

# The Journal of RMLA



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# Youth Shine at the 2020 National Western Stock Show

By Julia Henrich - Adams County 4H Kids



This year alpacas were given the opportunity to show along with the llamas. You can see from the pictures the alpacas enjoy showing as much as the llamas. These amazing kids represent Adams County from sub-junior to senior youth and our youth program is continually growing. The Adams County 4Hers have a large interest showing these animals, however it has become difficult to find performance animals on a 4-H budget.

These kids have dedicated themselves and their time every Sunday for the past three years to working and training these animals. Some of these alpacas have never stepped into a show ring and yet, with continuous work have beat some of the best llamas in performance; even in the pack class. We had two alpacas win the performance buckle in the junior and intermediate divisions this year at Stock Show! It has been truly inspirational to see the bonds form between these kids and camelids.



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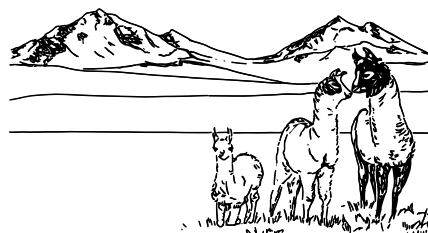
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## Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates and Specifications

Issue	Submission Deadline	Mailing Date
Spring	February 20	March 20
Summer	May 20	June 20
Fall	August 20	September 20
Winter	November 20	December 26

Ad Type	Width x Height	Member	Non-Member
Business Card	3.5" x 2"	\$15	\$18
1/4 Page Horiz.	7.5" x 2"	\$24	\$36
1/4 Page Vert.	3.5" x 4.5"	\$24	\$36
1/3 Page Horiz.	7.5" x 3"	\$35	\$48
1/3 Page Vert.	2.5" x 10"	\$35	\$48
Half Page	7.5" x 5"	\$48	\$72
Full Page	7.5" x 10"	\$78	\$117
Two Page Spread	15" x 10"	\$200	\$300

- **Classified Ads**—Member \$10 for up to 50 words  
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- Ad rates are quoted per issue. Lock in the current rate by purchasing the same ad for four consecutive issues and receive a 10% discount.
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## EDITORS' CORNER

Welcome to the Spring issue of The Journal! Ron & I are very excited to bring you this 36-page issue. The articles and photos just kept rolling in; we could hardly keep up with our mail. Thank you to everyone.

For this issue the trend seems to be fiber and youth. You will find 4 or 5 articles on each topic. Be sure to check out the new Youth Recognition Program (see page 19) developed by the Youth Committee. Participation in llama and alpaca related activities is the foundation of the new program. 2020 will be an exciting year.

Fiber articles have grown in number to include spinning instructions, making llama filled comforters, to complicated knitting patterns. The diversity of what we can do with our animals' fiber is enormous.

Also of note is the new packing event developed by Alexa Metric (see page 7). This event is for everyone regardless of age or the species of animals you use for packing.



We hope you enjoy reading The Spring Journal as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

Kathy and Ron



### Cover Photo:

From Julia Henrich - Adams County 4H Kids. Story and more photos on page 2.

# Letter from Your RMLA Board

Welcome to spring! Pastures are thawing and animals are becoming frisky. For the keepers of the critters, oh! the work that lies ahead. Fences, hay, crias, a bit of mud and lots of sunshine.

As you are puttering around the pastures, we on the Board ask that you consider giving some time to this organization. It is not too early to do this. Director elections will happen again this year in August. The membership will elect two Directors. Requirements? Easy!

The Bylaws require the Board meet at least quarterly to conduct association business. This Board usually meets about six times a year, plus the Annual Meeting. A Director's ongoing work is to be available to help each committee chair to which they liaison and include a report on those committees for each meeting agenda. Regular meetings are conducted by teleconference – no traveling required and no paid vacations! Business between meetings is efficiently conducted through e-mail discussions and voting. Please give running for the Board a thought and contact Lougene or any other Director with questions. Be a part of the forward movement of RMLA.

When you think about it, I have served a number of years on the Board and if it wasn't rewarding and lots of fun, I would have been doing something else!

Hopefully, you read the e-blast about the SPAM attack on our membership. Basically, some talented folks in Germany needed to have some fun with all of you. On RMLA.com they were able to get information about the Directors and membership. PLEASE remember this: RMLA will NEVER contact you by email to ask for donations without a general announcement being made on the website OR a personal phone call made directly to you. I received a number of phone calls and emails about this from the membership. The good thing about it: I sure enjoyed visiting with a few of you that I haven't chatted with in a while. Finally, Ron Hinds, our Web Master, does a fantastic job keeping our web site secure, but there is nothing that can be done to prevent these situations.

Be sure to read the Youth Committee article. Our Youth are amazing. Morgan has some great new ideas for the Youth Committee and we look forward to all these ideas come to fruition.

And look at the event list on the back cover. Notice the new, first time event, organized by Alexa Metric. We all sense the revival of packing. Alexa's event will support packing and this is just the beginning

Thanks to those members who have renewed their membership. If you haven't renewed yet, please do so. We all will work together to keep RMLA strong.

hw

Thank you, Lougene




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# Letters Saved Lamas from Ban at Alaskan Park

By Linda Hayes, Prescott Valley, AZ

When a call went out to llama owners that help was needed to keep llamas from being banned at a National Park, a quick response saved the day.

A park in Alaska was in the ruling stage on what pack animals could be used in the park.

Outfitter interests had erroneously lobbied that llamas and alpacas carried disease that would affect Dall sheep, caribou and mountain goats. Even though other Alaskan parks had agreed that llamas were no threat, Chugach National Forest had written them into their ruling.

Llama owners got wind of this and began a last-minute campaign to educate the park officials on the truth about Camelids. Llama organizations across the country sent out a call for help. The process of how to respond to the park officials was not easy. Since they were in the last stages of decision, certain tedious protocols had to be followed.

Even with this obstacle, 32 llama owners responded. Letters asking the officials to look at the scientific evidence proliferated. Although only 8 responses met the requirements for official consideration, the other 24 were sent on to members of the committee. These comments swayed the naysayers to vote against the new regulation which would have banned llamas.

RMLA board members Geri Rutledge & Linda Hayes were among those that responded. ILR Board member Ramona Simpson also took part. There were many well-known llama owners on board as well as others who felt the need to save the day. Scott Woodruff & Stan Ebel were also

involved in the first objection to llamas being in a Utah park. That was back in the early 90's. They have been instrumental in every fight since. Alexa Metrick is editor of Pack Animal Magazine and made her knowledge known. To each of them, we say "Thank You"



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**Sidebar:** The letter that was sent to responders included an interesting fact. Apparently those who wrote in favor of letting llamas and alpacas use the park, often used the one "l" llama to signify both llamas and alpacas. The officials did not know that "lama" is the term for the genus of guanacos, llamas and alpacas. They mentioned several times that the word "llama" was misspelled with one "l" being left off. Should an outfitter plan to use alpacas in the park, they can point out that they should be included as the original terminology included them.

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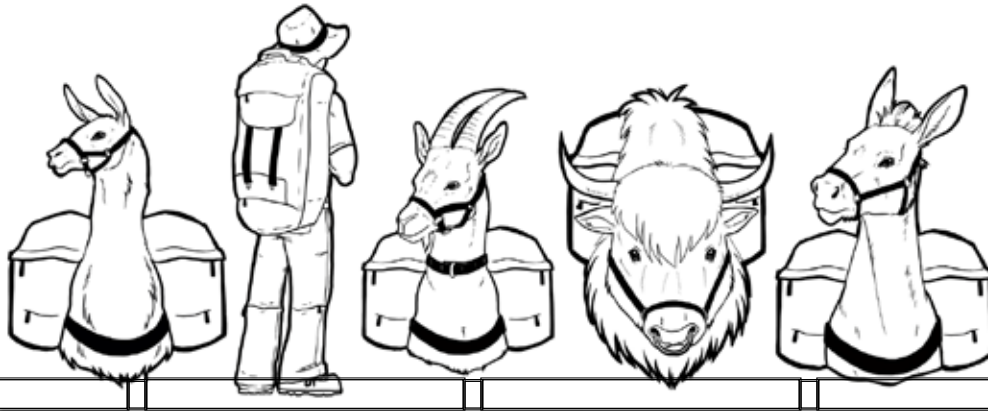
**Editors' Note:** Report from Constant Contact. The RMLA eblast was sent to 113 members with these results: 54% opened!!!! and 14% clicked through to the links. Thank you, Members!



# -PACK ANIMAL GATHERINGS-

LAMA, GOAT, BURRO, AND YAK PACKERS WELCOME!

BY ALEXA METRICK



## PACK ANIMAL

*Our mission is to build community between packers with the ultimate goals of defending access to our public lands and transferring knowledge to the next generation.*

Some of us have been packing with alternative pack animals (llamas, alpacas, goats, burros, and yaks) for many years, while others have only recently discovered the charms of these beasts of burden. Join us in Conifer, CO this July and/or in Cle Elum, WA this September to meet other packers, share wisdom and stories, and build community.

There will be four main topics of discussion: Public Land Advocacy, Animal Husbandry, Training

Techniques, and Outdoor Skills. Ideally, packers of the four main alternative pack animals (lama, goat, burro, or yak) will be represented.

Both of these events will be put on by the participants, which means that the events' effectiveness depends upon all of us pitching in and contributing our expertise. Think about where your strengths lie (as they relate to our topics) and let us know what you'd like to share. For example, Jim Roller in Conifer and Charley Rosenberry in Washington have both offered us the use of their ranches at no cost. Dan Corley is excited about sharing his extensive knowledge of backcountry first aid,

while Cathy Mitkovska has volunteered to talk about the logistics and benefits of pack animals for families who want to experience the outdoors. Devon Herndon is planning a Goats for Beginners talk, Woody Woodward of Yak Pack Outfitters is excited to share all he knows about yaks, and RMLA's board is supportive and engaged.

When you register (it's free!), let us know if you'd like to be listed as an expert in one (or more) of the four main topics (Public Land Advocacy, Animal Husbandry, Training Techniques, and Outdoor Skills) and which animal (llama, alpaca, goat, burro, or yak) you pack with. We would like to have an even num-

ber of experienced packers and newbies to facilitate a healthy exchange of information at these events. Also, if you plan to bring animals to the events, please let Alexa know.

Visit [packanimalmagazine.com/gatherings.php](http://packanimalmagazine.com/gatherings.php) to register.

P.S. Recent attempts to ban both pack llamas and pack goats in various National Forests have made it clear that we will have better success at keeping our public land access if we work together, and these two Gatherings are an attempt to bring everyone together to find common ground. Our success at defeating the pack llama ban in Alaska shows how effective we can be if we are organized.

# SELECTING A FIBER MILL

By Kathy Stanko,  
Chair, Fiber Committee

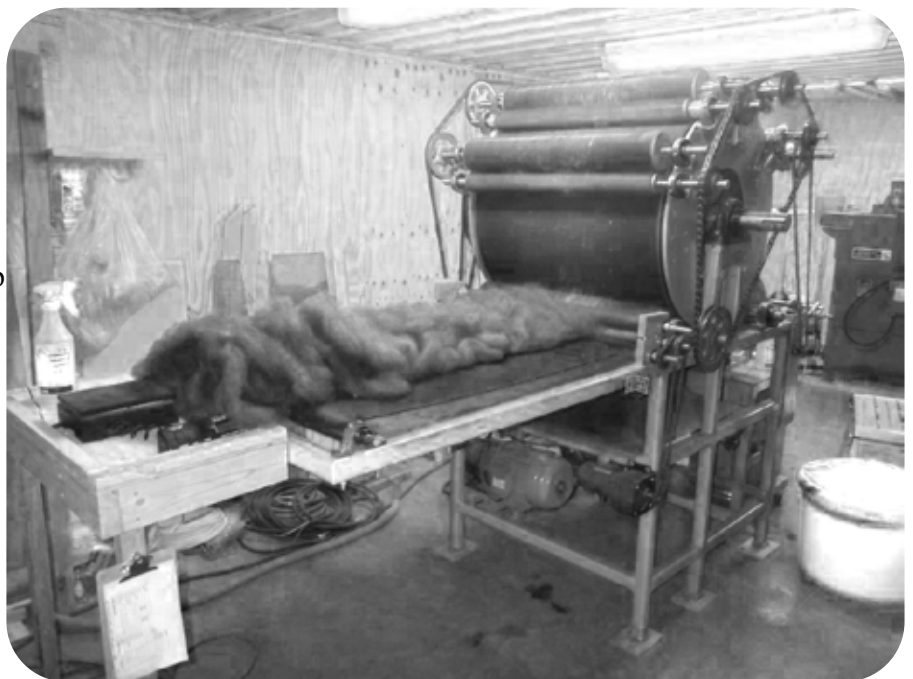
I am often asked which fiber mill I use. By luck, my fiber mill came to me one Friday morning as I was pulling guard hair from a recently shorn llama. Each month, a group of like-minded people get together for Spin Day. It is a drop in, informal affair where we gather to work on our projects, catch up on each other's lives, and enjoy a pot luck.

On this particular Friday, Jim from our local fiber mill approached me about making my life easier: he could dehair that fleece in an 'instant.' So, after thinking about it for a while and experiencing how long it takes to dehair a fleece by hand, I packed up the car with fiber and headed off to Jim's, about an hour's drive. And, now, 6 years later, I am still making the drive to the fiber mill.

To help us find a fiber mill to process our llama's and alpaca's wonderful product, I sent a request to RMLA members who are on my 'committee'. (This is what happens when you check 'fiber' as a topic of interest on your membership application!) The following are their collective thoughts for you to consider.

- Location: do I want to drive to the mill or ship the fiber off. It appears that there is a consensus among those who responded that it is less expensive and way more fun to take the fiber to the mill.
- Cost. This can be complicated and difficult to determine from mill to mill. Just check out the websites and do your best to compare. But my experience is that even though each mill 'packages' their services in a unique way, they are pretty comparable when all is said and done.
- If you have fiber people in your area, look at their final product to see if you approve. Attend a local fiber fair and talk to the various vendors.
- Does the mill process llama and alpaca? Some mills do not or they insist that it has to be blended with a percentage of sheep wool. How much experience do they have with llama and alpaca fiber? How do they feel about blends and getting creative? Do they have dehairing equipment?
- Will they take small batches? Some mills do not as they focus on the sheep producers with large quantities of wool. Will your little bags of llama or alpaca get lost in the volumes of sheep wool?
- What is the approximately turnaround time for my product? Five to 6 months is a reasonable expectation.
- Is the mill taking new customers? Some are not; or they may be on hold for a few months until they get caught up.
- Are the people friendly and helpful? If not, they may not want your business. This was the case when a friend of mine made inquiries at a new mill she was thinking about using and was met with rude and curt responses to her questions.
- What assurances do I have that the fiber I send in is the product I get back? This is where the mill's reputation is important and you can also ask questions about how they keep your order separate from everyone else.

Now you have a great deal to think about. Don't be shy about asking questions; after all it is your product. Find a mill that you enjoy working with. And don't be reluctant to change 'go some place else' if you are not 100% satisfied. Use the web to find the fiber mills operating in your part of the world; then call or go visit. Have fun with your search.





1980

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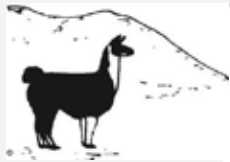
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## SMILE.AMAZON.COM Feeds Rescue Llamas

by Linda Hayes

A while back I received an email from **SMILE.AMAZON.COM**. The email said that about \$64.00 had been donated to Southwest Llama Rescue (SWLR). **SMILE.AMAZON.COM** is a way that lets you order from Amazon but 0.5% of what you spend is donated to the charity of your choice. In the scale of Amazon sales, \$64.00 isn't much but to a rescued llama that needs to eat, it is a life saver. That \$64.00 can feed that one llama for a couple of months. To SWLR the donation is a big help.

But wait, that amount was only for the last quarter. In the whole last year SWLR received a total of \$256.29. Now that's a "whopper" of an amount to an all-volunteer organization like SWLR. The money came from people who logged onto **SMILE.AMAZON.COM**, [HTTP://SMILE.AMAZON.COM](http://SMILE.AMAZON.COM), when they wanted to buy something on line. That site will transfer you to the regular Amazon shopping network. Before it does, it asks you what charity you want your purchases to benefit. After that you are just a click away from shopping. Once signed up, you are automatically enrolled. You won't have to do it again but you do have to go to the correct Amazon site.

Let's try to double the donation in 2020. Just type in **SMILE.AMAZON.COM** instead of Amazon whenever you want to make a purchase. If you forget and go straight to Amazon your purchases won't count for a donation. **SMILE.AMAZON.COM** is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. You can support Southwest Llama Rescue by starting your shopping there.



# Will You Join Us?

Saturday, July 25th, 2020 is the date. Fairplay, Colorado is the place. The 38th Annual Fairplay Llama and Alpaca Event is not to be missed.

Three years ago, the name of the event was expanded to the Fairplay Llama & Alpaca Event. The name change was made to demonstrate that both alpacas and llamas can participate in events during this wonderful day. The Event, in fact, is a llama pack race, a public walking event for llamas and alpacas, the Lama Rama, and the Llama Lunacy. An entire day of fun that the public is just 'eating up'. In fact, the Event has become a destination for weddings (last year) and birthdays (this upcoming year). People want to include llamas and alpacas in their celebrations! This is a multi-level educational event for all.

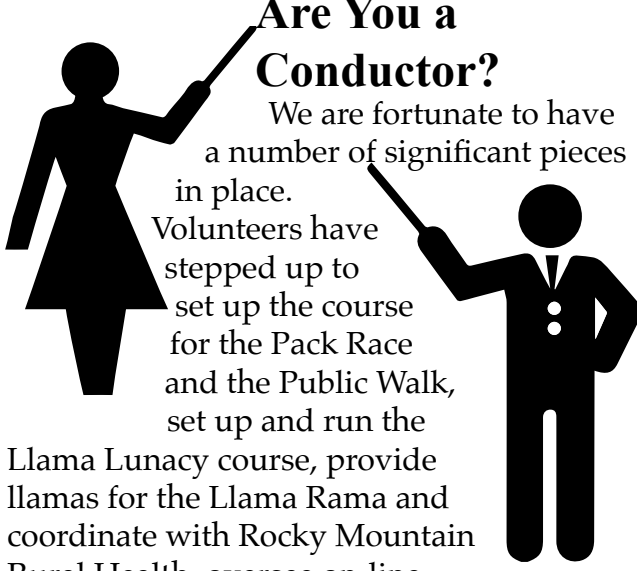
Two additional changes were implemented last year. Both changes ensure the safety of the animals and their handlers: 1. Participants in the pack race must bring their own race-ready llama or alpaca; 2. RMLA Members bringing animals for the Public Walk can join the walk at no charge to ensure the safety of their llama or alpaca. By participating in the Public Walk, there is a huge untapped potential for you and your ranch.

And the change this year, you ask? If you pre-register your plans to bring animals for the Public Walk, RMLA will have \$50 waiting for you at the registration table. That is \$50 for each alpaca and llama. But you must pre-register with Kathy Stanko at [turkeytrots2@gmail.com](mailto:turkeytrots2@gmail.com). This offer is open to RMLA members and non-members.

## Are You a Conductor?

We are fortunate to have a number of significant pieces in place. Volunteers have stepped up to set up the course for the Pack Race and the Public Walk, set up and run the Llama Lunacy course, provide llamas for the Llama Rama and coordinate with Rocky Mountain Rural Health, oversee on-line registrations, provide publicity including eblasts and advertisements.

What is needed now you ask: An RMLA member to coordinate the overall event. To assist you: a 'how to' guide is being created; your out-of-pocket expense receipts will be reimbursed up to \$1,000; and a Board of Director who has hands-on experience running this entire event will be available as needed.





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## PACK ANIMAL



*Pack Animal Magazine* is about the hiker's companion: the llamas, goats, and other pack animals that willingly haul our gear into the great outdoors. A quarterly print magazine full of color photographs, *Pack Animal* is for anyone who loves our wild spaces and our public lands.



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# Ask The CSU VET Team: *Caring for the Neonatal Camelid*

By Ann DiPastina, DVM – CSU Livestock Intern

The answers to the Ask The CSU Vet questions for this issue are contributed by the 4th year veterinary students in the Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital Livestock Medicine and Surgery Service.

For a first-time alpaca owner or a seasoned professional, managing newborn crias can be challenging. It is important to recognize normal behavior and to detect when something is amiss early. The purpose of this article is to answer common questions pertaining to raising crias from birth until weaning.

## My llama just gave birth—what do I do?

The dam is a valuable source of protection for the cria, and allowing her time to bond with her cria is vital. Unlike goats, sheep and cows, llamas and alpacas do not typically lick their crias after they are born. Instead, llama and alpaca dams will nudge the cria to help stimulate activity and free fetal membranes from the nose and mouth so that the cria can breathe. This also encourages the cria to lie sternally, then stand, and finally nurse. The cria should be standing within the first 30-60 minutes after it is born. In the first 2 hours of life they should be actively nursing the dam. The dam and cria rely on nuzzling and soft vocalizations to bond. It is important to minimize disturbing the dam and cria following birth to allow them to bond well. While allowing time for bonding is critical, there are multiple steps you should take to evaluate the cria and protect them from infection, hypothermia, and starvation:

- **Clip & Dip:** The umbilicus will usually tear on its own to about 2-3 inches from the abdomen but will occasionally need to be clipped if it drags on the ground. To prevent infection, disinfect the umbilicus by dipping it in an antiseptic such as diluted povidone iodine (0.5%, 5 ml in 1 liter of water) or chlorhexidine solution (0.5%) two to three times within the first 24hrs of life. This can either be sprayed on the umbilicus or it can be placed in a cup and held tightly to the belly over the umbilicus and shaken.
- **Strip & Sip:** The dam's teats and udder should be inspected for evidence of infection or damage to the teats. Evaluate the ends of the teats and strip a couple of squirts of colostrum out to remove the keratin plug that can obstruct the teat end. The first milk, called colostrum, is essential to provide passive immunity for the cria. The ability to easily strip colostrum from the teat is an indication that the dam has sufficient colostrum and the cria should be able to nurse easily. Crias should actively start nursing within the first 2 hours after birth.
- **Keep the Cria Warm:** It is important for newborns to regulate their core body temperature. Failure to be able to regulate normal body temperature is a sign of a maladapted cria and puts it in a high-risk category for other neonatal problems such as septicemia and respiratory disease. Normal rectal temperatures range from 99.8-102°F in newborn crias. Straw bedding is an excellent insulator and should be used generously with heat lamps, hot water bottles, and jackets to help them stay warm if they become hypothermic. During times of cold weather, a good rule of thumb is to have a 6-inch bedding pack to insulate the cria from the cold ground. Any colostrum or milk supplement should be warmed to body temperature or slightly warmer in a hot water bath prior to feeding.
- **Weigh:** It is helpful to obtain an initial birth weight and continue to monitor body weight at least 3 times a week for the first two weeks. Expected birth and growth rates are listed in Table 1. Decrease the frequency of weighing to once weekly thereafter until weaning. Stalled or inadequate growth may be an indicator of underlying disease or insufficient milk from the dam.

**Table I: Expected birth weights and growth rates for healthy crias**

	Minimum Birth Weight	Mean Birth Weight	Mean Growth Rate
<b>Alpacas</b>	8.3 lb (3.8 kg)	15.4 lb (7 kg)	0.5 – 1 lb/dy
<b>Llamas</b>	15.4 lb (7 kg)	19.8 lb (9 kg)	(0.25-0.5 kg/dy)

*continued on next page*

- **Check for birth defects:** Congenital (present at the time of birth) defects provide a significant challenge to the cria and can be incompatible with life. Causes of birth defects include toxic plant ingestion, in utero infections, developmental errors, and genetically inherited abnormalities. Work with your veterinarian to determine the most appropriate treatment and to search for an underlying cause if indicated. Crias diagnosed as having suspected congenital defects should not be bred due to the possibility for hereditary transmission. Common congenital abnormalities that can be identified soon after the cria is born and how to evaluate them are listed in Table 2.

<b>Table 2: Common congenital abnormalities of crias and how to evaluate them.</b>	
<b>Congenital Abnormality</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Cleft Palate	Visual and digital oral exam. Place finger in the mouth of the cria and feel for an intact hard palate on the roof of the mouth. (See Figure 1)
Microphthalmia	This is a smaller than normal eye. Look at the eyes for normal size and symmetry.
Umbilical Hernia	Palpate the abdominal wall at the location of the umbilicus for the presence of a circular opening or ring, or swelling that can be pushed back into the abdomen. It is relatively common to feel a small 1 cm or less sized hernia and these will often close on their own. Larger hernias should be evaluated by your veterinarian.
Angular Limb Deformity	Evaluate the limbs of the cria to see if they are straight or nearly straight when it is standing. The most common abnormality is angulation at the carpus (front leg knee) where limb distal to the carpus is deviated outward (carpus valgus). (See Figure 2)
Contracted Tendons	Evaluate the limbs to make sure that they can be fully straightened. Crias with contracted tendons often have difficulty standing or may knuckle at the carpus or fetlock.
Atresia Ani	Evaluate under the tail to make sure that the anus is present. This is easily done when you take the cria's temperature.
Choanal Atresia	Choanal atresia is the lack of development of the airway opening from the back of the throat to the nasal passages. Evaluate if the cria breathes normally and you can feel airflow from both nostrils. Crias with choanal atresia often breathe with their mouth open and if the mouth is closed, you will see the cheeks puff out due to the obstruction of the nasal passages. (See Figure 3)

**Figure 1:** Cleft palate in a Holstein calf. Crias with cleft palates are at risk of aspiration pneumonia. Note that the hard palate does not continue to the back of the mouth. A cleft palate carries a poor prognosis for life. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Kelly Still-Brooks).



**Figure 2:** Carpus valgus in a young cria



**Figure 3.** This newborn cria with choanal atresia is open mouth breathing. Airflow cannot be felt at either nostril.

*continued on next page*

- Identify Premature and Dysmature Crias: Premature crias are born prior to the full gestation of 330 to 365 days. Dysmature crias are born at full gestation but they are not fully developed. Both can be recognized by any combination of:
  - o Lack of eruption of incisors
  - o Floppy ears that do not have full cartilage development
  - o Soft silky hair coat
  - o Softer than normal toes.
  - o Tendon laxity

Recognizing premature and dysmature crias early is vital as they are at greater risk of developing problems including respiratory failure, septicemia, hypo or hyperglycemia, and hypothermia. Treatment and supportive care within the first 24hrs of life is critical to improve survival.

### How much colostrum should crias consume and when?

The camelid placenta does not allow transfer of maternal immunoglobulins (antibodies) to the fetus. Colostrum is the milk produced prior to parturition and is rich in immunoglobulins that can be absorbed by the newborn cria to provide early immunity to prevent disease. This process is called passive transfer and occurs within the first 12hrs after the cria is born. Crias should ingest at least 5% of their body weight in quality colostrum within the first 6 hours of life. A cria that is actively nursing on its own within 2 hours of birth will consume sufficient colostrum. However, crias that are not nursing well by 2 hours will benefit from directed feeding of colostrum. For these animals, it is best to milk the dam by hand and feed colostrum by bottle or tube. When bottle or tube feeding colostrum, it is best to give the full 5% of the crias body weight prior to 6 hours. If you know the weight of the cria, multiply that by 0.05 to get the amount of colostrum needed in pounds and multiply that by 16 to find out how many ounces need to be fed. This volume can be fed in one or two feedings. Consumption of adequate amounts of quality colostrum in the first 6 hours of life greatly decreases the risk of infection and fatality due to neonatal septicemia.

### Cria Milk Supplementation

There are several milk supplements available. It is best whenever possible to use a supplement that most closely mimics the nutritional constituents of the milk from the species being supplemented. Below is a table of milk constituents for different species.

**Table 3a:** Average % fat, sugar, and protein of milk by species, cow whole milk and Greek yogurt. It is preferred to utilize a yogurt that has nutrient values similar to what is listed below. The last column is the calculated % fat, sugar, and protein for the following milk supplement mixture shown in Table 3b.

Species	Alpaca	Llama	Cow	Goat	Sheep	Whole Milk	Plain Greek Yogurt	% for Formula in Table 3b
Fat, %	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.5	7.4	3.3	5	3.6
Protein, %	6.3	3.8	3.4	2.9	5.5	3.3	9.4	4.3
Sugar, %	4.8	6.2	4.8	4.1	4.8	4.9	2.3	4.5

*continued on next page*

<b>Table 3b Alpaca and Llama Milk Replacer Formula</b>			
	<b>1 PINT (16 oz)</b>	<b>1 QUART (32 oz)</b>	<b>1 GALLON (128 oz)</b>
<b>Whole Cow's Milk</b>	1 Pint	1 Quart	1 Gallon
<b>Rugular Yogurt</b>	1 TBS	12 TBS, 3/4 Cup	3 Cup

When supplementing crias that are nursing a dam with insufficient milk, start by supplementing with up to 5% of the cria's body weight (BW) in milk replacer per day and divide this into at least 4 to 6 feedings. If the cria is not gaining weight, then you can increase the amount of milk up to 10% BW over a 5 to 10-day period.

When supplementing orphaned crias, start by supplementing with 10% of the crias's BW (maintenance) of milk replacer per day. This should then be increased to 15% BW for growth over a period of 5 to 10 days. For crias less than 2 weeks of age, divide the total amount of milk into 6 to 12 feedings per day. This feeding frequency can be gradually decreased to 4 to 6 feedings per day for animals greater than 2 weeks of age.

Feeding high volumes, cold milk, milk replacer with too high or too low nutrient or electrolyte content, or milk that is cold can decrease gastric emptying and increase the risk of clostridial enteritis.

**When and how should crias be weaned?**

Transitioning crias to a creep feed is helpful for the development of the camelid digestive tract. Camelids, like ruminants, rely on fermentation in their foregut for digestion of fibrous feedstuffs. Starting at 3-4 weeks, crias should be offered a pelleted creep feed approximately 16% crude protein and additional alfalfa. Crias are typically weaned at 4-6 months of age.

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# Northern Comfort(er)

by Susi Huelsmeyer-Sinay -  
Yellowstone Llamas

Another Montana winter storm is upon us. My llamas are snuggled in the barn as the snow whirls around the buildings and temperatures drop. All but two, that is. Diego and Cuzco often choose to sleep outside and seem to be warm enough in their own winter coats which double as comforters for the night. The evolution-tested structure of their fiber holds their body heat and provides superior cold weather insulation.

For a long time throughout history, humans, who for some reason evolved into naked beings, used other animals' hides and fur to warm ourselves (after killing and eating those animals first). They made dwellings out of hides and piled furs onto their beds to keep warm at night. Later, they made blankets from sheep wool to place on their beds, and, in other parts of the world llama and alpaca fleece was shorn and woven into warm garments and covers. Cotton was discovered and harvested at a high humanitarian price, but then, it doesn't really keep you warm at all. Then came the idea of down comforters and sleeping bags at the expense of millions of birds, followed by the alternative of mostly oil-based fabrics at a high cost, as we are now finding out, to the environment. Which really brings us full circle back to natural fibers which have been tested through the last few millennia and seem to be working great.

While I think about the two boys who opt to camp outside on a cold winter night, I am, in fact,

cozily embraced by warm llama fleece myself. Yes, indeed! I just received my long-awaited llama fleece comforter. The cozy feeling of warm, snuggly pleasure is made even better by the satisfaction that I finally did something with my stored fleece that was not suitable for other applications. In addition, I feel relief that the

product that keeps me cozy on a winter night did not cause any agony to helpless geese or add to the extraction and use of oil.

Diana Lasa Blair of Going-To-The-Sun Fiber Mill in Columbia Falls in Northern Montana has developed a technique to fill and interlock llama and alpaca fleece inside a cotton coverlet and then stitch it in place so it does not shift. She offers a few different designs for the quilting but is keeping the details as her trade secret. She offers summer as well as all-season quilts.

Upon my request to make me a llama fleece comforter for the winter, Diana needed about 6 pounds of raw fleece for a queen size. So I compiled small batches of a few different animals, pulled out debris and felted pieces and sent them off to Diana to apply her magic.

Since I ordered it in the summer, I didn't mind that it took quite a while to receive it. It arrived shortly after Christmas. In the end, the final cost for this piece of pure luxury added up to roughly



*continued on the bottom of page 21*



# Please Translate that into English

By Nancy Wilson – Camp Verde, AZ

I recently joined an online spinning instruction group, and one of our topics has been learning about our wheel's spinning ratios. To do this, I used the same fiber and controlled as much as possible for treading speed and length of draft. While doing this, I made a simple ply-back sample using each of my wheel's ratios on each flyer.

You may be saying, "Please translate that into English." What that means is that I sat at my spinning wheel



**Orifice** **Flyer**

**Drive Wheel**

and treadled using the same speed and fiber while changing what groove my drive band was on, spinning a couple

of yards, and folding the yarn in half to let it twist back on itself to create a two-ply yarn. Ratios are to a spinning wheel like gears are to a ten-speed bike. On a spinning wheel, the ratio is the number of times the flyer goes around for every single rotation of the drive wheel. Some common ratios are 6:1 or 15:1. In a 6:1 ratio, the drive wheel goes around once and the flyer goes around 6 times. This will give you in the 15:1 ratio, you get fifteen twists per inch, or a much higher twist yarn.

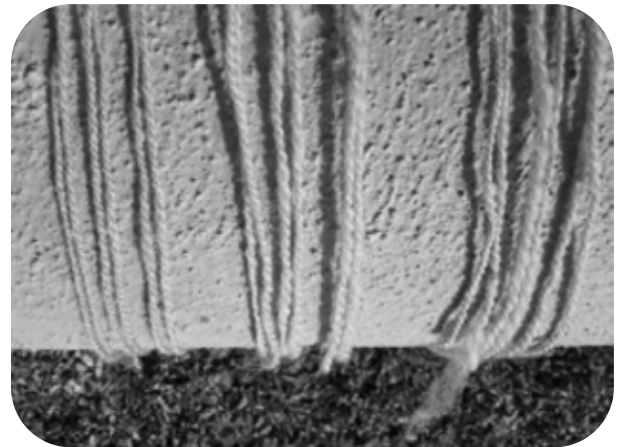
What does this mean for the spinner? If you want to spin a bulky yarn, you'll want to use a lower ratio in the 6:1 range and work close to the orifice. A lower ratio is also good for long staple length fibers such as Icelandic wool. To get more twist per treadle (or more twist for your effort) a higher ratio, such as 15:1, will give you the result more efficiently. Sure, you could use the 6:1

ratio for a higher twist yarn, but you'll need to treadle either faster and/or more for each length of yarn.

By using the same fiber for each sample, I was able to see how the different ratios affect the resulting yarn. Some yarns were more difficult to spin such as a low twist yarn using a low ratio. Conversely, I found that a really high twist on that fiber makes a wiry yarn.

This exercise will allow you to make a conscious choice about what ratio you use for any given yarn. Say you're spinning a fine yarn for a lace shawl. You'll want to use a higher ratio to spin that yarn. For a nice warm lofty yarn for a bulky sweater, you'll want to use a lower ratio. You may think that you can use the same ratio for all your spinning and just change your treadling speed. That works for a while, but you'll find yourself going back to your default treadling speed. Let the ratios do the work for you.

Happy spinning!



Left group ratios 17:1 15:1 12:1

Middle group ratios 10:1 8:1 6:1

Right group ratios 9:1 7:1 5:1

And now a segue to something exciting that you will be hearing more about in the future. The Arizona Fiber Arts Retreat (AFAR) is held the third weekend in January at the Prescott Resort in Prescott Arizona. The dates for the 2021 retreat are January 20-23, 2021. The retreat's mission is to bring together like minded people to become friends, share with each other, learn from each other, and inspire each other. The 2021 will have a major focus on using and working with camelid fiber! More to come.



# 2019 Youth Awards Program

Congratulations to all the Youth who participated in the 2019 program. We hope you enjoy your fancy RMLA mugs for a long time.



**Malachi(L) &  
Christian(R) Abel**



**Alex Leland**



**Kira Leland**



**Logan Sillman**



**Emily Muhlhauser**



**Morgan Barba**

# 2020 Youth Recognition Program

By Morgan Barba, Chair, RMLA Youth & 4H Committee

In my last article, I wrote about the exciting changes that were coming to the RMLA Youth Program. As we look forward to 2020, you should all have received your personalized tumbler as a gift from RMLA and the out-going chair of the Youth Committee, Marshal Rutledge, congratulating you on your 2019 accomplishments.

The Youth Committee, in concert with the RMLA Board, is excited to announce we have completed the work on the point-based incentive program and are ready to go! As we wrote about in the previous article, the focus of the Youth Recognition Program is to encourage involvement and participation from our youth members. Members will receive points based on their participation in three areas of emphasis: participation in RMLA events, community outreach, and education. All youth members will have the opportunity to earn each of the incentive awards based on their involvement in the following categories, and youth will be rewarded for earning multiple points in each of the three categories.

- Participation in RMLA sanctioned events. Examples include showing at the National Western Stock Show or volunteering to assist with activities such as Fairplay. RMLA events are a marketing tool and should portray alpacas/llamas positively and professionally. Again, members will be rewarded for showing or volunteering at such events.

- Community outreach. Community outreach refers to efforts that connect RMLA's ideas or practices to the public. Community outreach takes on an educational component that engages the community. Community outreach is key to the RMLA mission. Some acceptable examples of

community outreach include hosting events, training, and participating in local events. Festivals and community events are great places to interact with the community. It also raises awareness, provides a face for our organization, and allows you to share takeaway content to help people you meet remember you and visit the RMLA website to learn more.

- Education. Education improves one's knowledge, skills and develops the personality and attitude in ourselves and others. Examples of educational activities include attending seminars or workshops sponsored by RMLA or other organizations on the care or showing of llamas and alpacas. Other examples are writing an informational or educational article for the RMLA Journal or submitting a photograph with captions to be published on the RMLA website or in the RMLA Journal.

The Youth Committee will be using SurveyMonkey to keep track of youth member participation. Once you have participated in a qualifying event or completed a qualifying activity, **go the RMLA.com**, click on the **Youth Tab**, then select **Youth Recognition** and tell us what you did. Youth members will need to complete an individual survey for each of the activities they participated in. The reporting period will run from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. Incentive awards may include but not limited to, clothing items, show supplies, promotional items, and educational books or materials. All prizes will be mailed to all qualifying youth participants by February 28, 2021.

In closing, we need youth members to get involved and promote this enjoyable hobby. Let's get out there and grow our membership, our knowledge, and the future of RMLA!

**To Join or Renew your membership go to RMLA.com and click on JOIN OR RENEW**  
**To report changes to your address, etc. send email to [membership@rmla.com](mailto:membership@rmla.com)**

\$40 Annual Membership  
\$25 Youth membership and  
Youth Recognition Program  
Life memberships also available



# Performance Classes:

## Are You Your Own Worst Enemy?

by Linda Hayes, retired AOBA, ALSA & ILR-SD judge

In my many years of judging I was always surprised at the number of exhibitors that never asked to see their score cards. The few that did were always the ones who really didn't need to see them. They were already doing a good job.

Most judges are quite diligent in writing down why they gave the score they did. Out of necessity they use their own personal short hand but after a few tries, most people can figure out what the "chicken scratches" mean. And of course you can always ask the judge.

I understand that many exhibitors are shy and for some reason kids think that a judge is someone to be avoided. This is not the case. Judges expect to be questioned about the scores they give and welcome the chance to help you do better the next time out. Judges usually won't say anything if they aren't asked. As a judge, it is a wonderful feeling to see an exhibitor use what they learned from a score card or your comments in conquering the next class. Don't be afraid to ask.

Over the years I have seen beginners become accomplished showmen by incorporating the tips they receive by looking at their score cards. Unfortunately, so many times I would have to write STL (short tight lead) on cards that were never looked at. How many point deductions could have been avoided if just that one thing would have been learned from looking at a card. In shows where cards are available before the end of the day, try and peek at yours before the next class. You will probably raise your score considerably.

Another way that exhibitors hurt themselves is in the walk through. It is perfectly all right to ask a judge for clarification. You need to know what they are looking for before you can get the best



scores. If you aren't sure which way to go in the weave - ask. If the change of pace is confusing to you - ask. You have that right.

Watching your fellow competitors is also helpful. Figure out what the good ones are doing right and zoom in on the mistakes of the beginners. It will make you a better showman.

So...at the next show, seek out the score cards & if you get a chance after the show, ask the judge how you can improve. You will be glad you did.



# New Website Needed!

By Linda Hayes and Ron Hinds, Board Members

RMLA.com needs to get tech-savvy. We need a person or persons that can help us move our website to a new form. The website needs a new technological 'system' to enable individual RMLA leaders to create, read, approve and publish additions to the website without using a central 'webmaster'. The website may look good but behind the screen it incorporates very ancient methods to provide what you see.

The need for this major change was brought to our attention by the current web-manager, Ron Hinds. Ron knows the site's growth can't continue in its present condition.

The website itself needs the help of technologically experienced persons to redo it. It would be ideal to create a team of both RMLA members and outside technological help to begin this transformation. Ron would love to be part of the team but doesn't necessarily want to be the leader. The leader needs to have experience with websites and be knowledgeable of content management systems (CMS). We need several people to step up to the plate to determine the best direction to take the website into the future.

There are many programs that could be used. The most popular appears to be 'WordPress'. WordPress and similar systems comprise a CMS which is very capable of providing what is needed for RMLA, members and visitors. If you or someone you know is comfortable using such systems and can help in the effort, The RMLA Board would like to hear from you. We need your expertise.

The Board would like multiple RMLA members to volunteer to provide input as needed, however, this will not be a total volunteer project. We understand that we will probably need to hire someone to do the initial work.

If you are a young person that needs to build your resume this will be a chance to put your knowledge to work and get the credit needed for future employment. If you are already working with computer programs this is a chance to earn a little extra money or to donate time for the benefit of the lama world.

RMLA is an all-volunteer organization and it will not succeed in the future if our younger generation doesn't come forward and help keep it going. We need you. Please consider helping us. Please contact Ron or Linda at '[newwebsite@rmla.com](mailto:newwebsite@rmla.com)' to help us with your expertise.



*Northern Comfort(er) continued...*

\$440 including sorting, skirting, washing, picking, blending and roving the fleece plus, of course, the stitching (I chose the "tree design") and shipping on both ends (expensive!).

I am happy with it. And even though it is thinner than I expected, my guilt free, environmentally sensitive comforter feels cozy as it folds around my grateful body. And while Picasso's, Domingo's, DotCom's, Kokopelli's and Ishi's exquisite skeins of soft knitting yarn await my attention sometime in the next few years when I will finally turn their coats into one of mine, I sleep away winter nights right now wrapped softly by Lupe, Teddy, Chico and Candido. I can't imagine anything better.

*Editors' Note: In the past, down has been harvested from live geese. Now, however, a few major companies such as Patagonia, North Face and Lands End are using ethically harvested down.*



down noun (3)

Definition of down (Entry 7 of 9)

1: a covering of soft fluffy feathers

also : these feathers

goose down pillows

2: something soft and fluffy like down



# Knitting Memories

By Lougene Baird

The 47 skeins of 500g Jaeger pure wool Aran knitting yarn, shade 304 the label reads, was purchased in a little village in England close to Ireland in about 1980. Along with the yarn, a detailed pattern rested on my closet shelf for a few months after returning to the States. One cool fall day, it was time to commit to the start of what would be over a year of total focus on the project as well as questioning my sanity as to why I started it in the first place.

As most fiber folks know, the European way of yarning is different than that in the US. The yarn itself is smaller than US yarn— as they say there, 'the denier is a bit more delicate'. I call it thinner. The thinner yarn knits up smaller. For example, using a #7 knitting needle and the same number of stitches, a row of European yarn is shorter than a row of US yarn and you end up with a smaller garment. Using a trial of a few knitted squares and a few glasses of wine, I was able to convert the yarn and the number of stitches to my US #7 needles!

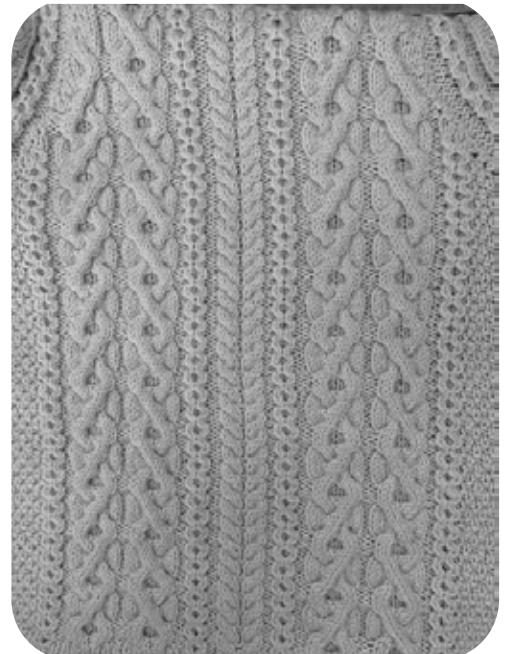
Take a look at the pattern. The largest pattern repeat set consists of 36 rows. Within that pattern are: one pattern repeat of 4 stitches repeated 9 times, and pattern of chevrons and circles which has a pattern repeat of 12 stitches repeated 3 times — this is all happening within the largest pattern repeat of 36 rows.

In the beginning, the pattern required 100% focus but after several 36-row sets were completed, I was able to read the pattern as I knitted. The inside is as interesting to look at as the outside. Converting it to the desired size, it could be used to make a large, but heavy, afghan.

The story behind the Fisherman Sweater, as I have been told several times, is that back in the day in the fishing villages along the coast of Ireland every family had developed their own overall pattern. The father, son, uncles and cousins within the family all wore the warm sweaters, knitted with the family

pattern as they set out to sea to fish. If they didn't come home after a storm, the families could identify the survivors by the pattern of the sweater they were wearing.

Parting with this sweater would be hard to do. Each time I wear it, whether it be a rainy Colorado day, a snowy mountain top in Hawai'i or a cool Arizona morning walk, my Fisherman Sweater brings back the enjoyment of the yarn store, the stories told, the tie to customs and the time I spent knitting it.



# City Kids Love Their Camelids

By Claire and Brooke Rowan

My sister and I are lucky. Every Sunday we get to go out to Henrich Farms and work with alpacas and llamas. We live in the city of Denver, not on a farm, so we are “city kids” by anyone’s definition. My name is Claire and I am 12 years old but will be 13 in a few weeks.

What I love most about working with these animals is the bond that forms between animal and handler. It seems that Zeus and I have the same personality and he helps me to slow down and take my time during performance. I tend to rush through a lot of things and Zeus senses that nervous energy. That “worry is what makes one hurry” is what my kindergarten teacher used to say. I don’t want Zeus to worry, so I have learned different ways to calm my brain and slow my body down.

When Zeus and I are in sync he follows me like a puppy! The more we practice the easier this has become. I absolutely love seeing not only my animal but also my 4-H friends as we practice together most weeks. It is the absolute best way to finish out the weekend and clear my mind before heading back to school.

My name is Brooke Rowan and I am 11 years old. What I love most about showing alpacas is their personalities. I show two different alpacas, one for performance and one for showmanship. They have very different personalities just like people.

When we were at National Western Stock Show I remember Chagall, (my showmanship alpaca), hiding behind me when people tried to pet him. It was like he was saying “protect me friend!” He has had some health issues and we take care of his feet and skin every time we practice. At first he protests, but eventually he settles down and I think he knows how much I love him.

My performance alpaca is Titan. He is fast, just like me on the soccer field, so we make a great pair. He is also a good sport when it comes to dressing him up for shows. I love coming up with creative costumes.

We have found a great group of friends and mentors through showing alpacas. None of this



would be possible without the generosity of the Henrich’s and ADCO 4-H. Our hope is to continue to show and encourage others to show these amazing animals. We are having so much fun!

**A Mother’s perspective:** Our family feels immense gratitude to the Henrich and Barba families for their willingness to train our group of “Urban Farmers.” It was easy for my daughters to write up something about what showing means to them. As a parent and a 4-H leader myself, it makes me happy to see how my daughters conceptualize the experience on a much deeper level than just winning ribbons or buckles. Don’t



get me wrong, they are definitely out to do well, but it is clearly not the only reason they love to show. We couldn’t be more pleased with all they are learning and the relationships they have made through this endeavor. Thanks to everyone involved. Jenny



# Why Does My Llama or Alpaca Lay Down Instead of Walking on the Lead?

By Marty McGee Bennett  
Cameldynamics.com

When done appropriately I think that teaching young llamas and alpacas to lead is one of the easiest and most fun aspects of camelid training and handling. Unlike giving injections, oral worming or trimming toenails taking your animal out for a walk can be enjoyable for your animal as well as for you. The techniques described below can be used to re-train older animals or ones that have not been handled.

If I am having trouble with a skill that other people think it is easy I remind myself, "Anything thing is easy if you know how to do it!"

Teaching a llama or an alpaca to walk nicely on a lead IS easy provided that you have an understanding of how to avoid the pitfalls AND that you have a proper set up. This article focuses on one very common problem and that is the llama or alpaca that lies down when you are training him to lead. The most important thing to understand and believe is that if your camelid lies down in the middle of a lead training lesson, YOU have made a mistake. You are the teacher: it is your responsibility to convey what you want in a way that works. If the animal doesn't understand, it is not his fault. When I am training I make mistakes. Mistakes are the way that I learn what TO DO.

It is no good to just try random ideas and hope one works, i.e. the "throw all the spaghetti at the wall and hope some of it sticks" approach. I evaluate each step of the process as I go and make an educated choice about what will work in any given situation. Animals are not all cookie cutter versions of each other. There is no way to work with an animal and not make a miscalculation now and again. Making a mistake is not the problem, repeating the same mistake over and over IS the problem. Repeating the same mistake TEACHES the animal to do what you DON'T want him to do.

Understand why your animal student dropped to the ground instead of walking and you are three quarters of the way to "that was easy!" Camelids that lie down on the lead have a reason for choosing that behavior, labeling the animal as stubborn, stupid or obstinate only reduces your chances of fixing the problem.

There are a number of possible reasons for the behavior listed below. More than one reason may apply.

- The animal is overwhelmed and frightened
- The halter doesn't fit
- The animal does not know what you want
- You are being heavy handed
- Your set up is not good enough and does not provide limits
- You are standing too close to the animal

Let's look at each of these possible miscalculations in more detail along with the solutions.

## **The animal is overwhelmed and frightened and lying down feels safer than standing up.**

Getting small is a coping strategy for camelids. They don't all use it and some have more of a hair trigger "cush" button than others but in my experience, in a stressful situation it means the same thing. The animal doesn't know what else to do and it feels safer to get small.

It is similar to a child putting his or her head down on the desk when they don't understand the material and the teacher is not noticing the signs of confusion and or fear. Teaching animals to lead that are too young either mentally or physically is probably the biggest reason for this problem. An 8-10-month-old animal will learn to lead twice as fast as a 4-6-month animal. Here is a partial laundry list of what will cause "overwhelm:" lessons that are overly long, do not

*continued on next page*



include any breaks, are too frequent, or teaching in a location away from other animals.

**The halter doesn't fit and lying down seems safer than moving.**

It is not possible to overstate the importance of proper halter fit, particularly in the early stages of teaching an animal to lead. I have written many articles on halter fit; it is not a simple subject. For purposes of this short article the most important aspect of halter fit is that there is plenty of



Incorrect Placement on the Nose

room in the nose band for comfort and that the crown piece (the part that goes behind the ears) has plenty of "take up" meaning that you can snug

up the crown piece and the halter nose band will slide well up on the nose bone resting quite closely to the eye AND that it will stay there no matter what! If the nose band slides forward and off the bone onto soft cartilage it will compress the cartilage and compromise the airway creating panic. One very likely response to panic is to lie down or more dramatically rear or leap up and crash to the ground.



Correct Position on the Nose

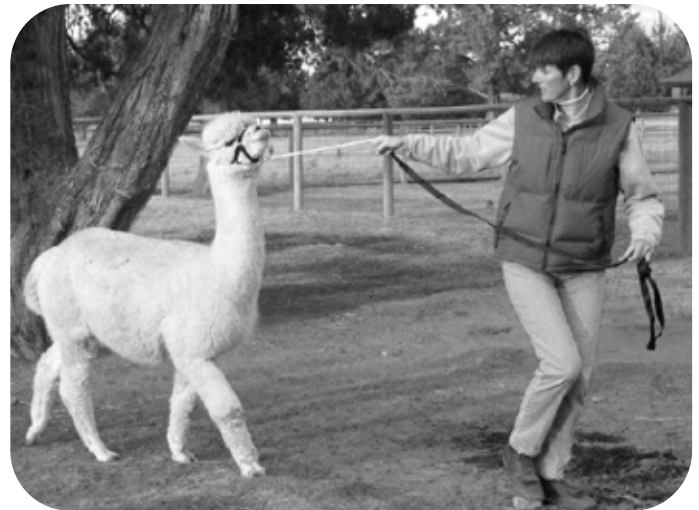
**The animal doesn't know what you want because you haven't taught him what a signal on the halter means.**

Education NOT brute force is much easier with less blow-back. Most people don't teach an alpaca or llama the meaning of a signal.

When I train an alpaca or a llama to lead, I give a very specific signal on the lead—a squeeze release signal that shifts the animal's weight forward. When the animal takes a step, I drop the connection marking the moment of the step and indicating that taking a step was the desired behavior. I call this "turning on the light bulb" and I teach this inside a catch pen after the animal is comfortable in a halter but BEFORE I take him out of the catch pen into a larger area.

**You are being heavy handed on the lead**

Unlike every other barnyard animal, llamas and alpacas have tiny heads on the end of a long stalk offering anyone with control of the head an extraordinary amount of power. It is very scary!



Putting a lot of pressure on the head only pulls the head forward lowering the neck. Pull harder and the animal widens his stance and grows roots. Pull harder still and the animal will simply pull back balancing backwards on the anchor that you are handily providing. Keep pulling and "down she goes!" Pulling steadily on a lead—essentially making the animal uncomfortable and "rewarding" with a release—is much slower than teaching a signal to come forward. The animal must engage in the process of elimination to figure out how to make you stop pulling—lying down also provides a release in pressure but is hardly the behavior you are after. Once you teach your animal to lie down as a way of relieving the pressure you apply to the head, you are in big trouble. This particular learned behavior is a tough one to retrain.

*continued on next page*

**Your set up does not provide limits and the shape of the training area doesn't provide options for influencing behavior.**

Leave the confines of a catch pen and walk out into a square area and you have no way to influence where your animal goes EXCEPT to



hold steadily on the lead. Hold steady on the lead and many animals respond by bucking and rearing followed by collapsing on the ground in a heap. Instead, work in a catch pen that adjoins a long narrow aisle way and you can stop an end-run simply by stepping in the animal's way. Additionally the shape of the pen adds clarity to the process and says visually to the animal, "Follow me and stay behind."

**You are standing too close to the animal triggering a learned behavior to run away in the opposite direction**

If you are among the many people that rely on trapping your llama or alpaca in a corner to catch him, consider how this affects the animal's behavior when learning to lead. In all previous situations your approach signals to the animal to move away in the opposite direction from your approach. When you hook a lead to him and stand near him in a large area his natural inclination is to run in the opposite direction NOT to go with you. If you want your camelid to feel comfortable trying a new behavior such as moving toward you, your best bet is to be well away from him. (I also advocate not using a



corner for catching but that is another topic) Use a long lead in a long narrow lane way, use a light connection, stay well away from the animal and remember to BREATHE!

There are many different approaches to lead training. I feel the most comfortable with techniques that educate rather than dominate. I feel energized and personally satisfied when I can start young animals on a lead and watch the light of understanding come on in their eyes. Loyalty to a technique that isn't working will only teach your animal behavior that you don't want. Pay attention to what works and modify your approach, the result will be a more efficient training session and one that is more fun and less frustrating for both you and your animal student.

Happy Handling!



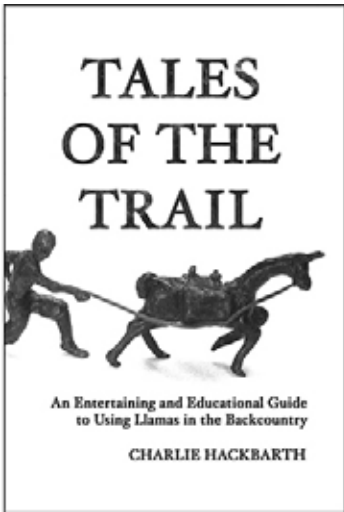
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# THE GEAR, Part 2

BY CHARLIE HACKBARTH, SOPRIS UNLIMITED

*An excerpt from Tales of the Trail: An Entertaining and Educational Guide to Using Llamas in the Backcountry  
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*Editors Note: Part 1 appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of the Journal. It covered selecting a pack system. In Part 2, Accepting the Saddle, Chest strap & Breeching, and the Panniers are discussed. Enjoy!*

## ACCEPTING THE SADDLE

I will begin by assuming that your llama has been trained to halter and lead, and his body has been somewhat desensitized to your touch. Brushing him will help desensitize, and should be done before saddling to clear the wool of sticks and burrs that could irritate or sore his back or belly. If he is not used to you putting your hands on his upper legs, belly, and sternum area, you will need to work on that a little before bringing out the saddle. I do this by patting the llama with my hand until he is accustomed to



my hand being in a certain area. Start high on his sides and pat in the same place until he accepts your hand, then slowly work around his barrel until you have covered his entire underside where the cinches might make contact. Work from both sides of your llama.

Once you have desensitized your llama so that he will stand comfortably, bring out the saddle along with the instructions on its specific use.

Disregard the following instructions when you feel that yours are clearer or more appropriate for the saddle you are using. Continue to work in a confined area throughout the saddle-training period, and avoid obstacles and other challenges until your llama gets used to the pack outfit.

Establish the front and rear of the saddle, disconnect the chest strap and breeching, and make sure that your cinches are set up to accommodate saddling from the llama's left side. If you are a non-conformist you may saddle from the right side, or even from the rear if you want to make things really difficult. It's just easier to keep the rigging organized for the next person if you saddle from the "universal" left side. Pre-adjust the cinches to the size of your llama; you will probably guess wrong, but it's a good drill and if you're right, you've saved yourself some time and your llama some unnecessary agitation at this stage of the training.

Flip the cinches upside-down across the top of the saddle so that they are out of the way. Set the saddle and pad on your llama's back. If the saddle and pad are separate, just use the pad at first. Go on and off with it several times, then move it around on his back a little and rub it to make a little noise. Hold on to the saddle or pad during this process in case he tries to get rid of it. When he is standing comfortably, position the saddle for saddling. When in place, the front cinch will come across the sternum. The cinch strap coming from the saddle will be one to one-and-a-half inches behind the llama's elbow.

Carefully lower the cinches over the opposite side. If his lower legs haven't been desensitized,

*continued on next page*

*The Gear, Part 2., continued ...*

he will probably get a little excited if the cinches make contact with his legs. Keep a hold on the saddle in case he jumps around, and remove it if necessary. Even when your llama is calm, continue holding onto the saddle with your left hand in case he moves around. Reach under the



llama and find the front cinch with your right hand and connect the buckle. As you draw the cinch tight, push the wool away from the cinch buckle. Tighten the front cinch enough to keep the saddle from slipping around your llama. Follow the same procedure with the rear cinch, which will angle as far back as possible, bringing it directly in front of the penile sheath or udder. Adjust the strap that connects the two cinches in order to keep the rear cinch from moving any further back (you may want to estimate the adjustment at this point and make the physical adjustment when the saddle is off the llama).

The cinching process gets much easier with practice. Keep your head out of reach of the back feet in case your llama tries to strike forward. After he gets used to the cinching process, you can tighten the cinches as required. A common mistake for the beginner is not getting the front cinch tight enough. The front cinch needs to be tight when your llama is fully loaded. If it is tightened properly, it should be difficult to get your hand between the cinch strap and the llama. The rear cinch should fit snugly.

Test your saddle by pulling down on the side, as well as back and forth from front to rear. It should be difficult to move the saddle in any

direction. When you have saddled, walk your llama around and let him get used to it. There is usually little reaction to the saddle once it is in place. Practice saddling a few times until you both get the hang of it. Make any adjustments while the saddle is off.

### **CHEST STRAP AND BREECHING**

The chest strap and breeching are used to insure that the loaded saddle does not move forward or rearward on steep inclines. They also help to stabilize the side-to-side motion of the load. Although these straps may seem complicated, once you and your llama become familiar with them it will be easier to use them than not to. The chest strap and breeching are particularly useful to the novice who doesn't always get the cinches tightened properly or doesn't pack up the ideal load. Their use will cut your frustration level and increase your llama's comfort.

Start with the chest strap. Simply clip it into the saddle at the appropriate places and center it across the llama's chest between the windpipe and the shoulder joint. Be careful if you duck under your llama's neck to get to the other side; if he isn't used to this, he may panic and rear, injuring you both in the process. Tighten the chest strap snugly.

Don't use the excuse that "my llama doesn't like the breeching so I'm not going to make him wear it." He will like your fully loaded saddle riding on his shoulders far less, and he will quickly get used to wearing the breeching. Begin by standing at your llama's left side with the breeching completely disconnected from the saddle. Once you and your llama get used to the process, you may choose to leave the chest strap and breeching connected to the left side of the saddle throughout the entire cinching process, but for now the fewer things you have in the way the better. Connect the breeching per your instructions. Adjust the breeching so that it is plenty long—you don't want to end up short on the other side when you get there. Holding the end of the breeching, walk around the rear of your llama and attach the strap to the other side. Be sure to give him plenty of room, just in case

*continued on next page*

*The Gear, Part 2., continued ...*

he decides to kick. He may swing his rear toward you when you start around with the strap, which just makes it easier. Adjust the breeching straps on his rump and connect the diagonal breeching straps if you have them. The perfect placement for the breeching is where the testicles used to be on a gelded male and below the genitalia on an intact male or a female. Tighten the straps that connect the breeching to the saddle and walk your llama around to get him used to the breeching. He will dance and possibly kick a bit at first. Repeat the entire process until you are both comfortable with it.

### THE PANNIERS

Begin with empty panniers and go easy at first. If your llama appears to be nervous, hold a pannier against the saddle and brush your hand across it to make a little noise until he gets used to it. Attach the panniers and secure them so that if he jumps or bucks the panniers will not flop or fall off and upset him further. Walk around for a bit and, when he feels comfortable, add a couple of pillows to each pannier. Rub the panniers with your hands to get him used to the foreign object on his back and protruding from his sides. If you have a rain cover, carefully lay it across the top of the panniers and rub it to make some noise. When you feel comfortable, take him through some obstacles such as a series of small jumps and a smooth post/tree slalom course where the panniers can rub without getting hung up. Avoid taking your llama through narrow gate openings or obstacles where the panniers could get



## HELP US BUILD A PACK ANIMAL COMMUNITY

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If you're not on Facebook, please email Alexa Metrick directly at [alexa@packanimalmagazine.com](mailto:alexa@packanimalmagazine.com)



hung up. This could cause your llama to panic, creating a potentially dangerous situation—not to mention the destruction of your pack outfit.

Next, begin adding bulk and weight to the panniers and take him for a short hike. Hike on a trail or in a large pasture or fenced area where there are some water crossings to go through and some brush to rub up against. Jump a log or two and go for a short run. Allow saddle straps to touch his legs. Anything to prepare him for what lies ahead. When taking the pack outfit off, just go in reverse order. You're set to go packing now, and the more you go the easier it gets for both you and your llama.

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# From Alpaca to the Floor – A WINTER AT THE LOOM

By Susan Unser – Unser Alpacas – Chama, NM

This past winter has been muddy, then icy, then muddy again. While it is inconvenient, we seem to be the only ones complaining. Our “boys” are quite content to slip and slide in the mess, endure blizzards, and I envision them cuddled in their shelter when the temp falls below zero. However, eating is a matter they take very seriously. At precisely 4:30 each afternoon, snow or shine, they are all idly standing at the window of our house, just in case someone wants to get them their dinner. They even act surprised to see me come out. So, in my very best Julie Andrews voice we form a single line and march the 250 steps to their corral while I sing Do-Re-Mi.

As I mentioned in the last issue, the week-long weaving class was a wonderful gift I gave to myself. That first day, five eager weavers were told that in 1 week we were going to make a 3'x5' rug. Of course, being a Leo, I had already told all family and friends that everyone was getting a hand-woven gift from me for Christmas because I was going to learn to be a weaver.

Standing at this Rio Grande Style walking loom which is much, much bigger than a bread box, (5'x7'x6') I accepted the reality that I once

again had over-estimated my abilities and might be able to make a couple placemats by Friday.

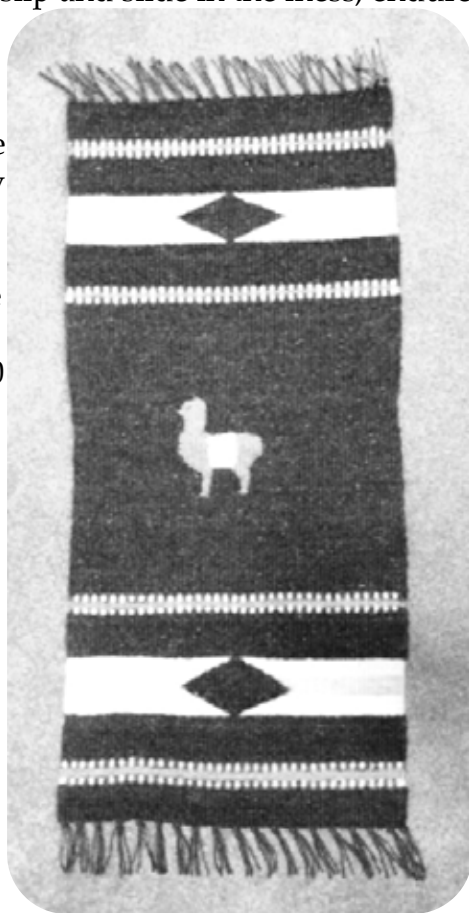
After lunch on that first day, my confidence was reduced to a few cocktail coasters. The Alpaca fleece from our herd had not come back from the mill so I chose my colors from the abundant selection of churro wool. It was like being at Baskin Robbins, just too many to choose from and this was possibly going to be my first - and last - product on the WALKING LOOM so it needed to be perfect.

Colors selected, a good night's sleep, hearty breakfast and the second day we began weaving. What fun to listen to everyone talking, feeling the heat of the pellet stove and the sound of the heddles shifting, the shuttles passing and the rigorous batten thud. Survived the second day and a call to Al assured me there would be a beverage and the hot tub ready when I arrived home. Did I mention this was a walking loom as in “I know I walked at least 20 miles”, on that second day. And I only had 10 inches of weaving to show for it. By Friday I needed to have 60 inches; more hot tub time!

Al came to observe on the 3rd day and said he was impressed. By my talent or grit he did not say, but I kept walking. On day 5 we beginning weavers had become a small community, formed friendships, celebrated our milestones like changing a color and lamented when an inch had to be undone. We each miraculously finished our rugs on Friday afternoon and were presented with a certificate of completion, a copy of which my family and friends would receive at Christmas in lieu of that hand-woven gift. I proudly showed my husband my 3'x5' rug and I might have said that someday I might like to have my own loom.

The Alpaca fleece came back from the mill in Taos, it was given to Olivia to spin and then to Tony to dye with her natural dyes. I was now a

*continued on next page*



regular at Tierra Wools, renting a loom as often as possible and Al was often found sitting on a tall stool watching and listening to the sounds of a weaving studio. Master Weaver and best friend, Charles, was my inspiration to go out of the box with weaving, encouraged me to try tapestry and partnered with me to establish a TGIF happening which began as a bottle of wine, cheese and nuts for 4 and ended up being a local event.

Al was so supportive of my new passion but in hindsight I can see that his mind was already at work to make a place where I could have my own loom. And here is where we have the cart before the Alpaca. It was a building filled with snowmobiles, racks to stack them on, oil, pieces which had not survived a wreck and nylon uniforms from the children back in the 70's. He had spoken to a contractor about re-purposing the building as a heated "She Shed" and when he shared this project with me it was already empty of all snowmobiles, etc. and all he needed was, if and where, I wanted windows.

Now where could I find a Rio Grande walking loom? Long story, short, She Shed was finished



Johnny Mack visiting the Studio

before I found a loom in California and had it sent to Chama. It came in pieces with dubious, handwritten instructions. Now, my wonderful, talented husband and I cannot hang a picture together without a complete tool chest, electricity and words. Thus, when this loom was unloaded and laid out on my red-painted cement floor, he and I were aware that this project was going to be a test of our marriage. It took a week but it is warped and has produced several wonderful Alpaca pieces.

Our "boys" love my Studio (we do not refer to it as the She Shed due to someone's inability to pronounce it correctly). One end has a barn door which I open on nice days and they all know where the carrots are kept and are very curious about all the yarns! A pellet stove keeps it warm on a cold day and it serves as a quiet place to get away from the frequent noise of car, bike, snowmobile, anything with an engine, races on tv and Al's beloved country music.

Best news of this installment of the Unser Alpaca-saga is that we will have three more "boys" coming to live with us in May. A first grandson, there are those of you who will understand the significance of that, has been born to friends in Colorado who have a lovely ranch, with three Alpacas, outside Denver. This event, akin to the second coming, has necessitated selling the ranch and moving to the city. Their change of lifestyle is our good fortune. We are veterans of transportation now that I have a two-horse trailer and I am told one of these "fellows" has been trained to be a therapy animal. Sidney (the scallywag who rings the bell) should enjoy meeting him. Al rolls his eyes when I say 'Alpacas are cheaper by the dozen'. And, we are getting there.

Even though our adventure in tending male alpacas brings us so much happiness and entertainment, we are also very aware that tending to Alpacas and Llamas for most of you is a serious business. Our lighthearted observations pale in comparison to the labor and expense required to breed, raise, show and sell in a competitive industry. The Unser Alpacas are grateful.



# June 21 National Llama Day

All over the country llama owners are making plans to take part in the National Llama Appreciation Day. First started by the Greater Appalachian Llama Association, (GALA) it has grown bigger each year. This is the first year for the event which will draw attention to llamas and their varied abilities. Now, with promotions on a national level, news outlets are starting to set up and take notice.

Llama ranches are encouraged to hold open houses so the public can get to know what camelids can do. People that can't have an open house are gathering llamas at parks and trails for nature hikes. Others are setting up displays at libraries, schools and other places that might have an area for use. Libraries are offering sessions with children where they are reading a book about llamas and when feasible, have a real live llama for the kids to touch. Fiber groups are holding demonstrations on using llama fiber in art classes as well as felting, spinning, knitting and weaving.

If you haven't decided what to do on June 21st you can get ideas at the GALA site: <https://galaonline.org/ilove-llamas/>. Since the Committee's inception in early 2017, it has produced six items to promote the virtues and uses of llamas:



- "Llamas: Your New Best Friend" a full-color, tri-fold brochure
- Ambassador Cards
- "I Love Llama" buttons
- Fiber brochure
- Well-received video, "Humming Along with Llamas" about National Llama Appreciation Day <https://youtu.be/nupauppHxc0>
- Another well-received video, "Getting to Know Llama Fiber". <https://youtu.be/9X5iDXg3Lcc>

Whether you only have one PR llama or a whole herd, there are things that you can do to promote llamas. By joining together on June 21st, we will make a greater impact on the public. Llamas are quite popular right now, let's keep them in front of the public on National Llama Appreciation day.



## Stillwater Minerals Received a LUMP of COAL for the Holidays from United Parcel Service

Did you receive this announce in your email? All Stillwater Mineral customers got the email on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> describing their situation. It seems that UPS (United Parcel Service) raised shipping rates by 4.5% for everything and it added a \$24 surcharge for anything 50 lbs. or over. That presented a problem for Stillwater Minerals who ship mineral containers, especially the 50# containers, around the US.

But problem solved and without raising prices. Here's how Stillwater Minerals did it. Switch to USPS for 50# box orders and will now ship in two 25# boxes. You want a 50# bucket? They reduced the weight to 44 lbs and will ship via UPS. The 4.5% increase will be absorbed by keeping the cost per pound about the same. No price increases.

Stillwater Minerals has been a long-time supporter of RMLA and an advertiser. With many suppliers either going out of business or no longer supplying minerals, we think Stillwater Minerals came up with an excellent solution for all of us. Thanks to Bob & Jo Riley!





# Mid-Winter Fiber Fest

By Geri Rutledge



The Golden Plains Llama Association held their mid-Winter fiber fest in Phillipsburg, Kansas on February 8th. Several classes were held and open demonstrations were ongoing all day. Many attended the event for fiber related activities.

Added this year was a Heartland Youth ALSA show attended by 11 youth. Sally Brandon and the Shepherds Mill Creek did an awesome job along with Betty Hollman and Christina Abel who organized the event. The weather was great and the llama and alpaca communities welcomed the pygora goat owners.



Youth Auction Table



### Reverse, the goat

From Geri Rutledge on how Reverse got his name: *When I found him, he was frozen...first 2 days were iffy. Day 3 he sat, kushed. Day 4 he pushed himself in reverse. Day 5 he backed up to wall and stretched his front legs. By the end of day 5 he took his first steps.*

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# PacaBuddies - February 8 & 9th, 2020

By Ron Hinds

Castle Rock, CO -- Douglas County Fairgrounds

We had good February weather on Saturday with a lot of visitors. Sunday was a bit cloudy and colder, but we still had a good turnout. PacaBuddies had about 70 people on both days.

Lots of kids and parents with cameras for the 'Photo Booth'.



Great time and fun for all



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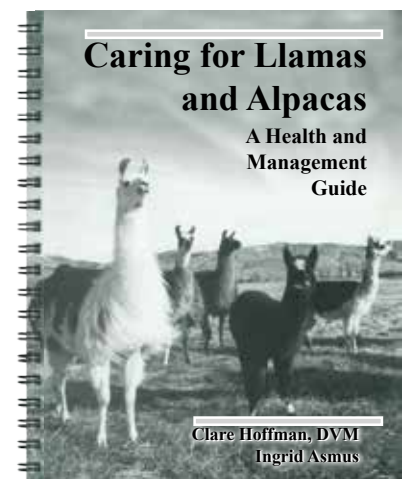
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# NEW RMLA Members

RMLA IS ALWAYS GROWING

RMLA has a New LIFE member

Susan and Al Unser of Chama, NM renewed as life members!

Thomas & Elliot Good - Lafayette, CO  
Elizabeth Moore - Tijeras, NM  
Dianna Marston & Jim Murray - Elbert, CO  
Darrel Eyestone - Yuma, CO  
Julia Henrich - Brighton, CO  
Suzanne Kay - Grass Valley, CA

*Thank you  
and  
Welcome!*

Additional information, phone, address, etc. can be found on the website under MEMBERS.

NOTE: Before youth members under the age of 18 are listed, a signed release is required from a parent or legal guardian. You can find a link for further instructions and that form at the top of the MEMBERS by Name page on the website. *Thank you*

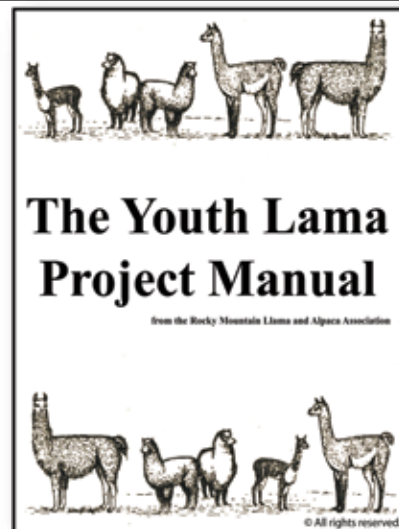
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Rocky Mountain Llamas and Alpacas Association is a 501 (c) (5) non-profit organization

## Postscript from The Journal Volunteers

Ron, Marilyn,  
Kathy,

*'You can be anything you want to be.*

*But be kind!'*



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**Elizabeth, CO 80107-7814**



# EVENTS CALENDAR

MARY WICKMAN, EVENTS CHAIR

For more details and live links, go to [www.RMLA.com](http://www.RMLA.com), select **EVENTS** and hover on the boxes.

**April 25 & 26, 2020, Mid-Plains Fiber Fair.** York County Fairgrounds, York NE. Event with Vendors, Fiber of all breeds, Classes, Education, Hands on Demonstrations. For more information contact Geri Rutledge, 402-366-9304; [buckshollow@wildblue.net](mailto:buckshollow@wildblue.net) or go to [www.Mid-plainsfiberfair.com](http://www.Mid-plainsfiberfair.com)

**July 11 & 12, 2020. Pack Animal Gathering, Conifer, CO.** Education event to connect everyone who packs with alternative pack animals (llamas, alpacas, goats, burros, and yaks.) A fantastic event to introduce new people to the packing world. Event will include Pack Trials, talks from experts, representatives from organization like NACA, PLTA, RMLA and non-animal outdoor organizations like Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, the Continental Divide Trail Association and Generation Wild. For more information contact Alexa Metrick, 303-910-9176 or [alexa@packanimalmagazine.com](mailto:alexa@packanimalmagazine.com).

**September 19 & 20, 2020 Higher Ground Fair,** Albany County Fairgrounds, Laramie, Wyoming. Llama and Alpaca Performance and Fleece Shows; Fiber/Fleece Vendors; Camelid-Related Displays and Presentations. Vendor space available. For more information, contact Gayle M. Woodsum, [gayle@highergroundfair.org](mailto:gayle@highergroundfair.org); or [gmwrites@icloud.com](mailto:gmwrites@icloud.com).

## Save the Dates

Planning an event, but, the 'paperwork' is incomplete? Send us the information and we will let members know to Save the Date.

**July 25, 2020, Fairplay Llama Event, Fairplay, CO.** Fun for everyone! Llama walk/races, Llama pack races, obstacle course for kids.