

**Position Paper from the Calpaca Sponsored Regional Breed Standard
Conference
July 22, 2006**

On July 22, 2006, the California Alpaca Breeders Association (**Calpaca**) sponsored a Regional Breed Standard Conference to educate attendees on the subject of breed standards, and to create this Regional Position Paper which will be forwarded to AOBA and ARI to utilize in preparation for a National Breed Standard Conference in November of this year. 105 people (of the 128 registered) attended the conference, including the moderator and speakers. The following summarizes the position of the attendees of the conference based on a **written ballot** collected at the conclusion of the conference. Comments made on the ballot follow the results of the Questions.

Question: Are you in favor of a Breed Standard?

45% voted **in favor**

40% voted **No** or **Not at this time**

13% were **undecided**

Question: If a breed standard is passed, what should the method be for modifying it in the future?

71% voted to **require** a majority vote of the AOBA membership

(The following comments were made on this question: *Evaluation for minimal functional/health standards by non Breeder Alpaca Industry Standard. Majority Vote. Majority vote is the only way it will work and hopefully we can get everyone out to vote. 2/3 Vote. 2/3rds vote of all us alpaca owners with ARI registered alpacas – not just AOBA. Simple majority of members not 2/3. Popular vote. 2/3 of those that vote .Simple majority. Popular vote. Popular vote of the membership. ARI Membership. Same as for adoption – at least vote of the membership. Majority vote of AOBA membership only; absolutely not majority vote of AOBA Board; not committee recommendation as these committees are recommended by the AOBA BOD.*)

Question: Will you vote for a breed standard if the method for modifying it is not clearly defined?

84% voted **No**

Question: Will you vote of a breed standard if the method for modifying it does not **require** a vote of the membership?

73% voted **No**

Question: If a breed standard is adopted, should it be minimal, ideal, or midway?

55% voted for **minimal**

19% voted for **ideal**

18% voted for **midway**

Question: If a breed standard is adopted, should there be one standard with two fiber sections, or two separate breed standards, one for Huacaya and one for Suri?

60% indicated there should be **two**

33% indicated there should be only **one**

4% indicated they didn't care.

Question: If a Breed Standard is NOT passed by the AOBA membership this year,

44% indicated we should try again later

25% indicated we should try again later, but not for several years

13% indicated we should drop the idea (Comments: *But improve the Show Standard*).

17% were undecided.

Question: If a breed standard is passed which conflicts with the show rules, should the show committed be required to bring the show rules in compliance with the breed standard?

86% voted **Yes**

Question: What research did you do about breed standards prior to this meeting?

8% attended other Breed Standard conferences

68% read discussions about breed standards on online sites

87% discussed breed standards with other alpaca owners

62% read information at the links provided on the Calpaca website

Question: Were you in favor of a breed standard prior to this conference?

20% were in favor of a Breed Standard

39% were opposed to a breed standard

41% were undecided.

Attendees were asked to indicate other opinions they had regarding the Breed Standard issue for inclusion in the Position Paper. Written comments provided are as follows:

No standard or qualification should be adopted that decreases the potential genetic resources.

Someone needs to research tax implications to breeders both pro and con.

I am in favor so the show standards would be more consistent.

Biggest concern is process for future changes if breed standard adopted as well as potential for registry impact. A breed standard must be focused on functional

characteristics (relating to healthy productive low-maintenance animals and useful product) rather than aesthetic characteristics (fuzzy faces, etc.).

No height or weight minimums or maximums; no definition beyond triangular snout for muzzle; good bite a must; no filed teeth; no pink eye limitation.

We could develop a "ideal" breed standard and make sure that the show committee has a list of attributes in the judges criteria but fall short of actually initiating a full blown breed standard per se.

Like all other agriculture, breed standard should include guidelines and basis for fiber and meat production.

I feel it is too soon to make these decisions – we are a very young industry. Also, at this time there seems to be a big divide between those in favor and those opposed. If the vote was 51/49 it would be very divisive among our members. We need to get to a place where we can get a consensus, so the industry as a whole will support a standard.

Concerns: How B.S. would be modified; who has final decision re content and approval; very "under the table" route taken to adopt B.S.; any B.S. should allow for geographic differences/be minimal as to function only.

Firm believer that if the system isn't broke, quit trying to fix it!!!!

Most people I've talked to want members to vote. Smaller farms need to have as much say as the large farms. Many of us smaller ranches are afraid the big ranches will be heard and we won't.

Without the ARI's endorsement new standards would affect shows only. Backyard breeder could still keep breeding milkless dams and deformed males trying for that female. And then register her.

I need to know why it's important for us to adopt a breed standard at this time. Until I am convinced, I cannot support this effort.

Needs to be very inclusive and based on function, health of the alpaca with eye on high quality end product.

We are pushing to change Bylaws regarding decision making.

Breed standard needs to be held to functional traits.

Agreement to a breed standard must be concurrent to agreement on approval and change management process. My agreement to a breed standard would be contingent on 1. Review and modification would not be administered by

committee (like show rules); 2. Breed standard discussion factual, not special interest pleading, and/ 3. based upon original selection criteria utilized upon early importation. Breed standard must focus strictly on functional aspects and avoid any aesthetic qualities.

What is meant by a “standard”? Is a “standard” something to work toward? Or, is a “standard” a minimum requirement to register alpacas? No info yet provided. How will a “standard” be enforced? Why a “breed standard”? What is really being sought (and I do not mean a “standard” for alpacas) and by whom?

This is getting too political. We need to develop a means of doing something functional with our fiber.

Functionality must be considered. ARI must be brought into the picture somehow. I came prepared to not support Breed Standards and now I do.

We need first to define what “breed standards” means and how and by whom it is to be enforced. How and by whom may it be changed? And how Often? For what purpose is this breed standard to be used? For example: if an animal has major defects or faults, but it’s crias are phenotypically correct ... can those crias be registered? Are the parents removed from the Registry although genotypically pure?

If there is a standard adopted, the only considerations should be to the health and function of the animals. Attractiveness should play no part in any breed standard. Based on the panel discussion Q&A section, it sounds like we need a better show standard and let us breeders choose what we breed. The standard in other livestock seems to change after a few years ... the market will set the standard and we will use our experience and knowledge to breed the best animals possible.

If a breed standard is passed at this time, it should be viewed as a work – in – progress and there must be a method in place to easily revise standard.

Don’t rush it. This is too important to do too quickly.

I like Suri Network approach, describing “ideal” (but pretty down to earth) picture of Suri – which most of us exactly has in mind, no matter if we have it in writing or not. I would want a group of people (presidents of organization like Calpaca etc??) who together with AOBA will write proposal for us.

We have not really heard or talked to AOBA members who definitely want a Breed Standard NOW. The fact that the AOBA President Amy McCroskie said at the 2005 AOBA National Luncheon “... and we WILL HAVE A BREED STANDARD after the November conference (was scheduled for 2005) and only got a smattering of applause, and many affiliate Presidents and other went to her

afterward saying members DIDN'T WANT a B.S. should tell us what members want. We are still waiting to hear WHY we NEED a breed standard, and exactly how having it would benefit the majority of the breeders.

The Calpaca Breed Standard Conference was held in Stockton, California and Brett Kaysen from Colorado State University did a fantastic job as a neutral moderator. In addition to a Judges Panel and Veterinarian Panel as recommended by the AOBA Suggested Guidelines, based on feedback we heard from earlier Regional Type conferences, we included a Fiber Processor Panel and both an advocate and an opponent on the subject of alpaca breed standards. Following opening remarks by the organizers and the moderator, Eric Hoffman presented his thoughts on the push for Breed Standards, and he was followed by Dr. Dick Walker who spoke about the progress made by the Suri Network on a Suri Breed Standard. Sharon Loner and David Barboza presented their perspective as AOBA certified judges. They compared the Canadian and Australian Standards and noted that the criteria they use for judging AOBA shows are general, and are not prioritized, and the definitions of major, minor and severe faults are unclear. Dr. Joan Rowe and Dr. Daniel Mora presented basic anatomy and emphasized that function should be used as a Guiding Principle when developing a breed standard. Dr. Rowe brought a unique perspective from her experience owning, showing and judging dairy goats, and her work with various Breed Associations. She discussed the elements of a Breed Standard, which may include many things ... a Standard of Perfection, a Breed Description (which may be general or have specific details), a Scorecard, an Evaluation of Defects and/or Rules for Registration. She emphasized that if a breed standard reflects traits affecting function (such as general health, dental health, musculoskeletal soundness, fiber production, reproduction) then flexibility can exist in the standard to allow different styles and body types as a breeder's preference. Shari McKelvy of Morro Fleece Works and Pat Peddicord and Kerry Trento of Suri-Al Pacas discussed desired fleece characteristics from a processing perspective. Shari commented that for Huacaya fiber, fineness, density, bundling, consistency and crimp are very important. Pat commented that luster is the most important trait in Suri fiber, and that it takes two washes due to the lock structure. Because they use different equipment and process to different end points, there are some differences in the fiber characteristics they can process with their equipment.

The speaker's presentations were followed by a 1 ½ hour question and answer period. The attendees were then broken into groups of 7-8 people and asked to rank specific traits of the alpaca. Most of the Suri owners were assigned to evaluate Suri Head, Suri Frame or Suri Fleece (1 group each). Dick Walker also gave them the Suri Network Working Document of the Proposed Suri Alpaca Breed Standard to review and comment on. The remainder of the groups were asked to evaluate Huacaya Head (3 groups), Huacaya Frame (4 groups) or Huacaya Fleece (3 groups). After each group did their individual trait ranking,

they were asked to develop a statement about that aspect of the traits they had ranked. Very few of the groups had the time to develop a statement. The groups for each body section then united and talked about what each individual group came up with. Since the combined groups were unable to achieve a consensus about their trait rankings, the list represents how each individual group ranked each trait. They were asked to rank each individual trait as:

A = not important B = important C = very important

HUACAYA HEAD

Head Shape	A	B	B
Ear Set/Shape	C	B	B
Eye Set	B	C	B
Eye Color - Dark Brown/Black	C	B	
Eye Color - Blue & Brown/Black		B	
Eye Color - Do Not Mention			A
Bite	C	C	C
Muzzle/Nose	C	C	C

SURI HEAD

Head Shape	C
Ear Set/Shape	B
Eye Set	C
Eye Color - Dark Brown/Black	A
Eye Color - Blue & Brown/Black	A
Eye Color - Do Not Mention	C
Bite	C
Muzzle/Nose	C

HUACAYA FRAME

Balanced Proportion	C	B	C	C
Neck	B	B	B	C
Top Line	C	B	C	C
Body Capacity	B	C	B	C
Forequarter and Front Legs	B	B	B	C
Hindquarter and Back Legs	C	C	C	C
Height and Weight	B	B	A	B
Reproductive Soundness	C	C	C	C

SURI FRAME

Balanced Proportion	C
Neck	C
Top Line	C
Body Capacity	C
Forequarter and Front Legs	C
Hindquarter and Back Legs	C
Height and Weight	C
Reproductive Soundness	C

HUACAYA FLEECE

Coverage	C		C
Coverage - Head	B	A	A
Coverage - Legs	B	A	B
Coverage - Body	C	C	C
Uniformity	C		C
Uniformity - Micron	C	C	C
Uniformity - Staple Length	C	C	C
Uniformity - Color	B	B	B
Density	C	C	C
Fineness	C	C	C
Handle	C	C	C
Brightness	B	B	C
Crimp	C	B	B
Staple Length	C	B	C
Lack of Medullation (Guard Hair)	C	C	C
Condition (general health of fleece)	C	A	C

SURI FLEECE

Coverage	C
Coverage - Head	B
Coverage - Legs	B
Coverage - Body	C
Uniformity	C
Uniformity - Micron	C
Uniformity - Staple Length	C
Uniformity - Color	B
Density	C
Fineness	C
Handle	B
Luster	C
Lock Structure	C
Staple Length	B
Lack of Medullation (Guard Hair)	C
Condition (general health of fleece)	C

The following are the written statements that were started:

Huacaya Frame: Group1: Dark Brown/Black Eyes preferable; Muzzle/Nose: no Roman nose and not too short; Group 2: Muzzle/Nose for function; Group 3: Head Shape neatly shaped in proportion with animal body; Ear set/shape: spear shaped; Eye Set: large and round – must be able to see; Bite: incisors meet dental pad; Muzzle/Nose: square.

Suri Head, Frame and Fleece: Suri Network Working Document of the Proposed Suri Alpaca Breed Standard was reviewed and some comments and recommended changes were given to the President of the Suri Network, Dr. Dick Walker.

At the end of the break out session, each individual group reported their results to all attendees. There was little time for discussion and no attempt was made to try to achieve consensus among the 105 attendees, especially since there was no consensus among the individual groups that came together.

The agenda for our Breed Standard Conference was very robust for a 1 day conference, but the overall feedback indicated that the conference was a VERY positive learning experience for all who attended.