

AO News

Published by the members of Alpaca Ontario

Volume 4 - Issue 1 • February 2006



Recaping the
2005 Royal Winter
Fair...**pg5**



Spring is
just around
the corner!

**Alpaca Ontario
Show 2006...pg3**

A message from the President



With the beginning of a new year what better way to introduce **Steve and Jennifer Hagey** our new Newsletter Committee and our newly designed newsletter. Steve's skill as a graphic designer has certainly enhanced the professional look of our publication.

The Board of Directors and our Committees have been very busy as you will read throughout the newsletter. As everything we do is volunteer driven it requires a lot of dedicated members' involvement to keep things running.

We are extremely thankful for the contributions and time that volunteers have given to all of the 2005 functions.

I would like to encourage everyone to let us know how you can help or if there is something you would like to see changed or new programs started. The ideas and involvement of our members is the very reason that Alpaca Ontario continues on its positive trek.

The annual general will be held again on Friday April 8 at 7:15 pm. This is a great opportunity for members to hear from all the

Committee Chairs and Directors on what has been accomplished in the past year and hear about future goals and objectives. This is also a good opportunity to meet the board of directors and committee chairs to share your thoughts and of course to socialize afterwards. Please plan on attending.

Our committee's are well underway with the preparations for the 2006 halter show and seminar weekend in Orangeville. This year's show will be an unforgettable event which will prove to be the show by which other shows will be measured. The Show Committee has once again raised the bar another notch. By now you should have received your show package in the mail. Be sure to take advantage of the online stud auction and the early bird registration deadline.

At our board of directors meeting on January 28, an election was held for position of President as I'm completing my 2 year term in April. I'm pleased to announce that **Kathleen Holmes** was voted as your new President of Alpaca Ontario. Kathleen has two years of experience on the board in charge of the advertising committee and is a well respected breeder in Salem Ontario. Congratulations and best wishes Kathleen.

Having spent 4 years on the board of directors, including the two years as president, I would like to thank everyone for helping to make this a truly enjoyable experience. I would also like to thank all the Directors and Committee Chairs that make everything happen. The alpaca industry in Ontario is strong and growing every year we need only look at the growing list of new members and entries to the annual show. With everyone's help we can keep the momentum moving ahead to ensure a long lasting viable marketplace.

Thank you, I look forward to seeing everyone in Orangeville.

Sincerely,

Robert Quigley
President, Alpaca Ontario

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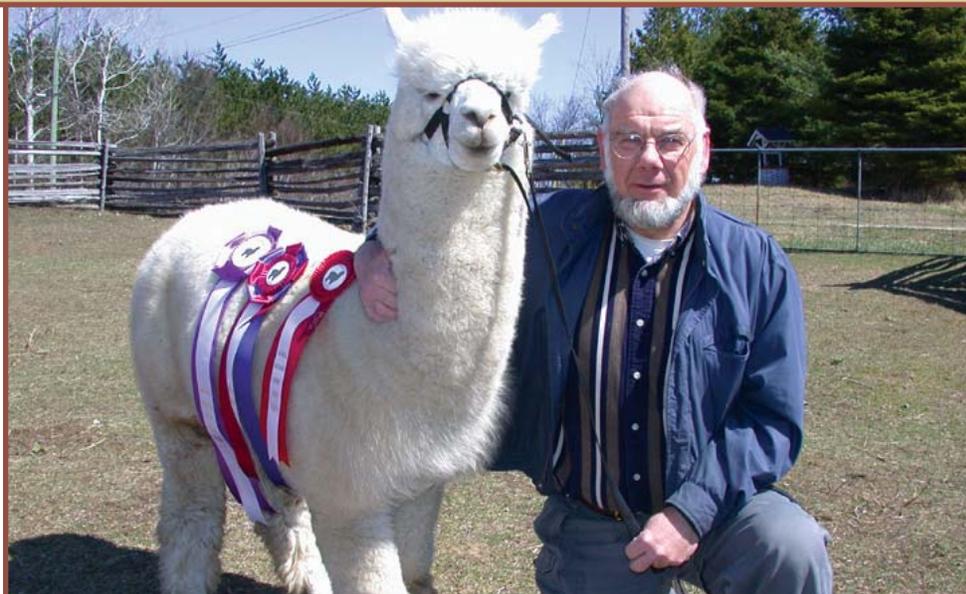
Alpaca Ontario represents the collective interests of Alpaca Owners and Breeders in Ontario to actively promote the awareness of the Alpaca and related fibre industry, encourage through education the highest quality Alpaca husbandry and breeding practices, and foster interaction among its members.

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Alpaca Ontario SHOW



by **Brian Riff**

Hey did you hear! According to Warton Willy winter is almost over which means it is time for alpaca enthusiasts to make plans to attend the annual Alpaca Ontario spring show. At the time of reading this you will have either just received the show information and registration package or it will be soon arriving in the mail. If not or you would like a package sent to someone else email gsgreen@sympatico.ca. I urge you to read the show information completely and visit www.alpacaontario.ca to see the quality line up of studs whose services have been donated for the gold sponsorship online stud auction. All funds raised through the online auction from Friday, February 24 to Tuesday February 28, 2006 go to Alpaca Ontario to grow the annual event and to promote the awareness and growth of the Canadian alpaca industry. In appreciation of your gold or other level of sponsorship support Alpaca Ontario extends to you a range of benefits according to the level of sponsorship. You can also support Alpaca Ontario and promote your farm and/or business by purchasing a Featured Farm Showcase or Vendor space. The Featured Farm Showcase gives your alpacas, farm and products high visibility in the main show area. Several vendor spaces have already been booked. These are sure to attract a lot of attention so don't be left out book yours today. See the Alpaca Ontario web site for complete details of the sponsorship program.

The show judge **Amanda VandenBosch** is a Senior AOBA Halter and Fleece Judge and an Alpaca Judge Trainer and Instructor in the USA. Amanda qualified as an International Alpaca Judge trained in Peru at the International Alpaca Judging School (IAJS) in 2000. She has judged alpaca shows in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia. She travels worldwide judging alpacas and giving presentations and workshops on alpacas and showing. She too travels to the United Kingdom and teaches for the British Alpaca Society on a regular basis. Amanda is a native of the United Kingdom, traveling and working in South Australia with thoroughbred horses before settling in the USA in 1991. With her husband Vince and their two sons Cody (4) and Hunter (6 months) they operate Flying Dutchman Alpacas, LLC in California and Oregon, raising both huacaya and suri alpacas.

Besides Amanda's presentation of Alpaca Selection and Alpaca Marketing several other seminar options are being offered on the Sunday. You are sure to find a topic that will interest you. Since some of the workshops have a maximum number of registrants you need to act quickly and list the seminars in order of preference for each person registering for Sunday on the Workshops and Lectures Registration Form. Then send this form along with the Registration Remittance Form and payment to **Susan Garrett**. Registering early

>continued on pg4

"...winter is almost over which means it is time for alpaca enthusiasts to make plans to attend the annual Alpaca Ontario spring show."



not only gives you a better chance of getting your first seminar choices it saves you money as well. Early registration with reduced fees ends March 3, 2006.

At this time of restructuring of CLAA and birth of Alpaca Canada the need to have a liaison with Alpaca Canada and Can Cam has become critical. This liaison role would be to communicate back and forth to the association and the membership – to get the wheels in motion so that everyone gets the message.

"Without a fibre industry, there is no alpaca industry... and we have a limited time".

The show will kick start this liaison with a forum led by **Michael Dixon**, a director of Can Cam on the emerging Canadian Camelid Fibre Industry.



The purpose of this forum is two-fold: firstly, you will have an opportunity to learn more about CAN CAM, how its mandate is supported by the Canadian Llama and Alpaca Association (CLAA) and the Natural Fibre Centre (NFC), CAN CAM's history, the programs that they offer including the Fibre Value Credit System, the pricing structure, Value

Chain Marketing, the challenges they have met, the challenges they continue to meet, as well as the challenges of the fibre industry in Canada as it relates to the global fibre market. Can Cam is going to be working very closely with Alpaca Canada on these issues as well.

The second component of the forum is to allow participants to provide Can Cam with some feedback on these very same issues. We are certain that this will prove to be a very exciting discussion and it is hoped that it will help link many of the players – policy makers, processors, and producers, at a critical stage in the emerging Canadian camelid fibre industry. Mike has flown over specially and is passionate about CAN CAM's success, so please come out and join the debate to help ensure our industry's success!

All alpacas entered in the show must be CLAA registered and all alpacas brought to Orangeville must be tested for the BVDV virus. Proof of both will be required at registration. The BVDV virus test needs only be done once in an alpaca's life time.

The aim this year is to have check-in of alpacas including health and colour verification happen upon unloading of your alpacas and prior to placing them in their pens. The logistics of this are being worked out. Any information you need to know will be posted to the Alpaca Ontario web site as details are firmed up. Look for designated check-in points and please be patient as the volunteers staffing these points do their best to minimize delays.

The important dates to be aware of are:

- The online auction will take place from February 24 to 28, 2006 on the AO web-site. The final bids will be accepted up to 8:00pm on February 28th, at which time the auction will close.
- Early bird registration fees apply for registrations that Susan receives by mail March 3rd or earlier.
- All Full Fleece Halter Show registrations with payment must be received by March 21st. No refunds will be made for halter show entries withdrawn after March 21st.

- All Workshops and Lectures registrations, as well as, purchasing dinner tickets must be received with payment by March 29th. No refunds will be made for cancellations after March 29th .
- SHOW WEEKEND April 7, 8, 9, 2006

See you in Orangeville!

Brian Riff

Chair, Alpaca Ontario Show Committee

2006 ANNUAL

Alpaca Show

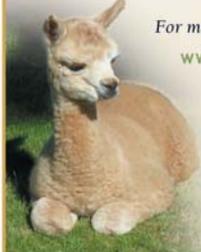


APRIL 7-9, 2006

Orangeville Fairgrounds

in Orangeville, Ontario
Senior US Judge Amanda VandenBosch

FRIDAY:	Registration, setup and Annual General Meeting
SATURDAY:	Show Ring 9 am to 5 pm, vendors, displays, banquet
SUNDAY:	Workshops, pre-registration required



For more information:
www.alpacaontario.ca

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And watch for
the Fall Education
Seminars!

Meet this years judge, **Amanda VandenBosch**



by **Catherine Timms**

Amanda VandenBosch is a Senior AOBA Halter and Fleece Judge and an Alpaca Judge Trainer and Instructor in the USA. She qualified as an International Alpaca Judge trained in Peru at the International Alpaca Judging School (IAJS) in 2000. She has judged alpaca shows in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia. Amanda travels worldwide judging alpacas and gives presentations and workshops on alpacas and showing. Her "hands-on" workshops are well sought after. She also teaches for the British Alpaca Society in the UK on a regular basis.

Amanda has spent many hours volunteering at AOBA National Conferences and has participated on numerous committees over the years. She is a past President of Calpaca, a regional Affiliate and currently serves as the Chair of the AOBA Judge's Advisory Committee (JAC). Amanda has had the opportunity to work with many of the world's leading experts in the field of alpacas.

A native of the United Kingdom, Amanda traveled and worked in South Australia with thoroughbred horses before settling in the USA in 1991. With her husband Vince and their two sons Cody (4) and Hunter (6 months), they operate Flying Dutchman Alpacas, LLC in California and Oregon, raising both huacaya and suri alpacas.

UPDATE

Alpaca Ontario Events 2005

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair 2005

by **Robert Quigley**

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is held the first week of November every year in Toronto. It is the largest indoor agricultural fair of its kind in the world. Ontario's Alpaca industry is fortunate to have this exhibition in Ontario so that we can showcase our wonderful animals, their fibre and related products.

Since its inception Alpaca Ontario has always had a very positive presence at the Royal and despite challenges, this year was no exception. Royal patrons love to see the alpacas. In the face of numerous road blocks while trying to negotiate a location with the Royal, AO was able to acquire a smaller booth near the Education area. It was a challenge to find volunteers this year; thankfully, twenty three volunteers came forward to staff the booth and to answer the visitors many questions.

If you've not had the opportunity in the past, make an effort to bring animals and volunteer your time at the AO Booth at the Royal in 2006, you will find that the rewards are tremendous.

International Plowing Match & Rural Expo 2005

by **Henry Mengers**

The Ontario Plowmen's Association formed in 1911 in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Each year, this parenting body, along with a local chapter of the Plowmen's Association, organizes and sanctions a plowing competition and agricultural exhibition. Through this organization, the dedication and leadership of Ontario's rural community has made their Plowing Match the premiere farm show in North America.

Along with the demonstration of plowing skills in many different classes, anything agricultural is on display. Rural life is celebrated and its many facets shared with the general public.

Several hundred acres of farmland are transformed into large and small lots for exhibitions, demonstrations, RV accommodations, and a Tent City full of exhibitors. This Tent City is a large section of land divided into streets and service roads. Hydro and water are installed and for five days in late September, a Tent City thrives in the country.

Alpaca Ontario was present at the IMP & Rural Expo 2005, held near Listowel from September 20 to 24. A large tent is rented to provide some protection from the variable weather of late September. Sidewalls help to keep out the rain, but the wind is an ever present menace. Some days the warm fall sun can make the inside of the tent too warm, so we arrange to have the tent set back from the street providing a region out in the open for the alpacas to be truly out doors and enjoy the fresh air. During the less pleasant days, the alpacas are able to stay under cover away from the harsher elements.

Inside the tent, volunteers have provided display boards to inform the browsing public of our amazing alpaca. Some fibre, yarn and finished products provide evidence of the wonderful material these animals produce. Local alpaca breeders generously bring a few of their alpacas to reside at the IPM for a day, allowing the rural and urban public to view these gracious animals "in the flesh". On most days, a spinner is present to demonstrate the art of turning alpaca fibre into yarn. >continued on pg6

Thousands of people attend the IPM each day creating an immense potential to educate and inform people of our livestock alternative. Every day, our volunteers can relate having a chat with some acutely interested parties. They leave each day thrilled to have shared their interest and devotion to alpacas and their exquisite fibre.

Alpaca Ontario expresses its deepest thanks to the volunteers at the IPM 2005: **Victor Brown; Delbert and Mary Thompson; Suelaine, Joellen and Peter Poot; Heather Blanchard; Christie Poolman; Robert Quigley; Chatherine Timms; Anna Mengers; Susan Garrett; Henry Mengers** and of course the alpacas which included; Erebus, Adonis, San Quinten, Bruiser, Rocky Mountain, Roxanne, Miss Demeanor, Donnica, Grand Larceny, Black Hallow Lotto Express, Mr. Jury, and Joanne.



This year, the IPM & Rural Expo is being held south of Peterborough, September 19 to 23. The organizing committee has asked us to provide a display in the Education Area. Please consider what you can do to promote the alpaca industry via the IPM Peterborough. We need bodies to staff our tent/booth, display boards for the Education area, product samples, spinners on site, and of course, those gorgeous, gentle alpacas for the public to view and fall in love with.

Consider making Peterborough County and Rice Lake part of your fall travel plans. Enjoy the region and spend a few days at the IPM. Donate some time and volunteer. You will have the time of your life talking alpaca!

Fall Education Day 2005

On a fine fall day last October, 84 alpaca enthusiasts gathered together to listen to **Eric Hoffman**, an icon in the alpaca world, speak on everyone's favourite subject, the alpaca.

by **Catherine Timms**

Eric's presentation provided us with a look through the history of alpaca evolution, from their North American ancestors which evolved as many as 11 million years ago, to their domestication by Andean pastoralists, to the fall of the Incan empire, and finally to the present day alpaca. Eric's account of Incan customs, the incredibly high regard to which they held the alpaca and the fibre goods that were produced, and the extreme pressures that followed the Spanish Conquest more than 470 years ago, was compelling. Certainly, several challenges must be overcome to ensure that better breeding and husbandry practices are both promoted and supported if we hope to restore the alpaca to its former pre-Conquest glory.

Eric then presented the alpaca as a natural pacer and identified the desirable conformational traits that support efficient movement, locomotion and quality of life. Eric's pictorial review of phenotypic traits of alpacas as well as potential congenital defects provided us with a framework upon which to base sound purchasing and breeding decisions.

Most of us who have the pleasure of owning alpacas know how important it is to monitor alpaca behaviour as it gives us clues to herd and individual health. And who has not been entertained by the "strutting" of males (or females for that matter) around their "significant" others or the spit fests that go on in establishing herd hierarchy. Of course, none of us wish to get in the cross fire of those! Eric discussed alpaca behaviour in the context of their wild progenitor, the vicuna, and provided numerous examples of normal behaviour. By understanding behaviour well, we can better manage our herds.

A discussion on alpacas is never complete without a thorough discussion on fibre characteristics and Eric closed his presentation with several compelling thoughts on fibre quality and methods of assessment. As many of us know, there is much debate in the alpaca community as to what characteristics are more important than others and the methods that we use to subjectively and objectively evaluate them. Although passionate to the core about this subject, Eric presented his viewpoint with tact. He encouraged alpaca producers to think beyond show-ring standards and instead, focus on qualities such as fineness and uniformity of fineness, which he suggested are most important to fibre processing. He also encouraged producers to selectively breed for alpacas that retain these qualities for 6-7 years.

I tip my hat to **Dr. Nancy Carr** who organized this event and arranged for Eric to present this very worthwhile lecture.



Fall Education Day 2006

Camelidynamics

presented by Marty McGee Bennett

Face it. Most of us in the alpaca industry were smitten the first time we looked into those eyes... so sweet, so expressive, and so demure. We were promised that alpacas were the ultimate huggable investment. Huggable, huggable?

by **Catherine Timms**

No one would argue that alpacas look huggable but as many of us know, lay one hand on them and off yonder they dance, as far away from you as possible, taking the entire herd away with them. Worse, maybe you have been spit at, kicked at, or bruised

and battered when you have attempted to administer routine care such as injections, toe nail trimming, or wish to check their body condition score. It may have even crossed your mind, "What am I doing wrong?" or "Does it have to be this way?"

No, it does not need to be like this! Alpaca Ontario is excited to present the upcoming seminar on alpaca handling and training, presented by **Marty McGee Bennett** of Camelidynamics™ fame. Let Marty, who modeled the Camelidynamics™ approach to training alpacas and their handlers after the work on animal training by **Linda Tellington-Jones** (the TTeam and TTouch methods), help you learn new handling skills and renew your confidence in managing your alpacas. Topics to be covered in the one-day seminar include:

- Camelidynamics and the 4Point Approach
- The basics of balance and the physics of animal handling
- Herding
- Catching

- Haltering and halter fitting
- Organizing your farm
- Using bodywork as means of communication with your llama or alpaca

This seminar will take a hands-on approach where you are invited to bring your own alpaca or two so that you can learn the Camelidynamics™ techniques on your own alpacas. Two one-day Camelidynamics™ sessions are planned for October 21 and October 22. Because of space limitations in her sessions, participants will choose to attend either the Saturday or the Sunday. More information regarding these sessions, including location, will be forthcoming once the details have been finalized!

To find out more about Marty McGee Bennett and the Camelidynamics™ approach to training alpacas and their handlers, visit her web-site at www.camelidynamics.com.

Alpacas in the City



No, our alpacas do not live on the condo balcony. They are very happily boarding on a farm about 90 minutes away. We get to see them about once a week when we travel to the farm to help with chores and learn the business of raising alpacas.

by **Sandy and Godfrey Green**

There are several viable ways to get into the alpaca business. Many alpaca owners and breeders got in because they already owned land that could support the barns, fences and pastures needed. That scenario may still be several years away for many city dwellers. But they can begin to experience the alpaca lifestyle by owning an animal right away.

We would like to recommend this way of life to every city dweller. And, we would like alpaca farmers to consider marketing their animals and their farm lifestyle to those still trapped in the concrete jungle.

Many of us who live in cities would love the opportunity to visit a farm and even get involved with chores. Now that so many Canadians are in their fifties and sixties and still healthy, there is a large market for wise farmers to appeal to the baby boomers' desire for an alternative lifestyle or investment opportunity in the growing luxury fibre industry. Do you have room for overnight guests who want to get up with you to do morning chores? Do you have a large project on the farm that

requires many unskilled hands? Do you have two or three alpacas that are comfortable with strangers? Why not offer a weekend package to host a family or grandparents with grandchildren? Or an open house that offers a hands-on experience?

For those in the city who long for greener pastures, consider the alpaca lifestyle while still living in your current location. It is easy to visit 10 or 12 farms and enjoy the alpacas. A day trip is a good way to learn about alpacas and the value of their fibre.

With the increasing popularity of knitting in North America, people are looking for exotic fibres like alpaca. When you own alpacas you see a return on your investment every shearing and birthing season. For city dwellers it is viable to ask a farmer about buying alpacas and boarding them on that farm.

We long for the day when we can own some land and have our own herd on the back forty. In the meantime, the alpacas are worth the drive.

Additions to Your Web Site by **Susan Garrett** Your web site, alpacaontario.ca, has two new features to help all farmers. There is a forum available for you in the members only section. This allows all Alpaca Ontario members to post questions, suggestions or ideas for feedback, awareness and sharing with your fellow alpaca farmers and owners. There is also a classified ad section. Here members can promote alpacas, breeding, and product to further assist them with additional marketing streams for their business. For a nominal fee, your ad can be seen by the hundreds of people who check out our website every month. For more details, check out your web site for these new updates and watch for more changes over the coming months!

Bitten by the Alpaca Bug: Confessions of a Newcomer

by **Laurel Moore**

It has been nearly a year since we were bitten by the alpaca bug. We knew what they were and where they were from (my husband, David is a Quechua speaker and worked and lived among Peruvian alpaca herders), but not until we began to search websites did we begin to seriously think about getting them. As our website viewing became more frequent, our wish to have our own herd grew stronger.

In 2005 we attended the Alpaca Ontario show and were completely won over by the friendly and knowledgeable participants, and of course the wonderful alpacas themselves. Who could resist such a likeable group?

— and I am not only referring to the alpacas! While we searched for a farm, we accumulated invaluable advice from the breeders in Ontario, and on web sites such as on www.claacanada.com and www.alpacanation.com. We chose our first alpacas, consisting of a pregnant suri, a maiden suri and two companion huacayas, and boarded them at the seller's farm while we searched for a farm to buy. In June a healthy female suri cria was born. Newcomers to the world of alpacas may like to hear about what we have done in preparation for the arrival of our herd.

Barn

The farm we purchased near Tweed, Ontario came with a charming but impractical old barn. Many discussions and quotes from contractors later, we had it taken down and built a new one. A water hydrant was installed, which

draws water from our well near the house, and electricity, including enough outlets to allow for heated water buckets, and plenty of overhead lighting. Gravel 'fines' were used on the floor. We placed rubber mats over it, and covered everything with about a foot of straw for bedding. We had a Dutch door made and the animals enjoy being able to look out the top half if the weather is particularly cold or windy. Several windows were added, which provide natural light indoors and ventilation in the summer. Two large sliding doors will provide access and ventilation. The walls were insulated, and air vents were installed in the roof. One of the best investments we made was a series of 5' high enamel-on-steel panels and gates in lengths ranging from 4 feet to 12 feet, which we can use in various configurations inside to create instant pen areas and chutes, and outside, as gates on hinges attached to the fence and connecting to sturdy hooks on the barn. The panels are extremely versatile and can be ordered through your local CO-OP store. Advice: talk to local farmers and contractors, but listen carefully to what other alpaca breeders have to say about barn design and layout.

Fencing

We live in an area with several natural predators, and wanted secure fencing in our pastures. There are some very reliable fencing companies out there who can provide what you need, but it does not come cheaply. We chose to buy cedar posts and 6' high welded wire fence from local suppliers, and hired an experienced farmer to come and dig the postholes and install the fencing with us. The bonus was we made a new friend. We put rocks and gravel around the bottom of the fence-line and plan to add two strings of electric wire, top and bottom, for maximum protection. Advice: buy locally. Often experienced farmers in your area are the best source of labour or materials. Some farmers can cut cedar posts for you if you plan in advance.



Start-up List

Important items we purchased before our herd arrived included reading material, such as the *Camelid Companion* by **Marty McGee Bennett** and *Caring for Llamas and Alpacas*, a *Health Management Guide* by **Clare Hoffman, DVM** and *Ingrid Asmus*, and *Alpacas Magazine*. Bare minimum essentials we considered necessary were heated 5 gal water buckets, straw for bedding, good quality hay and feed, minerals, and barn implements such as shovels, a wheelbarrow and a few large bins for feed. After our girls arrived we purchased new pruners for toenail trimming, and vitamins and de-worming supplies. A digital scale is on order, which will be useful for regular weight checks as well as for weighing hay, feed and shorn fiber.

In November, the Big Day arrived and our alpacas moved into their new home. They are a source of constant joy and pride, and even in sub-zero temperatures it is easy to find excuses to hang around the barn a little longer than is necessary (and the insulated barn makes it a cosier spot to be). We continue to learn as much as possible about all aspects of the industry. Alpaca Ontario's Fall Education seminars are worth their weight in gold and not to be missed. If we could go back and do anything differently, it would be to become alpaca owners even sooner.



BVD Virus and Alpacas



Most alpaca owners who have received CLAA (Canadian Llama and Alpaca Association) or CABA (Canadian Alpaca Breeders Association) newsletters, Camelid Quarterly or Alpacas Magazine in the last year are aware of Bovine Viral Diarrhea Virus (BVDV) and its ability to cause abortions, stillbirths and the birth of persistently infected cria in alpacas. This will therefore be just a short overview (resources for more detailed information are at the end of the article) with an update.

BVDV has been a major problem in cattle, but was originally not thought to affect camelids. Knowledge about BVDV and alpacas is evolving; there is still much to learn. The most important aspect of BVDV is its effect on the developing fetus and its ability to cause abortions at all stages of pregnancy from early pregnancy loss up to stillbirths at term. The abortion or stillbirth may occur many months after the female had her BVD infection. Even more importantly, if the female is exposed to the virus in early pregnancy and does not abort, she may produce a persistently infected (PI) cria. The fetus is not immune competent in early gestation and never mounts an immune response to rid itself of the virus. Once it is born, it sheds huge amounts of virus from every secretion (saliva, urine, and feces) for its entire life, and is the major way BVDV is spread. The only way to be PI is to be born PI. The majority of animals acutely infected (as opposed to persistently infected) are

subclinically ill (do not appear unwell) or will be ill with other infections (such as pneumonia) because the virus depresses the immune system. When present, signs of acute clinical illness in alpacas have included anorexia, sore mouth and lethargy. Despite the name, BVDV does not necessarily cause diarrhea.

In cattle, some PI animals may appear normal, but the majority are 'poor-doers' – low birth weight, poor weight gain, with repeated infections, and most have died before the age of two. It appears that the majority of PI alpacas have these same features; prematurity has also been reported in PI alpacas. Many will not show signs of illness until they are at least several months old. There has also been an apparently healthy 30 month old PI alpaca identified. BVDV has likely been in alpaca herds for quite a while, and responsible for some unexplained abortions, stillbirths, and poor-doing cria, but because it was not specifically tested for, it was not recognized.

Now that it is being tested for, BVDV has been identified in alpaca herds across North America. The virus can spread easily between alpaca farms because alpacas are moved around from farm to farm much more than other livestock; the practice of females with cria at side going to other farms for breeding is one of the main ways this has spread – if the cria is PI it will be infecting every animal at that farm. Or, if there is a PI cria on the farm, the visiting female may return to her own farm carrying a PI fetus that, once born, will infect all the animals on her farm. The Alpaca Research Foundation (ARF) in the United States has an anonymous census of confirmed PI alpacas, but they can only be posted on the web site with the owner's permission. Seventeen are posted, but ARF is aware of at least forty cases of confirmed PI alpacas. Also only those alpacas meeting the scientific definition of persistent infection (two positive tests for the virus taken at least three weeks apart) are accepted for the census. There is no census of abortions, stillbirths, or any alpacas, including newborns, that die but have had

just the one positive test for the virus done on tissues at autopsy. It is apparent that many PI alpacas have not been reported to the voluntary census, and that there have been many abortions as a result of BVDV. ARF is funding two research proposals on BVDV and alpacas, and the results will help to show how widespread BVDV is in alpacas.

All aborted and stillborn fetuses, cria that die, and any unexplained deaths should be autopsied by your vet so that samples of tissue can be sent to a veterinary diagnostic lab for testing, including for BVDV. Low birth weight cria, weak newborns, very premature cria, poor-doing cria, and alpacas with unexplained illness should be tested for BVDV. Your vet should discuss with the veterinary virologist at the lab where the testing will be done about the appropriate tests. Testing for the virus itself (at this time, it appears the most accurate tests in live alpacas for this are either the PCR or virus isolation done on buffy coat cells) would be positive in a PI or an acutely infected animal. A positive test should be repeated in three weeks time to confirm that the animal is PI. Testing for antibodies (serum neutralization) is a totally different test and shows that the animal has been exposed to the virus at some time in the past and mounted an immune response (and not that it is sick or contagious – for example, most of us have antibodies to the chickenpox virus). Because the majority of acutely infected animals are subclinically ill, the only sign that BVDV has been on the farm may be an abortion, stillbirth, or birth of a low birth weight and/or poor doing cria, any of which test positive for BVDV, and the detection of antibodies to BVDV in the herd. If any submission shows BVD virus then the herd must be tested to see if there is a PI animal still present.

BVDV should actually be easy to control if every alpaca farm instituted biosecurity measures, tested for the virus, and eliminated any PI animals (all verified PI animals should be euthanized). At this time, veterinary virologists >continued on pg11



are not recommending immunization for alpacas; immunization is not 100% effective in cattle. Biosecurity would mean ensuring that any animal coming to the farm (purchase, or female coming for breeding with accompanying cria) be tested to prove it is not PI before arrival on the farm. New arrivals or animals who have been off the farm, such as at a show, should be put in quarantine for 3 - 4 weeks in case they came in contact with the virus and are acutely infected (an acutely infected animal sheds the virus in much smaller amounts and for only a short length of time, in contrast to a PI animal, which sheds a large amount of virus its whole life). It is most important that these newcomers or returning animals have no contact with your pregnant females. Do not take pregnant females to shows. There should be no fence line contact with other livestock. You should ensure that human visitors do not have footwear contaminated by manure from other farms. More detailed information on biosecurity is given in the following article of this newsletter.

Awareness of BVDV has prompted most shows in the States to ask that all entrants have had the blood test done to prove they are not PI. AO will also be asking for this test for the 2006 show. Because the only way to be PI is to be born PI after being exposed in utero, an animal only needs a negative test for the virus once in its lifetime to prove it is not PI. It is likely that soon all reputable breeders will offer proof of the alpaca not being PI as a standard condition of sale (and any buyers in the know will be requesting this); therefore the cost of doing the test for the show is a cost that would have been incurred in the future anyway if the alpaca is sold.

For more information see:

www.claacanada.com and click on Articles – the article on testing will be updated with new information on the most accurate tests for detecting the PI state.

www.alpacaresearchfoundation.org

www.diaglab.vet.cornell.edu/issues/alpacas.asp

Biosecurity on Alpaca Farms

The recent awareness of BVDV in alpacas has made many alpaca breeders realize that they have been terribly lax in regards to what should be standard biosecurity measures on any farm. Alpaca breeders should be concerned not just about incoming animals bringing BVDV, but also about other viral and bacterial diseases, intestinal parasites, fungal skin disease, mites, lice, and other diseases that we may not yet be aware of, just as we were not aware of BVDV.

All new animals coming to the farm, or animals that have been off the farm and are returning (such as after being at a show or away for breeding) should be quarantined from the rest of the herd for 3 - 4 weeks (unfortunately there does not seem to be a unanimous opinion about what the exact length of time should be.) There should be no nose-to-nose contact between the animals in quarantine and your herd, and ideally there should be a separation of at least 10 feet. Many farms keep females coming for breeding (with or without a cria at side) in a separate area and never put them in with their herd. A gelding could be used to keep a single alpaca company while in quarantine. While in quarantine, fecal tests for parasites, and examination for any other problems can be done.

All animals coming to the farm should be tested to prove they are not PI (persistently infected with BVDV) before arrival on the farm. An animal only needs a negative test for the virus once in its lifetime to prove it is not PI, since the PI state can only result from exposure in utero. If the animal arrived acutely infected with BVDV (as opposed to being PI) it would no longer be contagious after 2 weeks.

- **All human visitors should have footwear not contaminated by manure from other farms. Disposable plastic boot covers are available at farm supply stores.**
- **Manure clean up in the quarantine area should be with separate boots and equipment.**
- **Ideally there should be no fence line contact with other livestock.**
- **Isolate sick animals and wash your hands after treating them.**
- **If shipping alpacas by commercial transporters, consider using those who require confirmation of non-PI status, and who disinfect the trailer or use a high pressure wash after use.**

Alpaca Ontario **Fibre Committee**

by **Nancy Hutchinson**

I am thrilled to be part of the Alpaca Ontario Board as the Fibre Committee Chair. I look forward to moving the alpaca fibre industry to new heights.

I have found an enthusiastic group willing to work hard with me and as a result we have created a Fibre Committee for Alpaca Ontario. I would like to thank **Heather Blanchard, Deb Griffey, Caecilia Goetze, Nancy Hines, and Denise Martel** who have volunteered their time and skills to become part of The Fibre Committee.

We have some exciting things that will be occurring during 2006. Watch for information on the web site... coming soon! We are always looking for new and creative ideas. Please contact us with any thoughts you may have for making this a better alpaca fibre world. We always welcome fun ideas.



So... what did you think?

by **Steve Hagey**

At **Robert Quigley's** request I have been asked to introduce myself. Why? Well, as you've scrolled through the previous pages of this newsletter I hope you've noticed a dramatic change from past issues. As a Graphic Designer by trade, I've volunteered my time to bring a new look to Alpaca Ontario and this publication.

I hope you've enjoyed the new look, but more importantly the great articles provided by our members. This publication requires the work of many and I encourage everyone to submit stories and – more importantly to me – any fantastic alpaca images you may have taken that are just screaming for a bigger audience.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the AO board for their trust in my abilities. Working with a large group can often be difficult when so many opinions are involved. A concerted effort by everyone involved in the beginning stages of this project made things quite smooth.

Having said that, I realize I can never fully appease every member in so large an organization. My hope is that each of you will understand that my interest lies in the betterment of Alpaca Ontario as a whole. I strongly feel that as the organization moves forward, we need to position ourselves in a way that better reflects what we represent – incredible alpacas. We should all be proud to be a part of so great a community. And that should show in everything we do!

Thank you.

Your 2006 AGM is Coming!

The Alpaca Ontario Annual General Meeting (AGM) will once again be held in conjunction with the Alpaca Ontario 2006 Show. This year's AGM will be held on Friday April 7th from 7:15 - 9:00 pm. The location will be at the Orangeville Fairgrounds in the Community Hall building. There will be a social time with refreshments following the AGM.

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O N T A R I O

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