



President's Message:

Dear MaPaca Members,

On the eve of Thanksgiving, as I sit down to write the President's Message, what comes to mind is giving thanks for the many blessings we all have. Not the least among these blessings are those wonderful creatures we've chosen that enrich the quality of our lives. Who among us can deny the feeling of delight we experience each day as we go about our tasks of caring for our alpaca herd?

May the joy of the holiday season upon us carry you through to a new year filled with the special pleasures of your alpaca friends!

Nancy Johanson

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Jubilee Art Contest Winner!



The 2006 MAPACA Art Competition winner is ~

Congratulations to Linda Spalding of Fiddlehead Farm Alpacas located in Scarborough Maine. The judges were challenged again this year with multiple deserving entries. We wish to thank all those MAPACA members who contributed to the success of this contest. Honorable mention goes to Ann Lemon of White Lightning Farm and Kyle Schumann of Berry Meadow Farm.

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Jubilee Update!

By Alice Brown

Congratulations to Linda Spalding of Fiddlehead Farm Alpacas in Scarborough Maine for her winning art work. Linda's work will be featured on all the Jubilee Program's and T-shirts. Linda was also awarded \$500 for her winning design.

The Jubilee is scheduled for April 28-30th with April 27th for check-in and set up. The Jubilee will again be at the PA Farm Show Complex and contracts will be signed this month to that effect.

New to the Jubilee effort will be Anne Hallinan and Marsha and Ken Hobart. Anne will be the Jubilee Manager, working with Andy Schneider as the Jubilee Coordinator still. Anne will be heading up the volunteers and several other tasks. Marsha and Ken Hobart will be taking care of the registration this year. More to follow in a future Newsletter about when registration will open up and how it will be handled. Please go to www.mapaca.org and continue to watch the Newsletter for future updates.

The Board of Directors explained that due to space constraints, there is no more room for the Jubilee to grow, however in an effort to accommodate as many breeders as possible, the Jubilee will limit the number of pens to a maximum of 5 pens per breeder and that includes any display pen.

This year the Board has determined that service is their area focus for improvement. The board is working to see that every person that attends the Jubilee has a great experience! Areas of improvement will include faster check-in, more amenities for volunteers, judges, and other workers, and better use of screens for keeping track of the goings on in each of the four show rings.

If you have any concerns or areas that you would like to see improved, please contact Andy Schneider, or any of the Board of Directors.

Editor's Ramblings:

With Bovine Viral Diarrhea Virus (BVDV) on the minds of many, I thought I'd like to share a few thoughts on the subject myself. First off, breeders need to realize that BVDV is not just in Canada. I recently spoke to a breeder that thought that was the case. BVDV, including the Persistently Infected cria (PI), that must be euthanized, have been confirmed in several cases at least in the MAPACA region. This is thus a wake up call to all us to increase our Biosecurity measures on our farm if we want to help stem the flow of the virus.

Secondly, BVDV is not the worse bug in the collection of bugs that our alpacas can contract. It can be controlled. In August I attended a seminar on just this subject, Biosecurity on our farms. It was a

real eye opener for me. You would have thought that breeders would be knocking the doors down to get to such a seminar, but that was not the case, perhaps showing a lack of interest in such issues on the part of many breeders. It is time to take this issue seriously.

I have in my involvement in alpacas seen that there has been a traditional lack of security measures on many farms for the last 7 years. Animals come home from auctions and shows and are put out with the rest of the herd on arrival home. Females and crias coming in for breeding, go right out with the farms other females and crias, without so much as a thought to their own animals perhaps contracting some virus. I would venture to say that it is now time for this practice to stop and for people to start quarantining incoming animals for at least two weeks.

What does quarantining involve? At least have an area separate from all other animals on your farm so that there is a minimum of 10 feet between the new comers and the rest of your herd. Don't allow these animals into the other pastures or barn for any reason. They should have their own shelter, even if the shelter is just a "garage in a box," it should be separate. Wear different shoes for the quarantine pen or dip them in 10% Clorox solution when going from the quarantine area to the rest of the herd. Wash hands between areas. If you feel that there is high risk, even change your clothes. Take care of any sick animals last. Have separate manure removal equipment for the quarantine area, along with separate watering buckets and feed bins.

For some further ideas on how to protect your herd, please read "Bovine Viral Diarrhea in Camelids—A Practical Approach" by Corry Mortensen, DVM in the September 2005 issue of *The Camelid Quarterly*.

Thanks for listening, Alice Brown

PS—Please send your renewals to me ASAP!

MaPaca Meeting Schedule

2006

January 15, 2006

April 27, 2006 (At the Jubilee.)

July 16, 2006

October 15, 2006

***Please mark your calendars for these dates and plan to attend.**

Watch the Newsletter and the web site for announcement of the meeting times locations. The locations will vary.

FYI—Meetings are held each quarter, starting in January on the third Sunday of that month.

BVD We've Heard About it, Now Lets Understand the Terminology

By Carol Pfister, Whirlybird Alpacas,
Glen Gardner, NJ

If you've been within 10' of me in the past 4 months you've undoubtedly heard me talking about BVD. Originally I was going to write an introduction to BVD for alpaca owners, but as I did an internet search including www.google.com, I found there is already plenty of literature and medical accounts of the virus on line for anyone to find. What I have found talking with other owners, is that there is still confusion with the terminology of BVD. Please be aware that I am not a veterinarian, I work with camelid vets as a technician. I read Dr Nancy Carr's article in Alpacas Magazine and made copies for my 3 vets. We began asking questions and worked our way through the BVD quagmire. I want to thank Dr Nancy Carr of Silvercloud Alpacas in Canada for making us all aware of BVD in alpacas and Dr. Dubovi of Cornell University for all his assistance in helping us understand the emergence and course of BVD in alpacas and the testing protocols that are successful. There is no model for the virus in alpacas. Extrapolations are being made from the Bovine model.

For the most part, when our animals are infected with this short term virus we are unaware of it. Alpacas do not typically have diarrhea as a symptom of the virus. An animal gets the virus and begins to develop antibodies and the entire course of the BVD lasts 5-10 days. They may show no outwardly visible signs of infection. If they do, a brief upper respiratory infection appears most common. There are no known lasting effects on a camelid that has been exposed to and got BVD, other than developing an antibody response that is measurable as a titer to the virus. This titer lets us know that the animal has been exposed to and gotten over the BVD virus. The real "lasting" effects are on the fetus of an infected adult.

The problem begins when a pregnant female is exposed. This exposure could be from a briefly infected adult or a PI. Depending on the gestational age of the developing fetus, various conditions arise. Early exposure may result in abortion and congenital deformities. 30-120 days gestation is the critical exposure period to make the fetus become a PI. Later exposure results in mummified fetuses and stillborns to name just a few problems. If an animal develops an antibody response to the virus it by definition cannot be a PI. Therefore animals with titers are not only naturally immunized against this strain of the virus but are also incapable of being PI's.

As a lot of confusion seems to continue to surround BVD and the PI, the following is a glossary of terms to help you understand the articles you read. To that extent I hope you find the following helpful. Dr Dubovi is available to answer your veterinarian's questions. Please note that each farm has a different level of exposure and bio-security hazards. Therefore, there is no one answer on who to test and how to isolate. Please work with your veterinarian to develop a plan that works for your farm.

PI -

Hopefully by now we have all heard of the **PI** alpaca. The PI is born in a permanently infective state because the dam was exposed to the virus 30-120 days into her pregnancy. This cria will never develop antibodies and thus must be removed from the herd immediately as it will shed the virus continually. It must be humanely euthanized to prevent further exposure of the virus to others in the herds. All pregnant females exposed to this PI will be at risk of repeating this infective cycle and giving birth to another PI, aborting or having a stillborn or deformed cria.

Positive animal -

This is a confusing and incomplete term. An animal can be **positive with active virus**, and *may* be a PI. Further testing for antibodies will help determine if the animal was born as a PI or exposed recently and just beginning to produce antibodies. If the serum neutralizing (SN) test shows an antibody response the animal is not a PI, and will be clear of the virus in about 10 days. Contrary to a true PI, this animal does not need to be euthanized, just isolated.

A **positive titer** means an animal has been exposed to the virus at *some time*. The virus lasts 5-10 days and the body initiates an antibody response quickly. The exposure therefore could be years or days ago. Having a positive titer is not a bad thing and no cause for alarm. However, if the pregnant female has a titer you should repeat the SN test in 2-3 weeks to see if the titer is rising, falling or remains steady. This will help determine if the exposure was recent and therefore the pregnancy is high risk for BVD complications. If she was exposed during the 30-120 day period of pregnancy there is a good chance that she may produce a PI cria and she should give birth in an isolation area. It makes good sense to know your female's BVD exposure status prior to breeding her.

So, when you hear someone say they had a positive on their farm, listen carefully or ask questions to determine that you are both on the same page, ie: Did they have...

- a true **PI** – in which case it should

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be euthanized.

- **Active virus** that is developing antibodies and will be finished with the virus soon. This animal should be isolated during the course of the virus.
- **Positive titer** to past exposure, meaning no current active virus and no need to isolate.

As you can see the terminology of BVD is crucial to understanding the virus as well as determining the procedures you need to follow on your farm once you have tested. When testing for BVD in camelids, Dr Dubovi has found that only 2 of the 10 cattle tests are working consistently in live alpaca testing. The PCR whole blood buffy coat test is used for testing for active virus, with a special virus isolation test on crias under 12 weeks of age. The serum neutralization (SN) test is used for detecting antibodies to the virus.

While the focus has been on PI's remember that BVD exposure during any time of pregnancy has consequences other than producing PI's. For example the inability to maintain pregnancy, stillbirths, and birth defects are a few of the devastating effects of BVD.

No one can say how long a titer to BVD will be protective. Hopefully further studies will tell. There are many strains of BVD in cattle but thus far only 1 strain has been isolated as a cause of PI's in the alpacas that Dr Dubovi has tested. It is the California strain. Vaccines are available for cattle and have been used in (alpacas) for years with no known side effects (Dr Evans). Contact your veterinarian and make a plan to determine the BVD status of your herd and whether vaccinating is warranted. If we start vaccinating our herds we may never be able to identify and eradicate the virus as we will be unable to distinguish natural vs. vaccinal antibody response to BVD. We need to act responsibly and with our veterinarian's advise.

The sooner we understand BVD, test for it and protect our pregnant females from exposure, the sooner we can have this BVD bloom we are experiencing in the Northeast behind us. If you have a true PI please contact Dr Dubovi at Cornell University as he may be able to use it in his ongoing research. Dr's Anderson and Evans have said that they do not feel BVD is a critical issue, but admit that we in the NE are in a true "hot spot" for the virus. I wonder if it's because we are actively testing for and addressing this viral threat to our herds. If you don't look you won't find it but that doesn't mean its not there. Or maybe we are a true hot spot that will fade as we improve our bio-security habits. Regardless, with the amount of movement for showing and breeding we maintain in this alpaca industry, without a change in

a lot of our present bio-security methods, it seems that other "hot spots" are likely to appear.

There should be no finger pointing at other farms for blame. Prior to last year BVD was considered a non-issue in our industry. It has been documented in alpacas at least since 1975 on the west coast.

No one was testing as it was assumed BVD was a benign virus to our herds. Until Nancy Carr's articles we were blissfully ignorant of what BVD does, how it travels and what it can do to our herds. If we all act responsibly and work on containing the virus, without blaming those who did not know they had the virus, we will be in a much better place to move forward as an industry. Focus on a solution; let's not play the blame game.

Carol Pfister

All the alpacas on my farm have been tested for BVD. The results were surprising. The female purchased at auction that lost her cria was negative – so much for stereo-types. The female born on my farm has a titer, go figure. All males and females have subsequently been tested and that one female is the only one that has been exposed to BVD. The good news is that I can send her out for breeding and she is incapable of coming home now with a pregnancy that will produce a PI because she is protected by her titer. Unfortunately I tested her too late. She is already pregnant, so I will need to have the cria born into isolation and test it the day it is born to see if it could be a PI. If I had known my female's status before breeding, I would know the risk.

For more information on BVD and to track the incidence of PI crias as reported, go to the ARF web site at:

<http://www.alpacaresearchfoundation.org/>

You will find testing procedures and several articles as well about BVD on the ARF website.

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 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 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. **Pocono Farms Products Oak Hay feeder**—holds 1 bale. Used, needs hay grid. See at <http://www.poconoalpacas.com/HusbandryAids/hayfeeders.htm> (new \$135.00) \$50.00 410-734-7084, Wild Rose Suri Ranch, MD.
2. **Leer Model #122 Truck Cap for 6ft Truck Bed.** Very good condition except for front window needs replacement. See details at <http://www.leer.com/caps.html>—(New over \$900.00) \$350.00 picked up at farm. 410-734-7084 Wild Rose Suri Ranch, MD.
3. **Team J W Alpaca Handling Equipment**—chutes, lightweight panels, gates, and Hay saver feeders of all sizes. Some discounted used equipment available. See http://www.wildrosealpacas.com/alpaca_equipment/alpaca_equipment.htm or call 410-734-7084. Wild Rose Suri Ranch, MD.
- 4.. **Alpaca & Light Livestock Equipment**—in stock chutes, feeders, panels, and shearing table. Can be shipped or picked up at our farm. www.lightlivestockequipment.com or call Jay at (518) 524-0545 AuSable Valley Alpacas, Jay, New York.

Letter to the Editor:

Hi Alice,

Recently I decided to have our alpacas tested for BVD and Johnnes disease to confirm what we were already certain would be the end result. Medical confirmation that our herd is BVD and Johnnes free will not only increase the value of our herd, but provide the peace of mind to anyone visiting our farm. The cost of testing is certainly worthwhile and to be confirmed a certified "disease free" farm should be our ultimate goal.

The only way our industry can get a handle on this situation is for breeders to remain diligent and pre-emptive on the biosecurity threats that currently exist and to ensure the future of our animals. Unfortunately, in my opinion too much emphasis is currently being placed on "Breed Standards" instead of focusing on the health and well being of these magnificent animals.

If breeders do not take the biosecurity prevention measures necessary now, not after the fact, it is then that we have the potential to fall prey to major catastrophes throughout the alpaca community. That is what we should all consider extremely scary! It is not what we know about our animals it is what we don't know. Proper biosceurity measures should prepare us for the future.

Many newcomers to this industry are overly impressed with the glamour of shows, ribbons, advertising, etc. and believe the more animals you own, the more ribbons you've won, and the more shows you've attended the better quality the animal and the more experienced the owner. As we know, quantity is definitely not quality! Newcomers to this industry need to learn the basics of health maintenance and ensure each and every animal is disease free. Too often they are overwhelmed by the financial opportunities and neglect to focus on the basics of herd health.

Animals kept in small, confined spaces exposed to hundreds of other animals are at high risk for transmitting disease. It is crucial that extensive biosecurity measures are enforced at all shows to ensure the safety of each and every animal no matter

what their quality. What we all need to understand is that a top quality alpaca can just as easily infect a herd as can a fiber-quality animal if not tested and treated properly. Each and every breeder should take a long hard look at their numbers. I am not speaking about financial numbers. I am speaking of number of animals per acre, available pasture, ability to rotate pastures, a comprehensive deworming strategy, and the ability to commit personal time to each and every animal to ensure they are aware of any issues with their health however subtle. These are stoic animals. To notice deviations from their health standards should be a constant study.

It is more likely that a small breeder will tend to be more "hands on" and diligent about the health of their herd due to the limited number of animals they have in their care. It obviously is more financially feasible to keep on top of vaccinations and preventative medicine when you have a smaller herd.

When we know that we have taken every step possible to prevent outbreaks, only then will our animals as small breeders within this industry, become more valuable to the alpaca community. Of course fiber, conformation, luster, etc. are important to acknowledge for the overall development of the breed. However, I am afraid this industry has neglected to focus on the most important issue of the day - health! I am sadly faced with the reality that the end product of fiber has lost its importance in our community.

Just look to other countries where "mad cow disease" has been found - why? - because they have not conformed to the stringent rules of biosecurity that the United States does. As small breeders - diligence and prevention are an advantage that we have complete control over compared to our fellow large breeders. And since we have the advantage of quality control because of our herd size, only then does it make our alpacas more valuable to the whole of the alpaca community.

Dave Monasterski
StanPete's Alpacas
Vincentown, NJ

Poisonous Plants: Pine

By James E. Perry, Ph.D., PWS,
Ambler's Alpacas, Lanexa, VA

Pines are Conifers, a group of plants that are cone-bearing and found throughout North America. Most of the members of this phylum are evergreen, such as firs, pines, and spruce trees. However, there are some important members of the phylum, such as the Southern Bald Cypress and Northern Larchwood, which are deciduous.

The pine genus is the most widely distributed and most common member of the conifers and is found throughout North America as well as around the world. There are over 12 species in North America, but only one has been reported as toxic to livestock. The Ponderosa pine (also known as western yellow pine, *Pinus ponderosa*) is known to be highly toxic to livestock; ingestion of a modest quantity of needles is known to cause abortion through premature parturition. Called "pine needle abortion", livestock have themselves succumbed to complications, and even death, from retention of aborted material in their uterus. Cattle are particularly susceptible, goats, sheep, and horses less so. I

have seen no reports of camelid susceptibility.

While we have several species of pines in the MAPACA region, there has been only one report on the east coast, a 1942 Maryland Technical Report, of cattle poisoning from the very common loblolly pine (*P. taeda*). However, there have not been any reports since then and most current authorities on poisonous plants do not consider loblolly pine as being toxic to livestock. This is good news, since the loblolly pine has been planted throughout the east and is now probably the most common tree in the Mid-Atlantic States.

However, I still recommend that we are a little cautious around pines until we are certain that they cause no harm. If you have pines present in small numbers I would make sure that plenty of good pasture or hay is available and that browsing of pine needles and new pine twig growth is kept to a minimum. I would not recommend grazing animals in areas where thick layers of pine needles were the only browse available.

The chemical that is thought to be responsible for "pine needle abortion" has been identified as isocupressic acid and is also found in other taxa of conifers. Two of those, the Monterey Cypress

(*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), have also been known to cause abortion and should be considered poisonous.

Signs of Isocupressic Acid Poisoning: Swollen vulva and/or mucilaginous discharge may precede abortion, premature parturition, or stillbirth.

To learn more and see photos of the pine family, I recommend the following web site: <http://www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/factsheets.cfm>. Developed by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Department of Forestry, this is an excellent site for a written description and distribution, and photos of all North American trees.

(This article has been extracted and modified from "Friend or Foe: North American trees and Camelids", by J.E. Perry, Camelid Quarterly, June 2004, pages 1-6.)

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about the
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or any
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TIME TO RENEW!

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