

IN THIS ISSUE

- Alpacas in the UK
- Alpaca Castration
- Vicuna Habitat
- Sydney Royal Alpaca Show
- Camelid Tourism

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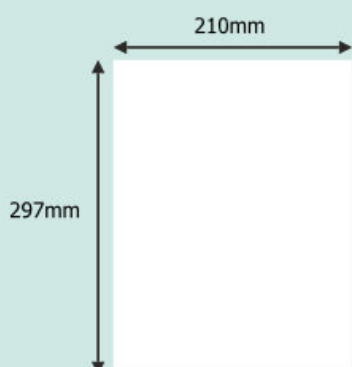
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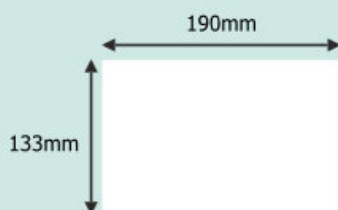
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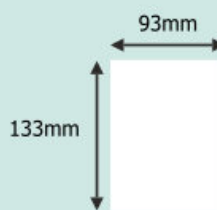
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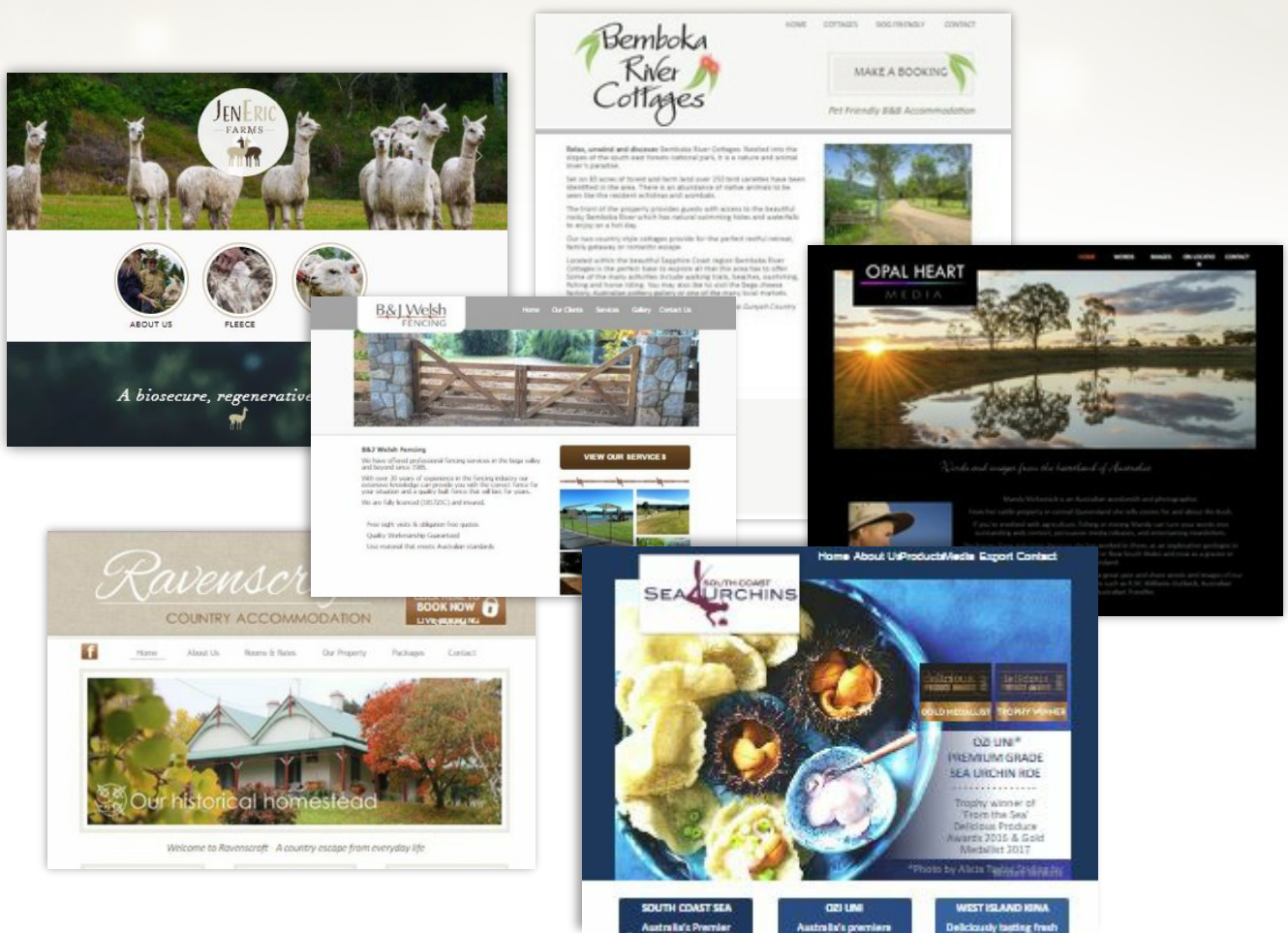
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Publisher

Camelid Connections is published by Oak Grove Graphics ABN 84 171 413 342

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Cover Image:Classical Mile End Alpacas UK

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Welcome to Camelid Connections

We have a wide range of articles this issue including some international stories for you. We learn about fleece collection in the UK and get the perspective of an alpaca breeder involved in many aspects of the UK alpaca industry. We also take a trip to Peru where the Quechua Benefit group is working to save and create habitat for the tiny fine fleeced Vicuna.

We have an article from veterinarian Dr Hope Stephanie Trostian about castrating male alpacas and the details of what is involved, what the best age for castration is and she outlines the details involved in this process.

Ever had an emergency where you needed to contain your stock? Agriculture Victoria runs you through all the considerations for creating a stock containment area on your farm, knowledge worth having as emergency situations can often arise very quickly without warning.

Continuing our series of articles on camelid Tourism, this issue we travel to Ipswich near Brisbane QLD to see what Shane Hancock of the totally off grid Llama Farm is doing to create an income from tourism. The Llama Farm has the largest herd of llamas in Queensland and offers different experiences to suit a variety of tourists.

We also have a round up of highlights from this years Sydney Royal Show and what different breeders were doing to highlight alpacas to the general public through demonstrations and displays, as well as the show ring classes of course. We also get an update from the AAA Youth group on what they have been doing over the last six months.

Fleurieu Prime Alpaca are forging ahead in the alpaca meat industry and give us an update on this side of their alpaca business, and although we are aware this aspect of the alpaca industry is not something everyone is comfortable with, we report on all aspects of the alpaca industry to present the big picture to our readers.

Lastly, with the sad and unexpected passing of World Of Alpacas Magazine owner Trevor Pavlovich, we have heard that WOA will cease to be produced. Here at Camelid Connections, our magazine has not focussed on breeder business articles, but we can see that there will now be a void in the industry for this type of advertising. So we have decided to include a very limited number of these type of articles in addition to our usual content in each edition ongoing. You will find our advertising rates are some of the most affordable anywhere, please contact julie@camelidconnections.com.au if you would like to discuss advertising options and pricing.

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.

www.oakgrovegraphics.com.au

Classical MileEnd Alpacas

By Rachel Hebditch CME



Spring has arrived in the UK and that means some of the early birds have started shearing already. The knock on effect being that fleeces will start turning up in UK Alpaca's barn for grading by yours truly. I have become a fleece nerd and have been known to drag Chas away from his computer to look at a really lovely fleece.

UK Alpaca buys around nine or so tons of fleeces every year and it is graded into baby, 21 micron and under and superfine 22 to 25 and the duvet department, over 26 micron. This is a bit of a moveable feast as there are other factors at play. Some very fine fleeces may have lots of strong primary fibres that mean an instant downgrade. They may be too short, must be three and a half inches (90mm) minimum for worsted processing and so end up in outsorts.

Outsorts, fleeces that are too short and too coarse, have a good market. All the white is sold to a client in Poland who makes the most beautiful hand embroidered duvets while the coloured goes to a British maker of duvets and pillows.

Colour is a big thing for us too. We want white and fawn as both can be dyed successfully and prefer not to buy black, grey or brown. If we do, we pay a lot less for them.

While all this grading lark is going on, we also have a herd of round 100 alpacas trading under the name Classical MileEnd Alpacas. Chas and I don't have any help with the animal side even though we are both in our 70's. We have 35 or so cria due in June and July when there will be loads of good grass. Our office overlooks the birth field so it is easy to keep an eye on the heavy pregnant girls and get some work done.

We probably should try to cut down our female herd but bought two new stud males last year and selling girls pregnant to them is a bridge too far for me. I want to see what they produce. Can you hear Chas sighing heavily?

The farm is on the side of a valley in mid Devon with great views. It is very good for funghi, wild flowers and loads of refugee pheasants from a nearby shoot. Apparently isolated, we are just ten minutes from Tiverton and 20 minutes from a main line station where you can wizz up to London in two hours.

We do some alpaca showing but not a great deal. The BAS National is our biggest show and we go to the North Somerset Show in May and the Taunton Show in September. In between Chas organises the alpaca classes at the three day Devon County Show in Exeter.

Obviously we don't have enough to do so we thought why not buy a shepherd's hut and get all those millennials down here for short breaks. To my horror, the letting company, Unique Hideaways, insisted we get a hot tub. In the end we

capitulated and have a wooden one heated by a wood burning stove. Plenty of wood here as we are always having to fell trees afflicted by ash dieback. It turns out they were right, the millennials are in love with hot tubs, God knows what their skin looks like after all those hours in hot water.

The reason we don't go to many alpaca shows is that some of them clash with wool shows and they are very important for UK Alpaca. Buyers want to squish the yarn, hear the product story and see garments made out of it in the flesh as it were. I also have a little tribe of Rachel's Diary fans who are intrigued by farm life.

There are three really big Knitting and Stitching Shows, four day shows, two in London and one in Harrogate. I love these, big carpeted venues, proper shell schemes, good lighting, prosecco bars, loads of people. The others are what we call 'woolly' shows, often in draughty auction marts with corrugated cement floors and no power. Bring on the thermals. The stands are cheap so lots of the smaller craft vendors are there along with rare breed sheep and a few alpacas for people to gawp at.

Actually making our yarns is a long process. We want wholesale and retail margins as plenty of our customers are running trekking businesses, farm shops or are high end designers and weavers. The socks are extremely popular too, particularly as they are made from British yarn rather than Peruvian.



So we process in minimum lots of 1,000 kilos of each colour and grade. Once graded and baled it goes up to the scour near Bradford and then on to the top makers. At the moment we spin in Italy as they are a cheery lot, know what they are doing and are very good value for money.

We keep a good stock of cones here and every so often as we run out of colours more goes north for dyeing, finishing and balling.

At the moment we make a range of double knitting, 4-ply and chunky yarns that are 75% alpaca 25% wool. Then we have a 80% baby alpaca 20% silk DK and 4-ply plus a 4-ply suri yarn. The sock yarns are 90% alpaca 10% nylon as you need nylon to stop them wearing out rapidly.

Patterns are key to our retail sales as they are an inspiration to knitters so I commission designers to come up with garments I think might be popular. One thing we learnt the hard way is that designers make mistakes so an independent pattern checker is a must.

Our online sales went absolutely bonkers during the pandemic and dropped back to normal once it was mostly over. Happily our wholesale customers were back in business once people were out and about so it all evened out.





Brexit however has been painful. Chas, luckily, is extremely good at all this paperwork malarkey and quickly acquired all the relevant numbers for export and import. Eventually even depressed remainers like me have to get up from under the desk and try and make it work.

Rachel Hebditch and Chas Brooke run a yarn manufacturing business UK Alpaca Ltd and have been running their alpaca business Classical MileEnd Alpacas for 25 years.

www.ukalpaca.com

Castration in Alpacas

Dr Hope Stephanie Trostian BVetBiol/BVetSc

Castration is the procedure of surgically removing the testicles, thus the sex hormone testosterone.

All male alpacas not of breeding quality should be castrated to avoid testosterone driven behaviour including, mounting and aggression towards humans and livestock. Castrated alpacas (wethers) make far better livestock guardians and pets as they are more focused on guardianship and far easier to handle.



Selling machos to a livestock guardian or pet home without prior castration has immense animal welfare concerns to the macho and for animals sharing the paddock with him. He is far more likely to injure himself and other animals performing sexual or aggression driven behaviour.

There is some discussion in the veterinary field on the appropriate age for an alpaca to be castrated. As extrapolated from studies in other species, there was concern in castrating alpacas prior to reaching mature skeletal height, as the long bone growth plates will not have closed. This can cause abnormally long legs, especially in the hind limbs, resulting in issues in the stifle, including patella luxation and early osteoarthritis. This has been seen in llamas when castrated at a very young age, i.e. 4 months old. As llamas do grow taller than alpacas and are slower to develop, they need to be older at castration to avoid this issue. Minimal side effects have been seen in alpacas castrated younger than 12 months in recent studies, but ideally, alpacas should be castrated from 12 to 18 months to avoid limb developmental issues.

Prior to surgery it is important that all alpacas are up to date with vaccinations, in particular tetanus toxoid. General health is important prior to surgery, to ensure the alpaca will manage the sedation (where using one) and will heal well after the procedure.

A recent study has compared the main methods of castration in alpacas, including banding, standing castration with and without local anaesthetic and castration under sedation. It should be noted that banding alpacas is not recommended in camelids at any age due to anatomy, the testicles are held too close to the body to accurately apply a band. This technique has been found to cause a great amount of pain in camelids and is also not recommended due to animal welfare concerns.

Performing standing castration with local anaesthetic was found to be appropriate, but the gold standard for animal welfare is to perform castration under sedation. This is the procedure used by the author unless the alpaca is deemed not fit for sedation, for example, is systemically unwell e.g. severe heart murmur, very mature age etc.

After passing a health check, the sedation is administered intramuscularly (into the muscle), heavy sedation is seen after about 5 minutes and will last for approximately 20 minutes, some variation is seen between individuals.

The sedation used is a combination of ketamine, butorphanol and xylazine, this combination allows for a reliable sedation while maintaining good blood pressure, crucial for surgery in the paddock as minimal equipment will be available. The alpacas breathe well under this sedation also, no need for intubating and supplying oxygen. The eyes are covered as the blink reflex is lost while under sedation, covering the eyes with a blanket or towel avoids any trauma to the eye from underlying material and any damage to the retina from the sun.

While under sedation the scrotum is prepared with surgical scrub and local anaesthetic is injected into each testicle (intratesticular), this takes 5 minutes to begin working and will continue to have effect for a few hours after the procedure. An incision is then made over each testicle and the testicular vessels are ligated (tied with suture). Very minimal bleeding is seen from the surgical site, occasionally there is a little bleeding from the initial skin incisions. The skin incisions are left open this decreases the risk of post-operative swelling, the incision is then sprayed with an antiseptic spray (cetrigen or similar). The alpaca then has an injection of a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), meloxicam is suitable as it has longer lasting effects than other NSAIDs, it will give analgesia for up to 3 days in camelids.

When recovering from sedation, it is important to orient the alpaca so any fluids from the oesophagus drains from the mouth and is not aspirated into the lungs. The alpaca may be a little lethargic over the next few hours, but won't be demonstrating any signs of discomfort. Often alpacas will be up and eating comfortably within 10 minutes following surgery. After surgery, alpacas should be moved to a clean pen or yard and monitored for the next 24-48 hours for rare complications including excessive swelling, bleeding, difficulty urinating or insect infestation.

Occasionally alpacas can have cryptorchidism, this is where one or both testicles have not descended into the scrotum. The testicles can be located anywhere from the kidney to prescrotal (just in front of the scrotum). If the veterinarian cannot locate the testicle/s on initial assessment, it is advised that surgery in a sterile environment is conducted, it is likely that the veterinarian will have to surgically explore the abdomen to locate the testicle/s. Far more complications are possible after this procedure as it is very invasive.

In summary, alpacas require castration to avoid unwanted behaviour and for animal welfare. It is advised for alpacas to be castrated from 12-18 months age to avoid developmental health issues. There are a few methods for alpaca castration, banding is not suitable for alpacas under any circumstances, for animal welfare it is advised to have castration done under local anaesthetic with or without sedation and for analgesia to be given after the procedure.

Please speak with your local alpaca veterinarian if you have any further questions or queries.





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A Virtuous Circle:

Creating Vicuña Habitat and Empowering a Community in the Fight Against Global Warming

By Mike Safley



*An alpaca shepherdess overlooking the lagoon that supplies all of the water to the Phase One of the Picotani water project.
Photo by Robert Els*

The Andes are the longest chain of mountains in the world. They snake down the entire South American continent, forming its spine. The mountains' skirts are woven with the warp and weft of tropical glaciers, lagoons, rivers, bofedales, and vast grasslands.

Alpacas evolved in the extreme high plateau of this landscape, known as the altiplano, some 5,000 years ago and were domesticated by an ancient people whose survival depended on a sophisticated understanding of the harsh, arid environment they inhabited. These people were as extraordinary as the landscape they inhabited. As Erica Gies, an award-winning journalist who writes about climate change, noted: "The Andes Mountains are one of six places in the world where complex civilizations emerged, spurred by precipitation so seasonal it was a catalyst for hydrological innovations again and again. People cultivated deep knowledge of water and the underground, employing strategies that still astonish – and which some still use."

Visitors to the altiplano today are drawn to the unique environments of the region's bofedales without recognizing that they are an important water management legacy of these ancient aboriginal people, and one that is carefully maintained by their descendants.

Bofedales are high wetlands that formed in natural swales and depressions in the landscape and have been managed over millennia by generations of pastoralists who built systems to channel and retain the water and managed their camelid livestock such that the bofedales were maintained and their soils enriched without being overrun.

Today's bofedales are not just biodiversity hotspots but also, like other peatlands around the world, important to carbon sequestration and the fight against global warming. They are also an indispensable part of the Andean Mountain "water towers" that combine to supply water not just within the highlands but to the cities, farms and forests of the surrounding lowland regions.



A bofedal located in Multicommunal Picotani that serves as a pasture and the year-round water supply for the community's 40,000 alpacas and 12,000 vicuña. Photo by Robert Els

As the primary water supply for the animals of the region, both wild and domestic, the bofedales are also essential to the long-term maintenance of the high grasslands. The World Wildlife Fund recently published a paper on the importance of grasslands worldwide, in which Martha Kauffman, WWF vice president, noted “We can now definitively say that more than half the world’s land surface is made of up of rangelands which are vital to both wildlife and people. Equipped with this new data, it’s time for the world to recognize the critical role these valuable ecosystems play in mitigating climate change, sustaining wildlife populations, and supporting livelihoods.” Peru’s grasslands alone are currently sequestering 200 million tons of carbon from the atmosphere, year in and year out.

This compelling environmental story unfolded in front of us like a highland vista several years ago, when Quechua Benefit, the organization I founded and which many of you have actively supported, began what we thought was a shorter, simpler journey: To help the Quechuan people of the small community of Picotani solve a water supply issue. What we’ve learned in this process reinforces our sense of the interconnectedness of life on this planet and motivates us to find ways to do more.

Perched at an elevation of nearly 15,000 feet, the 850 people of Picotani and its neighbors of Cambria and Toma currently manage 12,000 vicuña, the largest population living on one contiguous landscape in the world. The families also shepherd a total of 40,000 alpacas on 100,000 acres. Quechua Benefit has been working with the deeply impoverished but incredibly resilient people of Picotani for more than 20 years.

Two years ago, we engaged the community to determine the potential threats to their way of life and economic stability. We discussed problems and solutions with small groups of breeders. The question we posed was, how can Quechua Benefit help? The immediately answer was, “we need water.”

There was no number two need expressed. As is the case for all the altiplano communities, the life blood of Picotani is water, and for the last 30 years it has been bled away by the demands of bureaucrats, miners, and masses of people living in the cities far below.

When Picotani’s community leaders asked Quechua Benefit about helping them with a water project, there was a lot initially lost in translation. At first, we assumed they wanted help securing the town’s drinking water supply. After a second meeting it finally dawned on us that the community leaders were talking about a project to provide water for their vicuña during the dry season and ultimately a way to expand their vicuña and alpaca habitat to improve its capacity and, even more importantly, its sustainability.

Dale Cantwell, an engineer and the Executive Director of Quechua Benefit, says “This project intrigued me the minute I connected it with the need. Throughout my career I have designed, supervised the construction of and operated many piping systems, from extremely complicated multi-phase, multi-branch projects to long distance pipelines. The systems I worked with were for water, natural gas, and liquid petroleum products.”

The history of Picotani’s previously existing water supply is interesting. When it was first brought to our attention many years ago, we were told many stories about that project’s origins. But as we researched the existing lagoon and 6” water line, an unusual story with an international flavor unfolded. Derek Michell, who is the grandson of Michell Company’s founder and the current managing director, recalled the day that Paolo Zegna, scion of the Italian fashion house Ermenegildo Zegna, contacted him and asked if Michell company knew of a vicuña project that his firm’s philanthropic foundation could assist. Derek immediately thought of Picotani which is situated about 2,000 feet above Michell’s alpaca ranch Mallkini.

Paolo Zegna and Derek visited the site and met with the community leaders. In 2010, Paolo agreed to pay for the construction of a dam to increase the size of an existing lagoon, install a membrane to line the banks of the lagoon, and build a 6" line that ran for nearly 2 miles to the site of the community's vicuña habitat. The work was started but unfortunately never finished.

The project remained dormant until 2020 when José Escalante, a longtime Picotani community leader, pitched the need to Quechua Benefit. He took Dale Cantwell on a tour over the steep topography of the project from the lagoon to the vicuña habitat he wanted to expand. Dale says, "I immediately recognized the importance of their objective. The one thing I love about the people of Picotani is that they always propose to be our partners and become significant contributors to any project we undertake."

This turned out to be no small feat. More than four miles of the wrong sized pipe had to be dug out by hand and the new pipe installed. To complete the water project the people of Picotani needed design assistance, money to purchase the appropriate pipes, and engineering drawings to accurately plan the gravity flow pathways.

The community was entirely willing to provide all the installation labor and purchase the valves and connectors. This was an enormous contribution: community members dug 5.2 miles of new trench for the pipe by hand. It took 30 laborers a month to lay the pipe.

Next, they undertook the construction of 48 surface water catchments that serve as watering holes and lagoons. These were situated a minimum of 1,200 feet apart, a distance dictated by the vicuña's territorial behavior. Each was supplied by a small diameter pipe fed from the main pipes and regulated by a valve that runs 24 hours a day. Installing those took another month. Quechua Benefit rented a small backhoe to dig out the lagoons and the community again provided all the manual labor. In addition to providing drinking water for the vicuña, each watering hole formed the beginnings of a small new oasis of biodiversity.

The biggest challenges were the extreme elevation changes across the system and producing a design that was easy to construct out of materials that were readily available to the local community. Dale said, "the hardest part of the project was walking straight up the hill at 15,000 feet elevation. It's embarrassing when the entire work party waits for you to catch up!"

I came to understand the economic importance of this project through a conversation with the manager of the vicuña reserve above Arequipa, John Machaca Centty, Head of the National Reserve of Salinas and Aguada Blanca, who has overseen the government's reserve for 25 years. He told me that the government mandated that no more than one vicuña per 2.5 acres was permitted to graze. More than that



One of 14 lagoons constructed by the Picotani community with assistance from Quechua Benefit. Photo by Robert Els

and the excess vicuña would be moved to another available habitat. However, pasture with year-round water is allowed by the same law to double its vicuña population. This is the most important direct economic outcome of Picotani's water project.

The environmental importance of this project took me more time to understand. I always knew that water conservation was critical to the health of the planet, but I did not have the entire context for this idea as it manifested at 15,000 feet above sea level among the peaks of the world's largest mountain range. Nor did I understand at its onset the way the Picotani water project carried on the environmental work of the pastoralists who have occupied and helped sustain those lands for thousands of years. It is also clear to me now how the Quechuan people and the alpacas and vicuña they care for contribute to maintaining the health of the world's climate through their role in maintaining the critical ecosystem of the altiplano.

The 100,000 acres of grasslands and bofedales that make up Picotani are far more efficient, stable, and prolific carbon sinks than the world's forests. Think of Picotani's grasslands as upside down forests where the grass' roots sequester carbon below ground just as trees, limbs, and leaves capture carbon above ground. They are not like forests, at risk of fires or from clear-cutting, both of which release the years of sequestered carbon back into the atmosphere. All grasslands need to sequester carbon in perpetuity is a little slow water conservation and alpacas and vicuña to graze them.

There are currently no programs or outside funding available for the one million Quechua people, who collectively manage and care for 40 million acres of grasslands, conserve water and sequester vast amounts carbon from the atmosphere, to increase their alpaca and vicuña habitat. Without the pastoralists' labor not just these animals but a whole ecosystem would be gravely threatened, with impacts that extend far beyond the altiplano. Bill Gates noted that "indigenous farmers are the poorest people on earth."



The ribbon cutting ceremony with Mike and Dale (Quechua Benefit), folks from the Picotani multicomunal, town mayors, and the Peruvian Ministry officials in charge of vicuña management practices. Photo by Robert Els

No one can argue with that fact. But the role of pastoralists in sustaining our planet has never been greater than today, and they both need and deserve our support.

Quechua Benefit is helping to address the need for outside funding and expertise. It has produced a documentary film, *Vicuña Salvation*, which has received critical acclaim and will be available for viewing on the National Geographic channel beginning in March 2023. The documentary has already begun to broaden the funding base for projects supporting the vicuña, the people who care for them, and the broader environment of the altiplano region.

Quechua Benefit also continues to directly fund environmental projects in the area that are consistent with its mission to support the economic empowerment of the Quechuan people. We are grateful for your past support of these initiatives and hope we can count on you to help us going forward as well. The opportunities for wide-reaching positive impact have never been greater.

Members of the Quechua Benefit team returned to Picotani on October 25, 2022, to witness the current phase of the water project up and running perfectly. The community was ecstatic with the result and rightly proud of the work they had done. On a personal level it was satisfying to be able to bring a water system that began in 2007 to completion after all these years. But the beer was still cold when the residents of Picotani asked us how much capacity was left in the lagoon and how far they could extend the water system. The community has already identified several thousand acres of habitat for expansion.

With your support and donations, we can help the people of the altiplano flourish economically even as they help maintain an ecosystem that is critical to our shared destiny on this planet.

The Numbers

1,500
hectare
area

Benefits to the Community

14
small
ponds

20
vicuña
drinkers

7.45 mi
of new
pipe

Under
\$30K of
materials

Double the number of vicuña –
1,500 to 3,000

Stock Containment Areas for emergencies

By Agriculture Victoria

Managing livestock after an emergency can be challenging, particularly when large areas of the farm have been affected.

The loss of feed requires more intensive farming practices be used until pastures have re-established and the soil is able to withstand livestock without causing erosion or pugging. There is also a higher risk of weed infestation with imported feed.

One of the best ways to minimise weed infestations and erosion and help pastures to recover is to remove stock from normal paddocks and feed them in a stock containment area.

Stock placed in containment will be 100% reliant on the operator for nutritional requirements, water and management.

At a minimum this will require daily inspections for the duration of the feeding period; being aware of the likely duration animals will be in containment prior to starting can help producers ensure they have sufficient feed and staff resources to see the job through.

The Agriculture Victoria Feeding Livestock website has useful resources for calculating feed requirements and costs based on the number of animals being fed and the anticipated duration of feeding.

Stock containment areas

A stock containment area is a carefully selected part of the property that is set up to hold, feed and water core farm-livestock during adverse weather periods or after a fire.

Consider it as part of the property management plan. Once established, the area should be maintained and available for use during emergencies.

If there is any intention to convert a stock containment area into a feedlot for cattle then it will have to meet the requirements of the Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots. See planning requirements for feedlots.

Benefits of containing stock

There are a few benefits of containing stock. These include:

- ease of stock feeding, watering, monitoring and handling
- weeds brought onto the property with imported feed will be contained to the stock containment areas
- stock control when large areas may need fencing rebuilt
- faster pasture recovery
- less chance of soil erosion or damage to paddocks
- control of shelter and shade





Stock containment area requirements

Stock containment areas should have:

- an area of two to five square metres per sheep and 10 to 15 square metres per beast for cattle (lower figure to be used on light soils to reduce dust)
- reliable fencing
- appropriate subdivision to separate different classes of livestock
- water troughs with a reliable, reticulated supply of water, see water supply for stock containment areas (water pipes should be buried underground to stop water heating up while in poly pipes)
- stabilisation of soil around troughs, using stone or gravel where necessary
- feed areas located away from water troughs (such as the opposite end of the pen) to reduce the chance of livestock transporting feed residues on their mouths to pollute the water supply
- guarded trees
- existing trees for shelter and shade, or ensure provision is made for establishing shelterbelts or shaded areas using shade cloth or alternative shade structures
- vehicle access for feeding and stock movement
- a maximum desirable number of animals per pen for animal welfare and husbandry reasons (500 sheep or 100 cattle). The establishment of additional areas may be necessary in some circumstances
- and in the event that animals will be retained in the SCA beyond the autumn break, ensure that pens have adequate slope/drainage.



Location

The location of the stock containment area is important. The site should have:

- easy access for daily monitoring of stock (at a minimum the SCA will be visited on a daily basis, however, due to dust, noise and high levels of activity beware of placing the SCA too close to a residence)
- no important remnant vegetation
- a moderate slope and well drained, stable soils such as a clay or clay loam
- minimal problems of noise and smell that will cause concern to you or your neighbours
- shade, shelter and good drainage
- access to good quality water and clean facilities
- proximity to a yards and/or a shearing shed to assist with animal handling requirements.

Setbacks to houses for both SCA and feedlot facilities can be found on the Navigating Farm Developments website.

Other issues

Water quality needs to be protected through the following methods:

- The stock containment area should be setback from watercourses and water storages. A distance of 500 metres is desirable if no other management methods are to be used in combination with the setback.
- Establish a nutrient filter on the down slope side of the stock containment area. The filter may be provided by a vegetation buffer strip, or by constructing traps from wire netting or straw bales.

It is important to closely monitor livestock during the period of containment.

Stock containment area checklist

Area

Allow two to five square metres per sheep and 10 to 15 square metres per beast for cattle. Use the lower figure on lighter loams to reduce dust, and the higher figures for ewes and lambs, and cows and calves.

Water supply

The stock containment area needs a supply of clean cool water supplied by trough. Plan for an average of six litres per day per sheep and 50 litres per day per beast for cattle. This can increase to nine litres and 90 litres respectively for very hot days or lactating animals.

It is important to keep water troughs clean and free of dust and debris – when selecting troughs consider both how easy



they are to clean out and the volume of water that will be lost when troughs are cleaned.

Water trough length

Ensure 15 metres of trough edge is available to 500 sheep, while 100 cattle could require five metres of trough edge. Anecdotal evidence from landholders is that less has been used satisfactorily. Flow rates are often more important – the flow rate should pump enough water for the contained stock in 2-3 hours.

Slope and soil type

Land should be moderately sloping with well-drained and stable soils such as a clay or clay loam.

Odour and noise

If possible, some separation from dwellings is advisable to avoid issues with odour and noise.

Feeding

Feeding apparatus should be used where possible rather than feeding directly on to soil. When feeding grain, use 15 to 20 metres of double-sided trough for 100 sheep, 400 to 600 millimetres each for beef cattle.

Old conveyor belts or corrugated iron between two logs and tractor tyres and 200 litre (44 gallon) drums cut in half have been used.

Access

Good access is needed for:

- feeding
- watering
- monitoring
- getting stock in and out.
- Shade

Animals with access to shade will have lower respiration rates than those without shade. Cool livestock will drink less and be less stressed, so it is important that adequate shade is provided.

Runoff

Consider where runoff will go from the site and the options for avoiding contamination of off-site water quality.

Subdivision

Subdivision may be needed for separating different classes of stock including shy feeders.

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Meat the Alternative

By Chris Williams - Ambersun Alpacas Pty Ltd
Fleurieu Prime Alpaca



Chris Williams of Ambersun Alpacas has an over thirty year history in breeding alpacas. He was first introduced to the alpaca in 1990 and saw the opportunity to create business both locally, nationally and internationally using the alpaca as the nucleus for all the business.

The initial investment was \$300,000 which purchased 12 females and a male to start the journey in the alpaca world. Over the following years he bred, bought & sold, and traded in alpacas until he had achieved his goal herd size of around 1000 alpacas. This was always his aim, to secure a large herd so he could participate in all aspects of the alpaca industry. While achieving this milestone number, however, he discovered that he was accumulating a larger than required number of males that were not always fitting to the requirements of his breeding program and fleece standards.

Lesser quality, wethered alpaca males have been sought after by sheep, goat and even chicken breeders because alpacas are intolerant of foxes' predatory attacks on these livestock. But because alpacas live a long life (of 20 years) and they can provide a 'guardian' service for most of their life, repeated business is less likely to occur.

It raised the question of what to do with the surplus of male and female alpacas, those born with any genetic imperfection, of poor fleece quality or those that were not able to breed or couldn't raise a cria and so on.

The development of the meat industry was the next challenge that Chris was to embark on. Chris started to research the meat and looked at developing a range of products that would utilize every part of the alpaca carcass.

Regular trips to South America, the homeland of the alpaca, helped Chris to appreciate the virtues and potential of alpaca meat.

The alpaca, domesticated in South America over 6000 years ago, has provided the local population with a protein source and healthy meat alternative. This is particularly so for the farmers located high in the Andes, where alpaca meat is a food staple because other more traditional meat livestock cannot cope with the high altitude and sub zero temperatures. High protein diets are essential to these farmers who are often forced to cope with extremely cold temperatures high up in the mountains.

Alpaca is an extremely nutritious meat source. It is high in protein, low in saturated fats and cholesterol, and an excellent source of iron. It is mild (not gamey) in flavour, and chefs describe the taste and texture as somewhere between pork and milk fed veal, with a slightly mineral background flavour and a buttery consistency.

In 2013, Chris was approached to introduce alpaca meat by the ABC Landline program. Following four days of filming on all aspects of Ambersun's involvement in the alpaca industry, ABC produced a feature on alpaca farming, which also highlighted alpaca as a meat alternative. The segment 'Meat Paccas' is still available for viewing on YOUTUBE. This promotion launched the meat business "Fleurieu Prime Alpaca" very quickly into the spotlight and the need to develop the complete range of meat products. Product development quickly became a priority.

The Fleurieu Alpaca product range consists of a range of prime cuts, the traditional BBQ lines, and a range of smallgoods. The prime cuts - fillet, backstrap and rump are recommended as fast cook cuts, and the shanks and neck rosettes as the slow cook options. The prime cuts, especially backstrap and fillet, have lended themselves delightfully to being consumed raw as an alpaca tartare, sashimi or carpaccio.

For BBQ, there are rosemary and garlic sausages (breadcrumbs as a binder), leek and garlic sausages with no preservatives or additives and the new very popular Reaper jalapeño sausage. Alpaca burgers are also popular. These are lightly seasoned with a cumin and herb mix. Salt and pepper schnitzels are a crowd favorite.

The smallgoods lines took longer to develop, but sourcing the best smallgoods artisans was a priority. The alpaca meat is sent to butchers located on the outskirts of the Barossa Valley, to utilise the expertise and handcrafting of German based methods to produce the hugely popular smallgoods range: smoked rump, pastrami, herb pastrami, garlic mettwurst, chilli mettwurst, chorizo, bier sticks, pepperoni sticks and jerky. The processing of these goods takes more time as the meat is left to cure, but the longer shelf-life of the product allows for greater time and options for distribution.



There is also strong demand for the offal - hearts, livers and kidneys, and of course, dog bones. Offering such a range of products allows for the use of every cut of meat, and there is almost no waste. It also allows for the use of meat from all aged alpacas, male or female.

At present, Fleurieu Prime Alpaca is processing 6 alpacas a week to supply an ever-increasing demand. Six alpacas per week doesn't sound like many, but at the end of the year that means over 300 alpacas that Chris needs to produce or source. The challenge is that the alpaca is slow growing, with a male not reaching full maturity and size until they are at least three years of age.

Processing of alpaca is restricted to only a few abattoirs that need to be specifically licensed and accredited.

There are a number of distribution points for the meat. The alpaca meat is presented every weekend in South Australia at The Willunga Farmers Market on a Saturday and the Adelaide Farmers Market on a Sunday. It has also been featured at many other culinary festivals.

A range of samples is regularly made available for the public to try and experience. The markets provide a great opportunity to promote the meat to the public. Convincing some to sample the meat is a challenge, but many of those who have stepped forward to try have become regular customers. Many chefs have been introduced to the meat through the markets, eventuating in the meat being offered through restaurants around Adelaide, and also freighted interstate.

Alpaca meat has featured on the menu of some of Adelaide's highest profile restaurants. The Cube, one of South Australia's most prominent tourist attractions in McLaren Vale, offered alpaca carpaccio on its \$200 degustation menu. The prestigious 'Adelaide Club' has also been a regular client. There are many other restaurants. Having alpaca on these restaurant menus has been extremely important to the promotion of the meat, providing the consumer the opportunity to try the meat and to recognize its versatility.



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Camelid Tourism Ipswich QLD



The Llama Farm

By Shane Hancock

Located between the rolling foothills of Pine Mountain and the tranquil waters of the Brisbane River, The Llama Farm is set on 80 picturesque acres of undulating land. Home to the largest llama herd in Queensland, it is 'Ground Zero' for llama lovers in the state. Owners, Shane and Darren live on site and open their farm up to booked tours every weekend so as to share their unique farm with the wider community. Offering two different tour products, 'Faces of the Farm' a family-friendly tour and a 'Guided Llama Walk' for older guests, both are booked online through their website (https://www.thellamafarm.com.au/our_story.html), with no general admissions to ensure personalised service and a balance between time commitments to run the farm and hosting visitors.

Guests are invited to come and see for themselves how an authentic llama farm operates and manages its animals. As an exotic livestock, llamas are used for stud purposes, recreation, companionship, livestock guardians, fleece

production and manure production in Australia. For Shane and Darren, they are our paddock pets with their own names, unique personalities and stories...and yes, each animal has its own name that is known off by heart. Guests leave The Llama Farm with a first-hand experience of just how gentle and stoic llamas are along with a greater understanding of their biology, husbandry and behaviour. It is just as much an educational experience as it is a hands-on.

The Llama Farm provides tour guests with personalised, rural tourism experiences that have earned them a great reputation from the local to national level via Queensland Tourism and the Ipswich City Council in conjunction with many media appearances. All money raised from these tourism activities go 100% back to the animals by supporting local businesses, farming families and contractors to buy their grain, hay, chaff, carrots, veterinary, shearing and farrier services. It is very much a labour of love and passion for Shane and Darren as there are no staff to assist in the daily operations.

The Llama Farm is completely off-grid and entirely powered by solar energy. Rainwater is captured and stored for household use and river water is pumped and irrigated for the gardens, orchard, animals and pasture. All liquid waste is processed on site with only household refuse and recycling being removed from the property. When you visit The Llama Farm, you are definitely in a very green space beyond just the paddock.

Aside from llamas, The Llama Farm is also home to Australian Teamster and Irish donkeys, miniature goats, sheep, miniature ponies, camels, rabbits, cavies, emus, Maremma sheepdogs and numerous poultry including peafowl, guinea fowl, turkeys and chickens. Guests get to engage with all of these animals when participating in the Faces of the Farm tour each Saturday and Sunday morning.

The Guided Llama Walk experience is more intimate and a boutique tour experience conducted with a much smaller group of guests. It occurs late afternoon each Saturday and Sunday and concludes on sunset. The walk takes guests with a llama on a lead for a guided tour through the farm to the Brisbane River which is the rear boundary of the property. If conditions are right, guests might be lucky enough to see a platypus swimming in the river on dusk making this an incredible addition to their tour experience.





*“Guests leave
The Llama Farm
with a first-hand
experience of just
how gentle and
stoic llamas
are...”*



This year is one of the farm's breeding cycle years as they only produce cria every 2 to 3 years to allow the females to rest between pregnancies and weaning their young. With many cria due in mid-July this year, tour bookings are in high demand as guests want to interact with the young llamas and their mothers. For those people who cannot visit the farm, Shane maintains a very active social media presence to share what's new or of interest to a global audience. Undoubtedly, there will be a lot of cria spam once they are born in a few months. Aside from breeding llamas, The Llama Farm is also a donkey stud for Australian Teamster and Irish donkeys. In addition to the cria due this year, there are a number of donkey foals due over the coming months as well. It will be a baby bonanza for all to enjoy.

Having gained state government recognition as a Best of Queensland tourism experience, The Llama Farm offers guests the opportunity to create wonderful memories with their friends and families that is quality assured. Always evolving, future projects include farmstay accommodation cabins and a retail outlet.

Visit their website to make your tour booking or follow them on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date with what's happening on this interesting and family-friendly farm.



While you are visiting Southern Cross Llama Farm why not make a weekend of it? There is plenty to see in the area and numerous places to stay. Perhaps make a booking at the idyllic Worlds End Pocket Retreats. (<https://www.pocketretreats.com.au>) This is a place to escape to when you want to detach from the city pace, close your laptop and simply reconnect with nature. The Pine Mountain property is a working cattle farm on the upper reaches of the Brisbane River where you can enjoy a spot of kayaking or fishing just a few paces from your bed for the night. This area is also home to quite rare birdlife and birds of prey, nature photographers will be in their element.

Maybe you would prefer Woodlands of Marburg (<https://woodlandsofmarburg.com>). Whether it's the stunning views, interesting history or exquisite food, Woodlands of Marburg has plenty to offer thier guests. Located halfway between Brisbane and Toowoomba, and only 20 minutes out from Ipswich, the estate is the perfect place to stay. Make yourself comfortable in their serene and spacious Deluxe or Executive suites that overlook the heritage listed Mansion, enjoy their tennis court and 25m outdoor swimming pool ('hand dug' by the priests of the Order of the Divine Word Missionaries during the 1960's), or book to dine in Tommy Smith Café (Open Sat/Sun) or Sugarmill Restaurant (Open Fri/Sat).

For further information on things to do in the area have a look on the Ipswich information website www.discoveripswich.com.au

Perhaps the Ipswich Nature Centre (below) may appeal, particularly if you have children. This is home to a range of native Australian animals including dingos, wallabies and bilbies as well as cute farm animals. Enjoy walking around the shady boardwalks for free or book a VIP Animal Encounter tour for four or more people including lunch at the Prince Alfred Hotel. Another suggestion is Watercress Creek Olives & Limes. Check on their website for opening times and the possibility of ordering a Ploughman's type lunch. There are many other suggestions on the website to make for an enjoyable stay in the area.



Places to Stay & Things To Do



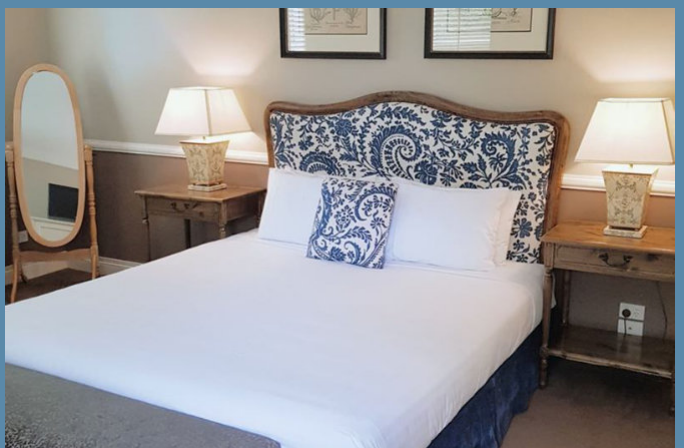
Worlds End Pocket Retreat



Watercress Olives & Wine



Woodlands of Marburg



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2023 Sydney Royal Easter Show Report

Article and photos by Annemarie Ashton Wyatt - Board Director



2023 Alpaca Show Season

Thanks to the hard work of Show Convenor, Keryn Burns, and her team of amazing volunteers, another successful Sydney Royal Easter Alpaca show was held from 14th to 17th April 2023 in the Munro Pavilion at the Showground in Olympic Park. Huge daily crowds admired the alpaca competitions and displays of winning alpaca fleeces.

All facets of the alpaca industry were on display. The Fibre to Fashion display coordinated by Beverley Burns included demonstrations of spinning, weaving, knitting, crochet, and felting. Trade stalls were popular shopping stops for show attendees interested in yarn, garments, homewares, and toys.

Sean and Emma Timmony from Dunbars Run Alpacas provided daily demonstrations of alpaca shearing while crowds enjoyed the amusing and informative commentary from John Hay. After shearing, many of the audience were keen to handle the shorn fleece displayed on a skirting table.

Hephner the alpaca was a popular educational attraction at the Fletchers Ark stalls, where show attendees could also compare llamas and alpacas in side by side pens. Another very popular display was provided by Ngumbudhaaga Alpacas, where many showgoers could walk an alpaca, assisted by the NSW youth group.

The competitive section started with the Alpaca Schools Competition on Friday. Competitors from four schools demonstrated a high standard of showmanship and alpaca handling skills with Elderslie High School winning 2023 Champion School.

The Sydney Royal Easter Alpaca Show Halter Competition was entered by over 180 alpacas from more than 30 exhibitors from New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and Western Australia. Judge Shane Carey praised the high standard of alpacas participating in the halter classes and frequently noted the difficulty in deciding between first and second places when awarding ribbons.

Top Show Results

Best Huacaya Alpaca in Show/Grand Champion White Huacaya Female
Bedrock Pallas

Best Suri Alpaca in Show/Grand Champion Medium/Dark Fawn Suri Male - Bedrock Crypto

Harriet Davison Perpetual Trophy presented to Bedrock Pallas

The Best in Show Suri/Grand Champion Male Suri
Bedrock Crypto



Both animals are owned by Bedrock Alpacas who made the very long trip from Western Australia with four solid days of driving to get to Sydney. The amazing thing is that this is not the first time Bedrock Alpacas have been awarded both Suri and Huacaya Supreme in Show titles, having achieved it previously in 2019 with Bedrock Pakiri and Bedrock Comic.

There were four exhibitors making their Sydney Royal Easter Alpaca Show debut: Hallards Alpacas, Mapa Alpacas, Toffeemont Alpacas, and Wedgetail Rise Alpacas. They all enjoyed the friendly and supportive atmosphere and promised to return next year. Toffeemont Alpacas was awarded Most Successful New Exhibitor in Show.

The Alpaca Halter Show was enabled by the generosity of sponsors. The overall show sponsor was Mapa Alpacas, with Grand Championship and Best in Show Sponsorships provided by Coolawarra/Storybook Alpacas, Surilana Alpacas, and Keiana Lodge Alpacas. Championship sponsorships were provided by many current AAA members, the NSW Alpaca Youth group, and several alpaca industry affiliated businesses, including Any Animal Transport, Berrima Courtyard Café, and New England Fleece Testing.

The Sydney Royal Easter Fleece Show was judged by Peter Kennedy-Gane and apprentice Ariana McCauley. The Championship and Best in Colour fleeces from the show made an impressive display in the Munro Pavilion.

The Dr Jim Watts Perpetual Trophy for the highest scoring alpaca fleece was presented to Pacofino Bacardi owned by Precision Alpaca Group. Bacardi achieved a score of 94.5 and was also awarded Champion 30-48 Month Skirted Suri Fleece, Best Light Fawn Skirted Suri Fleece, and Supreme Skirted Suri Fleece and the RAS of NSW Award for Excellence Medallion.

Supreme Champion Huacaya Fleece and the RAS of NSW Award for Excellence Medallion was awarded to Precision Sceptre owned by Precision Alpaca Group. Sceptre also won Champion 6 to Under 12 Months Skirted Huacaya Fleece, and the Best White Skirted Huacaya Fleece.

Monday's show events focused on the youth competitions which were convened by Robyn Hayward. The Paraders Youth Events were a huge success with 44 competitors competing in showmanship and stockmanship classes.

It was great to see many first-time competitors from Cootamundra join in and show their great animal-handling skills, with the youngest competitor being just six years old. We hope to see you all again in future alpaca competitions. Sincere thanks also to all the exhibitors who loaned alpacas to be used in the youth events.





The RAS Young Judges Competition was judged by Shane Carey and Rubey Williams. Overall Winner Grace Nesbitt was presented with her trophy and prizes by RAS Councillor and Chair of the Alpaca Committee, Ms Janie Forrest.

Congratulations to Rubey Williams for being awarded a RAS of NSW Youth Group Medal for her commitment to the alpaca section of competition over many years.

Congratulations and thanks to all who participated in 2023, planning has already begun for the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show, so make sure to put dates for fleece, halter, and youth competitions in your diaries when they are announced.

Don't forget that the art and product shows will be returning as part of the alpaca competition in 2024, so get busy with your creative activities, and in the meantime keep enjoying everything alpaca and promoting our wonderful industry!



Diary of a Show Alpaca

By Wedgetail Rise Paddington

Thursday

My owner (aka Hu-Mum) took us to Sydney Royal Easter Show this year. It was a long drive in the float with my annoying little brothers, Crown Prince and Underworld, but it was such fun that I had to write a story so all the other humans can read it to their alpacas.

I've seen a few showgrounds in my time, but the Sydney Showground at Olympic Park is so much bigger than any other place I've ever seen! I learnt lots of new words from Hu-Mum as she drove round and round it trying to find the right entry gate.

Thankfully, I had a show pen all to myself when we did get unloaded with lots of hay and a big bucket of water. We were a bit too far from all the gorgeous girls for my liking, as I am a working boy, but they turned out the lights and we all went to sleep.

Friday

I got up really early as it was so exciting to be in Sydney. I saw Hu-Mum in her pyjamas as she sleeps in a box next door to us. I don't mean to brag, but I think my fleece looks much nicer in the morning than her hair!

When she was dressed, we went for a walk while my slave other owner cleaned out my pen. I saw cows and horses all having baths outside, which proves that alpacas are much more civilised, we don't need baths as we are naturally beautiful.

There are so many humans, too. In all shapes and sizes. So many adoring fans who want to give me pats and take my photo. I am quite the star! I like the little kids best, but I am not keen if they have balloons or sticky fingers.

After lunch they started with the shows. Underworld came back with a blue ribbon. He was chuffed, but I told him not to get a swelled head and think he could start stealing my hay.

Saturday

I'm a bit tired today, as all those humans are a bit noisy at night compared to my paddock at home. There were fireworks too, which were scary at first for my little brothers. I told them I'd spit at any firework that came near them.

I need to look my best for my show class, so Hu-Mum spent lots of time picking bits of hay and sawdust off me. She laughs and says the dark alpacas covered with sawdust look



like lamingtons and light alpacas look like schnitzels. How rude! I do very nicely in my class and get a red ribbon. Cedar House Pepperjack got the blue. He was very nice to me, and we chatted while the judge admired our fleece. It turns out we have a great-grandparent in common. Ancestors are very important to us. The humans record them on eAlpaca, but we like to hum about them when we are all in a herd.

Sunday

I take lots of naps today. The fans think I'm cute and I soon work out that they feed me hay if I pose for a selfie.

Monday

I did Youth Parader classes with lots of other alpacas and little humans. It was fun! My boy was called Cody and he was super nice to me. I even turned in circles when he asked. I want to take him home to be my new slave owner, but Hu-Mum says that his family in Cootamundra will miss him. Sigh! Humans take a very long time to grow up.

Tuesday

Time to go home. Good bye Sydney! I wonder if Hu-Mum will let me try candy floss when we come back next year



NSW Alpaca Youth Group

Christie Hayward

NSW Alpaca Youth President

The NSW Alpaca Youth Group has had an extremely busy last 6 months. We have organised various youth events and competitions this year, with more still to come in the next 6 months!

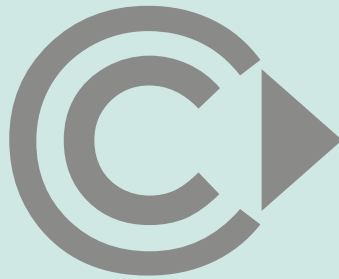
Opening our year, In January we held our annual NSW Alpaca Camp. It was a wonderful weekend with lots of informative workshops and enthusiastic youth. It has been great to see many of these participants follow us through the year and attend multiple shows competing and developing their knowledge with alpacas.

The following months there has been lots of opportunity for our youth to participate in alpaca events, including team competitions, paraders and young judges. These competitions were held at various agricultural shows including Canberra Royal, Camden Show, Sydney Royal Easter Show and Hawkesbury Show.

The NSW Alpaca Youth Committee has done a great job organising shows and we look forward to providing more opportunities for passionate youth. There are some upcoming events later this year... keep an eye out for more information coming soon!







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