



## President's Message

~Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Summer is here – with green grass and bouncing crias! No real heat or humidity - yet! Sweet Summer! Living in the Northeast, we endure the l-o-n-g winters, just for these wonderful Summer days and nights.

The Summer is a busy time for your Board even though there is no official Empire activity in the Summer. We are planning for the Extravaganza, working on marketing for the National Alpaca Farm Days and of course the 2010 Symposium. Having a Symposium in 2010 hinges on a successful Extravaganza since we use profits from the Extravaganza to underwrite the vet seminar and subsidize the educational Symposium and the Fleece Show. The Board's intent is to go ahead and plan a 2010 Symposium knowing that if the Extravaganza is not a financial success, we will need to cancel the Symposium. We are optimistic about the Extravaganza since we have been receiving numerous inquiries about it and one of the hotels has actually sold out BEFORE we have even negotiated the room block with the hotel!

We have had an excellent response rate to our membership renewal drive. As you know, all memberships expired on May 31. The board is currently following up with those who did not renew yet since we need to make sure our membership database only has current paid-up members when we go live with the Extravaganza since farms in that database receive a \$25 discount on the show.

Please make sure we have your current email address in the member database (you can check by visiting your profile or by clicking on your name on the "Member Farm" names on the web site and seeing what email address pops up). Detailed Extravaganza information as well as our marketing efforts for National Alpaca Farm Days will be distributed by email since the Fall newsletter probably won't be received in time for you to plan your NAFD efforts. I urge you to participate in NAFD – I think it is the industry's best marketing effort and gets people to the farm.

I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to EAA member Bill Johnson of Abenaki Acres Farm on his election to the AOBA board and becoming the new AOBA president. I had the pleasure of working with Bill on the now defunct Affiliate Congress and was very impressed with Bill's leadership ability, his professionalism and his level-headedness. I think he will make an excellent AOBA President and Board member and I am very pleased that he is representing us. Congratulations Bill and good luck!

Enjoy these wonderful Summer days and the cute crias running around the fields! We'll see you in Syracuse in October!

### EAA Board of Directors

**President:**

Steve McCarthy ~ 518-794-6294  
Spruce Ridge Farm

**Vice President:**

Cindy Cuykendall ~ 315- 685-7410  
Song Meadows Alpacas

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**Members at Large:**

Dick McCoy ~ 315-626-2672  
Fox Run Farms Alpacas

Ann Merriwether ~ 607-785-8226  
Nyala Farm Alpacas

Barb Rossi ~607-387-7122  
Bel Canto Farm

# 2009 Extravaganza Highlights

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

**I**n this article, I will provide some of the highlights planned for the 2009 Empire Extravaganza since (hopefully) you should be receiving a more detailed email before you even receive this newsletter.

**Dates:** Friday October 23 (check in); Show Saturday & Sunday October 24 & 25

**Earlier check in time:** Starting at 10AM (it was 1PM last year)

**Judges and preliminary assignments:** Wade Geese (performance); Tim Lavan (all suris, brown huacaya males, all grey and multi huacayas); Amanda VandenBosch (all other huacaya males), Jill MacLeod (all other huacaya females)

**Online registration opens:** August 15 for Platinum & Gold sponsors (email me at Spruceridgefarm@aol.com in advance for a link); August 30 for general registration

**Pricing:** Stall and entry prices remain the same as 2008; credit cards will be accepted.

**Sponsorships:** Platinum, Gold and Silver sponsors can stretch out their sponsorship payments over time to assist with budgeting efforts.

**Additional stalls:** Reconfiguring the main building to allow more stalls.

**Member Product Booth:** A “member store” where members can sell their products.

**Vendors:** Expanding the number of clothing vendors and creating a “vendor village” where all of the vendors will be located

**Selling at stalls:** Exhibitors will be permitted to sell items from their farm display stalls.

**Fiber Coop Drop-off:** Continuing the ACFNA fiber drop-off where you can drop off your boxed fiber and we will ship it free of charge to AFCNA (pending AFCNA decision on shipping, see article on page 5 of this newsletter).

**Fiber Corner:** We will have fiber arts demonstrations throughout the weekend for members and the public.

**Expanded marketing efforts:** To attract more public to the show, the Product Booth and the vendors, we are expanding our marketing efforts to attract more of the public.

**Seminars:** Education seminars will be available free to the public and exhibitors.

**Silent Auction:** Breedings to top herd sires and various alpaca products and supplies will be auctioned off. Please contact me at Spruceridgefarm@aol.com if you wish to make a donation.

**Show Superintendent:** Melissa Young-Crozet is returning as the show superintendent.

Please be on the lookout for emails on the Extravaganza which will provide more detailed information about the show.

## Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership!

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas

The membership year for the Empire Alpaca Association runs from June 1 to May 31. This means that if you have not yet renewed your membership, it has now expired. Renewing is easy. Simply go to the Empire web site ([www.nyalpacas.com](http://www.nyalpacas.com)), log in to your account, and follow the directions. Payment may be made online via credit card or by check. If paying by check, please make your check payable to Empire Alpaca Association and mail it to Cindy Cuykendall, 5197 DeWitt Road, Skaneateles, New York 13152. The annual membership fee is \$60.00.

What does your membership include? Empire members are eligible for a \$25 discount at the Extravaganza and a \$25 discount for the Symposium. That's a total of \$50 in discounts!

As a member of the Empire Alpaca Association, you receive:

- A complete farm listing on the Empire web site (a web link and a profile page may also be purchased for an additional \$25 each). Our Board is currently working to update and improve the web site in order to bring more business your way. Our Marketing Committee is also working hard to increase our advertising so as to drive more potential customers to our web site, and in turn, to our member farms.
- Empire's marketing efforts also include monthly mailings to all new AOBA leads within a 9-state area, in addition to direct marketing through mailings, advertising media, and the purchase of trade show space. Marketing done by your association is marketing for YOUR FARM. Our marketing efforts encourage people to visit the Empire web site, where they can find your listing alphabetically, by direct search, or by checking the map of member farms.
- Empire offers some of the best educational programs in the industry for members and for veterinarians, and it does so at a very low cost to participants (FREE to vets!). In these tough economic times, the Empire Alpaca Association really provides a lot of value for your dollar!

## MARKETING TIPS

~ Lou Eustance, French Hollow Alpacas

It is commonly thought by new alpaca breeders that marketing efforts can be put on the back burner until they have animals to sell. Nothing can be further from the truth. It is never too early and you can never be too small to start marketing. Here are some reasons why:

If you don't market your farm's identity and message until you have animals to sell, you may be unable to get the attention of prospects that will be ready to buy when you have something to sell. How would a prospective buyer know what is available on your farm if they do not know who you are? Therefore, establishing your farm's identity in the marketplace is essential.

### So, how do you get started?

- **MAKE TIME FOR MARKETING!!!!** (it is time well spent)
- Put together a realistic marketing action plan (short term is ok to start)
- Set aside a budget for marketing and advertising
- Adjust your marketing action plan if necessary
- Above all - **Follow Through!!!**

Some of the essentials for you to consider are: Logo, Tag Line, Business cards/Stationery, Website, & Signage

Be sure that the image that you create clearly represents you and your farm. Be consistent in your message and design in all of your promotional materials. Remember, repetition brings recognition... recognition brings success.

# Tractor Safety

~ Dick McCoy, Fox Run Farm Alpacas

**T**ractor rollover has been the leading cause of farm operator deaths for the past two decades. In fact, one out of every five deaths on the farm occurs when a tractor rolls over on top of the operator. Your chance of getting killed while driving your tractor is higher than any other task you do around the farm.

Overturns are the most frequent cause of fatalities. Roughly half of the tractors in New York lack Roll-Over Protective Structures (ROPS). Roll-bars prevent overturn injuries and death. If you have a newer model tractor, you probably have roll bars installed. Many of these have the ability to either lower or fold down when it's necessary to clear an obstacle. It is very important to return the ROPS to its upright position as soon as practical. Use of a seat belt is required in order to remain in the seat in case of roll over.

The tragic thing about tractor rollovers is that many could be prevented. Safe driving techniques, special equipment, and never allowing passengers to ride on the tractor can reduce these risks.

Fortunately, there is the New York ROPS Retrofit Rebate Program which was started in 2006. The program provides rebate funding and technical assistance for farmers to retrofit their unprotected tractors with ROPS. The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health/Northeast Center for Agricultural and Occupational Health has organized this retrofit program which now provides rebates of 70% (up to \$703) of the entire cost to retrofit a tractor, as well as toll-free hotline assistance locating and pricing ROPS kits. This program is available to all farmers in New York. Interested individuals should contact the hotline by calling 1-877-ROPS-R4U. It's a call you can afford to make. Let's keep all New York alpaca breeders safe!



The operator of this tractor walked away from the accident with a few scratches. It had a ROPS fitted.



The operator of this tractor was crushed to death. His tractor didn't have a ROPS fitted. Tragically, around 250 Americans die this way every year.  
(Photos courtesy of [www.herculesrops.com](http://www.herculesrops.com))

It's worth a thought every day: How are you staying safely on your tractor?

# AFCNA Clip Collection at the Extravaganza

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadow Alpacas

The Empire Alpaca Association hopes to be able to offer an AFCNA Clip Collection again at the Empire Extravaganza. Last year our very first Regional Collection netted approximately 1200 pounds of fiber. At this point, it has not been determined whether or not the Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America will subsidize freight charges for Regional Clip Collections. Last year, for shipments of 200 lbs. or more, AFCNA paid 50% of the freight charges. On shipments of 500 lbs. or more, AFCNA paid 100% of the freight charges. This really provided a tremendous savings in shipping costs over sending fiber individually. If the AFCNA does offer subsidized shipping for the 2009 Clip Collection, the Empire Alpaca Extravaganza will again serve as a collection point.

In order to participate in the collection, you must box your fiber according to AFCNA requirements and pack it in 18" x 18" x 18" boxes. Fiber packaging instructions will be posted on the AFCNA website, [www.afcna.com](http://www.afcna.com). Once you have your fiber boxed, pre-register by emailing one of the Clip Coordinators listed below. Bring your prepackaged fiber to the Extravaganza and drop it off at the Clip Collection site. It's that simple! Fiber will be collected on Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 to 2:00. If you need to arrange a different time to drop off your fiber, you may do so by contacting one of the Regional Clip Coordinators.

Utilizing AFCNA is one of many options available to alpaca owners and breeders for processing their raw fleece into value-added merchandise. The Alpaca Fiber Co-op of North America is an agricultural cooperative that is wholly owned by its members. In order to become a member, you must produce alpaca fiber and purchase one voting share of common stock in AFCNA. The co-op accepts fiber from its members and processes it into finished products. Members may then purchase these finished goods at wholesale prices for resale. As a large-scale co-op, AFCNA is able to provide members with services at a much lower cost than they could obtain individually. A primary goal of AFCNA is to build a sustainable and successful alpaca fiber industry.

Once again, plans for the 2009 Clip Collection are tentative at this point in time. Updates will be posted on the AFCNA web site and in future Empire Alpaca Association newsletters. If you have questions regarding the collection, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Clip Coordinators listed below. Out of the barn and into yarn!

**Regional Clip Coordinators:** Ann Kennedy – Phone: (315) 406-5455 email: [limerickhill@yahoo.com](mailto:limerickhill@yahoo.com)  
Cindy Cuykendall – Phone: (315) 416-3142 email: [cuykendallfarms@aol.com](mailto:cuykendallfarms@aol.com)

Important points to remember:

- Follow the packing instructions on the AFCNA website. Both prime and seconds will be accepted. Each box must have your farm name, co-op number, and box number (ie. Box 1 of 5) clearly marked on the outside.
- You MUST use 18" x 18" x 18" boxes. In order to load the fiber onto pallets as required by AFCNA, we must have uniform size containers. Fiber will not be accepted in odd-sized boxes. The least expensive place we have found to obtain the correct boxes is U-line.com. We will have a limited supply of boxes on hand for purchase for those who are unable to obtain them in advance.
- You must pre-register your fiber for the collection. Email one of the coordinators with the number of boxes and total weight of the fiber you wish to contribute.
- If you are not a co-op member, you can still send fiber. Contact Ann Kennedy for information.

This is a great opportunity to send your fleece to the National Co-op without paying expensive freight charges. Don't miss out!

## Board Member Resigns

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

EAA Secretary and Board member Jeannine Anderson regrettably submitted her resignation effective at our July Board meeting. Jeannine's husband, Eric Gaze, has accepted a position as Director of Quantitative Reasoning at Bowdoin College and they will be moving to Maine in August. EAA By-Laws require Board members to be residents of New York state, therefore, Jeannine had to resign from the board. Jeannine's term expires October 2010 and EAA By-Laws require the remaining board members to select a replacement to complete the remaining term. The board is currently considering several candidates to complete Jeannine's term.

At our June meeting, Ann Merriwether was elected Secretary and will replace Jeannine as Secretary effective with our July 2009 meeting. In the 20 months that Jeannine has been on the EAA Board, she has established a fiber committee, initiated a "fiber corner" at the Extravaganza where there are demonstrations of various fiber arts, has written fiber related articles for the newsletter, created a "fiber tips" email blast, and served as Secretary since October 2008. Jeannine's long experience and her expertise in fiber arts will certainly be missed. We wish Jeannine, Eric and their daughter, Galen, much success and happiness in Maine!

## USDA Seeks Comments on NAIS

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Many of you may have received a letter or email message from Tom Vilsack, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) seeking input from farmers about the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Approximately 35 percent of the country's farmers are currently participating in the program and it is clearly the intent of the USDA to expand NAIS.

In his letter, Secretary Vilsack writes, "We need to work collaboratively to resolve concerns and move forward with animal disease traceability. The dialogue brings two goals to mind: 1) sharing accurate information about the current program, and 2) discussing how to work together to resolve or reduce issues of concern while creating a system which farmers can support."

The USDA is conducting "listening sessions" throughout the country and seeking input on their web site from producers and stakeholders. If you have concerns about NAIS or want to provide your input to the USDA, please visit their web site [www.usda.gov/nais/feedback.html](http://www.usda.gov/nais/feedback.html).

## AOBA EMERGENT HEALTH TASK FORCE

*Reprinted from AOBA membership email 6/16/09*

AOBA has formed the Emergent Health Issues Task Force and instituted a web based Veterinarian Forum. AOBA's Vet's Forum is now operational and is available to any licensed Veterinarian without cost. The emergent health issues task force is composed of Veterinarians who are developing a comprehensive health issues system within AOBA to react when National health issues occur. The initial major objectives of the group are as follows:

- This task force will recommend a structure for a panel of Veterinarians who will review major health issues as they emerge and make recommendations to AOBA for communication to the membership on the possible impact to the national herd and what, if any, course of action should be taken.
- Institute a peer review process composed of Veterinarians who will review articles and information on health/husbandry issues before they are posted on the AOBA website. This process will help to assure AOBA members that the information being posted on the website is current and accurate.

- Create a Veterinarian forum on the AOBA website where information can be shared and discussed among Veterinarians committed to the industry as well as archived for future reference.

If you haven't already, please encourage your vet to sign up and participate in AOBA's Vet Forum located on the web at [www.alpacaowners.com](http://www.alpacaowners.com). Contact AOBA Executive Director Bill Edmunds at [bill@aobamail.com](mailto:bill@aobamail.com) for more information or if your vet would like to participate in either the Emergent Health Issues Task Force and/or the peer review panel.

## **Local Laws and Ordinances May Not Apply to Farm Operations**

*Reprinted with permission by the author. This article originally appeared in the New York Farm Bureau's Legal Affairs Department's E-Newsletter on June 9, 2009*

**G**enerally, local governments, such as towns and villages, have extensive authority over a property owner's use of their own land through enactment and enforcement of zoning laws. This authority may be significantly curtailed, however, when it comes to farm operations.

New York State Law exempts farms located within "agricultural districts" from zoning laws if such laws unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations. The legislature enacted Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law in 1971 for the stated purposes of protecting, conserving and encouraging "the development and improvement of this state's agricultural lawn."<sup>1</sup> The legislature found that "many of the agricultural lands in New York State are in jeopardy of being lost for any agricultural purposes" due to local land use regulations inhibiting farming, as well as other deleterious side affects resulting from the extension of non-agricultural development into farm areas.<sup>2</sup> To this end, the legislature gave county legislative bodies the power to create "agricultural districts". Farms located within these areas are afforded special protection from interference by local governments.<sup>3</sup> When exercising their powers to regulate land use activities, local governments must do so in a manner consistent with the policy objectives of the statute and, therefore, are prohibited from unreasonably restricting or regulating farm operations within agricultural districts unless it can be shown that public health or safety is threatened.<sup>4</sup>

One of the greatest advantages afforded to farms by the statute is that a local government's actions are subject to review by the Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural and Markets (the "Department"). Typically, if one wanted to challenge a local law or a municipality's enforcement of its laws, a legal proceeding would have to be brought by the party challenging it. This would bring with it the costs and expenses associated with legal actions, including attorneys' fees. However, a farmer can request that the Department review a local government actions and law to determine if they are consistent with State Law. The Department, in essence, takes on the farmer's cause with its extensive resources and expertise relative to farming and the legal issues.

Therefore, if any issues arise relating to farm operations and the enactment or enforcement of local laws, a farmer should immediately contact the Department and get them involved at an early stage. The farmer may be able to avoid costly legal proceedings but still obtain a favorable result. In any event, it is always advisable to retain legal counsel to make sure that your legal rights are being fully protected and advanced.

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<sup>1</sup> *Town of Lysander v. Hafner*, 96 N.Y.2d 558, 733, N.Y.Supp.2d 358 (2001) citing L. 1971, Ch. 479, Sec. 1

<sup>2</sup> See *Id.* citing L. 1987 Ch. 774, Sec. 1 and Agriculture and Markets Law §300.

<sup>3</sup> Agriculture and Markets Law §305-a.

<sup>4</sup> See *Id.* citing Agriculture and Markets Law §305-a(1).

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**ALPACA  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION**



April 21, 2009

Dear Affiliate:

The **Alpaca Research Foundation** wishes to thank our many affiliates who have been so very generous and supportive of camelid research. It is with your donations and assistance that **ARF** has remained in the eyes of the alpaca community and thus, allowed valuable research to continue.

**Board Members:**

Alan A. Rosenbloom, MD  
Allan Dewald, MD  
Karen Baum, DVM  
Pat Long, DVM  
Patricia Craven, PhD  
Michelle Ing, DVM  
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As you may be aware, the **Alpaca Research Foundation** sponsors an annual '**Super Stud Raffle**' culminating in drawing and announcing winners at the AOBA National Conference. A donation of \$50.00 enters the donor's name in a drawing which offers the chance of a breeding to either a well-known huacaya or suri stud. This year, the outstanding huacaya stud is **PPPeruvian Royal Fawn**, co-owned by **Ernie and Barbara Kellogg of Double "O" Good Alpacas** and **Mike and Robin Tierney of Maple Brook Farm**. The suri stud up for auctioned breeding is **Peruvian Accoyo Montoyo**, owned by **Ken & Trudy Halley of Alpacas at Cloudy Pass**. The sole purpose of this raffle is to generate the much needed funds that allow the **Alpaca Research Foundation** to continue to support camelid research.

We are asking our affiliates throughout the United States to assist in this year's raffle. We ask that you remind your members about the value that this auction provides to them. Through the use of e-mail, snail mail, newsletters, phone calls, or just a post on your website you have the ability to play a vital role in the continuing research that affords each and every alpaca owner a healthier and happier herd!...and a healthier, happier herd makes for healthier and happier caregivers!

Through the research that has already been completed with funding from The **Alpaca Research Foundation**, all of us have gained a greater understanding of issues such as BVDV, many issues surrounding camelid metabolism, genetics, the efficacy of various vaccines and medications, West Nile Virus, ulcers, Mycoplasma haemolamae, corona virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, antihelminthic resistance.....and the list goes on. In short, our knowledge base, and that of our veterinarians, has grown by leaps and bounds as a direct result of the contributions made to The **Alpaca Research Foundation** and the resultant studies.

The '**Super Stud Raffle**' is one of ARF's largest fundraising events of the year. Your help in this worthwhile fund drive will be more than appreciated while you can also boast being a part of some of the most worthwhile work being done for all camelids and their owners.

Should you like further information or copy to include in any type of publication/ mailing, etc., please feel free to contact Rachelle Black at [wynthblack@earthlink.net](mailto:wynthblack@earthlink.net).

To purchase a Super Stud Raffle ticket log onto the ARF website at <http://www.alpacaresearchfoundation.org/> where a secure credit card transaction can be easily made. Tickets will also be available at the AOBA Conference. You need not be present to win!

Thank you for your consideration.

**Alan A. Rosenbloom, M.D., President**

# Steps to Prevent Plant Poisoning

~ Shirley A. Weathers, Rosebud Llamas

Every year, poisonous plants cause death, temporary and chronic pain and illness, abortions, decreased productivity, and birth defects involving hundreds of thousands of grazing and browsing livestock. The annual economic loss amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars. Although less is known about llama and alpaca susceptibility to plant toxins than other livestock, there are documented cases of poisoning of llamas by at least Oleander; Mountain, Black or Sierra laurel (*Leucothoe davisiae*); Rhododendron; Water hemlock (*Cicuta* spp.); Ponderosa, Western or Yellow pine (*Pinus ponderosa*); Yew (*Taxus* spp.) and Death camas (*Zigadenus* spp.). Camels reportedly have been poisoned by African plant species identical or related to western U.S. plants: Thornapple (*Datura stramonium*), Milk or Pencil bush (*Euphorbia tirucalli*), Lantana, Castorbean or Castor-oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) and Sorghum.\* Time will tell more about how llamas react to other plants that have harmed horses, sheep, cattle, goats or pigs, but using caution in allowing them access is the best policy in the meantime.

For complicated reasons of plant and animal evolution, well-nourished herbivores will generally avoid eating most toxic plants. The toxins in some plants make them unpalatable to animals—they either smell or taste bad. Animals learn from other animals, particularly their mothers, to avoid some of the other poisonous plants. Still other poisonous plants produce a disagreeable physiological sensation soon enough after ingestion that animals learn not to eat them at all or they stop before consuming toxic quantities. But these mechanisms of safe eating are not foolproof. As noted, above, poisoning does occur and when it does, it can be devastating to both animal and owner.

There are a variety of reasons why livestock eat poisonous plants. There are some to which livestock have been found to be attracted. Some unpalatable plants appear to lose their disagreeable odors or tastes when dried (as in hay); a significant cause of poisonings is consumption of toxic plant parts mixed in hay, silage, grain, or processed feed. Some typically safe plants become toxic when fertilized or treated with certain herbicides. They may simultaneously become more palatable. Weather stresses and other natural conditions may convert the non-toxic to toxic. Probably most importantly, if put into a situation where only poisonous plants are available or where they make up a large percentage of available forage, animals will eat them.

Whether or not animals will be sickened by ingesting particular toxic plants is also a complex matter. Not all species of livestock are equally affected by or susceptible to various plant toxins. For example, it is thought at this time that only equines contract “chewing disease,” a devastating illness involving irreversible brain damage caused by consumption of toxic amounts of *Centaurea solstitialis* or *Centaurea repens* (commonly known as Yellow starthistle and Russian knapweed, respectively). I personally choose to err on the side of caution and avoid feeding hay to our llamas that contains this plant. The relative health of the individual animal (or, if a ruminant, of the microflora in its rumen) can figure into how well it can handle some toxic substances in the plants it consumes. The digestive systems of some animal species can adapt to be able to detoxify higher levels of toxins with exposure. A substantial quantity of some plants must be ingested to trigger illness or death. A couple of leaves of other plants can kill.

Despite all of these variables (and more), experts agree that plant poisoning can be minimized. The best means is a combination of effective use of good information about toxic plants and the provision of adequate amounts of safe alternative food. In the unhappy event that poisoning occurs, being informed may facilitate effective response.

Here are some suggestions that may help owners of livestock of all types protect their animals from poisoning:

- Pasture management is critical. Learn about plants in pastures and the animals that will graze there. Seek help from Extension agents and others, if necessary. Some options:
  - Eliminate or fence securely around toxic plants, especially if animals may find them palatable or if they are highly toxic or abundant. NOTE: If you grub out highly poisonous plants such as the various Water hemlock species (*Cicuta* spp.), take appropriate precautions to protect yourself and others, especially children. (*Continues next page*)

- If animals will have access to less palatable toxic plants, ensure that they always have adequate safe forage available. Check plant levels and types periodically. Do not overgraze.
- Watch carefully in early spring or late fall when toxic plants may be more prevalent than others.
- Know which plants are drought resistant. They may be the only food available under some circumstances.
- Watch out for toxic plants that are evergreen from fall to spring.
- Ensure that animals have adequate water, as well as salt and mineral supplementation, if needed.
- Avoid giving access to plants during their toxic season(s).
- Check on your pastured animals regularly and know the signs of poisoning to allow prompt action in case poisoning occurs.
- Be careful with herbicides (including those that may be applied by others, e.g., local government entities). Learn about their direct effect on animals, whether animals may be attracted by application of the product and, if palatability is likely to increase, know about the inherent toxicity of those plants.
- Be prepared to identify and respond appropriately to toxic plants when animals will be taken into unfamiliar areas. New poisonous plants may be eaten simply because the animal has no experience with them.
- Avoid driving animals through areas with high concentrations of toxic plants, particularly if they are hungry.
- When tying, picketing, or staking animals, identify, and avoid areas where they are likely to consume toxic plants. If at all possible, find a place that is grassy, rather than leafy. Most, although not all, wild grasses are safe forage. [Be able to identify and avoid *Triglochin maritima* (known in most areas as Seaside arrowgrass) and *Zigadenus* spp. (commonly known as Death camas, but there are several other common names).]
- Do not assume that others know about poisonous plants. Feeding animals “treats” seems to be an almost irresistible urge of humans. Educate both adults and children who may come in contact with animals so that they know not to feed them leaves, fruits, etc. (*This exercise will also alert children to the whole issue of poisonous plants. Many plants are at least as dangerous for children to eat as livestock.*) Consider providing visitors with “official treats” that animals like and can safely eat.
- If animals are rented or lent to others, orient the temporary caretakers to toxic plants along with other instructions on care and handling. Provide plant identification resources to be taken along with the animals.
- When selling animals, ensure that buyers are aware of toxic plants. Consider providing pertinent materials to the new owners.
- Do not feed yard or garden vegetation (clippings or trimmings) to livestock.
- Try to arrange to walk uncut hay fields before buying and check hay when feeding. Buy grain and processed feeds from reputable sources.
- Consider removing toxic trees and shrubs in corrals, pastures, and yard that could be accessible to livestock. Of course, the urgency of this measure depends on the toxicity of the plants.
- Anticipate accidental circumstances such as leaves blown by wind or the fact that animals sometimes get out.
- The safest course during Christmas and other holidays is to avoid feeding trees or other greenery to livestock. Although *Pinus ponderosa* (Ponderosa pine, among other common names) is the most commonly referenced harmful member of the *Pinus* genus, other species and other conifers also may be toxic, especially if consumed in large quantities over a short period. Many common types of holiday decorative greenery can be deadly.

- Check branches and tree limbs brought down in pastures by storms to ensure that they are not from toxic trees.
- Plant poisoning is generally a complex medical situation and will probably require a veterinarian's evaluation and care. The following may be helpful for livestock owners to keep in mind:
  - Establish a connection with a veterinarian before an emergency arises. Locate a practitioner familiar with your species of animal(s) and involve him or her in routine care.
  - Ask for information about any plants in the area that may already have caused problems. If other animals have been poisoned by local plants, there is a good chance that local veterinarians at least will be aware of that. They also may have some good advice to give you about prevention or response or both.
  - If you will be taking animals into a situation where veterinarian assistance will be difficult to obtain, ask your veterinarian to discuss some prudent actions to take in the event of poisoning. Always notify a veterinarian when plant poisoning is suspected. Be prepared to provide him or her with as much information as possible about the situation.
  - Discuss appropriate supportive/symptomatic care you may be able to provide to sick animals and be prepared to provide it until assistance arrives.
  - Try to identify any suspect plants.
  - Get a sample.
  - Inspect the area where the animal was grazing. Try to determine the amount and duration of consumption.
  - Observe and make careful note of any physiological or behavioral signs the affected animal may exhibit.
- Keep an open mind and investigate other possible toxic agents to which a sickened animal may have been exposed, as well as the possibility that another type of illness may be involved.

\*Murray E. Fowler, "Plant Poisoning in Camelids" in *Poisonous Plants - Proceedings of the Third International Symposium*, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1992, pp. 335-39.

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## So Much More

~ Jody Hatch, Salmon River Alpacas

The definition of agist is 'to feed or pasture for a fee'. What a great way to add income to the farm account. "I could earn *so much more* to do what I already do!" A signed agisting contract full of specifics that states fees and services provided is a sure way to sharpen your mathematic addition skills. The added income is welcome in any economy and often times provides the opportunity for expanding our network, gaining new contacts and leads, and brokering animals by having a larger selection available for prospective buyers. It is a simple idea in theory but there is *so much more* to consider...

*Risk:* You are now responsible for the investment of others.....enough said!

*Specifics:* Agisting contracts vary from a simple one line statement including only board fee to several pages of detailed items including (but certainly not limited to!):

- Basic maintenance coverage fee
- Veterinarian availability and fees
- Farm setup/management / animal handling approach/philosophy
- Cria care / sick alpaca care

- Documentation / record keeping
- Educational training
- Insurance coverage for animals agisted
- Alpaca shows & transportation (shows, outside breedings, etc)
- Miscellaneous expenses
- Brokers fee (if needed)
- Other unique services only *you* can provide (ad work, design, etc)

Stop and think about everything you do for your own alpaca herd that is beyond 'feed and pasture'. You'll be amazed at the 'so much more' you do. Many of these things may be unique services that you may be able to offer to potential agistors.

The daily care of the animals is easily put under control, but the most important work involves *people*, not animals. So what about the owners? Whether your agisting customers are hands off investors, new breeders not yet ready, or involved breeders without a home farm, it is important to remember that these folks are expecting more than what can be written into a contract; a *relationship*. Are you willing to provide the 'more'? No matter the level of involvement, the relationship you establish involves trust, communication, direction, support, and availability. There is no dollar amount that can be given for peace of mind, nor is there a dollar amount worthy of receiving when you know the 'people' aspect just does not jive.

Take the time to ask potential agistors what they expect. The answers to these questions will give you valuable information in determining if this is a compatible match. The time spent defining your own expectations of agisting for others will also help you decide if you are able and/or willing to meet their expectations. This will help guide you in creating a positive experience for all involved. Be fair, be honest, and be open. You will earn *so much more* than money.

EAA member, Robin Schatzkin, Autumn Kiss Alpacas, lives on Long Island and agists her alpacas on another farm. She is very happy with this arrangement and feels there are many more like her out there who would benefit from this arrangement from the owner's perspective. Robin is interested in compiling a resource list of alpaca farms interested in agisting animals for owners not able to have their own farm. If you'd like more information on this please contact Robin at [autumnkissalpacas@gmail.com](mailto:autumnkissalpacas@gmail.com)



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