

# The Journal of RMLA



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# Festival of Lights in Colorado Springs

By Gerry & Terri Bruening-3B Llamas



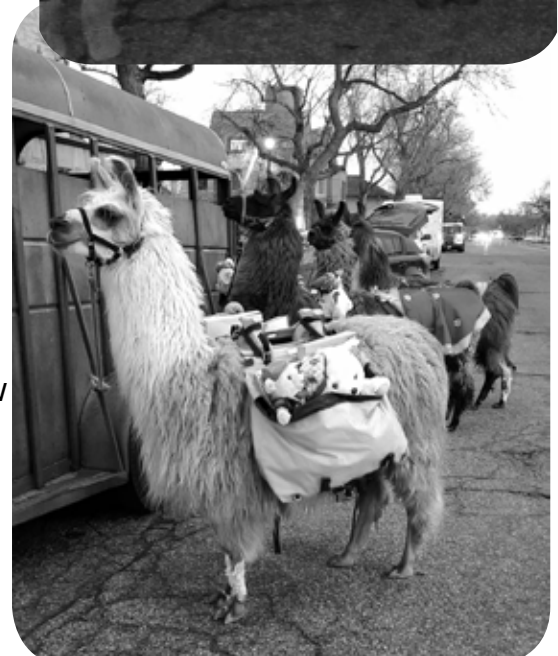
The day started off rather windy out on the eastern plains, not really parade weather. We gathered our gear, loaded 10 llamas into the trailer and with family and friends in tow, we headed to downtown Colorado Springs for the 34th Festival of Lights. As we were getting ready snow started to fall making the evening somewhat special.

This was our first parade here in Colorado with the hope of many more to follow. We dressed in red, whether llama sweater or sweatshirts, and added lights to cheer up the mood. The llamas wore lighted skirts and gear

with Christmas music pouring out of the speaker. It was a mile walk and a whole lot of fun.

We won the Snowman Award-Yeah. Thank you to all who helped and participated: Erinn, Gus, Ofelia, Genesis, Brittney, Jonathan Cardona & Chris, Chrissy, Trinity, Willow Dodson & Kathryn, Saul Tovar, Jules, Emma, Luis from CSU with Jason Bruening. Many thanks to our friends, furred and coated.

And 'Thank You' RMLA for providing liability insurance because it was a requirement to participate.



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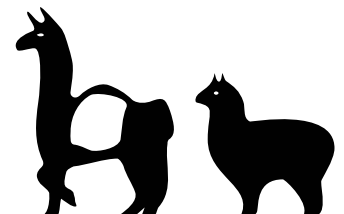
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## Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates and Specifications

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
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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- 25 cents for each word over 50 for both Member and Non-Member.
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- **INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARTICLE AND AD SUBMISSION:** Email all text and/or graphics content to: [RMLAEDITOR@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RMLAEDITOR@GMAIL.COM). 'Camera ready' ads and articles should be submitted via email in .PDF, or any text readable by MS Word. Images alone should be submitted in .jpeg(.jpg) or .tiff. Quality photos start at 1-2MB.
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Once again, Ron and I are amazed and overwhelmed by the articles YOU submitted for this issue.

THANK YOU! I think we can all pat ourselves on the back as we continue to educate our readers about the 'grandness' of alpacas and llamas!



We have not 'talked' about what is known as aberrant male syndrome (ABS). In this issue we have a perspective on ABS by two well-known camelid trainers and behavioralists: John Mallon and Marty McGee Bennett. Important reading, and reminders, for all of us, that our actions can adversely affect the animals we so dearly admire and respect. (See pages 10 & 20)

Do you have crias on the way? Then the Ask the Vet article is for you. It addresses the importance of colostrum and what to do to ensure that the cria gets these nutrients and antibodies. (see page 26)

In recent months, several members have stepped up to take on important issues such as the revitalized Education and Outreach Committee headed by Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay (page 17) and the activities of the refocused Fiber Committee, chaired by me, Kathy Stanko. As Chair of this committee I continue to be amazed at the variety of directions a fiber enthusiast can go (articles on pages 18, 23 and 25).

Gary Jones, who raises both alpacas and llamas, submits his first article on Bridging the Gap (page 16). This is the first in a series of articles addressing the issue of division among owners of alpacas and owners of llamas. He sees a need for all of us to work together for the betterment of all.

Our members have been out and about, chairing and attending events, all the while, having FUN! Enjoy this issue. And in between articles, take a moment to enjoy the stillness and beauty of the Winter.



Kathy and Ron



Cover Photo: Batman and Tuscan Red-Courtesy of Gary and Patti Jones. Photo by Ron Hinds.

# Letter from Your RMLA Board

Happy 2019 to our RMLA family,

The Annual Meeting held in Castle Rock, CO, at the end of October was a successful and fun day.

When we put together the agenda for the meeting, we did something a little different this year. We began with an hour of social time followed by lunch. The meeting area had already been set up by another group that day with table and chairs forming a rectangle with a large open center. As it turned out this was a perfect arrangement as everyone could see each other's faces and hear well. After folks were seated, we each spoke a little about our interests, why we volunteer, what we like about some lama-related events, what could be done better and cares and concerns. Even though this was very casual it turned out to be productive. We learned things about fellow members we did not know previously and all became closer by the end of the day. Those in attendance took part in building a strong team that will be with us in the future.

The RMLA Fiber Committee has been restructured to bring together RMLA members who are interested in fiber. An email chat group has been developed to share what each knows and ask about what they want to know. The group has become members supporting members. Kathy Stanko volunteered to Chair this committee and has done an outstanding job to get our members talking to each other about fiber, and to get more members out and about at craft fairs to promote fiber and their wares.

The group now is up to near 40 members and this is a good percentage of our membership. Kathy believes that we all have fiber to deal with so make it fun, use it in some way and share what you know. This reminds me of the day many years ago Sharon

Beacham talked about 'shearing to keep our animals healthy in hot weather....and have fun with the by-product of shearing. Do something with your fiber'.

It is troublesome to hear about the misinformation that is moving about the coconut telegraph (social media) regarding feeding and care of camelids. Sounds as if horrible recommendations are being given to people who are new to llamas and alpacas. Our Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay volunteered to Chair the Education Committee and added Outreach to the Committee's name. Susi is passionate to see that owners are learning correct methods to train and care for llamas. She has put together a team of professionals to refer new owners who need help with training and need answers to vet/medical questions. Mentoring is important!

Another interesting item came up in our discussions. "Why is there distance between llama folks and alpaca folks." Hmmmm, this is interesting, isn't it? Maybe we all need to think about that and see how we can come together somehow. New member, Gary Jones has agreed to write a series of articles about his perceptions in this area. Related to this, what about healing our personal and professional relationships among ourselves. RMLA members, unique as each of us is, all share a love of llamas and alpacas. Our individual uniqueness creates a wonderful diversity of ideas. Surely we can find a way to appreciate that in each other?

You are always welcome to call or e-mail if you have questions, concerns or just want to talk. I love hearing from you. Stay warm and keep the critters safe in these cold, dark months ahead. Spring will be here before you know it. *Lougene*

hw

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# Your Lama Needs to Know How to Back Up

By Linda Hayes ALSA, ILR & AOBA Judge

There are any number of reasons your lama needs to know how to back up. Around the ranch, getting out of a trailer or the restraint chute are prime examples. In the show ring, knowing how to back just a few steps allows you to properly “square up” the lama to show off their best conformation. Performance exhibitors are always asked to back up and often the backing obstacle is complicated and challenging.

There are four steps to training. As the lama learns your commands, you will not need to use them all. He will react to more subtle voice or body movements.

1. Say the command - in this case “back”. Always use the same word and the same tone of voice.

2. Move into the lama’s personal space. The end goal is to have your animal respond to your body movements or at least the movement coupled with a quiet voice command.

3. Use the lead to pull back on the halter. Do this gently. No jerking allowed. One of the main ways to punish a lama is to jerk on their heads. So use a soft hand.

4. Physically make the lama go where you want. In this case your first goal is just one step back.

Now here is something that is very important. Don’t do all four things at once. Start by standing in front of the lama and saying “back”. Then pause for a moment. Follow that by moving into their space and again pause. Next, put pressure on the lead and give the lama time to respond, i.e. pause. When that doesn’t get a response, use the tickle or push to the chest. Repeat this over and over, always including the pause between commands.

I have seen people try to force the lama to back by stretching the lead rope across the lama’s neck and pushing on them. This is awkward and not very subtle. If you must put hands on, tickle them on the chest. When the chest moves back, the neck and head are sure to follow.

Your first goal is to get just one step taken backward. Once this is accomplished, give them a reward.

Usually just a loose lead will do, but a bit of grain can also work. Sometimes they need to be rewarded just for switching their weight back without any foot movement at all. Training is a matter of taking small steps to accomplish your end goal. If you give a verbal reward like “good boy”, use the same tone of voice and same words each time. Follow it with a physical reward such as the



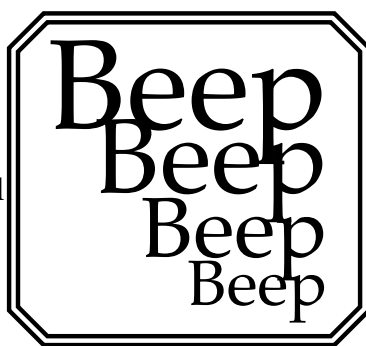
loose lead. In time, just the words will be all you need to use.

I’m sure the first time you do this the lama is thinking “This guy is nuts!” That’s why you pause after each command. You want the lama to have time to digest what is happening. Once he has taken a step back, give a reward. You are also teaching him that if he obeys your first command (voice) you won’t

touch him, get in his space or pull on his face (halter). It won’t be long before this soaks in. You can do a lot of damage to the training process if you forget and do them all at once or in the wrong order. Remember: voice, move, lead, and then touch.


After a while, you will find that the lama no longer needs to be touched and will back with just pressure on the lead. Once you get this far, work on increasing the number of steps taken. In the end, you want him to respond to slight movements of your body or quiet voice commands. In the performance classes, a lama that backs without pressure on the lead is sure to be a winner. In the halter ring and around the ranch, it makes life a lot easier.


It’s important to keep your training sessions short. Ten minutes twice a day is better than twenty all at once. It gives the lama time to think about what has happened. You have heard the term “Let’s sleep on it”? I think lamas invented it because it seems to work well for them. You can spend all day trying to teach something that they simply refuse to do and then come back the next day and they do it like they knew how all their lives.





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*Your Llama Needs to Know How to Back Up.. continued*

Okay, your llama now knows how to back. It's time to use this same training in the halter ring. With a relaxed, responsive llama at the end of the lead, you would go through the following steps to make sure he is standing correctly.

1. Be in a position where you can ask the llama to take a step straight forward. Sometimes you have to get out of line and move up into position again to make this possible. It's allowed, just don't do it over and over.
2. Ask the llama to stop. A correct llama usually stops with the hind feet where you want them.
3. If his back feet are not positioned correctly, move him forward or backward until the rear feet are side by side with weight equally balanced. Remember always get the hind feet placed before moving the front.

4. If the front feet are not in place, use your 'backing up' training to get the llama to move each front foot ever so slightly until it is where you want it. With practice you will see the llama actually hold the foot in the air until your body language tells him to put it down.

I know this sounds nearly impossible to those of you who never show in obstacle classes, but as a performance judge, I can tell you, these animals are amazing and with trust and training you can get them to do almost anything. Just watch the kids in the performance classes at the next show you attend. Many have totally trained llamas.

Once all four feet are correctly placed, the llama will be balanced for visual and hands on inspection. Your time and effort will have paid off. Even if you don't win the blue ribbon, you can bet that your peers and the judge will have noticed what a great showman you are and how well trained your animal is. That's not a bad feather to put in your cap.





# Buckle up, it's going to be a bumpy ride

By Susan Unser - Unser Alpacas

As reported in the Fall issue, my husband's life was about to get much happier. Little did he know how much that happiness was going to cost. On the day he finally granted permission to create Unser Alpacas, I hit the internet and phones running. By the end of the week a contractor had turned the old wood shed into a small barn with an automatic water system, electricity and a corral that was coyote proof. The negotiated three acres were fenced; wheelbarrow, rake and shovel were at the ready; several books been ordered about caring for Camelids and so now it was time to go shopping for my 3 Alpacas.

Located half way between my parent's home in Colorado Springs and my son's house in Parker, Black Forest Alpacas seemed destined to be the place where I would find my "boys". So with my 90 year old mother and 19 year old grandson in tow we blissfully headed off to inspect a real Alpaca operation and left that day smitten with several candidates. Greg began the tour in the corrals that accommodated over 80 females and their cria, then moved across the walkway to the 50 proud males, preening, as males are prone to do and then at the end of the walkway was a corral with about 8 males that had he explained had been taken out of the breeding pool and were for sale as "domestic companions". That was what I wanted, three, 150-pound, domestic companions. Did I ask why they were reckoned unfit for breeding? Did it matter? At that point I was hooked and would have agreed to take a two headed or three-legged companion, but one in particular caught my eye and you will meet him when he has his turn to add to this ongoing tale.

Sandy sent me a list of 5 of the names, of the ones we had met, to choose from and said they would have them ready to load at the end of their shearing day. Load? Well, of course, we needed a trailer. No problem, we have several enclosed trailers we use for hauling race cars or snowmobiles. Put in a pail for water, and off we went. On the drive to Colorado my husband asked which 3 names I had chosen from the list and I had five hours to convince him that I was

really having a hard time choosing who would get to come and who would have to stay, and that they would probably miss each other, etcetera...

It was when we arrived to find 20 cars and perhaps twice that many people, each with a particular job to do on shearing day that I began to realize it was a good dose of ignorance that was responsible for my bliss, which I of course could not admit. It

was a sight to see. My husband is very comfortable in a garage or with thousands of people cheering and engines roaring, but he was definitely out of his comfort zone when we experienced our first shearing day. Staying out of the way as over 150 Alpacas were herded into the barn, laid down and swiftly transformed from large "fuzzy" animals into lanky, thin, long necked beings proved to be quite an eye-opening experience. Our "boys" were the last to be sheared and even though everyone was exhausted extra attention was paid to their top knots, as a farewell.

It was time to load up and head for Chama. This enclosed trailer is long enough to carry 4 snowmobiles so 5, yes 5, Alpacas took up little room.

*continued on next page*



Not wanting to have their alpacas injured before the check was cashed, Greg and Sandy helped build a barrier with bales of hay midway thru the trailer to keep them all in the front. Each one had a halter, lead and a person who walked them into the trailer in a nice, controlled procession. No problem. Pail filled with water and off we went.

Not knowing what was happening in the trailer required frequent stops along the 5-hour trip to open the side door and see if they were alright. Each time we were greeted with 10 big brown eyes looking to see if we were alright. The drive home was dominated by talk of how we should go about getting them into the corral once we arrived. I could just see them leaving the trailer in five different directions and we would have to spend days rounding them up. It was decided we would back the trailer up to the gate, open the corral, then let down the back of the trailer which would create a ramp, take down just



the middle of the hay barrier and I would lead one out while Al blocked the others by holding out his hands. We had seen this work successfully in the shearing pen just that day. There was no plan B.

I gently put the lead on Garrett, the smallest, and began walking down the ramp when Plan A failed. I knew when I heard 20 hoofs thundering down the metal ramp that the holding out of hands blocking the others had not worked. First of many Alpaca lessons: **WHERE ONE GOES, THEY ALL GO.** And they all went directly into the corral, turned and looked at me, as if to say, "this will do". My husband has certainly incurred more serious physical injuries in his career but probably none that bruised his ego as much as being trampled by his five new "domestic companions."

Next issue you will meet the 6th member of this growing herd and discover how I was able to avoid moving into the corral or divorce court. Stay tuned.



## CAMELIDAE AND THE FLU.....

*From the RMLA Journal Editors*

*Llamas are 'hot' news in the world of flu research. We have received the following information from a couple of members.*

*'Llama blood clue to beating all flu', by James Gallagher, Health and Science Correspondent, BBC News*

*"Scientists may have found the key to universal flu vaccine in llamas", by Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times.*

Both articles originated with the research recently published by the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, CA. The link to this research is below.

<https://www.scripps.edu/news-and-events/press-room/2018/20181105-wilson-flu-therapy.html>

The bottom line is that because some llama antibodies are unique, i.e., small size, they can go places where no others can. After vaccinating the llamas against a number of A & B strains of influenza, the researchers took blood samples to analyze the antibodies produced by the llamas to counteract the influenza virus.

What they found were four uniquely small antibodies, called nanobodies, that showed the ability to destroy many different strains of influenza. The researchers then did their 'magic' and found a single protein capable of squeezing into conserved spaces on a virus' surface that are too small for most proteins or normal antibodies. By binding in these areas that are similar across many influenza viruses, they are able to block the ability of these viruses to infect cells.

Here is Dr. Callan's, Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital, take on this new research.

"The methods they use are an excellent follow-up to the Ask the Vet article that appeared in the Summer issue of the RMLA Journal. Basically, they are using the camelid derived nanobodies to attach to interior more conserved domains of the HA and NA surface molecules of influenza virus in order to neutralize the virus. While it works, application in the real world of influenza prevention in people would be difficult with current technology because they would have to administer before expected exposure. The nanobodies would not persist very long in a human so the duration of protection with current technology would be short. Still, very interesting application."

*Caution: this research is still in its infancy. We will keep you posted. We always knew our animals were special.*



# Aberrant Behavior Syndrome

by John Mallon- John Mallon Clinics

Well, I guess we can't put this off any longer; it's time to talk about one of the most unpleasant topics relating to llamas and alpacas — Berserk Male Syndrome, or BMS. Actually, in these politically correct times, the new term is ABS, or Aberrant Behavior Syndrome, so as not to leave out the “ladies” (and, yes, females do develop the behavior, although usually to a lesser degree, as they are not typically the territorial defenders that males are.) I want to be very clear about a couple of things before we start.

First, I do not hold myself to be an “expert” on this topic; in fact, I don't know if there are any experts out there. (If you are one, or know of one, I would sure like to spend some time speaking with you.)

I have dealt with berserkers since the early 80's, have had six or seven shipped here to work with for extended periods of time, have encountered dozens more in my travels, and have hundreds of calls referred to me by zoos, veterinarians and private individuals, so I think it's pretty safe to say that I have had more experience with them than most people have, but that doesn't make me an expert in my mind.

I am not here to preach, but to share the benefit of that considerable experience with you, in order to help you to understand this often-misunderstood phenomenon, and to help prevent creating a monster in your own backyard.

Another thing worth mentioning is this: to the best of my knowledge, no one has ever deliberately created a berserker. Please read that sentence again — it is important. The point is that nobody wants a berserker, yet there are more and more of them out there — how can this be? It is easy for me to understand how this is, with all the talking and consulting I do about it, but, for the average person, it seems incongruous that people who don't want berserkers are creating them.

The reason that these people are causing aberrant behavior to show up more and more is that they don't recognize, or refuse to accept, the reality of the warning signs.

If you've never encountered an ABS animal, you'll find it difficult to imagine one. It is an animal which will scream, spit, charge, attack, bite, butt and lay on top of people — it is a llama or alpaca that can kill.

Now, I don't mean to frighten you new folks; this extreme form of the behavior is relatively rare (but becoming more common — more about this later) and is totally man-made. ABS llamas and alpacas are not born that way, and it is not a heritable trait. It is also, (again, to the best of my knowledge) incurable, irreversible — not one

documentable case of rehabilitation exists. Usually, full-blown berserkers have to be put down. (Well, maybe I do mean to frighten you a little.)

I should also mention that most of the animals that are labeled “berserk” are not — they are simply spoiled, disrespectful, bad-mannered, undisciplined “brats” that have been “trained” in an overly permissive manner and bribed with handfed food treats.

I meet quite a few of these guys every month at clinics and have no problem dealing with them, seeing meaningful and permanent changes in their attitudes within just a few minutes. It's simply a matter of understanding the psychology of the prey animal, and communicating to him in a way that he understands that he is not allowed to push people around. Once he understands that, he easily accepts it and is unlikely to regress, unless, of course, his handler goes back to his old habits. (That's part of the beauty of the herd animal's makeup — his willingness to follow leadership unquestioningly.)

**For years, it was believed that bottle feeding babies, especially males, was the cause of ABS. We know now that this is not true...**

On average, I receive over a hundred calls a year on this topic, and the conversations are remarkably similar. Someone has had an unnerving experience with their “sweetest” llama. “He's always been very “friendly,” they say, “coming up to us in the pasture, letting us handle him all

over, following us around the barnyard, giving us kisses... visitors just love him and he gets lots of attention, but this morning, as I was feeding, he ran up behind me and chest butted me, knocking me down! Out of the blue, just like that!”

“Sweet” and “friendly” are the most often used words I hear when these animals are being described to me. Those of us with no prior experience or understanding of prey animals fall easily into this trap, because, in other animals such as dogs and cats (the predators we are used to), the behavior would be “sweet” and “friendly.”

Unfortunately, prey animals are very different, and what is submissive behavior in a predator (initiating physical contact, for instance) is aggressive behavior in a herd-living prey species. Simply brushing against a human without repercussions establishes the animal's dominance over the human, and this information is then “filed away” for future reference (say, when his testosterone starts to surge through his body and mind).

The subtlety of it all is what makes it so difficult for us to comprehend. Kisses seem so harmless, benign, even, that we just can't seem to resist, and continue on that fateful

*continued on next page*

course convincing ourselves that “this really doesn’t apply to me, or to this sweet little llama. How could this lovable little thing turn bad...?”

For years, it was believed that bottle feeding babies, especially males, was the cause of ABS. We know now that this is not true; that it is the improper over socialization that accompanies the bottle feeding, rather than the bottle itself. It’s important to know the difference between the two.

If you must supplement a baby, do it in a businesslike manner, with no talking, kissing, cooing or petting the animal. Sound easy? It’s not, believe me. For one thing a baby llama or alpaca is the cutest thing we’ve ever seen, and if it’s in trouble and has to be helped (we are literally trying to save its life), every instinct in our bodies cries out to comfort, soothe, love and encourage this baby to live, so we kiss, pet, etc., etc., thus planting a time bomb, set to go off in about two years when the hormones begin to flow.

Handling babies from birth, in a businesslike manner, and starting training early (in the first month or so) seems to be one of the best things one can do to prevent aberrant behavior in the future. It establishes parameters of acceptable behavior during the most critical learning period in the llama’s life.

Young males living without conspecific companionship, that is, another llama, are at much higher risk of becoming ABS adults, even if never handled at all. The company of his own kind is crucial to the llama or alpaca (and any other herd-oriented animal).

I am very worried about what the future holds. There are unscrupulous breeders selling two- and three-day-old babies, complete with bottles, from local feed stores and Saturday night auctions. After years of seeing fewer cases of ABS males (and females) I fear that we may have a new wave coming, especially with the proliferation of “pet” breeders.

I don’t like having to talk or write about this topic, but feel it is my obligation to do so, for the sake of the llamas and alpacas, the owners, and the industry. Remember, ABS is NOT hereditary, but it is a strictly human caused condition, which only humans can prevent. For you new buyers, beware the “friendly” baby that is so irresistible.

What, exactly, is ABS (Aberrant Behavior Syndrome; formerly BMS, or Berserk Male Syndrome?) Bearing in mind that I am a layman, and as stressed, not an “expert”, but rather, someone with 40 years’ experience with prey animals and 18 years of full time involvement with llamas and alpacas specifically, particularly relating to behavioral problems, I’ll give you my opinions and perspectives, based

upon that experience.

Please understand that there are lots of opinions out there, some based upon very limited experience or knowledge — (sometimes a little bit of knowledge can be a very dangerous thing.)

Please also keep in mind what I mentioned previously — most of the animals that have been labeled “berserk” or ABS are simply spoiled, undisciplined brats, and can be brought around in a very short time with proper training.

Most of the spitting problems that develop (not necessarily having anything to do with ABS) can be prevented by avoiding the use of food treats in training, or hand-feeding grain at any time. I know some of you don’t want to hear this, but 18 years and thousands of llamas and alpacas and their handlers have proven this to be the case. I am trying to do right, not to be right, in presenting this to you, for the reason of hoping to protect as many llamas and alpacas (and people) from having to experience this unfortunate situation firsthand.

As simply as I can explain it, ABS results from a llama’s inability to differentiate between the species (human and llama), resulting in inappropriate (that’s putting it very mildly) behavior toward people.

This is usually a result of improper over-socialization of youngsters by humans, but not limited to that cause. I have seen many llamas and alpacas which had been born into, and raised in, a perfectly normal herd situation, and not handled at all until after weaning, develop ABS. In most cases, these animals were forced to live without the company of other young llamas or alpacas, and transferred their affections and associations to humans. I have met many animals that have been sold as yearlings develop the problem, as well.

It appears that the greatest risk for future ABS occurs very early in life, during the most critical learning period of the animal’s life, those minutes and hours and days immediately following birth. The potential diminished with age, but is still very much there. Some typical scenarios:

- A compromised cria, requiring intensive care, including, but not limited to, supplemental feeding. The irresistible eyelashes and distressed humming of the newborn makes it almost impossible to keep this place of business businesslike.

The snuggling and cooing and intense attention shown the baby causes it to imprint on humans and understand that there is no difference between itself and us. These are the “friendly” babies that follow us around, gurgling and humming, with tails flipped up over their

*continued on next page*



backs.

This is a submissive “I don’t want any trouble, I’m just a baby” body posturing displayed to other llamas or alpacas to avoid trouble. The baby, then, is treating us as if we were another llama; he doesn’t mind us handling him all over, he shows no natural fear.

The problem arises when he reaches puberty and the hormones start to run his life (remember being, or raising, a teenager?)

The male, being the designated territorial defender, then attacks his human handlers when they enter his paddock (territory) to drive them out, just as he would any other llama or alpaca on “his turf”.

- A youngster sold soon after weaning to a child, who wants a playmate, an equal, a living, breathing, Disney-like “pet.”
- Compromised crias which have to spend several days at the veterinary clinic, often being cuddled by the veterinary assistants.
- Petting zoo “graduates.” Petting zoos probably produce more ABS males than all other factors combined. The constant, intense physical interaction with people and hand-fed “treats” is almost guaranteed to produce dangerous adults.
- Any cria growing up without the company of peers (animals his size and age and species).
- Youngsters of any age that are over socialized — many “PR” llamas or alpacas “suddenly” develop behaviors. These may include llamas or alpacas that are used as children’s birthday party attractions, county fair displays and other situations where there is a lot of direct physical interaction with people. There is an abnormally high incidence of the “he was our very best “PR” llama; Why, he’d let kids climb all over him and get kisses all day.

Let’s finish up this discussion on ABS (Aberrant Behavior Syndrome) with some tips on prevention. It is crucial that we recognize the fact that this is a learned

(taught) human-caused condition which is totally preventable and equally incurable.

It is up to us; some llamas and alpacas seem to be somewhat predisposed toward the syndrome due to an unusually low fear response. These babies, which we are naturally drawn to, can very easily be pushed “over the edge” with very little interaction with people, so be careful with these cuties....

I wish, as much as anyone, that we could cuddle and hug on our llamas or alpacas without fear of repercussion, but it just isn’t so. We should be satisfied with a mutually respectful relationship, and MUST assume the role of leader in that relationship — this is the world of the llama or alpaca and crucial to his well-being — a clearly defined social order.

Of the hundreds of behavior-related phone calls that I get every year, none are more heartbreaking than those from the distraught llama or alpaca owner whose veterinarian and llama or alpaca friends have told them that their “favorite, sweetest, most affectionate” llama or alpaca must be put down due to ABS. They are calling me for a last hope, a reprieve, praying that I will tell them that this most drastic step is not necessary. In the case of a full-blown ABS animal, there is really no other choice. Imagine having to deal with that, then having to live with the fact that you caused it, choosing to follow your heart rather than your head and the available information.

Please be careful — the llama or alpaca you save may be your own....

Happy trails!

*With over 40 years’ experience in the training of horses, dogs, and birds, John has devoted himself exclusively to all aspects of the llama industry since 1981. A popular featured speaker at regional, national, and international venues, and a longtime consultant with an international list of clients, John has averaged 50 to 60 clinics a year since 1994. Visit John’s website at <http://www.johnmallonclinics.net>.*

*See his ad on the page 15*

*John Mallon’s article was originally published in the GALA Newsletter, May 2018*



**I wish, as much as anyone, that we could cuddle and hug on our llamas or alpacas without fear of repercussion, but it just isn’t so.**



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## WARNING SIGNS!!!

Some behavioral clues to watch for in Berserk Male Syndrome:

- The young llama or alpaca that follows people around, seemingly preferring their company to that of other llamas or alpacas.
- The llama or alpaca that does not object to being handled (this does NOT apply to those animals which have been PROPERLY desensitized at birth) by people.
- The llama or alpaca that approaches with tail curled up and over his back, sometimes accompanied by the “submissive crouch.”
- ‘Gurgling’ to people.

- ‘Lipping’ clothes, shoelaces — a prelude to biting.
- The llama or alpaca that “casually” brushes against people in his proximity. This is the llama’s way of establishing himself in the social hierarchy of the group or herd.

Having been allowed to brush against us it is now clear in the llama’s mind that he is superior to us in the social order, and may exercise his options (spitting, bumping, ramming, biting, etc.) against us at any time in the future. Taking that a bit farther is the llama or alpaca who “bumps” his handler, usually the wife (smaller in stature) when her back is turned to him, most often when she is bending over to pick something up.

## TIPS TO PREVENT

- Do NOT over-cuddle llamas and alpacas — it is as simple as that. Llamas are not psychologically adapted to being “pets” in the sense that dogs and cats (predators) are. As difficult as this may be, it is nothing compared to hearing that your favorite llama or alpaca has to be put down, a very strong possibility in the future.
- Whenever the youngster approaches you with his tail flipped up over his back, ignore him (it sounds easier than it is...) Better yet, startle him by making a big noise and movement toward him. You have to make his llama-like interactions with you a little unpleasant in order to dissuade him from more of the same. This is known as “nipping it in the bud”.
- Gelding: While some current wisdom advocates waiting until fighting teeth have erupted before gelding in order to avoid abnormalities in bone growth (tall, stretchy, post-legged adults) and “breaking down” of fetlocks/pastern, I would prefer to have an animal a bit down on his pasterns at age ten or twelve than to have to put him down at age two-and-a-half or three.
- Give strict instructions to employees, visitors, family members, and anyone else who may come in frequent contact with him to comply with your “hands-off” policy. You must be ruthless about his — most people cannot possibly believe that such a little sweetie could become a life-threatening adult.
- Make the llama or alpaca move out of your way. If you enter a pen or corral and a llama or alpaca

blocks your way, don’t go around him to be “polite”; go through him, using a good firm bump of your knee to his ribcage if he is standing broadside to you, or a “goose” of his lower leg if he is standing otherwise. This is language the llama or alpaca can understand, how they communicate with one another — he doesn’t take it personally and won’t hold it against you, really.

- Do not allow the llama or alpaca to invade your personal space for any longer than the one second or so it takes for a nose-to-nose “how do you do.” No nuzzling! Although, to us humans, this seems a very sweet and friendly thing for a llama or alpaca to do, it is actually an aggressive act on his part, “testing the waters” to ascertain his position in the social order. As the more dominant “animal” in the group, it is our prerogative to enter his personal space, but he is never allowed to enter ours.
- At feeding time, get your exercise by doing what my Australian friends call the “Mallon Macarena” — throw your hands, elbows, knees and feet around your personal space, creating an uncomfortable zone for the llama or alpaca who wants to steal food from your hand, which brings us to...
- Do not hand-feed your llamas or alpacas, for any reason, at any time. I know, I know, but please trust me on this one...
- If your llama or alpaca approaches you whenever you enter his pen, make it an opportunity to teach him some “business;” pick up a foot, handle his ears, tail, etc., but don’t pet him.

*The two articles above, as an accompaniment to John Mallon’s article, were originally published in the GALA Newsletter, May 2018*

# Theriogenology – A Specialty

By Jordan Robins - Washington State University - DVM Candidate Class of 2020

Theriogenology is the branch of veterinary medicine concerned with reproduction, including the physiology and pathology of male and female reproductive systems of animals. The Theriogenology Club at Washington State University (Pullman, Washington) provides opportunities for veterinary students to develop knowledge of comparative reproduction.

Twice a month, at club meetings, Dr. Tibary, Dr. Ruiz and Dr. Patino share their expertise and understanding of reproduction with veterinary students. The club also hosts several labs that allow students to apply their knowledge and further their understanding with hands-on learning.

This year the Theriogenology Club hosted an Alpaca Course for breeders. The course was on Saturday September 22nd and included 20 breeders from all over the Pacific Northwest. We spent the morning listening to Dr. Tibary lecture on alpaca reproduction, and Dr. Zeigler, a large animal internist, lecture on alpaca husbandry while drinking coffee and enjoying donuts.

After lunch we divided into two small groups for hands-on experience in the labs. Dr. Ziegler demonstrated how to properly give subcutaneous injections, animal restraint, and transfaunation. Transfaunation is the process of taking rumen fluid from a healthy cow and putting it in a sick alpaca's rumen to restore normal gut microorganisms. In the other lab Dr. Ruiz, Dr. Tibary and Dr. Patino walked through female reproductive evaluation showing breeders what the veterinarian is looking for when evaluating alpacas. Since we were at WSU, we were able to display the internal reproductive tract to the breeders using an endoscope and projector as shown in the image below.

We would like to thank the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association for their financial support and continuous support of our club. Overall, the alpaca course was deemed a success and the club is looking forward to hosting the course again in the future.



Dr. Tibary (Left) and Dr. Zeigler (Right) answer questions during the Q&A before lunch.



Jordan Robins giving the attendees a run down of the day's events.



Dr. Tibary (far right), Dr. Patino (Center), and Dr. Ruiz (kneeling on left) using an endoscope and projector to display the internal reproductive tract of the female.



Breeders from Idaho working with models on properly giving subcutaneous injections.



# LLAMAS

by Malachi Abel, RMLA Youth

Llamas are wonderful animals to raise, train, and to have as a pets. My grandma and grandpa introduced me to llamas when I was about two years old. I am 13 years old now and have been showing since I was 4.

I have had fun taking care of, training and just developing a close bond with my llama. Recently, I had to say good bye to my best friend, Concrete. This was very hard, but it taught me that life is just too short. It taught me that no matter what bad is thrown your way we should always persevere through it and never give up. Yes,



it was hard to say good bye to my best friend but I can take what I learned from him and further my knowledge as I grow older.

I learned a lot from Concrete; we worked great together. One thing I learned from him was patience.

He had a great amount of patience. I guess you had to have patience when your

humans make you wear costumes. By working with Concrete, I learned his and my likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. Food was his favorite. Now, who doesn't like food? When we came across a challenge, we pushed through it together. For example, jumping. For some reason Concrete did not like to jump. That was not one of his stronger abilities but that is okay. We ended up developing an unbreakable bond. Later, I found out why he did not like to jump: he developed a bad case of arthritis. The more you train the more you will gain each other's trust.

Throughout my years of showing llamas, I have had my share of good times and my not so pleasant times. I have learned that no matter what, keep a positive attitude. You won't get anywhere with your animal by being negative all the time. Your animal will sense your anger and will not perform as well. I know I have made many mistakes showing Concrete but, I have learned what I did wrong and hopefully won't make the same mistake over again. I hope you are able to do the same and take something away from my article that you too can use with your animal friends.



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# Bridging the Gap: Alpacas & Llamas

By Gary Jones, Silver J Ranch

I fell in love with llamas in the early 90's but couldn't convince my wife to take on such an adventure. I never stopped pursuing my passion, but the trail became a little clouded with the emergence of alpacas entering our country. They were smaller and so darn cute.

One major difference between alpacas and llamas became very, very apparent right away. No, it wasn't that llamas were bigger or had banana shaped ears or had different stronger attributes than alpacas. No, it wasn't that alpacas were so darn cute and cuddly and their fleece was supposedly as glorious as cashmere and their smaller size was easier to handle. No, it was not the minor differences between the alpacas and the llamas that stood out so prominently. Nope, the biggest difference between alpacas & llamas was THEIR OWNERS!

Alpaca breeders were too snobbish and prissy with their expensive spoiled furry critters. Using cute names and a spoiled lavish lifestyle for livestock, alpaca breeders copied llama shows and perfected them to fit the alpaca industry.

Llama breeders were camelid experts, being too confident in their knowledge and always eager to share their expertise with less informed alpaca breeders. Llama breeders laughed and scratched their heads at the alpaca breeders and their obsession over alpaca fleece.

Each group existed separately and degraded the other group with myths and stories of horror. Sadly, this is too commonly done, even today. The crazy things that are said or believed are so outrageously wrong and need to be corrected to help both the llama and alpaca Industries. Both organizations and owners need to come together



to make both industries strong before it's too late.

At this point in time both the llama industry and the alpaca industry are suffering from the same ailments: lack

of attention, lack of sales, lack of interest. Alpaca & llama breeders are desperately selling or giving animals away to anyone that might show any interest in raising these wonderful animals, thus causing weekly rescues from inexperienced owners who have no clue what they're doing.

Both industries together, working TOGETHER can make both industries better. There are ways to make both industries strong again, but it starts with changing out of the past and creating a new future of understanding, sharing and caring. Both groups need to work together, supporting each other. Alpaca breeders need to know that llamas have awesome fleece too. Llama breeders need to know alpacas can guard or pack.

Perhaps as a starting point we can make an effort to always include the words "alpacas and llamas" or "llamas and alpacas" when we are speaking or writing about our animals. Where appropriate (e.g. Journal articles, event names, etc.) can we begin to make an effort towards inclusion? Do you have another idea on how we can begin to bridge the gap from both sides? Please let me know, [silverjranchalpacas@gmail.com](mailto:silverjranchalpacas@gmail.com), or write a letter to the editor ([rmleaditor@gmail.com](mailto:rmleaditor@gmail.com)). Let's share our ideas.

Finally, let's have some fun! Alpaca breeders get to know llamas, get to know llama ranchers, go to a llama show. Llama breeders get to know alpacas, get to know alpaca ranchers, go to an alpaca show. Let's start supporting each other. Look for future articles on "Bridging the Gap."

*Gary with his wife, Patti, raise & board Llamas and Alpacas in Elizabeth, CO.*





# Revitalizing Llama & Alpaca Education & Outreach

By Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay, Chair, Education & Outreach Committee

Time flies when you are having fun and before you know it, you belong to the old guard. The good part of that is that you can now teach others, so that your knowledge and experience is passed on and gets used. And while you are doing that, look at that! – you'll have lots of fun – again!

At the RMLA Annual Meeting in Castle Rock, CO on October 20, 2018 the twelve individuals around the table were having way too much fun proven by the fact that the planned time frame for the meeting was exceeded by 2 hours, and we could have gone on for hours more! One of the topics on the agenda was “**Education & Outreach**”. So many ideas, goals, thoughts and actions can be put under that rather stiff title and the best part is: almost everybody in the far reaches of the RMLA membership can contribute and participate! There are many llamas and alpacas and many new owners who struggle with issues that they are not prepared for. The more our animals, our expertise and useful information is put in front of people who are either potential owners or are already, the better.

For example: you can organize a small llama event in your community at a County fair or other cultural event, a feed store event or art walk. Event managers are usually grateful for the draw that live animals add to any event. Set up a corral in a corner, wait for curious folks to stroll over and start talking about llamas and/or alpacas.

If you shear your animals, bring fleece; if you pack, bring a saddle. If the local paper covers the event, even better. If you are interviewed please mention the importance of being educated about the animals you want to bring into your life for overall success and happiness. And please talk about RMLA as a source of information and support. You can even do a “mini clinic” covering leading, saddling, brushing, shearing and talking about sheep guards for instance and their advantage over sheep dogs. Whatever applies in your community. If you don't want to go all out and transport your animals, write a letter to the editor of your local paper. Display your animals on your Facebook page and add a link to RMLA. If you feel so inclined, join some of the Facebook forums and add your voice and include a link to RMLA.

The RMLA website (rmla.com) is presently being improved, extended and rejuvenated. If you haven't been on it for a while, please take a moment to visit. When you tap the button “Education & Outreach” you will find categories such as “Ask The Vet” and “Behavior & Training” that folks in need for information can access. The RMLA Facebook is vibrant as ever.



Being involved in animal-related Youth Projects is another way to spread the word and provide education and understanding of llamas and alpacas, their behavior and care. Invite your neighbor kids to meet the alpacas, let them lead a llama around the block or in a parade. Teaching the youth is, of course, of utmost importance. I am planning to saddle two llamas during Christmas time, fill the panniers with baked goods and other goodies and make the rounds to the neighborhood kids. They can then take over and lead the llamas. Should be fun for everybody.

In addition, RMLA is planning a free Education & Outreach workshop next spring. E-blasts will be sent out when the plans are firm.

There are many opportunities to reach out and educate and I bet you could come up with even more ideas that fit your neighborhood and lifestyle. The reward will be happy, healthy animals and educated people who will enjoy not only owning the animals but owning the power of knowledge to take care of them properly.

It takes a village. Let's get to work. If you would like to share your ideas or have questions, please contact me at [education-outreach@rmla.com](mailto:education-outreach@rmla.com).

Let's have a fantastic 2019 as we share our knowledge and love of alpacas and llamas with our community.



# Creating Marled Yarn

By Nancy Wilson  
Camp Verde, AZ

The Oxford Dictionary defines *marled* as an adjective meaning “(chiefly of yarn or fabric) mottled or streaked.”

There are a couple of ways to create a marled yarn. The simplest form of a marled yarn is to spin singles in two different colors and ply them together. This type of yarn is also known as barber pole yarn. While this type of yarn doesn't always conjure up a desirable yarn (especially if done with highly contrasting colors), it can be created to give an interesting effect. If one of those plies is the same color for the entire length of the yarn, and the other ply is short sections of



multiple colors, the result is a self-striping yarn. If you use black as the first ply this will make the colors of the other yarn pop.

Gray or white will give different effects.



The second way to create a marled yarn is to draft two different colors of fibers together at the same time.

This is a great way to extend a smaller amount of fiber. If you have two, 2 ounce rovings, then you instantly have four ounces of roving. To prepare to spin this type of yarn, I hold the two rovings together in my hand and pull off short segments of both (approximately 12-18”). I then gently pre-draft them to encourage some blending. Then off to the wheel, and let the colors change at random as you draft the fibers. The plied yarn will have interesting color changes.

Don't think that this technique is only for dyed roving. I am in the process of knitting a vest from marled yarn using natural colors. One of the yarns is a dark brown marled with gray, and the other yarn is a medium brown marled with tan. The resulting yarn has hints of all the colors, and creates what a wine taster might call a complex bouquet of colors.

This is also a great technique if you've got some dyed roving, that sort of go together, that you wish you had more of. If you're not sure about a combination, you can spin up just a small amount and make a sample.



Happy Spinning!



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## What do you do when....?

By Ron Hinds

It has probably happened to most of us. I know it has happened on our ranch.

You have an intact male that got loose in a field with one or more females. Panic sets in. What do I do?

- Get a can of grain and start shaking it violently to get the male's attention, or
- Start chasing him with a halter and lead, or
- Send in more intact males to fight with him, or
- Wait until the male gets tired and sits down.

Here's a successful plan of action:

If any of the females are pregnant,

- 1) Get the female(s)' attention by opening a gate into an empty area so they can run through and then quickly close the gate before the male follows, or
- 2) Wait until the male calms down (no longer chasing the female), then put a halter on him and lead him away.

If the female(s) are not pregnant, with a lead rope and halter in hand, wait until the female sits down for the male, then quickly put the halter on the male and pull him off the female.



# Berserk Male Syndrome or...Novice Handler Syndrome?

By Marty McGee Bennett - CAMELIDynamics

## Berserk Male Syndrome

Berserk male syndrome is a phrase that has been around for a long time. As near as I can tell Llama Breeder Paul Taylor originally used the term BMS in an article in late 1980 or early 1981. Paul wrote an article in the 3L Llama Newsletter in March of 1981 clarifying what he meant by the term.

Paul said, "It seems to be the end result of a series of confusing and negative interactions with humans, beginning with the breakdown of the normal standoffishness that herd raised llamas show in their relationship to humans. A male llama that has been bottle fed or constantly petted and fondled as a baby will show no hesitation about initiating contact with humans, as in the mild case of the pushy llama who runs up to be petted or bumps with his chest against people in the pasture with him. Such a llama is apt to be pushed or slapped to keep him away; this conflict can escalate over a period of time, possibly with changing owners or eventually the use of a whip or club to keep the animal at bay. The final result seems to be a tangled combination of the normal llama behavior for dominance assertion, breeding and defense."

While I don't disagree with the characterization, I don't like the term because 1) berserk male syndrome makes it sound as if it is some random bad luck thing that just happens like Choanal Atresia, not so. It is we humans who are responsible; and 2) the behavior is not restricted to males.

In any case camelids do not have a monopoly on this particular problem, domestic animals that become aggressive occur in all species. Dairy bulls, bottle raised cats, puppies and foals all are prone to difficulties in their interactions with humans.

### What is aggression... more questions than answers

Today the phrase BMS is used to describe those llamas and alpacas who are doing anything from innocently pushing the bounds of proper behavior to those animals that are completely out of control and dangerously aggressive. It is a confusing state of affairs.

I get calls from worried llama and alpaca owners on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis. These owners are worried about the potentially aggressive or already aggressive behavior of their animals. The rest of Taylor's article went on to advise llama owner/breeders to allow young llamas to be socialized by the herd so that they develop the normal standoffish behavior. I agree that allowing young llamas and alpacas to live in a herd is a good idea.

On the other hand, what if you, like many camelid owners, don't have a herd? Many new owners have one each—male, female and new baby. What about the young llama or alpaca that voluntarily leaves the company of the herd to interact with humans? What about the orphan or youngster who must be treated medically on an ongoing basis? The current advice within the camelid community ranges from a complete hands-off policy until young camelids (especially males) are six months old to intense handling as a newborn to varying approaches in between.

I think that in order to decide how to prevent aggressive behavior it is important to gain awareness of what it is exactly and what causes it. Perhaps more importantly to recognize the early warning signals of aggression and act then. Why do some males become aggressive and others raised in the same circumstances turn out fine? Can it happen to females? Is gelding aggressive males the magic bullet?

## The Novice Handler Syndrome

Perhaps it would help if we reorient our thinking about aggressive camelids and put the onus where it belongs—with the humans. My suggestion is that we coin an additional term "The Novice Handler Syndrome." It is my experience that aggressive animals happen because a variety of

**Perhaps it would help if we reorient our thinking about aggressive camelids and put the onus where it belongs—with the humans.**

factors coalesce. Camelids are born with different personalities and tendencies. Humans have different behavioral styles, levels of confidence and experience. Environmental factors such as multiple owners, age of weaning, herd composition also play a part in the behavior of a llama or an alpaca.

A precocious animal whose approach to new situations is to control them combined with a new owner lacking in experience = problem. The same new owner with a naturally timid animal = no problem. A young camelid with early medical problems (even if he is raised in a large herd) who is later sold to a new timid owner=problem. A young male camelid is raised alone with no other llama or alpaca babies to play with. The owners have young children. The children encourage aggressive play behavior directed at humans. The young male camelid eventually outweighs the children and reaches puberty when the games get serious=problem. You get the picture. Sets of circumstances are responsible, not one factor, and usually a person new to camelids is part of the mix.

**How it Starts....Nancy Novice** So how do we humans navigate these dangerous behavioral waters? The first step

*continued on next page*



I believe is to own the problem. Once we accept that the behavioral change has to happen with the humans in this particular animal's environment, we can realize the limitations of a "fix" and set about changing what we can. The easiest thing is prevention through awareness. One very important facet of the "Novice Handler Syndrome" is the tendency of the human to misinterpret the beginnings of aggressive behavior for friendliness.

Allow me a short description of how the NHS is played out leading to a real problem. Nancy Novice has her first llama or alpaca baby. IT'S A BOY! The baby lives with two adult females (Nancy's entire herd) in a small pasture. His instincts tell him to play, wrestle, bite, and bump. We have a couple of immediate problems. First there is not a lot of room to run and not much to do. Second the other animals in his environment don't want to play and in fact they say something like "Get away from me kid you bother me." Young stud is majorly bored.

The high point of this young animal's day is when Nancy comes out and sits with him. This two-legged "thing" is nothing if not interesting and far from being rebuffed he is the star of the show. He starts finding out about this thing in his environment by interacting with it. At first, he is a bit timid and walks up with his neck and nose extended for a greeting. Fine so far. At first the baby gets Nancy's undivided attention. From Nancy's point of view everything this baby does is worthy of putting in the baby book.

The reality is that there are chores that Nancy must do in the barn such as mucking out the stalls. The baby decides he wants to interact with her. He wants her attention so he picks at her clothes, puts his nose in her face and rubs against her while she is working. A week or so later this youngster is now running up to Nancy skidding to a stop and putting his nose in her face. I can bet you that by the time this baby is 16 months old—maybe a lot sooner than that—Nancy will be calling me, or somebody, to ask why her beautiful, friendly, perfect, baby boy is now rearing up and wrapping his legs around her waist every time she turns her back on him.

Young llama or alpaca babies that rub, lean stand closely, walk right up and put their nose in your face or crotch and fail to yield space when you move toward them **are not being friendly**. These behaviors are really the beginnings of future aggression. Your young camelid is exploring his environment and checking out the boundaries of what is allowed. He or she is asking you very important questions. The conventional wisdom of ignoring youngsters who behave this way is, in my

experience, not the answer. If you do nothing to discourage this seemingly "friendly" behavior it usually escalates.

**What Now?** What is Nancy to do now and when did she give the impression to a young perfect baby boy that he could practice breeding her? Should she slap him, push him away every time he comes near her and yell NO BAD boy! ? I wouldn't recommend this course of action. It surely would have been better if Nancy knew to discourage her young suitor earlier on. There is certainly nothing wrong with a young llama or alpaca youngster soliciting a nose greeting with neck and nose extended and then waiting politely for Nancy to lean forward to participate in the greeting. Sticking

his nose in Nancy's face any time he felt like it is crossing the line of allowable behavior.

I believe if Nancy had flicked him on the nose with her fingers (like she was flicking a piece of lint off her sweater) the first couple of times this youngster entered

**...flicked him on the nose with her fingers the first couple of times this youngster entered her personal space without permission the problem would have ended before it got going.**

her personal space without permission the problem would have ended before it got going. I don't mean to suggest that Nancy needs to scare him away only that she needs to be clear about the fact that she has personal space and he is not allowed in it. A foot and a half is my personal space. A human need only stop an animal from entering this space; we do not need to chase the animal away.

In my opinion Nancy would be making a big mistake to push this young guy away when he approaches or to yell. Yelling gets everybody's blood going, escalates the situation and indicates that you are afraid. Speak like you mean it firmly and powerfully and tell the young camelid what you want him to do, which is STAY BACK. NO is a very overused word and is a lousy command. NO is the answer to a question not a command. The unspoken thought after you say NO is... DON'T JUMP ON ME. Better not to even think it!

If you are currently dealing with a young camelid who has headed down this road and is already at the point of rubbing pushing you may need more than your fingers to back these little guys up. A Frisbee is a great tool. Use a very short staccato bip on the nose along with a firm STAY BACK. You are creating a force field around you. Remember when you use the Frisbee there is **no follow through**- simply reinforce the edges of your space with the Frisbee. Visualize that the animal is hitting the Frisbee rather than the other way around. The point is not to hurt this youngster but to startle him. Get a few Frisbees punch a hole in the edge and tie a string on

*continued on next page*

it so that you can hang one anywhere you are likely to need one. Carry one with you AT ALL TIMES until the youngster gets the idea. It is important that every human in your young camelid's life behave consistently. If you have children keep them away from this youngster until he understands how to behave. If you have farm visitors put this guy on a halter; if he is halter trained, or put him back in the barn.

**Insist on Respectful Behavior** It is not a bad idea to geld him. Gelding uncomplicates the problem but doesn't solve it. You must still learn to behave differently and set limits. Female llamas and alpacas can become disrespectful and difficult too. Clucking, ear threats and spitting are the more likely outcome but I have met females who were physically intimidating. My policy is to treat male and female babies no differently. I insist on respectful behavior from both sexes.

Babies do best if they have other babies to play with. With other babies around in many cases, the whole problem becomes a non-issue. If you are going to have a single baby, think about forming a baby camelid playgroup. Contact other breeders that are going to have single babies. Make arrangements to board your female and baby at their farm for a month or two and then move both mothers and babies to your place for two months. The hassle is well worth it and you will both benefit from the enjoyment of watching the babies play together.

### **Avoid the Dangers of Overcompensation**

Overcompensation is a major facet of the "Novice Handler Syndrome" leading to the old "I will show this animal who is the boss attitude". I prefer to think of myself as the teacher rather than the boss. If you prefer the boss analogy, that's fine, but how about being a boss of the new millennium instead of the 40's. Enlightened managers, teachers and bosses know that coming on like Attila the Hun creates major difficulties.

Many trainers use the word dominance to describe how to behave around an animal. The issue of dominance is a tricky one. Humans come into an animal's life as being entirely different from them and very powerful—omnipotent actually. We control everything about the environment, no question. I don't think it is a good idea to participate in dominance contests with animals. Assume you are in charge, don't feel like you have to prove it and by all means don't give away your place of preeminence by encouraging animals to behave disrespectfully towards you. Setting consistent limits, being respectful of the animal and being careful about asking too much too soon are all good ways of avoiding confrontation.

Using training methods that do not rely on force or intimidation are important when training camelids particularly the ones that test the water. Tying an alpaca or a llama and forcing him to submit to excessive grooming, dragging him to teach him to lead, physically holding him to put a halter on or to pick up his feet will all provoke the young animal that has decided to be physical with humans.

### **Dangerously Aggressive Animals**

One last difficult issue... what about the animal that has already gotten **dangerously** aggressive, that is bumping, hitting, charging, vocalizing and biting? Sell him to someone who doesn't know any better? Auction? Petting zoo? Keep him behind a chain link fence for the rest of his life? Once an animal learns that aggression works to make him/her feel more secure it is very hard to convince him to give it up. Training techniques that rely on force or reciprocal aggression usually escalate the behavior. When treated this

**Dominance is not a static thing. Just because you were dominant on Tuesday doesn't mean you get to be top dog forever, so if your approach is to address this problem with dominance techniques, it would be best not to turn your back.**

way most aggressive camelids will become selectively obedient to those humans that have dominated them and of whom they are afraid.

Dominance is not a static thing. Just because you were dominant on Tuesday doesn't

mean you get to be top dog forever, so if your approach is to address this problem with dominance techniques, it would be best not to turn your back. There are some training and handling techniques that I share individually with people who are determined to give these animals another chance but as a general rule I don't encourage people to keep these animals around, particularly if you have children. The irony of the situation is that most people who have the emotional constitution to deal with these animals don't want to and the people who can't stand to see any animal euthanized and decide to "save" these animals don't have the inner ballast to deal with them successfully. If you have helped to produce or maybe just ended up with a llama or an alpaca who has become **dangerously** aggressive—that is one that attacks and bites— it might be best to take the responsibility and have him put down. In many cases this is a kindness. A quick painless end is highly preferable to a severely limited, confusing, lonely long existence.

*Go to [CAMELIDynamics.com](http://CAMELIDynamics.com) for more information from Marty and a schedule of her up-coming trainings.*



# Fiber Artist? Who, Me?

By Elizabeth Cline, - el Zorro Colorado Alpacas

In 2001, Ron Hinds and I acquired "ancient Bolivian and Chilean" alpacas for our "starter herd" at el Zorro Colorado Alpacas. For those who want to learn a little Spanish, el Zorro is "the fox". Colorado is the color red for "animate" objects. LOVE red foxes ... even if they are a predator to our chickens!

Ron and I involved ourselves in the local alpaca industry. Ron had been a pioneer in the industry, starting with llamas in 1994. We progressed from our starter herd to much better quality fiber-producing alpacas thanks to MANY friends who gave us very good breeding opportunities for our growing herd.

I learned how to skirt fleeces for show and production from some of the best: Freda and Carl McGill, Jody Sharp, and Billie Rogers to name a few. I entered the best of our herd into the local halter and fiber competitive shows. We won ribbons, getting better every year. At that time, el Zorro Colorado could compete with the local alpaca producers. We did not have the best nor did we not have the worst. We offered new owners an opportunity to start their herd within modest financial means, all the while providing the best mentoring available.

Then 2008 hit. Now anyone could acquire high quality alpacas for not very much money. el Zorro Colorado Alpacas couldn't compete with them. We intentionally stopped breeding our alpacas.

With breeding and selling out of the picture, fiber became more of our focus. I will wholeheartedly admit I am not a fiber artist.

Nevertheless, I wanted to do something with our fiber other than sending it to the cooperatives and/or storing it in our "cat and fleece" room. We finally had a large batch of fiber sent to a local mill and processed into very nice yarn, battings, and rovings. It was a way to start the "added value" process.

I volunteered at our local fleece shows as a scribe. That is THE BEST way to learn about fiber! You get a free education on the front line while the judges evaluate submitted fleeces. I also took fiber compliance classes offered by the Alpaca Breeders of the Rockies (ABR).

I now volunteer at local shows as a compliance checker. If you ever want to put your hands on some of the best fiber, volunteer as a compliance checker at a large show.

During one of our local alpaca shows, there was a fiber sort, for which I volunteered. It was an opportunity to join the Natural Fiber Producers (NFP) Cooperative. NFP will only accept fiber sorted through the Certified Sorted® System (CSS). We joined NFP and I was a scribe at the sort. I learned much from that experience.

Shortly after that, there was a course and sort offered locally at Sharon and Frank Loner's ranch in Parker, Colorado. I wanted to improve my knowledge of fiber and I will have to say there was no better way. I took the Basic Course with many local and other close fiber enthusiasts. I decided to continue with more fiber education and took the Advanced Course, then signed up to be a CSS apprentice sorter.

My mentor was very patient with my initial years of sorting ours and two other ranches' fleeces. The limit of apprenticeship is 2 years; I extended mine to more than 6 years. Mind you, I need to start all over again because I have overextended my apprenticeship.

During my apprenticeship through CSS, CSS joined forces with other fiber experts to form Sorting, Classing, and Grading (SCG). SCG is standardizing the process of sorting and grading across the country to further the natural fiber textile industry in the United States. I am excited about this collaboration.

Another opportunity arose earlier this year: a Basic Course offered in Nebraska. A fellow fiber enthusiast, Coral Dillon, and I went to the Basic Course and we learned so much. The instructors pass around samples of blankets, both are the same grade of fiber. One was made from fiber sorted by the SCG method, the other, was made from fiber sorted by a novice. There was a huge difference in feel between the two.

## **Consistency makes a difference! Who knew?**

There are two lengths, woolen and worsted, and 6 grades of fiber, depending on the micron of the individual fiber. Then the colors: white, beige, fawn, brown, bay black, black, silver grey, and rose grey. During an actual sort, the sorter has to class and grade each blanket into that many different bins, then combine same lengths, grade, and color. That's a lot of bins!

My favorite part of this training was a very quick way to establish the first grade of the entire fleece, as our very knowledgeable instructor called it: "the sweet spot". Instead of evaluating every single piece of the fleece as I was originally taught; you evaluate just the center of the fleece. Working out from the center, fiber that does not match that first analysis is placed into different fiber categories.

Another quick trick we learned was the "eye level" evaluation. This is where you determine the grade of your fiber based upon the distance down your body from the fiber. See the diagrams.

I am excited about using these techniques when I evaluate, class, and sort our ranches' 2-years' worth of fiber. In other words, I guess I am a fiber artist after all. If you want to know more about this amazing opportunity to experience and learn about natural fiber sorting, visit:

<https://sortgrade.class.com/apprenticeship-program/>



# PACABUDDIES EDUCATIONAL AND MARKETING EVENT

By Gary Jones - Silver J Ranch



PacaBuddies is a group of like-minded alpaca owners & breeders south and east of metro Denver who have joined together and pooled resources to better share the experience with members of our communities. For more than 20 years, PacaBuddies has been hosting 2-day events at various locations in Aurora, Parker and Castle Rock.

A list of visitors along with analysis of related information has been kept since 2006. Using these email and snail-mail addresses, PacaBuddies sends emails and postcards to invite the public from the recent lists and typically generates 150-200 visitors each year.

The last 6 years the event has been held in the multi-purpose building at the Douglas County Fairgrounds. This September we had 180 visitors and 2 dozen alpaca owners plus 6, or so, alpaca fiber product vendors.



For the first time, PacaBuddies is holding a second event the weekend before Valentine's Day on **Feb. 9 & 10, 2019**. We expect a good turn out and hope the weather cooperates. Please join us at the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Castle Rock, CO. For more information and to sign up as a participating farm and/or vendor, please go to the PacaBuddies website at [www.pacabuddies.org](http://www.pacabuddies.org).



Kayla Wiggins, 13, parades her llama, Argento, past the judges at the Spokane County Interstate Fair. The pair were dressed as salads and won Grand Champion in the competition. Kayla lost her legs to bone cancer. She found llama keeping as an outlet as she inspires others. Once, she dressed up as a shark bite victim with Argento as the shark. "He doesn't care about the wheelchair, he's like a dog". From the Spokesman Review, Spokane WA.





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## A Baby Llama Needed A Home

by Chris Switzer, Estes Park, CO

Years ago, in 1980, when we were first learning about llamas, a phone call came asking us to help rescue a baby llama from the Denver Zoo. Only 3 months old, we went to see her, and at 4 months she was separated from her mother and came to our place in Estes Park.

We became fast friends! And, our black Lab became “a friend through the fence.” A four-sided small barn was built by my husband. It had a large window with sides that would open, plus a sliding door. Also, some sheep fencing was put up. I carried five-gallon water buckets plus hay to her every day; sometimes twice a day.

We “played” together -- romping and running. I used a halter/lead rope to walk with her. My command was “come” and very soon she trusted me and would walk through small metal gates, up wooden steps outside, and load into a trailer.

Why did I want a llama? For “wool,” of course. I had begun weaving and spinning in 1971, and knew that llama undercoat was very soft and warm. By the mid-1970’s I met Bobra Goldsmith. Actually, her Mom, Olga Oliver, taught me to spin. Soon after, I helped Bobra with chores and learned how to care for llamas.

I could brush China (Cheena) when she was tied to a wooden split rail fence. She liked it, especially on her neck. I’d talk to her and she’d “hum” back. After 10 - 15 minutes, I had a large brown grocery bag full of her wool! My spinning got better and better. She had coloring like a guanaco -- light grey face, reddish brown body with guard hairs, light underbelly, but oh the undercoat! When I showed other spinners the fiber, they guessed it was cashmere!

Eventually, she showed me a special type of affection: she rubbed her forehead on my upper back. I’ve never had another llama or alpaca out of 600+ do that. She learned her name and would come even from far out in the pasture. She was very observant, curious, and always interested in what was going on.

This is the story of my first llama, China. I loved her so.



## Colostrum Management in the Cria

**Question:** What is colostrum and why is it important for the cria? What should a llama owner do if for some reason the cria does not get the colostrum?

**Response:** The “first milk”, or colostrum, produced by camelids and other livestock species is key to providing temporary passive immunity to protect against many diseases while the cria develops its own active immunity. The structure of the placenta of many of our large animal species, including camelids, prevents the passage of immunoglobulins from the dam to the fetus within the womb. Crias and other livestock neonates are then born without the presence of antibodies. Instead, they rely on absorption of antibodies from colostrum, or “maternal passive transfer”, to provide immunity. Colostrum contains much more than just IgG antibodies. First, it provides needed energy for the cria after they are born. It also contains antimicrobial factors, immune-modulators, and anti-inflammatory substances that all play key roles in ensuring that the cria is well-protected from infectious diseases for the first days to weeks of life.

There are several things you can do to increase the quality of your dam’s colostrum during gestation:

- Vaccinating your llama or alpaca in the last two months of their gestation will stimulate them to produce antibodies that will concentrate in the mammary gland. Clostridial vaccines, usually containing *C. perfringens* types C and D as well as *C. tetani* (CD&T Toxoid Vaccines) are the standard core vaccines for llamas and alpacas. Administering these vaccines prior to birth will improve the transfer of these specific antibodies and hence, increase the protection provided to the cria.
- Providing your dam with adequate nutrition is key to ensuring that her udder develops appropriately. Ensuring that she has sufficient energy and protein intake during gestation



From left to right, Dr. Ben Turchin, Dr. Elizabeth Crabtree, and Dr. Cileah Kretsch.

will aid in her ability to make adequate, high quality colostrum.

- Increasing the amount of carbohydrate and protein in your dam’s feed during the last 3 months of gestation with supplemental grain will support growth of the fetus as well as proper development of the mammary gland and subsequent colostrum production.

The ability of crias to effectively absorb immunoglobulins through their gut begins to decline within hours of birth, with little to no absorptive capability by 24 hours of age. Thus, a newborn cria needs to nurse or be tube fed as early as possible. A good rule of thumb is to ensure colostrum intake of at least 5% of the cria’s body weight within the first 6 hours of life. The earlier they receive this, the better the absorption will be. Watch the newborn cria closely to make sure that it is standing and begins nursing within the first 2 hours of life. Unless your dam is not showing interest in her cria, you do not need to interfere. Confining the pair to a smaller pen is one way to help the dam and cria bond and promote nursing.

If your cria is premature, weak, seemingly ill, or has not stood or attempted to nurse within the first two hours of life, it is time to assist the cria. This may be as simple as standing the cria up and guiding it to the dam’s udder. In other situations, you may need to milk the colostrum

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Ask The CSU Vet Team continued

from the dam and feed it by a bottle or tube. Your veterinarian can aid you in placing a naso-esophageal tube so that colostrum can be administered easily for very compromised crias.

If your llama or alpaca has an underdeveloped udder, if she is not producing adequate colostrum, or if you are just not confident that the cria has been nursing, there are a few options to improve the chances that your cria receives adequate passive transfer. If you run a large operation, you may want to consider having a colostrum bank on hand. Frozen colostrum will maintain its quality for roughly one year. Freezing colostrum in 1-pint servings in either zip lock bags or other containers is one way to prepare for the need of extra colostrum. When doing this, collect colostrum from a healthy, mature female after its own cria has nursed well. Generally, you can collect this around 2 hours after birth.

While colostrum from the same species is ideal, other colostrum sources can be used. Colostrum from ruminant species such as goats, sheep, or beef cattle are acceptable alternatives. If using colostrum from these other species, it is best to ensure that source herd is free of infectious diseases that can be transmitted in colostrum such as Johne's Disease (*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*), Caseous Lymphadenitis

(*Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*), and BVDV. Powdered colostrum replacers for ruminants are also available, however the use of these products have not been well-studied in llamas and alpacas. Make sure that the product says colostrum "replacer" and not colostrum "supplement." A high-quality colostrum replacer will contain at least 100 g of IgG per 2-liter mixed volume (50 mg/ml). Please see the table below for some examples of high-quality colostrum replacers.

If 24 hours have elapsed and your cria has not received adequate colostrum, oral supplementation will no longer be useful. If you are at all concerned about colostrum intake and passive transfer, you should contact your veterinarian. They will be able to test a blood sample to evaluate for successful passive transfer and will be able to make recommendations on how to treat the cria if failure of passive transfer is confirmed. An intravenous or intraperitoneal transfusion of llama or alpaca plasma can provide passive transfer of antibodies when colostrum intake has failed. Hyperimmune llama plasma is available commercially from Triple J Farms – Kent Laboratories (<https://kentlabs.com/jjj/llama-plasma/triple-j-farms-llama-plasma/>). Plasma transfusion in crias with complete or partial failure of passive transfer



Product Name	Immunoglobulin (grams/2L)	Manufacturer
Bovine IgG Colostrum Replacement	100	Land O Lakes Animal Milk Products Co.
Acquire	100	APC, Inc.
Calf's Choice Total Silver	100	ALTA Genetics USA Inc.
Calf's Choice Total HiCal (Bronze)	100	ALTA Genetics USA Inc.
Secure Calf Colostrum Replacer	125	Vita Plus
Colostrx 130	130	AgriLabs
Lifeline Rescue	150	APC, Inc.
Sav-A Caf Ultra Start 150	150	Milk Products LLC
Secure 175	175	Vita Plus

will help protect them from potentially fatal infections for the first month of life. Following this time, the cria will begin to develop their own antibodies.

If you have more questions regarding colostrum management in your cria or how to best prepare your llama to care for her cria, get in touch with your veterinarian. Together, you can develop a plan to maximize your chances for successful passive transfer in your cria.





# BORN TO LEAD

By Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay — Yellowstone Llamas

Alicio was the result of a breeding program that did not have packing in mind. Oh, no - Alicio was meant to be the showy type! And he is. His gait is fluid and correct. His legs are strong and straight, his body is well balanced and athletic – now that we can see his features after removing all that fleece! - and he holds his pretty head high with confidence. While at first glance, he was not very tall, there was certainly packer potential under all that showy fluff and a personality to boot! So the decision was made to try.

Alicio is part Argentine and part Peruvian, born in the beautiful Flathead Lake country of Montana. Mountains graced his horizon every day on his ranch home full of Argentine crosses. On a balmy day in May of 2017, at the age of six, I whisked him away to Yellowstone country and our llama home of then 15 with his buddy Cuzco, almost 4 years his junior.

After a period of settling in and after the effects of neutering him had slowly passed, Alicio was initiated into my herd of geldings, who immediately jumped and picked on him and ignored the taller but younger Cuzco. Yet, Alicio was nimble, fast and confident and soon took his rank in the group. Intelligent and curious like most llamas I have met and trained, he showed an even temperament towards me and was eager to learn. As I did not need him to pack that season, I took my time with him which is one of the most important ingredients in my pack llama training program. He progressed well and I was confident I had a packer.

One fine day in July of 2018, Alicio loaded with his buddies into the trailer on his first trip to Yellowstone National Park. As all rookies have to pay their dues and go through an apprenticeship, Alicio, like many before him was positioned in the back of the line so

he could watch and learn. We set off on the trail with a total of 9 llamas led by 9 humans, everybody smiling, everybody happy. Except Alicio!

Our treks are guided by two guides. I am usually in the front with my lead llama Domingo and my guide, Davina, was leading Alicio at the end of the line like she had many others over the years.



We were not 10 minutes into the trip when Alicio's unruly behavior in the back made the group have to stop over and over again. My cute rookie packer who on our many training sessions had happily walked behind me keeping a polite distance between us, kept walking right into Davina with head lifted and an overall demeanor of impatience and upset. She made him circle repeatedly and finally exclaimed with exasperation that this guy was not manageable.

We traded llamas and I took my place in the back. Off we went. Alicio started crowding me from the get go. It was not like we were any distance from the llama in front of us that maybe would cause a fear of being left behind. In fact, we were

pretty much right on that llama's tail. What was going on? Alicio continued trying to get by the llama in front of him and the many circling maneuvers by me did not help one bit! The group kept stopping to accommodate Alicio and me, so I finally tried a new option: Alicio and I moved to the front of the line with Davina and Domingo behind us.

It was like a cloud had shifted from blocking the sun! Alicio's ears went happily forward, he walked erect and relaxed, neck slightly craned in eager anticipation of what would present itself on the trail in front of his

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exploring feet. Next, he turned around while never breaking his stride, to make sure “his boys” were following. They were, of course. Alicio’s gaze went to the mountains ahead, took in the forest that closed in on either side of the trail, pursed his lips and settled into a comfortable stride. Now then, he seemed to say, “that’s much better, let’s go”.

The group of humans smiled and wondered aloud, since I had told them ahead of time about the rookie I was bringing along on this trek who would probably walk timidly in the back. Nothing timid about this guy! In fact, it seemed as if Alicio knew he belonged in the front. He knew he was a leader! Hesitantly and feeling a little guilt, I turned to see what my lead llama, Domingo, had to say in the matter and was surprised to see an expression of wise acceptance on his face. Maybe he was happy to be relieved of a great responsibility, which can weigh on a leader, no doubt. But Domingo’s face also said “Let’s wait and see.”

So off we went down the trail and into Yellowstone’s wild wonderland. Alicio marched undaunted, his big eyes intently staring ahead, unblinking, ears swiveling in all directions, taking it all in. He was clearly born for this moment, for this place, for this purpose! Every so often, he turned around to make sure everybody was still there, then focused again on the trail, bending his neck to peek around a bend and forging ahead. I was shocked.



Alicio and guest

While Domingo had moved into lead position pretty fast himself, he did have a few trips of learning and watching from the back under his belt first, something I still think is necessary for a solid base of becoming a lead llama. As we approached the stream, Alicio stepped into the water without hesitation, then up the steep hill on the other side, his smooth gait not too fast, not too slow, accommodating everybody. In camp, he settled into the year-long, well established routine with all llamas getting comfortable in the meadow and Candido circling the camp. It was settled and all was well.

Alicio went on 2 more treks this summer and on the last one he agreed to settle into second position due to a very steep ascent that Domingo had done a few times and knew how to pace and rest long enough to get everybody to the top. While Alicio is confident, he certainly has to gain more experience. While he forges ahead without hesitation, he has not yet met a bison bull on the trail or a bear in camp. To be a true leader, one needs seasons of experience in all kinds of situations, whether you are a llama or a statesman. Yet, Alicio clearly knows that this is his path in life, this is his fate. Expected to be a showman, he is going to be a leader. It happens. And with Domingo’s wise and gentle help, the support of the whole llama gang and a little bit of guidance from me, I am confident he will get there.

And he will be great!





# ALPACAS ON THE ROCKS EVENT

By Jane Levene

Hello RMLA members! First, before anything else is said, we, at Alpacas on the Rocks (as well as your fellow RMLA members) would like to thank RMLA for providing the show insurance policy for our event.

Alpacas on the Rocks (AOR) started in 1996 as a group of six alpaca owners who got together to do a cooperative open house. The purpose was to introduce alpacas and llamas, their fleece and fleece products to the public. Participants have changed over the years but the purpose remains. This year's event was held at the Jefferson

Evergreen and Golden on the West.

We enjoyed the company and participation of Jerry Dunn and Judy Glaser. Jerry brought a few llamas and Judy had a fantastic vender space. AOR always tries to keep expenses as low as possible, and if someone is a fiber artist or doesn't have



County Fairgrounds Event Center on October 13 and 14.

This year we added a couple new features. First, because alpacas and llamas are cousins, we invited members of the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association (RMLA) to join us. Currently we have 3 RMLA members who are also members of AOR. This year's open house had 13 owners/breeders and 11 vendors, 6 of whom also own alpacas and/or llamas. Our participants extend from Wiggins and Wellington on the north to Colorado Springs on the south, and from Bennett and Kiowa on the East to

animals (or at least in any quantity) the vender space is free. Farms/ranches pay only \$200.00 for the weekend for 4 stall spaces.

Our Saturday attendance was moderately good, an estimated 150-175 people. As we are on our 22nd year of hosting this event, many of our attendees are repeat customers, with lots of pre-Christmas gift purchasing. We do have the benefit of the Westernaires practice facility just next door so those riders and family members always come over to visit with us and learn more.

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This year, Saturday was a lovely day, but the first major snow storm of the year was set to arrive on Sunday. And it did, with a vengeance! The net effect being a greatly reduced attendance for that day, and also the early release of farms and vendors, so they could get home safely.

A primary goal of AOR is to educate existing farms/ members about the services and programs that are available to them, and to present the better practices and advances in farming. With this goal in mind, on Saturday presentations were made on what is needed to have alpacas and llamas. We covered the cost, amount of land, shelters, fencing, feed, health, etc., and what to do with the fleece after shearing.

On Sunday we introduced our second new feature. The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)/Colorado State University (CSU)Extension gave several presentations on Managing Grazing for Sustainable Pastures, and Predator Management, as well as Weed Identification and Controls. We were so pleased to have the Conservation District of Jefferson County/NRCS experts participating in our event! We hope to include representatives from the NRCS/Conservation District, as well as Colorado AGTourism, joining us every year.

Another benefit for attendees is the hourly drawing of a door prize, donated by our farms

and vendors. Our group has done a great job keeping this event very accessible, with a streamlined and easy move-in/ move-out process. We are a great team, helping one another all the time so the weekend is as easy as it gets. And coffee and donuts are provided to members each morning! So while attendance was down compared to prior years, it was a very fun weekend.

We are currently making plans for next year to include more fiber animal types, such as sheep and rabbits and ways to further reduce the stall costs. Farms and ranches are also permitted to sell product directly from their stall spaces, alongside their animals. Or if someone wants to bring animals, and has farm products to sell, we are happy to arrange vender space directly across from their animal's stalls. We try to stay very flexible, and keep the focus on fun, fellowship and promotion of the animals and products.

Finally, we extend a hearty invitation to all RMLA members to join us next year. Bring your llamas and alpacas and join the fun!!! Please mark your calendars now! The 23rd ALPACAS ON THE ROCKS is next year, always the second weekend in October. We look forward to having you join us.

Visit [www.AlpacasOnTheRocks.org](http://www.AlpacasOnTheRocks.org)



### **Postscript from the Journal Volunteers**

*Let's work together to  
create something wonderful!*

Kathy, Ron,  
Marilyn



*'Harnessed' Chickens photo Courtesy of EBAY*

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



# EVENTS CALENDAR

BY 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.

**PacaBuddies II, February 9 & 10, 2019**, Douglas County Fairgrounds, Castle Rock, CO. Local group of alpaca breeders bring the alpaca experience to the general public. To participate by bringing alpacas and/or products, contact Ron Hinds or Elizabeth Cline at [alpacaron@gmail.com](mailto:alpacaron@gmail.com) or [www.PacaBuddies.org](http://www.PacaBuddies.org)

## Save the Dates!

2019 National Western Stock Show, Denver, CO. January 10 – 13, 2019. Halter, Showmanship, Performance, Shorn Fleece, Walking Fiber and Meet the Llamas. Contact Judy Glaser for more information: [judy.glaser@yahoo.com](mailto:judy.glaser@yahoo.com).

Do you have an event you are planning for 2018 or 2019 but don't have all the 'paper work' completed? Send us the dates, name of the event, and location. We will add it to the list.