



MAPACA

Mid-Atlantic Alpaca Association

Newsletter

October 2007

Volume 7, issue 10

President's Message:

Hello to all MAPACA members;

As you know, the MAPACA Election results will soon be in. The results will be announced in the next Newsletter and the new Officers will be announced at the MAPACA Annual Meeting in Hershey, PA on November 4, 2007. I hope that many of you will be able to attend and enjoy and learn from the seminar presented.

I have had a wonderful experience on the MAPACA Board working with a very energetic group of people all striving to make this organization the best it can be. We came through a tough time this past year with the IRS Audit. However, with much hard work and a tremendous effort this Board has made great strides towards the goals we set out for ourselves. I will miss the opportunity to continue on with these projects to see them all to completion. I do know that those that are on the Board will continue to work hard to complete all the goals we have set out for MAPACA. Thanks for giving me the chance to serve on the MAPACA Board, the experience has been rewarding.

Carol Pfister
MAPACA President

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**Please Mark Your Calendars
and Plan to Attend.....**

MAPACA ANNUAL MEETING

The Hershey Hotel
Hershey, PA
November 4, 2007

Registration: 10:30am
Meeting starts at 11am
Lunch Provided

☺ DOOR Prizes For all you
chocolate lovers out there,

**Speaker: *Internet Marketing*
presented by BreedWorks
Hazen Reed & Susan Muther
Reed**

The Hotel Hershey
100 Hotel Road
Hershey, PA 17033
Phone: 717-533-2171
Website: www.thehotelhershey.com

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Annual Meeting November 4th, 2007

Please join us for the 2007 MAPACA Annual Meeting at the Hershey Hotel in Hershey, PA. Get some great marketing tips when you attend the Internet Marketing seminar by Hazen & Susan Reed with Breedworks. Meet and talk with the new Board of Director members chosen by the membership. Meet and talk with the affiliate state representatives for our region. Get updated on what is new and upcoming for MAPACA in 2008 and the great strides we have made through 2007.

MAPACA is made up of YOU, our membership and we want YOU to be actively involved to help support our region. Please get involved with MAPACA, lend a helping hand by volunteering for a committee. Sign-up sheets will be available at the meeting. Any help you can provide will help our organization grow. You can make a difference!

Kathy Schwartz, MAPACA Director

NEEDED MAPACA Jubilee Manager

The Mid-Atlantic Alpaca Association (MAPACA), Inc., a 501c5 not-for-profit organization, is seeking management of its annual alpaca livestock show and sale, the MAPACA Jubilee, to be held annually in Harrisburg, PA in April.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) is directed toward any company that has had experience in the management of livestock shows and sales and has the capability to develop, manage, oversee and continually improve the MAPACA Jubilee.

A copy of the RFP may be down loaded from the MAPACA website www.mapaca.org.

The proposal deadline is 11 October 2007.

Editor's Ramblings:

Report on Microchip Scare Studies

"Oh my God!" We all probably said that when we read about the recently published report claiming that implanted microchips could cause cancer. The reports were primarily in regard to microchips to be implanted in humans, but many pet owners, as well as livestock owners became concerned as microchips are regularly used in animals. The report was published in early September by the Associated Press and linked microchip implants to cancer in laboratory animals.

However, Kevin Warwick, professor of cybernetics at the University of Reading, England, who has had RFID microchips implanted in his body for short periods of time, expressed skepticism about the Associated Press report. He questioned the ethics of the study report by Dow Chemical apparently long after the results were obtained. Warwick claims that the microchips are silicon encased and hermetically sealed. He pointed out that many animals and humans even, have had implants for many years and he has not heard of one single case of there being a problem.

Makers of RFID implants, VeriChip Corporation, claim on their website, "Over the last 15 years, millions of dogs and cats have safely received an implantable microchip with limited or no reports of adverse health reactions from this life-saving product, which was recently endorsed by the USDA." (www.verichipcorp.com) VeriChip also sites two studies that find no correlation between the RFID implants and cancer in laboratory mice. (Chronic Evaluation in Rodents to a Microchip Implant Used for Animal Identification by D.J. Ball, R.L. Robinson, R.D. Stoll and B.D. Visscher, Sandoz Research Institute, East Hanover, NJ. and Tissue Reaction to an Implantable Identification Device in Mice by Ghana N. Rao and Jennifer Edmondson).

The studies that the Associated Press report cited included: a 1998 study in Ridgefield, Conn., of 177 mice that found an incidence of cancer that surpassed 10%; a 2006 study in France of 1,260 "chipped" mice that found tumors in 4.1% of the mice; and a 1997 study in Germany that found

cancer in 1% of 4,279 chipped mice. The AP report claimed that these studies should be enough to make people wary of RFID implants.

Warwick then countered this thought stating that people are affected by radio signals of the type in question every day, yet to his knowledge there are no studies linking these waves to cancer. He thinks that the AP reported study results are bogus and may be an attempt at industrial espionage or that other factors in the studies are not being reported on.

The Associated Press report suggested that the Food and Drug Administration's approval of RFID implants for humans may have been swayed by lobbying efforts rather than on purely scientific considerations. (The FDA approved the VeriChip implants on January 10, 2005.) Reportedly, two weeks after the approval, Tommy Thompson, who worked for the FDA, left his job there and within five months was on the board of the VeriChip Corporation. Reportedly, Thompson denied influencing the FDA's approval of the VeriChip implant.

Warwick reportedly claims no financial involvement with any RFID vendor.

Reported on by Alice Brown from Reports Link RFID Implants to Cancer, Critics are Skeptical RFID chip maker VeriChips says it will review several studies that link RFID implants to cancer in laboratory animals. By Thomas Claburn. Information Week September 10, 2007 02:00 PM.

Hope to see you all at the Annual Meeting on November 4th in Hershey PA. Hope you are having a healthy and happy birthing season. No matter how many crias I've had here, I still feel the same way, "Isn't he or she cute!" I never tire of seeing their playful antics and I make sure that I take some time out of my busy schedule to just enjoy the little ones. They grow so quickly! Enjoy!

My Best to you all, Alice Brown



Color Genetics for Alpaca Breeders Some Simple Rules and the Correct Terminology To Use

By D. Andrew Merriwether, Ph.D.

Hi everyone;

I was asked to write an explanation of color genetics for alpaca breeders and address a few questions posed by the membership. This is the current understanding of color genetics in camelids based upon population and quantitative genetic analysis of phenotypes (the traits we see) rather than molecular genetic testing of the genotypes (the genetic codes for the traits). Sometime in the next decade or two we should have full knowledge of both kinds of data and be able to offer genetic tests for carriers of traits of interest in camelids, much like similar tests that already exist for horses, dogs, and sheep. My lab at Binghamton University is currently working on locating the genes involved in many phenotypes of interest in alpacas (suri fleece, coat color and pattern, choanal atresia, wry face, cataracts, heart murmurs, bent tail, extra nipples, fleece characteristics, and many more) with the goal of creating and providing genetic tests for carriers of these traits. We are also actively sequencing candidate genes for coat color including *Mc1r*, *KIT*, and *ASIP* among others.

A few key inheritance rules must be explained to apply the color genetics rules I am about to explain. First, an alpaca's DNA is arranged on chromosomes, 37 pairs of them. One set of 37 come from the dam via the egg, the other set of 37 come from the sire via the sperm. The dam has two copies of each chromosome, but only one copy (and it is random which of the two it is) end up in each egg. Same for the sire. For every chromosome, and every gene on those chromosomes, there is a 50:50 shot at it ending up in each egg or sperm. A second rule is that genes on different chromosomes are unlinked. So if a gene has a mutation on chromosome 12, it tells you nothing about the mutations the animal has on chromosome 13. They are transmitted independently of each other. Given that there are 37 pairs of chromosomes, most traits one might compare are on different chromosomes, and thus independent of each other.

It is not necessary to understand too much about

how the genes work that create the colors. It is more important to understand how those traits behave (are they dominant, recessive, additive, polygenic, multifactorial, etc...) I will explain these terms as I use them. These color genes work by three primary methods. 1) genes that control whether phaeomelanin or eumelanin is expressed in a tissue; 2) genes that control how much phaeomelanin (yellow pigment) or eumelanin (black pigment) is expressed, including if it is expressed at all; and 3) genes that control where the cells that express melanin migrate to in the growing embryo. There are at least a dozen candidate genes from other species that do one or more of the three methods of coat coloring.

Nomenclature:

Different folks use different terms for genetic traits like "agouti" and "extension locus" but as no molecular genetic testing has verified these terms they may be incorrect. The Extension locus in pigs is the melanocortin-1 receptor. The Agouti locus puts fawn stripes or tips on black fiber (that is the biological definition of agouti) and does not seem to relate to the phenotypes being described by those using this terminology. Until it is shown which of the many genes actually cause a trait, it could be misleading to use terminology that specifies the gene until we know if that gene really does it. I think it's better at this point to call the genes by the phenotypes they produce (white spot gene, base color gene, dilution gene, UV-fading gene, etc...) rather than genes, until we know if those are the correct genes. Since my lab (and other labs) are actively sequencing these genes, we may someday know for sure, but right now I would bet that these are not the actual genes causing the color phenotypes that some have used to name the traits.

Dominance and Recessivity:

Remember that an alpaca has two copies of every trait. Dominant traits mask or hide recessive traits. One copy of a dominant trait creates the trait (also called a phenotype, meaning the physical expression of the gene). Two copies of a dominant trait also creates the dominant phenotype. Two copies of the recessive trait and the recessive phenotype is observed. Many of the traits involved in color genetics follow a dominant or recessive inheritance pattern.

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Base Coat Color (for solid animals with no white or grey markings):

The basic color of each alpaca is controlled by what could be called the base color gene. For this gene, light colors are dominant over darker colors, so white is dominant over everything, fawn is dominant over brown and black, brown is dominant over black. There is not good evidence for dominance within a color (ie light fawn is not necessarily dominant over dark fawn). There are four or five other genes that act on top of the base color gene to modify the final color. Since every animal has two copies of every gene, including the base color gene, then the lighter color of the two copies is the color the animal should be. Most often, one of the two colors is the color the animal is, the second (sometimes called the recessive color or second color) is the same color or darker. You cannot see the second or recessive color, but you may be able to figure it out by examining all the ancestors and descendants of the animal. I wrote a column for AlpacaStreet.com that explains how to figure out the recessive color of an animal.

White Spot Gene:

A second gene, on a different chromosome, so independent of the base color gene, could be called the white-spot gene. This gene can put white or grey markings anywhere on an animal. Most alleles are dominant. Getting two copies of most white-spot alleles (other than the normal solid allele, ie no white or grey markings on the animal) creates a blue-eyed white (BEW) animal, many of which are deaf. Tuxedo grays and grays with white at the extremity are phenotypes of the white-spot gene (dominant ones at that). Phenotypes of the white-spot gene include tuxedo pattern, white face, white mask, white socks, pintos, and even some all white animals. The key is that there is white at the extremities. This overlies the base color.

Tuxedo Grays:

Grays with white at the extremities are caused by an allele of the white-spot gene. It is also dominant. Tuxedo grays have one copy of the gray allele off the white-spot gene and one copy of the solid allele. I believe two copies of the gray allele is lethal and is never born (is reabsorbed, aborted, or just never takes). On a positive note, breeding gray to gray does not seem to make blue eyed whites

(only 1-2% seen from gray to gray breedings).

Roan Grays:

Grays with no white on them, with no tuxedo gray or white parent are likely a different recessive kind of gray. These grays have no white markings. They do not make tuxedo grey offspring typically unless bred to tuxedo gray. Since it is recessive you can occasionally get a roan gray out of two non-gray parents, but you cannot tell if the parents are carriers of roan gray until they throw a roan gray or if they are out of a roan gray.

Dark Spot Gene:

This gene puts dark spots anywhere on the animal. The spots can be lighter or darker than the rest of the animal. This dark spot is not the same as the recessive color. The recessive color has often been darker than the dark spot. The spots can vary in number and size between parents and offspring.

Dilution Gene:

This gene is recessive, meaning it takes two copies for the effect to be seen, and animals with one copy of the dilution allele and one of the normal allele show no effect. The effect of two copies of the dilution gene is the animal is made lighter than the base color (it is diluted to a lighter color). You can only tell if animals carry this if a cria is born that is lighter than either parent.

UV Fading Gene and Tipping Genes:

Some fleeces fade at the tips with exposure to the sun, just as some humans get blond highlights from being in the sun. This is due to UV fading. Other fleeces are not affected by UV. This is a genetic trait. Fading is common, so I would not be surprised if it is a dominant trait. Some animals with lighter tips are not due to UV fading but to striping or bands of fawn fleece (like the agouti pattern in many animals). They are black at the skin, and look black when shorn, but turn brown at the tips as the fleece grows out. I don't know if tipping is dominant or recessive in alpacas.

Knowing the inheritance of the traits should allow you to predict the odds that cria produced from any matings will have any particular trait/color/pattern.

Final Thoughts:

People use colorful terminology to describe the genetic proclivities of their dams and sires that have become commonplace in the alpaca industry. Some

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of this is incorrect based on the actual inheritance patterns of the traits. Some descriptions describe the end result but attribute the wrong mechanism for how it happens. When an animal “throws the color of the dam,” all you are really saying is your animal’s colors are more recessive than the dam’s colors. The original article bemoans the phrase “loaded with black” genetics. There are only three levels, one copy of black, two copies of black, and no copies of black, so I guess it is open to interpretation whether 50% is loaded, or 100% is loaded. Again, this is just descriptive marketing. Another example is a stud that “pulls color from the dam.” This is yet another way of saying the sire is recessive to the dam’s recessive color. I have written a half dozen articles and dozens of columns on color genetics. You can refer to these to have this all explained in more detail, and to see examples worked through. I also do seminars and workshops around the country on genetics for breeders. Learning how to predict color outcomes can be a huge help to making your farm more profitable. We all desire to make certain colors, and avoid other colors. Understanding the inheritance patterns of color traits can let you do just that.

Good luck.

Dr. Merriwether is an associate professor of anthropology and biology at Binghamton University in New York (2003 to present). He received a B.A. in Medical Anthropology (1988), B.S. in Biology (1988), and an M.S. in Genetics (1989) from Penn State, and a Ph.D. in Human Genetics from the University of Pittsburgh (1993). He trained as a Keck Fellow at the Keck Center for Advanced Training in Computational Biology (1993-1996). Dr. Merriwether was an assistant professor at the University of Michigan from 1996-2003 in two departments (Anthropology, and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology) and two centers (Center for Statistical Genetics and the Center for Molecular and Clinical Epidemiology of Infectious Disease). Dr. Merriwether began research on ancient DNA from camelids in 1990 and diseases and color genetics of camelids in 2002. He and his wife own Nyala Farm Alpacas in Vestal, NY, currently home to 40+ alpacas, 16 sheep, and assorted horses and other critters.

Calendar of Events

October 6, 2007—7th Annual Alpaca Heritage Sale. To be held at Terhune Orchards, Princeton, New Jersey, 08540. A private treaty sale in an idyllic setting, with free seminars sponsored by 20 Mid-Atlantic breeders. **For more information visit: www.AlpacaHeritage.com .**

October 6 & 7, 2007—Autumn Alpacafest. Blankstone Farm Alpacas, Coopersburg, PA. Discover Alpacas! Seminars, Demonstrations. **Contact Kit Hower, 610-797-4309, www.blankstonealpacas.com.**

October 6 & 7, 2007—SAFONA Fall Classic Alpaca Show, Sale & Fiber Festival—Full fleece Halter Classes, Obstacle Classes, Costume Classes, Silent Raffle/Auction, Fleece, Skein & Fiber Arts Competitions, Free Demonstrations & Seminars, Alpaca Yarn, Fiber, Rovings, Garments & Craft Sales. **Go to www.safona.org/events.html for more information.**

Nov. 2-4, 2007—The Good, The Bad, The Beautiful!- All-inclusive seminar, Friday evening through Sunday. Contains all the information you will need to become a successful alpaca breeder. Topics include evaluating and purchasing alpacas, husbandry, reproductive issues, and how to make informed genetic breeding decisions. **Go to www.creativeacres.com or contact Renee Petersam 410-557-6869, creativeacres@verizon.net.**

Nov. 3-4, 2007—Dr. Norm Evans, DVM—2 Day Seminar—Topics include: Herd health/management, Parasite Control, Nutrition, Breeding and Birthing, Mother and Cria Assessment, Reproduction, Skin and Fiber Issues, Skin Biopsy. \$225 per person. **Contact Misty Sheehan, Misty Starr Alpacas 304-279-5321, info@mistystarralpacas.com.**

November 10, 2007—Fiber Seminar with Winnie Labrecque—Fleece Show (certification pending). Bordentown, New Jersey. **For registration form and further details visit: www.AlpacaHeritage.com.**

November 10 & 11, 2007—Holiday Bazaar at Annapaca Farm/The Alpaca Shop LLC Near Hagerstown, MD. Vendors, yarn, alpaca products, handcrafted jewelry, ceramics, digital photos, antiques, organic soups, candy and candles! **Contact Bert and Ann Kramer, 301-824-2840 or bertkram@aol.com.**

Classified Ads:

Any member may post an ad for alpaca and/or alpaca farm related equipment and items. The ad may include a short description and contact information. This will be a free service to current MAPACA members ONLY. Please send your ads to Alice Brown, fpalpacas@aol.com or call 856-697-8127.

- 1. Alpaca Equipment:** Destron microchips, Premier shearing machines, combs & cutters, scales by Salter-Brecknell & Arlyn, chutes, hay saver feeders, bar & mesh panels, gates, travel pens, & shearing tables by MSA; alpaca restraints by Pro-Tie; & tooth trimmers by Tooth-A-Matic. See our insert in this month's Newsletter. **Visit us online at www.lightlivestockequipment.com or call Jay Ward of AuSable Valley Alpacas at 866-999-2821.**
- 2. Transportation Services** from Origins Alpaca Ranch: Private Transport, Emergency 24/7 Transport and "The Show String" - Will transport your alpacas to shows and show them on your behalf. **If interested contact Mike Kober at 908-239-8676 or mike@originalalpacaranch.com.**
- 3. Non-Breeder Boarding**—Fenwick Manor Farm is now offering a discounted boarding option for non-breeder alpacas. In our lush 5 acre pasture, alpacas have plenty of grass and room to roam. One nominal fee covers a year of boarding, basic shots and shearing. Save your pasture space for your ladies! Let us care for your fiber Animals. **Contact Katharine Thompson, Fenwick Manor Farm in New Lisbon, NJ—FMFAlpacas@Fenwick.net.**
- 4. Custom Fleece Processing**—Yarn, rovings, batts, felt sheets available. The Fiber Factory, 493 Clark Rd. Ext., Alfred Station, NY 14803. **Call Wendy at 607-382-7811 or contact us at east-valley-alpacas@eznet.net or www.east-valley-alpacas.com.**
- 5. Transportation and Showing Services** provided by Warford Creek Alpacas, LLC. No trailer or time to show your alpacas? Let us Transport and Professionally show your alpaca (s) for you. We will be attending all the Fall shows for 2007, so book early. **Contact Deborah Hoff at 908-996-2128 or 980-894-8044.**
- 6. Advertise** your alpacas for sale, herdsires or alpaca equipment or services on our highly ranked website. **Go to www.MountAiryAlpacas.com/ads.html for more information.**
- 7. Alpaca Care DVD**—shots teeth & toenail trimming, birth, breeding, comprehensive segment on shearing and shearing equipment and more. **Contact Kate Perez 301-607-9129 or www.mountairyalpacas.com/.**

Classified Ads:

- 8. Still Showing Animals and Haven't Sheared Yet.** If you do your own shearing and would like to save your back and make the job significantly easier, we have a shearing table for you. Our table is the Totara Grove Shearing Table that was developed in New Zealand. We have used this table for 5 seasons and it is in excellent condition. It comes with a shearing guide and a "how to" video. It is a steal at \$995. **Call Bob or Lee of Almost Heaven Alpacas at 304-496-1073.**
- 9. Shearing Table**—Excellent condition, used 1 season for 12 animals. Asking \$850.00. **Call 302-381-6062.**
- 10. Boarding or Long Term Leasing of Farm Land for Your Alpacas**—The Farm at Rainbow's End, located in Lafayette, New Jersey, in Sussex County offers Boarding or the opportunity of Leasing Land for your Alpaca Farm. With 60 Acres of pasture and Woodlands available, there are unlimited possibilities for structuring your own design or simply to integrate your herd with ours. We also have 75 acres dedicated to growing Premium Orchard Grass Hay. Our Complete Package is Full Care including Veterinary Services on the Farm. Facilities include a Maternity Barn. Dr. Lori Walker DVM co-owns and lives on the farm. Call or visit us and make the Farm at Rainbow's end your alpacas home. **Contact Larry Scheer at 973-903-8624 or email larryscheer@earthlink.net.**
- 11. Big Sky Alpacas Ranch for Sale**—Downsizing and relocating to PA near our children. Magnificent 6 acre "Gentleman's Farm", home, barn and property in Southern New Jersey. MLS listing #4960739. Also available with part of our alpaca herd. Contact Paul at 856-223-0570. Recommendation fee for MAPACA member, commission on any alpaca sales.

MaPaca Meeting **Schedule—2007**

**Annual Meeting,
November 4, 2007 (Sunday)**

*Please mark your calendars for this date and plan to attend.

Camelid Veterinarian Continuing Education Grant Program

**PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR
VET!**

The MAPACA Board of Directors has established a program to support continuing education for camelid veterinarians serving alpaca owners in the MAPACA region. Grants will be available up to **\$1000** to attend camelid educational programs. Includes travel expenses, meals, rooming as well as the conference. Grants are limited to one per year for each veterinarian. In the case of veterinary practices, only one grant per practice per program.

Contact Alice Brown, with any questions.

Funds will be available retroactively for programs attended in 2006. The Camelid Veterinarian Continuing Education Grant Application is available at: www.mapaca.org.

Print out the application on line from the MAPACA website (www.mapaca.org) and give it to your veterinarian to fill out and send to:

**Alice Brown
458 Main Road
Vineland, NJ 08360**

Please send your comments, articles, or submissions to Alice Brown at:
Fpalpacas@aol.com.

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.

Any AOBA affiliate may advertise their event for \$200. Any business that sells products or services relating to alpacas or farming in general that would benefit alpaca farmers may place an insert AD in the MAPACA Newsletter at a cost of **\$200.00**.

Please send copies of your ad, 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. When you send inserts, do not require that I have to sign for them! **Any questions email Alice Brown: fpalpacas@aol.com or call: 856-697-8127.**

**An animals eyes have
the power to speak a
great language.**

—————*Martin Buber*