

MAPACA

November 2003

Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 11



Mid-Atlantic Alpaca Association

MaPaca

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Newsletter

Editor:

Alice

Brown.

President's Message:

PA Farm Show - Last call for the PA Farm Show in January. If you want to participate you should contact Brandon Boyd, of Double E Alpacas at EEAL-PACA@aol.com, if you haven't already. Plans will be finalized the first week in December and you will be contacted.

Jubilee - Plans are coming along for the Jubilee as you will note in Nick and Cristy's message this issue. Please let them know if you would like to volunteer. Your time is appreciated and you will enjoy a sense of gratification and team spirit. Help us make this, the 2004 Jubilee, even better than 2003.

Newsletter articles - Please submit material to Alice Brown for the Newsletter. She cannot do it all herself. We have had a few contributions but they are very few and far between. If everyone would submit just one article a year, we would have more content than we would know what to do with. Please get involved –

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you will enjoy being a part of it.

Happy Thanksgiving to all our members, their families, and their alpacas. Wishing good health, happiness and prosperity at this wonderful time of year.

Paul

It's That Time!!!!

Send in Your Renewal Today!



Thanks!

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From the Desk of the Jubilee Coordinator:

Hello MaPaca Members;

Well, we're on our way. The ball is rolling for the 8th annual MaPaca Eastern Alpaca Jubilee. Many thanks to all the staff that decided to once again be part of planning and executing this fantastic event. The excitement has begun and is building with each passing day. Again this year's Jubilee will require a lot of work. To benefit us all, I'm asking for people interested in lending a hand as a volunteer during the Jubilee to please let us know. With volunteers we can make the Jubilee an enjoyable show for everyone. Please contact the Jubilee volunteer coordinator, who will also keep you abreast of what is going on and let you know what positions need to be filled by volunteers. I will do my best to keep you informed of any Jubilee updates through the pages of our Newsletter each month.

As you may have guessed, Peg Stephens and Andrea MacDonald will once again be the respective show superintendents for the halter show and the fleece show. Our judging panel is also shaping up, and barring any changes, we currently have Maggie Krieger, Jude Anderson, and Phil Switzer (fleece) as Judges. We are still looking for two more Judges, since we will once again be running four show rings. Last year this went quite well (considering it was our first time with four rings). We know that some classes were missed by some, however, we did stress to those showing that they needed enough handlers to show. Last year we had available a few individuals who were able to show for you, if you were stuck in two classes at the same time. We expect this year that we will again have volunteers to help with the showing.

Celebrity Sales will be conducting our first Jubilee Alpaca Auction. We will be sending out information about the selection process. We will have Paul Connor be the auction liaison, as Paul and Ann will not be submitting any entries for the auction. Perhaps most importantly, we will once again occupy the same expo hall as we did last year.

At this time, I would like to introduce to you the staff assembled for Jubilee 2004:

Administration Assistant: Kit Hower
 Advertising Chair: Frieda Goodrich
 Facilities Chair: Alan Anderson
 Vendor Coordinator: Dave Reder
 Meals and Entertainment: Kim and Lou DeVos
 Volunteer Chair: Gwen Smith
 Seminars and Education: Kelly Zanella.

Cristy and I will again act as Jubilee coordinators and taking the liberty to speak for all the Jubilee staff, we will do our best to bring you a first class event.

Camelid Humor:

By Alice Brown

Some of you who know me have probably seen me wear an alpaca hat that I made. Now it may not be the prettiest thing, but I love my hat. This hat keeps my head warm when it is cold and it keeps my head dry when it is raining. It's light on my head so it's comfortable. Often when I go out to take care of the alpacas my hat is on my head and the alpacas will sometimes come over and give it a sniff.

The other day one of the newly pregnant maidens was feeling a bit cranky on a day that I happened to be wearing my hat. This girl occasionally gets some little bare spots on her nose. Through trial and error I have learned that Oil of Olay Original Beauty Fluid applied once a day for a few days always helps clear this up. Having noticed that her nose had a few small bare spots, I got a little dab of Oil of Olay on my finger and started walking toward the cranky newly pregnant maiden, sweetly saying to her as I approached, "Hi honey, Mom has your beauty fluid!" The phrase was no sooner out of my mouth when the girl hocked it up and sent one my way. In a reflex action I grabbed my hat off my head to kind of wave her off and as the hat came down she stepped under it and it somehow landed square on her head. Of course, she immediately backed away, further setting the hat on her head! What a surprise for both her and myself! As she trotted across the pen she was quite a sight with her head bobbing up and down with the hat on it. It made all the other alpacas turn and look and gave me a laugh seeing her thus adorned.

PS: The hat finally came off and I picked it up, dusted it off and put it back on my head where it belonged.

Feature Article:

Hey! Hay is for Alpacas!

By Alice Brown

My husband Fred thinks I'm a "Hay-a-phobic." The reason is that I can always find something wrong with any batch of hay that he brings home. I drive him crazy! The truth be known, I drive myself crazy as well. I fret and foam and feud over hay! I even dream of hay. Give me some nice sweet smelling, leafy green, clean, soft orchard grass hay. I know it must be out there, but I have as yet to find the perfect hay.

This year with all the rain, the problem has been too much moisture in the bales when they were baled. We bought 30 bales from one source, and the bales smelled sweet and looked not too bad. We stacked them in our hay area and I smiled. However, two weeks later when I went to get a bale I noticed a pungent odor coming from the hay area that had not been there two weeks ago when we put the hay in there. I told Fred. He was not happy! I said, "Well, maybe it's just a few bales, lets sort through them." Out we went, and after pulling out several bales we came to the stark realization that the bales were all moldy. "See," I said, "smell this! It smells funny. Look here," I showed him, "Just look at this white powdery stuff coming off the hay when you pull the flake apart! It's moldy!" He couldn't deny it, it was in his eyes and his nose. We both started sneezing! Out went the 30 bales of hay to use as compost for our next new pasture that we are clearing.

Hay has frightened me from the beginning, I guess because I really didn't know much about it, other than that hay is for feeding and straw is the yellow stuff used for bedding. I have since learned that there is a lot to learn about hay.

A few years back when one of my males was sickened, probably by a moldy old bale of hay, I put a call into Dr. Karen Baum in Virginia and asked her about hay. One thing she stressed to me was the importance of using a soft, leafy green hay. This bit of knowledge has stayed with me and I always look at the feel and color of hay that I am going to buy.

I recently found an interesting web site that contains a haying FAQ (frequently asked questions).

You might want to check it out at www.sheepscreek.com/rural/hay.html. Although the site encourages farmers to grow their own hay, there is much there that we can learn about buying hay as well.

For one thing, hay must be baled during periods of dry weather. If hay contains too much moisture it will mold once it is stored. Moldy hay is not good. I always pull flakes of hay apart to make sure they are not moldy. One observation I have made is that moldy hay tends to clump together or pack together. If I come upon a clump that does not come apart easily, I smell it. If I smell that pungent mold odor, I pull it apart and see if I see the white mold puffing into the air. If I do, out it goes. However, I have found that you may find this in one or several flakes in a bale and the rest will be OK. On the other hand, sometimes when one flake is found to be moldy, the rest of the bale is also moldy.

I have had discussions about how to stack bales of hay in the hay loft or hay storage area, whether flat or on their sides, with the stems of the cut hay running up-and-down. In the past, we always stacked our hay bales flat, string sides up and down. However, this year after the molding incident that I mentioned earlier, we decided to take the suggestion on the sheeps creek web site (and that of another local hay grower), to stack the bales on their sides. Stacking with the bales on their side is supposed to allow for maximum convection ventilation. It seems that the moisture migrates out through the cut ends of the hay while it is curing. It is also suggested that the greener the hay the looser it should be packed to allow cooling and curing and lessen the danger of combustion. Most hay farmers have moisture testers that can determine the moisture content of their hay.

You should never stack hay directly on the ground. It will mold. You can put down wooden pallets to raise the hay off the ground. We even put plastic down under the pallets first to prevent the ground moisture from getting to the hay.

It is interesting that the quality of hay, its protein content, is determined mainly by the stage of growth when the grass was cut. Thus, the later in the bloom the hay is cut, the greater the yield, but

(Continued on page 4.)

Hey! (Continued from page 3.)

the lower the protein content. An example is alfalfa hay which can range from about 21% protein just before it blooms to about 11% protein at the end of the bloom. Timothy is another example that can be about 18% protein just before bloom and about 6% protein in late bloom. Most alpaca breeders that I've talked with agree that buying second cutting of grass hay is good. First cutting tends to be too stemmy. Remember the soft, leafy green rule! Sometimes farmers can get in some third cut hay which can be like candy to our alpacas.

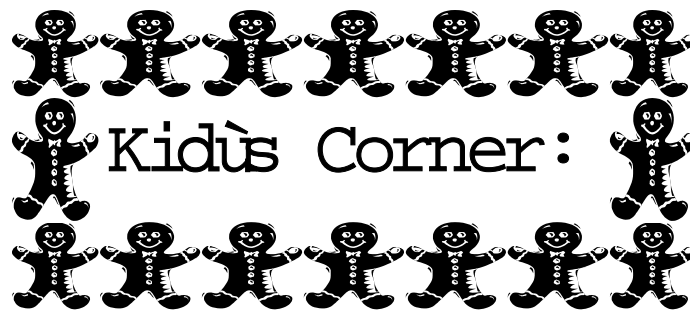
If you have a larger herd of alpacas and get in large loads of hay at a time, you can have each load of hay tested for exact protein and Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN). But, if you are like me and buy 10 bales here, 20 there, and 30 from over yonder, this may not be feasible. So, remember, good hay smells, looks, and feels good. The best grass hay is usually silvery green in color. If the hay has a lot of brown in it, it was probably cut too late or dried too long. Such hay will be lacking in vitamin E and other nutrients.

Of course, the smell of a good hay depends on what kind of hay it is. Hay that smells moldy, mil-dewy, or dusty is probably not any good. Hay with too much moisture content can possibly start a fire. To test for moisture in hay for storage, if you don't have a hay moisture tester, you can slide your hand deep inside a few bales. Excessive heating in the bales is a danger signal.

Another test of hay is to pick up a handful out of a bale and twist it tightly between your fingers. If it is too dry, the twist will not hold its shape and the hay is probably not very good. If it feels wet when you twist it, it is too wet.

As we know, our alpacas like to waste hay. They are regular hay connoisseurs, picking and choosing through their hay bag or bin, just the right morsels that they want to eat and letting the rest fall to the ground. Making a grate to put over the hay in the bin will lessen this, while still allowing the animals to eat the hay.

In conclusion, there are some books out there for those who may want to bale their own hay, or who just want to learn more about hay in general. *Making Hay* by Verlyn Klinkenborg, Nick Lyons Books, 1986. Another is *The Haymakers: a Chronicle of Five Farm Families* by Steven R. Offbeck,



Sent in by John LoVerde of Fleecy Dale Alpacas in Lambertsville, NJ.

Here is a somewhat typical dinner conversation during birthing season with our 6 year old daughter Francesca (a problem solver with a great imagination). One of our females, Elvira, was about 3 weeks overdue and had looked especially ready to deliver earlier that day.

DAD: I can't believe that Elvira didn't have her baby today.

MOM: Me neither! What is she waiting for, a written invitation?

FRANCESCA: Maybe we should write an invitation and tape it on her bottom. It could say, *Please come into the world, it's very nice here. From, The Family!*

FRANCESCA: Then the baby would open it up and say: *Ooooh! An invitation for me! I guess I'm going to come out of the belly now!*



Photo by Alice Brown
Forever Precious Sapphire, 1 day old!

Editor's Ramblings:

Today the leaves are flying past, off the trees, as the wind blows gusting towards the woods. I can only hope that most of the leaves will find their way into the woods beyond my house. What a blessing that would be!

The alpacas remain hunkered down, ducking their heads even farther down toward the ground when the strong gusty winds buffet them. The crias are staying close to mom today. Even though it's a sunny day, the gusting winds take most of the charm away. Not much grazing today, not much running and playing, just time to cud chew in the barn, staying low out of the wind.

Sometimes we all have to do a little of that, I mean staying low out of the wind. Sometimes we just need to take some time to withdraw and contemplate whatever situations face us. Sometimes you have to meet the wind head on and strive against it to get where you need to go. Sometimes you just have to hunker down and wait for it to blow itself out.

I think different things that we have to deal with in our alpaca businesses can sometimes be like gusty winds. Whether we have to face the situation head on, such as a traumatic loss of life, or if we have to hunker down, the trial is temporary, and soon the gusty wind ceases. We clean up the debris, and pickup any scattered pieces, and let the the charm of a sunny day come streaming through again.

Recently I started having trouble with my one and only eight year old computer. The poor old, over worked, "old codger," just couldn't handle the work load anymore. Just as arthritic bones freeze up on older people, my computer would freeze up whenever I taxed it too much. Sometimes it would freeze up as soon as I did anything. Was it time to hunker down or face the situation head on?

Well, as I am writing now, I have a brand new computer that is showing its youthful vigor. I'm still trying to pick up all the scattered pieces from the poor old codger. I've even taken to emailing information to myself from the old computer to the new. That's how I got the Newsletter over here to work on. It worked and that's what matters. I had to take a proactive approach, the face into the wind

approach, to solve this problem.

I'm sure that some of you may know that Nick Melfi recently had to undergo back surgery. I hear from Cristy that Nick is home recuperating nicely, stretched out on the sofa. I guess it's time to hunker down, huh Nick? This too will pass and I hope your recovery is speedy and complete!

Another member of our MaPaca alpaca family, Jim Cross of Alpaca Consulting Services in Hillsborough, New Hampshire was in the hospital in critical condition for the last three weeks with pneumonia. Although it was reported that Jim was showing some signs of improvement, sadly, Jim died on the morning of November 20th. Our hearts and condolences go out to Jim's mother and family. If you would like to do something, cards to the family would be in order, but also see the information on page 7 of this Newsletter for another fitting way to memorialize Jim's life.

This month you will notice that there is a brightly colored sticker on the front of your MaPaca Newsletter along with a label telling you the Newsletter contains "Important - Renewal Notice" information. So, what does this all mean. Enclosed with this months Newsletter is the notice to renew. Please send your renewal checks to our new Treasurer:

Andy Schneider
Middle Eight Farm
13097 Old Annapolis Road
Mt. Airy, MD 21771

The MaPaca membership year will run from January 1 through December 31. Please renew by December 31. Some have already renewed for 2004, we would like to thank you.

MaPaca would also like to welcome 14 new members that have joined in the last few months bringing our membership up to 250 members.

Remember, this is your organization. There are benefits to members that you can use, such as having a listing as a member on the MaPaca web site at www.mapaca.org. There are also features of the web site that you can use to advertise your herdsire or animals for sale for a minimal fee.

In closing, I'd just like to express the thought that if the gusty winds come your way, they will be momentary and light and leave you with little debris to pick up afterwards.

My Best to You, Alice Brown

Benefits of Raising Alpacas

By Sharon Hennessey of Aleatory Alpaca Farm, LLC in Chenango Forks, New York.

Over the past couple of months I have been reading many negative comments about raising alpacas from high costs to hidden agendas. Well, I have some positive benefits to share. Please note, these comments are only from my point of view and my experiences.

We started our farm in 2000. Prior to that, our only experience with livestock was the county fair. We became interested in alpacas because of the tax advantages, and the fact that my husband wanted a tractor that we had read about. After checking it out with our CPA and finding that it would indeed help us, we were off. In 1999, we had moved to a 95 acre farm in New York. It was an old farm that had not been used for years.

Benefit #1: We cleared the pastures, put up fencing and barns and BINGO! Our land was now worth much more as a working farm and the material can be deducted.

Benefit #2: We have met many interesting people now that we have animals and the contacts have helped us in our daily lives.

Benefit #3: We did get a nice tax break, however, I did not put it all back into the farm. I took the 5 of us to St. Thomas, a lovely place for a vacation.

Benefit #4: (And to me the most important) Education. I am amazed at all I have learned in a short time about farming in general, animals, breeding, fleece, training, feeding/nutrition, hay, worming, shearing, equipment, pasture, putting up fences, types of fencing, insurance, marketing, record keeping for a business, etc. My family has also learned about these things and it is funny to hear my 10 year old talk about alpacas and his friends know exactly what he is saying. We have educated the whole community! I have learned a huge amount about fiber arts. I now know most of the lingo associated with fiber: blanket, second cuts, thirds, guard hair, carding, combing etc. I also know what to do with each part of the fleece, plus I have learned to wash, card and spin fiber, felt: dry & wet, dye yarn, knit, and weave. I am not an expert at any of these, but the fact that I have been able to learn all of these new skills, to me, is the best benefit of this whole business. In closing, I would like to say that Mike and I consider ourselves very successful in this business, even though we do not show or sell large numbers of animals. I feel this has been the best adventure ever for my family and myself.

Do You Want to Advertise in the MaPaca Newsletter?

NEW! PLEASE TAKE NOTE: Starting with the next issue, 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.



Members Events Calendar

January 10, 2004 - 1-4pm. At Wool & Gray Alpacas.
Alpaca Health 101 Seminar with Dr. Shari Silverman, VMD. Cost: \$25 per person. Topics will include: Vaccination Protocols, Parasite prevention/treatments, Biosecurity issues, and more... For information and registration, please call Yvette Kirilenko, Wood & Gray Alpacas 908-996-5248.

Bright Ideas!

By Alice Brown

When I first started with alpacas, we were using pens in the barn to separate the alpaca area of the barn from the people/hay area. This was a great setup that was very flexible. I used to use these live-stock panels to hang the feed bins on. This was convenient, but it taught me a lesson in what way not to feed your alpacas.

“Never, and I mean never, walk toward your alpacas when you have the feed bucket in your hand and you are facing them and they are looking at you. You will eventually get spit at, at point blank range, right in the face. I can attest to that fact! (Paper towels anyone?) The reason I was spit at was that even though the animal was warning his neighbor that this food was his/hers, he was looking at me because I had the food. BINGO! I was the one that took the hit.

Since those early days, I have discovered that the best way to feed is to hang the bins on a fence and walk up to the bins from behind. This way if alpaca #1 chooses to spit at alpaca #2 because he/she wants that bowl of food, you will no longer be in the line of fire. The spit will go out in the direction of the bin itself, or even to the other side of the fence with no harm done to you.

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 one line ads to Alice Brown 458 Main Road, Vineland, NJ, 08360 or fpalpacas@aol.com or call 856-697-8127.

1. About 100 locust fence posts, 4x4x8, \$8 each, chemical free, long lasting. Call 609-261-0960.

2. Custom designed, hand woven and knitted fashions from your alpaca's fleece, roving or yarn. Shop online at www.cherryridgealpacas.com.

Regarding the tragic news of Jim Cross's death, this may be an appropriate time to mention a wonderful program whereby you can honor Jim's memory. Managed by the Alpaca Research Foundation (ARF), it is called the "ARF Memorial Program." Donations to this special endowment are used to fund alpaca health care studies. If you'd like to make a contribution in Jim's name or would just like more information, contact Dr. Patricia Craven, ARF President, at alpacone@mail.ptd.net or Dr. Patrick Long, ARF Treasurer, at lama_dr@msn.com.

Veterinary News for the East Coast: Breeding Males: Testicle Size and Fertility

It's not an old wives tale that there is a relationship between testicle size and fertility in breeding males. As most of us know, testicles on a male that we are using for breeding should be well developed, both present and descended and each of equal size. Another consideration should be the size of the testicles.

The testicles secrete testosterone and produce the sperm. It is the testosterone that gives a male his masculine characteristics which include muscular mass and the desire to breed females. As a male grows, his testicle size increases with his age. A yearling should have a testicle size of about 1 inch in length, a two year old should have testicles that are 1 1/8 inches in length and by two and a half years old the testicles should be 1 5/16 inches. A breeding age male (around 3 years old) should have testicles of 1 1/2 inches in length and 1 3/8 in width, meaning the testicles are sort of almond shaped.

Once a male reaches puberty, around 2 years of age, the testicles should feel resilient and move freely in the scrotum. The detachment of the penis from the foreskin is necessary before a male can be used for breeding. By 24 months of age, about 59%

of males have a detached penis, while at 34 months of age that figure is closer to 95%. Once the penis is detached, (this can be determined through digital palpation if you so choose, but the male must be sedated for a definitive examination), the male may be used for breeding.

Testicle size is implicated in breeding success, once a male is ready to breed. A study in the mid-1980s in Peru compared two groups of males bred to two groups of thirty females. A 30% difference in fertility rate was found to depend on testicle size. The male with normal size testicles of 1 1/2 inches in length, impregnated twenty-one out of thirty females. The group with small testicles of only 1 inch, impregnated only twelve of thirty females. This is a statistically significant difference.

Thus, in selecting a male to use for breeding purposes, it is important to not only look at his general conformation and fleece characteristics, but also closely examine his testicles and make sure there are two testicles of equal size and that the testicles are of a good size according to his age.

*Information taken from the article Relationship Between Testicle Size and Fertility by P. Walter Bravo in The Alpaca Registry Journal Volume 1 * Number 1 Winter-Spring 1996.*

Comments
about the
Newsletter,
any
contributions,
send to
Alice Brown
at
fpalpacas
@aol.com

**If Winter comes,
can Spring be far
behind?**

—Shelley, *Ode to the
West Wind.*



Photo: By Alice Brown
“Enjoying the Last Leaves of Autumn”