



EAA Newsletter June 2008

President's Message

~Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

The Board got together on March 30 for a face-to-face meeting at Cindy Cuykendall's beautiful farm in Skaneateles. Besides stuffing our faces with Cindy's wonderful cooking, we had a very productive meeting. Since the Board members reside everywhere from the eastern side of the state (I am 10 minutes from Massachusetts) to the far western part of the state and many places in between, up north and down south, face-to-face meetings are logistically difficult to arrange. We have a few face-to-face meetings a year and many more teleconferences.

The 2008 Extravaganza and the 2009 Symposium were the main focus of our discussions. Each year, we evaluate what went well and what could be improved and discuss changes for the next event. As Board members, we often receive comments from members; usually it is the negative comments that we are more likely to receive. Over the years, we have received a number of complaints about the absence of clothing vendors at the Extravaganza and the prohibition against exhibitors selling from their farm display stalls. In the past, the policy was to prohibit clothing vendors and stall sales because we wanted to encourage the product booth sales. Last year, our tax accountant again brought up a potential New York State sales tax liability issue for the Association because of the product booth. The Board discussed eliminating the product booth because of the complaints we have received and the tax issue, but then we decided to survey the entire membership to see what you want, rather than only basing our decision on the comments of a few.

Overwhelmingly, the membership voted to keep the product booth (97%!). BUT the membership also wants clothing vendors (76%) and exhibitor stall sales (63%). We are not sure what the impact of having all three will be (hopefully higher sales for everyone), but we decided to give it a try this year to see how it works. We are also working a solution to the sales tax problem.

The survey's response to the 2009 Symposium location was much less clear. We asked the members to rank 5 cities for their preferred choice. Much to my surprise, Saratoga received the most votes as both the #1 and #2 selections. Almost 50% of the respondents selected either Albany or Saratoga (1/2 hour from each other) as their #1 choice. However, Syracuse had the highest weighted average rating, mostly because no one ranked it as their 5th place choice, whereas Saratoga and Albany were ranked 5th by a number of people. So the decision is: either Saratoga, Albany or Syracuse! We are evaluating hotels in all 3 cities to see what works best. Our main criteria for selecting a hotel are availability (there are only a few weekends we can schedule this event because of the Super Bowl, February Farm Show, and conflicting alpaca shows or seminars), close proximity to a major highway and an airport, appropriate meeting space and reasonable costs. We hope to have a selection by the next newsletter. Many thanks to Ann Merriwether for putting the survey together to help guide the Board's direction!

Another great outcome of our face-to-face was the establishment of an EAA Fiber Committee with Jeannine Anderson as its chair (see separate article, page 5). I am very excited about this since EAA has many great fiber resources throughout New York State and our membership.

EAA Board of Directors

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Fashion Shoot at the Farm!

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

When you live in close proximity to New York City as we do (2.5 hours), you usually have a lot of “weekenders” as your neighbors and friends. Many of them you just know through their “country” life and don’t really know much about their “other” life. One of our neighbors asked us to do a fashion shoot at the farm. Turns out that our neighbor, Gail Hadani, is a fashion and beauty photographer. She was hired to shoot a fashion spread for an online women’s magazine called VIVmag (www.VIVmag.com) and wanted to use our farm and alpacas as a backdrop for the photos. We readily agreed to host the shoot.



On the appointed day, May 14, three SUV’s full of people, equipment and wardrobe drove up the driveway. There were people for hair, make-up, wardrobe, jewelry, lighting, computer, and, of course, a photographer! Plus a model: Simona – tall, attractive and weighing less than my weanlings!

They wanted to shoot 4 photos here, each with different outfits and jewelry. We walked the farm to select the 4 locations. The first shot had Simona standing in the middle of my crias, nursing mothers and weanlings – about 25 animals. Simona was pretty freaked at first having all of the animals surrounding her. Fortunately, the animals behaved (no spitting) and Simona relaxed. The wardrobe people even used a scarf from our shop in the shot.

The third shot moved out of the paddocks and onto the front yard where the ornamental cherry trees were in full bloom. For this shot, they wanted Simona with an alpaca – one on one – with the alpaca decked out in jewelry. Fortunately, one of my weanlings (Emily) is pretty tolerant so they “dressed” her and we went out to the front yard for the shot. Simona and Emily really bonded and the shot went well (again no spit).



The fourth and final shot was my favorite. They put Simona out in the field with the adult boys. She laid down on the grass and while they shot hundreds of photos, the boys just hung around Simona (see photo above with headline). The only problem was the place they selected for Simona to lay down was right in front of a poop pile and in most of the shots, there was a boy behind the model pooping! I was the only one who knew what the boys were doing (as you can see from the picture at right – the one with me with my hands on my face - I was not happy!).

Fortunately, they repositioned Simona for some of the shots with the poop pile off to the side, not directly behind her, so they were able to get some shots without an alpaca squatting in the background.

The whole shoot took about 5 hours. Having never been involved in anything like this before, it was pretty interesting to me. The model looked very different after the hair and makeup work and she really was able to convey different messages with simple changes in her facial expression and body language. The technology was pretty amazing. The camera was hard wired to a computer where someone was reviewing every shot as it was made, shouting out with comments and instructions on lighting, camera angle, model's look, etc.

Four of the photos will appear in the July/August online magazine starting around July 1. I have seen some of shots but don't know which ones the editor has selected for the magazine. They spent the previous day at the 1,200 head dairy sheep farm across the road where they shot 6 photos. Of course, everyone preferred working with the alpacas!

Alpaca Fiber Discussed at Recent International Fiber Conference

~Jeannine Anderson, Gaze Acres Alpacas

It was my extreme privilege to represent EAA recently at the 36th annual International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR) conference held in Niagara Falls, NY the week of June 16-20, 2008. The conference was a week in duration and included one 2-hour session specifically on alpacas. This is the first time alpacas have been on the ICAR schedule, which is primarily filled with sessions on cattle, dairy, sheep and goats.

Our presenters were Marco Antonini of Italy and Carlos Pacheco of Peru. We were a small group of 6 in attendance, but represented 4 countries.

In 2007 the ICAR Executive Board approved a new Animal Fibre Task Force. The working group included members from Italy, China, UK, Peru, Argentina and Australia. The main goals of this working group are OPTIMISING the quality and uniformity of raw material and providing confidence for its use by manufacturers, and MAXIMIZING the financial return and profit.

To achieve these goals the task force has identified 6 critical fiber control points:

1. Fineness (average diameter - μm),
2. Homogeneity (average diameter Coefficient of Variation - C.V. %)
3. Staple length (average length - mm)
4. Medullation (percentage %)
5. Impurities
6. Colour

We concluded our talk by looking at what is the next step. The ICAR South American Camelid Alpaca Fibre Working group has identified the following:

1. Objective definition of Huacaya and Suri fibre/type.
2. Definition of the objective and criteria in Alpaca fibre selection program worldwide.
3. Contribution to adequate analytical performance quality for
4. Alpaca fibre recording purpose worldwide.
5. Development of reference document and standard on methods of Alpaca fibre analysis and quality assurance in laboratories applicable to animal fibre recording.

After 3 presentations and a roundtable discussion we found that we still could not walk away from our conversation. The next step for the United States we agreed is for AOBA to join ICAR to enable us to be a part of this task force working group. As members we will be participating in creating the future of the alpaca textile industry worldwide.

Photo Needed for School Calendar

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Empire Alpaca Association will again be a sponsor of the New York Farm Bureau's Foundation for Agricultural Education's calendar. Each year, the Foundation distributes a calendar to third grade classrooms across the state in an effort to provide agricultural education to children at a young age. Each month of the calendar features a New York State commodity with a picture, facts and an activity for classroom participation.

We need a GREAT alpaca photo to submit for the alpaca month! EAA must submit the photo in early July to the Foundation so if you have a great alpaca shot that you would like us to consider, please email it to me by July 15. We will review the submitted photos and select one to send off to the Foundation. The photo should be high resolution. You can send the photos to me at SpruceRidgefarm@aol.com.

NYS Farm Show a Success!

~ Chris Gilman, Riverside Alpacas

The Farm Show at the NYS Fairgrounds in February was a great success! Many people had the opportunity to see and touch the alpacas that we had on display. Thanks to Dick & Debbie McCoy of Foxrun Farm Alpacas for bringing two of their boys. We displayed many products that answered the question "What do you do with them?" We handed out hundreds of EAA brochures and encouraged people who visited the website to learn more about all of us. The Board would like to thank the volunteers who gave their time to answer their many questions: Chris & Mickey Gilman - Riverside Alpacas; Dick McCoy - Foxrun Farm Alpacas; Casey Mantione - Golden Oak Alpacas; Peter Harrison and Evelyn Brumell - YB Normal Farms; Ken & Polly Michaelis - Finger Lake Alpacas; Paulie & Ed Drexler - Springside Farms; Sarah Lamanna - Claddagh Farm; Helen & Tim Herman - Sugartown Farms; Jill Snell - Inghams Mill Farms; Roger and Jessie Keymel - Stone Elm Alpacas Farm; Ellen Souva - Tug Hill Alpacas; Jen Tompkins - Alpacalachin Farms; Lindsay Butkiewicz - Wild Thyme Farm; Connie Preston - Song Mountain Alpacas; Philip Alamond - Alpacas of the Finger Lakes; and Carolyn & Dan Clark - Heavenly Sunset Farm

Before you know it, the Empire Farm Days in Seneca Falls will be upon us. This exciting event has over 10,000 folks in attendance from all over. The dates are August 6, 7 & 8. If you would like to donate your time and bring some products please email Chris Gilman - RiversideNY@yahoo.com. More info will be sent out in mid-July.

Upcoming Election for EAA Board of Directors

~ Sue Watts, Calidad Alpacas, Election Committee Chair

Election time is coming up again later this summer. The terms of two of our EAA Board members are up: Chris Gilman, who is ineligible to run again having served for two consecutive terms, and John Askew, who has decided not to run for a second term. A minimum of two nominees are required for each open position, and the nominating committee has recruited the following slate of five nominees. Thank you to each of these candidates for their willingness to be of service to our association:

Ken Clark ~ Tartan Acres LLC, Dick McCoy ~ Foxrun Farms Alpacas, Tim Preston ~ Preston's Alpacas, Connie Preston ~ Song Mountain Alpacas, Barb Rossi ~ Bel Canto Farm.

Candidates can also be nominated by petition. The petition requires the signatures of three EAA members in good standing and must be delivered to the nominating committee no later than July 31, 2008. For more information, please contact Sue Watts at sue@calidadalpacas.com.

Ballots will be sent to all voting members by the end of August, and the results of the election will be announced at the Empire Alpaca Association's annual meeting at the Extravaganza on Saturday, October 25, 2008.

Thank you to all the members of the nominating committee for their work in nominating this year's slate of candidates. The nominating committee members are Sue Watts (Chair), Wayne Jarvis, Richard Jonassen, Cindy Vars, and Karin Young.

2008 Extravaganza Preview

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Even though the Extravaganza is months away, we have been very busy working on it. A number of items were pending the results of the member survey and now that we have the survey in hand – it's decision time! Here are some of the highlights:

- Judges: Jude Anderson, Charlene Friedman and Peter Kennedy are the halter judges and Linda Hayes for performance
- A fiber "corner" will be set up where demonstrations for both the public and the exhibitors will take place throughout the weekend on various fiber arts
- Saturday night dinner will be replaced with a "social hour"
- Two clothing vendors will be invited to set up booths at the show, exhibitors will be permitted to sell product from their stalls and the product booth will continue.
- We hope to have a collection area for AFCNA

Melissa Young-Crozet, who has served us so well as the show superintendent for many years, is expecting a child the week before the show and will not be able to join us this year. Amy McCroskie will be our show superintendent this year. From what we hear, Amy has done a great job at other shows in this capacity and we look forward to working with her.

Chris Gilman and Cindy Cuykendall will be our barn managers this year. We will miss Polly Michaelis who has done an extraordinary job in this role for years and is now working hard to complete her judging apprenticeships.

Compared to other shows, Empire has some of the lowest entry fees and stall prices in the country. As the cost of everything has escalated, it has become harder and harder to keep the show fees at reasonable levels. In an effort to keep the show affordable for most people in this economic environment, we have decided to again keep entry fees and stall prices the same this year for those who take less than 6 stalls. We are increasing stall prices \$50 per stall for stalls 6 to 10. To help offset higher costs for sod, panel rentals and other items, we are increasing the level of our Platinum and Gold sponsorship to \$1,500 and \$750, respectively. Our very generous sponsors are the reason we are able to maintain low entry and stall fees and still have some funds left over to subsidize the Symposium and donate to alpaca-related charities. This year we will allow these sponsors to sign up in advance of our "live" date as a token of our appreciation for their financial support which allows us to keep everyone else's cost reasonable.

Remember to save the dates October 25 and 26 for the Empire Alpaca Extravaganza!

EAA Fiber Committee

~ Jeannine Anderson, Gaze Acres Alpacas

We are forming a Fiber Committee! It is crucial that we, as breeders and keepers of fiber-bearing livestock, establish and maintain an active awareness and interest in the end products of our yearly harvest. As a committee, we will be educating, writing grants and pursuing production possibilities.

We will be asking you for input as we collect data on NY alpaca fleece. Please be honest. We may be asking for fleece donations as we work on prototypes. Please be generous. As alpaca breeders we must work together to pool our resources and energies. The yearly clip from any one farm is not enough to get the interest of high-end fiber processors, textile processors, designers or manufacturers.

We cannot move forward on sock sales alone. We cannot move forward on only cottage industry endeavors. We must think big and we must think highest quality. We have the home state advantage – we have the fashion capital. Let's see what we can do!

What you can do right now - It really is about the fiber. Get your samples in to the labs for testing. Understand how your herd management decisions this year had an impact on the results. Make well informed breeding decisions that will result in fleece improvement for next year's shearing. If you need help making these decisions, consult with someone you respect and trust. Alpaca breeders are a very generous bunch when it comes to sharing information and helping each other. We were all beginners at some point and we remember the sharp learning curve we had to climb. The goal is always herd improvement, fleece quality improvement. Producing more and more alpacas will not move us forward. Industry is only interested in highest quality and consistent raw material.

Herd Sire Raffle – Donations Needed

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Each year at the Extravaganza we have a silent auction in which numerous members generously donate stud service to their herd sires with the funds designated for alpaca-related charities. Last year, we cranked it up a notch by adding an online auction of stud service to three high-end males. Those three males raised over \$18,000. This year, we decided to add another twist. In an effort to give everyone a chance at one of the “big boys”, we will replace the online auction with raffles for stud service to 3 herd sires.

We need donations of stud service to three herd sires. If you have a male you would like us to consider, please email me (Spruce Ridgefarm@aol.com). We are looking for males that have the potential to sell at least 50 tickets each at \$100 a ticket. The donors get to decide which alpaca-related charity will benefit from the funds their stud raises. We have some great studs in our membership and some very generous members so we hope to get some great donations.

We will be continuing the herd sire silent auction as well and we also encourage you to consider donating to that.

Membership Renewal

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas

Remember to renew your membership to Empire Alpaca Association, if you have not already done so. Renewal dates are no longer determined by the date you originally registered. All memberships now run from June 1 to May 31. For easy online renewal, just log into the Empire web site and follow the directions. Credit card payment is now available online. If you wish to pay by check, please make checks payable to Empire Alpaca Association and mail to: Cindy Cuykendall at Song Meadows Alpacas, 5197 DeWitt Rd, Skaneateles, NY 13152. Annual dues are just \$50, and include a \$25 discount for the Empire Extravaganza and a \$25 discount for the Symposium (\$50 - \$25 - \$25 = \$0! Now THAT's a bargain!). Optional member profile page and web page link are available for an additional fee. If you have any questions regarding membership, please email Cindy Cuykendall at CuykendallFarms@aol.com or call (315)685-7410.

EAA Educating Future Vets at Cornell

~ Ann Merriwether, Nyala Farm Alpacas and Sue Zelazny, Andes Dandies, LLC

The Cornell vet school camelid rotation has been making a strong effort not only to expand student knowledge about camelid health but to understand the alpaca industry in depth. To this end, nine 4th year students and two faculty members recently toured local alpaca farms and met with a range of speakers about fiber and the alpaca industry.

One of the speakers was Board member Jeannine Anderson. Jeannine spoke on two topics: fiber evaluation and Camelidynamics handling techniques. The students were an engaged and engaging audience for both. In the fiber discussion, Jeannine presented the different alpaca fiber qualities that are measured by a histogram and the various qualities that the fiber is judged on in a fleece show. The attendees then got hands-on and went through several fleeces ranging from 17 microns to 31 microns that had various structural styles. The students had excellent questions and were able to look at the histograms that went with each fleece and understand how the numbers translated into the handle of the fleece.

Switching gears to Camelidynamics handling techniques, Jeannine shared the “10 most important things we would like our vets to know” that were suggested by members of the international forum of Camelidynamics Practitioners:

1. Alpacas don't mind many medical procedures - they do mind the restraint. Use alternatives.
2. Don't stand in front of the alpaca, stand on the side instead when possible.
3. Use a small area and give them a friend.
4. Let the facility do some of the work for you.
5. Examine teeth properly.
6. Do not leave halters on to facilitate handling. They cannot eat properly. Use a halter helper instead.
7. Use containment over restraint.
8. Injection sites in the rear cause the animal to kick and move off.

9. Don't pick up cria and take them away from their moms if at all possible.

10. How to use the mid-line catch and bracelet.

After having an overview of the principles and reasoning behind the techniques, the students had an opportunity to role play using the inflatable camelids, followed by demonstrating their new-found prowess with the two live alpacas that reside at Cornell.

Another speaker was our own Empire Association President, Steve McCarthy. Steve explained the structure of the various organizations (AOBA, ARI, Empire, etc.), covered statistics on alpacas in the USA and demographics of alpaca breeders. The group was very responsive and had numerous questions and comments particularly about breed standards, artificial insemination and embryo transfer. Two students were from New Zealand and Australia and were very familiar with these topics in their countries. Steve gave each student an alpaca scarf from his shop and gave an alpaca bear to the lead instructor, Dr. Sylvia Bedford-Guaus.

Capping off the educational event, the students toured two local alpaca farms to get some hands-on practice at diagnostic procedures. Ken Clark of Tartan Acres and Ann & Andy Merriwether of Nyala Farm were gracious enough to open their barns for this important piece of the camelid treatment puzzle. Dr. Wendy Hartman, the vet for Nyala farm, was also able to be present to add to the learning.

The students got to practice ultrasound techniques on several females in various stages of pregnancy (...and various levels of tolerance as you can imagine!). They also got to do a wellness exam on a newly born cria, and draw blood from the cria for IgG and BVD testing. In addition, they removed stitches from an alpaca, trimmed fighting teeth on a young male, and inserted a microchip. At Tartan Acres, they had the rare opportunity to examine a partially blind 4 year old male who has been visually impaired since birth as one of his eye's pupils is missing material and the other has severe cataracts. Each student got to compare and contrast the physical make up of his eyes and observed him as he interacted with his fellow alpacas in their pen.



While at Nyala Farm, Andy Merriwether gave an overview of alpaca domestication, alpaca color genetics and genetic diseases of alpacas and Ann introduced them to the various end products one can make from alpaca fiber. They were even treated to an impromptu demonstration of an alpaca and young handler negotiating an obstacle course! The attendees were all enthusiastic and very curious.

Many thanks to Jeannine, Steve, Ken, Ann, and Andy for giving of their time and talents to further the camelid education of our future veterinarians!

***National Alpaca Farm Days
September 27 & 28, 2008
Be on the lookout for more info from AOBA &
Empire!***



434 Route 13
Old Chatham, NY 12136

**Empire Alpaca Extravaganza
October 25 & 26, 2008
Check-in October 24
New York State Fairgrounds
Syracuse, NY**

**Judges: Jude Anderson, Charlene Friedman, Peter Kennedy, Linda Hayes
Online registration opens mid-August**

Watch your emails for more information or visit www.nyalpacas.com