

Summer 2022

# *The Journal of RMLA*



**RMLA**  
Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association

# Welcome to RMLA!

--- Mission Statement ---

The mission of the Association shall be to educate the members and the public as to the breeding, raising, care and use of llamas and alpacas.

## RMLA Board of Directors



**President**  
Lougene Baird  
Cottonwood AZ  
808-747-5023  
[lougenebaird@outlook.com](mailto:lougenebaird@outlook.com)



**Vice President**  
Nancy Wilson  
Camp Verde AZ  
928-220-5553  
[spinllama@msn.com](mailto:spinllama@msn.com)



**Secretary**  
Sandy Schilling  
Chino Valley AZ  
602-403-8166  
[Sschilling9151@gmail.com](mailto:Sschilling9151@gmail.com)



**Treasurer**  
Geri Rutledge  
Waco NE  
402-366-9304  
[buckshollowalpacas@icloud.com](mailto:buckshollowalpacas@icloud.com)



**At-Large**  
Linda Hayes  
Prescott AZ  
970-379-4576  
[llamas@skybeam.com](mailto:llamas@skybeam.com)

## Chairpersons, Active Committees

### Bookstore

Manager: **Mary Vavrina**  
303-726-9694  
RMLAbookstore@gmail.com  
Bookkeeper: **Marilyn Arnold**  
Liaison Lougene Baird

### Facebook

**Morgan Barba**  
rmlayouthinfo@gmail.com  
Liaison Sandy Schilling

### E-Blasts

**Sandy Schilling**  
602-403-8166  
RMLAeblast@gmail.com  
Liaison Lougene Baird

### Education/Events/Marketing

**Mary Wickman**  
719-651-8871  
Mwickman1@gmail.com  
Liaison Linda Hayes

### Fiber

**Kathy Stanko**  
970-256-7716  
rmlafiber@gmail.com  
Liaison Nancy Wilson

### Finance

**Marilyn Arnold**  
303-841-5126  
rmlaaccounting@yahoo.com  
Liaison Geri Rutledge

### The Journal

**Kathy Stanko**  
970-256-7716  
rmlaeditor@gmail.com  
Liaison Nancy Wilson

### Library

**Sandy Lockwood**  
303-838-9554  
Rmlalibrary3@gmail.com  
Liaison Nancy Wilson

### Membership

**Sandy Schilling**  
602-403-8166  
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com  
Liaison Lougene Baird

### Nominations & Elections

**Christina Abel**  
620-626-8743  
luckyonyx81@gmail.com  
Liaison Linda Hayes

### Pack

**OPEN**  
Liaison Nancy Wilson

### Research

**Ron Baird**  
808-747-5975  
ronbaird1942@outlook.com  
Liaison Geri Rutledge

### Website

Content: **Kathy Stanko**  
970-256-7716  
Rmlawebiste@gmail.com  
Membership: **Sandy Schilling**  
602-403-8166  
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com  
Liaison Lougene Baird

### Youth and 4-H

**Morgan Barba**  
rmlayouthinfo@gmail.com  
Liaison Sandy Schilling

## About the Journal

The Journal of RMLA<sup>®</sup> is a quarterly publication of the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association (RMLA). The RMLA Journal Committee and the Board of Directors reserve the right to select and edit all articles and advertisements submitted.

The information in The Journal is not intended to be a substitute for qualified professional advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with their own veterinarian, accountant or attorney regarding any questions concerning their animals or business operations.

RMLA is not responsible for any losses resulting from readers' failure to heed this caution. The views expressed by the authors of articles are not necessarily those of the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association, Inc., its officers, directors or members.

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**Cover Photo:** Courtesy Keith Payne packing in New Zealand. See page 42.

## RMLA News from Your Board

Summer, at last! Hope you are all out enjoying your animals in your favorite way.

This year's membership renewal drive was successful. A big thank you to our members who continue with us this year. Our membership consists of 122 Annual members, 41 Life members, 7 youth members and 13 Honorary members. Each of you is important to RMLA and has something unique and special to share with other members. Please see page 7 of this beautiful Journal of the RMLA for a list of our new Annual, Life and Youth members.

The members' list is up to date on RMLA.com. You may find who our members are by visiting RMLA.com, select the Members tab, and scroll down to "Members by location" or "Members by interests."

To remind you of something new with RMLA.com, your membership is an annual membership based on the day you joined or renewed your RMLA membership. You will receive email notices several weeks before "your" membership cycles next year.

This year we say goodbye to two long-time RMLA members. Marie Bernard joined RMLA in 2014 but now has sold her Berthod, Colorado farm and llamas and moved to Florida. Marie misses the mountains and llamas, but is settling into the Florida lifestyle. The folks who bought her farm are also the new owners of her llamas. How lucky for the new owners and the llamas!

Candy and Tracy Montgomery of Castle Rock, Colorado, joined RMLA in 1994 and have experienced the loss of their last llama. Their trailer is now owned by the folks who are with the Douglas County 4H group. Life with the trailer goes on.

Candy, Tracy, and Marie were wonderful RMLA volunteers. Marie was always seen at Fairplay and active with her llamas, and Candy and Tracy participated in 4-H for many years, bringing up the next generation. We will see you all around, stay in touch.

Your Board is having most meetings face-to-face each month someplace in Arizona. Nebraskan Geri reviews the agenda, makes amazing comments before the meeting, and is available by cell during the meeting. These meetings are special and easily recall board meetings "back in the day" when most of the membership and directors lived along the Colorado Front Range.

The essence of last month's Board meeting was how can we, as an organization, do more for our members. While our new website is just wonderful, it is but a part of who we are. We have spots open for Committee Chairs and Committee members. Please find something that is your passion and step up to share your talents and knowledge. Our members are worth it.

Enjoy your summer and stay safe, Lougene

## From the Editor

Kathy Stanko, Editor, [rmlaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:rmlaeditor@gmail.com)

I am very excited to bring this issue to you. We have new authors, who are new members, submitting articles on various topics! Fiber shows are happening again and many people are getting out in their communities with their animals.

The article submitted by Keith Payne about his packing trips in New Zealand is outstanding. It makes me want to go packing with him. If you live in an area where Valley Fever threatens your animals, be sure to read the Q&A with Christine Staten, DVM of the Adobe Veterinary Center in Tucson, Arizona and with Lisa Shubitz, DVM with the University of Arizona's Valley Fever Center for Excellence.



Yes, it is fire season again... or is it always? We do need to be prepared in the event of any disaster, be it fire, flood, earthquake, etc. We have an article from our member, Nick Stone, describing what he and his wife went through when fire threatened their ranch. Also, the Alpaca and Llama Evacuation Plan for Fire and Flood is included in this issue. The evacuation plan can also be found on the website.

A "Look Behind the Home Page" (page 30) will inform you of the ongoing work by RMLA members to keep educating all of you and to create opportunities to market your llamas and alpacas. Do you know what SEO is? Read the article to find out.

## Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates & Specifications

Issue	Submission Deadline	Publication Date
Spring	February 28	March 31
Summer	May 31	June 30
Fall	August 31	September 30
Winter	November 30	December 31

Ad Type	Width x Height	Member Rate	Non-Member
Business Card	3.5"x2"	\$ 7	\$ 15
¼ page horiz.	7.5"x2"	\$ 12	\$ 24
¼ page vert.	3.5"x4.5"	\$ 12	\$ 24
Half Page	7.5" x 5"	\$ 24	\$ 48
Full Page	7.5"x 10"	\$ 39	\$ 78

Ad rates are quoted per issue. Lock in the current rate by purchasing an ad for four consecutive issues and receive a 5<sup>th</sup> ad for free. You may change your ad once during the year.

### To submit articles, ads or photo:

- All submissions go to [rmlaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:rmlaeditor@gmail.com)
- Documents in MS Word format
- Camera ready ads as a pdf or jpg file. **NOTE:** What you send is what we publish.
- Images/photos as .jpeg (.jpg) or .tiff files. Photo from a camera or phone are sufficient. Please check the background and lighting. RMLA will only crop for fit and/or enhance the lighting.

### Instructions for advertising payment:

You may pay for your ad on the RMLA website using a credit card. Or, send your check, payable to RMLA:

RMLA  
11483 Ponderosa Ln.  
Franktown CO 80116  
303-841-5126

Payment and ad copy must be received prior to submission deadline. See the table above for dates.

## Welcome New Members!

RMLA is always growing! We welcome the following new members:

1 youth member	Denver, CO
Mark Keller, Life Member	Castle Rock, CO
Linda & Brent Schlenker	Scottsdale, AZ
Sydney Kimble & Bill Posey	Clovis, CA
Nancy & Kent Gunzner	Wheatridge, CO
Ronald & Susan Cosner	Hutchinson, MN
Sheri Bowman	Prescott Valley, AZ
Ken Williams	Newcastle, CA
Linda McKinch	Lennon, MI

## Welcome, Mark Keller, New Life Member



Mark is thrilled to be part of RMLA and excited to learn more about the organization and work with folks raising llamas and alpacas in Colorado.

He grew up in southwest Kansas farming communities where his first job was driving tractors during harvest time for his uncle. Mark attended Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas, graduating with a bachelor's degree in communications. After working in the food and beverage industry, Mark decided that he was no longer happy in a retail environment and wanted to do something more fulfilling.

A career change led him to helping people through Colorado Farm Bureau Insurance where he can support farmers and ranchers through the Colorado Farm Bureau Federation. Mark says, "I love how I can get hands on with this role, getting out to visit clients and friends on their own turf and seeing what they are doing with their operation and what we can do to make sure they are protected."

Mark and his wife Tori love animals and love to travel. Check out their YouTube travel channel "The Adventures of Tori and Cat."

Thank you, Mark, for becoming an RMLA Life Member. We appreciate your investment in the future of our organization and your desire to work with llama and alpaca folks.

## Escaping a Fire

By Nick Stone, Somerset, CA

On the evening of Saturday August 14, 2021, my wife and I were working in our vegetable garden when we saw a few local fire trucks headed east on Grizzly Flat Road toward the El Dorado National Forest. We live in Northern California and like most places in the West, wildfires are a common problem this time of year. Our property borders a very large BLM parcel on the Middle Fork of the Consumnes River that is full of manzanita and chamise. Every time I hear sirens or see fire trucks this time of year, it gives me a slightly uneasy feeling.

A quick check on the internet showed that a fire had started a few miles East of our place in the Middle Fork Consumnes Canyon near Caldor. Caldor was the name given to a town and mill that no longer exist which were built by the California Door Company in the early 1900's. The company used a narrow gauge railroad to haul logs out of the mountains. I am very familiar with the area as I frequently take my llamas on training hikes along the old railroad grade.



A few hours later the uneasy feeling in my gut went away as I saw a few fire trucks heading away from the fire back down Grizzly Flat Road. It appeared that crews had gotten it under control. Two weeks before the fire I had reluctantly turned in a Nevada archery deer tag. We own llamas, horses, and cattle. We have a 17-foot stock trailer, and also a 4 horse slant gooseneck trailer, yet currently only own 1 Ford-250. If I were to take the llamas on a hunting trip to Nevada, it would have left my wife with no means to haul animals in the event of an emergency. Originally when I drew the tag my plan was to rent a truck and leave my F-250 with my wife. My rental truck reservation got canceled due to the rental company giving preference to CalFire for trucks needed at several other fires that were currently burning around the state. I definitely wasn't happy about turning the tag back in, but it was the right thing to do.

My wife and I went about our regular business and went to work like we normally do for the next few days. The fire continued to burn, yet online reports seemed to show it was somewhat contained. On the evening of August 16 I was out in the garden and felt the wind shift direction and pick up speed. I went inside to check the fire status and noticed that the community of Grizzly Flats had been given an evacuation warning. The fire was still a few miles away from us. I talked to my wife who suggested we hook up the 4 horse trailer. I stayed up all night monitoring the fire and getting texts from concerned friends. From my place I wasn't able to see any flames at that point due to the height of the trees; however, I was able to see a constant string of cars and trucks driving past our house as they evacuated.

I went to bed around 4 a.m. and at 4:30 a.m. my phone went off with a mandatory evacuation alert from the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. I woke up my wife, and updated her. She grabbed some personal belongings, clothes,



important documents and loaded them into our F-250, and loaded the horses into the 4 horse trailer. At the same time I called my friend Jeff and let him know I was going to need help hauling the stock trailer with llamas. He showed up shortly after. Once we got my wife loaded and on her way, Jeff took the llamas and headed towards his place. Jeff had a set of pens and property where the llamas would be fine, and my wife had previously set up arrangements for boarding her horses in the event of an emergency.

I stayed behind and tried to do anything I could to make sure we would have a place to come home to. I take pride in how fire safe our place is; we work hard to clear vegetation around our home, shop, and outbuildings. The majority of our siding is cement, our roofs are metal. We have 2 wells so I set up sprinklers on a wood deck and a few other areas to minimize impacts from embers. I parked my wife's Honda, my 4 wheeler, and several other pieces of equipment in the horse field as it's pretty much bare dirt. I made a point to park them several feet from each other so that in the event one caught fire, it would minimize the chance of something else catching fire.



None of my neighbors live very close, but I talk to all of them regularly. To the east of me lives a couple with a young son; I texted them to make sure they were aware of the situation and that they had already evacuated. To the north of me lives an 84 year old rancher. I called him; he was aware of what was going on, and was using his tractor to cut firebreaks around his ranch. He had no intention of leaving. Shortly after my wife called and gave me an ear full about not leaving; she also told me she was having some issues with a few feral llamas that we had recently rescued from a large ranch. I assured her I would be along shortly to help her.

Our address was under a mandatory evacuation warning until September 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was a long 16 days. At that time we were allowed to bring all of our animals back home. During the evacuation we were blessed to have several good friends offer places for us and also our animals to stay. I'm pretty new to the llama community and I was blown away by all of the offers of help from people I've purchased animals from to people I've just casually met at llama events.



A few of the main things I think people should be aware of if they live in an area with the potential for wildfire are:

1. Fire Safe your property to the best of your ability. Clear any ladder fuels, mow when appropriate, do anything you can to help fire crews if they have to defend your place.
2. Transportation - Make sure you have a truck and trailer, and your trailer is functioning. Make sure the tires aren't flat, and the lights work, etc. When my wife first left, she called me and told me about several people on horseback at an intersection down the road from our place. They did not own or have access to a trailer, so they rode their horses several miles down the road to evacuate.
3. Handle your animals. The majority of our animals are very easily handled, with the exception of the feral ones we took in shortly before the fire. My main training goal after returning home was to work with them so that anybody could halter them and easily load them in the event I wasn't around. It just makes life easier for the animals and anybody working with them. While we were evacuated a friend texted me photos of a llama covered in fire retardant asking if it was one of mine. Luckily it was not. (See note below from CSU VTH) There are several groups in my area that help evacuate animals, but I'm guessing they don't have much experience gathering and loading feral llamas.
4. Evacuation animal facilities. Try to set up a place to take your llamas in advance of being evacuated. Luckily we had a ton of options.
5. Reach out to your neighbors and help them in any way you can.



**Note from Rachel Oman, CSU VTH** when asked what to do if a llama or alpaca takes a direct hit from the retardant.

*I don't know specifically what effects would occur in a llama or what the exact fire retardant was. Generally, wildfire retardants can be irritating to the eyes and skin. If there is direct contact, flush the eyes with water and wash the skin with water and a gentle soap if needed. Make an effort to prevent the animal from ingesting the retardant in any feed or water sources. In theory, the effects should be short-term, but there are reports of long-term negative effects in humans including neurological signs and cancer. I suspect these would be unlikely with the shorter lifespan of the llama, but nobody knows.*



The Homecoming Caught by the Security Camera

## Alpaca and Llama Evacuation Plan for Fire and Flood

**Editor's Note:** *Fire season is upon us again...but in the West where the persistent drought is still persisting, I don't believe there is a 'season' any more. For me, the photo, courtesy of Malachi Brooks on Unsplash, captures my feeling exactly. Thank you, Malachi, for your willingness to share your incredible photos with the public.*

The following evacuation plan was developed by Fran Etzkorn, retired fire chief for High Country Volunteer Fire Department in Gilpin County and Jerry Dunn, former High Country fire captain. Do you have a plan that you have shared with your family and neighbors to evacuate your loved ones and animals in case of a disaster? Following are guidelines for such a plan.

### Beginnings:

- Decide which animals are to be evacuated first. You may only get one chance! Remember the family house pets.
- Make arrangements for housing for your animals before a disaster.
- Family pets need I.D. collars and should be transported in travel crates with leashes. Crate them before the confusion starts.
- Always back your vehicle into your driveway facing the exit, in front of your trailer if possible.
- Practice hitching your trailer. Check brakes and air in tires on a regular basis.
- Determine a safe staging area with extra stall panels.
- Practice backing your trailer into the loading area.
- Train all of your animals to lead and load into a trailer.
- Provide barnyard lighting with a backup in case the power goes off.
- Mark driving lanes for the rescuers with construction cones.
- Mark pick up point and/or the driveway with long streamers of surveyor's tape.
- Provide orange vests with ANIMAL RESCUE printed on them with a black magic marker. This reduces confusion if the fire company is there at the same time.
- Organize halters and lead ropes on a pegboard in the barn hallway.
- Print up a list of all of your animals and make copies. Photograph your herd and keep it with your master list. Organize your herd into groups (geldings, studs, moms, and babies). Who should go first?
- Make plans for your animals if it is too late to transport them to a safe area.
- Get to know your volunteer fire department. Attend work parties and give them a copy of your evacuation plan. Ask for suggestions.
- Involve another reliable person, neighbor, or close friend in your plan. With one phone call, that person can set your plan into action.
- Develop a phone tree of people who hopefully will not be involved in their own rescue. Provide a highlighted map to your place with the entry and exit plan. Make copies for all rescuers. Keep it simple and safe.
- Make a list of how many animals each rescuer can transport and safely house.
- Give each rescuer your vet's name and telephone number.
- Keep a copy of all of the information on a clipboard with extra pens and pencils, tape, orange vests, and a flashlight in a place where your number one helper can find it. This list is to document "who went where" for later verification. You might not be home. One person needs to be in charge of the list on the clipboard as the rescue begins.
- Carefully review your plan with all of the helpers.

## Rescue People

The volunteers helping you need to be clear about their responsibilities. Encourage them to practice backing their vehicle and trailer. Suggest that they have a special backpack in their vehicle which includes the following:

- Drinking water
- Emergency food and snacks
- Flashlights and/or headlamps
- Sturdy footwear
- Hat, leather gloves, warm coat, rain gear, bandana
- Shovel
- Extra lead ropes, stake lines, halters
- Surveyor's tape
- First aid kit

## Plan in Action:

- All markers in place.
- Take a deep breath and stay calm!
- Begin catching and sorting animals.
- Clipboard person puts on vest and begins the list with the first rescuer.
- When the last of the animals are loaded--get out of there!

## When should you evacuate? Before it's too late!

You also need to plan what will be taken or moved from your home.

- Driver's Licenses / Birth Certificates / Passports / Insurance Papers / Bank Documents / Tax records
- Special Medications / spare glasses / hearing aids
- Computer
- Family pictures / Keepsakes / Jewelry / other valuables

It might be wise to keep all of these things in one or two locations so they can be easily collected and stowed in your vehicle quickly.

**Chris Switzer, Weaver**  
**1236 Glacier View Lane**  
**Estes Park, Colorado 80517**  
**chrisalpaca@aol.com**  
**(970) 586-4624**  
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## Where Did It All Begin?

By Lougene Baird

Llama farms began to pop up along the Front Range and Western Slope of Colorado in the 1970's, a few here and there. As more and more folks interested in llamas connected with each other, they began to exchange information on the care and use of llamas and alpacas. Sound familiar? Read on. After a few years, the informal group referred to themselves as "The Rocky Mountain Llama Association."

In about June of 1982, this press release was published in newspapers, posted in farm and ranch stores and post offices here and there around Colorado:

### Press Release

The Falcon Inn of Monument, Colorado, will host the Rocky Mountain Llama Associations first Annual Meeting October 8th and 9th (1982). This is the first professionally directed meeting about llamas to be held in the Rocky Mountain area. Approximately one hundred conferees are expected from Montana to Texas and from California to Missouri.

The gentle, sturdy South American llama is rapidly becoming popular with animal lovers far beyond the zoo gate. This increasing interest stems from the llama's superiority as a high-country pack animal, as predator control for sheep herders, as exotic pets, and as a high yield investment. There is also a steady interest in the animal's high-quality wool.

The meeting begins Friday the 8th with a 7 – 10 PM reception and slide presentation about Peru. Saturday's agenda includes professional research presentations as well as an afternoon of practical hands-on experiences for the conferees. A few of the sessions address topics such as nutrition, pregnancy testing, training, packing, grooming, tooth extraction, and toenail clipping.

Registration is open to all interested persons. The cost is \$15 per person, which includes Saturday lunch at the Falcon Inn.

Our Corporate records show paperwork that the Falcon Inn served over one hundred attendees for lunch, dinner and breakfast. Membership dues in 1982 were \$50 farm (two people) and \$35 for a single member. Dr. La Rue Johnson was a guest speaker. The group collected \$1,890 in registrations and memberships dues for twenty-two new folks who joined. Some of those founding members continue their membership today.

The Board of Directors in 1982 consisted of Howard Kerstetter, Bobra Goldsmith, Wally White, Betsy Bell and Erma Hast. This Board formalized the organization. Incorporation documents were issued by the State of Colorado to Rocky Mountain Llama Association, Inc. on October 3, 1983.

Included in the incorporation process were RMLA's Bylaws. The Mission Statement is clearly stated within this document: *The mission of the Association shall be to educate the members and the public as to the breeding, raising, care and use of llamas and alpacas.* This mission is the reason for this organization's existence and is considered in all decision-making on the part of the Board of Directors.

The Board began the lengthy process to apply for non-profit status in 1983. Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c) (5) was given to RMLA on April 14, 1985.

As time passed, alpacas were being raised by our members and others in the Rocky Mountain area. To incorporate the alpaca in everything RMLA does, the membership voted to change the name to Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association, Inc. Paperwork for the name change was recorded with the Colorado Secretary of State November 19, 1993.

More about fun stuff from early years in RMLA will be in future Journals. It helps to successfully go forward when we know where we have come from. If there is a subject you are interested in RMLA history or if you have a story to share, just let me know.

## RMLA EVENTS

### Upcoming RMLA Events

By Mary Wickman, Events Chair

**July 30, 2022 Llama Lunacy, Fairplay CO.** Yes, Llama Lunacy is back again joining the fun of Burro Days in Fairplay. This event educates children and adults about llamas and alpacas while going through a fun and easy obstacle course. Volunteers are available to help the children and answer questions. Contact Mary Wickman, 719-651-8871, for more information. Volunteers are needed!

**September 10 & 11, 2022 PacaBuddies Fall Event, Castle Rock, CO.** Be a part of this wonderful event. Booths are available to alpaca and llama owners. This educational event is open to the public; it is a great opportunity to meet people new to alpacas and llamas. Bring your animals and your creations. Contact Ron Hinds, 720-648-8302, for more information. And, if you have a yen to learn how to sort fiber from a professional, a workshop on this topic is being conducted in conjunction with the PacaBuddies Event. See the article in this issue.

**September 17 & 18, 2022 Higher Ground Fair, Laramie, WY.** Celebrating tradition and innovation in the Rocky Mountain Region with an emphasis on rural creativity. This event brings together agriculture, the arts, social action, health and wellness, education and entertainment. Llamas and alpacas hold center stage with a full performance show including youth, plus vendors and displays. To participate, contact Gayle Woodsum, [gayle@hightergroundfair.org](mailto:gayle@hightergroundfair.org) or by texting 307-399-3815.

**To plan an event** go to the Events tab on RMLA.COM for the planning packet. If you need help, please contact Mary Wickman, [mwickman1@gmail.com](mailto:mwickman1@gmail.com).

## Charming Their Way Into Many Hearts

By Susi Huelsmeier Sinay

Llamas charm their way into many hearts. That is their thing. And so the Indian family visiting Montana from their home in Illinois found themselves at my place at one of my new Llama Farm Visits. The llamas lead the people around who think it's the other way around. I have a booth with fiber, both raw and processed. There are books and llama snacks. And there are many questions. And many smiles. It works.





## New Hats for Everyone!

By Kathy Stanko

Our relationship with Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital began in 2008. After trying to clear up a recurring abscess on the front leg of our llama Treasure, the vet said “take her to CSU.” X-rays showed that the abscess had gone into the bone. Naturally, we were traumatized and worried that we would come home with a three-legged llama. Three weeks later, Treasure returned home with four legs and raring to go!

Over time, our relationship with the vets grew. Dr. Callan began writing “Ask the Vet” articles for the RMLA Journal. My husband and I set up an endowment and we gave scholarships to large animal veterinary students. In addition to the vets, we developed a relationship with the CSU Development Office. These are the people who look for funding for projects related to the teaching hospital. They visit folks on the Colorado Western Slope about once a year to catch up on our lives and tell us the news in the works at CSU. For example, there is a new state-of-the-art facility for Large Animals including llamas, alpacas, sheep, cows, etc. and a total revamp and modernization of the curriculum for vet students.

In April, Katie and Aaron from the Development Office paid us a visit; the first since before COVID. Gifts always arrive with them. I happily received CSU pens and sticky note pads. Glenn got a new CSU cap that matches the two hats for our llamas! So the four of us had to go out to the barn to try out the hats on a couple of llamas. Phoebe Snow and Aria were the lucky llamas.

As it turns out a CSU grad designed these hats, [Pup Lids](#), for all animals. It is a very clever, easy-to-put-on design. There is lots of flexibility for different sizes and shapes. However, the chin strap proved a little short for our girls so we just tucked it in the sides of their halters. Hopefully, the designers will make a modification to the chin strap for larger animals.



## Ask the Vet

By Rachel Oman, DVM, MS, DACVIM Assistant Professor  
Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

### What can be done to protect camelids from wildlife disease transmission, specifically rabies?

Some diseases can be transmitted between species and infect both wild animals and camelids. One example of this is meningeal worm, which is common in the Midwest and other areas of the country where both aquatic snails and white-tailed deer live. This is because the meningeal worm must pass through both the snail and the deer as intermediate hosts as part of its lifecycle before infecting camelids. Fortunately, the arid Colorado climate makes meningeal worm rare in this geographic region. However, there are other diseases that can occur in the Rockies. One such disease is rabies.



Rabies is a virus that can infect a large range of mammals, not just bats and skunks, although bats and skunks are the most common wildlife reservoirs of rabies in Colorado. Rabies is transmitted via contact with infected tissues or fluids from an animal carrying the virus. Rabid animals may be unusually aggressive (known as the furious form of rabies) and are therefore more apt to bite and infect other animals. Alternatively, the “dumb” form of rabies manifests as unusually dull or docile behavior and can also be dangerous because otherwise shy and skittish critters may appear friendly. It is important to stay on the lookout for wildlife showing unusual behaviors such as normally nocturnal animals being active in the daytime.

There are steps that we can take to protect camelids from becoming infected with rabies.

- First, ensure adequate fencing and protection for your animals to help avoid any wildlife interactions. If a wild animal showing abnormal behaviors is found in the vicinity of your llamas or alpacas, you should report it to animal control and the local health department.
- Second, we can vaccinate llamas and alpacas against rabies using a large animal rabies vaccine. This vaccine is not labeled for use in camelids, meaning that it has not undergone safety and efficacy testing in llamas or alpacas. However, we do not have any vaccines specifically for camelids so we must extrapolate from what we know to work in other similar species like cattle and horses. It is important to remember that no vaccine is 100% effective at preventing disease. If you know your camelid has been bitten or scratched by a wild animal or is showing any abnormal behaviors, contact your veterinarian immediately, even if your animal is up-to-date on their rabies vaccination.

The good news is that rabies in camelids is very rare in Colorado. In speaking with one of the USDA veterinarians about this subject, she could only remember two cases in the many years she has worked in the state. One was a llama and the other an alpaca and they occurred in the Colorado Springs and Pueblo areas.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, there were only three confirmed livestock cases of rabies in 2020: one sheep, one goat, and one bovine. There were many more suspected or confirmed livestock exposures to rabies, indicating that we should all be aware and make every effort to protect our llamas and alpacas from this deadly virus.

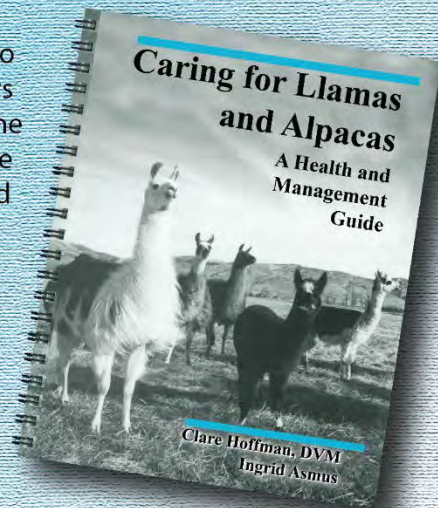
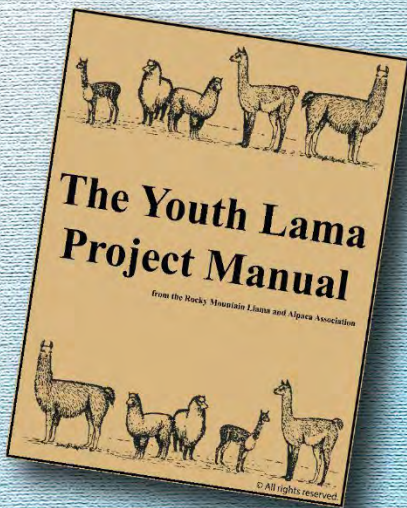
**Does llama/alpaca manure give off methane gas? Does their digestion produce methane gas?**

Cattle are certainly a significant source of methane partly because of their physiology, but largely due to the huge number of cattle in the world. Camelids are just not as big an issue and are unlikely to ever become a significant source of methane unless their popularity were to rival cattle! There is some research looking into altering feeding of cattle and pigs to decrease methane production in their waste. To my knowledge, there is no similar research in camelids.

**Rocky Mountain Llama & Alpaca Association**  
Your North American Resource for Education and Information

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the Association shall be to educate the members and the public as to the breeding, raising, care and use of llamas and alpacas.



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## Llama Pioneers Reunion

By Linda Hayes

Oklahoma City, April 28<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, was the location of a reunion of early llama owners. Some 50-plus people attended the Llama Pioneers reunion. It was orchestrated by Nikki Kuklinski of Bellingham, WA with the help of the Greater Appalachian Llama Assoc. (GALA).

In the 1970's and 1980's llamas were extremely rare and quite expensive. By the early 90's ranches began to network and buy from each other. Owners eventually got together at a premier sale held at Heritage Place in Oklahoma City. Ranches brought their very best llamas and sold them for extravagant prices. It was a heady time for the industry and the start of the llama world as we now know it. Attendees at the reunion had all been a part of the sales. Since the majority no longer had llamas. they had not seen each other in many years' a reunion was born. The event was well run and everyone had a great time.

On the first day, everyone met at the Heritage Place for a cocktail party and tour of the facilities that brought back so many memories of old. This was followed by an exceptional dinner at the world-famous Cattleman's steakhouse. The rest of the conference was held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, the host hotel of all the Celebrity and Celebration sales from the 1990's. One lady who still works at the hotel remembered the first sale when two llamas were displayed in the foyer.

One of the highlights of the reunion was the outstanding food at all meals and breaks. The Embassy Suites went out of their way to make sure everyone had a great time.



Nikki Kuklinski started the conference with "A History of Llamodom." Niki has taken it upon herself to catalog all the photos and llama publications she could find. Her collection and knowledge is exceptional. Besides the talk, she also shared publications with numerous pages plastered on the walls for everyone to read. In between talks she kept everyone entertained by running videos of long past llama events. These included the Denver National Western Stock Show (circa 1987), various sales, and the very first ALSA show which was held in Mississippi.

Several of the "movers and shakers" of the past gave talks on the highlights of their tenure (Dan and Dale Goodyear of Pennsylvania, Marilyn Milton of Oregon, and Donna Moore of Ohio). Dr. David Pugh gave a talk on how he was the only person ever to be bitten by a rabid llama. If not earning a living as a large animal vet, he could easily star as a comedian. His talk kept everyone in stitches. Gayle Woodsum told about the history of the Argentinian llamas and LaRue Johnson, DVM, explained how llamas got started as a teaching herd at Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Fort Collins, CO.

During meals, a microphone was passed around and many participants shared stories of their days raising llamas. Another highlight was Dr. William Franklin who gave a slide presentation on the wild vicuna and guanacos of Southern South America. He chronicled his extensive career studying the animals in Patagonia and the Falkland Islands.

There were a large number of people in attendance from the area that the RMLA covers. The only disappointment was that so few were still members. Gayle Woodson (Life), Sally and Jeff Rucker (Honorary), and Linda Hayes (Annual) are all still members.

Renewing old friendships and meeting new people made the conference one that won't be forgotten. Niki plans to do another in the future and it will likely be part of the GALA conference in Richmond, VA this October. Stay tuned for more.



*LaRue Johnson & Linda Hayes*



*Carolyn Myers & Linda Hayes*

## Aims Community College Ag Day Celebrates Agriculture And Llamas!

By Sarah and Jon Barba

RMLA members Jon and Sarah Barba participated in the Aims Community College Ag Day on March 30 in Fort Lupton, CO with their llamas Charlie, Edson, and Mason. As part of Ag Day, the college hosted an open house for more than 100 students and community members.



“Our boys do really great in social situations and we are happy to introduce them to the public when given the opportunity,” said Sarah Barba. “It’s really hard to have a bad day when you are around these happy guys.”

The open house was a great opportunity for participants to learn about local agriculture, tour the Aims Agricultural Sciences greenhouse and facilities, and participate in hands-on activities with community partners. The activities included a petting farm with live animals, baby chicks hatching, river study demonstrations, dairy farming with June the (robotic) cow, and more.

Amy McFarland, department chair and professor in the Agricultural Sciences and Technology department, was eager to highlight what Aims offers. “I love bringing new people to our campus and getting the chance to show off our amazing students, program, and agriculture in general.” Aims Community College is a public community college serving Northern Colorado with locations in Greeley, Windsor, Fort Lupton, and Loveland. Aims has more than 200 degree and certificate programs and provides day and night classes. Aims was founded in 1967.



## Ethics

By Sandi Burt

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Ethics is a word that can be defined in many ways. Over the years I have found most llama breeders to be ethical and fair. Unfortunately, I have heard some sad stories from other parties and I think it's time to address some issues. Greed can cause some individuals to break the Golden Rule.

**Empathy** is putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Remember when we bought our first llama? There were hundreds of questions. How does one know if this is a good llama or not? How does genetics affect the offspring? What do I do if the llama can't reproduce? We need to be there when the buyer makes these panicky calls about a llama's behavior. We have to supply the answers and the reinforcement that a new buyer needs.

**Truthfulness** is the telling and the disclosures about every llama that is sold. "Yes," the dam did have lactation problems and the cria had to be tubed or bottle fed. "Yes," this female has trouble carrying crias to full term. "Yes," the sire jumped the fence and bred the female when she was eight months old. By facing the problems and addressing the issues, the buyers respect us more and are aware of why the price is so low. Truthfulness also applies to buyers: "The fencing is secure." "I will be purchasing a companion llama." "I am not brokering this llama to a third party." "I promise I will not breed this animal because of a genetic default."

**Honesty** is being true to yourself and the buyer. Admit that the sale of this animal is culling your herd. Honesty is telling a buyer that a llama will not be fine with a dog or a goat. Honesty is not telling a buyer that he can keep his llamas on a city lot. Honesty is telling a buyer that he or she may have to get up many times in the night to feed a weak or premature cria. Honesty is saying that owning llamas is a full-time commitment; that llamas need to be trained, llamas need care.

**Integrity** is honoring your word and your contracts. If that llama you sold as a bred female is barren, you must make good on your promise to the buyer. If the buyer paid you, then he or she kept their part of the bargain, now you have to keep your part. All guarantees and agreements should be in writing. A year later it's hard conversations.

**Caring** is consideration of the llama. How many times have we gone to auctions, read the catalogs and noted that a particular female was due to have her cria when she herself was less than two years old? We've heard horror stories of females delivering crias in trailers on the way to auctions. I grant you some accidents will happen and the stress of traveling will cause some llamas to deliver prematurely, but, is this happening too often? ALSA discourages owners from bringing nursing dams to shows. Should not auction management discourage owners from transporting pregnant females during the last month of pregnancy? I remember when I was pregnant; if anyone told me I had to go any further than the grocery store during that last month, I was a raving lunatic.

**Sensitivity** goes in hand with empathy. We as buyers and sellers must be sensitive to the feeling of each other and the llama. I still shed a tear as one of my beloved llamas leaves the ranch in the trailer of the proud new owner. Buyers need to realize that the seller is saying "Goodbye" to an old friend or to a cria the owners had nursed through many nights. The seller needs to realize that the buyers are excited and afraid that they might not be doing everything perfectly. The buyers are feeling that they are adopting new "children." The auction process is particularly hard for some sellers, not knowing who the new buyer is and will the llama go to a good home? When a llama is purchased at an auction, the buyers and sellers need to spend time together. Reassurance is needed on both sides. If we all take a little extra time and try to adhere to the above, the future will take care of itself. The sellers, the buyers and the llamas will

be happy. New friendships will be formed and the llama community as a whole will continue to have the camaraderie that is unique to our industry.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## Fruita Farm Day Back After 2 Years

By Kathy and Glenn Stanko

Fruita Farm Day is a celebration of agriculture on the Western Slope of Colorado. The FFA and 4-H clubs were there with education and projects for this kids. This year, it was planting an herb in a pot with the FFA and selling cookies by the 4-H. Many vendors were there talking about everything from what seeds to plant in your pasture to the differences between various cow breeds. The Mesa County Sheriff's Posse provided free horse-drawn wagon rides while they talked about how a mounted posse conducts search and rescue.

Baby goats, miniature horses, baby chicks were all there to delight everyone. We have been attending the Farm Day since the inception about 10 years ago, except for the last two years due to the pandemic. It was great to be back with our llamas Phoebe Snow and Ballerina Rose. As always, kids and adults alike took great joy in giving tasty snacks to our very willing and gentle llamas. We love sharing our knowledge about raising llamas and their unique personalities. We always feel very fulfilled after these events.





## How To Be More Successful With Difficult Animals

By Marty McGee Bennett, CameliDynamics

Animal handling and training is a skill that the HUMAN learns and gets better at with practice, BUT you must practice **what is working** and not keep doing what isn't working with the hope that it will suddenly work. Repeat something three times that is NOT working and you have just taught your animal what NOT to do! Too often when it comes to working with animals we blame the animal for what we cannot accomplish... "that one was rescued and had a hard time or that one was born that way." There may be a kernel of truth in these assumptions **and** it really doesn't matter. These are things you cannot change. What you can change is your approach. It is your job as the human to lead the dance. You must learn the skills and techniques required to accomplish what is needed in a way that is the most positive and least intrusive.

The following is my list of things to focus on to avoid frustration and learn WHAT IT IS YOU ACTUALLY need to learn... not how to simply survive the interaction.



**Practice new skills on a training aid.** The most powerful exercises that we do at a clinic are the people-people exercises; not only do they teach a new skill but they offer a powerful window into the mind of the animal. In my opinion everyone should have a blow up training aid. These are portable, fun and the person holding the blow up can tell if the "handler" is squeezing or holding. They are hands down the best way to teach any new handling skill. Once you have practiced with a training aid, **move up to a VERY easy animal** for real life practice. Full size and head only training aids are available on my website [here](#).

**Avoid practicing your new skills with difficult or very young animals.** Not only are these animals not likely to really help you learn the skills that you need, BUT they are the ones that are the least equipped to have some patience with your learning process.

**Be SAFE!** Always have a good look around for anything that could be a danger to you or your animal student. For example, if you are worried that the animal you are working with might jump out of the pen, you will no doubt hold on tight to the rope which will frighten the animal and make it more likely he will try to jump out of the pen.

**Take notes.** Not only will the process of writing things down help you remember what you did last time, and what you want to work on next time, but it will help you problem solve...the very act of writing something down changes the way you process it.

**Focus on your set up.** You are almost always outnumbered by your animals; investing time to set up a handling area that impacts your whole crew makes total sense. Even if you only have a few animals, working them efficiently teaches them to be cooperative. Wasting time is a sure way to become impatient, and the animals feel it. Spend time setting up a good system for herding animals to a central location so that you can manage them instead of chasing them around the pasture. Create various catch pens of different sizes to use for different management tasks. One size does not fit all when you are working with animals. Create at least one perfect pen (I love 9x9 feet square 5 feet high) that is safe, centrally located and pleasant to work in for you AND the animals.

**Invest in your balancing skills.** Have someone take video of you working and watch it. In my very early years of training and teaching, I was determined to create training videos. I viewed hours and hours of video tape of me NOT doing what I wanted in order to find an hour of footage that showed what I did want. It was a powerful and sometimes painful learning tool. Look for times when the lead is taut for several seconds and notice what the animal is doing. The most common difficulty with animal handling is applying steady pressure on the animal or on the lead or catch rope attached to the animal. (Photo at below-left is me deliberately putting heavy steady pressure on the lead...you can see the result.) This extremely common tendency that causes the animal to pull back which starts the chain reaction that leads to all manner of difficulties. The only way to learn when you are putting steady pressure on the animal is to trust the reactions of the animal (hard to do in the moment) or watch yourself later and see it for yourself on a video; then you will be more likely to understand that the animal's behavior is actually a response to what you are doing. Photo below-right shows easy, steady pressure.



**Look at behavior and the conditions under which it occurs.** Let go of the past and any theories you have about where the behavior came from; it doesn't matter and you can't change that anyway. Begin anew and figure out what is being reinforced and what is being discouraged and come up with a plan to reinforce the behavior you want.

For goodness sakes be as kind to yourself as a learner as you are to your animal learner. None of us gets to be amazingly competent at something immediately.

FIBER

## Learn To Professionally Sort Your Fiber

By Elizabeth Cline, el Zorro Colorado Alpacas

A live Basic Sorting Grading Classing (SGC) Class is planned for September 10, 2022, at the Douglas County Fair Grounds in Castle Rock, CO 80104. This class is being held in conjunction with the 2022 [PacaBuddies](#) Fall Event. The class is offered through SUNY Cobleskill. The course fee is \$180. Registration is available at [here](#)

I personally have taken the Basic Class twice and the Advanced Class once and was an Apprentice. I learned a lot and enjoyed every minute of it. I let the apprenticeship lapse over the years but hope to continue again.



### Sorting Grading Classing

The process of sorting and grading is the hands-on evaluation and separation of fleece into like micron ranges, as well as creating uniform batches of fiber within those grades relating to color, length and contamination.

Wool, alpaca, and other protein based natural fibers have been categorized and allocated to batch lots of uniformity for many years. The process has been utilized to ensure quality in end products by putting into use large quantities of fiber that meet similar characteristics both in fineness and structure. Standards have been in place, developed over the course of time by manufacturers, processors, as well as growers that reflect the best end requirements for specific product development and production.

These standards are used as a stepping stone towards continuing innovation and improvement not only in final products but in husbandry, livestock quality, practicality of use and economical benefit to the grower.

### Basic Class

The Basic Class is a one-day program designed to give you the background and basics of sorting and grading animal fiber. The class presents an overview of fiber characteristics and how they are beneficial to processing for best results through fiber physiology, grading criteria and hands-on study of fiber samples. While heavy emphasis is on alpaca fiber due to its naturally occurring variations, the class also



el Zorro Colorado Alpacas

Ron Hinds and Elizabeth Cline  
5704 Canyon Trail  
Elizabeth, CO 80107  
303-646-1320

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touches on llama fiber, sheep wool, goat fiber and other natural fibers with samples presented for review.

The goal for the Basic Course is to have natural fiber producers gain the knowledge to return to their farm and organize their fiber for production. Management, harvesting, and sorting are the building blocks for the course. Also included is information on yarn production to familiarize the students with processing at artisan mills. Participants will leave the hands-on instruction with the tools they need to get their fiber out of storage and separated so they can maximize yield and minimize cost at their mill.

These classes are offered to help you understand standardization and the effect on quality in end product. You can take only the Basic Class to provide you with insight on your own farm or ranch fiber production. Our Advanced Class gives you a more in-depth fiber study and hands on practice. For those wishing to sort and grade for others, we offer the Apprenticeship Program giving you mentorship and guidance in how to help others get the best from their fiber harvest. Each of these classes builds on the previous one and requires successful completion to continue.

This Fiber Basic Sorting/Grading Class is a prerequisite to taking the Advanced Sorting/Grading Certification Course. As it is a SUNY Cobleskill Certification Course, there is a required Pre and Post Test administered. A passing grade of 80 or above allows the student to continue in the program to the Advanced Class.

Wini Labrecque has been involved in the fiber industry since the late 1980s. With a focus on natural fibers, she has an extensive background in utilization and promotion of all types of fibers for practical and commercial use. Wini is a weaver, hand spinner, felter, knitter, crocheter and dyer.

She is an AOA Certified Alpaca Fleece Judge, Certified Camelid Fiber Grader/Sorter/Classer through Olds College in Canada, Trained Grader/Sorter of cashmere fiber, as well as trained in judging cashmere. Wini is working with a company to help develop better cashmere production, collection, and marketing with nomad people of Kyrgyzstan. Working with IYAK (International Yak Association), she has been instrumental in developing criteria and judging protocol for yak fiber both on and off the animal. Wini is a past founding partner in a company dedicated to utilization of all grades of alpaca fiber into woven fabric for home décor use.



*The Basic Course is taught by the world-renowned fiber master Wini Labrecque.*

A retired Veterinary Assistant, Wini and her husband John have raised alpacas, cashmere producing goats, angora goats, sheep, and angora rabbits over the years. They currently have 5 alpacas including 1 Suri that are utilized for fiber production. Wini's background gives her the unique opportunity to share her knowledge with others to help enhance their own livestock programs.

### **Advanced Class Information**

The Advanced Class is a three-day course that builds on the information presented in the Basic Class. It is geared to those individuals who want more in-depth education and/or are interested in developing a business sorting for other fiber-bearing livestock owners or fiber purchasers. This Advanced Course requires completion of the Basic Course and a passing score on the final exam before registering.

The Advanced Course includes 3 full days of mandatory Zoom lecture/instruction. If you are unable to commit to being on the computer for the scheduled 3 days, you are not eligible for this course format. The Zoom format allows us to interact with students in real time while sharing some live fiber review. Class Zoom time is punctuated with breaks and down time for students to put to practice what was presented immediately. Zoom calls resume after a few

hours to review the practice and continue with the lectures/study. Course documents, assignments and tests are accessed through the SUNY Moodle Online portal.

Participants will receive some fiber samples to utilize during the class but will also be required to supply their own (or acquired) fleece to sort during this time.

### Apprenticeship Program

Two years of field work in sorting, grading and classing of a minimum of 250 fleeces. Each apprentice has a mentor providing guidance and feedback throughout the apprenticeship. Apprentices send samples of fiber they have evaluated to their mentor throughout the 2 years to ensure they are consistent with the program.

The Apprenticeship Program is designed for those who wish to pursue receiving their final Certification in Sorting/Grading/Classing. Qualification for this program requires successful completion of both the Basic and Advanced Course, as well as written and practical exams. Successful completion awards the apprentice a Master Certificate in Grading/Sorting from SUNY Cobleskill.



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**Website:** [SouthwestLlamaRescue.org](http://SouthwestLlamaRescue.org)

**Email:** [SouthwestLlamaRescue@gmail.com](mailto:SouthwestLlamaRescue@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** [Facebook.com/Rescue.Llamas](https://Facebook.com/Rescue.Llamas)

SWLR is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization supported 100% by donations. Ad paid for by Southwest Llama Rescue, Inc.



## A Look Behind the Home Page

By Sandy Schilling & Kathy Stanko  
Co-Webmasters, RMLA.COM



**Webmasters' Note:** We are continuing to bring you highlights of what we are accomplishing on the RMLA website. Our focus is to let the world know who RMLA is and that our mission statement is education.

In this issue, Charlotte Howard, who designed the website and continues to advise us, joins this conversation to explain how we can all get the best traffic to our site and to you, our members.

### Youth Awards Program (YAP)

The 2022 Youth Awards Program has been finalized. The 2022 point system for Youth activities is on the website and an eblast has been sent to all RMLA Youth. Anyone under 19 years of age is welcome to join RMLA and take part in YAP. Details for participation can be found under the Youth Tab on the Home Page.

### Your Member Profile

Visitors to RMLA.COM can now easily browse Members by Interest. Let visitors find you! Please keep your interest up to date. Behind the scenes examination shows that people are using the internet to find llamas and alpacas to purchase. We want them to find you! If you need to change your list in any way, let Sandy ([rmlamembershipchair@gmail.com](mailto:rmlamembershipchair@gmail.com)) know.

### RMLA on FACEBOOK

We now have 194 Facebook page followers up from 161 since March. All of these 'likes' are potential RMLA members and llama enthusiasts. Please share our Facebook page, [RMLA FACEBOOK](#), on YOUR Facebook page for all of your friends to Like and Follow.

For RMLA to remain a viable organization, it must grow. Facebook is a popular way for llama and alpaca owners or

prospective owners to find out how much educational and fun information RMLA can provide. If you are a Facebook user, Sandy has probably sent you a Friend Request. She is not a stalker! She is asking for your help. Please tell your friends and other camelid folks that you meet on Facebook, at events, etc. about RMLA and share our amazing new website and Facebook page with them. Our RMLA members have so much knowledge to share with others. You can make a substantial difference. Please help build our organization’s future.

**Visits to RMLA.COM**

Our new website has been busy as well. Below are the top pages website visitors have gone to in a 10 day period. They have increased since our last report in the Spring Journal. Let’s keep this trend going. Also, the ‘hits’ show which topics people are looking at.

Totals		988
		100% of total
1	Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association - Welcome! - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	239
2	My account - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	94
3	Browse RMLA Members by Location - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	65
4	Plants Poisonous to Alpacas and Llamas - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	52
5	RMLA Blog - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	43
6	Page not found - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	42
7	Journal Advertising - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	26
8	Packing with a Llama - Training Trip - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	24
9	The Journal Advertising - Members - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	20
10	Browse RMLA Members by Interests - RMLA - Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association	18

**The Pop-Up box when you visit RMLA.com**

The Pop-Up Box on our RMLA.com website is working! We are now up to 62 different email addresses signed up for our weekly llama and alpaca care articles. That’s almost double the amount of interest RMLA had at the end of March. And from this interest, we have 5 new Annual Members.

**What is SEO?**

By Charlotte Howard, [Web Design and SEO Specialist](#)

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization.

SEO is a strategy or a form of online marketing used to improve your website’s search engine rankings in the natural (or organic) section of search engine result pages (also called the SERPs) for as many relevant phrases as possible.



In other words, SEO is used to place your website on page one of a search engine (usually Google), and as high up on page one as possible using the best keyword phrases for each web page. A keyword phrase is a group of words that a person types into the search engines to find information. A single word typed into a search engine is extremely (or impossibly) difficult to rank for and has a low return. Longer keyword phrases are easier to rank for and have better returns. Each keyword phrase has its own competitive landscape, which means some keyword phrases are easier to rank than others.

In a simplified way, SEO is the opposite of PPC (Pay-Per-Click). Both PPC, also called Google Ads, and organically optimized pages can show up on page one of Google.

### **Search Engine Optimization is a Process**

[Search Engine Optimization](#) is not a one-shot deal. It is a process that is ongoing. The world changes, businesses change and the competitive landscape of each keyword phrase changes over time. SEO strategies can be data-driven, intuitive, or both.

### **SEO and the new RMLA website**

The new RMLA website has been designed to be easily optimized. The webmasters are watching statistics and are looking for opportunities as the new site gets noticed by Google. The stats currently indicate that the RMLA website is ranking for various keyword phrases around the niche “llamas for sale.” The numbers aren’t super high, but this is still actionable information if you, as a member, want to “go after these keywords.” This keyword niche is perfect for members who breed/buy/sell llamas.

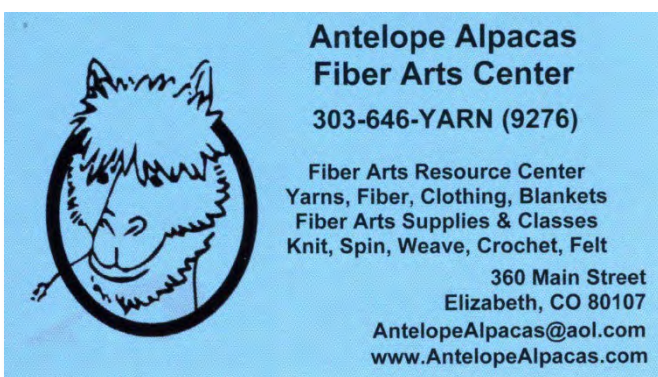
How can you get this traffic? Buying a RMLA [Featured Member Listing](#) and adding the appropriate keyword phrases to your custom page is a good start. We will then optimize your page appropriately with the relevant keywords.

Will it work? There is no guarantee and some keyword phrases take time to rank. Some take more or less time than others. However, if these keyword phrases are a perfect match for your business, we recommend getting your Featured Listing published right away.

As the new RMLA website matures in the search engines and more excellent educational content is added, traffic WILL grow. This benefits all RMLA members. RMLA will continue sharing exciting opportunities with you as they arise.

### **Continuing to move forward**

The website team is here for each and every one of you. We are available to answer any and all questions, guide you through the website, and listen to your ideas on what else we can do. The website is a total RMLA member-team effort. We are having so much fun and learning more than we ever imagined. Contact us: Kathy Stanko, [rmlawebsite@gmail.com](mailto:rmlawebsite@gmail.com), or Sandy Schilling, [rmlamembershipchair@gmail.com](mailto:rmlamembershipchair@gmail.com).





## Start Your Fiber Library

By Nancy Wilson, Camp Verde Llamas

In this article, I'm going to suggest a few resources for those of you who are new to fiber arts, beginning with processing your fiber through knitting or weaving your yarn into finished products. All three books are available for check-out from the amazing [RMLA library](#). They are:

- *Spinning Llama and Alpaca*, by RMLA life member Chris Switzer
- *Aunt Millie's Guide to Llama Fiber*, by Mike Brown
- *Homespun Handknit*, edited by Linda Ligon

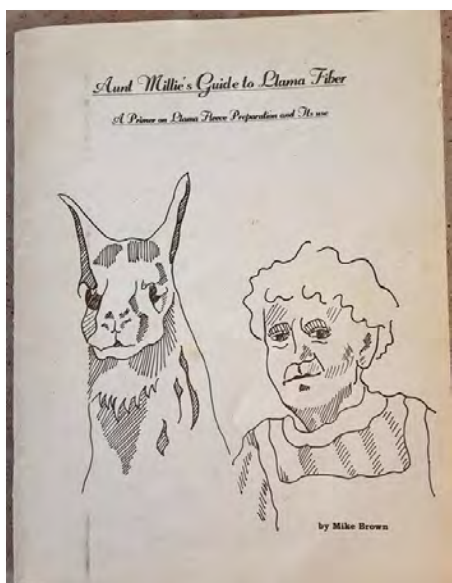
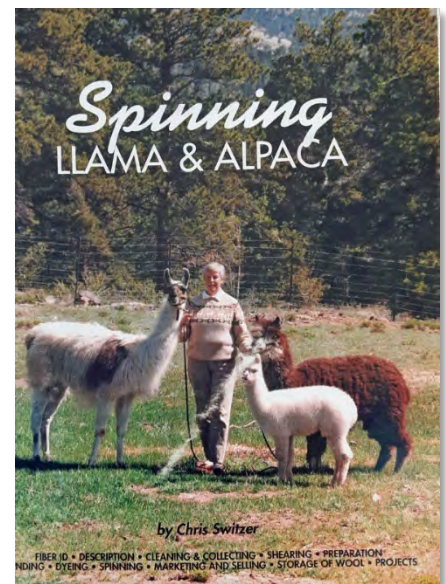
*Spinning Llama and Alpaca* covers the whole process, including a very interesting section on the history of camelids. If you are looking for a concise description of the differences between the various camelids, look no further; you'll find that information in the introduction. The section on fiber identification shows the difference between camelid fibers and other fibers. The description section talks about the different types of llamas and alpacas and their respective fleece. If you're looking for ways to desensitize your llamas for showing, packing, or being a good PR animal, you'll appreciate the section on cleaning and collecting fiber. If you plan to shear your own animals, the shearing section will give you some confidence on how to do it on your own. If you have your animals shorn by a professional shearer, this section gives you an appreciation for what they do.

Then on to the section of preparation; this is where for me the real fun begins. Even if you have your fiber processed at a mill, it is good to know how to do this from the beginning. Chris gives good illustrations on the process, as well as ways to prepare fiber for unique yarns. If you are a felter, this may

provide ideas on how to prepare fiber for that process. If you're interested in dyeing the fiber, the section on dyeing is an excellent primer on the process. You can start with Kool-Aid so you don't have to deal with heavy duty chemicals and develop your confidence in the process. There is also information on solar dyeing (as an Arizonan, I am playing a lot with this type of dyeing of late). There's also information on natural dyeing.

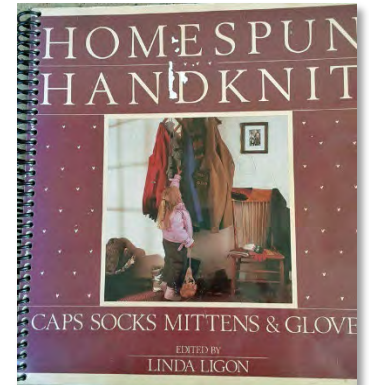
You'll find projects using a variety of techniques and an excellent bibliography. The first edition will whet your appetite for more, so you'll want to be sure to get the newest (fourth!) edition.

*Aunt Millie's Guide to Llama Fiber* talks about llama fiber in an easy-to-read story format. Here you'll learn about the different grades of fiber and where they're located on an animal. You'll learn how to remove guard hairs from a double-coated fleece and things to consider when selling your fleece or roving. Remember that these prices are from 1994, so you'll want to factor in inflation, etc. There's a section with suggestions for hand spinners



that talks about carding, both with hand cards and using a drum carder. One section I particularly appreciate is the information about drum carding. Mike's background includes work commercially preparing fiber which makes him very experienced at drum carding. He suggests a specific direction for placing the fiber on the drum carder after the initial pass that will make for a more pleasant spinning experience. You'll again find a good bibliography of additional resources.

*Homespun Handknit* is still one of my favorites. The book consists of small projects, which are great for beginning knitters and spinners. It's easy to come up with enough yarn for a hat or mittens. You'll find sections on caps, sets (hat and mittens), mittens, gloves, and socks. For beginning spinners, the Garter Stitch Cap and Mittens are an excellent way to use some of that early handspun. It's still a go-to book for projects and information. Using large needles allows you to combine several thinner yarns to create a unique hat.



This book also includes my first foray into two color knitting. The Mushroom Cap is an easy two-color project. I made this out of a llama/silk blend in natural color and combined it with a blue handspun very similar to the picture in the book. Oh, and all the projects have excellent pictures so you know what the end result will be. Another aspect of this book that I really like is the sidebar information. You'll find information about choosing needle size, making I-cord, knitting cables, and other useful information.



These books will also show you a variety of spindles to get started spinning, for example: Turkish spindle, top whorl spindle, and bottom whorl spindle. If you are interested in a spinning wheel but the price is a bit overwhelming, I see a Kickstarter campaign for an Electric Eel Nano 2 electric spinner. It's very affordable and the designer has an excellent reputation among spinners. I signed up for a blue Nano 2 e-spinner (see below) and am looking to use it as a travel wheel. It fits in the palm of your hand and can be run off a battery pack. So now I'll also need to pack my e-spinner as well as knitting projects for road trips.



## Mid-Plains Fiber Fair

By Geri Rutledge, Waco, NE

The Mid-Plains Fiber Fair was a huge success this year. Attendance was up as families were out and about again. We had 12 booths selling yarns, roving, woven products, and stuffed animals.

Interest in classes is really going up. We are seeing an upward trend as both men and women are taking fiber art classes. It's like the pioneer days are coming back. Weaving, dying, spinning - all the classes were full.

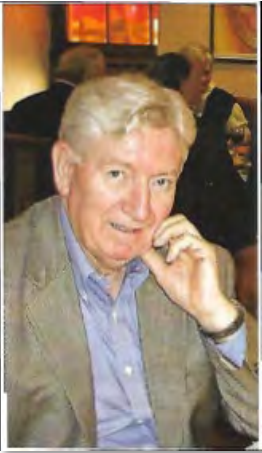
Kids love the animals in the barn full of sheep, llamas and alpacas. Sheep shearing really drew a crowd; again, it is back to the basics.

With the success again of this year's event and seeing more fiber events being planned for April, we are thinking about switching to October. You can find more information [here](#).



## Angus McColl (Sept. 24, 1928- Feb. 8, 2022)

by Linda Hayes



The lama world lost a true innovator when Angus McColl died. He founded Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories in 1963 as an animal fiber testing facility. His knowledge became the foundation for screening imports and developing histograms. These are used by alpaca breeders and have had a big impact on the industry. Every alpaca sale required histograms of the entries. These set standards of uniformity and make it easy to compare fiber microns.

Angus was born in Scotland, immigrated to the US and attended the University of Wyoming. He became a world-renowned expert in testing wool. When Mike Safley became president of the Alpaca Registry, he reached out to Angus to create scientific standards for screening Peruvian imports.

Angus suggested that fiber samples be taken from the side of each alpaca. He then did “histograms” on each animal. Histograms show the microns of the fiber as well as other scientific facts. It takes the guesswork out of comparing fleece. He also shared his knowledge on what micron range should be considered acceptable. These histograms made it easy for buyers to compare fleece and they quickly became the standard of alpaca and llama marketing.

Angus was a true friend of the camelid world. He will be missed for his innovative knowledge and the impact he has had on the lama industry.

## How I Got Into Llamas

By Julie Hall

Everyone has their origin story about how they got into camelids. Maybe it was by accident, maybe it was a purposeful journey. Ours is a kind of a mix between falling into something and a purposeful journey.

A few years ago, we purchased land that was classified as agriculture, and we needed something to keep that status. We owned horses, but in our county, horses don't count as agricultural, unless you have a breeding program, which we didn't. Others had suggested that we buy or lease cattle. I, however, knew that once an animal was here, and we'd name it, we wouldn't be able to butcher it. So, having cattle was out. I'd previously thought about alpacas, and we initially did some looking, contacting a few alpaca breeders and looking at their herds. Since we were still building the house, we had a hard time finding something we could afford, in the limited amount of time that we had.



While we were building our house, we'd begun working with a place that gentled BLM burros, so we could adopt a couple. The owner also had a small herd of Suri alpacas. When I mentioned our predicament, the owner said she was trying to downsize her alpaca herd and was willing to sell us a few of them at a reduced price. We didn't know anything about anything at that time, and we thought, what the heck? Let's get a few, and then we'll be covered for the agricultural status for the time being. They were cute and we could afford them, so we went ahead and bought them.

We were so excited to get them, but they were not impressed by us, not by any means! We couldn't touch them, or halter them, and they would try to kick us if we got too close. We tried bribing them with treats and we tried catching them, but as newbies to the whole alpaca thing, you can imagine how well that went. It was disappointing, because we love interacting with all our animals.

Shortly after getting our alpacas, we adopted our BLM burros. Everyone we talked to said how lucky we were to have donkeys because they would protect the alpacas. The burros and the alpacas seemed to get along well, so we thought it was great to have some guard donkeys. One day, however, I watched in amusement (or horror), as the alpacas ran off to investigate a noise (which just happened to be the neighbors walking their dogs). The donkeys never even looked up from eating. Some protectors they turned out to be!

In January 2020, we went to the National Western Stock Show during the weekend that the camelids were there. We started out talking with a few of the alpaca owners, trying to determine if alpaca ownership was the direction we wanted to keep going in. We were also toying with the idea of getting a guard llama, since our donkeys had failed so miserably at that job. We were still newbies, and still didn't know anything about anything, let alone what a guard llama was all about.

We were introduced to a llama owner who was showing at the Stock Show, and she was a breeder of rare Argentine llamas. I told her about my experience with our alpacas, and how disappointed we were that we couldn't handle them. She immediately invited me into the stall with her llamas and encouraged me to catch one. I was astonished! They were friendly, calm, and had the most awesome fiber I had ever felt! We walked around the show and talked with other llama owners, but I couldn't get past the Argentines.

We stayed for a while and watched some of the llama performance classes, and there is one picture that sticks in my mind to this day. There was a young girl getting ready to show her llama. She had to be eight or ten years old. She was waiting her turn, and had her arm casually looped around her llama's neck. Her llama just stood there, just as calm as could be. I knew, at that moment, that that was the type of animal we wanted to have on our ranch.

We formed a friendship with the Argentine llama breeder, and eventually bought three female Argentine llamas from her. She took the time to educate us on handling, breeding, feeding, general care, and has been a great mentor. We now have two pregnant Argentine llamas, and they are due any day now. The third llama was about four months old when we purchased her, and we actually brought the dam down with the cria to stay with us until she was old enough to be weaned.



When we purchased the younger llama, the breeder encouraged us to show her. She was from a long line of champions, and the breeder knew she was special. I've never shown animals before, and actually never wanted to. I politely told the breeder that showing wasn't a path we wanted to follow, and she accepted it. However, every time she saw us, she would encourage us to reconsider. A few other people also encouraged us to show her, so we finally decided to give it a try.

We took her to the 2022 National Western Stock Show. This was the first time I had ever participated in something like this and I was overwhelmed by how helpful everyone in the camelid community was! We entered our youngster, Dot, into the halter and fleece classes, and she did great! She tied for first for her fleece, won her age group in halter, and then, won Reserve Champion for the Medium Wool Females! I couldn't have been more proud of her. However, the thing I am most proud of is how she interacted with the people at the show. She snuggled babies, let kids and adults hug her, and handled herself in such a calm and mature manner. At our house, we knew she was friendly because she loves to snuggle with us and my 90-year-old mother-in-law, as well as all of us. It was great to see her in a different setting, showing off that wonderful llama personality.



We decided to take her to other shows this year, and now, when we see the breeder, we laugh at how I was so adamant about not showing. I have to admit that participating in the shows also helped us to learn more about llamas in general and introduced us to other llama and alpaca owners. All great things!

We have decided that we want to be a fiber farm, and to that end, we have Suri and Huacaya alpacas, Argentine llamas, and Pygora goats. I don't yet have time to do a lot with the fiber, and don't see myself as a spinner. Eventually, I want to use the fiber I'm collecting for art. But in the meantime, I'm slowly investigating how to prep the fiber, and hope to find a mill and actually get some of my fiber processed.

[www.howtocatchallama.com](http://www.howtocatchallama.com)

Animal rescue site for people who need to catch llamas and alpacas.

**Designed for people who know absolutely nothing about llamas and alpacas.**

The site gives those who need to catch llamas the tools to do so. It has links to locals who can help.

A joint effort of the International Llama Foundation and the International Llama Registry

# Valley Fever

by Sandy Schilling



Living in Phoenix, Arizona all my life, I remember hearing about Valley Fever in only a few people as a kid. As an adult, I became extremely aware of Valley Fever because it affected my animals. Valley Fever is so common now that doctors say that if you have lived in Arizona for any length of time, you've probably had it and thought it was the flu or some other malady. Valley Fever became so prevalent in my family dogs that I could diagnose them before the blood test showed a positive result. Unfortunately, I had NO IDEA a llama could also be affected until I tragically lost two of the best llamas anyone could have. As a result of my emotional trauma and guilt, I felt compelled to talk to experts to answer some of the common questions that people have about Valley Fever and how it can affect our animals. This information must be shared – especially with Arizona llama owners.

Following are questions I asked Christine Staten, DVM of the Adobe Veterinary Center in Tucson, Arizona along with Lisa Shubitz, DVM with the University of Arizona's Valley Fever Center for Excellence.

## What Is Valley Fever?

Also called coccidioidomycosis, Valley Fever is a fungal infection caused by the *Coccidioides* spp. fungi which are found in soil regionally in the Southwestern United States (especially South-central Arizona and the central valley of California) and in parts of Central America and South America. The term "Valley Fever" refers to both the fungal infection and the range of symptoms that it causes.

## What States Have Valley Fever?

Arizona, California, and Texas. A small number of cases are noted in Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico. Human cases have been documented in Washington and Colorado as well.

## How Do Llamas and Alpacas Get Valley Fever?

Llamas and alpacas contract Valley Fever the same way other mammals can, by breathing in infectious spores that are found in the soil. These spores can be kicked up from the dirt or can be breathed in while they are blowing around in dust and in the wind.

Once the lungs have been exposed to the infectious fungal spores, the lifecycle of the *Coccidioides* fungus continues. The spores take root in the lungs where they grow, mature, and reproduce. If left untreated, they can spread, causing painful symptoms and health problems throughout the body.

Most humans, and probably even most alpacas and llamas, successfully contain the fungus in the lungs at the beginning of infection and don't get sick.

## Is Valley Fever Contagious?

Valley Fever is not contagious. It is not spread between people or animals by coughing or any other way. Sometimes multiple animals or humans are affected in a household, but that is more an indication of their common environment.

### **What Signs and Symptoms Should Camelid Owners Watch for in Their Animals?**

Alpacas are more likely to show few or no clinical signs, while the majority of llamas in one report showed signs of illness. Male llamas are statistically the most likely to get Valley Fever. Male and female alpacas are equally susceptible, though pregnancy may be related to worse outcomes in females.

When animals demonstrate illness, the most common signs are weight loss, coughing, decreased energy, and decreased appetite. Others include lameness, joint swelling, inability to stand or walk, fever, cardiac disease, non-healing skin lesions, brain or spinal cord symptoms, and reproductive issues. Abortions were reported for 2 alpacas and 5 crias (4 alpaca, 1 llama) who were born with Valley Fever from their mothers who died. The dams were also usually euthanized or died.

Butkiewicz, Shubitz, *Transbound Emerg Dis*, 2019, Vol 66:807-812.

Grayzel, et.al., *Medical Mycology*, 2021, Vol 59(6):571-577.

Fernandez, et.al., *J Vet Diagn Investigation*, 2018; DOI:10.1177/1040638718777282.

### **How is Valley Fever Diagnosed?**

Valley Fever is diagnosed by a blood test that checks for antibodies to the fungus. Other tests may also help to diagnose the disease. Tests include complete blood work, x-rays of lungs or affected limbs, aspirates of joints or draining lesions, and biopsies or fungal cultures.

### **Why Are Camelids So Susceptible to Valley Fever?**

The issue is not that they are necessarily more susceptible to Valley Fever but that we are unable to manage/treat them well with the antifungal medications. Camelids may be more susceptible to the spread of the disease throughout the body from the lungs if it is not controlled early. Unfortunately, another issue is that they seem to “hide” their disease until it is widespread, which is very difficult to diagnose and manage.

### **How is Valley Fever Treated? Is the treatment successful?**

In dogs and people, Valley Fever is treated or managed generally well with various antifungal medications. That is unfortunately, not true for our camelids. Our own experiences, as well as the literature reported, suggest that over half of animals that are sick die despite treatment with antifungal medication.

The medications are altered in the forestomachs making them less able to get into the bloodstream where they need to be to work. In the past, I have worked with Dr. Shubitz on some small trials where we tried to get the blood levels of the medication high enough to try to treat the Valley Fever, but we have not been able to find a consistent medication, dose, or way to give it that gets us what we need. In one of the trials, we used rectal suppositories with the medication to try to bypass the forestomachs. In another trial, we administered oral medications at high doses twice daily. Neither gave us the results we were hoping for. One of the big problems is that there is not a lot of money available to fund studies in camelids as the problem is regional and there is a relatively small population of camelids in this small area.

**Editor’s Note:** *The forestomachs in ruminants and camelids are dilations and modifications of the esophagus. They are designed to house a digestive flora necessary for producing short-chain fatty acids from forage that are subsequently directly absorbed into the bloodstream along with sodium and chloride.*



A small study of fluconazole in alpacas performed by veterinarians at the Valley Fever Center for Excellence (University of Arizona, Tucson) showed that doses of 10-15 mg/kg/day produced blood concentrations high enough to potentially treat Valley Fever in about half of the animals. This was a pharmacokinetics study designed to understand doses of this drug that have the potential to make alpacas well, but there are currently no studies of the actual efficacy of this medication in alpacas or llamas.

For more details on the study and its results, follow this link to the Valley Fever Center for Excellence:  
[https://vfce.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/alpaca\\_for\\_website.pdf](https://vfce.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/alpaca_for_website.pdf).

Butkiewicz, CD, Shubitz LF, Nix DE. A preliminary study of the plasma concentrations of orally administered fluconazole in alpacas (*Vicugna pacos*) *J Vet Pharmacol and Ther* 2021:<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jvp.12994>

### **Can the hay you buy cause Valley Fever? A lot of camelid owners buy their hay from out of Arizona to try to avoid Valley Fever.**

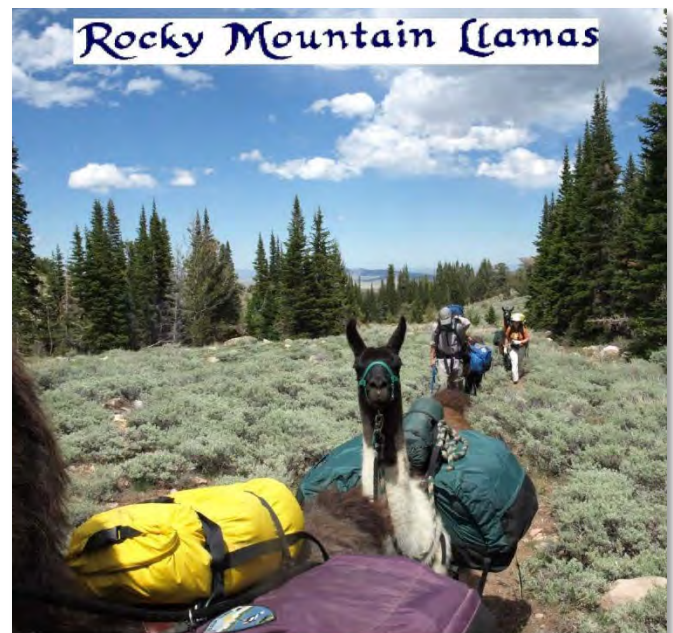
Hay bought outside of the endemic areas is much less likely to have spores in it than hay grown in endemic areas. However, if your camelids live in the endemic area, feeding them hay from non-endemic areas will likely not reduce their chance of acquiring Valley Fever because they are already breathing it from the soil. The opposite is potentially more concerning: bringing feed grown in soil from endemic areas to an area without Valley Fever may potentially expose your alpacas and llamas to spores trapped in the dust of the hay.

### **What Can Camelid Owners Do to Prevent Valley Fever?**

Move the animals out of the endemic areas. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine and no way to control the spores in the environment.

### **For More Information:**

For a slide show presented by Dr. Lisa Shubitz at Calpaca symposium 2020, follow this link: [Valley Fever](#)



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## Llamas Over The New Zealand Alps

by Keith Payne

Ed Shand was early on the llama scene in New Zealand, keeping several on his large sheep and beef station in the New Zealand high country. Ed and I have completed a number of llama treks both here in New Zealand, as well as in the Rocky Mountains. We were eager to tackle the Doubtful Valley track up and over the Amuri Pass before descending towards the West Coast gold fields. Last time I did this trek was eight years ago and it was a tough one! But since then several horse clubs had done work on the trail and by all reports it would be much easier. It is one of the heritage routes over which sheep and cattle were driven to hungry gold miners 140 years ago and is rated as Difficult/Experienced Only.

We left our departure date towards the end of March, possibly late in the season for this track. But we were seasoned in the bush and our llamas were experienced. On day one we arrived at the trailhead on schedule and were promptly loaded and underway.

The Boyle river was our first challenge; it was a bit swollen, running swiftly but we were full of confidence and set off without hesitation, Ed in the lead. We were not far from the far bank when without warning Ed disappeared into a hole, his llama struggled with footing until he also found the hole, managing to get away from Ed in the struggle. At that point my boy suddenly disappeared under water and came up fighting, top load quickly dislodged, floating downstream; I lost my footing and went under but managed to find a lead rope and headed back to catch Ed's boy. Ed in the meantime was heading downstream to recover the floating top load items. It took us a few moments to collect ourselves, calm the llamas before finding what looked like a better crossing spot. We were very wet and cold; the llamas were beginning to question our company, but we crossed safely, searched out the trail and set off. The sun rewarded us with some heat; Ed set a quick pace and the kilometers began to disappear behind us as we hiked along the trail.

Before long the well-marked track began to climb, but as the day wore on we started to realize it had received little usage for quite some time. For a horse track it evidenced little sign of horses. We began to spend time searching for the track in areas where it had been covered by landslides or swollen tributaries.



But the llamas were keen and we pressed on covering in total some 16/17 kms before arriving at an area called Phantom Flat by 3:30 p.m. It was time to make camp as dark would arrive in the valley by 5:15 p.m. and this was the last possible camp site before the final climb up to the Amuri Pass. Phantom Flat was full of hunters who had been helicoptered in with their supplies. From these fellows we learned the horse clubs had discontinued use of the trail some three years ago as it proved to be dangerous for horses and riders.

We got a good start the following morning, grunted our way up to the Pass and after a short break, we began to work our way down the West Coast side. Of course, the rain which had been light all morning began to build up to a steady downpour, destined to continue the next 36 hours. When finally we bottomed out mid-afternoon as we began to experience difficulty following the trail; the markers obviously had washed or blown away. About 4 p.m. we found a clearing and decided to make camp. Shortly after tethering the llamas, a big stag rumbled into the camp, being attracted by the llamas. He froze amongst the tents for several seconds before giving a deep roar and smashing off into the undergrowth.

Day 3 saw us up and under way early; we knew this would be the day to make or break the trip. The continuous rain had swollen the river and it would continue as we beat our way downstream. We lost and found the trail a dozen times that day but made excellent progress; each time we crossed and recrossed the river it was a bit deeper and the current a bit stronger. Towards the end of the day our luck ran out where Slaty Creek converged with the Waiheke, becoming too dangerous for a crossing. Fortunately there was an old but comfortable hut nearby so we staked out the llamas and set about getting a fire started in the hut.

The next morning we were greeted by blue skies and warm sun, enjoying a straightforward 14 km trek along the river to our final destination. And although we had passed through some truly scenic country the previous days (in bad weather), that last day's walk (with dry feet) really did top off the adventure.

Our good mate Tony Pearce was waiting for us; we loaded the llamas, packed the gear and settled back for the long drive back over the Alps to our homes on the East side.

And it is at this point that we must comment on the two llamas. If either of these fellows had faltered or experienced a

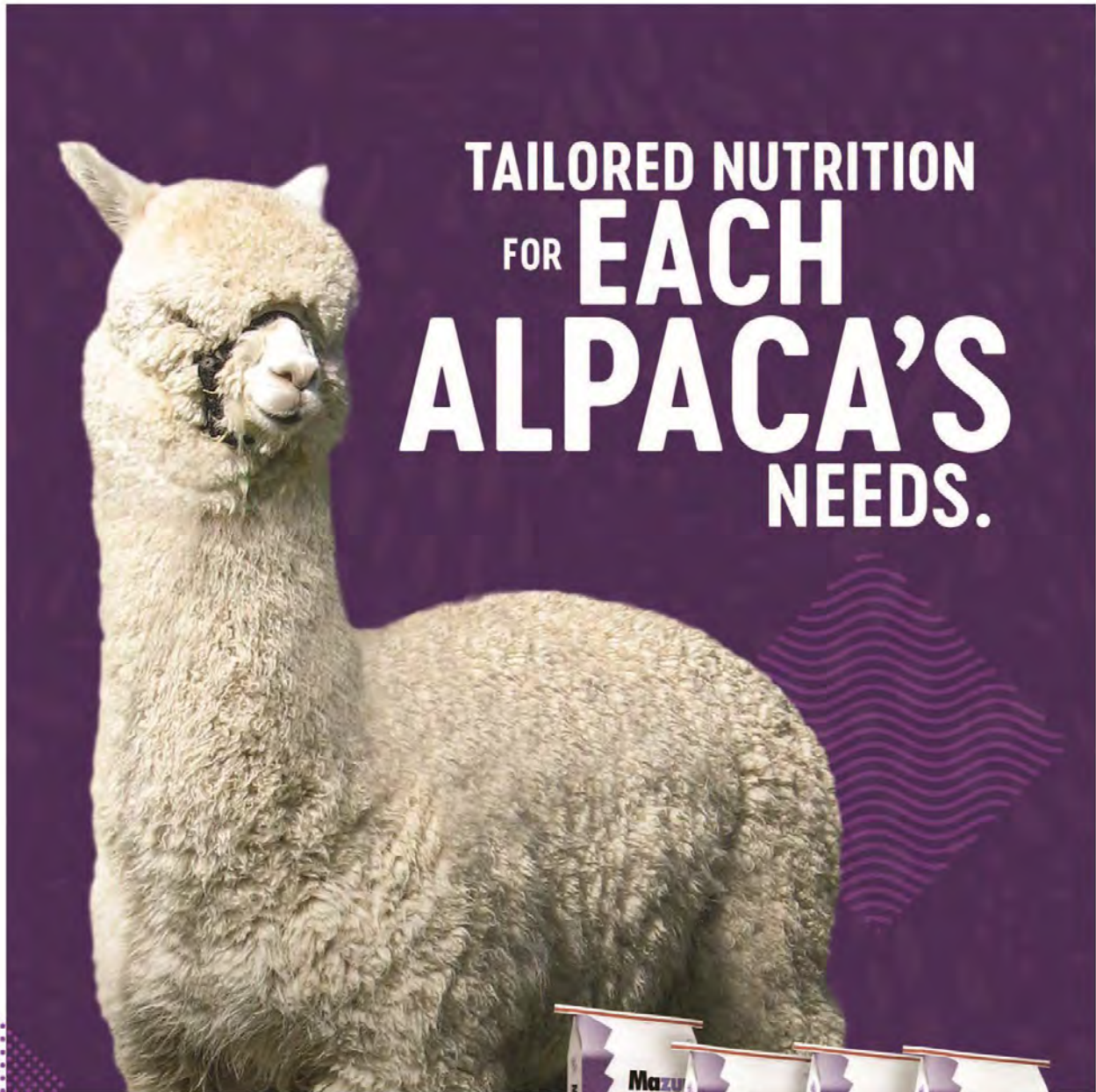


problem, the trip would have been different. But they didn't!

Ed was supported by Joey, a 16/17 year old Ccara llama owned by Tony Pearce of Hanmer Llamas, who without doubt is the most experienced packing llama in NZ. Not a big fellow, but Joey knows only one direction, and does not have a stop button. Manuel (11 years) was carrying my load, bred and raised on my farm; his mother is guanaco/llama and his father is full guanaco. He is a very strong fellow, great athlete and like Joey, would never say "enough". Some of the terrain we crossed was very difficult, wet, slippery, sharp edges, boulder fields, windfall, swollen rivers, steep climbs/descents and so on. Not once did either of these boys hesitate, pull back or slow our progress. They seemed to relish the challenge and if anything, seemed more determined with each day passing. They each carried 70-75 lbs.

Next year, Ed and I will be joined by Tony for a trek through one of the other passes, hopefully in better weather. Three old fellows in their mid-70's, you can imagine the stories that get told around the evening campfire . . . . .





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