online.

As an alpaca breeder I know the information prospective buyers of animals, fibre and products need to know to give them the confidence to purchase from me. As a web designer I also see how so often many in our camelid community fail to utilise the internet to their best advantage.

If you are going to have a website to promote your farm its important to see your website as your shop front to the world. Consider that prospective buyers are browsing the internet just as we all do in retail situations. First impressions count and poor window dressing imparts the impression that your 'product' may also be inferior to the other options available. In fact web studies have shown that a persons first impression of a website as professional and trustworthy is made in a split second, and that first impression, known as the 'halo effect', colours their view of your business ongoing. It can be difficult to recover lost trust, whereas a positive first impression can actually last beyond even negative aspects of a website discovered after the intial view of a site.

Positive impressions are gained by using clear fast loading photos optimised for websites, having easy to use site navigation on every page, easy to find contact details and very importantly a consistent style and layout.

When selling animals on your site a prospective buyer needs to be able to easily compare the different animals available. So a consistent layout with the relevant information in the same format goes a long way to enabling buyers to easily

assess your offerings. It is also vitally important if you want to generate sales to offer as much information about your animals as possible. In addition to the basics like name, age, sex, colour, and registration details, providing a commentary on the animals qualities, temperament, mothering/stud abilities, progeny, as well as any show records and fleece statistics for several years is important. When I look at animals for sale online, I always notice what is not mentioned and assume it was left out for a reason, that may or may not be the case, but it's a negative impression you don't need to allow to happen.

In addition to the accurate detailed information you provide make sure to use recent photos of the animals for sale, having a photo of an animal when it was two years old when it is now ten is not accurate in most cases, don't misrepresent the animal or it may lose you a sale.

Optimising large file size photos that may be megabytes in size down to 200 kilobytes or less, without losing picture quality, is also important to help your web page load quickly, especially on mobile devices. Most web designers will do this for you when building your site and many web building platforms also have built in basic graphics editing capabilities.





Examples of unhelpful photos for selling alpacas - other animals blocking the view of the animal for sale is saying you can't be bothered to take a decent photo - so maybe that translates to you won't be bothered to be helpful after the sale either?



Make sure your photos are helpful to the buyer, try to get a good photo of the animal by itself, not obscured by other animals or long grass or pens etc. Avoid photos taken straight after shearing or after rain, when your alpaca decides to scratch itself or yawn. Good photos do help sell products of any kind, don't underestimate the power of visual appeal.

Another thing I notice is many sites don't give a price, they often say TBA (to be advised) or contact us for pricing. This approach will more often than not lose you sales for several reasons. It may create the impression that the price will be high, so you lose immediately the people looking for well priced or lower priced stock. Some people may avoid asking as they may then feel embarrassed if they can't afford it, others may feel that you are making them work for information which is off putting to most people.

I know from my camelid owner website clients that often the price is something they struggle with, afraid to set a price in case it deters people when they would be willing to negotiate, and alternatively not wanting to under price. My advice, decide on a true value of your animal to your breeding program and put it out there, the beauty of a website is that you can change that price at any time - you aren't locked into it forever.

Good navigation is essential in any website, the page navigation menu should be placed in the same position on each page and in a place it is expected like at the top of the page, don't make visitors to your site work to find the basics.

Animation can add some life to a page, but only use subtle and limited animation, your website isn't a carnival sideshow and overwhelming animation is offputting to most people, and can even trigger migraines or epileptic fits in susceptible people.

Contrast is important, especially for visually impaired people, make sure the text on your site has enough contrast with the background page colour, dark text on light backgrounds is easier to read than light on dark.

SEO or Search Engine Optimisation is an important part of web design as it helps you rank well in Google searches. It's important to give your web pages relevant names, titles and descriptions using the keywords and phrases related to your business. The text content on your web pages has a big part in your ranking so make sure to provide enough information for Google to assess what you are offering. Also ensure your website is using secure https protocol, and is mobile friendly, as over time Google is downgrading websites that do not meet these requirements.

Promotion - list your website on all your social media, add your site to relevant listings on related websites, make up an email signature with your site address, advertise on local ag noticeboards and in relevant publications - it takes time for a website to gain ranking online, you can help it along by encouraging traffic to your site - even if it doesn't result in a sale that day it helps push you up the rankings over time.

Contact via www.oakgrovegraphics.com.au for website or graphic design enquiries.



VALUE ADDING TO YOUR ALPACA BUSINESS



By Pauline Glasser - Wahgungurry Alpaca Stud - Northern NSW

New alpaca breeders invariably ask “How do I make my alpaca business pay for itself” Like any other business you have to work at it.

The most obvious way is to sell animals and sell raw fleece. Sounds simple, but how will people find your farm to buy the animals, and where are you going to get the best value for your fleece?

Joining the Australian Alpaca Association and being an active member of your local branch is a good starting point.

We live in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales and our region has a very active committee who run many events and alpaca shows and we are actively involved in these events. We show our alpacas and fleece at local, Royal and National shows which raises the profile of our animals and our stud. Attending shows allows you to meet other breeders and members of the public who attend the shows, increases your knowledge, helps you to know the value of your animals in comparison to others and often leads to sales of animals. You need to spend time handling your alpacas so they are comfortable on a halter and around people.

What to do with your fleece depends on the number and quality of the fleeces you have but there is a market for all types of fleece. It can be sold to fleece collection agents who collect your fleece and then market it or you can send it to mini mills to have it made into different products for you to use yourself or you can spin the fleece to make your own yarn - there are plenty of avenues to learn to spin.

Our AAA region is very active in the fleece market, buying some fleece, having it spun, having members make product for sale which is then sold at shows and events organised by our merchandise team. The region runs many events and courses in textile art and dyeing. To help members.

Across the country many breeders have online shops where they sell clothing and homewares they make themselves or buy in from wholesalers. You can take a stall at the various local shows to sell your animals and alpaca product and this is a good avenue to talk to the many people who come to have a look.

Make sure everyone goes away with a handout about your business or at the very least a business card with your phone number and website or Facebook details.

Our region runs an 'Alpaca Awareness Month' and studs open their farm to the public for a day or a week - a very good way to meet people who are looking to get into alpacas. For many years we have had our farm open on Mothers Day. We have a free Devonshire Tea available, people can picnic on the farm and enjoy a beautiful view, pat an alpaca and we have alpaca goods for sale.

During the year we host community groups with morning tea and they can pat or walk an alpaca. Sometimes you feel that these groups are not likely to be future customers but they talk to family and friends and open doors that you may not otherwise have found.

Visiting local schools with a couple of alpacas or having them visiting you - making sure you have activities for them - is a good way to get children involved and don't underestimate the 'pester power' of children who 'need' a couple of alpacas as pets, it's surprising how many parents fall for these pets and two are suddenly not enough! We have seen alpacas taken to libraries to promote childrens books about alpacas, taken to aged care homes where the residents are happy to have a pat , children's hospitals and to numerous other occasions. Some farms charge for people to take alpacas and llamas on walks with a handler and picnic included. All these promotional activities help to get you and your business known - the first step to making a sale.

Alpaca poo is something which is never in short supply. Did you know it is an excellent garden fertilizer? Why not bag it and sell it on the roadside? You will be surprised how quickly it sells!

Some alpaca farms have extra accommodation and use this as a B&B, an excellent way for prospective new breeders to stay on a farm and see whether alpacas are for them and for you to show what you have for sale and offer help to a new breeder.

For us, as for many other breeders, this is a lifestyle choice. We enjoy our animals, enjoy the camaraderie of other breeders and a lifestyle away from the city. We do our best to promote alpacas and their beautiful fleece and cover our costs along the way.

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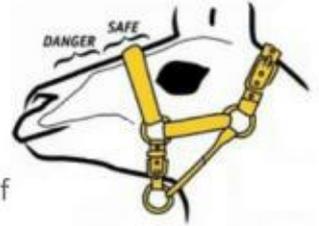
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HOW TO AVOID ALPACA SALES SCAMS

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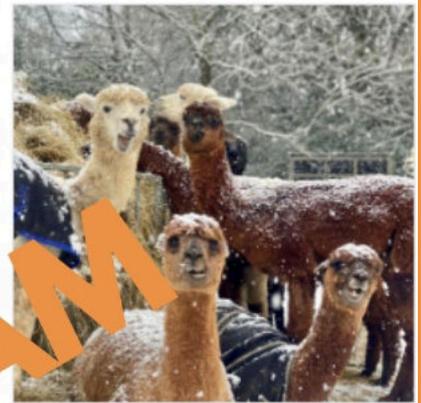


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SCAM

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SCAM

HOW TO AVOID SCAMS WHEN BUYING ALPACAS

We have been alerted to several scams on social media where buyers have lost money when trying to buy alpacas. One member of the public contacted us after losing \$500 to a social media "alpaca sale" scam. He never got the animal he bought and was unable to retrieve his money, which, according to his bank's fraud research, went to an overseas bank account.

We have compiled the following info to assist the public in recognising scams.

VERY LITTLE INFORMATION

- No location, generic location, overseas location, or various locations listed on their social media
- They have a limited amount of photos on their Facebook page or profile
- If a personal Facebook profile, they have few or no friends. If a page, they have very few followers
- There is no telephone, address, email, or other contact information
- They have no reviews from previous customers
- They are not registered with the Australian Alpaca Association

NO PHYSICAL INSPECTION

- They might advertise alpacas for re-homing, adoption or sale "near me" or in various locations in Australia or around the world
- They are happy to sell without meeting you or you inspecting the animal
- They require money transfer upfront before you see the animal
- Their communication is done purely on messenger or social media, not via telephone, email or face-to-face
- They might be in a hurry to sell

SUSPICIOUS ALPACA PHOTOS

- They often copy alpacas photos from the internet or from other breeders
- Trees, weather, shed photos, etc. might reveal alpacas live in the Northern Hemisphere or other countries than Australia
- They might sell "breeding pairs", babies or single alpacas
- There are no stories about their life with the alpacas or day-to-day posts. All posts are geared towards selling alpacas

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- NEVER give your banking details or transfer money through social media
- When buying alpacas, ensure you visit the farm and inspect the animals, talk to the seller and obtain detailed information about them and the animals they are selling
- Get a second opinion or visit other farms
- Don't fall for cheap sales
- If you see a spam/fake page, report it to Facebook, so they can shut it down



CARING FOR THE OLDER ALPACA

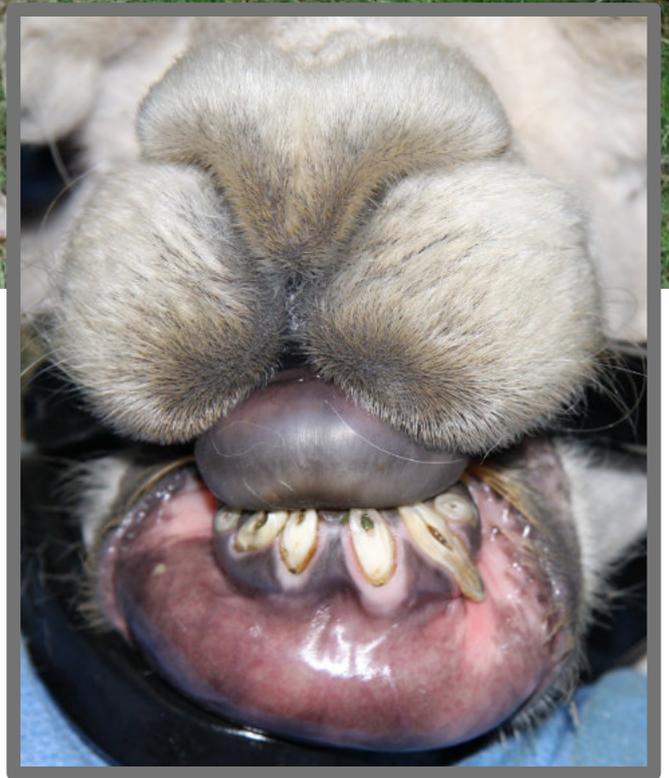


By Esme Graham

Many of our older alpacas have given us very good service over the years either as stud males, breeding females or much loved pets. These animals deserve to be well looked after in their old age.

With the care most alpacas and llamas are given throughout their breeding lives many live to a good old age – some into their twenties, and like all animals they may need a little consideration to help them thrive in their old age especially those with chronic health conditions. It is important to be vigilant in monitoring their health with regular health checks, weighing them regularly and faecal counts to ensure you treat issues early.

Keeping an eye on an alpacas' weight is most important. If you don't have scales to weigh your alpacas use the body scoring method (see Camelid Connections Issue 18 Dec. 2021 for more information). Underweight alpacas may be losing out on food through competition with others in the herd and may need to be separated at feed time to ensure they get their share. You can supplement the protein for an



Worn Incisors - photo courtesy of Alpaca Dental Services - www.alpacadentist.com.au

underweight alpaca to ensure this is not the reason for weight loss. Teeth and gum problems can worry any alpaca but older alpacas may have teeth worn down or alternatively their teeth may sharpen with time causing them discomfort or making it difficult to chew without pain. Long or tough grass can cause problems as they may be unable to break it down into small enough pieces to swallow and digest. If you see an alpaca dropping wads of cud or balling it up in their mouth this is usually a sign of dental problems and you should consult a vet.

Overweight can also cause problems. Often they are eating the same amount they have consumed all their lives but now they are not as active, not working or breeding and their food requirements are really a lot less but being with a herd, particularly in lush paddocks, there is the temptation “to get their share”. It may be necessary to limit their access to feed while ensuring they get a balanced diet.

If older alpacas are not thriving the cause could be a vitamin or mineral deficiency or imbalance due to less effective chewing or digesting. If necessary, you can administer an alpaca safe vitamin booster but don't make any great changes without consulting your vet.

Remember that some older alpacas/llamas may not be as nimble on their feet as they used to be so ensure their living space indoor and outdoor is safe for them. Steep paddocks can be slippery in wet weather and an animal falling near a fence can easily be entangled and not able to get onto their feet, and rocky paddocks are easy for an unstable animal to trip. It may be best to have a small paddock with a mate to keep them company or next to the rest of the herd where they feel safe. Keep in mind that alpacas are herd animals and tend to bond with other members of their species and can be prone to depression if left on their own. Older animals can't control their temperature as well as young animals so make sure they have shade for those hot summer days, protection from prevailing winds and rain in stormy weather and be aware of how they are coping with the cold in winter.

In the Australia climate few animals are regularly put in an indoor situation at night and many prefer to be outside but if you have older animals, in times of inclement weather or prior to shearing, if they are being kept inside consider the bedding you have for them as bony or arthritic animals may be very uncomfortable on a hard floor. Consider using straw bedding which can be replaced relatively easily or even rubber mats although these require more effort to keep them clean. If you have them inside make sure they have food and water close by.

Arthritis is one of the most common health concerns in older animals, and alpacas are no exception. An alpaca might develop arthritis in any of their feet, legs, or joints. They might also develop dropped pasterns (the alpaca equivalent of the midfoot or ankle). Untreated, this could eventually manifest as debilitating chronic pain and a general refusal to move around very much, especially in the cold. You might have to treat an older alpaca with alpaca-approved nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or there are some preventative drugs that may be of help if you suspect a problem. It is essential that you talk to your veterinarian if you suspect arthritis as there is a risk the drugs may cause other problems.

All animals deserve a comfortable old age and it is your duty as an owner to ensure they get it.

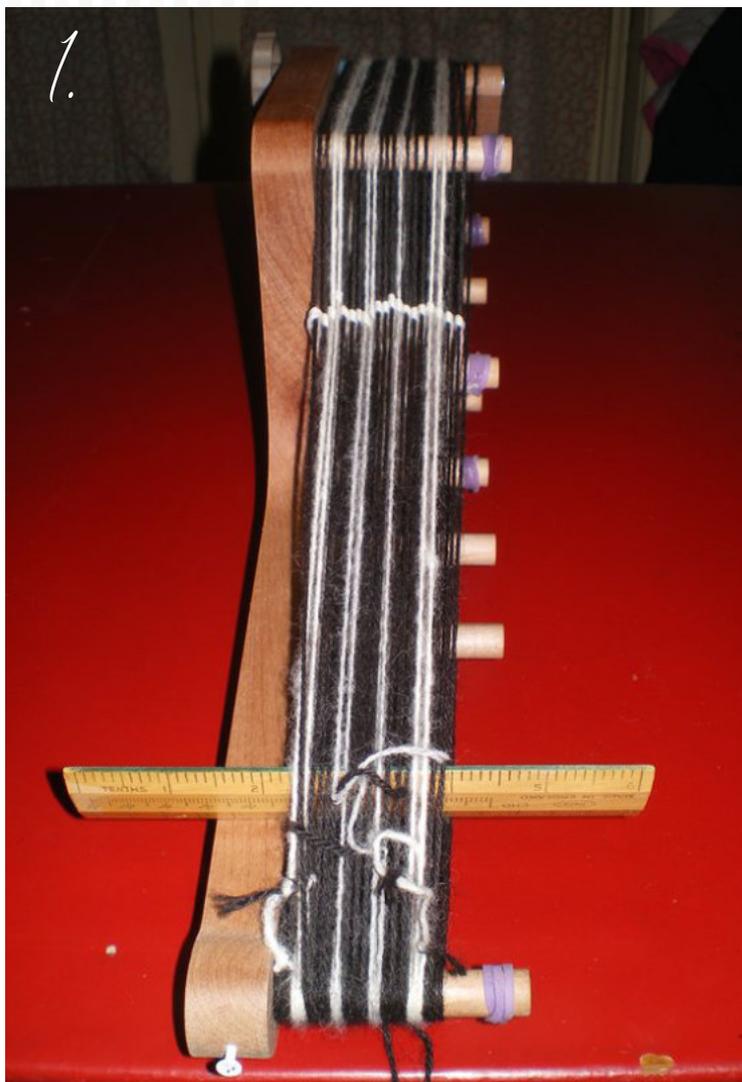


Inkle Weaving

Workshop by Elizabeth Paul Oct 2021

Inkle weaving creates tightly woven, warp faced fabric lengths which can be used for shoulder straps, belts, bag handles, ties etc.

The weft is beaten hard and “disappears” so that the pattern seen is created solely by the exposed warp threads. Smooth hard threads like cotton and artificial fibres are best as they don’t cling to each other when raising and lowering the warp. Soft, hairy yarns like alpaca are not really suited to inkle weaving. Having said that, I used 5 ply alpaca on this Ashford Inklette or baby inkle loom to produce small bands. The loom comes with an instruction booklet, to which I have added the following notes.



Warping the Inkle Loom

This is a very small loom, measuring about 35cm long and 9 cm wide, and requires some dexterity to wind the warp and attach the leashes. It also has no foot whereby it could be clamped to a table, unlike the larger version, and needs to be placed on some fabric or rubber sheet rather than a smooth surface, to prevent it moving around. Note also the rubber bands I have added to various pegs to help prevent the warp slipping off, or sliding down between the tension bar and the frame. The larger version comes with a belt shuttle which incorporates a beater, but I had to improvise using a 15 cm ruler as a beater. I also improvised shed sticks (folded paper) and a small shuttle of cardboard.

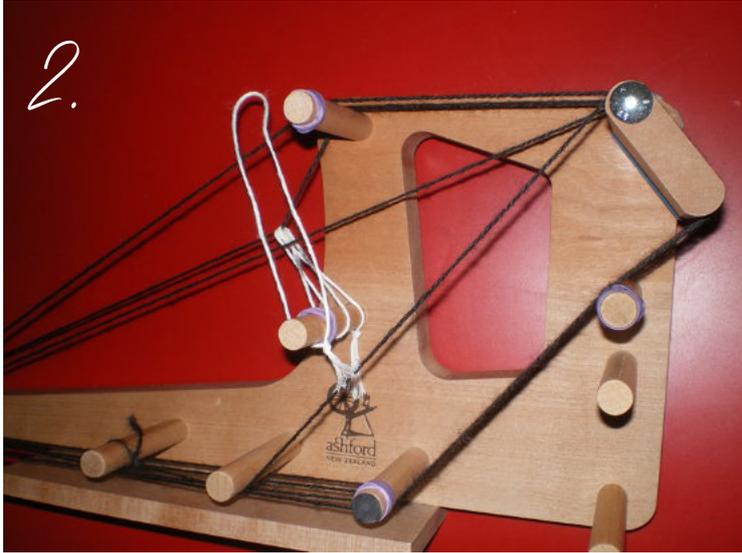
See Pic 1: Inkle Loom Warp

To start the warp the thread end is tied to the white screw at the bottom left corner of the loom and wound in two sequences, above and below various pegs as described in the booklet. The warp is wound around the pegs, with a longer warp involving the use of more pegs to a length of about 1.7m. Note the knots at the front peg where the colour changes have been tied together. (The knots should be about the same level, but alpaca yarn stretches.) Note the white screw now has nothing tied to it as once the warp has been wound on, the start and finish ends need to be tied together so that the warp can be moved forward. Halfway through my first band, the first warp thread became loose altogether and required pulling tight for every row.

Leashes

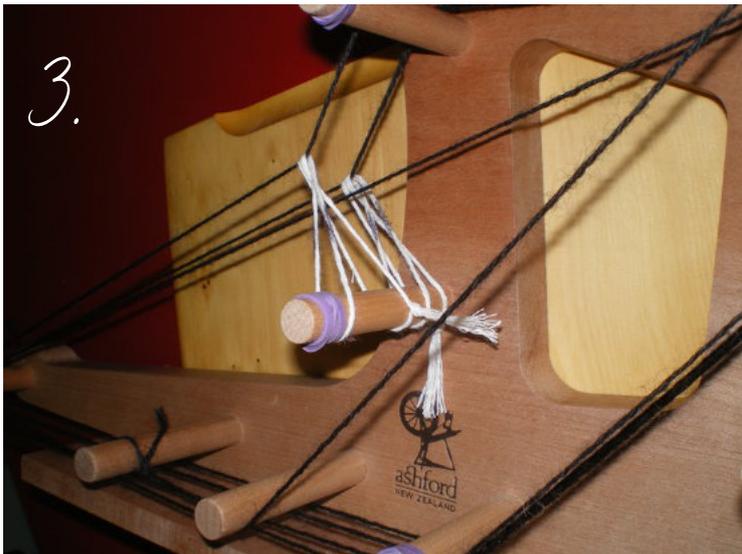
The thread guides which substitute for the rigid heddle on the previous loom are called leashes, and they have to be made. To more clearly illustrate the leash insertion I have wound 4 warp threads, 2 upper and 2 lower, on to the loom but I have put the second lower warp thread down further to more clearly illustrate the leash insertion. I have also laid the loom down flat. See Pic 2: Leash loop. Starting with the first warp thread, ie closest to the frame, each leash must be looped on to the peg, and folded from front to back (ie looking towards the frame) over the top warp thread (without catching on the lower thread). The loop is then brought under and backwards, opened up and pushed back on to the peg. See Pic 3. Leash twist. Note how the second

half of the next leash crosses over the first half to create the twist in the leash. I have marked the second half of the leash with black to make this clearer. When the loom is warped, the threads are very close together, and the leashes must be inserted between each pair of upper and lower threads. See Pic 4: Leashes under warp. The warp should be checked to ensure that lower threads are not caught up in a leash. Note the last thread at the front (crossing the white leash) is a lower warp thread with no leash.



Care needs to be taken that this thread does not slip off while weaving, hence the rubber band at the end of the peg. I would suggest thin, waxed string or thread to make the leashes, as kitchen twine is either too thick or too hairy itself and grabs the alpaca, so I was constantly pushing the leashes back up the warp.

See Pic 5: Leashes dragged down.



I also used a 30 cm length of twine to make a leash as once I cut the twine seen here, the ends fell open making it difficult to tie a knot.

Weaving

See Pic 6. Inkle Loom set up. The shed sticks are in place and a small section of warp has been woven. The shed is created by pushing down or up on all the lower warp threads behind the leashes. It is being held open with the ruler, which when turned down flat becomes the beater, and the threads being held up are the lower warp threads without leashes. I have two shuttles in this picture but normally the weft would be one colour only in a continuous thread, and wound on to a bigger shuttle. (I ended up using only the black.)

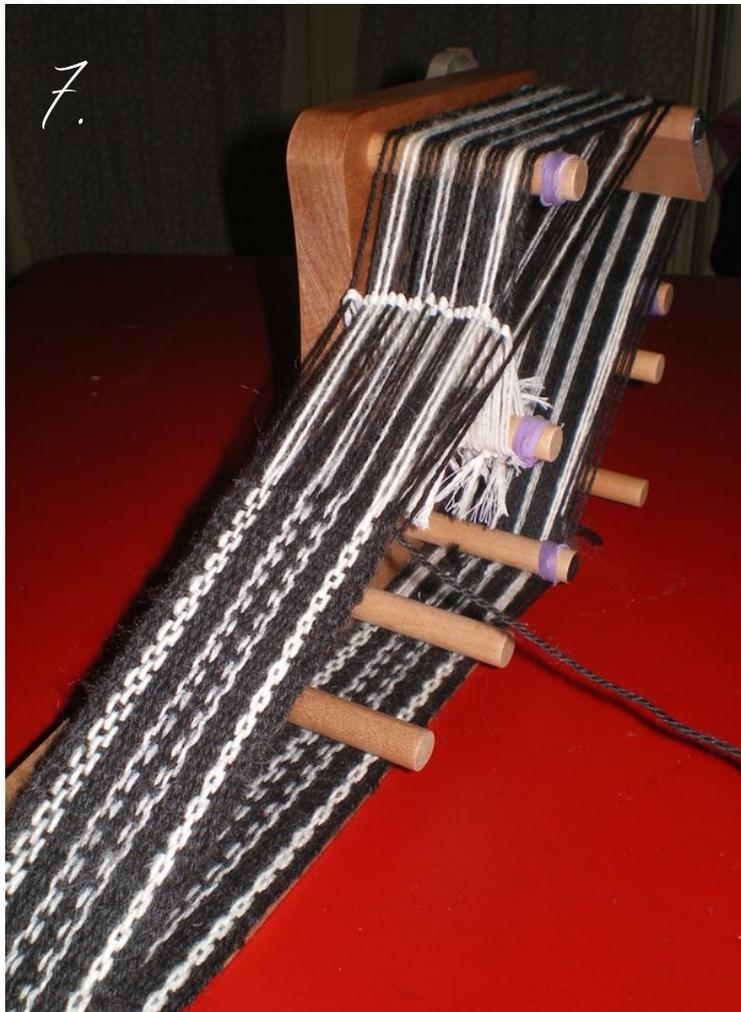


Once the weft thread is passed through, it is beaten down hard so that the only the warp threads really show. The selvages were very loopy, and I should have pulled the weft threads a little tighter to close the loops (which goes against my normal method of weaving.)

Alpaca clings to itself and never more so than when it is compressed and rubbed together like this. It was necessary to constantly “rock” the ruler down the warp threads and sometimes to even slide the edge of the ruler down between threads to break up the fibre connections. With such a small warp it became more difficult to fully raise the shed by hand as the band progressed.

Moving the Warp

See Pic 7: Time to Move the Warp. Note the leashes have been pushed up. The tension block at the back of the loom is eased off to enable the warp to be moved. See Pic 8: Loose Warp. Note the knot ends just visible at the bottom under the warp. Two hands are needed to slowly move the warp a small section at a time, one pulling the woven band down at the front and one moving the warp threads back and up underneath. These looms are made of very light wood and the pegs could snap off if too much force is used to move the warp. The leashes also need to be moved up again when the tension bar is retightened.



Finished Band

When the warp is moved more or less all the way around the pegs, the knots arrive at the top behind the leashes. See Pic 9: End of Band. The warp is cut behind the leashes, above and below. The free warp threads are drawn through the leashes. See Pic 10: Finished Bands. The leashes can be reused. As the warp threads retract when cut, it would be necessary to leave a bit more warp for braiding if required than I have on these samples, but of course the ends could also be folded over or through a buckle and sewn down to make eg a belt or strap. I also found several threads on the underside which had not been lifted, forming an extra loop towards the end of the bands. Despite various minor problems I think there is plenty of potential in creating bands like this with alpaca yarn (with a little more practice).





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From
“*Fleece to Fashion*”
Sydney Royal 2022

Beverley Burns - Convenor



When the idea was floated to create a new display for the Infotainment area at Sydney Royal, the question became – what?

The idea of educating the public and anyone thinking of entering the industry was top of our agenda, and the birth of from “Fleece to Fashion” was born. People needed to know that yes, there was far more to these wonderful animals and their divine fleece than just being a cute lawn mower that everyone loved and wanted to cuddle.

Our main aim was to begin with our very popular shearing, progress through the classing and skirting stage, through to what was then all the possible uses for their fleece and to make sure everyone was aware that the animals were shorn once a year and that their fleece then became a valuable commodity, using all the available avenues of sale, from sale of the raw fleece, through commercial processing and creating saleable yarn, then through various uses by the craft groups i.e. hand spinning, using the wheel or drop spindle, which we found the public were totally fascinated by, weaving - not only table, but also the larger scale floor looms, then the wonderful large needle felting machine which always had a large number of interested onlookers all fascinated to see the beautiful end products roll out.

A note regards the beautiful shawl used to adorn our antique spinning wheel. It was created by Alice Dryburgh from Sanyatsi Alpacas situated at beautiful Mt Vincent in the Central West. It was spun from fleece from her older appaloosa suri male alpaca and was tested at 39micron. The fineness of the yarn comes down to Alice’s spinning talents and took her 120 hours to spin the 400gms needed for the shawl. It was spun and crocheted for the CWA State Competition and took her two months to complete and was a truly beautiful piece of work, one that any baby would be happy to call its own.



Weaving Jamie-Lee Jerring

“Fleece to Fashion”

Below: Dace & Helen Spinners



Unfortunately, this year we had to forego our shearing display as the floods got in the way, but next year, that will be the beginning of our roll out of from “Fleece to Fashion” and if this year’s popular response from the public and current breeders alike was anything to go by, I’m sure we will go on to a bigger and better education process for all to enjoy.

I had a such wonderful group of volunteers, who I would like to thank personally, without your expertise and friendship we would not have pulled it off as well as we did, I had spinners, weavers, a flatbed felter all the way from Victoria and knitters who educated the public in their various arts and the many ways to turn our wonderful fleeces into beautiful yarns and garments. They all had such a great time they have agreed to join us again in 2023 and hopefully, with the addition of the shearing team and our skirting demonstrations we will be full steam ahead.

Our deepest thanks to our major sponsors the Australian Alpaca Barn who are again going to sponsor us next year, The Scotch Group and Waratah Alpaca Co-Op for the donation of the fleeces and special thanks to Gayle Herring at Fibre Naturally for processing that fleece into bats for our ladies to spin, also our thanks to Petlins for the donation of the parts to refurbish all our old donated spinning wheels.

‘Fleece To fashion’ display

It was wonderful having Gayle and Jamie Herring from Fibre Naturally with us as they were not only able to talk to the public about their felting and weaving, but Gayle was also able to talk to many visitors about their various processing and yarn needs as well.

Looking forward to “Fleece to Fashion” 2023.



Lord of the Ring Shane teaching Shawn to spin





Sydney Royal 2022

What a fantastic show the 2022 Sydney Royal Alpaca show was.

Not only did we have the celebrations for the 200 Years of the RAS but it was also 30 years of our Alpaca Show at Sydney Royal. And what a celebration year it was. Exhibitor numbers were up, fleece entries were up and so were the Halter entries. It was great to see new exhibitors and a few who haven't been for many years as well as the wonderful chance to catchup with those who come and support us every year.

For those who have not been to Sydney Royal, either as exhibitors or just to pop in for the day and say "hi", the multiple days, despite having its many challenges, allows for a lot of socialising, learning and catching up with what other breeders are doing with their herds.

There is nothing better than sitting around the huts at night, after the public have all gone home, having a beverage or two and chatting.

Both Fleece & Halter entries, gave our wonderful Judges a challenging time and we thank Shane Carey, Natasha Clark, Adrienne Clarke & Molly Gardner, for their expertise, support and patience for what was a big year of judging.

The Catalogue with results is available on the NSW website with results also in e-alpaca, however we will highlight the main award winners here for you.

Thank you to everyone who helped create what was a very successful 2022 Sydney Royal Alpaca & Fleece show. To the team, as usual we couldn't do it without you, and we thank you very much for all your hard tireless hours of work and effort that goes into putting together a show like Sydney Royal.

Best in Show - Huacaya - Malakai Firework Et Malaki Alpacas - Shane Carey (below)

Best in Show - Suri - Elimbari Sappho Elimbari Alpacas -Michael & Roslyn Davis (below left)





ABOVE

Judges pictured with:
Supreme Huacaya Fleece - Precision Hyperion Et
Precision Alpacas - Taryan Mathews

Supreme Suri Fleece - Kurrawa Just A Toy Boy
Kurrawa Alpacas - Natasha Clark

RIGHT

Natasha Clark winner of the Jim Watts Trophy for
the Best Fleece in Show

Kurrawa Just A Toy Boy





Is my alpaca a hermaphrodite?

Jenny McKenry - Dandura Alpacas

It was shearing day. Our shearer, Mike Snow, had just finished with one of our girls when he asked casually, “had any cria from this one?” I replied that we had been trying to get a cria out of her for 3 years. She had difficulty getting pregnant and if she did conceive she would slip within a few months. “Not surprising,” he replied. “She’s a hermaphrodite.” As he said this he leaned over and squeezed a white substance from her vulva. I stared at her genitalia. It certainly looked a lot different from the last time she had been examined in late autumn that year, when I had made a decision to leave trying to re-mate her until after the shearing. Now her clitoris, at the age of four and a half years, was quite pronounced.

“Any family history?” Asked one of our city helpers. The answer was “no.” All her female relatives had been very fertile and her sire and males we had used had good fertility records.

We had tried to mate GL over the years however she would not get pregnant. Not even a variety of males would do it. She would happily sit to mate but would not conceive. The vet examination didn’t pick up anything unusual.

The vet recommended a round of hormone treatment. So we started the eleven day estrumate, oxytocin, estrumate, receptor regime. After the first cycle she appeared to

conceive. She spat off, ultra sounded pregnant and then at about three months slipped. We repeated the hormone treatment with the same result. I was determined to have one more go after the shearing. When I made this decision she was 4 years old and her genitalia looked normal. In the last 6 months that had changed. She clearly looked like a hermaphrodite. Also other things changed. Back in the paddock, she became pack guard and leader and began mounting receptive females thereby upsetting our mating program. It was time to reassess her.

GL is now a happy, watchful and protective sheep guard on our property – one of our best and a role she adopted easily.





All AAA registered alpacas must have a brass International Alpaca Register (IAR) ear tag displaying that animal's unique registration number

To insert a tag:

- Catch the animal and check its sex. The convention is to insert a female's IAR tag in its right ear and male's IAR tag in its left ear.
- If the animal has already been registered with the AAA, be sure you are inserting the correct tag to match the registration number shown on the pedigree certificate. If the animal is not yet registered, keep a record of the IAR tag number and animal name in readiness for entering registration details on eAlpaca.
- Sterilise the tag and the applicator in disinfectant solution
- Soak cotton wool with disinfectant and rub both the inside and outside of the ear.
- Load the applicator correctly. You could use white paint to mark the side of the applicator with the raised symbol to quickly identify the correct way to load the tag.
- Locate the two cartilaginous ridges on the lower inside of the ear
- Position the applicator with the raised symbol on the outside (hairy side) of the ear
- Aim to puncture between the two ridges and avoid obvious veins
- Punch quickly with one firm squeeze of the applicator
- Spray the punched area with antiseptic spray.
- A day later check the ear for infection and wiggle the tag to free any adhesions
- Monitor the animals for signs of infection.



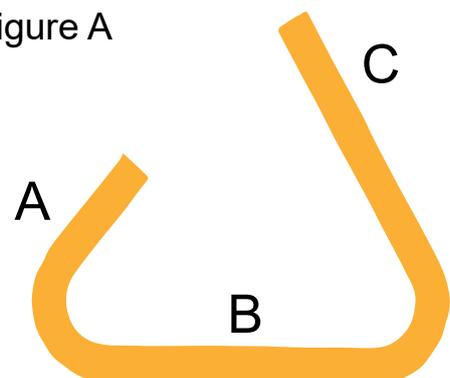
The IAR brass ear tags provided by AAA have three sides.

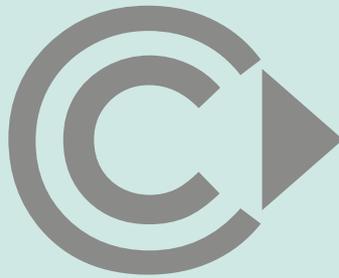
SIDE A is the shortest and is the side that pierces the ear cartilage when the applicator pliers are squeezed shut.

SIDE B is the longest and has the letter IAR embossed in the middle of the outside. (This is the side that should end up on the outside 'hairy side' of the ear.)

SIDE C has the individual ear tag number embossed on its outside. (This is the side that should end up on the inside 'smooth side' of the year.)

Figure A





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