

MAPACA



Mid-Atlantic Alpaca Association

March 2004

Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 3

MaPaca

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Paul

Connor,

Vice

President:

Jovi Larson,

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Boyd,

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Large:

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D e V o s ,

Nancy

Johanson,

Nick Melfi.

Newsletter

Editor:

Alice

Brown.

President's Message:

Sold Out!!!

Well I'm writing this article on March 20th, 5 days after the registration deadline for the Jubilee of March 15th. I hope you are finding joy in the fact that you sent your registration in by the deadline and did not have to find out that March 16th was "way too late". Yes, we even moved the auction to an adjoining hall so that we could accommodate all the reservations up to, and including, March 15th but that's all that could be done. It's hard to believe we could outgrow 175,000 square feet of space, but you did it. In any case since we advised of the potential sell out in the last two Newsletters I am sure that no MaPaca member was disappointed (I hope).

Showmanship & Fiber Preparation Tips

Another new feature this year will be hands on lessons on Thursday for new participants that would like to get some advice from seasoned handlers regarding showing techniques and dos and don'ts. Just arrive early on Thursday and look for a sign showing you which ring the instruction will take place. We have tentatively planned for 11am, 1pm and 3pm. We will also have lessons on fiber preparation, sponsored by the AOBA Raw Fiber and Fiber Products Committee by Wini Lebreque, which may not help you in this year's show but may prove very valuable in the future. We are tentatively planning to have the fiber tips at 2pm and 4pm. If you would like to participate, either giving assistance or receiving it, please show up at the ring at those times or the times posted that day.

ARI Voting Rights

ARI is going to be circulating more changes to by-laws soon. Of the list of suggested changes, on the surface they seem fairly procedural and harmless. However, there is a suggested change whereby notice of meetings

need only be sent to "voting members".

The reasoning is why send notices to people who can't vote anyway. There is a logic to it. My concern is twofold. One - I feel any owners or breeders who think they are saving \$50 per year by not voting because "they really do not understand the issues well enough to vote intelligently" are not choosing to save money wisely. I can't say as I understand the concept of paying to vote, but be that as it may, Board Members that we elected seemed to think that it was a good idea - that's a done deal. However, by electing to not send in your \$25 per person for the right to vote is really placing your business and your future in the hands of others. If you have any concern about your future and your investment I advise you to send in your money as soon as possible, don't wait until next year. If you don't understand issues or why you should maintain the right to vote, ask a breeder you trust, ask the breeder you bought alpacas from who taught you everything you needed to know about alpacas up to this point, or ask me if you like. The other part of my "two fold" is the fact that if you didn't feel anything was that important to pay to vote for, you never will if you never know what is going on at meetings on a current basis as opposed to reading historic notes once action has been taken that may not have been in your best interest, but how will you ever know.

AOBA Board of Directors

I am running for the AOBA Board of Directors. I would appreciate your vote in the event you feel I can represent your interests appropriately. In any case, thank you for your consideration, and "not to beat a dead horse" but please vote. Please take 20 minutes to read the bios of all of the candidates who are volunteering what will amount to hundreds of hours of their time in the course of their terms on your behalf, and then vote.

Zoning Restrictions for Alpacas

Our township recently changed zoning restrictions and implemented a restriction on llamas and alpacas to 1 for the first acre and 2 per acre thereafter. I am going to attempt to have the subject reopened and modified, however, I could use some ammunition if any is available. If you could let me know if you have any such restrictions in your community and specifically what they are - it could help me pursue this, which is in all of our interests. Please email to: paul@bigskyalpacas.com. See you at the Jubilee!

Paul Connor

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From the Desk of the Jubilee Coordinator:

Hi all,

It's official, the 8th Annual Eastern MaPACA Jubilee is an AOBA certified show. As you all know, the Jubilee is just around the corner. Your show committee volunteers are hard at work to keep things in order and meet the many deadlines. Please take a moment to notice their names! Kit Hower's final figures are 365 farms, 803 pen spaces, 1400 alpacas, 20 Diamond sponsors, 17 Platinum sponsors, 9 Gold, 3 Silver, 15 Bronze and 11 Show. There are over 1300 halter entries. This will be one unbelievable show! A sold out show! Thank you all for your contribution. Since our sponsors are relied upon to help keep the costs down for all attendees, please take a moment to take notice of and thank them for their generosity.

One of the many comments we have received is how nice the ribbons were last year. We will be using the same ribbon format this year. With a sold out show, plan to arrive early Thursday so you don't wind up in a bottleneck. I can tell you from past experience that between 12 Noon and 4pm is when most farms arrive. If you are one of those farms that arrives in that time frame, please be patient and our volunteers will do the best they can to get you in your stalling and settled as soon as possible. Last year ran extremely smoothly and with some luck and lots of help, we can do the same this year. Please make sure you pay strict attention to the health requirements, as no animals will be allowed in the complex without complying. If you are transporting animals for someone they must have a place to stay. Since the show is sold out, we do not have any pens available for transient animals and the PA Farm Show officials frown upon animals left in trailers. I hope you took a pen space for your farm display, nothing will be allowed in the aisles per fire code.

If you have not volunteered yet, it's not too late. While quantities last, we will issue you an official MaPaca Jubilee volunteer 2004 cap. Yes, the

same ones many volunteers were proud to wear last year. I'm looking forward to a great show with fantastic alpacas and some fun people.

Nick Melfi

Donations Needed for Monte Carlo Night

Barb Nuessle

This year the AFCNA will be holding a Monte Carlo game night at the Jubilee. Friday night will be fun for the whole family with games and prizes designed to appeal to kids and adults alike. Winners of games will receive "play money" that can be redeemed for gifts and prizes. There will be a silent stud raffle featuring our region's noteworthy herdsires. For prizes, all types of donations are welcome from big ticket items such as artwork, jewelry, and alpaca apparel, to smaller items such as hand-spun yarn, carding tools, cria coats, shears, clippers, halters, or leads. Donations need *not* be alpaca-related. Weekend getaways, vacation homes and time-shares are always a hit, as are bottles of wine, baskets of goodies, and professional services. Be creative!

Your item will be featured with your name and your farm name. Here is a great opportunity to showcase your herdsire or your special hand-crafted product. Proceeds from this fund-raiser will be applied toward the purchase of our knitting machine used to manufacture our popular Extreme Alpaca socks. If you have an item that you would like to donate, please contact Barb Nuessle (609-884-0563) or Jennifer Orr (812-951-1802). Or you can email me a brief description of the item together with its estimated value. My email address is bnuessle@aol.com.

Retraction

It was brought to my attention that since some members of MaPaca have the same last name there could be a misunderstanding in the list of last names that I put in February's Newsletter as a reminder to those who had not renewed. As a clarification, the Wood listing was not Ingrid Wood, but another member with the same last name.

Alice Brown

2004 MaPaca Eastern Jubilee Sponsors

DIAMOND

Bob & Lou Eustance , French Hollow Alpacas, Bondville, VT
 David & Laurye Feller, Sunset Hills Farm , Butler, PA
 Ed & Charlene Friedman, Mountain Edge Alpacas , Boalsburg, PA
 Mary Forte Goodman , Mary's Alpaca, Miami, FL
 Diane & Leon Rosenberg, Meadowgate Farm Alpacas, Lawrenceville, NJ
 Bud & Gail Stewart , Rocky Run Alpacas , Malvern, PA
 Nancy Johanson , Alpacas of Brookhollow Farm, Boonton, NJ
 Steve McCarthy , Spruce Ridge Farm, Old Chatham, NY
 Cheryl & Ross Palmentera, C R Alpacas, Inc., Chagrin Falls, OH
 The Alpaca Team
 Ben & Lynda Fisco , Humming Hill Suri Alpacas, Newbury, OH
 Gail S. Campbell, Ameripaca Alpaca Breeding Co. Inc., Galesville, MD
 Rebecca Black & Mitchell Rales, Glenstone Farm , Potomac, MD
 The Alpaca Group, Andes Alpaca Farm, Aconcagua Alpaca Farm, Lightfoot Farms, Maple Brook Farm, Royal River Alpaca Co, Skyview Alpacas
 Jerry & Libby Forstner, Magical Farms, Inc ., Litchfield, OH
 Sharon Brown , Virginia Alpaca Farm & Breeding Co. Leesburg, VA
 Mike & Kim Harnett, Hearts Desire Farm, Shinnston, WV
 Karen Byran & Hugo Ulloa , Alpacas de la Patagonia, Camano Island, WA
 Paul & Ann Connor , Big Sky Alpacas , Mullica Hill, NJ
 Barrie Lynn Wood , Benchmark Alpacas at the Tin Roof Ranch, Ortonville, MI

PLATINUM

Dennis Balbac & Monica Kline, A Suri Farm, Myerstown, PA
 Jim & Gini Barker, Sweet Briar Suri Farm, Burton, OH
 John & Lauren LoVerde, Fleecy Dale Farm, Lambertville, NJ
 Cynthia & Tim Lavan, Chase Tavern Farm , Bowdoin, ME
 Ian & Jennifer Lutz, Cas-Cad-Nac Farm , Perkinsville, VT
 Joan McCurry , Alpaca Connection, Woodbury, CT
 Glen & Sue Cook, Blue Ribbon Alpaca Breeding Co., Gaithersburg, MD
 Arlene & Marcel Gruter, Purple Haze Alpacas, Bangor, PA
 Carol J Karsten , Hidden Hill Farm Alpacas , Antrim, NH
 Chris & Lori Works, Kendall Creek Farms , Bradford, PA
 Alan & Patti Anderson, Wild Rose Suri Ranch , HavreDeGrace, MD
 Patrick Cassese , Glengary Farm Alpacas , Bath, OH
 Tilly Dorsey , Dafi Alpacas , Butler, MD

GOLD
 Peter Buckingham & Lorrie O'Connor, Folsom Farm Alpacas, Raymond, NH
 Kim T. Howey & Dale Burnard, White Birch Farm, Gagersburg, PA
 Frida & Daryl Goodrich, Angel Wood Alpacas Farm, LLC, Middleton, PA
 Jack Esterson & Richard Surles , Fibergenix Suris, Ringoes, NJ
 Kim & Lou DeVos , Creekside Breeders & Inca Fashions , Renfrew, PA
 Wendy Schwab & Jeff Krieg, Hillside Alpacas, Bradford, PA
 David Stensland , A Craftsman's Touch Alpaca Co., Edison, NJ
 Amy & Joseph Castellanos, Amy J's Homestead Alpacas, Tiffin, OH
 Andy & Kim Schneider , Middle Eight Farm , Mt Airy, MD
 The Swift Family, Mariah's Alpacas of Vermont, South Ryegate, VT
 Brad & Jandy Sprouse, Great Lakes Ranch, Maple City, MI

SILVER

Rachel & Matt Gsellman, MaRachel's Alpacas of Ohio, Medina, OH
 Olivier & Patricia Gillotin, Shalimar Alpacas of Warwick, Warwick, NY
 Robert & Helen Ribbans , Candlelight Farm Alpacas , Flemington, NJ

BRONZE

Scott & Pamela Maruna , Aristocrat Farms, Inc ., Sagamore Hills, OH
 Barbara & Warren Nuessle, Bay Springs Farm Alpacas , Cape May, NJ
 Linda Lindstrom & Roy Parks, Zodiac Ranch, Milford, MI
 Barbara & Jerry DuVall , Briar Rose Alpacas , Avondale, PA
 Ken & Lois Pocock, Shady Nook Alpacas, Annapolis, MD
 Tina Weston , Forest Glen Alpacas, LLC , Wallkill, NY
 JoAnne & Carl Givler, Y Knot Alpacas , Orefield, PA
 Raymond & Luann Fagundo, Rancho Chico Alpacas, Tridelpia, WV
 Cindy & Tim Vars , Autumn Hill Alpacas, Andover, NY
 Leah & Howard Jungkind, Hawks Willow Ranch, Blairstown, NJ
 Brian & Melinda Martin , Seven Springs Farm Alpacas, Glen Rock, PA
 Paula Ickeringill , Sea Hill Farm Alpacas , Kittery Point, ME
 William Thompson, Alpacas of Braley Hill, Bolton Landing, NY
 Susan Evon , Sleeping Monk Farm , New Ipswich, NH
 Tim & Amanda Trietley/Jim & Naomi Dickinson, Yes Suri Alpaca Farm , Thurmont, MD

SHOW

Nancy & Jimmy Stepp, Rolling Thunder Farms, Somis, CA
 JoAnne & Carl Givler, Y Knot Alpacas , Orefield, PA
 Karen Dunn , Angel Fleece Alpaca Farm, Simpsonville, KY
 Cheryl & Ross Palmentera , C.R. Alpacas, Inc., Chagrin Falls, OH
 Dawn Brooker , Fiber Fields Alpaca Farm, Palermo, ME
 Dr. Toni Cotton, Camelid Vet. Services & Rare Suri Alpacas, Findlay, OH
 James & Donita Brent, Camel's Hump Alpaca Farm , Huntington, VT
 Sandy & Leo Lawrence, Adirondack Evergreen Alpacas, Plattsburgh, NY
 R. Freddi Dunleavy , Alpacas of Dun-Dor Woods, LLC , Arkville,

Feature Story:

On-the-Job Training, Alpaca Style

By Janet Boas

Lilac Lane Alpacas

Ridley Park, PA

When we found our first alpacas, we knew we would not be able to move to a farm for a while. We knew we would have to agist (board). The farm we were visiting had three beautiful young girls we fell in love with. They also offered very generous agistment terms. We were thrilled! As our girls grew, so could we.

Like many new alpaca breeders, we had never owned any livestock. Life in the Philadelphia suburbs with two little poodles and our daughter's hamsters didn't quite prepare us for being farmers. I felt overwhelmed with the responsibility of actually being on our own someday with not the first clue about the day to day care of alpacas.

I was still working full time, hoping for an early retirement. But I had arranged my schedule so I could be off every other Friday. Would it be possible for me to come over on my days off and help out, doing the everyday ordinary things needed to keep our alpacas happy?

This has turned out to be a win-win situation. My husband and I, as brand new breeders, have learned invaluable lessons in the care of our alpacas. And I think the farm has benefited from a little extra help.

Hopefully, we have made ourselves useful. On our free days and on their employee's days off, we have helped with cleaning up (pooper-scooping, water buckets, summer wading pools), feeding, behavior testing, breeding, shots, teeth and nail trimming, training, and even a couple of births and navel dipping. During baby season, we came over to do a baby watch so our friends could go out with their family.

On our part, we have gained the knowledge that only comes from hands on experience. We may never have as many animals, but we've also learned a few things about managing several dozens of alpacas.

As a plus, another new breeder who has just bought her first babies a few months ago, has decided to opt for the on-the-job training experience also. She is planning on moving to a farm several states away. I'm sure the selling farm feels much more confident that the alpacas they sell to new breeders will be properly taken care of when the buyers have a chance to gain a little experience ahead of time.

Not only is the purchase of alpacas a significant financial investment, we also need to respect them as wonderful creatures who are smart and have personalities and feelings. As we see them relate to each other, I think we gain an appreciation and respect for them as

individuals. We want to care for them in the best way possible and benefit from the lessons others have already learned.

Many times experienced breeders offer on-going support to new buyers. But consider the opportunities to both seller and buyer of a little on-the-job training if time and location permit. This can be a definite plus to both sides.

Win-win? Tangibly, the seller gets a little extra help around the farm. This can be an extra plus, especially if a paid employee is off for the day, or at those inevitable times when there are extra chores to be done. Intangibly, the seller gets the satisfaction of knowing that their beautiful animals, which they have worked so hard to breed and raise, will be taken care of in a reasonably responsible way.

The new buyer gets a real feeling for taking care of their animals. Seeing these beautiful creatures out in a pasture on a warm spring day and falling in love with them, or investing in them for financial benefit, may be just a little different from the day-to-day pooper-scooping and dragging heavy bales of hay. Is this really your "thing"? Seeing a farm set-up is different from actually working it. A new breeder can pick up tips about arranging the barn, setting up fencing and catch-pens, and organizing a day of alpaca care, as well as gaining a little experience with some of the necessary details of keeping alpacas happy and healthy. And of course, setting out on a new, exciting venture with a bit more confidence that they can actually do this - "Priceless !" Happy farming!



Janet Boas of Lilac Lane Alpacas with her three girls, "Brandy", "Chablis", and "Tia Maria," who are all grown up now and ready to be breed.

Photo by Paul Connor, Big Sky Alpacas, Mullica Hill,

Camelid Humor: *When Blue Tarp "Coyotes"* *ATTACK!*

By Tara Lee Higgins, Alberta, Canada

When we had imminent snow warnings, I put out a large blue polyethylene tarp on the area I have spread some straw out on...the "lounging" area for sheep and/or llamas. Even with the plus temperatures, we still have lots of snow/ice ground coverage and if someone wants to lay out in the winter sun, not in the barn or covered areas, they may do so comfortably if I keep the snow from covering it over and packing down.

I like to stand back and observe my girls and babies, so as I was taking a break and admiring them from the edge of the corrals before I headed off to tote another bale or scoop another shovel full, I noticed both the crias (born Dec & Jan) were, of course, investigating the "new" tarp...yeh, not like they have ever seen one before...lots of times now! ;-). But of course, llama nature and who knows, it has been a few weeks since I last covered the straw, so there they both were, gently walking over and mouthing it. The girl picked it up and nibbled it a bit, but the boy, well he just had to grip it tightly in his mouth. Crias are always investigating how things "taste/feel" I suppose!

****WHOOSH!**** Suddenly the tranquil winter scene of sheep lounging chewing their cud and two Momma llamas and crias changed drastically...

Well for some reason or other the lil' boy didn't decide to buck...maybe the tarp swished at him, but he then took off running! For sure, he had forgotten he had clenched the tarp edge tightly in his mouth...and for certain, the more he ran, the tighter he clenched his mouth because the more velocity he increased, the more that tarp stuck behind him flapping in all its savage blueness.

Heavens! Coyote alert--BLUE flat-like-a-pancake COYOTEEEEEEEEEE!!

Both mommas freaked, Dolls rounded up her girl and Snowflake started gurgling that deep from the gut llama "I don't like this, not one bit!" sound...while her poor boy was going round and round her with the horrible predator stuck right there beside and behind him, flapping and gnashing its awful blueness. Snow to her credit, curled up her tail, perked forward her ears and ran at the monster who was harassing her boy. If only he would stay still so she could stomp it even flatter!

Meanwhile I was on the way in, thinking how the heck does one diffuse something like this? He's running too fast to get near, it is pandemonium at the girl's barn and everyone is stressed to the nines. Frightened crias, puzzled staring Jacobs, freaked out mommas...and a baby boy who just wouldn't let go!

Thankfully after what seemed like an eternity, he opened his mouth (maybe to gasp for air?) and the blue pursuer

dropped to the ground and played DEAD!

It was like quenched breaths all exhaled at the same time and peace descended on the whole scene...both girls nuzzled their crias who looked up and hugged tightly to them...and there for all the trouble it had caused lay--the TARP. Surprisingly, not five seconds later, the llamas all advanced on it...sniffing, looking, appraising the situation...of course the tarp just lay there for the inspection, never revealing its potential menace.

At that moment, I lost it and laughed...a good whole hearted chuckle. Is there EVER a dull moment, can one ever make it so nothing stresses your critters out? Even the placement of a silly tarp can cause all heck to break loose. Get a life?? I've got one and it is far too exciting to need any outside influences...

I duly note, for those who are gender conscious and tabulate these kind of stats...this boy happens to be the ONLY male in this sole female group! Any correlation with the y chromosome and trouble?

I've observed my bachelors (Jasper the llama stud and his two Jacob rams, Nicto & Noble) carrying on in some very "boyish" ways over in their pasture. I often arrive to put them in their barn (appropriately signed "saloon") for the night and see them rousting and jousting with each other...lots of she-nigans go on there, but surprisingly, nobody gets hurt...believe me, I have been closely examining the three to make sure none is injured from the play rough housing.

I've watched Jasper reach down and munch on Noble's foreleg, meanwhile, Noble then swings his four horns at Jasper as he "leaps" out of range. I just shake my head...no species is any worse to each other in behaviors. One bites their legs, the others try to blunt hit his rear...I say they deserve each other!

Doggone welcome to my private three ring circus.



Graphic by
Robert Owen

A Graphic Artist from British Columbia, Canada

Volunteer

We still need volunteers for various tasks at the Jubilee. Please get involved and volunteer. It is not too early to volunteer for Jubilee 2005 as well!

Editor's Ramblings:

On this exhilarating windy March afternoon, I have just come inside from watching our small herd of mommas and babies run out into a new pasture. Yes, we held our grand gate opening ceremony this afternoon. We invited many who had helped us in this endeavor and with an expectant crowd on hand, I walked over and did the honors of OPENING the gate!

Who would be the first to enter. With eyes wide open, almost in disbelief, the first girl noticed the open gate and headed for the wide open spaces and a greener pasture. Following a few seconds later, the remainder of the herd made their way into the new pasture. Guess what they did first? Yup! They all stopped and started stuffing their little mouths with the grass of early spring.

It wasn't long though, and they realized that here was fresh territory. They all began running with the wind, up one hill, down the other side, then up another hill. The crias at first were leading the pack and then the pregnant mommas took off and took the lead, kicking up their heels as they ran. An occasional stop to roll in the luscious grass and then off they ran again.

In the back ground I heard Fred hollering, "The camera won't work!" What a time for the batteries to go dead.

Yes, two and a half years of hard back breaking work and at last, the alpacas have another pasture to call home. Fred wanted to know if he should put out poop in an area where we want them to poop so that they will make a poop pile there. I told him, don't bother. I tried that in the last new pasture and it didn't work. They chose their own spot and ignored the one I had chosen. As I sat under the big Norway Maple, one girl walked over and chose the spot! Great spot, not all that far from the barn. I thought, see, we couldn't have done better if we chose the spot ourselves.

With Jubilee just weeks away, I'm again looking forward to seeing many of you. Please say hello and introduce yourselves. I will be at our farm display, Forever Precious Alpacas. We are showing two of our ten alpacas. If you have a story to share, feel free to do so. It will be a great event, I'm sure! A big thank you to all who have volunteered to make this show a success.

My Best to You All, Alice Brown

Bright Ideas!

*Contributed by Ann Connor of Big Sky Alpacas,
Mullica Hill, New Jersey*

Weighing our alpacas regularly is a good husbandry practice. However, getting on the scale may not be the favorite thing our alpacas like to do. A suggestion that seems to help even the most timid of these alpacas is to put hay on top of and all around the scale. This camouflage makes the scale appear much more friendly to a frightened alpaca. Once you have the hay on the scale, just hit the tare button to zero out the weight on the scale and weigh your alpaca. This procedure makes weighing the alpacas a one man job.

Do You Want to Advertise in the MaPaca Newsletter?

No ads will be accepted that include the PRICE of animals for sale. Stud Service prices are acceptable. Thank you.

We will insert one-page ads for members in MaPaca Newsletters. Ads cost **\$40.00** for one 8 ½" by 11" ad, on 24 pound paper or less, if you supply ALL the copies (they can be in color and two sided if you like). If your ad is on heavier paper than 24 pound, the cost will be **\$60.00**. If you would like us to copy your ad, supply us one copy and we will have it copied in black & white, one sided, for **\$70.00** total.

If you know any business that sells products or services relating to alpacas or farming in general that would benefit alpaca farmers, that would like to place an insert AD in the MaPaca Newsletter, you can recommend them if you are an existing Lifetime MaPaca Member. The costs for businesses would be an additional **\$100.00** added on to the regular member fee for an insert AD. Thus it would be either **\$140.00, \$160.00, or \$170.00**. Please send copies, along with payment, to Alice Brown, 458 Main Road, Vineland, NJ 08360 by the 20th of the month you want your ad inserted. Make check payable to **MaPaca** and include check with inserts.

If you have any questions, please email Alice Brown at fpalpacas@aol.com or give me a call at—**856-697-8127**.



Members Events Calendar

April 4, 2004 – Alpaca Heritage Budget Caper – Show and Sale Promotion:

Woodstown, New Jersey. Judge: Suzanne Tuccillo. For information: www.AlpacaHeritage.com – Superintendent: Ingrid Wood (609-261-0696 or alpacas@uscom.com), Asst. Superintendent: Kate Perez (301-607-9129 or kperez@erols.com), Sale Promotion Coordinator: Jackie Armiger (609-324-0080 or jkarmiger@aol.com), Vendor Liaison: Alice Brown (856-697-8127 or fpalpacas@aol.com).

April 24-25—New York’s 12th annual Washington County Fiber Tour

— Free event to the public. Come to Upstate New York to tour 11 farms with fiber animals such as alpacas, angora rabbits and goats, llamas and several types of sheep. Each farm is unique with a variety of interesting aspects to entertain and educate the whole family. To learn more about this family fun event, visit: www.sunsetridgealpacas.com

May 23, 2004—Hands on Family Fun Day

1-6PM Shearing demonstrations, Fiber Mill Tours, felting, obstacle course. Snugglers’ Meadow Alpacas & Fiber Mill, Huntsburg, OH. www.snugsalpacas.com 440-636-5384.

June 26, 27—John Mallon Alpaca Handling and Training Clinic.

At Wild Rose Suri Ranch in Havre de Grace, MD. Call 410-734-7084 for details, or see www.wildrosealpacas.com/mallon_clinic.htm. Register early by May 15th for savings.

Classified Ads:

Any member may post an ad for alpaca and/or alpaca farm related equipment and items. The ad should include a one sentence description and contact information such as phone number and email. We will run your ad for one month, if you do not sell the item and wish to run it again, let me know. This will be a free service to current MaPaca members ONLY. Please send your ads to Alice Brown, 458 Main Road, Vineland, NJ, 08360 or fpalpacas@aol.com or call 856-697-8127.

1. **GREAT STARTER TRAILER!** 7x10x7 high, room for 3+ adult alpacas, low deck, plexi-window ventilation, coral panel rack, hay loft, separate tack compartment w/spare tire, lights rewired/replaced last spring. Has been great for shows and transport to breedings. Available after May 1st, delivery to you possible. Will be at MAPACA jubilee or contact to see in NJ: David Stensland, A Craftsman's Touch Alpaca Co., craftsman4fiber@earthlink.net or **732-393-0351**. \$1000 OBO.
2. The “Hay Saver” double sided, covered feeder helps you keep your alpacas clean while reducing feeding costs. www.AllAlpacas.com or **724-940-4045**.
3. Custom designed, hand woven and knitted fashions from your alpaca’s fleece, roving or yarn. Shop online at www.cherryridgealpacas.com.
4. 2 oz. Custom hand-spun sample skeins from YOUR alpaca! \$10 each plus \$2 shipping. scmoore@1st.net or **740-934-9318** for details.
5. Yarn, batts, rovings, and felt from your alpacas. Snuggler’s Meadow Alpacas & Fiber Mill. www.snugsalpacas.com or **440-636-5384**.
6. “Pro-Tie”- Alpaca restraint system for shearing. Used twice, \$225. 410-734-7084.
7. **Alpaca Digital Scale**—from Steven’s Llamatique. Paid \$1225 new. Sell for \$800. 410-734-7084.
8. **Hay Bags**—with straps-used,. \$25 each (\$35 new). 410-734-7084.

Veterinary News for the East Coast

Choke and Mega-Esophagus

By Kathy Hamblett, Certified Veterinary Assistant
of BaggyWrinkle Alpacas

You've just fed the herd for the evening, and are heading back to the house when you hear a horrible retching sound coming from an alpaca. An alpaca is choking. What should you do? The haemlick maneuver? The good news is that unlike choking humans, the alpaca's airway is not obstructed. The object is not inhaled into the trachea and the animal is able to breathe. Choke is best described as a bolus of food that becomes lodged somewhere along the esophagus. Clinical signs for choke include retching, coughing, difficulty eating, head shaking, colic signs, salivation, and nasal discharge. In alpacas, "choke" can persist for days. But mostly, alpacas will be able to clear an obstruction by themselves within minutes.

Alpacas actually have a lot going for them to help avoid choke. Alpaca choke is less common than equine and bovine choke largely due to the alpaca's infamous ability to regurgitate freely, i.e. spit. Alpacas have more voluntary control of the esophagus than most species and a lodged object will initiate reflexive muscular contractions. Their split upper lips are uniquely designed to investigate and manipulate food, and each side can be manipulated independently. This means that alpacas are less likely than other species to ingest foreign objects, or non-food items.

When the alpaca cannot clear the obstruction, immediate veterinary intervention is necessary to prevent damage. If choke is long lasting, dehydration can set in. Over time, depression sets in, and the retching and coughing cease. Aspiration of feed into the trachea and lungs is a common sequel to choke and

leads to pneumonia. While choke is a fairly common occurrence, it is rarely fatal, unless left untended. Complications can compromise an alpaca, starting a chain reaction that is almost impossible to stop.

On-farm treatment by your veterinarian may include feeling the bolus on the left side of the neck and massaging it down. Unfortunately, most obstructions requiring intervention are in the chest. Your veterinarian may give atropine to relax the esophageal muscle and allow esophageal muscle contractions to move the bolus. Analgesics are appropriate to deal with pain, and a stomach or nasogastric tube may be used to push the object along. Long acting antibiotics are often given to prevent pneumonia. Depending on your comfort level, you may be able to perform some of these measures with proper instruction by your veterinarian.

If choking appears to be a frequent problem for a particular alpaca, your veterinarian may desire to take radiographs of the esophagus to rule out mega-esophagus. This rare condition mimics choke with common clinical signs of recurring regurgitation and hypersalivation occurring after eating or when the head is lowered to eat or drink. In "mega-esophagus" the esophagus is abnormally enlarged as opposed to being obstructed. To manage mega-esophagus, the animal is fed small, frequent meals on an inclined plane to elevate the forequarters, allowing gravity to empty the esophagus.

What causes choke in alpacas? Dr. Fowler believes the vast majority of choke cases are a result of a "greedy" animal bolting a mouthful of feed and attempting to swallow it without chewing. There are several approaches to dealing with this behavior. One approach is to change the pellet size. One product advocates larger pellets – "the larger, the better", while another product sings the praises of a hard crumbled feed.

Despite your best efforts at preventing choke, it may occur on your farm. Understanding alpaca choke will help you be better prepared to take the best actions for your alpaca should that time come.

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Another approach is to deal with the behavior directly by managing the *way* owners feed their animals, not *what* they feed. Dr. Evans estimates that 98% of choke is a result of feed management. Alpacas live in a social hierarchy, and eating is a large part of maintaining that hierarchy. Dominant animals expect to eat first. Trough space is very important – to defend, or to encroach upon. Feed pans placed 4 feet apart at ground level reduce competition, and places the feed where alpacas are naturally inclined to eat – at ground level. Other strategies include placing large round river rocks in feed pans, or spreading the grain in a thin layer to force the alpaca to eat more gingerly. Grouping alpacas according to their eating habits is helpful. This recognizes alpaca hierarchical behavior and accounts for herd dynamics. The owner can avoid situations where the subordinate alpaca quickly grabs and gulps a mouthful of feed before being forced away by a dominant alpaca.