

The Journal of RMLA



In This Edition

Camelid Kids Llama & Alpaca Camp.....	2
Editors' Corner.....	4
Board's Letter	5
2018 RMLA Wall Calendar	6
RMLA Youth Lead Group Hike with Llamas.....	6
Fairplay Volunteers- <i>THANK YOU!</i>	7
Strategies for Successful Toenail Trimming	8

Llama & Alpaca Visits	10
The Guardian of Hope Pass	11
Ask the CSU Vet – Camelid Eyes....	14
Llama Lunacy	17
RMLA Youth Still Going Strong!	18
The Magic of Kids and Llamas	20
Ruminations...from John Mallon	22
I Never Meant to Have Llamas	23

Stars and Stripes Show	24
Olds College Master Spinner Prgm	25
Bobra Goldsmith Leadership Award ...	26
RMLA Fiber Booth at EPWM.....	27
Fiber Animals Ranked by HOTNESS	28
Cover Photo	4
New RMLA Members.....	27
Membership Updates	4
Advertisers' Index	31
Journal Advertising Rates, Specifications and Deadlines	4

Camelid Kids Llama & Alpaca Camp

By Geri Rutledge



Another great year with 75 kids participating in the two-day Llama/ Alpaca Camp at Bucks Hollow Farm in Waco, NE.



This year we had the draft horses for wagon rides, an all-time favorite thing to do. Sally taught us how to make braided necklaces with the glass vials we found at the Denver Recycling plant during the October, 2016 RMLA tour.

The kids loved the llama trek. We went into a different pasture this year, took

pictures and then played red light green light. This trains the kids and animals at the same time for change of pace in a performance class.

Well, the parents were lagging behind and the kids crested the hill and went out of sight. One of the parents asked me "If you are with us, who is with the kids and will they stop?" I assured them the fence would stop them. Or so I thought. Imagine the sight of all those kids and animals. All we saw were their behinds headed down the next hill!



Sculptor Henry Rivera

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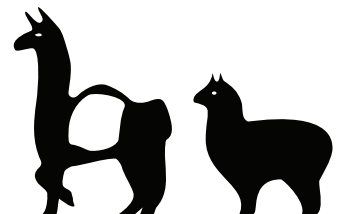
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Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates and Specifications

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"x2"	\$15	\$18
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We are pleasantly overwhelmed. What a great selection of articles and photo all of you have sent to the Journal. We like it!

We are really impressed by how many of you are getting out and about with your llamas and alpacas. Always showing and teaching others about the joys of living with these wonderful creatures.

Several articles on working with your animals are also in this issue plus some great fiber information. Then, of course, we have some great information from the CSU Vets; this time the focus is eyes (pun intended).

And kids and camelids are everywhere in this issue!!!! Take a good long look and keep having fun.

KATHY & RON



Membership Updates

IMPORTANT

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- Ingrid Asmus - 303-818-6201 - ivasmus@earthlink.net
- Allyn Bandell - 303.435.6645
- Jerry Dunn - BTllamas@outlook.com
- Kelvin & Brittany Eldridge - Zip Code – 80128-4024
- Stacey Tarr, DVM - 12431 N County Rd 13, Wellington, CO 80549-1933
- Elyzabeth, Kaitlyn & Whitney Winter - 1710 Road 2, Sutton, NE 68979

Cover Photo:
 Vicky Foster and Corky
 Photo: by Zoë Rom
 See Guardian of Hope Pass on page 11.

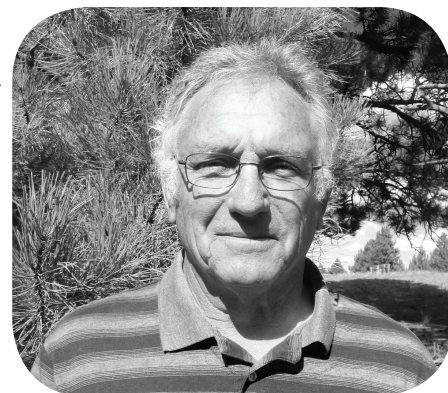
Letter from Your RMLA Board

It is the time of the year to say farewell to departing board members and hello to our new and returning members.

RMLA Board and members everywhere thank Dick Williams for his many years of service. When Dick came on your Board in the fall of 2006, he got right to work as Librarian for our organization. At once, he drove from Plains MT to Colorado to crate and move the RMLA Library. Over the last several years he has worked with Ron Hinds to transfer old VHS material to DVD. Dick has served as Vice President and Director at Large. DAL is not an easy position as he had to be prepared to step in for other officers at a moment's notice. Dick has chaired the Library, Pack, Membership and Youth Committees and functioned as Liaison to others. When he assumed Chair of Membership, he worked to streamline the way RMLA member records are kept. Hats off to you, Dick, for your sincere and dedicated service to RMLA. We will miss you. Stay well and stay happy.



Welcome to Ron Hinds! Ron became a member in 1992 and a life member in 1994 and has been one of those members who works endlessly everyday behind the scenes. His computer skills are awesome. He has been webmaster for RMLA since November 2011. The RMLA.com website is one of the best organized and user-friendly websites in the industry. Ron has been co-editor of your RMLA Journal since 2013. He oversees the design and layout, works with the printer and even stamps, labels and delivers them to the PO – every Journal. He wanted to be a part of the RMLA Board because he wants to see this organization continue to grow in every aspect. For our members, our volunteers and all camelids, he believes it is mandatory to maintain a highly visible and well managed organization for today and future generations. Welcome aboard, Ron!



And to Geri Rutledge, Welcome Back! We are pleased that you have been re-elected to the Board. Geri has been an RMLA member since 2005 and has served several years on the RMLA Board. She has several interests in the Camelid world. Her 4H Group in Nebraska is a great group of RMLA Youth doing many things in the community. Geri has worked with the Youth Committee Chair to develop an outstanding RMLA Youth program. She has been a fiber judge and continues to be a fiber artist, sharing talents, learning more with groups and the youth. Her family raises several critters at their farm, including llamas, alpacas, Paco Vicunas, goats, feathered friends and the dog. They show the animals, take them to schools, nursing homes and community events. She enjoys going to shows and clinics to learn more and see fellow llama friends. Fiber Fairs always give her energy to learn new things, and take that to the 4H group. The family conducts Llama Camp, an educational program for youth, every June at their farm and they always have a diverse group of youth eager to learn.

Geri is camera shy



The 2018 RMLA Calendar is now on sale!

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Costs with postage can be found on the website: On the menu, select:

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Download and fill out the order form, include a check and mail to: RMLA Calendar - 5704 Canyon Trail - Elizabeth, CO 80107-7814
Any questions contact the Calendar Committee Chair - Lisa Blidar at 2018calendar@rmla.com

*Head to the website
for a color preview!*

RMLA Youth Lead Group Hike with Llamas

By Patti Morgan

On June 14, 2017, the RORA (Ranch of the Rockies Association) Hiking Club was led by RMLA Youth Kale, Kyce, Elliot and Ethan Morgan on a hike to the historical resort of Interloken. Interloken is on the shore of Twin Lakes just off Highway 82 in Colorado. It is currently being restored and includes the original resort, caretaker's house, dance hall, livery, cook shed, wash shed and 6-sided outhouse. The resort was moved to its current location before the Twin Lakes were expanded which would have put the resort under water.

The only way to reach the resort is to go by boat from the north side of the lakes or walk in. The walk is 4.5 miles round trip. The Morgan boys were aided by their llamas; RM Skyhawk, RM Dusty and RM Figment who offered to carry the hikers' lunches and water.

Along the way the group of 23 was treated to great views of Mt. Elbert, Mt. Massive and the Twin Lakes. An osprey nest was also observed with mom and chick. At the turn around point, the llamas were tied out to graze as the group ate lunch on the porch of the caretaker's house. Other hikers came through and were treated to some photo time with the llamas.



Thank You Fairplay Llama Event Volunteers!

The RMLA Board of Directors wishes to thank each and every volunteer who helped make the 2017 Fairplay Llama Event a HUGE SUCCESS.

Kelvin Eldridge, co-coordinator ②

Jeff Sandberg, co-coordinator ①

Ron Hinds and Elizabeth Cline ⑤

Kathy Stanko

Gary Carlton ③

Marcie Saska-Agnew and Bob Burton

Geri and Jim Rutledge ④ ⑥

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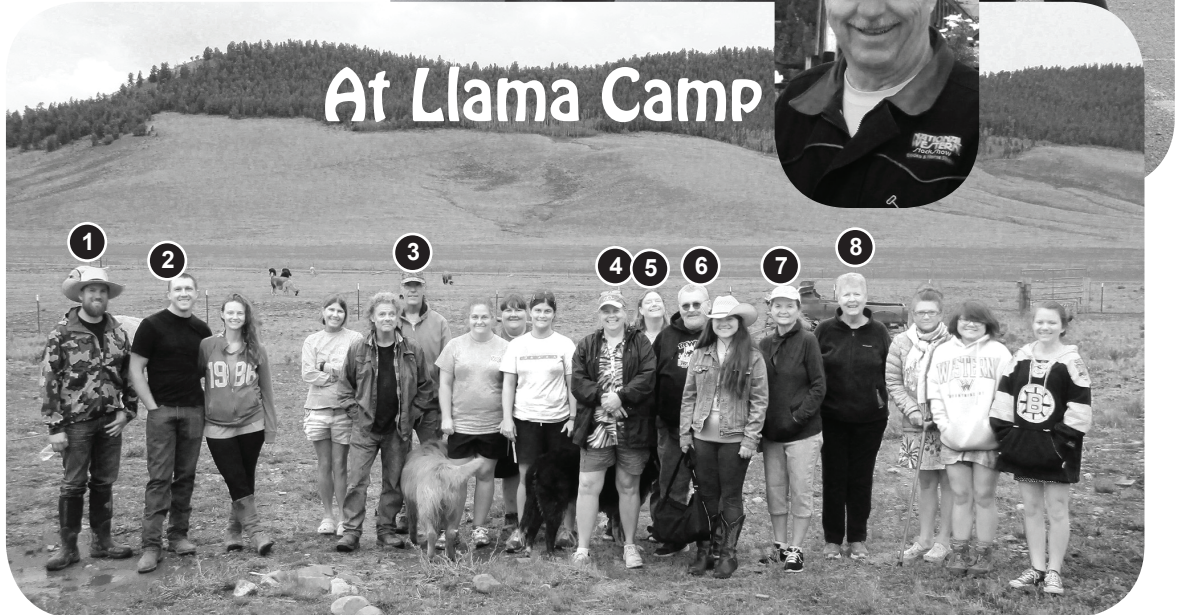
Tyler Volksen

Patti Morgan

IF WE MISSED YOU, INSERT YOUR
NAME AT THE TOP OF THIS LIST
AND RMLA THANKS YOU !



At Llama Camp



And a BIG thank you to
The Town of Fairplay, CO!

Continuing the Tradition-Join Us in Fairplay, July 28, 2018

Photos by Ron Hinds



Strategies for Successful Toenail Trimming

By Marty McGee Bennett - CameliDynamics

I have the reputation for being a pretty good handler but sometimes I run out of options too. I have on many occasions used a sedative to trim toenails and before going any further I wanted to encourage everyone to keep that option open if you need it. There is no shame in it. Everyone runs into situations where the animal cannot do reasonably what you need him to do.

When it is a medical situation most people don't hesitate to use a sedative. I would submit to you that from the animal's point of view anything scary or uncomfortable is the same and bottom line: using a sedative is safer for both the animal and the handler.



I often joke that when it comes to trimming toenails you better have not only a Plan B but a plan C, D, E, F, G, H and maybe then some! Here is my list of toenail plans for you to pick and choose from.

1. Start babies with systematic desensitization on each weigh in day and by the time it is time to trim toes for many of them it will be no problem. Begin with stroking from the top line down the leg to the knee in the front, hock in the back, progress to stopping your hand just behind the knee in the front and in front of the hock in the back. Progress to picking the foot up from these spots. Pick the leg up and put it back down a number of times without holding the leg up for more than a second or two we call this up-down-up-down. See the video at https://youtu.be/oApqGSEO_Cg

2. Pack your catch pen to 80% full and trim toes with a helper that can balance for you. Skip feet or animals that you can't do reasonably.



3. When you are trimming 'en masse' keep your ego out of it and satisfy yourself with a bunch of up-down-up-down on animals that allow you to touch their legs but cannot tolerate holding the leg up for long enough to trim.

4. Trim the toenails on the ground. Make sure to nibble small bits off the nail instead of taking bigger pieces. Put your non-trimming hand on the top line **WITHOUT PUTTING ANY DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON THE BACK** so that you can move the weight onto the toenail you are trimming. If you have a new spiffy Dremel try this. I think my new Dremel will work wonders on camelid toenails (warning - it was about \$80).

5. Trim toes in the morning after a heavy dew, after a rain or when the ground has been moist. The animals are **MUCH** more cooperative when the nails are moist. Trimming really hard toenails is uncomfortable for the animals causing the nail to twist and trimming moist nails is also easier for the trimmer.

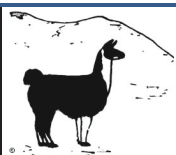
6. Always take the time to trim toenails on shearing day if you are stretching animals out.

7. Trim toes in a space just big enough for you, the animal and a second person to balance. For me this is about 9 feet long by about 3.5 feet wide.

Editor's Note: I have found the following resource to be extremely helpful, Kathy.

Raising or owning llamas and alpacas is fun, it is also a bit scary when you are new at it. Camelids are still unusual and owners are often geographically isolated from each other. It can be doubly difficult to find others who subscribe to a similar mind-set when it comes to the way that they approach living with and raising animals. The CAMELIDynamics Community and Guild is a wonderful group of camelid lovers around the world that are dedicated to raising, training and managing the animals we all love with kindness and respect. Have a look at the extensive array of topics covered at the CAMELIDynamics Community Forum. For a complete list of member benefits and to join visit www.CameliDynamics.com/ and click on the "community" tab.





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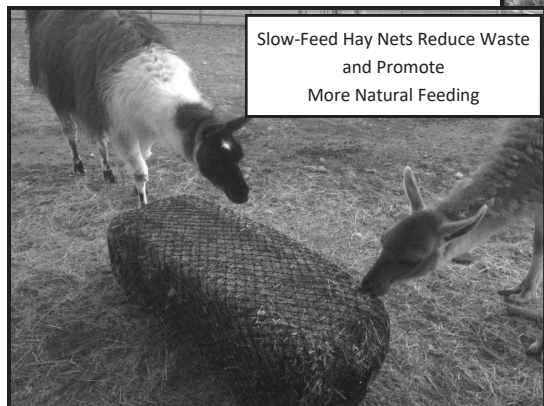
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Bobra Goldsmith Leadership Award

From the RMLA Board of Directors

The Bobra Goldsmith Leadership Award was originated to honor Bobra by recognizing an RMLA person, or persons, who have demonstrated a similar passion and a love for educating the community about llamas and alpaca.

Nominations are to be submitted to Jerry Dunn at BTLlamas@outlook.com by December 1, 2017. The nominee's level of commitment and involvement in activities centered on educating llama and alpaca owners, writing articles, hosting workshops, speaking at conferences, and participating in organized llama/alpaca events will act as the guidelines for the award.

Past recipients include Charlie Hackbarth, Wes and Mary Mauz, Karen Kinyon, Jerry Dunn, Gayle Woodsum, Al Ellis and Linda Hayes.

The award will be presented at the NWSS Llama Show in January, 2018. Bobra, along with other RMLA members were instrumental in getting the first NWSS Llama Show off the ground in the early 1980's.



Note Jerry's new email address.



A Great Visit to Wessels Living History Farm

By Geri Rutledge

In May Wessels Living History Farm in York, NE held a 2-day educational event. Jim and Geri Rutledge took their llama and alpaca fiber booth and were joined by Jim and Shannan Fisher and the Camelidkids 4H group.

It was 2 full days of meet and greet and educate. York Fire Department did a pancake breakfast and the llamas loved the syrup on the kids' plates. Kikaida with the kids made it on the front cover of the local paper, York News Times



A Visit to Vacation Bible Camp

By Geri Rutledge

On July 21st we took llamas and alpacas to Vacation Bible School at the Methodist Church in York, NE. From the huge banner set up in front of the church, it appears that Peru was the focus of study this year.

The kids came out in groups of 9 and we had 1 llama, Kikaida, and 1 alpaca, Pistol Pete. Both have been well-trained to be "Bomb Proof" public relations animals.



The kids asked questions, were able to touch the animals, and gave us so many giggles. Little kids got their picture taken on Kikaida's back. Pistol Pete was just a "Romeo", giving kiss after kiss. If these kids see us in town, they always ask "Where's Pete today?"



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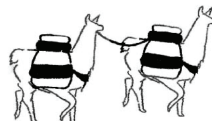
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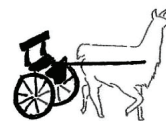
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THE GUARDIAN OF HOPE PASS.

By Zoë Rom

Reprinted with permission from REI's blog at: www.rei.com/blog/run/the-guardian-of-hope-pass

For 30 years, Vicky Foster and her llamas have hauled beer, ramen and medical supplies to the highest aid station of the Leadville 100 ultramarathon. This year marks their final race.

Like many things, it began with a breakup.

In 1986, Vicky Foster was an avid hiker and backpacker when a recent breakup left her seeking solace in the backcountry. Her mother, concerned that she was spending so much time alone in the outdoors, gifted Foster her first llama, Stretch.

"I had Stretch for 27 years," said Foster. "That's the longest relationship of my life."

Foster and Stretch spent days and nights exploring the trails of Wild Basin near Foster's home in Allenspark, Colorado. Stretch kept Foster company, carried her camping equipment and would warn her of wildlife with her distinctive call, halfway between a yodel and a whinny.

"I hike them, they hike me. We keep each other in shape."

The walls of Foster's home are lined with framed images of her animals: rows and rows of dogs and llamas that have kept her company through the years, organized like a furry family tree. Foster has smiling eyes and shoulder-length white hair tucked behind her ears. Earrings that bear the likeness of a llama and a snow-capped peak engraved in



Vicky Foster and Corky | Photo: Zoë Rom

She tries to hike with her animals as much as possible. "I hike them, they hike me," she said. "We keep each other in shape."

An avid marathoner, Foster would often lace up her running shoes to explore the winding trails near her home alone. Her desire to help others, coupled with her love for running, inspired her to pursue certification as an EMT and a degree in exercise physiology.

Foster has a competitive streak and has tried her hand at llama racing, in which humans race against each other to saddle and harness their pack animals before running two and a half miles alongside their long-necked companions to the finish line. About a decade ago, Foster's llama Corky was the first female to ever compete at the Fairplay Llama Race, breaking a decades-old gender barrier in llama racing's premiere event. "I'm a bit of a feminist," said Foster, stroking Corky's nose. "We both are."

"Everybody said we couldn't do it, and so we did."

There's a long-held belief in the llama packing community that you can't race or pack female llamas because, like rabbits, they're always fertile and would distract the males. Foster had to work to convince the race director that she would be able to safely compete without slowing down her male counterparts. "Everybody said we couldn't do it, and so we did," said Foster.

Corky's success in llama-racing's Super Bowl has encouraged other racers to compete with female llamas.

continued on next page



Photo courtesy of Vicky Foster

turquoise and pearl dangle above her shoulders. She wears jeans and running shoes, proof of the hike she has planned with some of her llama packing friends in the afternoon.

After smashing through llama-racing's glass ceiling, females have won the past two consecutive years. Foster,



Photo courtesy of Vicky Foster

herself, has not raced in many years, though several of her llamas—including one named Talkeetna—have won.

In 1987, Foster heard about a relatively new ultramarathon outside of Leadville that took runners up and over Hope Pass. A fellow llama packer and ultrarunner put out a call to the llama packing community, urging volunteers to help set up a renegade aid station for runners at the top of the pass. As an EMT, runner and llama packer, Foster jumped at the chance to be a part of the quickly growing race. The Hope Pass aid station combined everything that Foster loved: running, helping others and pack animals. So, Foster loaded six of her animals into her 1980s Ford EconoVan and headed into the mountains to support Leadville's Race Across the Sky.

Hope Pass sits just below 13,000 feet in the shadow of Hope Peak. It's a long and fairly technical trek that weaves through dense forest and across a glacial terrain before ascending a steep series of switchbacks to the ridge's saddle. Runners of the Leadville 100 will encounter this pass at mile 45, and then again at mile 55.

"The Hope Pass aid station looks less like a snack stop for a race and more like a basecamp for an Andean expedition."

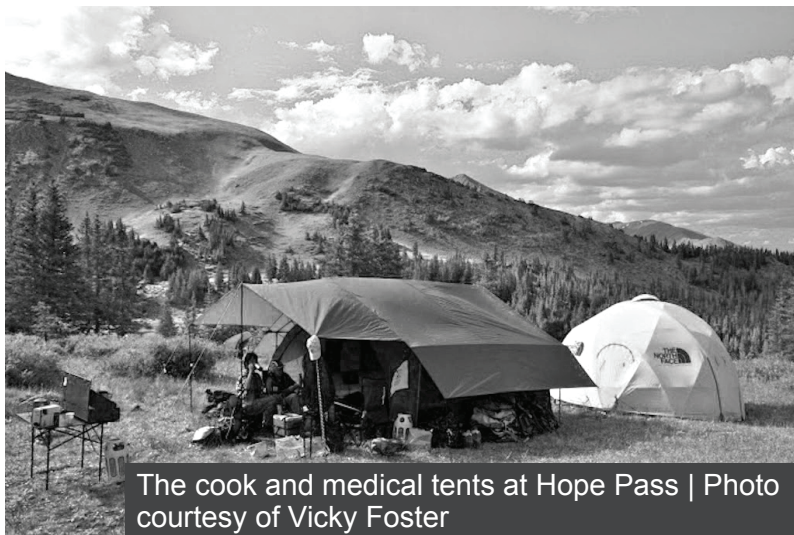
Foster used the steep hike up the pass as a training run, hustling up and down the pass with several llamas in tow. The animals themselves are loaded with packs and panniers containing everything from medical equipment to beer and

food. The Hope Pass aid station looks less like a snack stop for a race and more like a basecamp for an Andean expedition: Large tents for medical emergencies, cooking and beer-drinking dot the pass as thirty-something pack animals munch on grass nearby. This year, Foster will take roughly 12 cases of ramen noodles up Hope Pass for runners to munch on while they traverse the difficult section at the race's crux.

"The amount of support that we have up there would surprise people. We have oxygen, IV fluids, ramen, everything," said Foster.

What was once a renegade aid station is now officially supported and sanctioned by the race's organizers and has grown to include up to 36 llamas and 30 people. They call themselves the Hopeless Crew, and they take great pride in hauling hundreds of pounds of equipment up to the race's most difficult section, five miles across several streams and straight uphill from any roads accessible by vehicle.

"It's people from every walk of life. We only see each other once a year, up on Hope Pass," said Foster.



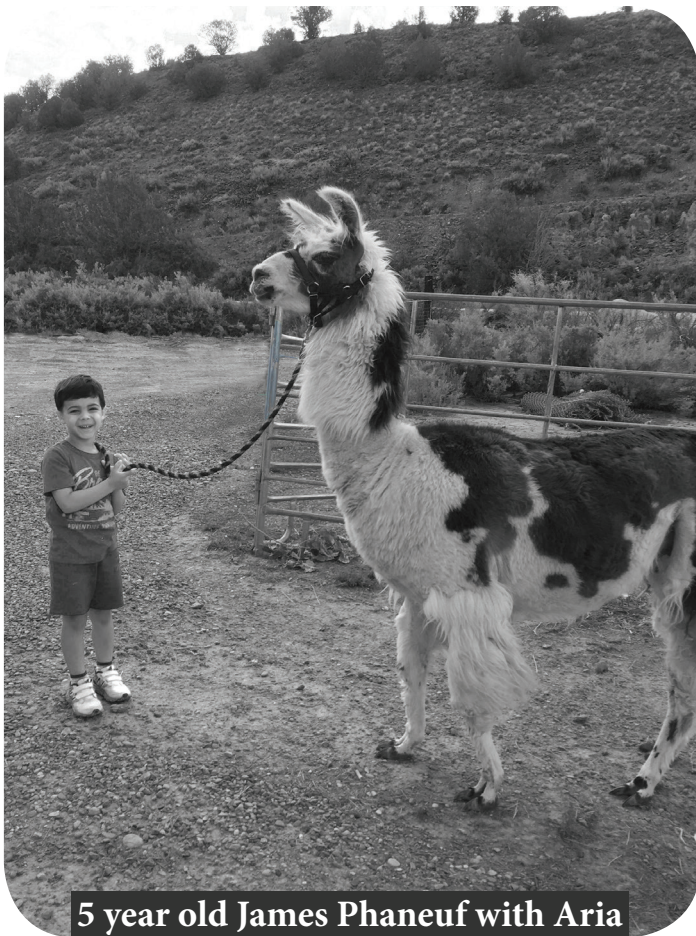
The cook and medical tents at Hope Pass | Photo courtesy of Vicky Foster

"We've seen snow, hail, sleet, rain, extreme heat and high winds all in the same day."

The Hopeless Crew travels to Twin Lakes, Colorado, to set up basecamp a week before the race. For those new to ultrarunning, the amount of organization and preparation that goes into setting up an aid station—especially one hundreds of feet above treeline—might surprise them.

"We've seen snow, hail, sleet, rain, extreme heat and high winds all in the same day," said Foster. "We've really got to be ready for anything."

continued on next page



5 year old James Phaneuf with Aria



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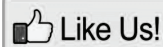
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The Guardian of Hope Pass... continued



Photo courtesy of Vicky Foster

The Hopeless Crew has trekked up to Hope Pass to support Leadville 100 participants every year for 30 years, patching up blisters, slinging snacks and helping runners any way they can. This year will be Foster and her llamas' last year. After three decades, she's retiring.

Foster says it's been a good run up on Hope Pass, and she'll miss her packing friends as well as the colorful runners

she encounters each year staggering up and over the pass. "Every year we come together and run an important aid station. We roll up our sleeves to make sure everyone gets up and down safely," said Foster. "But it's time for some new blood."

She hopes a younger generation of llama packers will roll up their sleeves, saddle their llamas and head up to Hope Pass to help ensure the safety of runners in this historic race.

While this will be Foster's last year up at Hope Pass, she plans to keep packing with Corky and her other llamas as much as possible, keeping each other in shape and in good company.

Zoë Rom

Zoë Rom is a Boulder based writer and journalist. When she's not running, she's climbing, and when she's not climbing she's cooking or eating. Southern story-teller turned mountain-dweller, she starts every day with a cup of strong coffee and a good story. Her work has appeared in Rock & Ice, Trail Runner, Backpacker, and Threshold Podcast.



Ask The CSU VET Team

CAMELID EYES AND COMMON OPHTHALMIC CONDITIONS

By Drs. Tanya Applegate, Amy Kunkel, Latasha McCracken, and Logan Wood, Colorado State University Teaching Hospital in cooperation with The Journal of The Rocky Mountain Llama & Alpaca Association

OCULAR ANATOMY

Compared to many large animals, camelid eyes are large relative to the size of their head and body. While this makes them visually pleasing, it can predispose them to traumatic injury. To combat this issue and provide protection from UV light and microtrauma, the cornea (the surface of the eye) is thicker compared to other animals. The pupil (dark part in the center of the eye) has an oval shape and is horizontally oriented.

extends from the medial aspect of the eye over the entirety of the cornea to help spread the tear film.

Unlike many livestock animals, camelids lack a tapetum lucidum that creates a reflection of the eyes in light at night.

Vision in alpacas is normal, whereas llamas, especially females, are nearsighted.

CORNEAL ULCERS

One of the most common problems we see at CSU that affect llama and alpaca eyes are corneal ulcers and stromal abscesses. Corneal ulcers are typically traumatic in origin and may become secondarily infected. Common causes of corneal ulcers include: ectopic cilia (eyelashes), grass awns, foxtails, splinters, sand, barbed wire, and trauma caused by other foreign bodies.

Corneal ulcers are painful and the animal will often hold the affected eye shut. Other clinical signs include swelling around the eye, excessive tearing, squinting, light sensitivity, and a focal area of white to yellow scarring. If an ulcer is not treated early they often become infected. Deep ulcers that are infected may progress to a stromal abscess (Figure 2). Regardless of the severity or complications of

the ulcer, the most important aspect of the medical management is not only the treatment but also identifying and correcting the cause of the injury.

If you suspect your animal to be suffering from a possible corneal ulcer or eye related injury, it is best to contact your veterinarian before attempting any treatment on your own. The veterinarian's thorough evaluation can help classify the ulcer, determine the appropriate treatment and thus achieve the best outcomes.

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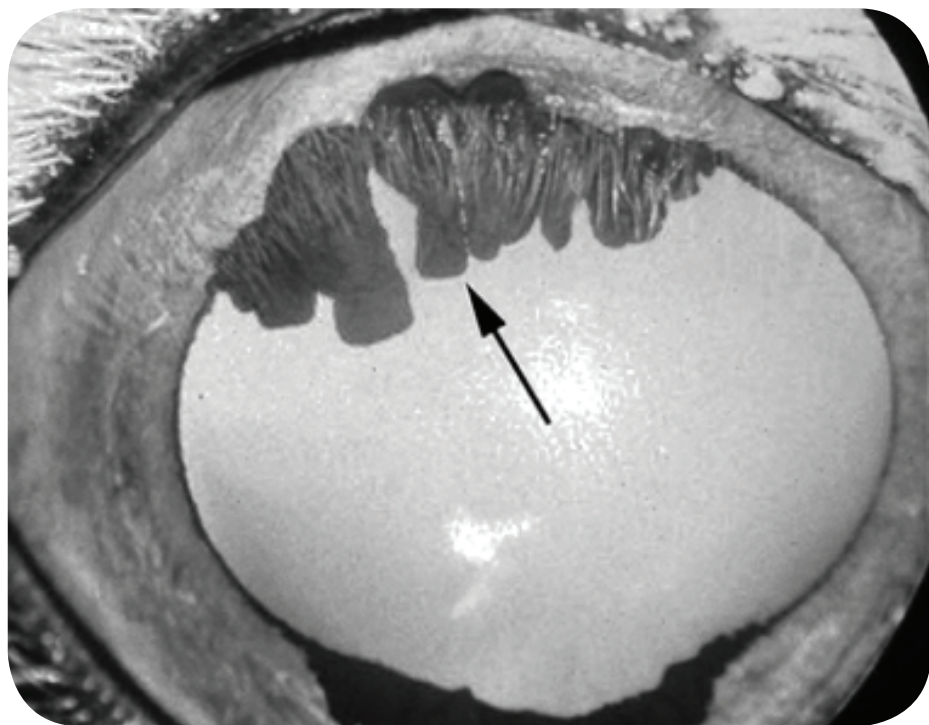


Figure 1. The dilated pupil of an alpaca. The arrow is pointing to the dorsal papillary ruff. Gionfriddo JR (2010). "Ophthalmology of South American camelids." Vet Clin North Am Food Anim Pract 26(3): 531-555.

When looking at the pupil, multiple pigmented folds can be noted extending from the iris into the pupillary margins, these are normal and are believed to help change light entering the eye (Figure 1). The iris (colored part) of camelid eyes can contain light and dark colors and is related to coat color, with darker coats having darker iris pigmentation.

All camelids have a third eyelid that contains sebaceous glands that contribute to the lipid layer of the tear film. When blinked, the third eyelid quickly

The best way to assess the presence of a corneal ulcer and its location is to perform a thorough ophthalmic exam with fluorescein stain. During the exam, the veterinarian will classify the corneal ulcer as either simple or complicated. This classification is based on two defining features: the depth of the ulcer and the duration the ulcer has been present.

Simple corneal ulcers are superficial and acute in origin involving only the surface of the cornea. The duration is less than seven days and will heal within seven to ten days with the proper treatment.

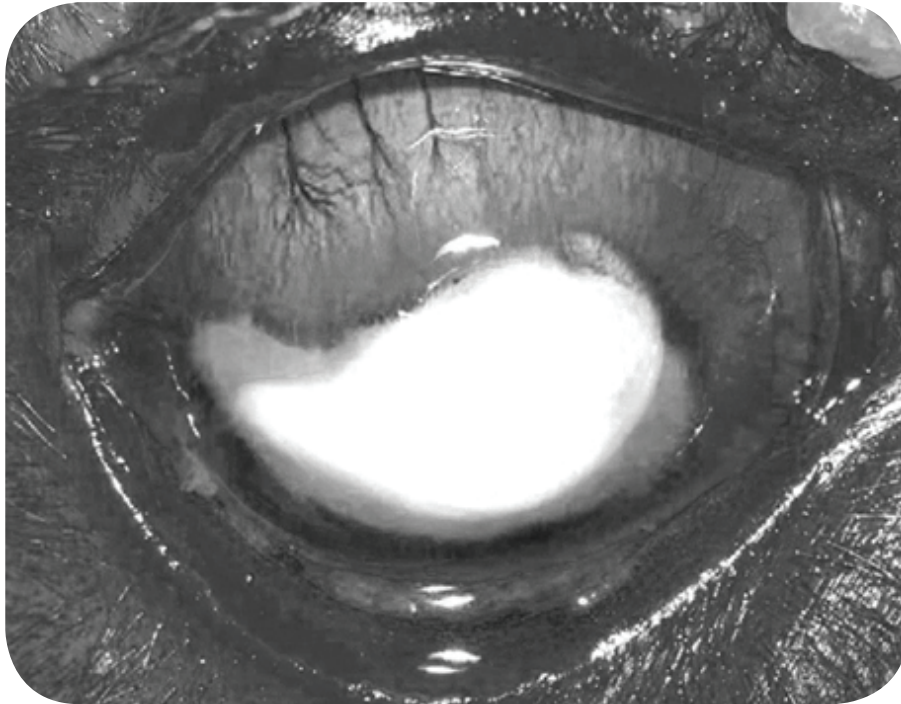


Figure 2. Large, midstromal corneal abscess in a llama. Note the marked vascular response of the cornea to the lesion. From Gionfriddo JR (2010). "Ophthalmology of South American camelids." *Vet Clin North Am Food Anim Pract* 26(3): 531-555.

Complicated corneal ulcers manifest themselves as a deeper lesion involving the underlying stroma. They can be considered chronic if lasting greater than seven days or more.

Many complicated ulcers have started out as simple ulcers. When a deep ulcer goes unnoticed, untreated, or does not respond well to initial treatment, the cornea can heal over the infected tissue resulting in a more complicated stromal abscess. A stromal abscess requires additional treatment to optimize resolution. One treatment is to scrape the surface of the cornea over the stromal abscess to induce another ulcer in order to allow topical medication to penetrate into the deeper infection. Even these complicated ulcers that require significantly more medical and supportive care

can resolve. Most llamas and alpacas recover and have only minimal scarring to the cornea.

CATARACTS

Cataract is a condition where the lens of the eye becomes cloudy or opaque. This can result in blurred vision or progress to complete blindness. Cataracts are the most common abnormality of the lens, and can be either congenital or acquired.

Congenital cataracts in camelids is presumed to be heritable and is present at birth. Acquired cataracts are less common, but can occur secondary to inflammatory or traumatic lesions, advancing age, and possibly due to persistent hyperglycemia.

Cataracts that involve the central part of the lens may partially resorb. If the cataract results in blindness, then surgical removal of the lens can be performed. Several factors must be considered prior to this procedure and a veterinary ophthalmologist can provide the best advice for a specific case.

LACRIMAL DUCT APLASIA and DACRYOCYSTITIS

The nasolacrimal system, which connects the eyes and nostril, involves two small openings (lacrimal puncta) in each eye, a duct passing from the eye to the nose (nasolacrimal duct), and an opening (the nasal punctum) in each nostril. These structures serve to drain the tear film from the eye into the nose.

Crias may be born with congenital abnormalities affecting the nasolacrimal system such as lack of a complete nasolacrimal duct (nasolacrimal duct atresia) or incomplete openings of the nasal puncta (imperforate nasal puncta). These conditions manifest as excessive tearing that results in moistening of the face under the affected eye, but the eye is otherwise normal. The tearing and staining of the face is often noted soon after birth and persists. The discharge can become more thick, white, and infected (mucopurulent) over time, and a secondary conjunctivitis may develop. A specific stain, Fluorescein, can be placed on the eye, and failure

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Michelle Dally, DVM

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Ask The CSU Vet Team continued

for the dye to pass to the nose is suggestive of this condition. Contrast radiography can be used to definitively diagnose the condition, determine where the obstruction is located, and assess how much of the nasolacrimal system is affected. Correction of this condition involves surgery, which may be as simple as opening the nasal punctum, or may be more complex if atresia of the nasolacrimal duct is more pronounced.

Dacryocystitis is an inflammation of the nasolacrimal system, usually accompanied by blockage of the nasolacrimal duct. The large nasal punctum is susceptible to invasion by foreign bodies such as grass awns. This disorder is more common in adults and affected animals will often have a history of chronic mucopurulent ocular discharge. The animal may demonstrate squinting, conjunctival redness, and swelling over a period of time.

Treatment of dacryocystitis is targeted at clearing the nasolacrimal system of foreign material and

resolving the secondary bacterial infection that accompanies it. Topical antibiotics can be tried initially but frequently do not resolve the problem by themselves. Flushing of the nasolacrimal duct through the upper or lower punctum often removes foreign material, pus, and infectious agents, allowing for patency of the nasolacrimal duct and better distribution of topical antibiotics to the affected region.

SUMMARY

Overall, the camelid eye is a complex and beautiful structure, that has some unique challenges and specific conditions that affect it. While the things discussed in this article are some of the more common conditions we see in camelid eyes, conditions such as conjunctivitis, exposure keratitis, glaucoma, anterior uveitis, retinal detachment, and neoplasia can also be seen. The information about camelid eyes has continued to grow in the last few decades, however there is still much to learn especially regarding the genetic traits of potentially heritable congenital conditions of the eye.



LLAMA LUNACY

By Mary Wickman
Llama Lunacy
Coordinator



Llama Lunacy is held each year in conjunction with the Fairplay Llama Event. The Llama Lunacy is a small, easy obstacle course set up for children to lead a gentle llama through. The course is free and each child gets a ribbon and a coupon for free ice cream.

This year's event started off with rain and not too many people around so we were thinking that we would not have very many children go through the course. But the rain stopped at the start of the race and people lined the streets. The line for the Llama Lunacy started to form right away and we had the children taking the llama through the course well after the race was over.

Betty Hollman brought two super gentle llamas all the way from Oklahoma just for the event. Betty: Thank you 1000 times over! In addition we had several great volunteers to assist the children through the duck tunnel, across the plank, weaving the noodles, jumping the camp chairs, and through the hula-hoop (great photo opportunity for the parents).

Some of these children may become the future owners of llamas. You never know. Last year a young girl – maybe 5 or 6 years old – went through the course, she had a blank expression on her face the whole way – showed no happiness, no fear, just blank. When we got to the end of the course she flat out refused to let go of the lead rope; she had decided that she wanted that llama and was not going to let go. You just never know how you impress a young mind.



RMLA YOUTH STILL GOING STRONG!

By Kaitlyn Winter, Sutton, NE



This summer the RMLA Youth members were very busy, whether it was bonding with our animals or participating in community events.

In Nebraska, members have been busy. Starting out the summer, the Camelid Kids 4-H club attended the Stars N' Stripes Show and Llama Camp. Both events were held at The Rutledge Farm in Waco, NE. Stars N' Stripes was an all-day llama/alpaca show, and many RMLA Youth attended. This year it was not as cold and rainy like most years! Many Youth competed in performance classes, showmanship, youth judging and halter. Many qualified themselves and their animal(s) to attend ALSA Grand Nationals in October!

While at Llama Camp kids worked with llama and alpaca fiber to create projects and any and all extra time was spent working with our animals. One project we made was braiding yarn around a bottle. Also, St. Johns Kids came out to camp, where campers taught them how to felt eggs. Then the young kids walked a llama/alpaca with the help of a seasoned handler. The youth enjoyed working with an animal and being able to interact with something they had never seen before.

The second day of camp was community service/fundraiser for the Camelid Kids 4-H group. At the York Tractor Supply Company (TSC), we sold cinnamon rolls and bottles of water. Members brought their llamas to TSC allowing folks to pet and interact with the animals. Then, several weeks later we again held a food stand at TSC. The Camelid Kids grilled burgers, brats, hot dogs and made

chicken wraps. The proceeds went back into the Camelid Kids 4-H fund to help pay for more crafts at next year's llama camp, food for the Stars N' Stripes Show and other odds and ends.

At the end of July Nebraska 4-H members attended Polk County Fair, or their own county fair in their respective states. Also, Estes Park Wool Market was happening. A few of the RMLA members donated items to the silent auction. Other members showed their animals at the two-day show. Another part of Estes is the vendor show, where people sell their camelid products.

Upcoming events for youth include State Fairs, Regionals, and preparation for Nationals in October. As the summer ends and free time comes to a close, Youth will need to learn how to manage school and their animals.



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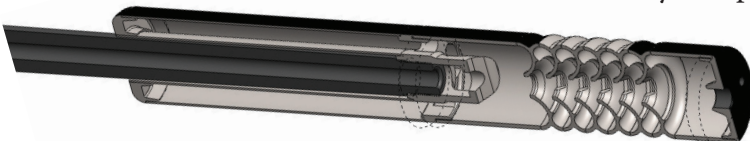
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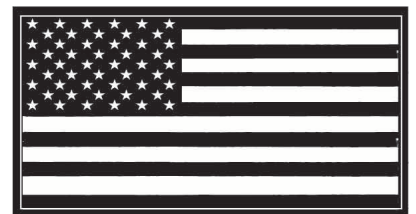
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#SHOOTSUPPRESSED

The Magic of *Kids* and Llamas

Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay

"Are you ready to lead your llama, Noe?" Noe, a blond, cute, 4-year old from Switzerland scrapes her tiny boot across the dirt and looks down. Llamas and people are ready to hit the trail. "Nein", comes the whispered reply. Lupe's ears are turned in her

We haven't hiked more than 10 minutes down the trail. Noe, who walks next to her mother, keeps turning her head repeatedly to watch Lupe marching along, tied behind Picasso. He takes in Yellowstone's vistas and seems oblivious of the tiny hiker who stumbles down the path craning her neck to see him. Soon I feel a tug on my shirt. "May I lead my llama now?" Noe asks in German, with an emphasis on "now" - "jetzt". I oblige, slip Lupe's lead into her hand and the two glide along the trail, both with a happy spring in their step. As I snatch a photo, Lupe seems to grin. He has worked his magic and, it soon becomes apparent, so has she. Tall llama and little human bounce along, enjoying the moment of a new adventure and a magical friendship.

Candido is often the favorite llama on the trek. He is beautiful, fluffy and never skittish or pushy. He likes his personal space though and wanders around free and untethered in camp. Sierra, 11 and her brother, 8, are on the trek with their parents. When everybody is settled in camp, Sierra who is shy, begins to sketch her surroundings while her brother just wants to hug "his" llama Teddy as much as possible until Teddy gently reminds him that he would now like to graze. Candido, meanwhile, avoids the parents' attempts to feed him flowers by wallowing and raising a lot of dust. After busying myself setting up tents, I later check on the llamas who are peacefully settled in the meadow with Candido kushing in the center with Sierra close by his side sketching him. He is definitely posing to look his best.



direction. He does understand German but does not seem to take her rejection personally. She's a kid. He gazes at Yellowstone's vast landscape as he is being tied to another llama. He is up for the challenge. He has done it before.

Work his llama magic, that is.

Llamas and kids have a special connection. Together, they make magic on a regular basis. I have witnessed it again and again over the summers. Kids attach quickly to llamas, I think, because of the animals' calm acceptance of whoever or whatever you are. Llamas recognize the little humans' innocence and trust and do their best to tread carefully around them. The kids look up at an animal that towers over them and follows willingly the gentlest tugs of their tiny hands. They become fast friends. While the adults are happy to park the llamas in the meadow near the campsite at the end of the hike, the kids are drawn to their new friends again and again to make sure they are okay, feeding them flowers and grain.



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The Magic of Kids and Llamas.. continued



Quinn is 8, of Chinese origin and was adopted as a baby by an American couple. He exhibits an impatient energy, asks a thousand questions and wants to know more. He seems annoyed by Diego the llama, who hums incessantly and pulls back at his lead slowing Quinn down. The boy, who wants to get to camp as soon as possible, argues with Diego to no avail. His mother offers to lead Diego and we resume our hike. "How is Diego?" the boy, who is now leading Ishi but ignoring him, demands to know just a short while later. Diego, way in the back, keeps humming. After a few turns in the trail, Quinn is not happy being separated from his original charge and demands him back. Off he goes again with Diego and as I turn a short while later, I see the two walking quietly and in step towards camp.

There are many examples of the special Magic between kids and llamas, the recounting of which would exceed my allotted space in this issue by at least threefold. I just love to witness that sweet friendship unfold. While the llamas do not care for kids running around them in the meadow, more often than not I observe youngsters becoming quiet and respectful around the llamas, wanting to please them and just be with them. The llamas respond to their honest approach and their need to be encouraged. Noe was intimidated but overcame her fear because she sensed that Lupe would be gentle and considerate. Sierra felt accepted and her artwork appreciated by her new friend. Quinn gave up his impatience in return for a peaceful friendship. The llamas sensed that their help was needed to provide the youngsters with the assurance that it is okay to be afraid, shy or impatient and that

if the kids made a tiny step towards the llamas, there would be a huge reward that put smiles on everybody's faces.

Returning from a recent trek, I hurried to resume the training of our novice future packer, Alicia. I did not have much time and entered his corral with lead in hand and goal in mind. Alicia moved away from me. I was surprised since we had earlier advanced way beyond that stage. Then I remembered. I stopped and closed my eyes. When I opened them again, my heart and mind were open as well. I took a deep breath, smiled at beautiful Alicia and took a bow. "May I have this dance?" I asked. And as I clicked the lead into his halter ring, he didn't object. Soon we moved around the corral in unison, enjoying the magic. Alicia smiled at me, and I could swear I heard him say: "You have been with those kids again, haven't you?"

hw

Ruminations...from John Mallon

Last time, we talked a bit about some of the most common handler errors I encounter, mistakes that are so common as to be almost universal. Something happened here last week that brought another to the forefront - arrogance. Let me just tell the story, then you can be the judge:

I had taken a friend's three-year-old colt in for training; he was "green-broke", meaning that he was able to be saddled and mounted and ridden in one or two gears without much bucking. He had several "issues" that needed to be dealt with, one of which was refusing to load into a trailer, which we'll use for our example. Oh, by the way, please don't be put off because this is a "horse" story and not a "llama" story because it is the human story we'll be discussing here...

How many times have you heard me say that there are lots of ways of doing things? That there is usually more than one "right" way to accomplish something? That if you think your way is the only way, then you will severely limit your effectiveness as a trainer/teacher? I think the following example illustrates this point well:

In teaching a horse to load into a trailer, it is a generally accepted as fact that it is not very wise to enter the trailer, then ask an 1100-pound animal to jump in there with us, especially if it is a two horse, side-by-side rig. Makes sense, right? So, what we do instead, is to send the horse in on his own. In other words, we stand at the entrance to the trailer and give the horse a cue to step up and in by himself. It's really pretty simple, and something that a horse will learn in a fairly short time.

So this is what I did, and, sure enough, within 30-35 minutes, this young horse was willingly and calmly stepping in and out of the trailer with a simple verbal cue ('step up'). Now, remember, this colt was afraid of trailers to begin with, and as with most aspects of prey animal learning, he needed to be calm, to feel safe, to trust me, before he would be willing to do something as frightening as climb into a noisy box. We accomplished this through consistency, by giving him the same cue ("step up"), waiting for the

same response (moving forward), and rewarding ("good boy") at the appropriate time (as soon as he tried).

It worked, and the next day, when we brought him to the trailer again, he walked right in the first time we asked him to. Then we brought him to another trailer, a fully enclosed slant load rig, which was darker and, of course, new to him. He walked right in the first time. I sure was proud of this little guy, overcoming his fear and trying so hard to learn about easy loading, and when my friend called to say that someone was interested in buying the horse, I was looking forward to demonstrating how nicely he loaded. Pretty nice story so far, isn't it? Well, it's about to start going downhill from here...

The prospective buyer arrives at our place a few days later, pulling a little two-horse behind his pickup, ready to take the horse home with him if he likes him. I'll spare you all the details of the "test drive" and cut to the scene where the man asks "How's he load?" "Great!" says I, "he was having some trouble with it, but he's over it now; here, let me show you", and to his trailer we went. I opened the back doors of this rig, brought the colt up and asked him to step in, which he did just beautifully; a rig, remember, that he had never seen before. So far, so good, but then the man wanted to try it himself, so he took the lead rope, fed it through the front window of the trailer and proceeded to start pulling on the poor horse's head.

What do you suppose happened? Right! The horse stood there bracing against the pressure of the halter, not having a clue about what was happening. "Why is he refusing?", the man asked. "He's not refusing, he just doesn't understand what is being asked of him...he's only been taught to go in with a verbal cue." "Well, he should go in this way, too", he insisted, and kept pulling on the horse's head, accomplishing nothing but confusion for the horse and frustration for himself (and me.)

"Look", I suggested, "why not just use what he knows for now, then, later on, you can teach him any way you'd like?" He replies "I've always

continued bottom of page 24

I Never Meant to Have Llamas

By Michele Chang Fox Hill Equestrian Center, LLC Louviers, CO

So here's the thing, I never meant to have llamas. In 2014 I knew three facts about llamas: they are pack animals, they originated in South America and they spit. If you had asked me what their feet looked like, I could not have told you. (Hooves? Cloven hooves? Certainly not paws!?) I didn't know what noises they might make. I didn't dislike llamas, I simply had no interest in them. I could probably have lived my entire life llama-free and believed myself to be happy.

Then I bought a barn because I love horses. Horses are great, you can ride horses. (Here's a fun fact, unless you are very small, you cannot ride a llama.) That is when, though I didn't know it, that I had started down a path that led straight to Llama Land.

With the barn came property taxes. To keep the agricultural status of the taxes I needed a crop or livestock in order to have an "agricultural product." Crops require water, lots of water, so no crops. I thought livestock would be more fun anyway.

When figuring out which livestock would work best, llamas never occurred to me. I had my three facts and none included the county giving me a tax break. I did some reading and sifted through possibilities and came up with...alpacas. I know, to the uninformed alpacas are just small llamas, but I did not even see the connection. Nor did I notice that that decision moved me quite a bit further down Llama Land Road.

I read about alpacas, I talked to an alpaca rancher and I even bought alpaca yarn and knit a hat. (It came out very nicely, thank you.) I learned my fourth and fifth facts about llamas: llamas make great guard animals and they are widely used in alpaca ranching.

Here I unknowingly passed the point of no return on my journey.

I should probably just confess right now that the idea of having to get a llama to guard alpacas might possibly have annoyed me just a little bit. Buying a barn was supposed to be all about horses and I was already having to get alpacas. On top of that I needed to buy a llama? So when I went to the National Western Stock Show to do more alpaca research I allocated about twenty minutes to ask the llama people about the whole guarding thing.

Still completely oblivious, I walked through the doors into the llama area and paused before heading down the

stairs. I turned my head and that's when I saw Joezee, a black and white tuxedo llama with lots of hair. Something in me shifted and I knew alpacas were no longer an option. She was tall and calm and beautiful, but I think it was the fringe on her ears that caught me. I didn't really care why, I just knew I had to talk to whoever owned her.

I found Sonja Boeff of Zander Farms and I learned my sixth llama fact: you can sell the fiber. Sonja let me pet Joezee and I knew in that moment that I needed llamas in

my life. I looked down at her feet and was a little startled to see two toes with big nails. (So, definitely not paws!) Then I looked at my own feet realized that I was standing squarely on the road to Llama Land.

At this point it did cross my mind that perhaps I should know more about these animals before continuing down that road, but looking into Joezee's big brown eyes I couldn't muster up the will power. So I started down that road not knowing how wonderful and varied Llama Land is. I did not know much

about the fiber, or about the shows, or about all the interesting people I would meet. I absolutely did not know I would have a herd of seven llamas (Joezee needed some friends) and that they would all be so different from one another.

I do know much more about llamas, and am well aware there is much more to know. But with my llama herd by my side I happily look forward to many more llama facts in my life.



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Stars-n-Stripes Show

By Jim & Geri Rutledge



The Stars-n-Stripes show is always the sign of spring. Everyone looks forward to getting out and seeing how the kids and animals have changed during the school year. The Showmances continue, and the kids now have Snapchat, instagram and so many ways to entertain me when sending messages. It was a great show.



Next year the show will be May 5th in conjunction with the Midplains Fiber Fair. Location is moving from the farm to the York County Fairgrounds, just 6 miles over with an arena and barn stalls. For fiber enthusiasts, this will be an opportunity for classes, demonstrations and ALSA show all combined. The show is open to all; let us know how you would like to participate.



Ruminations...from John Mallon.. continued

loaded horses this way - this is how it's done", and so on, and 'round and 'round we went.

Am I overreacting here? Wouldn't it make more sense to do it the way the horse understands and not insist that the horse come around to the man's way of doing things without a little help? Like maybe teaching the horse first?

Well, by the time the man left this willing little colt was now this 'stupid idiot' and a few other undeserved nicknames. And I spent some time apologizing to the horse for the human race before calling my friend and asking her not to sell to this person (she didn't.)

I see this kind of thing all the time; people expecting animals to do what the people know, rather than what the animal knows. Another quick horse story:

A friend's daughter, who grew up riding "English" hunter/jumpers was visiting shortly after I'd taken in a couple of mustangs to train. She wanted to come to the 60' round pen to watch me work. The mustang stallion was doing well, responding to verbal cues of "walk", "trot" and "canter", and she asked if she might give it a try, as he was pretty different from anything she'd ever worked with before. We traded places and she gave the traditional "English" command "walk ON!", and, of course, the horse just looked at her in confusion. "What's the matter with him?", she wanted to know. "Nothing; he just doesn't understand "walk ON!" so just use "walk". "That's ridiculous! Of course he understands "walk ON!" - all horses do!"

People... go figure!

'Til next time. Happy Trails...



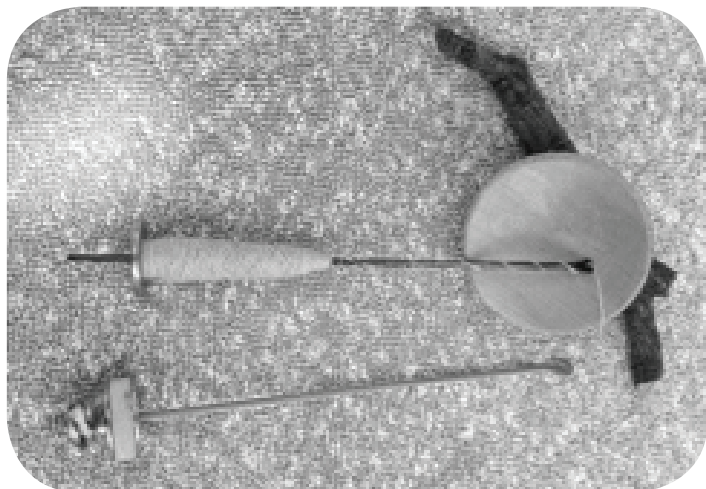
OLDS COLLEGE MASTER SPINNER PROGRAM

Continued
from Summer
Issue

LEVEL 6 AND IN-DEPTH STUDY

Level Six of the Master Spinner Program is an extra two days; a total of 7 full days of class. The focus is on testing. Each day of the class we were presented with specific yarns to make and hand in for grading. A total of 20 yarns had to be produced, and we were allowed to spin four of them outside of class. Fortunately, I had been practicing spinning cotton on a takli since that was one of the outside class yarns. A takli is a small support spindle developed to spin the very short cotton fibers. There was a surprise for which my practice prepared me: a cotton yarn

This year's dyeing was much more fun because we got to choose the colors we wanted to create. We were instructed to have a project in mind for the yarns. Since I have recently added rigid heddle weaving to my repertoire, I decided to spin yarns for warp and weft. Warp are the threads that run the length of the fabric and weft is the one that



Takli: The whorl is approximately 1" in diameter and the shaft is 6" from the whorl to the hook. The spinner places the bottom of the takli in the bowl and flicks it clockwise. The fiber comes off the tip at about a 45 degree angle and is spun with a point of contact long draw. Once enough twist is in the yarn it is wound around the whorl. Joan Ruane has excellent YouTube videos showing the takli spinning process. Here's a link to her website. <http://www.cottonspinning.com/>

Coincidentally, it was at Joan's shop in Tucson where I took my first class on spinning llama and alpaca fiber. That was February 1988 and the instructor was RMLA member Chris Switzer!

spun on a charkha. The charkha is similar to a takli in that it is spun off the point and puts a lot of twist in the fibers, making it very good for spinning cotton.

Our class was all of the same students from Level 5 and with the same instructor. We all got along well, and really helped one another as the week progressed. A couple of students got behind in their spinning, so when we were doing our dye projects (dyeing wool with fiber-reactive dyes and dyeing with indigo) we took over cleanup so they could get back to spinning. In the evenings, we would ponder over how to create the yarns that were on the schedule for the following day.

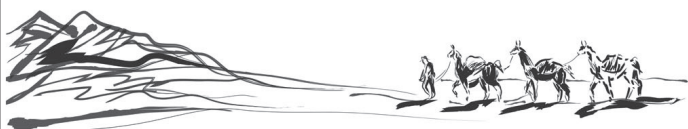
goes across the warp. When you see someone weaving, the shuttle they use is the weft yarn.

My colors progressed from green through to purple. I dyed both a warp yarn and a weft yarn using each of the colors. The scarf I have in mind will intersperse some gray handspun alpaca to soften the finished project.

Dyeing with indigo was as magical as I had imagined. Magical because you place your yarn in what looks a little like radiator fluid and then when you remove it from the dye bath and the air hits it, the yarn turns that beautiful indigo blue. I used a llama/CVM blend yarn that was a light gray. My plan for this yarn is a shrug made with squares woven on my Zoom Loom.

continued on next page

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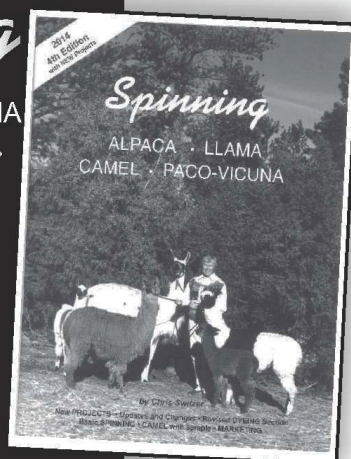
Spinning

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Olds College Master Spinner Program, continued

We spent time in the library looking at In-Depth Studies from other graduates. I am waiting final approval on my proposal. My plan is to prepare blends of double-coated llama fiber in specific proportions and re-create some blends I have had commercially prepared. This will include a variety of wools, such as Down breeds, fine wools, long wools, mohair, and perhaps a man-made fiber. Along with a 100% llama yarn, the blends will be 25% llama and 75% other fiber, 50% llama and 50% other fiber, and 75% llama and 25% other fiber. All yarns will be prepared and spun similarly. Once the yarns are spun, I will present them to members of my fiber arts guild and customers at my local yarn shop. They will be asked to complete a short survey on each yarn. Questions will ask suitability for specific

types of items. Yarns will be assigned a number, and fiber content will not be included. I will collate the data using Excel and see what trends develop. In addition, I will critique each yarn myself and see how my ratings compare. I hope to come up with recommendations for blending and end use.

This will be a year-long project. When I am finished I will submit my findings to the Journal for all of you to read! I can still use more fiber samples. A quart size baggie/Ziploc with fiber right off the llama, unwashed, and with guard hair left in is perfect. Please provide your name so I can include you in my list of donors in my written report. The information sheet is not necessary.

Thanks for your continuing support of my project.

Contact Nancy at spinllama@msn.com.

Send fiber samples to P.O. Box 853, Camp Verde, AZ 86322. , Thank you

Download a form to send fiber at: www.RMLA.com/wilson



RMLA Fiber Booth at the 27th Estes Park Wool Market and Fiber Festival

by Wally Juntilla



Once again the RMLA Fiber Booth participated in the Estes Park Wool Market and Fiber Festival. The 2017 Festival boasted 70 vendors participating in the new Events Complex which was 10 more vendors than the previous year. Public attendance seemed to be down this year, but there were still a lot of visitors to the Booth during the more than two days of displaying consignors' products and information about llamas and alpacas.

The RMLA Fiber display was unloaded, attractively setup and stocked in time for the Friday evening public preview. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped set up, manage, tear down and load up the Booth and consigner's products back into the trailer. There is a lot of heavy lifting and hauling and creating an organized display with such a variety of products from all the different consignors is a challenge in a small 10' x 10' vending space.

This year the Fiber Booth Silent Auction was a great success, earning \$229 which will go towards Booth expenses. A great big "Thank You" to all of the members who donated such wonderful items.



One of the most important educational areas in which RMLA members are involved is the mobile Fiber Booth. It is the perfect venue for introducing the public to llamas and alpacas by showing off their beautiful and versatile fiber. In addition questions relating to animal welfare, ownership and membership/organization contacts are answered and RMLA informational brochures and old copies of the Journal are handed out.

Participation in the Booth is open to all RMLA members. You can find the RMLA Fiber Booth Consignment information on the RMLA website, www.RMLA.com.

NEW RMLA Members

RMLA IS ALWAYS GROWING

Welcome!

Jerry and Sally Kuzior, Rancho Alamogordo Alpacas - Elizabeth, CO
Allyn Bandel - Castle Rock, CO

Additional information, farm/business name, 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** page on the website. *Thank you*

Fiber Animals Ranked by HOTNESS

By Lisa Shroyer - Reprinted with permission

I'm a knitter and I am always cold. When deciding between a crisp wool beanie and a floppy angora beret, which offers more warmth? There are levels of hotness that differ across our fiber-bearing friends, so here's a list of animals that we make yarn from, ranked by warmth properties of their fiber.

But first—I'm going to geek out on some fiber science. According to Anne Merrow, editor of *Spin-Off* magazine, "the fiber itself is only half the picture. The other half is yarn construction. Anything that traps air is warmer; anything sleek and drapery is cooler."

I wanted a clear, linear list of animals from cool to hot, but Anne cautioned that "this is a very rough list of tendencies, rather than an absolute scale."

And that scale goes like this, starting with the warmest fiber characteristics: Short, soft, hollow (medullated), undercoats are warmer than medium, crimpy, solid fibers which are warmer than long, slick fibers

With those characteristics in mind and remembering that yarn construction can make a big difference in final hotness, let's take a look at the regal beasts! We'll count down from least-hot to most-hot.

17. SHEEP WITH LONG FIBERS: We call 'em long wools; one example is the Border Leicester.

16. ANGORA GOAT: Makes mohair; had a good run in the 1980s in ready-to-wear. Mohair knitting yarns really differ in style and don't have to make super-fuzzy fabric. It's also important to note that brushed mohair (fuzzy) makes very warm yarn and rates hotter, but mohair fiber on its own, because it's so smooth, can't be regarded as a big hottie.

15. SILKWORM: That's right, silk comes from an animal and silk is warmer than some sheep and goat breeds. You'll find silk long underwear compared to merino long underwear on many outdoor-gear sites, and merino wins for warmth

but silk is great at retaining heat while being breathable, and makes thin, lightweight fabric. Everything you want in your underwear.



14. SHEEP WITH MEDIUM-LENGTH FIBER:

The Corriedale is one example.

13. SHEEP WITH SHORT CRIMPY FIBER:

Here's where Mr. Merino comes in, as well as his friend Cormo.

12. ALPACA: Camelids enter the list here with the alpaca.



You'll see more camelids further down, including llama, guanaco, vicuña, and camel. These guys come from some high elevation (all of them except the camel hailing from the highlands of

South America), and high elevation + evolution + weirdly long necks = super-cozy fiber.

11. LLAMA: The llama! Though domesticated and raised, historically, for his meat and to serve as a pack animal, this South American camelid



continued on next page

also offers lovely fiber. Bigger than his alpaca cousin, the llama is also characterized by a longer head and curved ears called “banana ears.” The section around the abdomen between front and back legs, called the saddle, provides the finest fiber on the llama.

10. ANGORA RABBIT: Angora rabbits make angora fiber (angora goats make mohair). My mom raised angora rabbits when I was growing up and they are BIG FLUFFBALL WEIRDOES. These animals were bred to have crazy big fleeces and they can’t survive in the wild; they need humans to shear them. They chew electric cords for fun. But oh my goodness, the fiber is heavenly, and they can live in your house kind of like cats, with litterboxes and everything (but watch your electric cords).

9. CASHMERE GOAT: If you’re the kind of person who buys V-neck pullovers at Bloomingdale’s, you might be surprised to learn that cashmere goats hail from rugged, mountainous Central Asia, where yuppies Do Not Hang Out. But at that elevation, the goats grow fiber that is not only luxuriously soft, but super warm.

8. YAK: On a long backpacking trip last summer, I read Jon Krakauer’s book *Into Thin Air*, which



chronicles the true and horrifying story of the deadliest season on Mt. Everest, and there’s a memorable scene in which the

hikers and Sherpas rely on yaks to carry their gear through waist-high snow just to get to the base of Everest, and that’s how I know yaks have warm coats. Yaks are now raised in the U.S. for their fiber; Colorado-based Bijou Basin Ranch has some lovely yak yarn for knitters.

7. GUANACO: Now if this was a ranking of the most valuable fibers on the planet, guanaco would rate better than #7. Guanaco fiber is second only to vicuña, priced by the ounce. The guanaco lives up and down the length of South America, mostly at high elevations except for in Patagonia and the Falkland Islands, which are chilly year-round due to their far-south latitude. The guanaco is believed to be the wild ancestor of the domesticated llama.

6. VICUÑA: This animal is proof that aliens came to earth in ancient times, and it is the MONEY. A small and wild camelid of South American highlands, vicuña fiber has long been cherished by humans; the Inca only allowed royalty to wear it. It was badly endangered at one time, but the species



was officially protected in 1974 and has since recovered in numbers. The animal has not been domesticated, and the fiber can only be sheared every 3 years from animals captured in the wild, then released. The fiber is not legal for trade, so you won’t find any yarn on the market, but I did find a number of vintage vicuña woven garments for sale on Etsy and eBay, all VERY EXPENSIVE. For a more legit option, try paco-vicuña yarn, which is legal, available in the U.S., and comes from an alpaca-vicuña hybrid.

5. BACTRIAN CAMEL: Camel *down* is the ticket here, and though not as soft as its smaller South American cousins, its fiber is very warm.

4. COMMON BUSHTAIL POSSUM: We don’t actually have consensus about where in the list possum should fall, but sources say the fiber is warmer than both merino and cashmere. The fiber is hollow and short (about 1” long), which does give it the best warming characteristics according to Anne’s scale, above. This specific possum, native to Australia, was introduced to New Zealand in the 1800’s and became

continued on next page

a destructive species on the islands (where it had no natural predators). So the possum fiber and yarn you find on the market now are coming from government-sponsored pest control programs—i.e., the animals are killed and the fiber harvested. This is sad, but it is best for the ecology of New Zealand, and the fiber is being used, which is a productive by-product of an environmental problem. Most possum yarns are blends, for similar reasons as the mink, below.

3. MINK: This one is tough to rank because you really can't do anything with 100% mink; it has to be blended to make functional yarn, so rating its hotness on its own isn't that meaningful. But it's mink, you know, like the musty coats your grandmother kept in a wardrobe. Toasty coats.

Anyway, mink has really short fibers, which can be combed/clipped from the live animal (a weasel-like little critter) without hurting it, so knitting with it isn't the same as wearing a coat made from it, if that sort of thing bothers you. Mink are found in Canada and Britain, and mink ranches are a big business in Nova Scotia. They do not lasso the minks or put saddles on them, no.

2. BISON: Both #2 and #1 on our list are bovines. Woolly cows, you might call them. *Bison bison* is an American species; people call this creature "buffalo" but that's a misnomer dating to the early days of European settlement in North America. Buffalo live in Africa and Asia and are not woolly. The water buffalo gives us some awesome mozzarella, but not wool.



Bison fiber is pretty special. It's incredibly crimpy with lots of air pockets, necessary for keeping the animals warm on the high and blizzard-prone plains (try to drive through

southeastern Wyoming in the winter and you'll appreciate what these guys have to deal with). It's also really soft, with a micron count similar to cashmere. And! It doesn't felt. You can machine wash and dry bison knits. It's not cheap, as the animals are high maintenance (they're not really into people) and even though they're huge, they don't produce much useable fiber per year.

The Buffalo Wool Company produces bison yarn. And if you can't keep up with demand once you knit your friends bison outdoor gear, United by Blue makes bison-down hiking socks, which do sound pretty awesome. Let's go snowshoeing!

1. MUSK OX: And the winner for HOTTEST is a small, stinky, wooly cow from Alaska! The musk ox, though a member of the Bovidae family, is more closely related to sheep and goats than oxen, and can be found in Greenland, northern Europe, Arctic Canada, and Alaska. The males emit a strong odor, which apparently attracts the ladies. HOT.

The fiber produced by musk oxen is called qiviut, an Inuktitut word, and it is knitter's gold. This is an animal that lives in the Arctic and survived the Holocene extinction event (epic kill-off by humans) by retreating into remote icy reaches of Canada. It is very, very warm and butter-soft. You have to touch it once in your lifetime. The fiber can be harvested either by collecting molted fiber off fences and trees in the spring, by combing the animals, or by harvesting it from the pelts of hunted animals. The Musk Ox Farm in Palmer, Alaska "is dedicated to the domestication of the musk ox and to the promotion of qiviut production as a gentle and sustainable agricultural practice in the Far North, with a focus on public education and providing income opportunities to Alaska Natives." This yarn is expensive, like many of the other hotties on our list, but makes a precious and toasty accessory that you will treasure forever. Go on, knit yourself a piece of the Ice Age.

These animals are incredible, aren't they? Weird and wonderful and so helpful to humans through the ages, giving us their better-than-

continued on next page

Fiber Animals Ranked by HOTNESS... , continued

manmade coats. Please note that this ranking is not law and people may disagree about the specific order, but we feel confident that the basic flow from 17-1 is informative and accurate. If you're interested in learning more about fiber animals and how to spin raw fiber into yarn, check out *Spin + Knit* magazine at interweave.com.

Lisa Shroyer is Content Strategist over the Yarn + Fiber group at Interweave, a media company specializing in products for crafters. She writes a weekly column called Lisa's List for the company website, www.interweave.com; this article originally appeared as one of those columns. She lives in Fort Collins, Colorado. 🐫🐫



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The Ribbons Cover the Goods

Geri Rutledge wins First, Grand, Best of Show and Best of Division at the York County Fair. The dress is 100% alpaca from Lil Bill. She dyed the pink. This project will go on to the Nebraska State Fair. She made this dress for her first grandchild who will no doubt be a winner! Congratulations Geri!



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Back Country Llama	26	Michelle Dally, DVM	16	Yellowstone Llamas	21
Bear Track Farm	10	Rocky Mountain Llamas	6	Zander Farm	23
Classified Ads	10	Sculptor Henry Rivera	2		
		Southwest Llama Rescue	13		

Thank You!

Postscript from the Journal Volunteers

YOU!

Yes, you are terrific!

Keep it up and a thousand THANK YOUs!

Yathy, Ron, Marilyn, Sonja,



Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association
5704 Canyon Trail
Elizabeth, CO 80107-7814



EVENTS CALENDAR BY MARY WICKMAN (EVENTS CHAIR)

Save the Dates!

Mark your calendars for 2018. Applications for review and approval have not been submitted yet, but the organizers & superintendents have indicated they will again organize the events and have provided the dates. More information will be provided as it is received.

- January 5 - 7, 2018, **Llama Show at the National Western Stock Show**, Denver, CO
- May, 5, 2018, **Stars-N-Stripes Show**, Waco NE
- June 9 & 10, 2018, **Estes Park Wool Market**, Estes Park, CO
- June 22 & 23, 2018, **Camelid Kids Llama & Alpaca Camp**, Waco NE
- July 28, 2018, **Fairplay Llama Event**, Fairplay, CO