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West/Southwest • summer/fall edition 2010

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ON THE COVER

Confined feeding operations of cattle. Yuma, Az. Photo by Jeff Vanuga, courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Have an article or photo submission? Give us a call at 1-800-330-3482 or e-mail: info@ritzfamilypublishing.com for image and file requirements. (All submissions subject to approval)

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Stukenholtz Laboratory Inc. Celebrating 38 Years of Agricultural Testing

In 1970, there were no commercial soil and plant testing laboratories in Idaho. Farmers applied fertilizers based upon educated guesswork. Dr. Dale Stukenholtz and his wife Joyce saw an opportunity to build a business and started a soil and plant testing laboratory and field consulting service based in Twin Falls, Idaho. Dr. Stukenholtz had an unusually diverse background as an educator at the University of Nebraska, an agronomist in the fertilizer industry, and a farmer, and he saw a need for more modern fertilizer recommendations to produce greater yields at less cost. His clients were the growers,

so he could make unbiased recommendations that maximized economic return to the farmer. After extensive field research, he developed these improved fertilizer recommendations that quickly became popular with growers and form the basis for nearly all fertilizer applications in the intermountain west area. Stukenholtz Laboratory clients include growers from all neighboring states and several foreign countries including Australia, Canada, Egypt, Russia, Mexico and New Zealand.

Stukenholtz Laboratory provides 1 to 2 day service, including picking up and delivery time, across Southern

Idaho from St. Anthony and Grace to Parma and Homedale. Results can be delivered, mailed, faxed, or pulled from the Laboratory's webpage: www.stukenholtz.com. To improve their service, Joyce and Dale Stukenholtz expanded the laboratory 11 years ago, installed the latest in computerized instrumentation and quality control, and made it the most modern and well equipped agricultural laboratory in their market area.

Critical to the success of Idaho's most efficient laboratory and largest field consulting firm has been its personnel. Dr. Continued on page 29

Remote-Controlled Wireless Tail Lights

Magnetic, wireless tail lights are Terry Stiles' solution to the frustration of trying to maintain conventional lights on his equipment and trailers.

"Repairing or replacing broken tail

lights on farm equipment and boat trailers used to be an ongoing headache for me and many people I know," the Malta Montana rancher says. "With the repair time and replacement costs involved, I knew there had to be a better way, so I

spent 2 1/2 years designing and perfecting these portable, magnetic lights."

The convenient system comes with two magnetically-backed lights, and a remote control transmitter for operating them while driving. The system provides turn signals, running lights, brake lights, and hazard lights, depending on the driver's commands. The lights can be moved from one trailer to another in a matter of minutes without any tools.

You usually don't find out that you have a tail light problem until you're away from home and it's dark. With these along, it's no problem to get home because they're so quick and easy to use. You will never again be without lights when you need them.

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Contact: Easy On Wireless Tail Lights, Terry Stiles, President, 7400 Kid Curry Rd., Malta, Montana 59538 Easonlights@mtintouch.net; To order call: Ph 866-889-8386 or www.easyontailights.com

Uibly Bean Knife Mfg., Inc. is at it again!

Hundreds of hard edible bean farmers have been taking advantage of the Uibly bean knife for over sixty years.

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There has been some speculation about the acceptability of the direct harvest system due to the high losses of beans.

Uibly Bean Knife Mfg., Inc. is now working on new products and modifications to existing products to effectively cut the losses when used with the direct harvest machines. These products may be just the answer to all manufacturers of bean equipment and bean farmers, with regard to prevention of bean losses.

While still in the development stages,

Uibly Bean Knife Mfg., Inc. expects to have these products available to the testers by this fall.

Keep your eyes open for another great product from Uibly and until then, keep using the Uibly Bean Knife for the best possible cut and quality for your money. Do what hundreds have already done. Make Uibly Your Advant-EDGE.

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Pierce County, Peterson Family Dairy to host 2010 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days



The Wisconsin Farm Technology Days is the largest agriculture exposition in Wisconsin--a three-day outdoor event that showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture. Each year, it is held in a different Wisconsin county - on a different host family farm.

Thirty-eight Wisconsin counties have hosted the event over the years but this will be the first time for Pierce County, and the Pierce County UW-Extension staff are excited and motivated to lead efforts toward an outstanding show.

Power of Agriculture is the theme of the 2010 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days. Throughout the three-day event, held July 20-22, visitors will have an opportunity to see the latest in technology, enjoy hands-on activities, and view demonstrations. The FTD will feature more than 600 exhibitors.

The event is also known for its fun for the entire family.

Among other things, there will be an arts and crafts tent, a family living tent with entertainment and music, a booth telling the history of Pierce County, equine performances with horse trainers, a longhorn steer that does tricks, 4H and youth tents, a tractor driving contest, catered food, educational exhibits on native plants and soil conservation, plus lots of free things like notepads and Frisbees handed out.

This year's event will be held at the Roger and Bev Peterson family farm, now incorporated as Peterson Family Dairy, located on Highway 29 outside of River Falls in the western-most part of central Wisconsin.

To accommodate the needs for the event, the Petersons had



Aerial view of 2009 FTD - Grave Brothers Farm, LLC, Dodge County, WI

to adjust their crop rotation to include 250 acres of alfalfa, 80 acres for parking for tent city, and 60 acres for hay ground. All this plus deciding to accelerate their already-planned expansion from 70 milking cows to over 250 and add a new free-stall barn, milking parlor, sand-manure separation system, 250-long blacktop feed pad for cows, and a 2.8-million gallon manure storage pit, plus an addition soon for the calf shed. The goal is to have everything new finished by June so that it would be done before the estimated 80,000 people show up to attend the three day event. (It should be noted that the Petersons' expansion was already planned due to the growth in their family business and financed on their own, and in no way related to hosting the FTD, nor was it financed by the any part of the show.)

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days is billed as "the largest outdoor show moving from county to county in North America." Farm Technology Days, Inc., a non-profit organization, has held the event since 1954.

For more information visit the website at www.wifarmtechnologydays.com or www.piercefarmtech.com

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Horn noticed the sticky mud that was making it difficult for drivers to unload their truck boxes. After seeing this problem first hand, he immediately understood how important the principles of quality, service and continuous advancement are to customers.

Valuable trips to real world working conditions while he was providing face to face service to his customers often resulted in new ideas and applications for a growing list of problems. Quality, service and continuous advancement continued to be the lead-

ing values for HPI as Super-Slide became the solution to more and more problems in an expanding number of markets.

To accompany this growth, products specially suited for the market were introduced. Starting the line of Super-Slide products was Blue Stripe®, our original medium duty HMW (High Molecular Weight) plastic liner. The next introduction was Blue Iron®. Wearing four times longer than HMW liners, Blue Iron is a heavy duty UHMW (Ultra High Molecular Weight) plastic liner. Next, Red Hot® UHMW plastic liner was introduced. Red Hot is specifically designed to give longer wear and non-stick properties to applications with high temperatures. Made from virgin UHMW, Red Hot yields an even higher wearing ability than typical UHMW plastic liners. Last to be introduced was Yellow Quartz UHMW plastic liner. Yellow Quartz, which is unique to the industry, is offered to customers who want the high wear of a virgin UHMW liner but do not need the high temperature protection that competing virgin UHMW liners have. In our drive for continuous advancement, we took what the customer wanted a step farther by incorporating a quartz additive to make Yellow Quartz the longest wearing UHMW plastic liner.

Horn Plastics provides faster quotes, quicker lead time and more rapid turn around times than our competition, but we are always looking for better ways to serve our customers. Quality, service, and continuous advancement are what the company was founded on and will always be the driving force at HPI.

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Dairy farmers are experts when it comes to purchasing forage and other feed for their dairy herds. They know that alfalfa dairy hay is superior to other forage crops because it is high in crude protein and energy, reducing the need for other types of supplements in rations.

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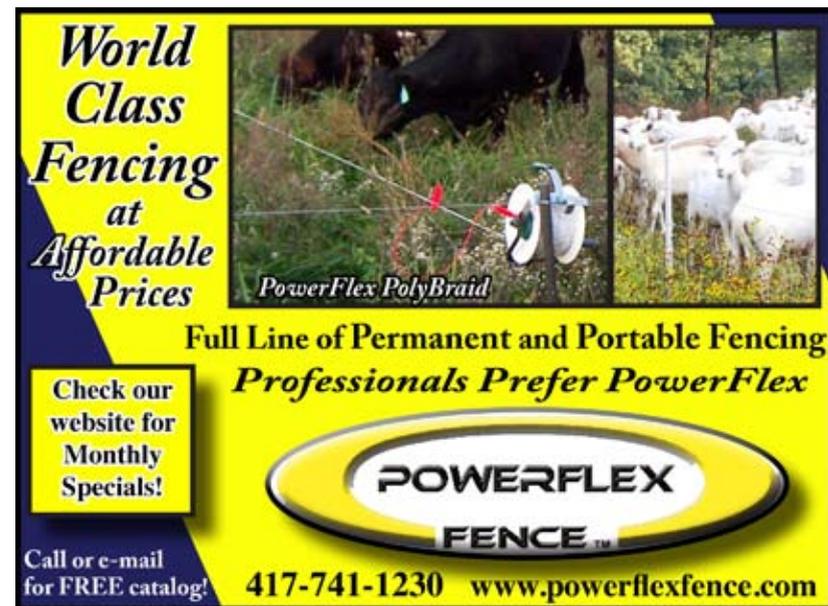
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Kim Wilson, Ivy Roberts Receive Fred Stout Experience Awards

Kim Wilson, Neosho, Mo., and Ivy M. Roberts, Mount Berry, Ga., have been selected as the 2010 recipients of the Fred Stout Experience Awards.

The award fund was created in 2000 in memory of Fred J. Stout Jr., Mt. Carmel, Ill., a lifelong Jersey breeder and member of the Jersey Marketing Service (JMS) staff from 1978 to 1997. Stout was instrumental in the growth of the company's marketing activities, and lat-

er added duties as a type evaluator and in customer field service for the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA).

Stout believed that the best learning experiences happen in the everyday world. These awards honor that conviction by providing financial support for on-farm and JMS internship experiences.

Previous recipients of the Fred Stout Experience Award are Tara Bohnert, Illinois (2003), Allison Waggoner, South Carolina (2004), Dan Bauer, Wiscon-

sin (2005), Aaron Horst, Pennsylvania (2006), Jacob Pieper, Maryland (2007); Katie Albaugh, Maryland (2008); and Brady Core (2009).

2010 Award Recipient Kim Wilson

Kim Wilson started her eight-week internship with Jersey Marketing Service on May 10 assisting with the Illinois Invitational Sale. Her experience will include herd visits with JMS Manager Dan Bauer, working in the national Jer-

Continued on page 31

STEAKing Out New Terroir... The Cabernet Cow

A winegrower has a twist on the convention of matching beef with red wine. In fact, these beef that have been raised on red wine.

The Cabernet Cowgirl, JL Chamberlain has taken the bull by the horns and is producing cattle that are naturally and sustainably grown and are fed out on the by product of her winemaking, the pomace (skins from the pressed wine.)



So, how far can we take the concept of terroir? Nebraskans notwithstanding, corn is not the ideal grain for fattening cattle. The Japanese prefer barley as spent beer grains to marberize the famous Kobe beef. But Chamberlain has taken it a step further in feeding the pomace. "I'm simply turning a waste by-product into a benefit for my cattle."

Usually, these grape skins are discarded. Winemakers pay hundreds of dollars for garbage hauling services throughout the fall crush to get rid of the pomace. Now, we use all the by-products of the winemaking process.

I pay attention to the eco friendly prod-

ucts. We turn down sprinklers, reduce the number of tractor runs and send out beneficial pests in lieu of pesticides when possible. Still some view sustainability as a world where we only using hand tools. We walk and bike everywhere we need to go. Our wine stores serve refillable bota bags right out of the barrel.

Most of us want to buy and sell locally, but it's harder to do. We have to work within reality since we are so closely regulated. Being green is easy until you have a pest infestation that is going to decimate your 12 year old vines or your calf gets sick.

Being a farmer means searching for ways to vertically integrate the crops. This one seems to fit the bill. We are always looking for better blends of nutrient feed. Especially in the fall as the pasture nutrients deplete, the cows will get restless. "I figured that if the Japanese could turn around the disposition of cows with beer and sake, my cows would certainly be open to something similar, says Chamberlain. "Not only does this help round out the flavors, it keeps the cows in a contented state of mind." www.spoffordstation.com

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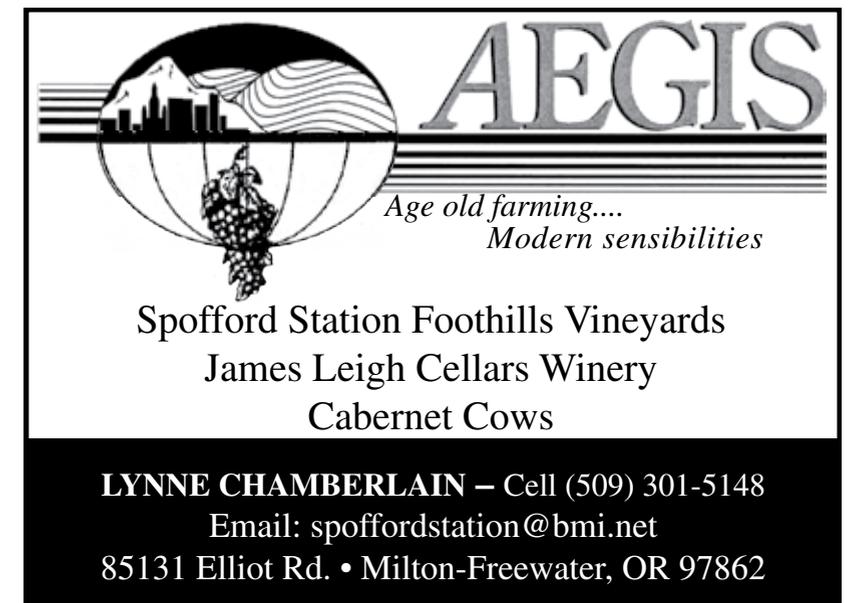
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Alpacas: Growing a Natural Fiber Industry

By Deb Hill, Cloud Dancer Alpacas, Lewistown, MT

Alpacas. You've seen 'em in the T.V. ads, you've seen 'em at the county fair, and you may even have seen them at a farm in your own neighborhood. They sure are cute, in a furry, space alien kind of way. But what are they really good for, and why would you want them on your farm?

In a word, diversified income streams. I guess that's really three words, but they are three important words for anyone in farming today. Let me share with you a little bit of the history of the alpaca industry, as well as some thoughts about its future, and perhaps you, too, will come to view them as more than just the latest wave of designer livestock.

First, a brief history: Alpacas are man-made. According to archaeological evidence, alpacas were developed from a relative of the camel called a vicuña, which lives in the mountainous terrain of South America. Thousands of years ago, native cultures recognized that vicuña have extremely fine fleeces – in fact, they produce one of the finest animal fibers on the planet. But there are some drawbacks: vicuñas are wild, hard to catch, and do not produce very much fiber. Over thousands of years, native people in South America bred vicuñas to produce better characteristics, and the result is the alpaca.

In the Pre-Incan and Incan cultures, alpacas were considered to be gifts from the gods. Alpaca fiber was woven into textiles for the Incan royalty, and was highly prized. Alpacas themselves were also prized, and played important ceremonial roles, including as sacrifices to the gods. With the coming of the Spanish to South America, however, alpacas were replaced by sheep and other, more traditional, livestock.

In the 1800's, alpacas were 'rediscovered'. Sir Titus Salt, an Englishman who created mechanized worsted mills, fell in love with alpaca fiber and began to import it, making a cloth that took the fashion world by storm. Thus began the modern alpaca fiber industry, and the international interest in its versatility.

Alpaca fiber is valued for its incredible softness (like the best cashmere), lovely drape, exceptional sheen (like silk), excellent insulating value, and strength. In addition, alpaca fleece comes in more natural colors than any other animal fiber! Anything that can be made out of wool can be made out of alpaca, although the majority of alpaca fabric produced every year is used in the high-end fashion industry.



In 1980's, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile, which contain the majority of the world's alpacas, began allowing them to be exported. Almost immediately, alpacas arrived in the United States. Since their arrival, the goal of U.S. breeders has been the creation of a North American alpaca fiber industry.

Currently there are three national alpaca organizations. The breed organization, the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association (AOBA) serves to promote alpacas and alpaca products in the U.S. This organization produces the industry journal, Alpacas Magazine, runs the national alpaca show, trains alpaca judges, and is the primary marketing wing of the industry.

The majority of alpacas in the U.S. are registered through the breed registry, the

ARI (the Alpaca Registry, Inc.). ARI is responsible for maintaining the pedigree information for registered alpacas, insuring compliance with registration rules (all registered alpacas are blood typed to prove parentage using DNA analysis), and is undertaking the U.S. alpaca EPD (Estimated Progeny Difference) program.

Developing alpaca fiber products, and finding markets for those products, falls under the management of the Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America (AFCNA). A true member cooperative, AFCNA collects alpaca fiber after shearing each year, contracts for it to be graded and sorted, and has developed several end products made from member fiber.

Since its beginnings in 1984, the U.S. alpaca industry has primarily focused on growth, for one important reason: to develop viable fiber markets, you need to produce enough fiber to meet the demands of the consumer. Currently there are approximately 150,000 alpacas registered with ARI. Compare that to the almost 7 million sheep in the U.S. (according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture), and you can see how small the U.S. alpaca 'herd' really is.

The small number of alpacas in the U.S. is the reason that most of the farms are focused on running breeding programs, rather than on fleece production. We simply lack enough fiber, at this point in time, to begin commercial production of U.S. alpaca products. We need more fleece!

The highest quality fleece on an alpaca is called the 'blanket' and is generally located where a saddle blanket would go on a horse. Other fiber, such as neck, britch (rear), and upper leg can be quite good, but on most alpacas it is the blanket fiber has the longest staple length, and the least guard hair. Alpacas are shorn every year, and typically their fiber becomes slightly coarser, and staple length declines, as they age. The very first fleece an alpaca produces, called its 'tui' fleece, is likely to be its best.

The garment industry has set an upper limit of around 27 microns in fineness for clothing. Using fiber that is coarser than 27 microns results in a finished garment will feel too "scratchy" to be worn next to the skin.

Some of our alpacas are too old to produce garment-quality fiber, and, of course, a small percentage was not good to begin with. If we subtract those animals that are too old to produce fine fiber, or which do not have fiber that meets the market criteria for garments, we see that the largest hurdle facing the U.S. alpaca industry today is... not enough alpacas! If we compare the alpaca fiber industry with another natural fiber, mohair, we can get a sense of the number of pounds of fiber needed to satisfy even a very tiny commercial market. According to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University, in 2008 the U.S. mohair industry produced 1.2 million pounds of mohair from 193,5000 angora goats. On average, each goat sheared 5.3 pounds.

While no exact figures exist for alpacas, we can estimate the average blanket size of an alpaca to be between 3 and 6 pounds. Let's use 4.5 pounds as the average for this calculation. In order to provide the textile industry with 1.2 million pounds of alpaca fiber, we need to shear over 266,000 alpacas with fiber under 27 microns in fineness!

Even after 20-plus years of growth, our national alpaca herd is still too small to support a commercial fiber industry. Herd growth is slow because alpacas have only one offspring (called a 'cria') each year. Consequently, most farms are focused on producing excellent breeding stock, increasing herd size, and improving fiber through better genetics.

Despite the challenges of slow herd growth, fiber has not been ignored. While most alpaca farms are busy improving breeding stock, at the same time many take advantage of the high demand for alpaca fiber in their local areas. You will see alpaca fleeces, yarn and finished products for sale at ranch stores, at craft fairs, at farmer's markets, or in small retail outlets.

Cleaned and carded alpaca fleece generally sells for between \$2 and \$5 an ounce, and most farms find that their

fiber is in high demand by spinners and fiber artists. Knitters and weavers love alpaca yarns, and farms that have developed finished products (such as socks, gloves, scarves, hats, etc.) find that their customers keep coming back for more.



Alpaca yarns sell for about \$5 an ounce and up, socks retail for between \$10 and \$30 a pair, alpaca scarves sell in the \$40 to \$60 range, and alpaca sweaters may sell for as much as \$200 or more.



New fiber ventures have been developed in the past few years. These are often the result of several small farms working together to combine their clip (the total sheared fiber for the year) in order to create uniquely designed alpaca fiber products. As the market for alpaca fiber and fiber products grows, we will see increasing numbers of farms keeping 'fiber herds' (non-breeding alpacas raised solely for their fiber) to supply the growing demand of the commercial markets.

The future for the U.S. alpaca industry

looks quite bright, despite some slow-down in growth caused by the current difficult economy. Even with the recession, something on the order of 20,000 alpacas changed hands last year. Breeding stock still sells for several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars per animal. Farms that sell their alpaca fleece and fiber products report that they can easily sell enough to more than pay for the cost of keeping their alpacas.

How might alpacas help with diversifying your farm's income? Because they are relatively rare and unusual in appearance, alpacas generate a lot of interest. Farm visitation increases, which is beneficial for farms already engaged in direct sales to consumers. Adding alpaca products to the mix in your farm store is a great way to improve sales. Sale of alpaca breeding stock, if you have good animals, certainly helps with cash flow. As with everything, you should do some careful research first, to determine if alpacas are right for your farm, and to find out what you will need in order to successfully raise them.

For more information, visit an alpaca farm near you. Most alpaca owners are eager to share how they make their small farms a success, and would love to exchange ideas. Additional information may be found at the following websites:

www.alpacainfo.com (AOBA)
www.alpacaacademy.com (ARI)
www.afcna.com (AFCNA)

The bottom line is that the alpaca industry in the U.S. has seen continued growth, even in uncertain economic times, and the demand for alpaca fiber outstrips its production. As the industry develops, you can expect to see alpaca garments in mainstream retail outlets, and alpaca farms moving into traditional agricultural communities just like yours!

Deb Hill began raising alpacas in northern Arizona in 1996 and has served in a variety of leadership roles for industry organizations. With husband Don Sanfilippo, she runs Cloud Dancer Alpacas, which relocated to central Montana in 2009. Deb can be reached at cloud-dancer@infomagic.net or at (406) 538-3177, and the ranch website is www.clouddanceralpacos.com

Alpaca Stock is on the Rise!

Have you thought about expanding your livestock portfolio? Well you should!

By Beth & Zach Correa, Kama'aina Alpacas, Enumclaw, WA

As mentioned in the Wall Street Journal article "When Stocks Tank, Some Investors Stampede to Alpacas and Turn to Drink" on October 3, 2008, people are looking to some alternative investments for relief. According to the article, "the national Alpaca Registry Inc., in Lincoln, Neb., says registrations are on pace to rise 7% this year and currently stand at 140,297." The numbers have continued to rise in 2009 and the trending is headed upwards for 2010.

Already owning livestock means you already have pastures, fencing, and shelters established - that's the hard part! Having livestock today means you have knowledge of herd health, pedigree and genetics.....alpacas are similar in this respect to other livestock. Why are alpacas a good addition to your current livestock portfolio?

1. Alpacas have padded feet, not hooves. That means they don't damage the pastures.
2. Alpacas don't have upper teeth. Thus, they gently trim tender grass with their bottom teeth and upper palate, rather than pulling it up by its roots. Their gentle nibbling keeps grass growing. But they're not too picky: alpacas don't mind eating some leaves and brush.

3. A group of alpacas prefer to leave their droppings in a single communal area. And if that's not handy enough, their pellet-sized droppings make a great natural, slow-release fertilizer.

4. Alpacas don't eat a lot and they like hanging out with each other, so you can fit 8 to 10 of them on an acre (a nice acre, mind you).



5. Alpacas are 100% insurable.
6. The best part: Shorn about once a year, an alpaca will provide 5 to 10 pounds of some of the finest fiber in the world (in 22 natural colors). You can help offset the cost of the alpaca by selling the fiber, sending it to the co-op for them to make products and sell for you or send to mini-mills to produce products for you to sell yourself in your own store!
7. Alpacas are eligible for the livestock tax advantages:
 - a. Breeding Stock retained for greater than 1 year qualifies for long term capital gains treatment when sold
 - b. Depreciable over 5 years, giving ranch owners immediate tax savings while growing their herd
 - c. More rapid depreciation under Section 179 of the I.R.C.

In many cases, financing your alpaca purchase can be done right on the ranch as many alpaca breeders offer financing.

The more alpacas there are in the US, the more demand for the alpaca products and thus more demand for more animals.... now is the time to get involved!

Beth & Zach Correa started in the livestock business with Thoroughbred race horses, and then in 2007 they expanded their livestock to include the alpacas. Beth & Zach can be reached at info@kamaainaalpacas.com or at 253-486-2464, and their website is www.kamaainaalpacas.com

Kama'aina Alpacas is dedicated to assisting new clients in setting up their Alpaca ranch. From education about the industry to helping make the right decisions when purchasing their foundation herd, it's all about helping them get started raising Alpacas!

Cherokee Rose Ranch Alpacas

As retirement years approached my husband and I had to find something to do. We purchased some property in central Utah and set up house. My husband decided that we should go into livestock, so we chose Alpacas as our investment. They are easy to care for and are a wonderful tax write-off. You will not see much return for the first 4 to 5 years but it is still worth the investment. With the economy as it is, now is the perfect time to purchase Alpacas. Prices have lowered tremendously and there are some great buys in good genetic lines. We took our time and spent two years going from ranch to ranch gaining information. There was a lot to learn. We purchased our starter herd in 2004. Our initial cash outlay was about \$75,000. Since we have grown we are able to offer starter packages to folks that want to get into the business. We offer 1 pregnant female with a cria at her side and a male herdsire plus two free breedings for \$18,000.00. We also sell breeding pairs for \$8,000 to \$12,000.00 and single animals from \$3,500 to \$12,000 depending on the animal you chose as long as they are going to a farm with other alpacas. Alpaca's are very herd oriented and need each other. All our animals are

DNA tested for proper genetic marking and they all have microchips, as well as being registered. We specialize in our after purchase support. We guarantee all of our animals to be fertile and able to breed to continue your herd growth. If a breeding problem occurs we will trade out the animal for another of equal value. We offer financial assistance and boarding at standard board rates. In Utah we recommend Veterinarian Dr. Issac Bott. We offer plasma through, Alpaca Valley Farms, for cria's that are in need of some passive transfer start up help. We also have shearing available. We have grass seed the is just right for alpaca's at better than competitive prices. We also have a mill in Payson owned by, Crooked Fence Alpacas, that will process your fleece at great prices. We are always just a phone call away. Should you live out of state we will help you with some farm names and contacts. I would like to suggest that you do not buy Alpacas without putting your hands on them and taking a good look. Should you decide to purchase Alpacas good luck and call us should you need anything.

Mickey and Paul Harnett. Cherokee Rose Ranch Alpacas, Sterling, Utah, (435) 835-7587, Harnett@mail.manti.com

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Almost Paradise Farms

We live on thirteen acres in the foothills of the coast range about 30 miles west of Portland, Oregon. Since we were first married, we wanted to live on acreage and finally found the right place in February 2000. Raising alpacas was feasible even with our day jobs in the city. We do everything ourselves, from pasture cleaning to website maintenance.

I found out about alpacas accidentally. Several years ago, my mother and I went to a plant sale at the Washington County fairgrounds. Next door to the sale, a local alpaca association was sponsoring an al-

paca show. I was fascinated with them and wanted to take two home that day. Howev-



er, we lived in the suburbs at the time and didn't have the facilities to keep them.

We started with two llamas in May

2000 and added three huacaya alpacas in November, 2000. Our female alpacas had their first babies in September of 2001. We now have three excellent award winning studs in black, lavender rose gray, and light fawn. Our current herd size is 15 alpacas and 2 llamas. We also raise Boer goats and chickens; thus, we are a 'real' farm.

We concentrate on fine fibered and conformationally sound alpacas of color and continually strive to improve the quality of our herd. We believe who you buy from is as important as what you buy for

Continued on page 29

Alpacas of El Dorado

So you have made the decision to at least look into the benefits of expanding your livestock business into alpacas. Where do you go to get honest answers and information about the business, financial opportunities, tax benefits and what is involved in breeding and raising these animals? That is where we at Alpacas of El Dorado hope to have the opportunity to offer our expertise to educate you and earn your trust and business if this is a

direction that makes sense for you.

There is nothing like hands on training. There are several great classes and seminars being taught but nothing compares to hands on, one on one learning. If you are new to alpacas and still learning how to care for, breed, deliver cria (alpaca baby) and get them nursing in a short period of time and are figuring out how to best lay out your ranch, it is great if you have the opportunity for ongoing mentoring. Our clients have the opportunity to

stay with us at no charge here in the beautiful Sierra Foothills and learn the day to day operations of running a successful and efficient alpaca ranch.

We have not been in this business so long that we have forgotten what it is like to have so many questions. We are always available to answer your questions both in the beginning and down the road as your ranch and business grow. Guidance in terms of breeding goals,

Continued on page 29

Big Meadow Alpacas

I met my first alpacas in 2001 when my brother came from Boston and took me to an alpaca show in western Washington State. In 2008, I inherited Big Meadow Creek Alpacas, the farm my brother established when he moved to Idaho. Originally a city girl from Pittsburgh, I've been challenged by owning nearly 60 alpacas.

Although I had a full time job at a university, I joined my brother when he went to alpaca shows and I enjoyed helping out on the farm, especially during shearing time. You see, I have been a life-long knitter and alpaca fiber is just so lustrous, soft and silky! Soon, I found myself dedicated to alpaca yarn, exclusive to all others. And, "when I retire," I would say, "I'm going to buy a spinning wheel."

Inheriting the farm made my decision to retire a moot point. Besides becoming a bit more hands-on with the animals, I did buy a spinning wheel, spun my first suri yarn, dyed it and knit a scarf for myself. The yarn isn't perfect—no first spun yarn is—but I'll never give up that scarf!

Along with a shepherd friend of mine, I recently opened Milk House Fiber Studio at the Dahman Barn in Uniontown, Washington. We have joined other artisans at this refurbished historic barn and are selling both alpaca and sheep fiber, roving, yarn, patterns and a variety of knitted items (mostly from alpaca!). Stop by when you are in the area!

I was charmed by alpacas in 2001 and I remain enchanted, even though I'm no longer the simple observer. However,

one of my goals is to reduce the number of alpacas and concentrate not on breeding and showing, but on the fiber itself.

I believe in the "alpaca lifestyle." Alpacas--gentle, curious and intelligent animals--are easy to care for. Grass hay, water, and protection from wind, rain and snow and predators, and you've got yourself an alpaca farm. Gentle on the land, alpacas are considered "green" livestock. Their soft padded feet don't tear up the ground, and they have communal poop piles—and that poop makes marvelous fertilizer that doesn't need aged.

Visitors are always welcome at Big Meadow Creek Alpacas. Give me a call; send me an email! I'd love to take you on a farm tour and let you learn about these marvelous animals!



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AlpacaKing's Rocky I

A true story about a very brave little alpaca

Story by Mary C. King
Photographs by Lindsey R. Annan



In October 2001, our daughter Lindsey and her husband Andy invited us to go with them to an alpaca show in Longmont. That was our first up close experience with alpacas. We both thought they were a unique, gentle animal and were interested in understanding more about the business. We especially thought it may be a good investment for our retirement years, and something we would enjoy. After the show, my husband Larry began researching alpacas on the internet.

Early in the spring of 2002 we purchased a small acreage in north Fort Collins. Larry's research continued to interest us. The more we learned, the more we began to formulate plans. Lindsey and Andy agreed to help if we decided to get into the business. Larry and I began visiting area farms to learn more about farm set-ups and the difference in quality of alpacas.

We decided to purchase white Peruvian Huacaya alpacas. Marcella was our first purchase in May 2002. She came preg-

nant and had a female cria, Lowansa, at side. Marcella delivered her cria in the fall of 2002—a female we named Alona. Now we had three white females. In the summer of 2003 we purchased a bay black female named May, and in the fall of 2004 Marcella delivered another white female that we named Abby.

Marcella was always a good mother. She also was now well established as the head alpaca in the pecking order. After Abby was born Marcella delivered a boy named Challenger, and a year later another girl named Aspen. This story is about Marcella's sixth cria we named Rocky.

I should mention here that our white Peruvian females were never very nice to May, our bay black female. They had their own little family and May was not included. The alpaca pecking order had reduced May to last place.

It was late in the afternoon of October 10, 2007, at Alpaca King, our Huacaya alpaca farm in Fort Collins, Colorado. All the alpacas were at the barn except May, our bay black female. Larry walked to the back pasture to get May and, to his surprise, found a little white alpaca chasing after her, trying to nurse. Larry scooped him up, brought him to the barn, and asked who he belonged to. Marcella was the only alpaca nearing the end of her gestation (two weeks out) but she wanted nothing to do with this

baby and she didn't look like she had given birth.

We called one of our veterinarians, Dr. Wheeler, to come and check Marcella. He determined that she was the mother, but that she didn't have any milk. He tubed the cria with goat colostrum. The next morning, Dr. Wheeler was able to milk some colostrum from Marcella and tubed that into the baby as well. Later that day, Marcella's milk finally came in, but there just wasn't enough.



Rocky with lopped ears

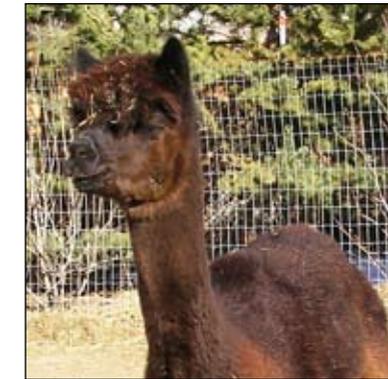
This little guy looked different—his fiber was hanging in long locks with lots of curl and density. He weighed 14 pounds, an average weight for a new cria, but the tips of his ears were lopped, which is an indication that he was premature.



Notice the fiber in the cria above is fluffy and smooth, but Rocky's fiber is so dense that it appears to break in clumps.

Sometimes when a cria is born prematurely or with a defect of some kind, the mother will often reject the cria and leave it to die. We wondered if that was

the reason his mother was rejecting him, or if it was because he looked different. Maybe the herd thought something was wrong with him since his fiber looked different from any other cria we ever had.



May was his only friend

Whatever the reason was, Marcella and the rest of the herd rejected this cria. They spit and kicked at him whenever he walked by and wanted nothing to do with him. May was the only one that didn't try to hurt him. His mother, Marcella, actually kicked him and pulled fiber from the back of his neck in an attempt to discourage him from trying to nurse from her.



Fiber missing from the back of Rocky's neck

But this new cria was extremely persistent in his attempt to nurse. No matter how many times he was kicked, he still tried to get nourishment. He was such a fighter! That is why Larry decided to name our new little cria Rocky.

We realized that we were going to have to bottle feed Rocky; it was a two person job. We began each feeding by giving Rocky a bottle of cow milk and yogurt. After he ate four ounces of milk, we held Marcella and encouraged Rocky to nurse from her. After several sessions, he learned how to nurse. She would let

him nurse as long as someone was holding her. We hoped that this would stimulate a nurturing instinct in Marcella. After a couple of weeks, I was able to hold Marcella without help, and Rocky was always eager to nurse. We repeated this regimen 10-12 times every day and through the night for several weeks.

We gave Marcella lactation herbs, extra alfalfa, and higher-protein hay hoping that her milk production would increase, but to no avail. For some reason she did not produce enough milk. It was suggested fresh goat milk would be better for Rocky, so we started him on fresh goat milk. After two weeks, the skin around his eyes and mouth turned red. He was really a sight, with his extremely dense fiber hanging in long locks and red skin around his eyes and mouth—he looked like a clown.



Rocky with fiber missing from nose and red around his eyes

I asked Dr. Wheeler to come out to look at him. His diagnosis was that Rocky was allergic to goat milk. What next?! Dr. Wheeler said we should go back to the cow's milk and yogurt, hoping he wouldn't be allergic to that.

During this examination Dr. Wheeler discovered bumps all over Rocky. I had noticed this earlier but had not said anything because I was hoping it would go away. I just didn't want to admit that another thing was wrong with Rocky. However, Dr. Wheeler informed me that the Suri breeders say this bumpy skin is a very good thing. We did some research and discovered that this bumpiness is caused by extra fiber follicles and is an indication that the alpaca will have very dense fiber. His conformation, energy and sweetness really drew us to him, but he truly was an ugly duckling. Rocky was very different from other alpacas we were accustomed to seeing.

Feeding time was really a fight. Rocky

just wanted his mother, and all of his energy went toward attempting to get nourishment. I was talking to Cory Bensley, a neighboring breeder, about



Arlene Francis

Rocky. He offered one of his females, known as the “barnyard smorgasbord.” Arlene Francis, a large Chilean alpaca with cria at side, came to offer her services. As soon as she arrived, Marcella was noticeably upset and was more willing to feed Rocky. Feeding did become easier with Marcella, but Rocky wanted to nurse all the time and she just didn’t have enough milk for him.

Even though Marcella was willing to nurse, she still didn’t nurture Rocky as she had done for her previous crias. Rocky was Marcella’s sixth cria and she had never treated her babies like this. Poor little Rocky was so alone.



Rocky settling down for the night

We had always made a bed of straw in one corner of the barn with a heat lamp for our new crias; none of them had ever used it. After the last feeding of the day Rocky turned a few circles and hummed as if he were looking for someone to care. Marcella turned her back and cushed at the far end of the barn. Rocky tried to cush near her but after being spit

at several times he turned and cushed on his little bed of straw in the corner furthest from Marcella. His only friend was our barn cat, Jag, who was just looking for a warm place to lay.



Finally asleep

By December 1st, Rocky weighed 25 pounds and held that weight until December 15th. For the next two weeks he gained a pound and lost a pound . . . and gained . . . and lost.



Rocky looking very thin and unhealthy

I called our other vet, Dr. Roberts, to come run a blood panel in order to determine if Rocky was metabolizing his food effectively or if something else was wrong with him. All tests came back normal. Our observation was that Rocky spent all day trying to get food. He would not suck a bottle so we had to force feed him. All he wanted was to nurse from his mother, but since she did not want him and did not produce enough milk, it soon was impossible for him to nurse from her at all. He chewed on straw or hay but was still too young to survive on this diet.

His teeth were too immature to chew

this kind of forage and get nourishment from it. His whole day was filled with frustration and rejection. He tried valiantly to eat and longed for his mother’s love but was continually turned away and rejected.



Sydni and Lilly, our granddaughters, with Rocky

I was becoming more and more concerned for Rocky. He was always bright and alert, but he just wasn’t growing. Something had to change. We consulted with Dr. Roberts and decided to take him from his mother and the herd before he suffered injury from their abuse. Now he was only 10 weeks old. The stress of the situation was mounting. It was mid-December, the Holiday Season was in full swing, I was preparing to go to Tennessee for a week to visit our daughter and family, and May, our Chilean, was due to have her cria by the end of the month. We were going to have to put Rocky and May in a setting where he would be under constant surveillance by caring people and she would be in a warm environment for the birth of her cria.

We decided to ask our good friends, Sue Johnson and Ellen Bryant, owners of Wabi Sabi Farm, if they would be able to help. They did not hesitate to offer assistance. Sue is a grower of organic herbs and perennials and had a greenhouse available, so she was able to keep Rocky and May in their heated greenhouse on cold nights at a steady 55°. This allowed Rocky to focus all his energy on gaining weight without concern of cold temperatures or winter winds.

Rocky cried often for his mother; it was very sad to see. Sue and Ellen were able to get 30-34 ounces of milk and yogurt into Rocky every day. His weight was still fluctuating and he continued to

Continued on page 30

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Alpacas of El Dorado

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Continued from page 20

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Stukenholtz

Continued from page 6

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Rocky I

Continued from page 24

be stressed because he still wanted his mother.

During the time I was in Tennessee, Rocky was eating every day, his weight continued to fluctuate, but he seemed to be holding steady. Sue and Ellen kept a close eye to make sure his needs were met. Rocky maintained this condition up through Christmas Eve.



Rocky with warm blanket

I returned from Tennessee on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day we went over to Wabi Sabi to take care of Rocky's morning feeding; he was very shaky and could hardly walk. A healthy alpaca has a body temperature of 101°; Rocky's body temperature was 97.8°! We called

Colorado State University Veterinary Hospital and were told to get his temp up and look for change in behavior. We brought Rocky to our house and began warming him. Larry sat in our family room rocking chair holding Rocky, while I brought him warm blankets from the dryer.



Rocky fell asleep Christmas morning.

Later that morning, our granddaughters came running into the room to open their Christmas presents. Imagine their eyes when they saw Papa in the rocking chair with Rocky. They were more excited to have Rocky home than opening their presents! An alpaca in the house for Christmas — our kids tell us we are Red necks. We fed him and were able

to get his body temperature up to 100°. He fell asleep on our family room floor and Sydni laid her Christmas doll next to him while he slept. Around noon we took him back to Wabi Sabi. At 3:00 p.m. we went back for another feeding. His temp was falling again and he was noticeably weaker.

We took him back home and made a place in the small TV room for him. We warmed him up, fed him, and left him to rest while we ate Christmas dinner. After Christmas dinner, I tried to feed him but all he did was cough and choke.

At this point Larry and I decided to head for the CSU Veterinary Hospital. By the time we got there, about 7:30 pm, sepsis had set in and Rocky was dying. We laid him on the exam table but he didn't have the strength to move. Dr. Bohnhoff was on duty that night. I asked him if he thought Rocky would live. He said he didn't think so. I asked him what his chance of survival was and he thought maybe 10%. ...to be continued

Editor's Note:

This is part 1 of 2 taken from the book *Alpaca King's Rocky I*. Part 2 will appear in our Fall/Winter edition of the *Western Farm Ranch and Dairy Magazine*.

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sey headquarters, and traveling to Oregon to work on the crew for the 53rd National Heifer Sale, June 26.

Wilson is a rising senior at Oklahoma State University, majoring in animal science with an option in livestock merchandising. She lives and works at the school's dairy cattle center, is a student supervisor and has assisted with research trials to evaluate calf starters. She was a member of the OSU dairy judging team that placed ninth in the 2009 national intercollegiate contest, and also the Neosho FFA team that was national champion in 2006.

Since 2002, she has exhibited Jersey, Holstein and Guernsey cattle from her family's herd at state and national exhibitions, plus The All American Jersey Shows. In 2009, she worked with the Mordale Jerseys show string at World Dairy Expo and the Royal Winter Fair.

Kim was recently elected vice president of the Oklahoma State Dairy Sci-

ence Club, having served as secretary since 2008. She is also member of the student affiliate division of the American Dairy Science Association.

2010 Award Recipient Ivy Roberts

For her on-farm Stout Experience, Ivy M. Roberts will intern at the 700-cow Registered Jersey™ dairy owned by AJCA Director Bill Grammer and family near Sebring, Ohio.

Roberts will graduate in December 2010 from Berry College with a B.S. degree in animal science. She has a keen interest in genetics. Since 2006, she has worked with large animal and ET vets in different capacities, and also worked at Barham Jersey Farm in Tennessee and Waverly Farm in Virginia. From February 2009 through graduation, she was the student CEO of the Berry Farms Genetic Enterprise, helping create and execute its business plan. For the past three years she has been very involved in organizing the embryo flush program and marketing embryos at Berry.

Selected for the inaugural class of Jersey Youth Academy in 2009, Roberts

was also a member of Platinum and Silver award teams at the Southern Regional Dairy Challenge, and received a number of scholarships during her college years.

About the National Jersey Youth Program

The American Jersey Cattle Association, Reynoldsburg, Ohio, sponsors nine educational awards for Jersey youth. Scholarships are paid from permanent endowments administered by the association. Contributions to these funds are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) tax deductible charitable gifts and may be made at any time during the year.

Applications for 2010-2011 academic scholarships are posted online at USJersey.com and must be submitted no later than July 1. Deadline to apply for the 2011 Stout Experience Awards is February 1 of next year.

For more information, visit USJersey.com, or contact Dr. Cherie L. Bayer, Director of Development, at (614) 322-4456 or email cbayer@usjersey.com

AUGUST 20-29

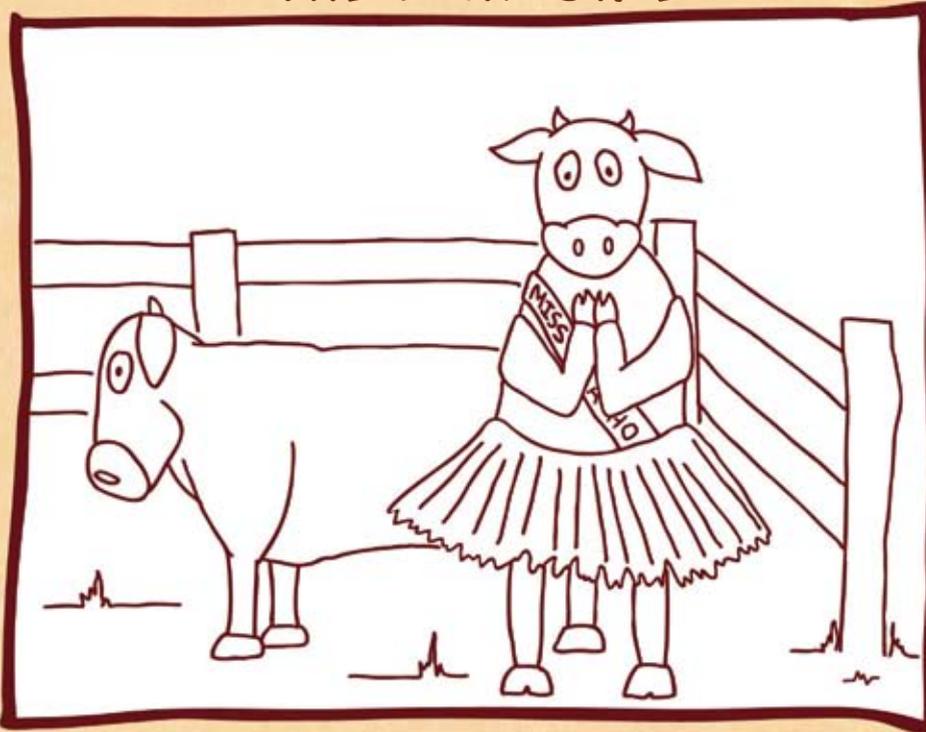
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Eagerly anticipating the results, Mabel was disqualified for an unspecified "udder stuffing" incident.



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