

# MAPACA



Mid-Atlantic Alpaca Association

November, 2004

Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 11

## MaPaca

### Officers:

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Paul

Connor,

Vice

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Jovi Larson,

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Fred Brown,

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rich, Nancy

Johanson,

and

Nick Melfi.

Newsletter

Editor:

Alice

Brown.

## President's Message:

Freedom of the Press.

As a member of the MaPaca Board of Directors I was elected to represent the entire MaPaca membership. I was not elected to present the points of view I favor, I was elected to "represent" all points of view. As President of MaPaca I was elected by the Board of Directors to represent the MaPaca Board of Directors, where applicable, in matters where it is not feasible to get the input of the entire Board prior to a specific action, response, or carrying out duties as outlined in the MaPaca By-laws.

As President I have made it a personal obligation and responsibility to maintain a sense of objectivity in all matters, to elicit input from the membership on all topics, at every opportunity, and to present a monthly message to the membership, via the MaPaca newsletter, in an attempt to focus on issues and subjects that I believe to be of inher-

ent interest to the entire MaPaca membership, as objectively as possible.

At MaPaca Board meetings, whether face to face or teleconference, I present the topics, I give everyone a chance to respond, if I have a point of view I present it as one of the Board members, or as a fellow breeder if it is a "personal" opinion or point of view. As President I then summarize everyone's input, take a vote where applicable, and review action

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## LAST CALL! Time to Renew for 2005!

All Membership Renewals must be in the hands of Andy Schneider by December 31, 2004 for members to receive the 10% discount on pens at Jubilee 2005.

Please fill out the enclosed form or go to [www.mapaca.org](http://www.mapaca.org) and fill out the renewal form. Print out the form and send it with a check made out to MaPaca to:

**Andy Schneider**  
**13097 Old Annapolis Road**  
**Mount Airy, MD 21771**

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to be taken and by whom, objectively.

I am told, second hand, that the MaPaca Newsletter has attracted the attention of numerous members of the ARI and AOBA Boards of Directors. While I am pleased that the Newsletter has been picking up the additional circulation (as always, congratulations are in order to our editor Alice Brown), I am disheartened by what I have been told are some of the comments evolving from this increased circulation.

In the October issue of the MaPaca Newsletter I presented a letter from a long time MaPaca member requesting the presentation of an issue recently highlighted in the publication, Llama Life II. I presented this article under my signature as an issue that was very important to our industry and worthy of attention. The last sentence of my brief message stated – “Opposing or additional points of view are always welcome”. That has always been the case and will remain the case.

The MaPaca Newsletter reserves the right to present and edit articles with the approval of the author/s. We reserve the right to determine what goes into the MaPaca Newsletter without the approval of the ARI, AOBA, AFCNA or any other Board of directors, other than MaPaca where appropriate or requested.

I am not going to get myself, as President of MaPaca, or the Newsletter, drawn into taking sides, self-interest politics (probably redundant) or innuendos. Any negative comments against the MaPaca Newsletter and it's integrity are unwarranted and unfounded. The organizations in our industry have a way of making things “personal” more than any other business I have ever known. I do not apologize in any way for last month's newsletter article and once again repeat – “Opposing or additional points of view are always welcome”.

In my personal opinion (Paul Connor's personal opinion) – rarely have so few had the potential futures of so many within their influence.

Paul Connor

**Note: As always, the message presented here does not necessarily reflect the opinions or points of view of any other MaPaca Board members.**

**From the Jubilee Coordinator:**

Hi to everyone,

As Thanksgiving approaches, Jubilee plans are on track and things are beginning to happen at a much faster pace. That pace will increase almost daily now until after the show is over.

We still need many volunteers. The all volunteer staff is what makes the show happen. Please help if you can, even if it's just a few hours. It all adds up to a great event for everyone. We'll need help in many areas, so there's definitely something everyone can do. Contact me by phone or e-mail if you can help, 410-549-3224, [middle8farm@aol.com](mailto:middle8farm@aol.com).

Please note, the 2005 show will be a bit smaller than '04 and we expect it to sell out early. Registration will open on the 15th of January. The early bird deadline is the 15th of February and the final deadline is the 1st of March. **These deadlines are firm and apply to ALL pen and dinner reservations and to all halter and fleece registrations.** To alleviate confusion, there are no separate deadlines. **Registration will close immediately if all available space is sold before the deadline.**

I'm almost certain alpacas with pending registrations will be accepted. The decision rests with AOBA but I think that policy will be extended through at least the first half of next year.

Late registration changes will cause a mutiny of our volunteer staff and the printer, so they cannot be accepted. Seriously, they cause logistics ripples downstream that we just aren't staffed to handle. The sheer size of the show and the small staff make it necessary to discourage changes. Please make your plans early and stick to them as much as possible. There will be a surcharge for changes, additions, or cancellations for registrations already sent in. After the final deadline, changes will not be accepted and cancellations will receive no refunds.

In response to member suggestions, we're going to try doing a few things differently this year. Rather than having multiple dinners, we're going to have only one, probably on Friday night. We're going to try making it a little nicer and definitely more affordable. We're looking for appropriate entertainment, but haven't hit on something that will work, yet. Suggestions are welcome. That's it for now. Best wishes for a safe and happy Thanksgiving and Holiday Season for everyone!  
Cheers, Andy

## Farm Visitors:

### Ready or Not, Here They Come!

*By Barb Nuessle, Bay Springs Farm Alpacas, LLC  
in Cape May, NJ*

When a car comes to a screeching halt in front of our farm, we know that someone has spotted our alpacas in the winter pasture that borders the road. Alpacas might be classified as an “attractive nuisance” since they draw people onto your property like a magnet, whether you want them there or not. We could put up big iron gates, erect impenetrable walls, or put up “no trespassing” signs. But that is not the way we want to live. We feel that part of our mission as alpaca breeders is to educate people about these wonderful creatures and to share these animals and their fabulous fiber products with the world.

When our alpacas first arrived in January 2001, we had no sign and no visitors. After the first shearing, I decided to put out a handmade sign advertising fleece and, sure enough, the people started flowing in. A few actually wanted to buy fleece; some wanted yarn or sweaters made out of alpaca, but most just wanted to see the animals. That winter, I decided that I would sell yarn as well as fleece and invested in several hundred dollars worth of AFCNA’s wonderful yarn. The next step was to erect a proper farm sign with the words “Sales, Fleece & Yarn” in large print. When the AFCNA came out with the APS (Alpaca Product Station) store-in-a box concept, I decided, as a Board Member, I should set an example and try it out.

My greenhouse was perfect with its outside entrance and lots of unused space (all the plants were outside for the summer). We made a commitment to set up a retail farm store in our greenhouse. We got a mercantile license and started running ads. I took space in the local summer farmers’ market help get exposure. It wasn’t long before the traffic to the farm was increasing. The problem was that we had not established any hours of operation and people were dropping in at all different times during the day.

To give us some time to get our work done, we decided to only be open to the public on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) from 10-4. We printed

brochures and advertised our hours in the local paper. However, people still continued to drive in at other times. Our remedy was to get an “OPEN” sign and a “CLOSED” sign that we could attach to our farm sign. The signs have been very effective. If for some reason we both have to leave the farm on a weekend when the store is supposed to be open, we simply close the main gate at the entrance to bar anyone from physically coming onto our property.

We are now in our third year of running the farm store and have probably had more than 2,000 visitors. This year I would estimate we have had about 900 individuals so far. Sales of fleece, yarn, apparel and miniatures have been brisk and we are now generating enough income to offset our farm expenses and make a small profit. Additionally, we have benefited from the many new acquaintances and friendships resulting from our open farm policy. We have never had a problem, perhaps because most people who come here love animals and are just grateful to be able to see our alpacas.

Having your farm open to the public is not for everyone, but if you want to operate a farm store on your farm, you can either schedule visitors by appointment or have specific hours when you are open. We do both actually. Since we live in Cape May, a popular resort area, sometimes tourists are not able to schedule a visit on weekends when we are officially open. My policy generally is to allow people who cannot come on Saturday or Sunday to visit if they call ahead and if I am going to be home.

Based on our experience with visitors, here are some of the policies and guidelines that we have established to keep our sanity and insure the safety of visitors and the security of our property:

#### **DO’s**

- Establish regular hours and be as consistent as possible.
- Post your hours of operation and use an OPEN and a CLOSED sign to reinforce your hours.
- Allow children to come when accompanied by parents.
- Whenever possible, have two people on the farm when you are open; one person to do the outside “meet and greet” function and

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## Farm Visitors (Continued from page 3.)

the “intro to alpacas” and one to handle the store traffic and purchases.

- Offer spinning demonstrations or knitting lessons and showcase any of your handiwork. Everyone appreciates hand made items.
- Use farmers’ markets, craft shows and advertising as a means of gaining a presence in the community and increasing traffic to your farm.
- Donate items from your farm to community event fund raisers.
- Enjoy the experience of introducing people to alpacas and alpaca products. What is more fun than talking about alpacas?

### **DON'Ts**

- Do not ever let anyone into the paddock or pasture with the alpacas (unless they are actually interested in purchasing an animal). We use kiwi latches on our gates which most visitors don’t know how to open.
- Encourage groups to come. I do not allow school groups or any children who are not accompanied by parents. In this litigious society, there is just too much liability.
- Allow any dogs that are not on a leash or barking dogs of any kind..
- Allow people to feed anything they bring in to the alpacas; however, you may want to provide carrots and kale occasionally to visitors who want a closer look.
- Charge an admission fee for access to your farm. Fees raise expectations and thus create potential dissatisfaction. They also discourage visitors. Nearly all visitors will buy something to take home as a souvenir of their alpaca visit. The amount they spend averages far more than an admission fee. Also, if they take home something made of alpaca, they will spread the word about the wonders of alpaca fiber.

Finally, don’t expect to sell alpacas from farm visits. It is the rare visitor that actually has acreage or a passion to raise alpacas. Still, depending on your area, having an open farm at least offers you a sales opportunity.

## **Editor’s Ramblings:**

*By Alice Brown*

A tall golden maple tree stands poised on a hill in one of our pastures, ready to shed its millions of leaves. As the sun set in the west today, it peaked through the clouds to set the tree on fire just as the crias in the field decided it was time to run up and down the hill. As they ran, the fire from the sun caught them and highlighted each running figure with what I can only describe as fire from the sun. I ran inside for my camera, but on return, the fire was gone, that quickly the sun changed its angle in the sky and the effect that had been there just minutes before was gone. That image, although lasting for only a few minutes, is indelibly etched in my minds eye.

I’m sure all of you have been enjoying similar scenes as the fall foliage collage crept northward and the fall crias reveled in the cool air. As December rolls around, the displays of earlier this fall fade away, replaced by the stark reality that winter is right around the corner.

With the leaves bare on the trees now, and with winter’s approach, take some time to ponder the many issues affecting our alpaca industry. Research is in order for **each** breeder to become informed. MaPaca is doing its part to bring these important issues before its membership in the hopes that as people become informed, decisions will be made that will benefit the entire membership, and make the future of the alpaca industry strong and viable. We welcome articles that express various points of view.

I would like to thank those members who have so kindly sent their articles to me the past few months. I enjoyed Sharon Roberts article about the grasshopper on her tractor and how this reminded her of how alpacas have affected her life. James Perry has so kindly sent me an article on poisonous plants, and he is going to help all of us learn what plants and trees to be careful of on the East Coast in future issues of the Newsletter. Ingrid Wood is sharing information to ponder in her articles about Breed Standards. Barb Nuessle loves to write and always comes through in a pinch if I need an article for the Newsletter. Thank you to you all!

My best to Everyone. **Alice Brown**

# Poisonous Plants in Winter

James E. Perry, PhD. From *Amblers' Alpacas*, in Lanexa, VA

## INTRODUCTION

When visiting ranches or attending shows, I am often asked by breeders if plants found on their ranches may be poisonous to their alpacas. In almost all cases the answer is, unequivocally, "yes". Very few poisonous plants, however, are ingested by well fed camelids. Furthermore, in this region, during this time of year, the threat of plant poisoning is minimized due to winter dieback of many plant species. There are however, several poisonous species that even well fed camelids tend to browse. Some are evergreen woody plants that have been planted to provide winter greenery. This article will concentrate on the most deadly of the mid-Atlantic evergreen woody plants: Yews, Oleander, and members of the Heath family.

Although signs of poisoning are given for each group, or plant species, it is important to realize that each animal has its own physiological makeup and one animal may respond differently than another to a toxin. Signs of poisoning may also vary with the time of year, part of plant, and amount ingested. Therefore, not all signs may be seen at one time, or at all, before death occurs.

## YEW

One of the most toxic evergreen plants in North America is the yew tree. Planted extensively as hedges, the most common species are the European (or English) Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and the Asian Yew (*T. cuspidate*). Both are extremely toxic: animals have actually been found dead with twigs and leaves hanging out of their mouths! Ingesting yew leaves has killed both llamas and alpacas. In some cases animals have shown no signs before succumbing to the toxin; in others, animals have shown nervousness, trembling, difficulty breathing, and diarrhea. This plant causes sudden death; therefore, it has no place around livestock.

## OLEANDER

Evergreen Oleander shrubs (*Nerium oleander* and *Cascabela thevetioides*) are extremely toxic.

Ingestion of a very small amount of the leaves, twigs, flowers, and fruits have caused death in livestock and humans. The lethal dose for horses or cattle is 0.005% of their body weight; that would translate to 1/100 of a pound (approximately one leaf!) for a 100lb animal. The principle toxin is a cardiac glycoside (oleanderase nerioside) and has been diagnosed as a poison in llamas. Livestock will generally **NOT** graze this plant if good hay is available. Signs of poisoning include increased pulse rate (will decrease rapidly in terminal stage), discoloration of the mouth (white instead of pink), vomiting, weakness, and bloody feces. If death occurs it will usually follow within a day.

## HEATH FAMILY

The heath family is a very large group of evergreen trees and shrubs. Members of the family are found throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), sheep laurel (*K. angustifolia*) and pale laurel (*K. polifolia*) all have been known to poison livestock. Several evergreen species, including western dog hobble (*Leucothoe davisiae*), rhododendron, and azalea (both belonging to the genus *Rhododendron*), are known to have poisoned camelids (Larue Johnson 2003). The principle toxin is a resin, andromedotoxin (however arbutin, a glycoside of hydroquinone, is also present) and all portions of the plants are toxic, either green or dry. Other evergreen members of the family known to be toxic include mock azalea (*Menziesia ferruginea*) and Japanese pieris (*Pieris japonica*). Members of this family are, for the most part, avoided by livestock except under poor pasture conditions. However, in at least one situation I have observed llamas grazing on planted azaleas, even though plenty of pasture was present. The owner later informed me that there were no ill effects. Signs of poisoning include repeated swallowing, copious salivation, slow pulse, lowering of blood pressure, convulsions, progressive paralysis, and death.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT POISONING

If you suspect your alpaca or llama has ingested a poisonous plant, **CALL YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY!** Most plant toxins work fast, so it is im-

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Poisonous Plants in Winter (Continued from page 5.)

portant that you get help as quickly as possible. Remove either the animal, or the plant, from contact with the other. Keep a specimen of the plant if possible; this is necessary to properly identify the species, and potential toxin, involved. The specimen should include a generous portion of the leaves and, if present, the flower or fruit. Try to keep the animal calm: provide a safe (familiar) area, and a stall mate. It's not a good idea to give food or water unless so instructed by your vet.

It is important to know what plants are growing around your farm: which ones are safe, and which ones are not. Local experts in your area including botanists at local universities or community colleges, extension agents, and your vet, can help you to identify potential problem plants. If you need help identifying a plant, feel free to contact me.

## Food for Thought

*By Ingrid Wood, Stormwind Alpacas,  
in Columbus, NJ*

The USA is a huge country with a wide range of climates and terrains. Its diverse environments call for diverse traits in a specific population. As breeders, we must question how a single breed standard can possibly meet all requirements of such environmental extremes. Does anybody really believe that "one size fits all" for both Alaska as well as Florida?

A fellow breeder residing in the northern region of our vast country shared with me his goal of breeding for 20 lb. fleeces. Living in New Jersey, with its hot, humid summers, I have no intention of adopting such a breeding plan.

Size can have an impact on how animals handle heat stress. In sighthounds, for example, the small whippet has a much higher heat tolerance than its larger cousin, the greyhound. Leg conformation is much more important in climates that require animals to spend long periods of time confined to a barn.

"Would you like to see the foot fungus some of my alpacas have between their toes?" one breeder complained to me. "They're all the ones with fiber from head to toe. What rot, no pun intended", she added. While leg coverage may be fine for a dry climate, it may not be such a desirable trait on farms with moist, marshy pastures.

Left to their own devices, animals must adapt their phenotypes to the environment or perish. Researchers Rosemary and Pete Grant found that Galapagos Islands finches evolved different beak structures depending on climatic changes and food availability in a span of only 20 years. This clearly illustrates environmental impact. Even in the artificial environment created at our farms, we should be mindful of the laws of nature.

In 1978, the Rambouillet Sheep Breeder Association decided not to adopt a breed standard "due to the variation in climatic and feed conditions under which Rambouillets are raised".

Think about what is best for your alpacas.

Ingrid Wood's book *A Breeder's Guide to Genetics – Relax It's Not Rocket Science* is available from AuthorHouse (1-888-728-8467)

## **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.*

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, email Alice Brown at [fpalpacas@aol.com](mailto:fpalpacas@aol.com) or give me a call at—**856-697-8127**.

## Classified Ads:

Any member may post an ad for alpaca and/or alpaca farm related equipment and items. The ad may include a one sentence description and contact information.. 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. **Vet Quality Alpaca Chute**— This chute is in excellent condition and comes with pull-down sides, belly slings, wheels and other handy features. I paid \$1,300 for it several years ago, and I would like to sell it now for \$750. Photos are available, and please call or e-mail if you have any questions. **Nancy Lake Info@alpinealpaca.com** , 301-393-5878, Hagerstown, MD
2. Announcing **The Blue Ribbon Alpaca** by Susan Rosche (Pax River Alpacas). A delightful, beautifully illustrated, hard-cover children's book that promotes the alpaca. The story of an alpaca, her jealous companions, her awesome fleece and the children who love her. \$18.,95. Bulk discounts available. **Information at <http://www.paxriveralpacas.com/>** .
3. Alpaca Art on Egyptian Papyrus. Unique. Original or custom designs. Reasonable prices. Additional information and samples at **<http://www.paxriveralpacas.com/>** .

## Bright Idea!

*By Paul Connor,*

*Big Sky Alpacas, Mullica Hill, NJ*

With all the millions of leaves now blown off the trees we need all the help we can get to rid our lawns and pastures of the grass killing leaves. One method that has worked well for us is to take a big tarp, lay it out on your grass next to the leaves and rake the leaves onto the tarp. The tarp is then easily dragged to the woods or compost area to dump the leaves.

## Members Events Calendar

**April 3, 2005 Second Annual Alpaca Heritage Budget Caper Halter & Fleece Show. West Friendship, MD, Howard County Fairgrounds.** Sponsored by Alpaca Heritage Events, Inc. Free seminars; learn about alpaca care and the tax advantages of breeding alpacas as a business. Free parking, and admission. Entry fee \$50/alpaca—unlimited class entries. Limit of 2 pens/4 entries. No stall fees, bring your own panels.

**Contact: Ingrid Wood, 609-261-0696 or [alpacas@uscom.com](mailto:alpacas@uscom.com) Kate Perez, [kperez@erols.com](mailto:kperez@erols.com) or [www.AlpacaHeritage.com](http://www.AlpacaHeritage.com).**

**April 21, 22, 23, & 24—MaPaca Eastern Alpaca Jubilee 2005**— The MaPaca Jubilee will again be held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex, in Harrisburg, PA. See the MaPaca web site at [www.mapaca.org](http://www.mapaca.org) and read your MaPaca Newsletter, to keep abreast of current Jubilee information.

## Veterinary News for the East Coast:

By Alice Brown

I wanted to share an email with everyone about what is happening at OSU. Many of us look to Dr. David Anderson, on occasion for help with serious problems with our alpacas. Right now Dr. Anderson is in particular need of financial support for his herd of teaching camelids. MaPaca is currently considering sending some support to Dr. Anderson as an organization, but as individual breeders we may also want to offer some support.

David Anderson [mailto:[anderson.670@osu.edu](mailto:anderson.670@osu.edu)]

Sent: Tuesday, November 16, 2004 10:45 AM

WE NEED YOUR HELP.

AT THIS TIME, I NO LONGER HAVE FUNDING TO MAINTAIN THE LLAMA TEACHING HERD AT OSU. WITHOUT HAVING LLAMAS TO TEACH OUR UP AND COMING YOUNG VETS WITH, WE WILL NO LONGER GRADUATE THE MOST EXPERIENCED VET STUDENTS IN THE COUNTRY WITH LLAMA HEALTH CARE. THIS IS A VERY SAD AFFAIR FOR ME SINCE WE HAVE WORKED -TOGETHER - TO BUILD SUCH A DIS-

TINGUISHED PROGRAM. I CAN NO LONGER SUSTAIN THE HERD WITHOUT SUPPORT. OUR CURRENT COSTS ARE \$3.50 PER LLAMA PER DAY. THAT MEANS WE NEED TO RAISE \$1277.50 PER LLAMA PER YEAR TO KEEP THEM AT OSU.

PLEASE MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAMELID FUND TODAY.

Checks are made out to the Camelid Fund and mailed to:

Susan Kelly, Veterinary Teaching Hospital Accounts  
601 Vernon L Tharp St  
Columbus, Ohio 43210

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

David E Anderson, DVM, MS, DACVS  
Head and Associate Professor of Farm Animal Surgery  
Director, International Camelid Initiative  
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Comments  
about the  
Newsletter,  
or any  
contri-  
butions,  
send to  
Alice  
Brown at  
[fpalpacas  
@aol.com](mailto:fpalpacas@aol.com) .

All your  
strength is in  
your union,  
All your danger  
is in discord.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Longfellow,  
*Hiawatha*



Photo by Alice Brown,  
Forever Precious Alpacas, Vineland, NJ  
"Sunset on the Alpaca Hill"