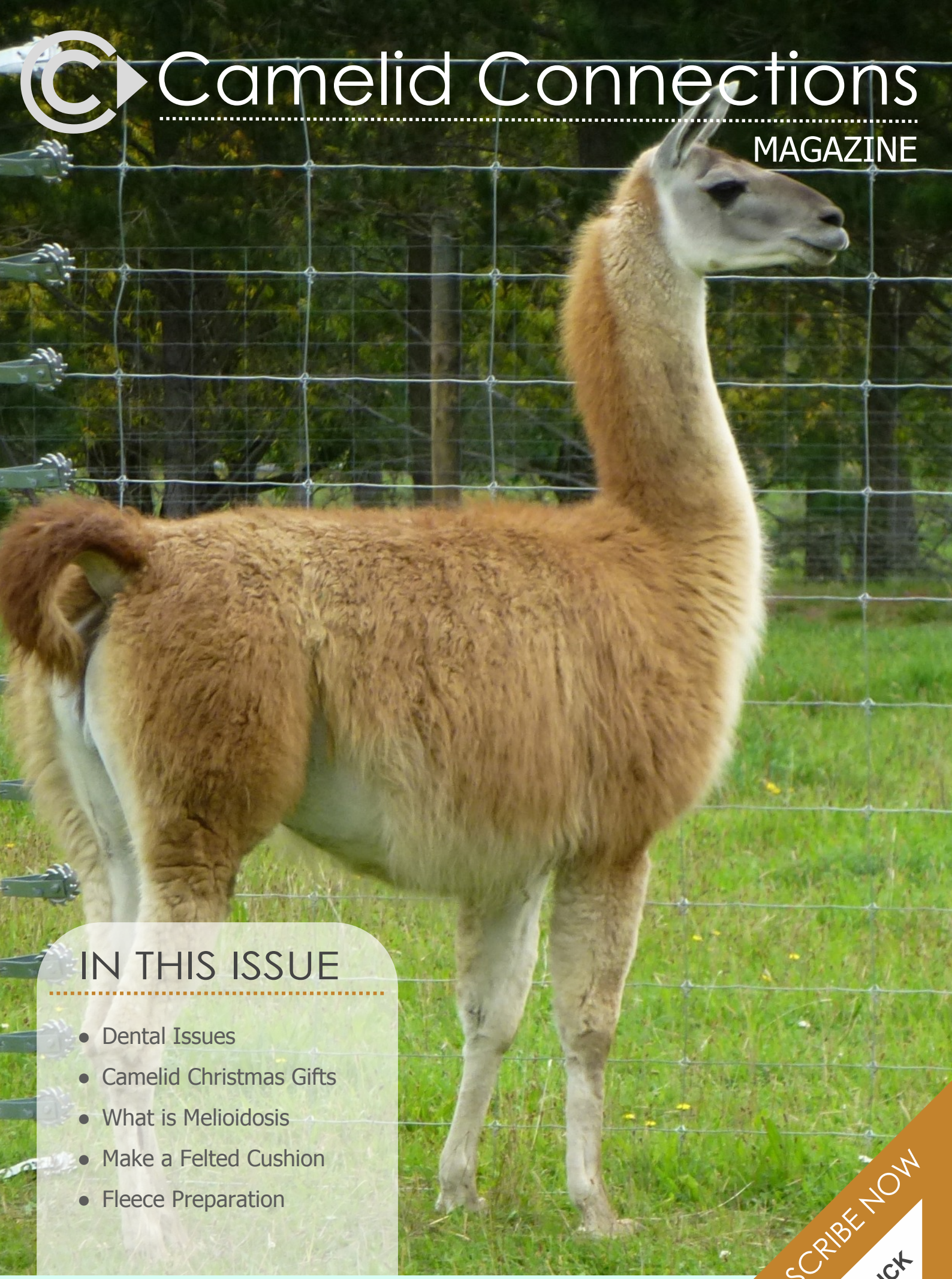
Camelid Connections

MAGAZINE



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Issue 2 - December 2017

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Photograph courtesy Keith Payne

Contents

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KUNA

Welcome to Camelid Connections

Julie McClen and Esme Graham, the team producing Camelid Connections , welcome readers to the second issue of Camelid Connections online magazine. We hope you enjoyed the stories in our first issue and are looking forward to reading this second issue and we wish you all a Merry Christmas & prosperous New Year.

Have you heard of Melioidosis? Turn to page 16 to inform yourselves about this disease which can affect both humans and animals. Learn how to treat wounds on page 36, and on a lighter note read about "The Coming of the Camels" on page 12. For the crafty people out there how about making the cushions on page 41 for Christmas Gifts, or making your own Snow Globe decoration from alpaca fibre on page 32?

This online style of magazine aims to keep owners, breeders and those just interested in camelids, especially alpaca and llama breeders informed and gives advertisers the opportunity to reach camelid owners/breeders who may not normally see advertising in members only publications. Check out the products in our Christmas catalogue.

We are always looking for interesting stories so don't hesitate to contact us if you have a story to tell or a fun/interesting photo to share.

Do you have a product you would like breeders to know about? Think about advertising with us, readers will be able to link directly to your website, Facebook page or blog from the magazine. All magazines will be archived in the library on our website so articles and adverts have an extended shelf life.

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Subscribers have the opportunity this issue to win a fabulous Alpaca/Wool throw rug from Creswick Woollen Mills!

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Meet The Team

Esme Graham - Editor

My husband and I have been breeding suri alpacas for the past 20 years, I have been heavily involved with both regional committees and the national board of the Australian Alpaca Association for a number of years.

My major interest has been in marketing and education and to this end I have been editor of Alpacas Australia magazine for the last six years.

I hope that the experience I have gained editing Alpacas Australia can be extended to educate and inform a wider range of alpaca and llama breeders who are not necessarily association members.

Julie McClen - Designer/Editor

A breeder of ultrafine Huacaya alpacas for over 16 years, 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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Dental Issues

In The Older Alpaca

By Alison Quagliani
Alpaca Dental Services

When I was asked to write this article it seemed quite timely.

I bought my first two alpacas back in 1996. They were two females, Mistletoe 18 months old and Grace 14 months old. A month ago I lost one of these beautiful old girls- Grace who was just over 22 years old. Grace spent her whole life with Mistletoe who will be 23 this coming December. I have an ageing herd with four over 18 years old and several in their early teens. I have good pasture and it wasn't until Mistletoe and Grace turned 19 that they really started to look 'old' and started to struggle with holding a good body condition score.

Like myself there are many breeders and pet owners who have alpacas they have owned for many years. Their old alpaca may be a special stud, the first alpaca they bred, a good guard animal or the family pet. Whilst I'm experiencing first hand 'the ageing alpaca' it is the change in their ability to process their food from a dental perspective that I am able to discuss in more detail.

Before we can discuss the problems I see in older alpacas I firstly need to explain a little about the dental anatomy of an alpaca and how the mouth works.

Fig.1 below shows the dental anatomy of an alpaca.

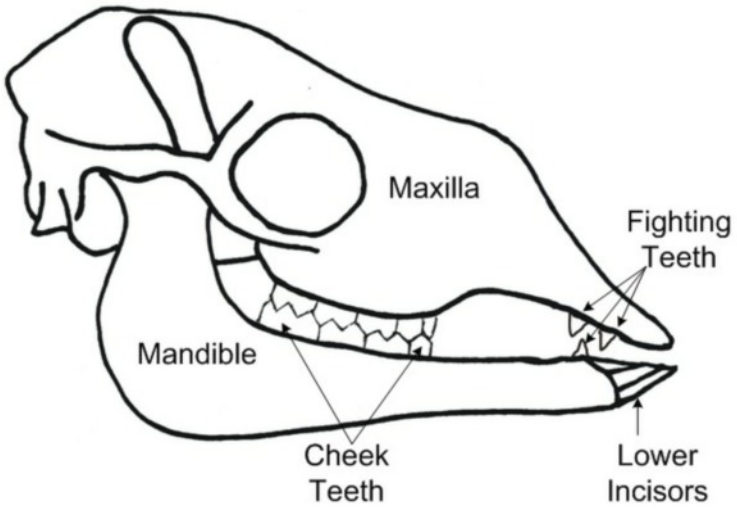

Fig 1- Dental Anatomy

An adult alpaca has 30-32 permanent teeth and during it's lifetime will have two sets of teeth. The first set is made up of the deciduous (or baby) teeth and the second set is the permanent teeth. Cria are born with some of their deciduous teeth, and by several months old will be munching away with a complete set. Permanent molars (cheek teeth) start erupting at around nine months of age but eruption of the full set of permanent teeth and the loss of the deciduous teeth will not be complete until well into adulthood.

To further complicate the process, alpaca teeth are designed to keep erupting into the mouth throughout the lifetime of the alpaca. The teeth form and grow in the jawbones beneath the gums. These teeth erupt into the alpaca's mouth and wear away against the opposing teeth or dental pad, little by little as the animal bites and chews. This process of continual wearing and eruption continues throughout the life of the alpaca until the teeth are worn out. As you can imagine it is not a perfect world inside the alpaca's mouth and this loss of deciduous teeth, eruption of the permanent teeth and the continual wearing down of the tooth surface does not always go to plan!

If the molars in the top and bottom jaws or the incisors and the dental pad do not meet each other correctly then the teeth will wear unevenly or often not wear at all. This is usually obvious when we see overlong incisors that do not meet or wear against the dental pad correctly. In the back of the mouth, the molars don't always wear evenly but unfortunately, as it is difficult to see inside the mouth these problems will go unnoticed.

Over time, along with the normal wearing of the teeth any small abnormalities that are present will become more obvious problems as the condition progresses and the alpaca ages.

So what problems do I see in older alpacas?

Individual alpacas will age differently. Conformation, the type of food that the alpaca eats and the dental care that the alpaca receives, throughout its lifetime, have an influence on the long-term health of an alpaca. Alpaca diets vary throughout Australia depending on climate, soil and the type of grasses available. What the alpaca eats will have an influence not only on nutrition but also how the teeth wear.

Fig 2 - Incisors of a young Alpaca

Fig 3 - Functional Incisors of a 16 year old alpaca

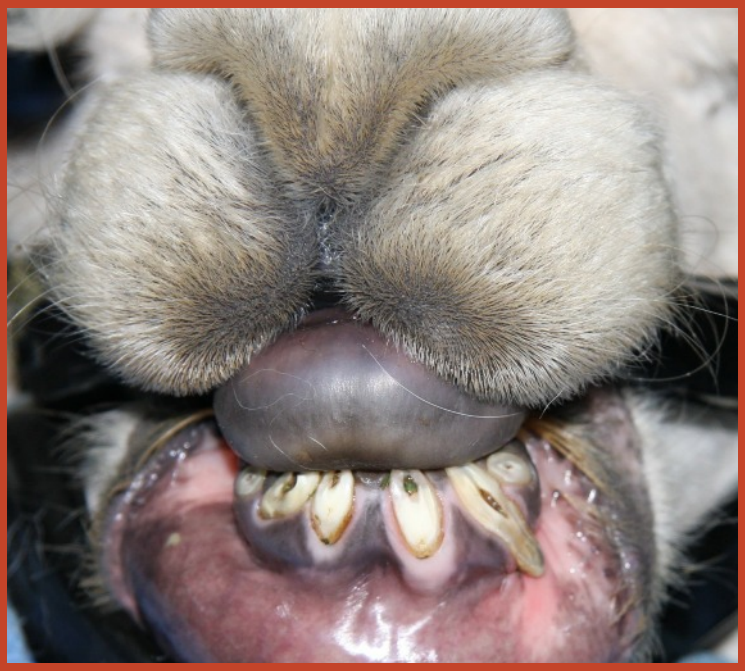

Fig 4 - Incisors Worn to Gum level

I see alpacas in their early teens with incisors worn level with the gums. Fig 2, 3 and 4 show incisors of alpacas at various ages. I see alpacas in their late teens with well functioning mouths. I see many that have cracked teeth, loose teeth, gum disease, ulcers (Fig 5) and those that have lost many of their molars. As molars 'wear out' the tooth surface becomes smoother loosing the ability to chew or grind.

Fig 5 - Ulcers Inside the Cheeks from Sharp Teeth

I also see problems with molars that have usually been present for several years and get to the stage where the teeth aren't effectively grinding the alpacas food. This results in a negative influence on the general health and body condition of the animal. Most of these serious, more painful conditions are usually the result of molars not wearing against the opposing teeth and becoming long enough to wear into the gums and in extreme cases the bone of the opposing jaw (Fig 6 opposite). These issues usually require treatment by a vet or consultation with an animal dentist familiar with alpaca dental anatomy.

Feeding the older alpaca is different from feeding the younger ones. The changes in the teeth all need to be considered. Most alpacas seem to cope with worn incisors especially if they have good grazing and access to additional rations. On the other hand, chewing with worn out molars can be more of a challenge. Hay takes a lot more effort (and energy) to chew than lucerne or oaten chaff. I allow my older alpacas free access to chaff mix that they prefer to hay.

I also feed a concentrated feed pellet for extra nutritional value, in an amount appropriate for the alpaca. There are lots of articles written to cover alpaca nutrition that can help you ensure your older alpaca has a suitable balanced diet.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of checking the body condition of your alpacas, especially the older ones. Weight loss is often an indication of a dental or other health problem and the sooner you can investigate the cause the easier it will be to manage.

Fig 6 - The Skull of an older alpaca.
The lower long molar has worn a gap between the upper teeth, worn away the gums and damaged the skull bone

The Coming of the Camels

By Mandy McKeesick - Opal Heart Media

Nigel, Sheeba, Frank, Ralph and Bubba arrived on our cattle property this year. Only they are not cows. They are camels.

It was Friday the 13th, it was a full moon and, to prove we're not always certifiably sane, my better half decided it was a smart idea to add camels to the farm stock.

Why, you ask?

Well there were two valid reasons behind the seeming madness. For one thing, camels will eat weeds and browse vegetation the cattle don't eat. And the second reason had all to do with pro-biotic yoghurt – well that is the best way I can explain it. Camels have a certain gut bacteria that when transferred to the cows via drinking water is supposed to make the cows more resilient in dry times. So hey – let's get camels.

What did the better half and I know about camels before that Friday the 13th?

Zip.

Undeterred by the lack of camel knowledge we toddled off to a farm not far from here that had seven camels for sale; three of which had maybe been handled before. We also took with us Nigel, a truckie who knew as much about camels as we did. Can you see where this is going?

The camels were already in the yards when we arrived so it was just a matter of getting them onto the truck.

Camel lesson No.1: Tall camels with high humps aren't really suited to cattle loading races.

First camel up the race was the big bull. He got to within a foot of the truck and stopped. For an hour.

After he deemed it an appropriate time to board, we started on the next camel – a young calf. Thankfully the little fella was so confused he ran straight onto the truck and we imagined we would be home before dark.

Then it rained.

It took us another two hours to load another three camels. Then camels six and seven sat down in the yards.

Camel lesson No.2: Camels sulk.

There was no way known that camels six and seven were coming with us so after a total of four hours we breathed a sigh of relief and headed home with five camels, thinking the worst was over.

Hahahahahahaha

It took 12 hours to get them off the truck!!!

Back at our yards with all the truck gates open the big bull camel (now affectionately known as Nigel) took one look at our loading race and said “Nup”.

We weren’t going to force them so we went out to dinner. We got home at 9pm. The camels were still on the truck. We went to bed. It rained again. Next morning the camels were still on the truck.

Desperate we drove the truck into the paddock and unhinged the entire back gate. Nigel said “Oh that’s better”

and jumped off in about two seconds flat taking his little herd with him.

However, then we had another problem.

Camel lesson No. 3: Horses hate camels.

Sally, the blue-eyed rastafarian guard horse, was not happy. “Holy cow,” she said as she galloped down to the house. “Have you seen what’s in the paddock? Come quick. And bring the gun.” Then she galloped back up the hill, around her cows and then back down to the house. “You are kidding, right?” she glared at the better half. “You can’t be serious.”

A week after the arrival the unbroken camels had made themselves at home. In addition to the big bull Nigel, we have Sheeba the female, Ralph her bull calf, Bubba (another bull calf) and Frank the teenage bull. We have since been told we shouldn’t have bull camels. Anyone out there with camel castration experience?

The cows are unfazed by their new paddock mates and Sally eventually stopped trembling. She will now get to within 50m of the funny humped, strange smelling, long-legged, snaky-necked demons – but only if her cows are between her and the camels.

We have pretty much let the camels be since we got them, but a couple of weeks ago we went to the camel races in Tara …. Reckon you could see me as a camel jockey?

If you’d like to see more camel images or learn more about camel racing check out my upcoming story on the Tara Festival of Culture and Camel Races in Australian Geographic.

Mandy McKeesick is an Australian wordsmith and photographer.

From her cattle property in central Queensland she tells stories for and about the bush. Read more about Mandy on her website www.opalheartmedia.com.au.

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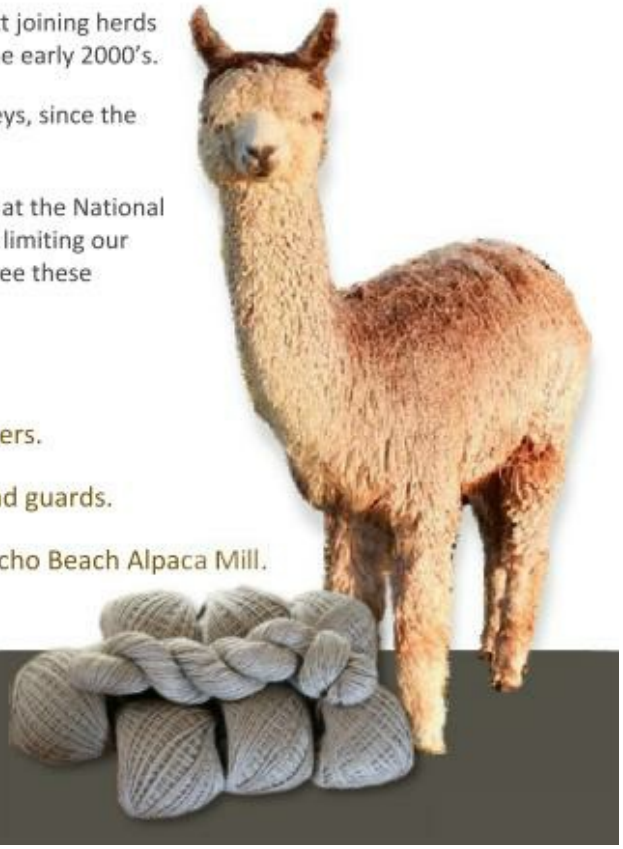
Some of Leonardo's 2015/6 progeny were shown and placed at the National Show in Adelaide 2016, and are now offered for sale. We are limiting our breeding and numbers to suit our property, but are keen to see these animals realise their potential.



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What is Melioidosis?

How it can affect camelids

Compiled by the editor

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 Meliodosis in SE Queensland, Central Queensland and more recently in WA not far from Perth. All of these outbreaks occurred after heavy rainfall events.

Can meliodosis be prevented?

There is no vaccine for Meliodosis and it is now considered endemic in many parts of Australia. However, it is now considered totally treatable. In humans it is a 12 week course of medication. In alpacas the treatment is 12 weeks of antibiotic medication administered twice a week for the first six weeks and then once a week thereafter. The majority of cases should present within 21 days of a severe weather event.

Times 5 magnification of colonies of Burkholderia pseudomallei on Ashdown's agar after 4 days' incubation - Gavin Koh - Own work

Latest Outbreak (By Lorraine and Natasha James)
WHAT: Melioidosis in Alpacas
WHERE: Chittering, Western Australia,
WHEN: February 2017

The contaminated property is in Chittering, approximately 61 km north-northeast of Perth in Western Australia's Avon Valley region. Approximately 90 breeding females, many of whom were pregnant were agisted on this 900-acre property to ensure they had access to feed and water during what was looking like a very dry unpleasant summer. This property had been cropped, so there was stubble available, but due to the relatively dry conditions leading up to the animal's relocation most of the forage was dry except for the low-lying areas where the springs were located, that had substantial green pick available for the herd. A small group of approximately 60 older females were dropped off on the property over several days in August 2016.

By November 2016 we were confident that there were going to be no issues with poisonous plants or lack of water due to the natural springs and as such we dropped off another 30 females and removed a stud male that had been with the original group for a couple of months. Of these 30 females approximately 20 of them were pregnant, beginning their second trimester. Visits to the property were made 2-3 times a week, as it was located about an hour's drive from where we lived, and the owners were regularly scouting around checking on the animals.

In February there were a few unexplained deaths that had occurred on the property. A couple of older girls that we assumed had succumbed to their age and the hot weather. Then there were abortions that caught our attention, once again the temperatures in the area had been quite high, we considered it could be just 'one of those things'. Then we received a call about one of the females not able to breathe properly, we brought her home and she had an ulcer in the jaw, we thought that could be her issue, she passed away that night. Another couple of females were unwell we took them home and isolated them, one of them died overnight and was taken to our local vet for necropsy (autopsy). The next day the other girl died, she was sent to the same vet, once again for necropsy. We thought this may be a co-incidence, until there were more and more of the herd either dead or dying.

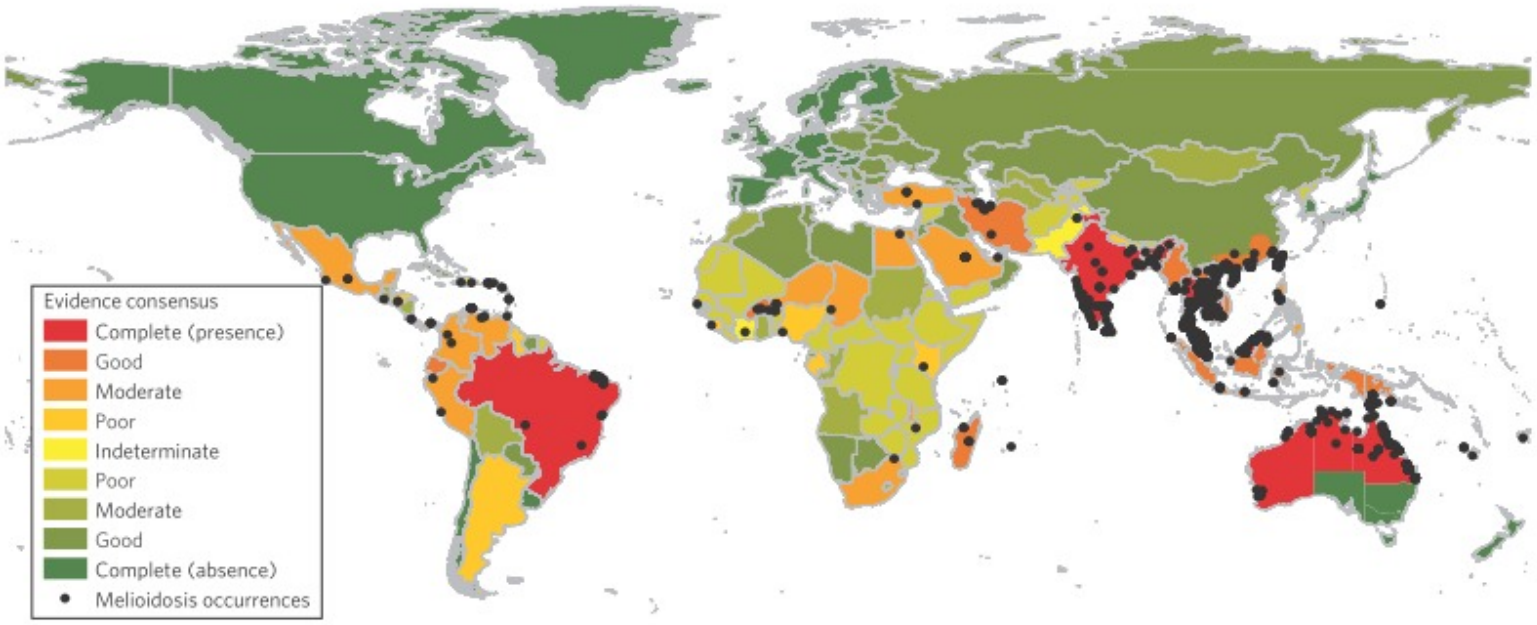

Figure 1 | Global evidence consensus and geographic locations of occurrence data from 1910 to 2014. Country colouring is based on evidence-based consensus, with green representing a complete consensus on absence of *B. pseudomallei* and red a complete consensus on presence of *B. pseudomallei*. Black dots represent geo-located records of melioidosis cases or presence of *B. pseudomallei*.

Map courtesy of Nature Microbiology - published 11 January 2016 (www.nature.com/microbiology

A couple of our more prized pregnant females that were due to cria were brought back to our property and isolated, within 4 days they had shown signs of respiratory distress, aborted their cria and died. They were all taken to Murdoch Veterinary Hospital for necropsy to determine what we were dealing with and how we could treat it. We also contacted the Agricultural Department and had a livestock vet come to the Chittering property to assess the animals, a call was put through to the head office describing symptoms and conditions with the response, "it sounds like Anthrax". This was one condition that we were not even close to considering as the cause of these deaths. The next couple of animals that were taken to the Agriculture Department were met with Hazmat like conditions. All but essential staff were asked to leave, those that remained were kitted out with contamination suits and then took the animals out of the van, we were informed that it was essential for the vehicle to be decontaminated and for us to wear protective clothing when working with the animals.

After a couple of days of phone calls, text messages and emails the blood results and samples had been tested and cultured to reveal that the animals had died of Melioidosis. A regimen of antibiotics was prescribed by the Murdoch University head veterinary officer in consultation with Agriculture Department veterinarians.

As Melioidosis is a zoonotic disease it was necessary that all people who had been in contact with the property or the animals were to be tested and if necessary treated for the infection, this involved the Infectious Diseases Unit at Royal Perth Hospital. All the veterinary students and staff from Murdoch University were tested, our veterinarian and his staff, the Agricultural Department vet for our region, the family who owns the property, the farmer who cropped and agisted his sheep on another section of the property and ourselves were all advised to be tested, just in case. During our frantic research into Melioidosis we contacted a friend who had a lung transplant, we were certain that the disease he had was the same as what we were researching, we were right. He was an avid gardener and he had inhaled/ingested some of the bacteria which causes Melioidosis from the soil, he was fortunate enough to have received a lung transplant, which saved his life. It was an anxious wait to get the test results back from the health department. Thankfully, there were only a few that tested positive, they had been exposed to it as children in their homeland, so we were fortunate in that regard, but our animals, not so much.

Even following the treatment program set out by the vets, we lost many more of our girls, in total we lost about 45 of the 90 animals that were agisted on the property. This number of course does not include the abortions, and as such we will never truly know the total loss of life due to this infection. The deaths occurred from February through to May 2017.

Weather Conditions

In January 2017, there were extreme weather events that saw well above average rainfall, in some instances, three times the average for the month. The mean maximum temperature for the area was slightly higher than average. The nearest meteorological station indicated that the area had the warmest days on average and the warmest nights with the hottest day temperature of 44.5^{o}c for the month. Rainfall was recorded as 54mm with the recorded average of

9mm, it was over five times the January average, a large difference to previous years.

In February 2017, once again there were extreme weather events precipitated by a tropical low that had formed off the Pilbara coast. In some areas of the Perth Metro, it was the highest rainfall measured in over 20 years, some in over 60 years. Again, the nearest meteorological station indicated that this area had experienced the warmest days on average, the warmest days overall and a new record rainfall for the month.

Given this information it can be deduced, that the weather pattern experienced in the region of the Chittering property was quite like tropical weather conditions, warm temperatures combined with above average rainfall, which caused significant flooding in the Avon Valley where this property is located. This is perfect for the proliferation of the bacterium which causes Melioidosis.

Symptoms

For many of these animals they were deceased not long after the first obvious signs of respiratory distress were noticed.

- One of the first signs was weeping eyes, this became a more obvious sign in the earliest stages as more animals succumbed to the infection.
- Abortion, although not all suffered this fate.
- Isolation, the sick animals moved away from the herd as they became progressively weaker and their breathing became worse.
- Respiratory distress, laboured breathing, pneumonia, was one of the last stages and varied from 2 days to 6 days of suffering.

Conclusions

The outbreak was thought to be mainly soil borne whilst the previous outbreak in Central Qld. was water borne. Professor Bart Currie* who is Australia's leading expert in this disease helped the Qld breeder to understand how to cope with the disease which is sometimes called Gardeners Disease as it affects gardeners as they are digging in the soil all the time and where the bacteria enters an open wound on their hands. Also football players commonly pick this up from cuts when playing.

On farm precautions in the wet season include wearing masks while vaccuming paddocks. Closed in boots or shoes and covering wounds or wearing gloves when handling animals or cleaning water troughs.

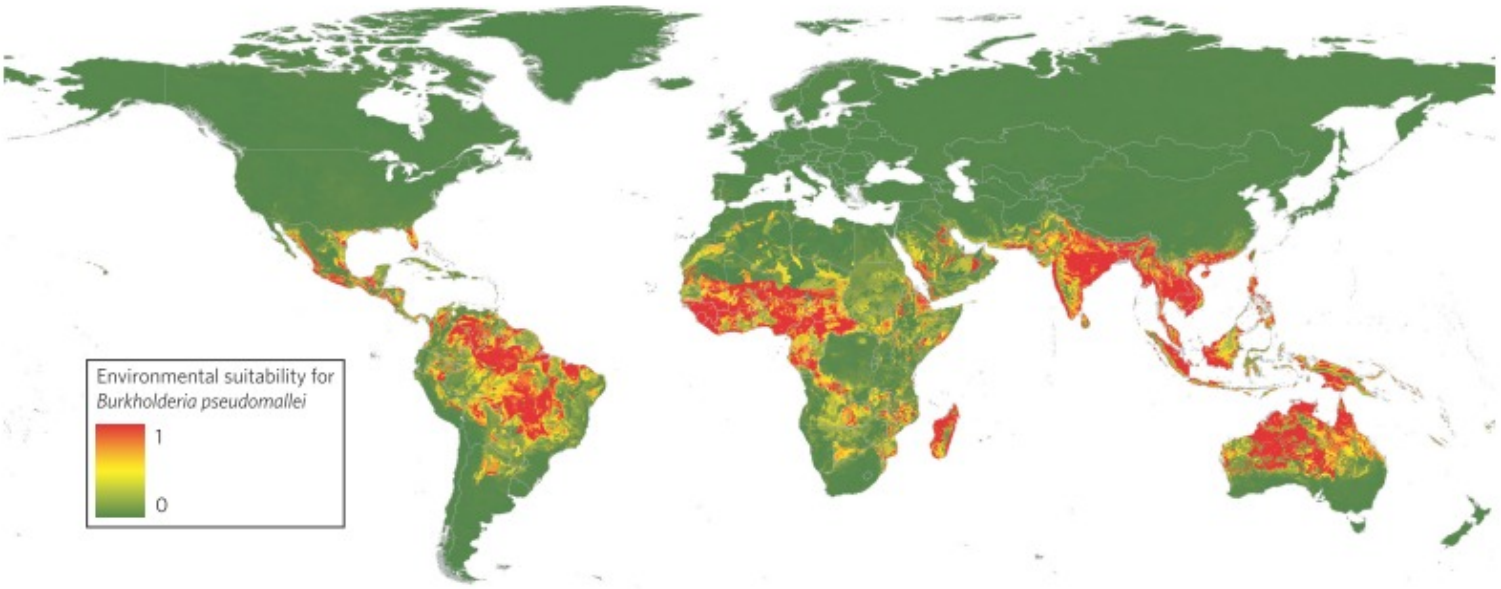

Figure 2 | Predicted environmental suitability for *B. pseudomallei* persistence at 5 × 5 km^2 spatial resolution. Areas of high environmental suitability are shown in red and areas of low suitability in green.

Map courtesy of Nature Microbiology - published 11 January 2016 (www.nature.com/microbiology

Also that any staff or visitors who suffer from an auto immune disease such as diabetes, recovering from cancer, kidney disease, alcoholism, etc should not be on the farm for 21 days after a severe weather event – as their immune system is lowered and they are more at risk of picking it up. Something we all hope not to get on our farms but with a few precautions and our eyes open to all possibilities we can overcome.

*Our thanks to *Dr Bart Currie - BA, BSurgery Univ of Melbourne, Fellow Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Fellow of the Australian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, Diploma Tropical Medicine & Hygiene – London School Tropical Medicine & Hygiene.*

From the Editor

We have no intention of being alarmist with this article as Melioidosis is quite rare.

But with climate variations over time the parameters for the reach of the disease could change, as no one would have expected an outbreak in the South of Western Australia.

Whilst there have been previous outbreaks in Tropical and Sub Tropical areas the information from these outbreaks has not been widely disseminated through the industry.

Our thanks go to Lorraine and Natasha James for sharing what was a devastating experience with the whole industry to help others.

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Why Join an Association?

If you have read Judy Webby's article on "Indiscriminate Breeding" in this issue, you will realise how important it is to be able to trace the breeding of your camelids.

Most associations have a database to enable you to register your animals so they can be traced and there are many other reasons to join an association.

- Register your animals to check and view pedigrees – check for common ancestors or view siblings - all part of making sure you make correct breeding decisions.
- Network with like minded people
- Access reliable information relating to camelids from the Association and experienced breeders
- Associations have access to information on an industry level and have access to Government which is particularly important relating to health issues, as association members will get alerts if there is a disease outbreak affecting camelids and also have a say in how government policy affects camelid owners.
- Availability of workshops on various topics held around the country
- There are always local and national shows and events you can participate in run by the various associations.
- Association websites usually list services available e.g. shearers, fleece processors

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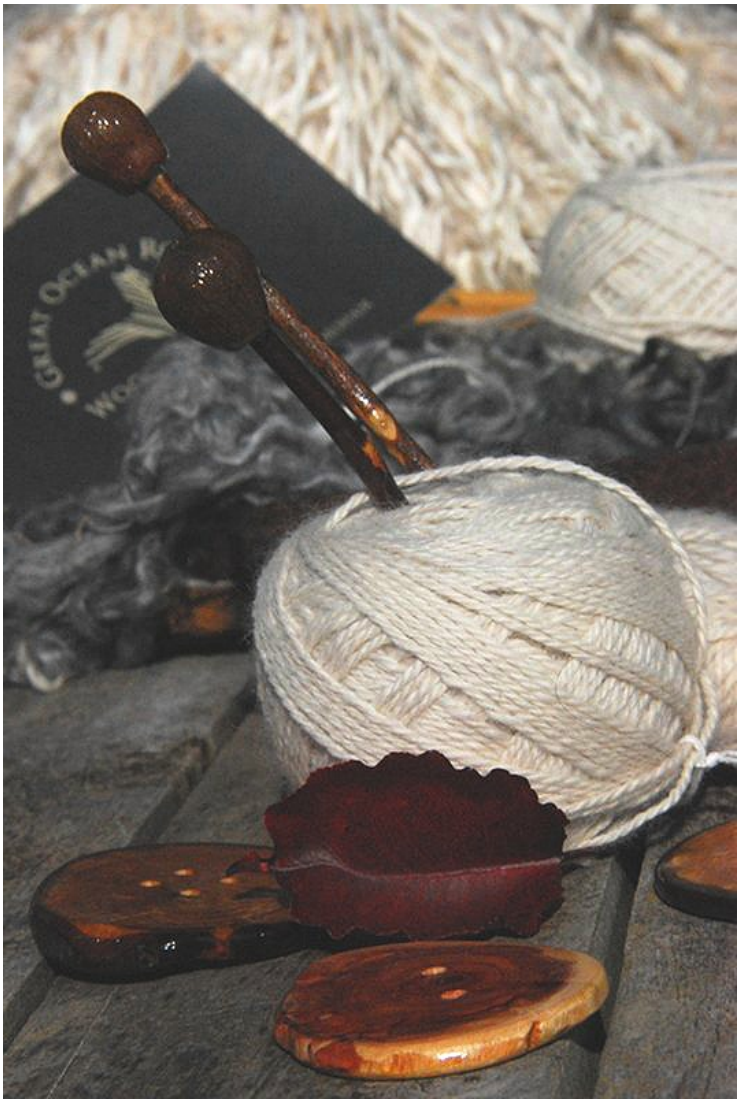
Suri -the new 'silk'

By Barbara Linley – Ambleside Super Fine Merino & Suri

In this age where there is growing concern about increased world population, scarcity of natural resources, too much reliance on chemicals and synthetics, the Australian alpaca has so much to offer. Investing in alpaca and it's amazing fibre is investing in sustainability.



Why?

1. Alpaca are hardy, fibre producing animals with padded feet, need no mulesing, are economical on food and water (part of the camel family) and their average life span is 15 years.

2. Alpacas have been successfully farmed in Australia for more than 25 years and the rate of improvement in husbandry, genetics AND most importantly fibre development is seeing this industry poised to be a major player in the fashion industry. 2016-2017 has seen the rise of the use of alpaca by major international brands as high luxe fibre. Australia can be a key player.

3. Many alpaca breeders here in Australia have benefited from the years of wool production and sheep breeding to fast track the alpaca fibre industry – I myself started breeding fine Merino and then alpacas, concentrating on the rarer breed the suri. Breeding objectives have been fine tuned to produce beautiful fleece with high comfort factor which is so amazing to wear

4. Huacaya (teddy bear alpaca) fleeces are all set to rival cashmere. Over the past few years there has been real concern as to the long term viability of the Mongolian cashmere industry. Overproduction, poor seasons and higher fibre counts plus degradation of much of the land is putting pressure on the future viability of this industry. Australian alpaca can take it's place. Alpaca numbers here are growing and there are now farms with over 1,000 animals.

5. Best of all is the little known suri alpaca with it's lustrous, silky soft handling fleece that looks like silk. Suri is the new silk. As with concerns re the viability of the cashmere industry so there are concerns re the silk worm industry. There are mounting issues being raised as to how silk is grown and processed. Silk is seen as high end fashion but only a few designers have known about suri silk. High end fashion designers are becoming much more aware of buying ethically and sustainably produced fibre and of being "seen to do the right thing". For example - only using wool from non mulesed sheep.

6. Suri fibre is highly lustrous and has a beautiful silky handle. Its thermal qualities are undeniable and it blends extremely well with other fibres. Wearing a garment made with suri is an amazing experience. You actually feel "cocooned". It is a sensual feeling and this you do not get using huacaya or other natural fibre. This feeling is unique to suri. Using suri fleece also enhances a yarn or product as it seems to leave a lovely glow.

7. Suri fibre has a very bright future as it is the much rarer cousin of the huacaya. In Australia the registered herd of suri is approximately 15% of the total alpaca population. In Peru it is roughly 10%. As with huacaya there has been a huge genetic gain in suri and it's lustrous fibre. Gone are the days where the majority of your herd was high micron and coarse fibre. Processing of suri and suri blends is happening in Australia, especially in Victoria. Like any other luxury fibre care needs to be taken.

8. As already stated 2016-2017 has seen the rise in the use of alpaca by major international brands as a luxury fibre. Huacaya has been incorporated into knits and coats while suri is the surprise. Because of its lustre and relative scarcity to other fibres it is being woven into beautiful fabrics for women and men's coating and suiting. The 2018 season promises even more success for suri as high end fashion designers discover the amazing attributes of suri fibre.

Watch this space and see what is happening in Victoria with this amazing fibre. In summary, because of ongoing global environmental concerns and consumer backlash on unsustainable fibres, the Australian alpaca industry is well positioned to make the most of its fibre.

SURI is the new silk and HUACAYA the new cashmere!

Llama Rescue

A not so happy ending

By Judy Webby

In June 2016 we received a call for help from someone who had sold their farm and had to get eighteen llamas off the property within the next ten days.

They had inherited the llamas when they bought the farm four years ago and knew nothing about age or sex of the animals, apart from the fact that after some babies were born the father was identified and castrated. Unfortunately, they did not think of the consequences of allowing the male babies to grow up with their mothers and other female relatives.

The llamas were in a shocking state, some were self-shedders but the majority had 3-4 years fleece on them. Only one young male was in the group, he had a badly undershot jaw (as did his father) so we had him castrated before rehoming him so the genes could not be passed on.

The heavy fleece on many of the females had acted as a chastity belt, which was a blessing, but 2 of the females were blood tested as pregnant. I took one of these females and asked the vet to inject her to abort the baby, he declined as these days you must show grounds to abort a baby even in animals. As she was a mature female with a cria at foot (also with a slightly undershot jaw) there was no evidence of a physical risk if the pregnancy continued and there was no way of knowing how far along she was. I estimated the cria at 2-3 months of age, but as feed was limited on the farm they came from he could have been older.

The previous owners had no idea when he was born and were unaware of his presence until they met me on site. The fact that the cria would be inbred was not sufficient grounds for abortion. With the benefit of hindsight I should have been more insistent.

As time went on and she didn't produce, I put a photo up on the LAA Facebook page of mother and baby taken 2nd June, when I had estimated the baby as 2-3 months old. The consensus of opinions was that the baby was definitely older than 1 month and probably 3 months old. But although I had never seen the baby kick, I was still convinced she was pregnant and sure enough on 23th April she produced a female cria.

Cria with wry face deformity

But the sad part of this story is that she had a wry-face so bad that she had trouble breathing and would never had been able to feed. She stood up and tried to feed which was heart-breaking to watch. It was fortunate that I check my animals regularly as if she was out in the back paddock the baby would have slowly starved to death.

I put the baby down and left her body with the mother so she could grieve over it, which she did throughout the day. Because the herd had never received A, D &E shots, one of the young females had lower legs that were so distorted that she had to be put down, another had an untreated eye abscess.

The point of my story is to share the damage, both physical and emotional that indiscriminate breeding can cause, and encourage anyone intending to breed to ensure that both parents are the best quality that they can be, so we are breeding to create quality llamas, not just for the fun of seeing babies in the paddock. Also, we need to remember that these lovely creatures can live for over 20 years and sometimes peoples interest in them does not last that long, so they can be neglected and mistreated.

I hope this sad tale encourages people to think the long term prospects of the offspring before they breed their llamas or alpacas.

Judy Webby is secretary of the New Zealand Llama Association and co-ordinator for llama rescues in the lower North Island. Her farm Champenoise Llamas in the Horowhenua district focuses on breeding the Purebred llama

Distorted foot

HOW THE LLAMA LOST IT'S FINE FLEECE

A Tale by Keith Payne

Once upon a time many, many years ago…

(actually about 10,000), in a land far away in the Southern hemisphere, a land punctuated by a range of rugged high mountains and an unforgiving climate, there lived 30 - 40 million guanaco and several million vicuna.

At first glance they looked quite similar, but as you approached, the difference in size of the animals became apparent. The vicuna was less than half the size of the guanaco and seemed quite slight of build, although their colour and fleece types seemed to be identical. Both had a light outer coat of coarse hair, this to dispel the rain, snow and sleet but an inner coat of fine, light almost downy hair, this to provide protection from the intense cold of winter and the unforgiving heat of summer.

The guanaco looked the more muscular of the two, almost to the point of being less graceful, but also more capable of covering long stretches of difficult countryside at a fast pace. But the habits of the two animals could be surprisingly different. The vicuna needed to be near a ready supply of water for drinking and was more comfortable at heights up to 4,500 meters. The guanaco seemed to be more adaptable and could survive quite well at altitudes from sea level to 4,000 meters plus, a ready supply of water was not essential and had a digestive system capable of supporting it on the least desirable of vegetation.

Both animals lived and prospered in a system which today we call "natural selection". A key principle of this system is that only the strongest most intelligent males with the best conformation, health and instincts would be able to pass on their genetics. These males would form social groups of 6 - 8 females who they would care for, taking responsibility for protection from predators, shelter from elements, sufficient food for well being and toilet habits to guard against parasites. They courageously fought off marauding males who challenged the herd. The system had been in place for thousands and thousands of years, it seemed to be working.

And then along came man (actually, woman as well). They found the guanaco and vicuna to be quite worthy of their attention as:

- they were acceptable to eat,
- their hides were very warm to wear and sleep on;
- their dung provided fuel for cooking fires;
- their dung provided fertilisation for crops; and
- their bones could be worked into tool and weapons.

One day a hunter killed a female guanaco for food, and then realised it had a chulengo (cria) nearby. The young animal followed the hunter back to his village. The people noticed

how the youngster was very curious, displayed great survival instincts and as time passed seemed to feel at ease with people. By the following season it had been joined by several other young guanaco which came to the village in similar circumstances.

It came to pass the next spring that the village elders decided to move the village to a new area. As belongings were packed up for the journey, it was suggested to connect two long poles to the backs of the guanaco and locate cargo at the loose end. The guanaco followed the villagers as they moved, pulling the poles holding the cargo as they travelled along. When the track became too rough for the poles it was then suggested they tie the cargo onto the backs of the guanaco, which they did.

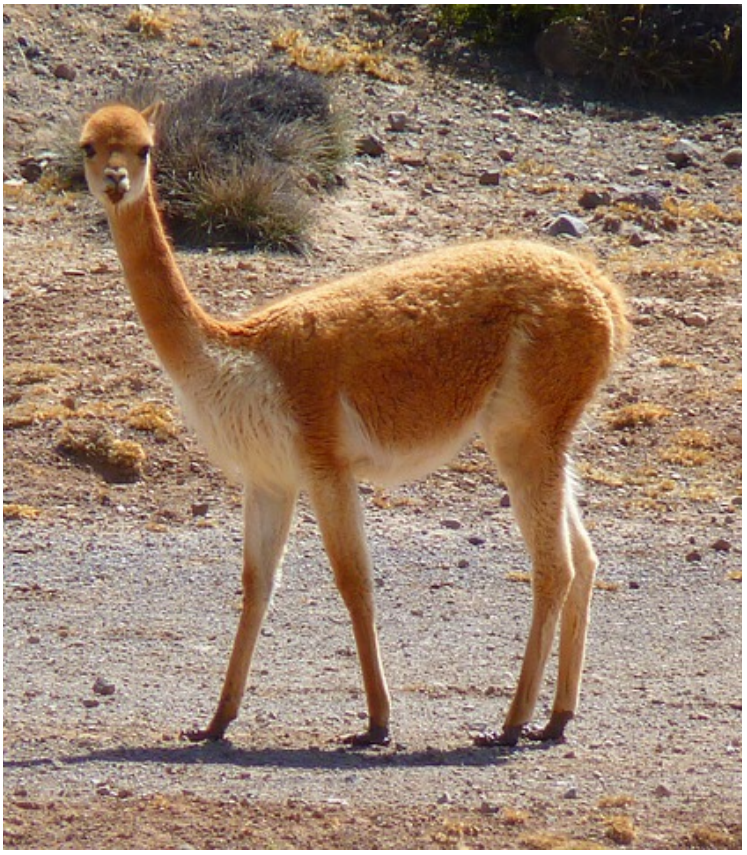
In the years which followed this beginning, the number of people increased steadily. Villages became permanent instead of nomadic and the population developed need of a reliable supply of meat. A volume of trading products developed between the settlements. Accordingly it came about that the guanaco started to be herded, often as a source of food and other products but also as a means of transporting cargo.

These habits began to spread to other geographic areas of the land, in the south they were known as guanaco (wah Nah ko) and further north called Kchara (also spelled k'ara, ccara or c'ara).

The vicuna was also herded, it was too slight to pull or carry cargo but was found to be more favourable to eat, and also possessed the finest fleece of any animal in the region. Its fleece was even finer than that of the guanaco which explained the years it had been able to exist at altitudes up to 4,500 meters.

As the years and centuries went by, the population of man (and woman) increased steadily, villages grew into communities, greater stretches of land were cultivated for crops and inevitably conflict arrived. Village against village, region against region. Battles had to be fought, gods needed to be satisfied, favour needed to be sought.

Now as this growth had been happening, a level of competence and discipline had been filtering through the herders of vicuna and guanaco. And man (and woman) decided they would try to "improve" them. In the case of the vicuna, that meant making them larger so they would provide more meat and more fleece. A touch of cross breeding with guanaco was worth a try, but also selective breeding whereby the larger males and larger females were encouraged to engage.



Vicuna

In the case of the guanaco, a twofold strategy was employed. First was to selectively breed for colour. We all know the guanaco possesses a variety of colours - white, black and shades of brown from light sand to rusty red. Careful breeding selection over hundreds of years and presto we now have white and black and dark brown, etc. This is just what our gods require, we are now able to better appease them with our sacrifices!

The next thing we need to do is get rid of that darned guard hair in their fleece, and that is really not too difficult, it just takes a couple of hundred years of committed breeding decisions! Taking the guanaco from the higher altitudes as

Guanaco

they have a lower percentage of guard hair (than those from low lying arid regions) and making selective mating decisions did result, over time in causing the outer guard hair to become less coarse and the inner down to become more coarse until the two met and VOILA, we have a single coated animal! Unfortunately it was no longer a fine fleeced animal.

As the years and centuries rolled by, the population of man (and woman) grew and grew, empires were established, and passed into history, replaced by the next. And then along came a group known as the Inca. They quickly established a large geographic base through military conquest and these few hundred years were possibly the finest for the herds of llama and alpaca. Of course, by that time they had come to resemble their ancestors less and less. The guanaco had become the llama, bearing the many colours we see in the breed today and the vicuna had become the alpaca, now known as the improved version. Larger, carrying more fleece, and like the llama sporting a variety of colours.

The more common alpaca type was called a huacaya, also bred like the llama for a single coat and a new fleece type was becoming established, called the suri. Both animals had the same physical body, and were only differentiated by their fleece.

By this time the llama could be carrying a traditional naturally shedding double coat or sporting a single coat, not at all fully shedding, called a chaq'u by the Inca (known to us as a woolly). Again, both animals were differentiated by their fleece and from what we can learn today, there seems to have been an appreciation that these fleece types needed to be protected through careful mating selections.

But the astute reader amongst you will have noticed a very important change that has crept into the lives of the guanaco/llama and vicuna/alpaca, a critical change.

Yes, the system of 'natural selection' has been replaced. No longer can the dominant strong male be responsible for preservation of the breed, no longer can the animal be responsible for itself. Man (and woman) has taken over. Matings are now determined by a perceived need to install traits particular to the convenience of the herder. Of course, it is difficult to fault this, if man (and woman) are to work together with the llama then the llama must grow to accept the terms of domestication. And as long as mating decisions are respectful of a responsibility to preserve the integrity of the llama, then the llama should be content.

This new relationship, overall, seemed to work. Particularly under the Inca the alpaca and llama prospered, the alpaca supplying the nation with fleece and meat, the llama carrying cargo and becoming an essential part of the Inca army, transporting provisions and weapons great distances.

Mating decisions were made by a qualified caste who understood the necessity to maintain the physical integrity of the two genetically different camelid types, the alpaca and the llama.

And then it all went wrong. The Spaniards arrived. They slaughtered the people with their weapons of iron and their European disease. They slaughtered the alpaca and llama with their weapons and forced them into the less forgiving highest altitudes to make room for European domestic stock breeds. After establishing a colony they then further slaughtered the people with inhumane labour at the mines and the llamas in transport from the mines to the ports. Breeding discipline disappeared. Alpacas and llamas were allowed to cross breed producing a hybrid, sometimes having alpaca and other times llama characteristics. Amongst the alpaca, the two fleece types were allowed to interbreed. Amongst the llama the shedding double coat was allowed to interbreed with the chaq'u woolly. And so today we see the results, the alpaca no longer breeds true - huacaya parents can produce a suri cria. Llamas today may have a short, medium or long type of fleece, often they may partially shed, sometimes not at all.

And we are still making the mating decisions. How often have you seen mating decisions to produce a certain look rather than a definite conformation? And do those making mating decisions even understand what a proper llama conformation should be? How many of them can see the results of hybridisation in their llamas? The downward tipped hip, lower tail set and camped under rear legs. Carpus valgus in the front legs, long backs, blue eyes and on and on.

And, ah yes, the fleece . . .!

Can you recall at the start of this tale how the guanaco had very very fine fleece? Bettered only by that of the vicuna? In terms we understand today, the vicuna has fleece of 11-13 micron, the guanaco of 15-17 micron. Well that also was the quality of the fleece when domestication developed and the llama as we know it became recognised.

And that is how the llama lost its fine fleece.

Man (and woman) did it.

Perhaps it is time to bring the guanaco back into the mating decisions of our domestic herds, or in the absence of guanaco males then perhaps some strong properly conformed, healthy DNA tested to be purebred fine fleeced llama males.

By the way, when did you last have the fleece of your llamas analysed ?

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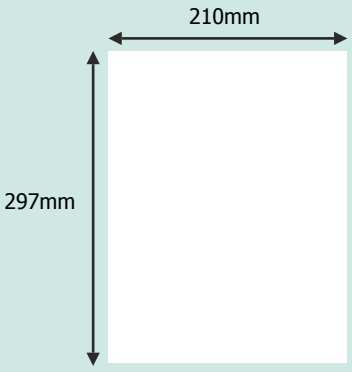

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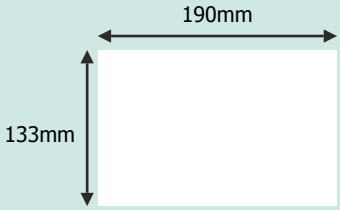

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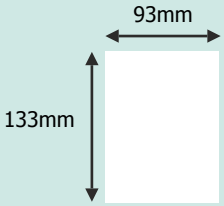

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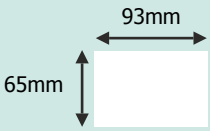

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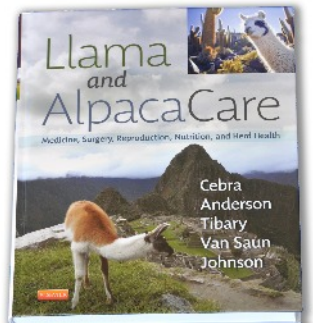
Llama and Alpaca Care



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Make An Alpaca Snow Globe

By Angela Smith
One Tree Hill Alpacas

Things you need:

- White alpaca roving
- A very small piece of orange roving (for the nose)
- Glass globe
- 2 foam balls (small and medium)
- Sticks that look like arms
- 2 small buttons – any colour you like
- Christmas leaf/holly
- Black felt
- Green felt
- Red ribbon

Other things you will need:

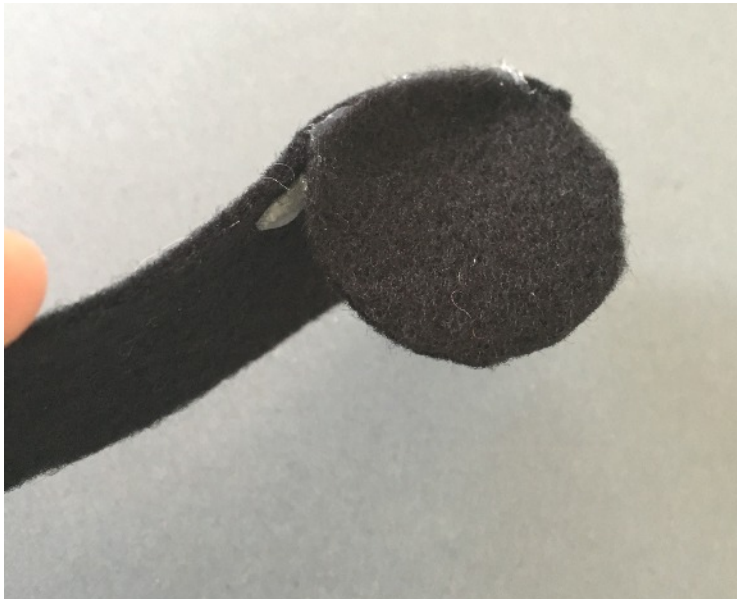
- Warm melt hot glue gun
- Small sharp scissors (pointy if possible)
- Dishwashing liquid

Start by criss-crossing a very small amount of the white roving and place one of the balls into the middle on the roving. Over the sink, add a very small amount of hot water and dishwashing liquid to the ball and roving.

Very carefully fold the roving around the ball and then with a gentle pressing motion form the roving around the ball. Press the wet roving and ball in between both hands a couple of times before slowly starting to roll the wet ball between your hands. Once the roving has attached itself around the ball, you can press harder. Continue pressing and rolling until the roving is firmly around the ball, then rinse with water and set aside. Complete the second ball. To make them dry quicker, roll them in a dry tea towel to take off as mush excess water as you can. Set aside to dry.

Cut the follow shapes from the felt:

Black – small circle about 2.5cms across
Black – medium circle about 4 cm across
Black – rectangle about 11cm x 2.5 cm
Green – rectangle about 15cms x 1cm – cut two little stripes into both ends to form a scarf shape.

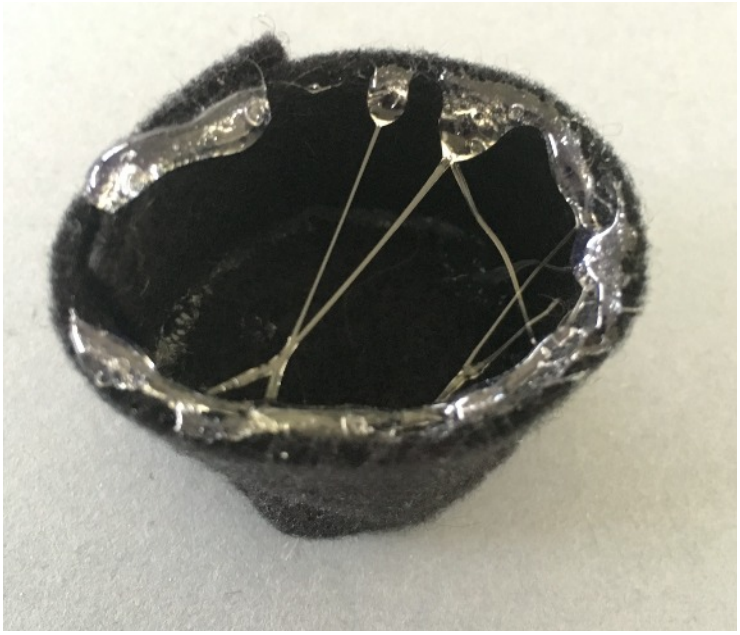


Start by making the hat

Being very careful because the hot glue will burn, run a little glue along about 2cm of the black rectangle, then attach the small circle. Work along the length of the black rectangle, a little bit at a time, until you get to the end. Overlap the rectangle at the end and glue down.

Then do the same with the large circle. If you get hot glue everywhere, as I do, using the small pointy sharp scissors gently cut off the excess glue. Turn the hat over and cut slits into the base of the large circle, starting from the centre of the circle up to the rim of the hat. This will allow the hat to sit well on the snowman's head.

Attach the holly to the front of the hat, making sure the join is at the back. Sometimes I have to trim the leaves down a bit before gluing on – it will just depend on the size of the leaves you have.



To construct the snowman, glue the small ball to the medium ball. Then using the green scarf, wrap and glue down, as you wrap around the neck area. Cross them over at the front and tack down with a little glue. Then glue the buttons on the front.

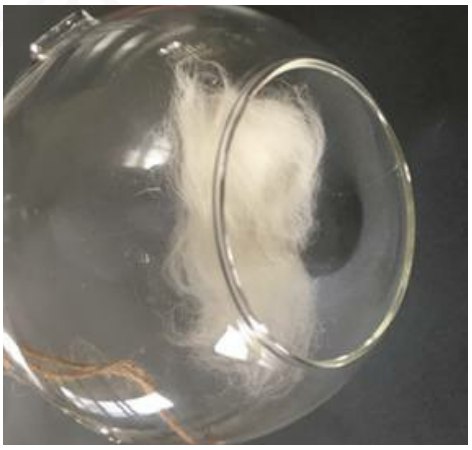
Using the pointy scissors, poke a small hole, in each side where arms should be. Using a little glue on the end of the sticks, place firmly into the holes, holding the snowman until the glue has dried.

Attach the nose and eyes.

For the nose, use the little bit of orange fibre, rub together in the palms of your hands until it forms a long nose shape. Cut the end off to make it easier to attach. Then using the black felt, cut little pieces in the shape of eyes. Attach both with a little glue. Then attach the hat.

Take a little length of the white roving, fluff up and then glue towards the back of the globe, by placing a strip of glue directly onto the glass globe and then press the roving into the glue. Don't glue it down across the entire base because when you go to stick the snowman down it won't stick. Then gently place the snowman into the globe, lean it back across the already stuck down roving. Then place a circle of glue down on the glass in the middle of the globe and using two fingers, hold the neck of the snowman, lift up and then gentle push it down onto the glue circle. Hold until dry. Then using more of the white roving, glue and stick down, to fill the front of the globe.

Attach the ribbon. Sit on table or hang in your window. Enjoy!



NEWS

Australian Alpaca Association launches eAlpaca!

eAlpaca is the AAA's new online transaction system designed to make registering and transferring your AAA registered alpacas faster, easier & yes, cheaper!

One of the new features we like is the ability to transfer alpacas to the buyer & nominate who pays the transfer fee. This way those alpacas awaiting the buyer to pay the transfer fee if that is what the sales agreement specified, can be removed from the sellers herd. The alpaca then appears on the buyers herd but is locked from having any further actions until the fee has been paid - which of course can all be done quickly online directly from within eAlpaca.

If you are an AAA member and haven't given it a go yet we encourage you to do so, it's easy to learn and will save you loads of time.

My animals

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Vic. Eastern Region
Berwick Alpaca Show 24/02/18 and Red Hill Ag Alpaca Show 10/03/18 Contact – Maddy Bissels 0458224313

Royal Sydney Show 23/03/18 – 03/04/18 Contact – Paul Haslin 02 48789429

South Australia
Mt Pleasant Show 17/03/18 Contact – see website)

New Zealand Alpaca Association – There are numerous shows between January and March. Details available on their website - alpaca.org.nz go to "shows & events"

INTERNATIONAL

BAS National Show – 24-25/03/2018 – for details www.basnationalshow.co.uk

If you have a major state/national show or specialist event that is camelid related then please let us know.*

Email: info@camelidconnections.com.au

*We will make every attempt to include your listing here free of charge if your listing meets our criteria, but due to space limitations cannot guarantee every listing will be published.

Wound Healing in Animals

By Merilyn Matthews - Daisybank Alpacas

I have a stud male alpaca who sustained a very large and deep laceration on his thigh. Due to circumstances this was not discovered for 3 days. When I went to feed the three boys who were sharing a paddock, I noticed that Ciro was hanging back and then noticed a dark mark on his thigh with flies buzzing around it. When he got closer I could see that he had a very nasty laceration and moved him to the shed and called the vet.

She sedated him and explored what was a significant wound, very deep and jagged and already having a number of maggots in it. After irrigating it and cleaning it she advised leaving it open to heal. This went against everything I knew as an RN about wound healing. I decided to give it 24 hours and assess it the next day, however it looked worse, if anything, so I decided to treat it as I would if Ciro was a human.

It was with some difficulty that we restrained him and gave the wound a good clean with a very weak Betadine solution. Then I applied Solugel into the wound to moisten it and then applied a Comfeel dressing to his shaven leg. I then wrapped it all up with 3 inch elastoplast tape. To be certain that the Comfeel dressing stayed in place I used super glue on the margins. This may sound cruel, but ideally this type of dressing will stay in place for a week or so and by that time it is quite easily removed.

Unfortunately, I didn't think about taking photos for 3 weeks, so I can not show the wound as it first appeared. After the first week when I took down the dressing I could see some granulation tissue showing through the dark, discoloured flesh where the wound had become desiccated and when the second dressing change took place all of the dark, dead flesh wiped off with the gauze and weak Betadine solution revealing pink, healthy flesh. The deeper parts of the wound had also filled in a lot and the whole thing was much improved.

After 3 weeks all of the deeper part had healed, leaving a smaller area which was beginning to close up. I have photos to show the final 3 weeks and it is evident how quickly the healing is taking place. Today Ciro has a leg totally healed with the fleece completely regrown, covering what was a terrible injury. Because this type of dressing can stay in place for 5 to 7 days, the cost is not too great. It also minimises stress on the animal. Because this male is quite stressy our local vet was kind enough to provide some sedation for him. This made everything much less stressful for both of us.

The materials I used were Betadine diluted with warm water to a solution that was barely a caramel colour (about 1 teaspoon in 3 or 4 cups of water). You could also use saline solution. A strong antiseptic solution will only delay healing once the wound has been initially cleaned.
The Solugel is available from Chemist shops and I applied it with gloves in a thick layer at first and then just a thin layer as the wound improved.

The Comfeel dressing I used was 15 x 15 cm. called “Comfeel Plus Transparent” and I cut it to fit, in half at first and then smaller as it healed. I was fortunate to have some in stock and then ordered it from Paraquad who supply dressings to paraplegics as well as others. They delivered by courier to the door in 2 days once I placed the order on line.

We kept Ciro in the shed and an outside small pen with a companion animal next to him until the wound was healed. If he had been able to run around the paddock I am not confident that the dressing would have stayed in place. He did not seem to mind this at all as I suspect his leg was uncomfortable when he moved too much.

Current wound care uses moist wound healing techniques. The research behind this has proven that new cells can only move across a moist surface to cause healing. Letting wounds dry out, as was the old way, significantly delays healing and gives a poorer result.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT in the Alpaca Industry

By Julie Wilkinson, B.Ed. M.EnvS - Director Synnot & Wilkinson Pty Ltd

As with all agricultural pursuits, the alpaca industry, from alpaca farming to fleece processing and garment manufacture, has the potential to impact on the environment in a multitude of ways. These impacts can be positive or negative. How we manage all facets will determine the extent of such impacts and the sustainability of the alpaca industry. There are legal, ethical and financial reasons for ensuring our activities do not cause environmental harm, and marketing benefits if we can develop an environmentally sustainable industry. Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in Agriculture, and Sustainable Agriculture Programs have been developed for a range of agricultural sectors over the past two decades. Lessons on what worked and what didn't can be taken from the experience of these groups and can be applied to the alpaca industry.

The environmental management of alpaca farming and fleece processing is an issue for the industry as a whole. This article focuses on the farming component of the alpaca industry, but consideration should be given to the 'Cradle to Grave' impacts, that is, a life cycle analysis which covers: inputs, farm practices, processing, distribution, use and disposal.

Environmental Benefits of Alpacas

There have been many claims of the environmental benefits of alpacas. When compared with other livestock, alpacas have:

- padded feet which minimise compaction and soil erosion;
- communal manure piles which facilitate manure management and minimise access to worm larvae;
- high immunity/low susceptibility to parasites, minimising chemical use;
- efficient digestion which reduces pasture pressures and fertiliser use and allows a wider range of suitable forage types, including unimproved and native pastures (Merrell 2002, Lawrie 2004);
- lower methane gas emissions than cattle (George Wilson in The Australian 13 January 2010) ;
- low grease content in fleeces, reducing the amount of water, energy and detergents used in scouring; and
- a range of natural colours allowing production without using harsh dyes.

Despite these claims for environmental benefits, they are only made in comparison with some other livestock or agricultural activities. Replacing cattle with alpacas on degraded land may be seen as an environmental benefit, but clearing native habitat to establish an alpaca farm is not. In addition, many alpaca breeders are not making the most of the potential environmental benefits - by overstocking, drenching unnecessarily, overfeeding, using resources to collect manure rather than allowing it to fertilise pastures and so on.

Environmental Management - Why?

There are a number of reasons why it is important to protect the ecological diversity and value of our agricultural lands and minimise the detrimental effects our activities have on the land, water resources, the atmosphere and other people and their property. Whether your alpaca farm is on the urban fringe, irrigated intensive agriculture regions or broadacre and rangeland conditions, there are issues that must be considered in terms of minimising environmental impacts. Some of these considerations are listed below.

Historic Impacts

Agriculture worldwide has been responsible for significant losses of habitat, extinction of numerous species and degradation of water and soil, through erosion and salinity. The agricultural industry has acknowledged that we must change our practices to ensure the sustainability of primary production into the future.

Limited Resources

The intrinsic value of natural resources and biodiversity is recognised world-wide. We have limited natural resources and must work to protect and sustainably utilise those that remain and repair and recover damaged areas.

Government Regulation

In Australia, everyone has a duty of care under environment protection legislation to ensure that environmental harm is prevented or minimised using all reasonable and practicable measures for their circumstances. Offenders can be subject to significant fines and/or jail terms for intentionally causing environmental harm, however fines can also be issued for environmental nuisance and non-intentional environmental harm. All farms are required to have a documented

Occupational Health and Safety Plan. Compliance with an Industry Code of Practice or EMS can be used as a defence against prosecution for causing environmental harm.

Market Requirements

Consumers and retailers are increasingly requiring demonstration of good environmental practice, particularly in relation to soil, chemicals, genetically-modified organisms, biodiversity and compliance with environmental, animal welfare and employment legislation. Examples of such programs include the EU EMAS (Eco-management and Audit Scheme); UK LEAF Program (Linking Environment and Farming); Ontario Environmental Farm Plan; and US Farm*A*Syst Program. Tesco's supermarkets in the UK require suppliers to meet their Quality Assurance and EMS standards. The increasing demand for organic products, including clothing, reflects the consumer's understanding of the potential negative impacts of farming on the environment, animal welfare issues and the potential impact to health of chemical residues in farmed fibres used for garments.

Business Advantage

The business advantages of a documented and/or accredited environmental management system can include:

- meeting consumer expectations and demands for sustainable products;
- access to export markets;
- the ability to make timely changes to on-farm procedures or activities according to consumer pressures, changing global markets, climate change or oil depletion and/or more stringent environmental regulation; and
- improved safety and environmental conditions on-farm.

Financial Benefits

Although the cost in time and money to develop and implement an accredited EMS can be significant, particularly for small enterprises, there is a range of levels of EMS which are appropriate to smaller-scale ventures.

Financial gains in implementing an EMS can include: the value of natural resources on-farm; reduced chemical use; lower insurance premiums; reduced compliance costs; avoidance of prosecution; and possible access to markets where a premium is paid for environmentally sustainable product.

Environmental Management Systems in Agriculture

Managing national resources well is critical for the economic and environmental viability of agriculture, and the wellbeing of our communities. Environmental Management Systems (EMS) is a voluntary, flexible 'systems approach' that encourages environmental management beyond compliance with legislation.

The value of the EMS framework lies in improving the efficiency of on-farm resource use and the sustainability of agricultural production, while assisting landholders to meet evolving challenges of community and market demands. Figure 1 sets out how the framework can work for a mixed farm, run by a single owner-operator.

Other primary production industries which have or are implementing EMS, Best Practice Environmental Management or Environmental Codes of Practice (include: grains, (Graincare), livestock (Cattlecare), dairy, wool (Eco-wool), rice, sugar, cotton, wine (EntWine), aquaculture and foodstuffs (tomatoes, bananas, citrus, potatoes).

What is an EMS?

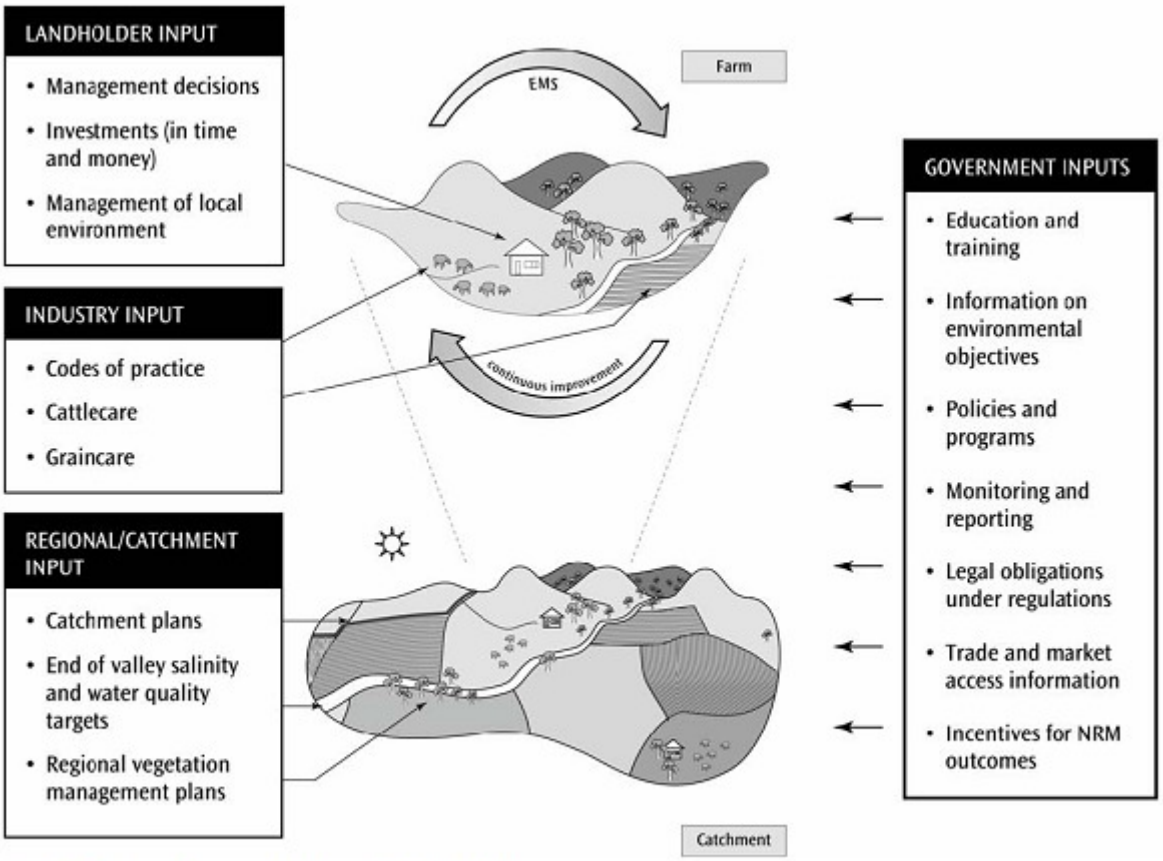
An Environmental Management System is a systematic approach to assist any enterprise to identify and manage its impacts on the environment, while providing opportunities for improved business performance. As an integrated business management tool, an EMS can effectively complement and build on other existing activities such as property management planning, best management practices, codes of practice and quality assurance schemes. EMS provides a management framework based on a simple `plan, do, check, act' cycle that achieves continuous improvement. A manager uses the system to identify their environmental impacts and legal responsibilities, then implements and reviews changes and improvements in a structured way

Why Adopt an EMS?

The reasons for adopting an EMS vary between enterprises, landholders and communities.
These may include the need to:

- improve business efficiencies;
- become more sustainable;
- reduce environmental and financial risks;
- differentiate products in the marketplace;
- maintain or improve access to markets and natural resources;
- maintain the natural resource asset base of the farm enterprise;
- meet catchment and/or regional strategies; and
- improve management of natural resources and protect the environment.

Figure 1. National Framework showing Stakeholder Inputs. Source: NRMMC, 2002



How to Prepare an EMS

The tasks involved in preparing an EMS are:

1. Prepare an Environment Policy
2. Identify Environmental Issues, Impacts and Risks
3. Prepare and Implement Environmental Management Plans to address issues
4. Monitor and measure performance
5. Report and review EMS

This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

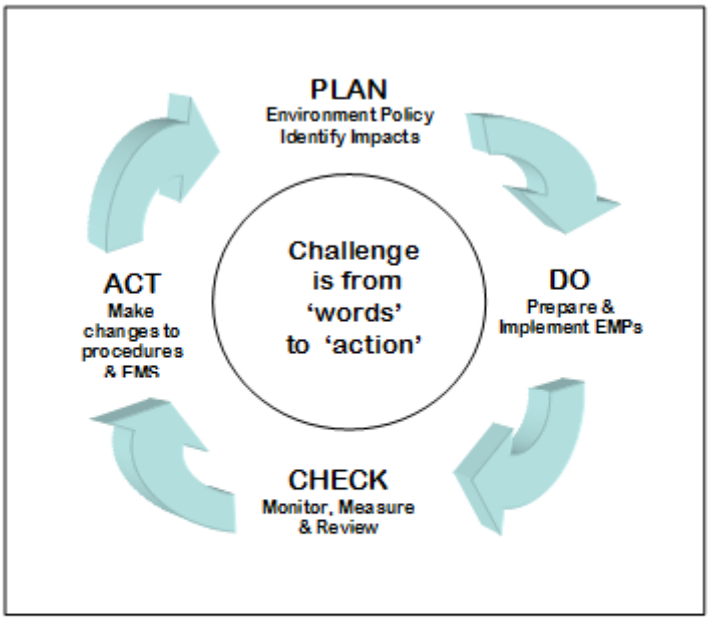


Figure 2. The EMS Continuous Improvement Cycle

Conclusions

There are many benefits to incorporating environmental management and controls into an alpaca farming enterprise, whether it is large or small. There is also a growing need for the industry as a whole to address environmental management policies and Codes of Practice. There is ample documentation from other agricultural sectors that can be applied to the alpaca industry.

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Embellished Felt Cushion

By Anne Marie Harwood
Echo Beach Alpacas - Fibre Processing Mill

Materials needed for 1 x 400mm square Cushion:

1 sheet of Echo Beach Alpacas Grey Alpaca Felt
Cushion Backing Fabric - .5m light weight upholstery fabric
1 x 14" Zip
1 x size 16 Cushion Insert
Iron On Interfacing medium weight .5m
Assortment of yarn or rovings for embellishment

Cushion Front

Press Felt to remove any wrinkles or fold marks Cut a 400mm sq piece of iron-on interfacing Iron interfacing to back of felt. Overlock edges.

Embellishment

The front is now ready for needle felting & embellishment. Arrange the yarn or rovings to a pattern of your liking and needle felt it in place with either a hand needle felter or embellishing machine.


Embelishing Machine


Embellishing


Overlocked Piece


Embellished Piece

Cushion Back

Cut a piece of backing fabric the same size as the front. Overlock the edges.

Attaching Zip & Joining Front to Back

Place zip face down on right side of cushion back fabric. Stitch 5mm from zip edge, all the way across. Flip fabric over & topstitch close to zipper teeth.

Place front & back together, right sides together.

Align zip top. Stitch zip to the front piece 5mm from zip edge, all the way across. Flip open & topstitch close to zipper teeth.

Partially open zip - very important.

Pin the 3 sides & stitch around. Clip corners to reduce bulk. Turn right side out & steam press. Insert Cushion Insert and that's all there is to it.

Now make another few for yourself or for unique gifts.

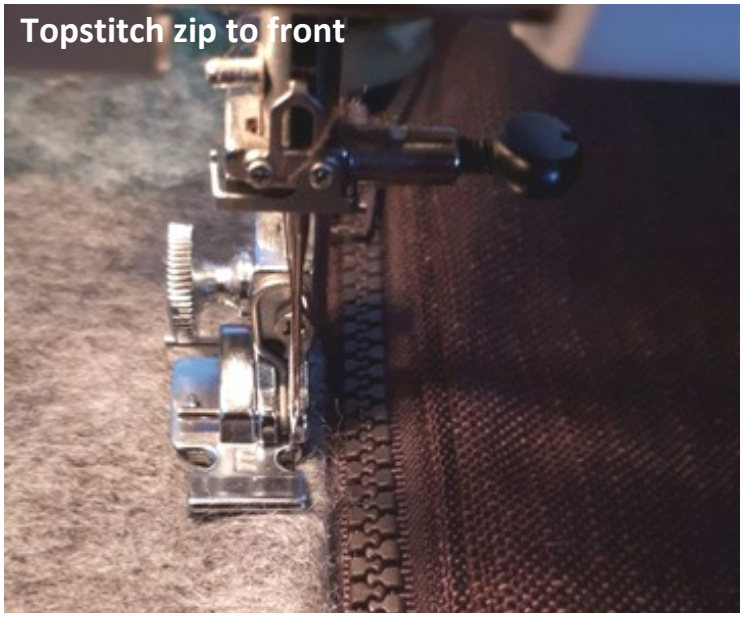
Felt Facts:

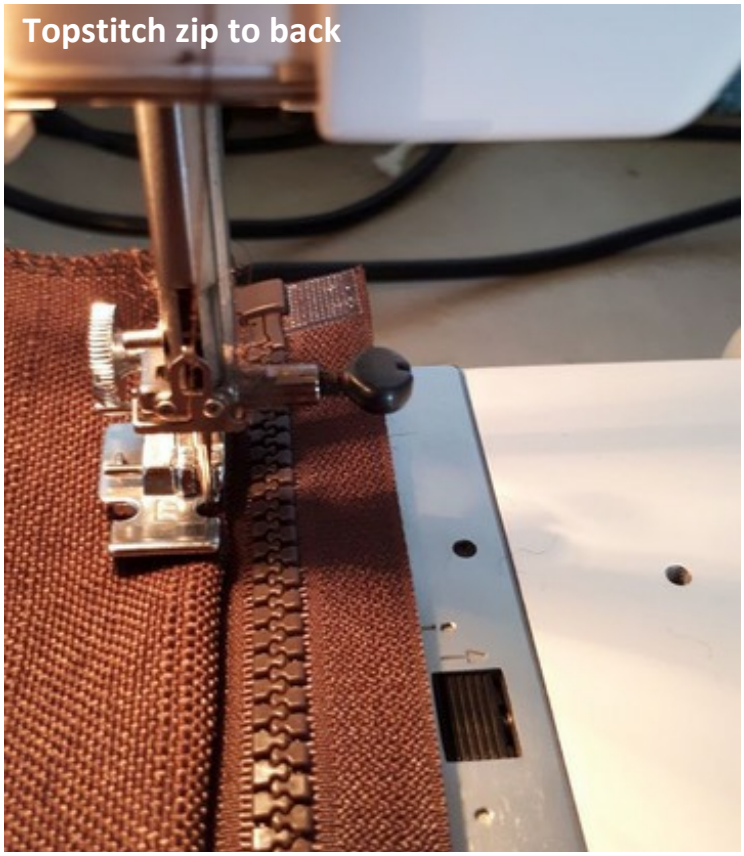
Did you know that Echo Beach Alpacas can make felt from your own alpaca fibre. Out of 1 raw kilo or fleece, you will get 2 sheets of felt 900mm x 1200mm.

You can make 6 cushions like these, out of one sheet of felt.

Email: anne@echobeachalpacas.com.au for details & pricing.
Website: www.echobeachalpacas.com.au
Contact: Anne Marie Harwood Ph: 0417 672566


Cutting Cushion Back


Topstitch zip to front


Topstitch zip to back


Pressing Cushion

Preparing your fleece for processing

By Tanya and Jim Boston - Boston Fine Fibres

Shearing

The blanket or saddle component of the alpaca fleece is the most suitable part for processing because it makes up the bulk of the weight (giving optimal yield) and is reasonably uniform in terms of micron (fibre diameter) and staple (fibre length). Additionally, the saddle usually has fewer heavier primary fibres.

If you are contemplating processing the fleece from your alpaca, you should let your shearer know of your intention. Many shearers will assist you to collect the saddle in a way that will avoid contamination from shorter and/or heavier fibres, arising from the legs, belly and brisket and soiled patches around the rump. Some shearers will shear the saddle first which helps to avoid significant contamination with these unwanted fibres. Other shearers prefer to shear toe to toe while separating the belly, brisket and leg fleece as they go.

Skirting

If possible, skirt your fleece at the time of shearing. Even a quick skirting at this time will reduce contamination from unwanted fibres that are difficult to remove during processing. You can come back to the fleeces at a later stage and skirt them more adequately.

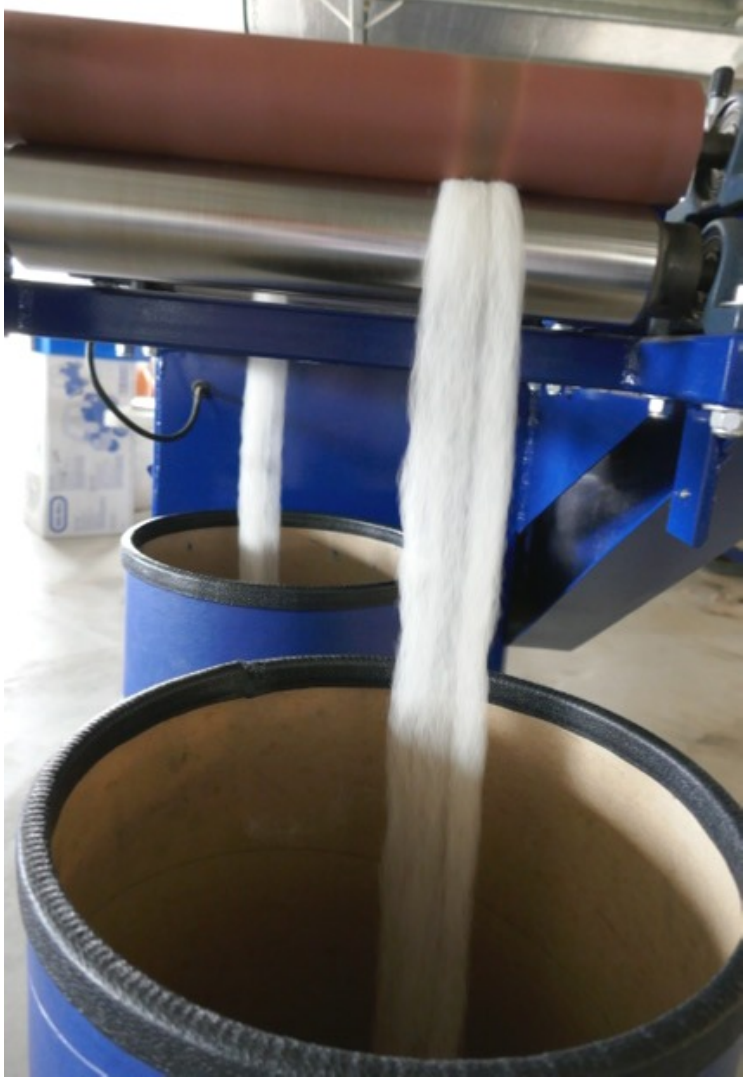
We cannot overemphasize the importance of skirting your alpaca fleece. It is critical to remove heavier fibres, faeces, urine stains, vegetable matter and as much dust as you can manage. If you are unsure about skirting, check the Internet for some great video clips that will assist you in this process. The Australian Alpaca Association also offers workshops, from time to time, on the subject.

Once skirted we recommend, (unlike skirting fleeces for show purposes), that you pull the fleece apart thoroughly. Give it a good shake to rid it of dust and remove vegetable matter and unwanted heavier fibres. If skirting a coloured fleece you may also want to pull out spots of unwanted colour. In general, mills base their costing on incoming weight so it is in your interest to provide clean, well skirted fleeces which are relatively free of dust, unwanted fibres and vegetable matter.

Some mills offer a skirting service at a cost and most are willing to show you how to skirt your fleece for processing purposes.

Once skirted, ensure your fleece is completely dry before you place it in a bag for storage. It is preferable that you store your fleece in a clear, perforated fleece bag. Garbage bags are ok, as long as they are non biodegradable, but do put holes in them to ensure the fleece doesn't sweat. Some people use calico bags or old pillow slips, both of which work well enough. If storing individual fleeces make sure you label the fleece with the name of the alpaca and the year of shearing. Some people also record the weight and the micron (if known) on the bag.

Store your fleece in a dry place, out of direct sunlight. You need to be sure that moths and mice cannot get to your fleece as mills, for obvious reasons, cannot accept fleece infested with moth eggs, lice or rodent litter. One of the problems with long-term storage is that any vegetable matter in the fleece tends to break down and ends up contaminating the entire fleece spoiling it with tiny specks of vegetable matter.



Choosing your processing mill

There are a number of mills located around Australia. A list of these is available on the Australian Alpaca Association's website. Some mills specialise in single saddles while others process larger quantities. Most mills offer a range of products from fine to bulky yarns, blends and rovings. When considering which mill you might choose, we recommend that you consider what you intend to be your final product and how you might use it. For example, you might leave your yarn on a cone for large knitting projects or machine knitting. If you want to dye your product, you may prefer to have your final product wound into hanks or skeins instead of balls. You might also consider:

- Specialty products of the mill including
- Whether you want your product blended
- The quantity of fleece you have to process
- Turn around time
- Your location in relation to the mills
- Pricing
- Customer service

You may choose more than one mill in order to realise your desired products. In all cases, we suggest you contact your preferred mill, before sending your fleece, to discuss your requirements. All mills offer free advice and product options to clients.

Choosing your fleece for processing

In choosing which fleeces to process, there are many things to consider about the nature of your particular fleece characteristics. These include comfort factor, micron, staple length, the condition style and handle of the fleece.

Comfort factor

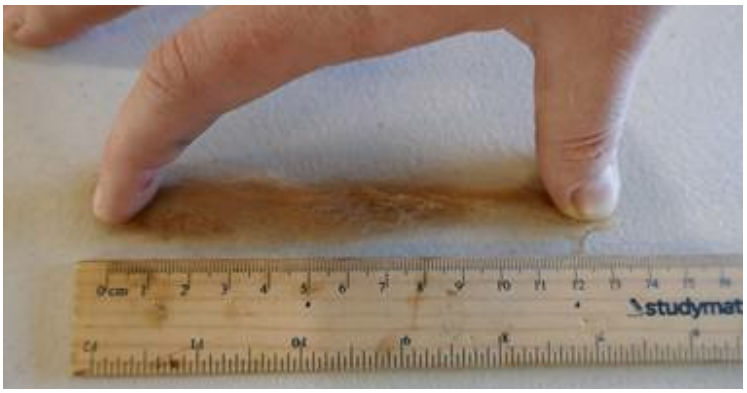
While there is a technical explanation, comfort factor is essentially a lack of "prickle factor" or the apparent softness of the fibre. The higher the comfort factor, the softer the fleece will feel. Ask yourself if you could wear this fibre against your skin and process only those fleeces that evoke a positive response. Disregard all prickly fleeces as no amount of processing will create a nice product from a fleece with a low comfort factor.

Micron

You should contact your preferred mill to discuss any limitations on acceptable micron. In general, best results are achieved from fibres with uniform micron of between 15-25 micron.

Staple Length

Most mills accept a staple length (fibre length) of between 70 and 150mm. You should check with your mill for specific requirements of their equipment.



It is important to open up suri fleece to assist in its processing

Tender fleece

It is important to check that your fleece is not "tender" and won't break during processing. Hold a staple end in each hand and pull it apart sharply. If the fleece is tender, it will break in your hands. The same thing will happen during processing resulting in very poor yields. Tender fleeces are not suitable for processing.

Cria fleeces

Cria fleeces may be processed but the tender tips are likely to break during the process and can result in the creation of neps (small knots embedded in the fibre) during processing. Apply the test for "tender fleece" to see if this is likely to be a problem with your cria fleece. You will also need to ensure that your cria fleece meets the minimum weight restrictions advertised by mills.

Huacaya crimp

Huacaya fleeces that are very crimpy, along with highly aligned crimp and well-formed staples produce the very best huacaya yarns. The air, naturally encaptured by the crimp during processing, guarantees a soft, more elastic yarn that better retains memory once knitted into a garment.

Suri

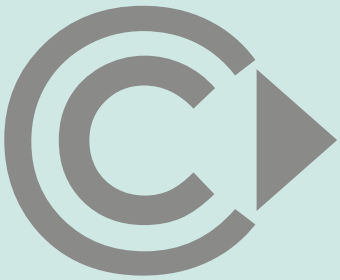
Not all mills spin suri fleece as if can be difficult to process. Make sure that your suri fleece meets the staple length requirements of the mill. In addition, go to some trouble to pull apart the locks thoroughly. This aids in the early processing and significantly reduces loss throughout. Many mills suggest adding a percentage of huacaya fleece which aids the processing and provides some elasticity (memory) to the final product.

Weight

Most mills have a minimum incoming weight requirement. This is to ensure that you receive the best yield from your fleece as a degree of loss is inevitable during the process. Generally, mills will experience a loss of around 30% (and sometimes more) from the incoming weight, largely as a result of processing and depending on the characteristics of the fibre. To avoid disappointment, talk to your mill owner to understand where losses are likely to occur.

For further information contact:

Boston Fine Fibres
www.bostonfinefibres.com.au



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