



President's Message

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas

As I sit down to write my first "President's Message" for the Empire Alpaca Association Newsletter, my first thought is, "Wow, my name looks weird under that heading!" (c'mon admit it, you were thinking the same thing!). I have not yet adjusted to the idea of being President of what I consider to be one of the best organizations in the industry. It is, to put it mildly, a daunting task. I am very much aware that I am following a really class act. Steve McCarthy has done a superb job of leading our organization, and has donated countless hours of hard work and behind-the-scenes worry to make it all appear so smooth. Thank you, Steve.

I've wracked my brain trying to come up with some *real* message for this first attempt; some pithy bit of wisdom that would be worth your time to read. Well, anyway, I still have to write *something*.....This is a difficult time, both for our organization and for each of us individually as alpaca breeders and business people. In the current economic climate it is difficult to make sales, to make ends meet, and to keep up the morale. Just as we have each done individually, Empire has had to make some tough choices, to scale back on expenditures and try to find ways to cut costs without sacrificing quality. We have had to prioritize, to really focus on what is most important to the membership and the industry. We've had to change, and change is never easy. We have decided to change the newsletter delivery method from paper to electronic, a change that will save a significant amount of money over time. We are changing the format of the Symposium, moving from a 3-day event to 2 days, and incorporating the veterinarian session into the same time-frame as the owner/breeder seminars. We will still provide a quality educational experience for camelid vets, but we will do it without paying exorbitant prices for a third day's usage of the venue. These are just two examples of the changes that are being made as Empire seeks to thrive and grow as an organization during trying times.

Change is **not** easy, but neither is it always bad. I have heard many of my fellow breeders, and some wannabe-breeders say that the bottom has fallen out of the alpaca market, that our Hey Day is over. To that, I say, "Paca Pool!" They say that never again will this industry be what it was. To that, I say, "Now you're on to something!" The industry will **not** be the same. We will prioritize, streamline, and adapt. I believe that the current market conditions will push us faster toward the traditional livestock model, a direction in which we were already heading, but now we'll get there more quickly. We will lose some good things as we are forced to make cuts and choices, and we'll mourn those losses. Yet I believe with every fiber of my being that our industry will emerge on the other side of the tunnel leaner, stronger, and better than ever. I have not been in this business for an awfully long time, but nonetheless many of the truths and assumptions on which I built my business are no longer valid. That does not mean that my business must fail. It does mean that I need to reassess and adapt in order to continue to be successful. We've all heard the saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Perhaps the definition of rigidity is doing the same thing under different circumstances and expecting the same results. We are neither insane nor rigid. We will succeed.

EAA Board of Directors

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Cindy Cuykendall ~ 315- 685-7410
Song Meadows Alpacas

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Barb Rossi ~607-387-7122
Bel Canto Farm

2010 Symposium & Fleece Event

~Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Mark your calendars because ‘Yes Virginia, there *will* be a Symposium and Fleece Event in 2010, including alpaca health seminars for veterinarians!’ As discussed at the Annual Meeting in October, profits from the Extravaganza allow EAA to heavily subsidize the educational symposium, fleece show and veterinarian seminars. Education is a key part of EAA’s mission statement and the EAA boards have always believed that using Extravaganza profits for education is important.

With reduced attendance at the Extravaganza, profits were significantly lower than in prior years, requiring belt tightening across all areas of EAA. After the Extravaganza, our largest outlay is the Symposium and Fleece Event; unfortunately, Symposium fees and fleece entry fees do not come close to covering the costs of putting on such an event. For example, the fleece portion of the 2009 event (fleece show and skein, spin-off and fiber arts competitions), judges fees, AOBA fees, and ribbons alone cost approximately \$14,000 – close to twice the revenues generated from these competitions. The EAA board believes that these are important components of our show system and our industry and that it is important to subsidize these. This year, some shows have completely eliminated fleece shows because of the large losses they generate; we are not doing that at Empire.

Elements of the Symposium and Fleece event are still coming together, but here is what we know:

- Dates: February 20th & 21st
- Location: Holiday Inn, Wolfe Road, Albany
- Speakers: Dr. Chris Cebra, Dr. Steve Hull, and AOBA judges Ruth Elvestad & Wini Labrecque. More to be announced
- Topics: Parasite Management, Alpaca Skin Issues, Fiber Sorting and Grading, Cria Care. Additional topics and schedule will be posted on the Empire web site.
- Cost for Symposium: \$175 for Empire members, \$225 for non Members.
- Vet session: Saturday February 20. \$50 cost
- Fleece Show: Registration open now. Spin-off deadline January 4, 2010; Fleece deadline February 7.
- Symposium Registration: Goes live on January 1, 2010

2009 Extravaganza Is In the Books

~ Scott Young, Hilltop Alpacas

It’s a wrap, a closed case, in the books; however you want to say it, the 2009 Extravaganza is behind us now. By all accounts this year’s show was spectacular in many people’s eyes. We’ve heard lots of positives about the show so we really hope everyone that attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We were down between 25 to 30 percent in entry numbers but we were feeling very lucky where we ended up, as we know most shows around the country are experiencing at least that. We were, for the 3rd year in a row, the largest Fall show in the Country. A big thank you goes out to all of you who made the Extravaganza a show you chose to attend in ‘09. I think the Board did a spectacular job keeping the expenses in line. Of course with the reduced numbers some cuts had to be made, and the hope was they were not in places that made the Extravaganza special for so many. They have worked hard over the years keeping entry fees stable to make it easier to attend for the membership.

In conversations with the judges, they were again impressed with the quality of the alpacas that came to the show. The Extravaganza does draw some stiff competition every year, so any ribbon at the show is a wonderful thing. An award that debuted at the '08 Extravaganza, the Judge's Choice Award, was again handed out and this year's recipients were: WGA Isis By Nexus, owned by Wool and Grey Alpacas for the Huacaya Female Judge's Choice Award, and TKO's King of the Ladies, owned by TKO Alpacas and Hilltop Alpacas for the Huacaya Male Judge's Choice Award. Congratulations to everyone for the quality breeding programs you are producing and selecting to bring to the show.

We must extend our appreciation with a huge "Thank You" to two invaluable groups at the Extravaganza. Thank you to all of the volunteers who gave of themselves to make the show a success. We always hear about how friendly everyone is and that statement is really about all of the volunteers that turn out in droves to help at the show. If you tried to help this year and I didn't call on you I am profusely sorry. This year we had so many people offer I didn't have enough places to put everyone, but please try again next year as we always need tons of help every year and our volunteers make a huge difference. Our next thank you, which was more important than ever this year, is to our Sponsors. Even though entry numbers were down, Sponsorships were the same and that support was drastically needed. I hope everyone understands that the entry fees have 100% been able to stay the same for 5 or 6 years now because of the farms that choose to sponsor the show in any capacity. So on behalf of the Board and Membership I will say a gigantic "thank you" to all of the Sponsors.

I say it every year but it is true, before we even left the building we were already working on the 2010 version of the show. It is worth mentioning next year will be the 10th Anniversary Edition of the Extravaganza! It is hard to believe that the Extravaganza got its start in what has now become infamously known as the "Pig Barn" with a little known judge working one of her first shows, Amanda VandenBosch, 10 years ago. Boy time sure flies!!

COMING SOON

Fundraiser for the 2010 Symposium:

~ Barb Rossi, Bel Canto Farm

The primary mission of the Empire Alpaca Association is to provide educational opportunities for members, enthusiasts, and veterinarians interested in improving their awareness and understanding of the science and business of the alpaca industry.

Historically, EAA fulfills this mission through the annual Empire Alpaca Symposium and Fleece Event where scientists, judges, breeders and aligned professionals speak on a wide range of alpaca topics including herd health, reproduction, nutrition, retail, accounting, fiber science and processing. This event has been almost entirely subsidized by proceeds from the Extravaganza, however due to the recent decline in revenues from the show, an alternative revenue stream is needed if we are to sustain this key educational event.

The BOD is proposing a fundraiser to generate revenue to partially subsidize the Symposium. Members and non-members may donate a drive-by breeding(s) to a Herdsire and the proceeds will be used in support of the Symposium. This is a great way to promote your farm and sires while helping EAA continue its educational commitment to members. We hope you will consider participating by donating a sire or placing a bid. We will be sending specific information regarding the fundraiser soon.

The Empire Alpaca Association and Board of Directors thank you for your continued support and look forward to providing members with another fabulous Empire Alpaca Symposium and Fleece Event in 2010. **Contact: Barb Rossi if you are interested in donating a breeding.**

(607) 387-7122 or info@belcantofarm.com

*** SPECIFIC INFORMATION COMING YOUR WAY SOON ***

Election of Board Members & New Officers

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas

The 2009 election of representatives to the Board of Directors is over and the results are in. Both incumbent Board members Sue Zelazny and Ann Merriwether were re-elected to a second three-year term. Congratulations, Sue and Ann. I would like to extend a special thank you to our two runners-up, Steve Fisch of Crosswind Farm Alpacas and Jody Hatch of Salmon River Alpacas. Your willingness to offer your time and expertise to Empire is truly appreciated. Thanks also to our nominating committee for their time and effort in coming up with a great slate of candidates and assisting with this election.

One of the first items of business for the “new” Board was the election of officers. Much to our dismay, Steve McCarthy informed us that he was not up for another year as President. The new slate of officers is as follows:

- President – Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas
- Vice-President – Sue Caston, Patchwork Meadow Alpacas
- Secretary – Ann Merriwether, Nyala Farm Alpacas
- Treasurer – Sue Zelazny, Andes Dandies, LLC
- Members-at-Large – Steve McCarthy, Dick McCoy and Barb Rossi

Alpacas Were a Hit at the Horse Show

~ Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas

Alpacas were among the invitees at the Syracuse Invitational Horse Show held at the Syracuse OnCenter October 28 – November 1. Several alpacas from Song Meadows were on display in the vendor area of the show throughout the 5-day event. The ‘pacas and I were invited to participate in the educational portion of the Syracuse Invitational Sport Horse Tournament. Over the course of the first two days, approximately 800 elementary school children from throughout Onondaga County were bused to the OnCenter for an educational field trip. The alpaca exhibit was one of several 25-minute stops on the field trip for each group of 40 – 60 students and teachers. The students were treated to a brief lesson about the alpacas, as well as demonstrations of fiber processing. Through the use of a small picker (basically a box full of precisely positioned nails), a drum carder, a spinning wheel, felting needles, and a tri-loom, the kids were taught how raw fiber goes “From Critter to Creation”. Although the large group size did not allow for close personal contact with the animals, the kids were able to view them in the pen and were able to get a feel for the fiber from a small sample that was passed around. The questions were many and varied. There was the usual “Do they spit?” (Only if you do something to deserve it), an occasional scholarly inquiry such as “Are they ruminants?”, and some more surprising queries – “Is that stuff you’re passing around clean?” (It was cleaner when it started than it will be when I get it back!). All in all, the kids, the teachers, and I had a wonderful time. The ‘packies?...well, not so much. They did hold up well and in general were very good sports about the whole ordeal.

The alpacas and the fiber demonstrations were a huge hit with the show-going public as well.

The Invitational is truly an event of International caliber, and drew crowds from far and near. Many people expressed interest in visiting an alpaca farm near them, and were pleased to learn that the Empire web site features a map of member farms with contact information. The alpacas certainly garnered attention as they strolled down the sidewalks of Syracuse and in through the front doors of the OnCenter! It was a long five days, but very rewarding and productive.

The Empire Alpaca Association is looking for interested folks to join the fiber committee. If you have ideas about promoting and developing NY alpaca fiber we would love to have you join. Experience with fiber production and/or fiber arts is a plus but just being an admitted fiber-holic is just fine! Please contact Ann Merriwether 607-785-8226 or amerriwe@binghamton.edu if you are interested.

Meet your Board of Directors



From Left to Right: Sue Zelazny, Sue Caston, Cindy Cuykendall, Ann Merriwether, Dick McCoy, Barb Rossi, Steve McCarthy

President	Cindy Cuykendall, Song Meadows Alpacas	315-685-7410
Vice President	Sue Caston, Patchwork Meadow Alpacas	518-673-5130
Secretary	Ann Merriwether, Nyala Farm Alpacas	607-785-8226
Treasurer	Sue Zelazny, Andes Dandies, LLC	585-798-0867
Board Members At Large	Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm	518-794-6294
	Dick McCoy, Foxrun Farms Alpacas	315-626-2672
	Barb Rossi, Bel Canto Farm	607-387-7122

The Board of Directors would like to thank its members for their support. Your generosity, dedication and enthusiasm make EAA one of the leaders in the alpaca industry. We look forward to serving you to the best of our abilities and are proud to be your representatives for the Empire Alpaca Association.

If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas regarding EAA please contact any of the board members. We will always welcome your thoughts and opinions and urge you to be in touch with us so we may serve you better.

***WARM WISHES THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS
AND A
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!***

Do We Have Your Correct Email Address?

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

So many people change their internet providers and email addresses these days, forget to update their information in the EAA system and miss out on lots of important information! Remember, you are in control of all of your EAA account information; if you do not keep it up to date, you will miss out on customers contacting you and all of my irritating emails! So log into your EAA account (click on "Login" in the upper right hand corner of any EAA web page), enter your EAA ID & password, and check your data that is in the system. Please update any out of date or incomplete information.

While you are in the system, please check that your names and other information are accurate and spelled correctly. The data you enter into the system appears in the listing of member farms and is also used to generate mailing labels and emails, so please make sure it all appears the way you want it to appear. It is also the way potential customers can contact you. I am always surprised to see how many people put all of their information into the system in lower case or all CAPS. The reality is that a big part of the alpaca business is marketing and presentation; if you type in your information sloppily and it appears as such in the listing when potential breeders are searching for farms, it may leave a less than pleasant impression of your operation on potential customers.

Marketing Your Alpacas at Little or No Cost

~ Dick McCoy, Fox Run Farms

Someone once said, "A terrible thing happens without advertising – nothing!" I believe that statement is true, but advertising does not have to be expensive. You can get lots of people to visit your farm and see your alpacas at very little or no cost. Small events can be both fun and productive. Community events such as fairs, festivals, art shows, church events, parades and even grand openings are a great way to get your alpacas out in front of the public. Contact the people running the event and ask for permission to be there. Most will love the idea of alpacas at their event. All you need is a small pen, business cards to hand out and perhaps a few alpaca products. You might plan a small open house at your farm taking advantage of free advertising in the upcoming events section of your local shopper and on the free community events spot of your local radio stations. Remember that one of the advantages of your EAA membership is the ability to advertise your event on the Empire web site's Calendar of Events. You can easily submit information here:

<http://www.empirealpacaassociation.com/Calendar/eventForm.asp>

The Empire Alpaca Association can also provide you with EAA brochures to which you can affix your farm contact information and use as a handout. When planning to attend a particular event with your alpacas, remember to invite the folks stopping by to visit your farm. Try to collect their contact information so you can follow-up later. Also remember that your mouth is your best marketing tool. Chances are that a few of the people you talk to will be interested enough to visit your farm and very good things can happen from that point.

