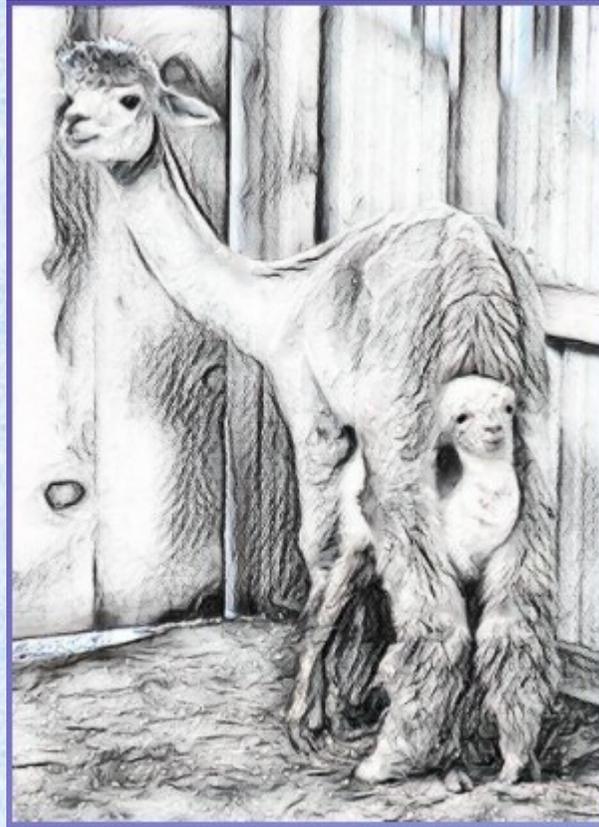


CONNECTION

Spring 2021



Articles This Issue

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- ◆ [Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours](#)
- ◆ [MAF & UC Davis Alpaca Articles on the Web](#)
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 - ◆ [Suri, the Versatile Fiber? You Bet!](#)

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California Alpaca Breeders & Owners Association
Connecting members to Calpaca, the industry and each other



In California's tradition as a pioneer of progress, Calpaca was the first, and the oldest, regional,

alpaca association in the Northern Hemisphere. Past and current members of Calpaca have been leaders in the American alpaca industry since 1989.

Calpaca represents alpaca owners, breeders, and enthusiasts in California and beyond. We promote the well-being of alpacas and education of the public about alpacas, alpaca fiber, and alpaca products. We support each other through shared information and experiences. We host meetings, speakers and shows for the benefit of members and the public.

Calpaca Membership meetings are held quarterly on the second Saturday of the second month.

We invite you to join us!

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Next Annual Membership Meeting ~ May 08, 2021

Hosted by Claudia & Jerry Porter

Black Rock Mountain Alpacas & Fiber Mill | Fernley, NV

See page 5 for more info

[Picture from original by Kim Weigman, Out of Sight Alpacas](#)

This was Lennox's first cria, and Dually Remarkable (Remi) is now a robust six-month old.

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Affiliations

Alpaca Owners Association (AOA)

8300 Cody Dr Suite A
Lincoln NE 68512
402-437-8484
402-437-8488 Fax
AlpacaInfo.com

Alpaca Research Foundation (ARF)

AlpacaResearchFoundation.org

International Lama Registry (ILR)

LamaRegistry.com

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½ Page Color Ad: \$30
Full Page Color Ad: \$55

Contact *Connection* Editor
editor@lillette.net

To join or renew your Calpaca membership:

[calpaca.org/page/
/2572/join-calpaca](http://calpaca.org/page/2572/join-calpaca)

Stay Connected!

Calpaca Website

calpaca.org

Group Emails

info@calpacaboard.org

Calpaca Facebook

Facebook.com/groups/Calpaca

Message from the President

Spring 2021

Spring has sprung! Everywhere I look, I see signs of the earth coming back to life. The buds on the trees are unfolding into a canopy of leaves. Some are displaying fresh blooms that will bear fruit. The grass-covered hills create a velvet canvas to serve as a backdrop for the vibrant wild flowers. The morning air is crisp, the days pleasant, and the evenings are comfortably cool. Ah, Spring, the time of life, hope and promise.

For many alpaca owners, this is the time of year when our fields begin to fill with other examples of life, hope and promise... the arrival of the cria. For all alpaca owners, this is also the time of year when we harvest the fleece these amazing animals have been producing for us.

What are your plans for your 2021 fleece harvest? If this is your first year shearing your alpacas and you don't have an answer to that question, ask your mentor. You can also [check](#) the archives of past *Connection* publications. The past spring or summer editions of the *Connection* are filled with articles about shearing and what to do with your fleece. Whatever you do, please do something with it.

Don't forget about our quarterly membership and education meetings. The pandemic precautions have resulted in a change to the way the meetings are offered and conducted. As the guidelines change regarding group meetings and interactions, we may find we are able to offer in-person meetings again. How exciting it will be to actually meet in person as a group of alpaca enthusiasts! In the meantime, we will continue to offer hybrid online and in-person meetings when possible.

Your Camelid Symposium committee is diligently working on plans for another exceptional symposium. Mark your calendars for Saturday, September 18. The symposium will be held at the fairgrounds in Woodland, CA.

We are looking forward to gathering once again at the Gold Country Gathering show, October 15-17 in Grass Valley, CA. Tracy DiPippo, the event manager, is once again putting together plans for a memorable show.

Your board appreciates your continued support. Please remember that we are just a message or phone call away. Your input is not only needed, but wanted.

Wishing you an amazing 2021 filled with hope and promise,

Dianna Jordan, 2021 Calpaca President

Upcoming 2021 CALPACA Events

- Sept. 18** **Camelid Symposium**
[Yolo County Fairgrounds](#)
Woodland, CA
- Oct. 15-17** **Gold Country Gathering**
[Nevada County Fairgrounds](#)
Grass Valley, CA

Calpaca Quarterly Membership Meetings

- | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|
| May 08 | <i>Host:</i> | Claudia & Jerry Porter |
| | <i>Where:</i> | Black Rock Mountain Alpacas & Fiber Mill, |
| | <i>Time:</i> | Fernley NV |
| | <i>Topic:</i> | 11:00 a.m.
Fiber Mills |
| Aug. 14 | <i>Host:</i> | Maureen Macedo |
| | <i>Where:</i> | Macedo's Mini Acre, Turlock CA |
| | <i>Time:</i> | TBD |
| | <i>Topic:</i> | Agritourism |
| Nov. 13 | <i>Host:</i> | Dianna & Jack Jordan |
| | <i>Where:</i> | Alpacas of Somerset Farm |
| | <i>Time:</i> | TBD |
| | <i>Topic:</i> | TBD |

Calpaca Quarterly Membership Meeting

Saturday, May 8, 2021 | 11:00 a.m. | In Person & Virtual

What: Calpaca Quarterly Membership and Educational Meeting

Hosts: Claudia and Jerry Porter, [Black Rock Mountain & Fiber Mill](#)

Education Topic: The Ins & Outs, Do's and Don'ts of Fiber Mill Processing, plus Tour**

Ranch Information

Where: 3585 Uccelli Lane, Fernley NV 89408

Contact and RSVP: 775-843-8201 or jerrylptr@gmail.com

To join virtually: [Click here](#)

Jerry and Claudia invite you to join them at their ranch in Fernley, NV. *The membership meeting and education presentation will be available online.* To join the virtual meeting, [follow this link](#).

What about Covid guidelines and precautions? This is what Jerry had to say: "We have visitors all the time, and in rural Nevada, we have not had a problem with Covid. Some people choose to wear masks, and some choose not to. Restaurants are at 50%, and groups can be 100 people. Nevada will fully open up on June 1st."

Meeting Details

10:30 a.m.: Social time, including coffee, tea and donuts

11:00 a.m.: Business meeting followed by education presentation

Lunch: Following the presentation, your hosts will provide this delicious selection:

- Pulled Tri-tip BBQ
- Pulled Pork BBQ and Baked Beans
- Cole Slaw and Fruit Salad
- Diet and Regular Coke, Water, Red and White Wine
- A few desserts supplied by attendees will round out the menu.

** **Following lunch, a tour of the mill.** This is a great opportunity for anyone not familiar with the mill equipment to get an up-close look at the process outlined in the education presentation.

**If you plan to attend the meeting in person,
please RSVP by Saturday, May 1**

775-843-8201 or jerrylptr@gmail.com

Shearing Season is Here

Steve Craig, Calpaca Vice-President

There have been lots of Facebook posts about our alpaca shearers getting ready to go out on their annual trek to the many alpaca farms around the region. Looking at the calendar, it is April, and winter is generally behind us, and shearing will be done through July.

Enjoy your fluffballs now, as once they get their thick warm jackets off, they will be skinny and pathetic looking. But then, this is what keeps them happy during the hot summer months.

So, I am writing this to help me, and hopefully you, to remember all the things that go into a successful day of shearing. There are really three parts:

1. Planning the event
2. Preparation for the event
3. The event itself

Planning means a lot of things. For instance, you need to check your supplies for large plastic bags for the fiber, syringes for annual shots, and oh yes, the Ivermectin and CD&T. Can you find the nail clippers, and do you have tie-down posts ready to go?

Preparation has a lot of components, and it is better to get them done early rather than scrambling to get things done as the shearer is driving up to your farm. When the shearer starts his work, you better have everything ready to go because things happen quickly, and you generally don't have enough help to get it all done.

Have a table where one person keeps track of the animal's name on a list, and who can pass out baggies for the fiber samples and the bigger bags for the firsts (blanket), the seconds, and the thirds. Each bag should have a tag stating the animal's name and the contents. These bags are all grouped together and clipped so they can be located quickly and distributed when an animal is on-deck.

Syringes and medication should be prepared beforehand and kept protected in a small cooler. Both these shots are subdermal (under the skin and not into deep muscle). I learned a new trick last year where you cut off about a quarter inch of the needle cap so the needle is just poking out. This keeps the much longer needle more contained, and you can get a quick shot under the skin. The syringe is preloaded with about 1.5 cc (or ml) of medicine. You will need one person dedicated to giving the shots when the animal is tied to the floor.

Take all your leads and halters, and get them lined up on a fence or a rack for quick fitting and control of the animals that are going in for their turns. You will need one or two strong persons dedicated to capturing and haltering the animals. They also lead the animals to the shearing mat where the shearer takes over.

Other things you need on hand are brooms, dustpans, vacuum cleaners, and large tubs to fit the plastic bags for holding the fiber. You will also need a large trash can for all the waste fiber left behind. And don't forget the large foam mat for the animal to lie on during shearing. You will also need to have persons available to sweep up and take the animals outside.

All the planning and preparation leads up to the Big Event of the day, which is shearing. If you have a few animals, then it should be a relaxed procedure. If you have 15 or more, then it is going to be busy, and you have to stay focused. You should make sure all your helpers know what they are doing, so all the responsibilities for moving the animal through is done smoothly; for instance, corralling them in a pen so that halters and leads can be put on, leading them to the shearing mat, lifting them and laying them on the mat while ankle holders are put on and followed by a quick pull on the stretching rope.

The shearer will have a "head-guy" controlling the



Shearing Season is Here, *cont.*

animal's comfort and safety during the entire process. Once on the ground, the shearer will immediately take a fiber sample which is passed to a person with a baggy. The shearer will then start working on the blanket, and while that is done, someone needs to do toenail clipping, and another needs to be ready to give the two shots. All the while, these people need to be mindful that the shearer wants to start a routine, and everybody needs to be mindful of that.

Near the end of the shearing, the "head guy" rolls the animal into an upright position for clipping around the face and mop. The halter is put back on, and the animal is invited to stand. Sometimes, you have to nudge them to get up and walk out. Make sure you get the halter off. Before the next animal comes in, the broom crew needs to sweep up and provide the next

animal a clean space.

Some animals get very distressed and start slobbering and spitting during shearing. Have a lot of small towels or old socks to muzzle them. It is better to have that green goo go into a towel or sock rather than on you.

Perhaps the most important thing to do when the shearer comes to your farm is ask him what he can contribute in the process, as he will always have one extra person, and maybe two, to help. He needs to know what your general plan for the day will be so that everyone knows what will happen.

With that all said, Calpaca wishes all its members best success in their shearing efforts this year. Enjoy the event, as it is a new adventure every year.

Giving Alpacas a Shower

by Julie Roy, *Calpaca Connection Summer 2010*



Alpacas love water—especially on a hot day. My females will stand in line to get their bellies hosed down. Then they wander off and find a cool place to roll, or lie in the mud, or bucket dance in their water pails.

This regular ritual allows me to give each one a close inspection. I check for the changes in the udder, birth canal opening, body score and personality. I also look at their toenails and any possible wounds or lesions. Because I control the flow of water, they let me get really close to them with no fear. If need be, I can catch one easily.

If you are going to give them a shower, keep the stream of water aimed at their feet and lower belly. This will prevent water from collecting in the fleece on their backs, possibly generating a highly humid condition that could harm

them. They have a "thermal window." It is the area on the alpaca that allows them to shed excess heat. This can be found on the belly, armpits, and groin.

Oh! Remember the males! They love to have their bellies hosed, too.

One of my "big boys" will rear up on his back legs, exposing his belly. When he brings his front feet down, he does a "quick step" and loves to splash me with mud as he rears up again. This dance continues as long as I am the hose at his legs. I keep my distance with him because he also lunges quickly on those back legs towards the source of the water. (Allow time for changing clothes after this shower ritual if you have a dancer like mine!)

Camelidynamics, Alpacas, and the Science of Applied Behavioral Analysis

by Marty McGee Bennett, CAMELIDynamics.com

Author's Note: You can teach an old dog new tricks! In this particular case, I am the old dog. I began my work with animal training in the 1970s while in college studying animal behavior. I graduated from the University of Georgia with an interdisciplinary degree in the subject. This degree was to serve as the jumping-off point for a career in veterinary medicine. Luckily, I discovered (by flunking physics) that I was better suited to the study of behavior than medicine.

Once I began working with camelids and after discovering Linda Tellington-Jones and her innovative approach to educating animals, I found in her work—TTEAM and TTouch—both the inspiration and the answers to my questions. I came to believe that the science of behavior was interesting, but limiting when it came to working with domestic barnyard livestock and companion animals. Last year, one of my Camelidynamics students, Dr. Susan Brown, a veterinarian and camelid owner, reintroduced me to the science of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). I have now come full-circle back to the science.

Based on Dr. Brown's recommendation, I recently completed a course for animal training professionals, "Living and Learning with Animals" taught by Susan Friedman, PhD, from Utah State University. Dr. Friedman's academic work is in the area of child psychology; but a personal interest in parrots brought her into the world of animal training to share learning theory and ABA with animal teachers. I am relieved and pleased to find out that what I have been teaching for so these many years is completely supported by the science of ABA. After finishing Dr. Friedman's course, I came away with a different way of seeing the work that I had developed. I also gained an increased understanding of learning theory and ABA that will shape my work going forward.

Join a conversation about animal training, and you will inevitably hear folks argue about whether or not animals can think. As it turns out, the entire animal kingdom, from bacteria to Bactrian camels, learns. **Learning is defined as a behavior change as a result of experience.** Recent studies reported in the journal *Science* have shown that even simple organisms such as bacteria are capable of pretty sophisticated "associative learning"; for example, using temperature as a cue to prepare for upcoming danger. It follows, then, that whether or not animals think really depends on which definition you choose for the word *think*. Only the animals really know whether they think or don't think, and does it really matter? Animals learn from their experience, and that is what is relevant to

our interaction with them.

Learning to Operationalize Behavior

- One of the most powerful lessons I gained from my studies in ABA is how crucial it is to focus on the *behavior* instead of our human interpretation of the behavior. When I field questions about behavioral problems, owners want to create explanations for the problem... complicated stories about how the animal was raised, how he was treated by other animals, or whether or not he was abused by humans. These stories are full of labels—words like obnoxious, dominant, stubborn, happy, sad, lonely—that we use to describe what we think is going on. Labels are problematic for a couple of reasons:
- Labels give us a false understanding of the problem, though we have only given it name.
- Labels create self-fulfilling prophecies causing the owner to get what they expect. Additionally, these labels are often handed down to the next owner, trapping the animal in a box not of his own making.
- Our interpretation, or *misinterpretation*, of the label can lead us down the wrong path when we try to change the behavior-perpetuating ineffective and unfair training methodologies like "I'll show him who's boss!"

We could all take a lesson from Sergeant Friday of *Dragnet*, whose famous line was, "Just the facts ma'am." Focusing on the behavior changes the description from: "my alpaca is happy" to "my alpaca is quiet, is ruminating and doesn't offer to get up when I walk close by"; or from "my baby alpaca is friendly or loves me" to "my baby alpaca runs up to me in the field and presses his body against mine."

Describing the behavior itself and not what we think the behavior means is called *operationalizing* it. Developing the discipline to think and speak this way will help you solve, and more importantly, *prevent* behavioral problems.

For example, labeling an animal as "dominant" is a

Camelidynamics, Alpacas and the Science of ABA, cont.

common practice in our industry. In fact, as an industry, we have gone one better and created a “super label,” the *Berserk Male Syndrome*. This label makes it seem as if the alpaca was either born with this malady or caught the problem like a cold. Someone hearing about an animal with the Berserk Male Syndrome might easily assume that humans had nothing to do with it.

Many years ago, I offered a different take on the Berserk Male Syndrome. I proposed we call it the *Novice Handler Syndrome* instead. “Friendly” baby alpacas that run up to you in the field and lean on you might seem pretty innocuous. But a 200-pound alpaca charging up to you at full tilt and “leaning” on you without slowing down is a big problem. Encouraging behavior in a young alpaca that will become inappropriate simply because of the ultimate size of the adult animal has nothing to do with love or dominance. Novice handlers do not have the prior experience to understand that what looks like a pretty light in the distance is really the headlight of an oncoming train.

The ABCs of Behavior

Animals behave for a reason. They respond to a cue in the environment, try a particular behavior and if the outcome of the behavior serves a useful purpose, the behavior is repeated. This complex web of behavior can be simplified by using a process called the *ABCs of Behavior*. Each behavioral interaction is made up of three elements:

- A = the *antecedent*: the stimulus or event that immediately precedes a behavior and sets the occasion for or signals the behavior
- B = the *behavior*
- C = the *consequence*: an event that influences the future strength of the behavior it immediately follows.

Dr. Susan Friedman, PhD, puts it this way: “The cause of behavior is found in contexts, not in animals. Behavior never occurs in a vacuum or sprays out of animals like water from a broken showerhead. There are always conditions on which behavior depends.”

The good news is that as animal caretakers, we have considerable control over the environment in which

our animals find themselves, *and* we have control over our own behavior, giving us considerable influence over both the antecedent stimulus and the consequences of a behavior.

To use the ABCs of behavior to understand and change a problematic behavior requires that you first decide on a target behavior. For example “my alpaca runs over, sticks his nose in my face and spits” describes a whole string of behaviors. Once you have decided on the smallest meaningful unit of behavior, which in this case might be, “my alpaca spits,” then you can observe its occurrence and determine what the animal gains from the behavior—the consequences—and then note what is happening immediately beforehand—its antecedent stimulus, the stimulus that signals what behavior will be reinforced now.

In a herd environment, the consequence of spitting is that the thing being spat at usually goes away. The “something” might be, among other things, the unwanted advances of a male alpaca, a herd mate that is encroaching on food, or a pesky baby that is being weaned. Why does your alpaca spit at you? The short answer is probably to make you go away. You can avoid being spat on by understanding the effect of your behavior on the animal and changing your behavior if possible. I get that we must manage our animals, and there are times when our alpacas want us to go away, and that is just not possible; however, it is amazing to me how often it *is* possible to simply stop pushing the spit button or the kick button or the kush button, and so on. Of course, if you are going to avoid pushing these buttons, it is really useful to know where they are—*identifying the antecedent stimulus* will tell you.

I can remember many years ago working with an alpaca owner who described the alpaca that he brought to the workshop as a “terrible spitter.” As I stood inside the catch pen, this seemingly cooperative and placid alpaca watched me with interest as I quizzed the owner about the spitting. I asked, “What are you doing just before she spits at you?” He replied, “Well, usually I am picking little bits of straw out of her fleece.” Before I could stop myself, I replied, “*Why don’t you just not do that?*” My reply was genuine, but sounded flippant, even to me. Far

Camelidynamics, Alpacas and the Science of ABA, *cont.*

from being annoyed, the owner very graciously said, "You know, I hadn't thought of that!" We then discussed (1) whether it was really necessary to pick things out of the wool, and (2) when it was necessary to remove debris from the fleece, as in show preparation, were there other ways to accomplish the same thing with less drama. As it turned out, there were many options to change the behavior. Most importantly, the owner looked at the alpaca with a new awareness... and didn't see an unreasonable alpaca that was a "terrible spitter," but an animal that was behaving in a way that worked for her,

for perfectly logical reasons.

References:

Dr. Susan Friedman www.behaviorwork.org

Dr. Susan Brown www.behaviorconnection.com



Camelidynamics is a system for training handling and understanding camelids. It incorporates the science of behavior with elements of TTEAM and TTOUCH. We offer classes, equipment, informational books and DVDs.

Camelidynamics also certifies individuals interested in teaching the Camelidynamics system.



Updated Lab Schedule

Due to COVID-19 our lab DDC reduced the testing of our blood cards to every other week. DDC will once again be testing our cards weekly. Cards are mailed every Tuesday with the results being returned on Wednesday of the following week.

Members Helping Members (see next pages 8-10)

Many of our alpaca families are in crisis due to the natural disasters happening across the country. If you need help or can offer aid, login and visit the [Members Helping Members](#) page online. Learn about [Disaster Preparedness](#) on Alpaca Academy.

Alpaca Articles on the Web

Morris Animal Foundation:

- [50 Shades of Alpaca Gray \(01.28.2020\)](#)
- [Establishing Effective Antifungal Medication Dosing in Alpacas \(04.01.2019\)](#)
- [Horses, Llamas & Alpacas White Paper \(2020\)](#)
- [Improving the Alpaca Genome Sequence Assessment \(02.01.2014\)](#)
- [MAF Awards \\$940,000 for New Studies Benefiting Horse/Alpaca Health \(09.26.2019\)](#)
- [Providing Effective Pain Relief for Alpacas and Other Camelids \(12.01.2014\)](#)
- [Researchers Offer New Hope for Deadly Brain Worms \(07.15.2015\)](#)
- [Unraveling the Genetics Behind Health Problems in Grey Alpacas \(04.01.2018\)](#)
- [You Are My Sunshine: Llamas, Alpacas and Vitamin D \(03.06.2018\)](#)

UCDavis Large Animal Clinic / Camelid Medicine Service

- [Burned Alpacas Hospitalized for Four Months Finally Go Home \(12.08.2020\)](#)
- [UC Davis Cares for 1,000 Animals from Wildfires | School of Veterinary Medicine \(08/28.2020\)](#)

Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours

[University of California Small Farms Website](#)

Appropriate planning is essential if you want to present a positive image of your farm and of agriculture as a whole, and to be well prepared for a group visit. Farm tours should not, generally, be conducted in an ad hoc manner.

It is important to think about what kinds of images you want your visitors to take with them when they leave (impressions, experiences, knowledge, facts, products). Here are some considerations to take into account when assessing your state of readiness for a farm tour:

- When is the best time of year for you to provide tours? Is the weather generally good at that time of year? Are unsightly chores like manure spreading or machinery cleaning occurring during that time?
- Will you charge a fee to offset the time and labor expended on the tour and to provide an economic return? If so, what will be your fee schedule?
- Will you offer products to eat at the end of the tour? If so, check with your local health department regarding regulations concerning your ability to feed guests.
- Can visitors safely tour your facility? Remember, safety is your responsibility!
- Is your farm relatively clean and in good repair? Do you practice good pest and waste management programs? Are you prepared to answer probing questions about your practices?
- Will your tour present a positive image of agriculture as a whole? Are there opportunities to demonstrate resource sensitivity, for example by providing habitat for wildlife such as hedgerows, ponds for waterfowl, etc.
- Is your farm accessible to persons with disabilities? If not, you may need to make this clear before the tour.

Preparation

Provide a site for commemorative photo opportunities.



- Develop rules for photography. You need to decide whether visitors can take pictures of everything they see or only in certain areas. Consider providing a specific location for group/family commemorative photos where pictures can be taken beside a farm sign, farm product, or some other piece of memorabilia.
- Be sure you have given adequate attention to hygiene. Assess the adequacy of your bathroom and hand washing arrangements, especially if visitors will be handling animals before they eat.
- Provide for adequate amounts and locations of garbage cans in the eating areas.
- Public Relations: Call your neighbors to let them know about the planned tour.
- Esthetics: Ensure that dead and injured animals or discarded products will not be on display during the tour or visible to your guests.

The Tour Schedule and Presentation

- Develop a tour program and a verbal presentation that can be modified to fit the interests and backgrounds of the audience.
- Post signs that clearly outline safety requirements.
- View your operation through the eyes of a visitor. Point out the obvious and explain the reasons behind specific operations.
- Emphasize a theme throughout the tour (for example, recycling, sustainable agriculture, food quality, animal welfare, agriculture and the environment, and conservation).

Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours, cont.

- Discuss your production systems, following the path of products from conception to consumption; from seed to tomato sauce, from cow to milk and cheese, from lamb to wool. Talk about the diverse markets your products serve, including by-products.
- Select three to five points of emphasis that you want to reinforce throughout the tour. What would you like guests to have learned by the end of your tour? Whenever possible, make it an interactive, hands-on, experience. For example: If you are touring an apple orchard, show pictures or point to trees in different stages of growth. Describe the production cycle. How much it will produce at peak yield (relate the yield to something your audience can understand, such as "as much as two children weigh"). Discuss why you grow apples here (soil, weather, and water). Describe the steps the product goes through before reaching the market. Explain the challenges and uncertainties you deal with when producing apples (pests, changing regulations, labor force issues, market). But don't bore your audience with your pet peeves. They are there for recreation, relaxation, and education.
- Have safe, organized, hands-on opportunities for children (touch the seeds, lambs, the warm pipelines in the milk barn and the cool milk tank, put feed samples in a bucket for touching, etc.). For younger children (pre-school to 3rd grade), use body language to accompany your verbal explanation to help them learn and keep them involved.
- How many people can you comfortably accommodate in a group and still conduct an effective tour? Practice the tour with other staff who will also be leading groups. Organize the tour so different groups will not get mixed up.
- Practice the tour program with a person who is not involved in your operation and get their feedback.
- Walk your tour. Check off how long it takes. Is the terrain level and well drained?

Tour Contact

Picnic facilities must be adequate if provided.



- Ascertain the general age and abilities of the members of the tour in terms of the approximate number of adults and children and why the group wants to visit your farm. Establish a comfortable ratio of chaperones to children and youth if you feel it is necessary.
- Discuss parking and provide directions to parking facilities.
- Suggest clothing that enhances safety, for example closed-toe, low heel shoes and comfortable clothing. Suggest people bring hats and sunscreen in the summer, and warm clothing in other seasons.
- Discuss meals. Will the group be eating on your property? What will meals cost? Are your picnic facilities adequate, if that is an option?

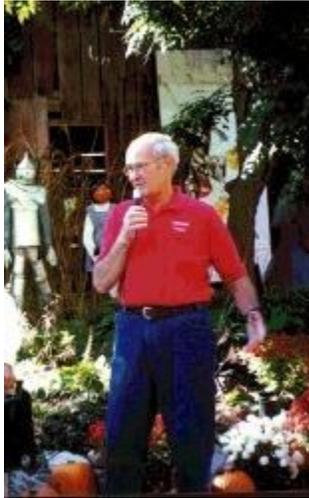
Briefing the Group

- Greet your visitors on the bus if they arrive by bus. Some tour buses have a PA system that you might use to address your audience.
- Introduce yourself and firmly but politely establish expectations regarding conduct and behavior (appropriate for the age group).
- Remind visitors that your farm is a working, production-oriented operation, not an amusement park.
- Children should be advised to: walk, remember that rocks stay on the ground, stay with the group, be good listeners, and raise their hands when they have questions.
- Prepare visitors for regular farm environmental hazards such as odors, flies, dust or loud noises. However, to the extent that you can, take steps to mitigate these environmental irritants.

Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours, *cont.*

Conducting the Tour

Greet your guests when they arrive. If you are addressing a large group, consider using a microphone or the tour bus PA system.



- Walk at a pace appropriate to the group's size and age.
- Have a responsible person at the rear of the group to assist with keeping the group together.
- Discuss what the group will see before entering a noisy area.
- Children should be encouraged to repeat new words and concepts as you explain them.
- Be sure to explain any agriculture terms that may be foreign to your guests. Think of ways to relate concepts and terms to everyday life, for example, feeder mixer wagons are blenders on wheels, etc.).
- Answer only questions about what you know and limit your comments to your farm. Avoid ideological debates with guests or customers.

Concluding the Tour

- Allow plenty of time for questions.
- Review the main concepts you introduced and refer to the key theme(s). For children's groups, use a fill-in-the-blank method, encouraging the children to participate, thus reinforcing the information.
- Samples of the product (empty containers, pictures, or actual products) provide a great ending. Provide information on how/where they can purchase your product.
- Escort the group to the bus or parking area, thanking them for their visit. Encourage them to return.

Post-tour Review

- Ask for an evaluation from the tour contact. What did the visitors like? What would help the group to better assimilate the information? What suggestions do they have for improving the tour?
- Establish and update a file of these notes. Review this feedback information with other tour staff before the next scheduled tour.

This Fact Sheet was produced by Desmond Jolly, Cooperative Extension agricultural economist and director, UC Small Farm Program; and Denise Skidmore, member of the Agriculture and Nature Tourism Workgroup.

Newsletter: California Agritourism News

The California Agritourism News e-newsletter is written by Penny Leff, statewide agritourism coordinator for the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP). This e-mail newsletter is a chance for growers, agritourism operators, county staff, tourism professionals and everyone else involved in California agritourism to keep up with the latest information. Input and suggestions from readers are always welcome!

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Suri, the Versatile Fiber? You Bet!

By Terri Swanson, 925 Suris of Sterling Alpacas

Suri, the Versatile Fiber? You Bet!

By Terri Swanson, 925 Suris of Sterling Alpacas

I hear a deafening silence and some groans in the audience. Oh, shoot, that's right, most people and even alpaca owners believe that suri alpaca fiber is *only* good for lace-weight yarns and fine textiles. Waiting to hear if I was correct seemed like an eternity, while the last eight years flashed through my mind...

In 2004, Nancy Helwig of 925 Sterling Alpacas started her adventure raising and breeding suri alpacas. She was attracted to the suri breed because of their elegance and luscious, shimmering, hypoallergenic locks flowing in the breeze. From day one, Nancy's mission was to improve fiber quality through breeding, to promote and support the alpaca fiber industry, and to legitimately answer a ranch visitor's number one question, "What do you do with the fleece?"

So Nancy asked her fiber-loving sister to join her (that would be me!) to help on the fiber side of the business. I have always enjoyed working with fabric and yarns, so when Nancy showed me samples of suri locks, it was love at first sight.

I began my quest to learn as much about suri as possible. In 2004, there was a pitiful amount of information regarding suri fiber, so I turned to the people I thought could help me—namely, other suri breeders. But many of the suri breeders responded to my queries with a glazed, discouraged look while telling me their fleeces were in boxes in their garages. As frustration set in, I signed up for informational seminar about alpaca fleece. The seminars I attended concerning alpaca fiber were highly informative... if you were a huacaya breeder!

Most suri questions were addressed as an aside with little or no detail. I also found that many alpaca breeders seemed to compare the qualities between huacaya and suri. I must insist that in the spirit of fairness, the alpaca industry needs to forget about comparing huacaya with suri. Although they are both al-

pacas, comparing their fleeces is like comparing apples to oranges.

Surely fiber processors would be able to help me. Although I found all the processors friendly and helpful, I was often encouraged to blend suri with other fibers, preferably merino wool. They insisted that suri can only be spun in lace weight unless it is blended. We were not about to blend our precious "hypoallergenic" fleece with wool!

Finally, it dawned on me... why not learn from the experts? For three years, I volunteered at every fleece show I could attend. I do have to say, this is the best way to learn everything there is to learn about fiber. The judges are so appreciative of good volunteers that they take the time to teach while they work. Alas, I learned a lot about huacaya, but not so much about suri. Being an avid supporter of fleece shows, we submitted many fleeces for judging. In order for the judge to remain impartial (wouldn't you know it?), I had to leave the room while suri fleeces were being judged!

It seemed everywhere I turned, there was little information about suri. And from the little I gleaned from "experts," I was told, "You can't do anything with suri." "It won't felt." "It is hard to hand-spin." "It won't spin into anything heavier than lace-weight yarn." And "It's too heavy."

I'm an obstinate Swede: *Nobody* tells me I cannot do something! So I set out to disprove all the suri fiber stereotypes. My quest started by doing my own washing, carding and, yes, learning to spin. Despite my instructor's insistence that I learn with wool (she should have known better!), I learned on suri. I quickly found that I was able to spin beautiful, sport-weight yarn. Yes, you heard me... sport-weight! A month later, I entered my sport-weight skein in the fiber arts competition at the Monterey Pronk, and it won first place in the People's Choice yarn competition.

Despite sending samples of sport-weight yarn to several mini mills, I was amazed at the differences in the

Suri, the Versatile Fiber, *cont.*

final products. I would get lace-weight yarn back with a note that stated, "We did the best we could." Needless to say, finding the right processors is a *must* for suri breeders! Remember this was 17 years ago, and we were trying to stock a farm store with yarns that our customers wanted, and we were determined to meet their needs.

There were, and are, some extremely accommodating processors out there who can even make beautiful, semi-bulky 100% suri yarn.

Does suri felt? Yes, indeed! With my homemade batts, I decided to experiment with wet felting. I had never tried felting before, and I did find that, yes, you can felt suri. Admittedly, some suri fleece felts better than others. It seems their fiber can often take on the personality of the alpaca itself: our most obstinate alpacas have more difficult fleece to felt! I found that felting suri was easy and much faster than I expected. Flat sheets of felt can be transformed by using shaping molds to make things like hats. You also can use flat sheets of felt for sewing projects, and you can make all sorts of garments, too. All those original felt sheets were made into alpaca cut-out Christmas ornaments so Nancy could remember her foundation herd every year.

Next was to make knit-to-felt projects with my sport - to bulky-weight yarns. I found most suri fiber loves to be felted in the washing machine. It is always a surprise how the project will turn out. I have found that, as a rule, suri gets "fuzzier" in an agitating-type washing machine, but comes out smoother in my front-loading machine loaded with a few tennis balls. If a project comes out too fuzzy for my taste, I simply needle-felt the project to smooth out the fuzz. Sometimes, I find the quirky results that are "hairy," "fuzzy" or "nubby" make the project more appealing. We have customers who *love* the crazy results.

It is no myth, but pure fact, that suri loves to be woven. The strength of suri makes a perfect warp, and the resulting cloth has a beautiful drape and glow. I have made several projects with suri as a warp and

huacaya as the weft, and the results are fabulous.

How is suri to dye, you ask? It's to die for! Suri takes acid dye beautifully. Our hand-painted dyed yarns are a big hit with our farm store customers. Don't think your yarn has to be white in order to dye it: fawns, browns and grays are gorgeous when dyed. You can also dye raw fiber, batts and rovings. Nancy and I were so excited about the versatility of suri fiber that we began to share what we'd learned.

We held seminars on understanding alpaca fiber, with an emphasis on suri. We taught workshops and gave step-by-step instruction on how to work with alpaca fiber. We also had open ranch days for the local community where we demonstrated fiber processing. We showed our ranch visitors fiber being processed from raw to finished product. People were amazed at the processes and truly appreciated the work that went into their ranch store purchases.

AOA Frequently Used Links

- [Alpaca Academy](#)
- [Alpaca Owners Guide](#)
- [Affiliate Directory](#)
- [Marketing Opportunities](#)
- [Members Helping Members](#)
- [Mission and History](#)
- [Renew/Join AOA](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Upcoming Shows](#)

Updated Lab Schedule

Due to COVID-19 our lab DDC reduced the testing of our blood cards to every other week. DDC will once again be testing our cards weekly. Cards are mailed every Tuesday with the results being returned on Wednesday of the following week.

THE SOUL OF FLEECE

Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay
Yellowstone Llamas



Author's permission to reprint. First published in Rocky Mountain Llama Association's newsletter, The Journal, Spring 2019.

Until recently, I admittedly had no particular interest in my llamas' fleece after it was shorn before the summer. Llamas have been bred over the last few decades to have more and more wool and in the process most have lost their natural capability to molt. This results in very wooly pack animals who have to be shorn every year so they don't have to lug their heavy burdens through the countryside wearing huge, permanent wool coats. After shearing my animals and admiring their new, sleek looks, I stuff their fluff into bags, mark them with their names and year of shearing and store them on shelves in my house.

There it sits awaiting a more meaningful future fate. Unfortunately, I am not overly fond of the time-consuming sorting and cleaning and the dust that covers everything around me in the process of getting the fiber ready for the mill. Therefore, this task ends up at the bottom of my annual to-do-list and has stayed there solidly and stubbornly for years.

I did try my hand at it once many years ago but even though I was rewarded with a neat package of skeins in the glorious colors of my animals, I had no desire to repeat the process any time soon. In addition, my habit to knit, once a hugely addictive activity resulting in an impressive number of sweaters, scarves, mittens and socks, gave way to other priorities over the years or simply fell by the wayside due to a shortage of time.

Yet, when the llamas produced progressively cleaner fleece over the subsequent years, I couldn't bring myself to throw away the bounty. Thus the shelving was extended to cover almost a whole wall holding an impressive number of labeled bags. Unfortunately, llama fiber, unlike good cheese and wine,

does not get better with age. Something had to happen.

I recently realized to my surprise that llamas have been part of my life for 25 years. During this time, I have learned a lot about these remarkable and endearing beings and have never ever lost interest in them or ceased wanting to learn more. After the many years of shared experiences and adventures, I feel that I have come close to understanding llamas and honoring almost every aspect of their being.

Except one: their fiber.

So, on a recent, cold winter afternoon, I decided on a whim to sort through the many bags on the shelves. Hours later, I emerged again to the present time and waning daylight. Where had I been? What I thought was 4 years' worth of shorn fleece was really 6! I dove into the bags, dust notwithstanding, and touched, smelled and marveled at the soft essence of the

animals neatly lined up and labeled before me:

Picasso, crimpy, so soft and dense. Teddy, luxuriously grey under outward chocolate-brown disguise. Yukon, the color of bubbly champagne. And oh, DotCom, getting greyer through the years, how I miss you, my sweet boy!

Otis, I only sheared your red abundance twice after you came home with me from horrid neglect at the "Sanctuary from Hell" in 2011. You packed with us in Yellowstone, tall Otis, and died too early and mysteriously in 2016. And Ishi, two-toned glamour, white and tan, like coffee-and-cream next to each other. And mischievous Domingo, reddish brown Argentine, prolific fleece producer and lead packer.



The Soul of Fiber, *cont.*

I grab the next bag and now I am crying. Amadeus, my most beloved llama. I held your head last summer as you breathed your last breath after 24 years of life. I sheared you many times, my friend. You were a classic llama, your black fleece would be scratchy in a sweater, but I am glad I kept a bag full of what was once a part of you. Candido is next, solid and strong, my Prince Charming, white wool always dirty, you love your deep dusty wallows.



Chico, sweet with gorgeously soft wool, you are useless for packing, but I love you. Mucho, a small bag of your fleece in the corner, but not forgotten. A snake bite claimed your life, the horror of watching you die deep in a far corner of my memory. The list goes on. Name after labeled name. Memory after memory. I take my time. I touch them all, quietly acknowledging the gift they gave and left behind.

And then it hits me. This evolutionary masterpiece of insulation, of hollow fiber, natural loft and ingenious moisture regulation that is a gift to anybody who wears garments of the genus lama, contains so much more than solid warmth and exquisite beauty.

There is personality in fleece. There is DNA in fleece. There is SOUL..

Both the tangible and intangible aspects of all our lives, of who we are and who we will remain, some scientifically proven, others heart-felt and just as real to me. On a dim Sunday afternoon of yet another cold Montana winter with my hands deep in fleeces-filled plastic bags, the final piece of what is the colorful mosaic of my llama experience falls into place. The timeless connection, the memories flowing through the enduring fiber is a gift from my animal friends, alive and departed. My long-awaited motivation stirs, kindled by the desire to honor their souls through art.

Artists through time have woven, spun, painted, knitted, beaded, braided, carved, and sculpted a part of their soul into their pieces of art. Indigenous hunters included a part of their spirit in the crafting and decoration of their weapons. Drum makers and flute crafters know the sound of their instruments because it carries the joined melody of their soul as well as the essence of the animal or tree they once were.

Creating pieces of art, therefore, is a spiritual act of connecting with the natural materials that are used as well as a deeply-felt kinship with the animals that provided antlers, hide, bone or fiber. Finally releasing the llama fleece from the shadows of the shelves and into the light of love, acknowledging and remembering each animal and respectfully preparing the fiber to be processed, is a first step on the way to give back. Knitting a part of my soul in a piece of wooly art to join with theirs may be next.

As has been my habit over the last few months before I fall asleep, I touch the small, dense ball of neck fleece that I kept from my last moment with Amadeus. My heart squeezes as I hold it, then becomes light with memories. I see his tall, dark form approaching as a dreamy fog begins to embrace me.



“Tomorrow,” I think as I drift off, “I will start knitting again.”

Calpaca Classified Ads

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Farms / Ranches

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? At the 2013 California Classic show, two up-and-coming herdsires were featured in the Herdsire Auction. Little did we know then that six years later, we would be proud co-owners of them.

OVA Kiernan of St. Andrews went on to garner a total of **3 FIRST PLACE GET OF SIRE** and **3 CHAMPION/RESERVE banners**. **101A El Jefe's Moro** earned **1 FIRST PLACE GET OF SIRE** and **3 CHAMPION/RESERVE banners**.

Between them, they have produced over **80 registered offspring**...many multiple show winners.

Call Dianna Jordan at 530-744-7474 to arrange a breeding to either of these proven herdsires.

Herdsires, cont.

MHAR Blizzard by Justice is a beautiful, bright white stud, with extremely uniform, dense, crimped fleece, full body coverage, and excellent bite/conformation. At 6 years of age, his fleece still has a lovely, soft, but-tery feel!

At the 2014 Gold Country Gathering, judge Kathy Klay said "He's the total package!" when awarding him First Place (no CC), noting his soft crimp style and density. Most recently, his 3rd fleece spin-off entry won Judges Choice! And his 4th fleece spin-off entry won 1st Place in the adult (D) class (of 8) at the 2017 AOA nationals, this in spite of being very dirty thanks to our very wet/muddy winter. His first cria are on the ground with more due next winter. We can't wait to see them all!

To date we haven't used him as much as we should because we've been focusing on the SG/black colors. But he's produced several lights/fawns; and now a gorgeous brown with amazing early crimp/bundling and density, plus staple length, brightness and handle that we'll definitely be showing! So we're focusing more on using Blizzard and hope you will too!

So through June 2020, his stud fee will be \$500 for CALPACA members, including 60 days agisting at Menagerie Hill Ranch in Vacaville for your girl. Reserve your breedings now and take advantage of his great genetics at this special price!

Deb Galway & Kirk Howard, Owners. www.menageriehillranch.com 707.290.7915

Menagerie Hill Ranch is pleased to offer the stud services of **RR Gun's Kit Carson (KC)**. With **17 Championships and 21 1st Place** wins, it's no wonder that more than **10 of his offspring are Color Champion** winners! KC took his first championship at 8 months of age. Since then, his fleece has maintained its length, fineness and uniformity, and he remains one of the best grey males in the country.

His kids still win big in the ring... including 2016 Gold Country Gathering KC son 4-Sights Crawford won RCC behind RR Dizzy Gillespie in Grey Male; KC daughter 4-Sight's Centerfold won CC, grey female; AND KC son RR Lancelot won Black CC. Centerfold also took CC at the 2016 ABI and the 2017 Futurity. And at the 2017 CA Classic, Lancelot won CC in both Halter and Walking Fleece. Most recently, MHAR Ebonni Carson won CC in Walking Fleece (Black) at the 2019 Gold Country Gathering!

Check KC and his cria out at:

<http://www.menageriehillranch.com/alpacas-for-sale/121347/rr-guns-kit-carson>

With gorgeous silver gray fleece, excellent conformation and a perfect bite, we believe Kit Carson can make a big impact on our breeding program and yours!

He normally summers in Utah and will be leaving around May 1. Until he departs, we're offering this spring special: Hosted breedings at a **reduced price of \$2,000, with drive-bys at \$1500**. Reserve your breedings now and take advantage of his great genetics at a great price!

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Alpaca Education At Your Fingertips

Do you know the AOA website contains a section called the Alpaca Academy? The Alpaca Academy provides education and information for the entire alpaca community. Topics range from the most common questions about alpacas and the industry to in-depth articles on alpaca EPDs, genetics, and breeding. Alpaca Academy also provides information on the latest alpacas research and links to additional resources.

The following pages contain examples of the various topics available for those wanting to know more about alpacas and the industry.

One of the common themes I have found in reading about what alpaca owners breeders would like is the desire for more education. Perhaps many don't know that many of their questions have already been addressed in the Alpaca Academy. Take a few minutes to review the topics on the right . If you would like to learn more about the Alpaca Academy just follow this link:

<http://www.alpacainfo.com/learn> and

ALPACA ACADEMY



- [About Alpacas](#)
- [Alpaca Fiber](#)
- [Alpaca Registry](#)
- [Alpaca Research](#)
- [Alpaca Shows](#)
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Video Topics Available From International Camelid Institute Include:

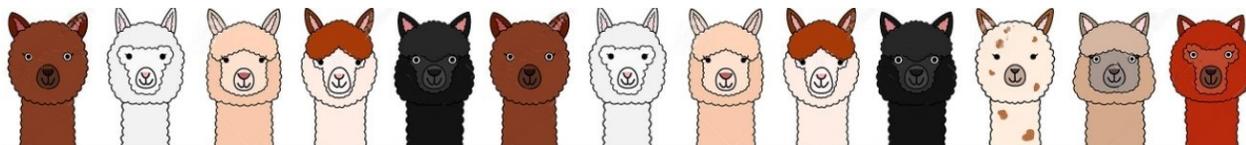
- How To Give an Injection
- Assessing Your Camelid Before You Call Your Veterinarian
- Removal of Fighting Teeth
- Proper Halter Fit For Camelids
- Passing A Stomach Tube in Camelids
- Obtaining a Blood Sample and preparing the DNA Blood Card
- Shearing for the Health of Your Animals
- Training Your Camelid to Halter and Lead

Contribute to the *Calpaca Connection!*

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of editing a newsletter is coming up with articles and ideas that are current, relevant, interesting and beneficial for our members. I like to write... I could fill each issue with my own stuff; but that's not why I'm here. To create a truly valuable resource for Calpaca members, we need Calpaca members to contribute.

- You have ideas all the time, right? This is a great place to explore and express them.
- Have you solved a problem at your place or with your animals? I'm betting lots of us would like to know how you handled the challenge.
- Do you get calls or emails asking your advice on fiber, herd management, breeding, and other aspects of living this lifestyle? Harness your responses, and let's share them!
- What other ideas or suggestions do you have to make this the best publication possible? I'd love to add regular columns, tips'n'tricks, pictures, anything you are interested in that will also interest your cohorts.

Email submissions to Editor@lillette.net



To Submit Advertising & Articles:

Email attachments to:
Editor@lillette.net

Mail CDs/DVDs to editor at:

L'illette Vasquez
170 Hoofbeat Trl
Kerrville, TX 78028-8780
720.839.0787 voice/text

To Pay for Your Advertising:

Make checks payable to:
"Calpaca" with info in the memo line
Identifying what you are paying for

Mail checks to:
Jackie Jones, Calpaca Treasurer
5055 Messing Road
Valley Springs, CA 95252

Connection deadlines are firm with few exceptions. Submission deadlines allow for newsletter publication one week prior to each quarterly Calpaca Membership meeting. Both advertising copy and articles must be received by the deadline, or they will not be published until the following issue. Payments for advertising must be received by Calpaca Treasurer Jackie Jones within seven days of submitting the ad via email or, if payment is mailed, included with disk containing the advertising copy.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Submissions Due</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>
Winter 2021	Jan. 16, 2020	Feb. 06, 2021	Feb. 13, 2021
Spring 2021	Apr. 10, 2021	May 01, 2021	May 08, 2021
Summer 2021	July 17, 2021	Aug. 07, 2021	Aug. 14, 2021
Autumn 2021	Oct. 16, 2021	Nov. 06, 2021	Nov. 13, 2021

Join Calpaca Today!

The **California Alpaca Breeders Association (Calpaca)** represents alpaca owners, breeders, and enthusiasts in California and beyond. We promote the well-being of alpacas and education of the public about alpacas, alpaca fiber, and alpaca products. We support each other through shared information and experiences, and host meetings, speakers and shows for the benefit of members and the public. We invite you to join us!

Calpaca Membership Meetings are held quarterly on the second Saturday of the second month of each quarter.

Calpaca Farm Membership - \$100/year (\$50 first year)

Benefits:

- Free marketing on Calpaca website (animals, fiber, store, services etc.)
- Educational quarterly Calpaca membership meetings
- Free advertising opportunity in the Connection newsletter
- Ability to link your Web site to a mobile device
- Ability to link your Web site to Facebook page
- Lobbying our State Legislature through– AG Day sponsorship
- Discounts at alpaca events
- Advertising opportunity to showcase your farm to over 3000 alpaca breeders
- Opportunity to run for a seat on the Calpaca Board of Directors and have a voice in the future
- Opportunity to host a Calpaca meeting and give your ranch and alpacas more exposure
- Two votes on Calpaca issues
- Connection newsletter that provides educational articles
- Ability to send email marketing items to members offering your animals, products and services
- Complimentary listing of your Openherd website on Calpaca's website – check out <http://www.calpaca.org/alpaca-farms/>

Calpaca Associate Membership - \$30/year

Benefits:

- Attend all Calpaca meetings and events
- Quarterly Calpaca *Connection* newsletter

[Join Online](#)