

Spring 2023

The Journal of RMLA



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



Vice President
Sandy Schilling
Chino Valley AZ
602-403-8166
Sschilli9151@gmail.com



Secretary
Nancy Wilson
Camp Verde AZ
928-220-5553
spinllama@msn.com



Treasurer
L'illette Vasquez
Kerrville, TX
720-839-0787
llamas@lillette.net



At-Large
Linda Schlenker
Scottsdale, AZ
602-576-3828
lindalouschlenker@mac.com

Chairpersons, Active Committees

Bookstore

Manager: **Karen Miller**
RMLAbookstore@gmail.com
Bookkeeper: **Marilyn Arnold**
Liaison Lougene Baird

Facebook

Sandy Schilling
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com
Liaison L'illette Vasquez

E-Blasts

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

Education/Events/Marketing

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

Fiber

OPEN
rmlafiber@gmail.com
Liaison Nancy Wilson

Finance

Marilyn Arnold
303-841-5126
rmlaaccounting@yahoo.com
Liaison Sandra Schilling

The Journal

Kathy Stanko
970-256-7716
rmlaeditor@gmail.com
Liaison L'illette Vasquez

Library

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

Membership

Sandy Schilling
602-403-8166
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com
Liaison L'illette Vasquez

Nominations & Elections

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

Pack

L'illette Vasquez
720-839-0787
llamas@lillette.net
Liaison L'illette Vasquez

Research

Ron Baird
808-747-5975
ronbaird1942@outlook.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

Website

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

Youth, 4-H, FFA

Ron Cosner
712-541-8938
rmlayouthinfo@gmail.com
Liaison Sandy Schilling

About the Journal

The Journal of RMLA[®] 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.

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Cover Photo: Charlie Romo with Titan. This is Charlie’s first year in the show ring. Photo courtesy of Julia Henrich.

From The Editor

Kathy Stanko, Editor, rmlaeditor@gmail.com

Happy spring to everyone! What a winter it has been for almost everyone across the country.

Let's begin with the President's Message. Reading Lougene's words, I am awed by the depth and breadth of how our members serve this great organization. As you read this article, maybe you will think of a way you can add your gifts to all that is going on in RMLA. If you have an idea of how you would like to participate, contact any Board Member or Committee Chair.



Yes, this issue has articles on health, fiber, packing, events, showing and training. All good stuff. But we also take a couple of steps back in time to learn about two individuals who have made huge contributions to the world of camelids. Read about Murray Fowler, DVM, on Pages 13 – 16. Long time llama and alpaca trainer John Mallon is honored beginning on Page 32.

The RMLA Youth are still shining. The belt buckle awarded to Bella Rogers, Outstanding RMLA Youth for 2022, is a definite **WOW!** The 2022 wrap-up begins on page 35. The RMLA youth are involved in everything from showing, creating costumes to learning the basic of health care. Emma Hunt's article about training a cria, page 12, has some great insights.

Finally, please take a look at the last article, *We Are Making an Impact*. With organizations all over this country, your articles and educational information are reaching beyond the borders of any state. Woohoo! Keep them coming and THANK YOU.

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 **5th 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
- 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 at RMLA.com using a credit card. Payment and ad copy must be received prior to submission deadline. See the table above for dates.

President's Message

This is it! The always wonderful Spring Journal! It's full of articles for you to enjoy and learn from, written by so many folks who have wonderful things to share. While education is the reason RMLA exists, there are many reasons to say this organization would be in a tough spot if we didn't have folks who have something to share but kept it all to themselves. Isn't it wonderful to read an article that spills into your life with a new hack on herd management or packing or using fleece? Take a look at what our RMLA Youth are sharing!

Speaking of sharing, the article by Bob Riley from the previous Journal that was a reprint of his trip into the Bears Ear area of Utah was a good read. We received several comments from members who have also enjoyed hikes in that area or who are really interested in going in that direction. What Bob shared so many years ago remains very relevant today to the use of a good pack llama in the wilderness.

While reading the article, it also took me back to that time. It was about the same time Bob and I "shared" a place on the RMLA Board; he was President and I was Treasurer. Bob and I, along with a couple other members, designed the stand-alone accounting system for the RMLA Bookstore. The bookstore had to run on accrual accounting because of inventory control, accountability and royalties, but the general operations account was simply a cash account. Without working together and "sharing" ideas, RMLA accountability would not be as transparent as it is today.

Speaking of the RMLA Bookstore, you may recall it now is located in South Fork, CO. Mary Vavrina has retired from the bookstore in her effort to downsize. A new RMLA member, Karen Miller, has stepped up to manage the distribution of *Caring for Llamas and Alpacas* and *The Youth Lama Project Manual*. The inventory is big these days as both books have just been reprinted. Thank you both, Mary and Karen, for your dedication to RMLA and the RMLA Bookstore. Your time and effort in this special RMLA endeavor means much to many people who use this publication in managing their herd and activities.

Interesting facts about our publications: *Caring for Llamas and Alpacas* is now in its third edition, third printing with over 50,000 copies in print; RMLA's *The Youth Lama Project Manual* is in its eighth printing with over 10,000 copies in print. Now, that is lots of volunteer time and lots of educational sharing opportunities!

One of the greatest contributions to the success of RMLA is from those members who take it upon themselves to "share" their time and organize an RMLA event. This is education at its best and often is the place where people unfamiliar with camelids may have their first hands-on experience. We say hats off to these folks for the time and energy each "shares" to orchestrate an event.

- Judy Glaser – Superintendent for many years at the National Western Stock Show – where tens of thousands of people walk past the llama stalls and sit in the stadium to watch the show and are amazed at the beauty of camelids.
- Gary and Patty Jones and Ron Hinds and Elizabeth Cline – Twice a year, they organize PacaBuddies where they teach about anything a person wants to know about our animals and where visitors can feel and touch the beauty of fiber.
- Mary Wickman – Organizes the Fairplay Obstacle Course in July, where last year over 150 kids (and a few adults) walked a llama for the very first time.
- Sandy Schilling – Organized a "show and tell" at the Chino Valley, AZ Library and taught "What is the difference between a llama and an alpaca?" Attendance exceeded expectations and interest was high.

- Gayle Woodsum – organizes a super fun fall weekend in Laramie, WY with lots of activities for learning and showing. This is a wonderful outdoor weekend.
- Julie Hall – is organizing the September Fallama Show & Event in Castle Rock, CO. This is RMLA’s first opportunity to sponsor an ILR show. With a group of volunteers on board, lots will happen this weekend – don’t miss it.

Let’s also remember the sharing of your Board. This year’s Board is just so full of energy and creative ideas that it is hard to believe what goes on. I am so honored to serve with this group of smart and productive ladies. What a team! I am so grateful.

And Kathy Stanko – You amaze me at how you continually outdo yourself as each new *Journal* is released. You do a task that few would even consider.

Thank you to those who have renewed their dues to spend another year with RMLA. You, too, are important. I know with all my heart you also have a good story to share, and I look forward to reading it in an upcoming *Journal*. Give it a try!

Lougene

Welcome New Members!

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

Mary Anne & Eve Anna Urlakis, Richfield, WI
Marcia Wescott & Forrest Vultee, Scarborough, ME
Beverly Scott, Woodside, CA
Adelaide Romo Sonneman, Kersey, CO
John Mallon, Chino Valley, AZ
Margot Darling - Bozeman, MT
1 new youth member, Kersey, CO

RMLA EVENTS

Upcoming RMLA Events

By Mary Wickman, Events Chair

FallamaFest Llama Show and Event: September 29 – October 1, 2023. Douglas County Fairgrounds, Castle Rock, CO. An ILR show plus educational clinics on llama health and showing. Contact Julie Hall for more information: jmhbluehorse@yahoo.com or 303-910-2134.

Save the Date:

Lama Lunacy: July 29, 2023, Fairplay, CO. For more information, contact Mary Wickman, mwickman1@gmail.com

Higher Ground Fair: September 15 - 17, 2023. Laramie, WY. For more information, contact Gayle Woodsum, gayle@highergroundfair.org.

National Western Stock Show 2023

Judy Glaser - Show Superintendent

The Stock Show never disappoints as a great way to start the new year. Each year the exhibitor numbers have increased. This year was the best so far: 29 different families brought 73 animals! It was exciting to see new youth participating!

As always, the performance classes set the stage for the audience on the opening weekend of Stock Show. Youth go first and definitely show that with patience and practice, llamas will follow you just about anywhere! Of course, the show stopper is when you have a five-year-old who can lead a llama around obstacles.

During the two and a half weeks of events, the livestock office has interns from various colleges volunteering their time for credit in their field of study. The word has spread that working the llama/alpaca show is a highlight and a place to be.

Thirty seven exhibitors entered the Walking Fiber classes. Llama fiber is up and coming! This was the second year of the Versatility Award. Winning results from the obstacle and pack classes, halter and a fleece class are the prerequisites to enter.



I am very thankful for all of the volunteers who are working in the background to make this show come together. And a huge thank you to RMLA for again sponsoring this event that showcases our animals to thousands of visitors. Let's do it again next year.

Photos courtesy of Julia Henrich with the Just a Bit of Spit Llama group.

Beware: These Weeds Can Be Killers

Dr. Char Arendas, DVM

Reprinted with permission from the GALA Newsletter, February, 2023

There's plenty of nutritious plants and grasses out in your llama pastures. Most llamas will avoid nibbling on "other" plants that don't taste as good. However, we need to keep an eye out for some common pasture inhabitants that can spell trouble. This is no trick or treat... sometimes deadly are the things you eat!

Cocklebur

We already despise this plant because of the burrs getting stuck in our llamas' fiber. But did you know it is poisonous too? The cocklebur prefers wet areas and poor soil. The plant is poisonous in the early spring as a seedling, but the burrs can also be toxic if ingested (OUCH!). Symptoms include abdominal pain, liver necrosis, hypoglycemia, incoordination, inability to stand, and convulsions.

This can occur within several hours to two days after ingestion. It's likely you've seen cocklebur before – it grows large round burrs and produces a purple flower.



Milkweed

Although all milkweeds can cause issues, the narrow-leafed milkweeds are the most toxic. Butterfly Milkweed is likely the worst culprit, which has a group of orange flowers at the top of the plant. However, all milkweeds can have varying degrees of toxicity. It is most poisonous in spring, while the plant is rapidly growing. However, it retains the toxins when dried in hay! It causes symptoms 1-2 days after ingestion. Symptoms include muscle spasms, bloating, irregular heartbeat, weak breathing, fever, coma, and death.

Milkweed stems and leaves ooze a milky-white sap when cut. Livestock will generally avoid the weed if good pasture is available to graze.



Poison Hemlock and Water Hemlock

Resembling the white Queen Anne's Lace flower, poison hemlock is nothing to mess around with. This weed can get BIG – up to six feet tall! It likes to live in wet areas and smells like parsnips or parsley when crushed. The stems of hemlock tend to be mottled with purple splotches. Water hemlock roots can even poison drinking water if enough plants are situated around a puddle where animals drink! Hemlocks can cause salivation, loss of appetite, bloat, weak pulse, paralysis, birth defects, and death. Symptoms occur minutes to hours after ingestion, and death can occur rapidly or up to 8 hours after ingestion. They remain toxic when dried in hay.



Cressleaf Groundsel (Tansy Ragwort/Butterweed)

Although small ruminants tend to be less susceptible to death by this weed, it can still cause problems. This weed tends to produce yellow daisy-like flowers in the springtime. You may notice it more so on fields where crops have grown but



gone bare in the fall, as the weed tends to seed in the fall without competition. This weed causes severe gastrointestinal upset including diarrhea, weight loss, anemia, and liver disease that can even cause severe sun sensitivity and neurologic behavior. Groundsel causes problems when it is ingested on a regular basis over time, as the toxins accumulate in the body. A single exposure is unlikely to cause concern. It remains toxic when dried in hay.

Black Nightshade

Whoever named this plant even gave it a spooky name, so no wonder it's so toxic! Nightshade plants have broad egg-shaped leaves and produce tiny white flowers. They grow green berries that turn black when ripe. It is most toxic in summer and fall, but unripe green berries are the most toxic part of the plant. Symptoms will occur within several hours, but up to two days after ingestion and can include salivation, diarrhea, colic, muscle tremors, dilated pupils, slow heart rate, labored breathing, incoordination, coma, and death. Berry scary!



Editor's Note: There are many additional plants that can be harmful to our animals. Most states have a list on their websites, or contact your local extension office.

Caring for Llamas and Alpacas
A Health and Management Guide

By Clare Hoffman, DVM, and Ingrid Asmus

A timeless resource for anyone caring for llamas and alpacas. Get one for yourself or as a gift for those you are mentoring.

Available at [RMLA.com](https://rmla.com)
<https://rmla.com/caring-for-llamas-alpacas/>

Cotton Spinning With Joan Ruane

By Nancy Wilson

Camp Verde, AZ

Perhaps you read that title and thought to yourself, “Wait. I’m reading the RMLA Journal, why is there an article on spinning cotton in here?” Good point. Well, there is much to learn by taking workshops outside of your normal field of interest. I’ve taken classes on spinning silk with Sara Lamb and on other topics with outstanding instructors. As a spinner, I jump at opportunities to take classes with well-known instructors because I’m certain to learn something. And likely I will learn something that will transfer to spinning camelid fibers or clever ideas that transfer to spinning in general and make me a better instructor.

But I digress. Cotton is a short fiber (did anyone also think guanaco or paco vicuña?) so it needs more twist to make a stable yarn. Raw fiber can be carded into *rolags* using hand carders (similar to a dog brush). When used with cotton, a tightly rolled *rolag* is used and called a *puni*. Carded preparations will make a lovely lofty yarn when spun using a woolen technique. There are two ways to spin a woolen yarn: a technique called double drafting or a point of contact long draw.



Spinner making notes to help her remember what she did.



Cotton Punis

Let me explain the two methods. In double drafting, the spinner pinches off a bit of fiber to create a *slub* (or bump). Then the spinner pulls back on the fiber to let twist into the *slub* area. The sequence is: jump back into the fiber supply with the back hand, pinch, and then attenuate against that twist to work out the *slub*. In point of contact long draw, the spinner moves the hand backward just ahead of the twist entering the fiber supply. Either method will work, and you can search YouTube for videos showing these techniques.

Another reason to take a workshop on a topic outside your normal spinning style is that it will get you better acquainted with your wheel. Since cotton needs more twist, that translates to using a smaller whorl (or higher ratio) to get more twist per treadle. In this class, all seven wheels were the same brand (they enjoyed getting to know each other) so I could compare my wheel’s performance with others. I was treadling with much more effort than others and wondered why that was happening. Fortunately for me we had a real engineer in the house who

understands bearings and how things are put together. We were able to compare how my wheel was treadling with how other wheels were treadling, and then to trace this difference to the ball bearing that the drive wheel rests in. Upon later inspection, there was no grease in the bearing; so once I repacked the bearing, my wheel treadled much easier. I love having engineers in class with me!

Besides the techniques I learned, another good reason to take workshops outside your normal routine is just that. Learning different methods of doing things can spark the creative side and get a spinner thinking about a new yarn to make and something new and different to make out of that new yarn. In this case, we were each challenged to spin a cotton yarn with a project in mind. We spun both ginned cotton that we had solar dyed (Did I mention the class was in Arizona in July?), as well as cotton sliver (similar to wool roving but the more condensed version with cotton is called sliver). I had two distinct singles: one a smooth, fine Pima cotton and the other a textured multi-color. Plying them together gave me a uniquely textured yarn with a variety of colors. I decided that I would use the yarn as weft for a woven scarf. I was able to spend class time doing what normally would be a tedious job: carding the cotton into *puni*. And that's exactly what I did. Made enough *punis* for the other single and then grouped them together in a pleasing color palette for spinning. The yarn hasn't made its way onto my loom yet, but the yarn is ready to go.

All this is to encourage you to learn outside your normal box. You might just learn something awesome!



At the End of the Day

TRAINING/YOUTH

Training A Cria

by Emma Hunt, Wunsapana 4-H, Altamont NY

I have been working with crias for a few years now and it is one of my favorite things to do at the farm. The first thing to do when working with a cria is to gain the trust of the mom and the cria. Going to 4-H every week and being around the animals is very important to gain their trust. So is feeding them at the same time every day.

The next thing I do when working with a cria is to put a halter on them. They may freak out, but first I put the halter on with no lead rope and get them used to wearing it. After they get used to doing that a few times, I add a lead rope and start to slowly walk them around at their own pace.

This is all building a foundation for future harder training like obstacles and public relations courses. To me the most important part of cria training is gaining your animal's trust and having a bond with them because when you are holding the lead rope, they are trusting you with everything, and you are trusting them.

Patience is key to working with a cria. It will take time and sometimes it will feel like nothing is going right or you are not making progress but it is important to maintain constant work ethic with the animal. Over time, your cria will become better and better on a halter and trust you more, which will help you set the foundation for harder commands and tasks.



Halter training with Beruna.

The Foundation of Camelid Medicine

By Kathy Stanko

The following excerpt is from *Medicine and Surgery of South American Camelids* by Murray E. Fowler, DVM, published in 1989.

The camelid foot is unique, with two digits on each foot. The plantar surface is covered with a safe, cornified layer of epithelium similar to that of the bulb of the heel in sheep and goats. This is called the slipper. In lamoids, there is a separate slipper for each digit, while in the camel, a single slipper covers the entire bearing surface (pg. 182).

Over time, this book has become the foundation of camelid medicine as we know it today. Dr. Fowler spent a lifetime studying all animals and willingly took on camelids when few vets were so inclined. Dr. LaRue Johnson estimates that it probably took five to seven years to produce the book. When reading Dr. Fowler's work I am reminded that the information my vet uses today, began here.

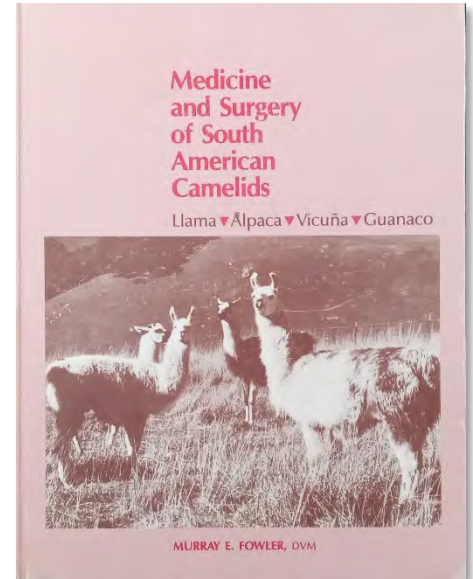


Table 15.9. Comparative serum biochemistry of the llama, camel, cow, and horse

Parameter	Llama	Camel	Cow	Horse
Total protein (g/dl)	4.7-7.3	6.3-8.7	6.7-7.5	5.2-7.9
Albumin (g/dl)	2.9-5	3-4.4	3-3.6	2.6-3.7
Globulin (g/dl)	1.1-3	2.8-4.4	3-3.5	2.6-4
A:G ratio	1.1-1.6:1		0.84-0.94:1	0.62-1.46:1
Calcium (mg/dl)	7.6-10.9	6.3-11	9.7-12.4	11.2-13.6
Phosphorus (mg/dl)	1.6-11	3.9-6.8	5.6-6.5	3.1-5.6
Sodium (meq/L)	148-158	129.3-160.7	132-152	132-146
Potassium (meq/L)	3.6-6.2	3.6-6.1	3.9-5.8	2.4-4.7
Chloride (meq/L)	98-120		99-109	97-111
Total CO ₂ (mm/L)	14-34		24-32	21.2-32.2
T3 (ng/dl)	0-423			
T4 (µg/dl)	9.8-30		4.2-8.6	0.9-2.8
SGOT (IU/L)	128-450		78-132	226-366
SGPT (IU/L)	0-14		14-38	3-23
SGGT (IU/L)	3-28			3-13.4
SDH (IU/L)	0-15		4.3-15.3	1.9-5.8
LDH (IU/L)	10-695		692-1445	162-412
ALP (IU/L)	0-610		0-488	143-395
CPK (IU/L)	0-137		4.8-12.1	2.4-23.4
Creatinine (mg/dl)	0.9-2.8	1.2-2.8	1-2	1.2-1.9
Urea N (mg/dl)	9-36	15.7-48.5	20-30	10-24
Cholesterol (mg/dl)	0-128	20.8-79.2	80-120	75-150
Glucose (mg/dl)	76-176	37-67	45-75	75-115

Table 15.9 found on page 267 *Medicine and Surgery of South American Camelids*

The book is in the RMLA Library. The detail of the content, tables, photos and illustrations is amazing. The RMLA library has a few other publications by Dr. Fowler.

The following excerpt is from *What About Conformation? Form, Function, Conformation and Soundness*.

It may not be readily apparent, but the unique foot of the camelids may be an adaption to increase the stability of the animal for the pacing gait. All other two-toed ungulates have a ligamentous structure that ties the toes together. Not so in the camelids, which have a splay-toed foot (page 21).

Any book, article, video in the library may be checked out by RMLA members. [Take a look.](#)

My Memoir of Murray Fowler

LaRue Johnson

DVM, PhD and Professor Emeritus from Colorado State University

I was recently asked by Kathy Stanko to write a couple of paragraphs about Dr. Murray Fowler as he was a pioneer in North American camelid medicine. I agreed to contribute, but said I would be hard pressed to do so in two paragraphs. Dr. Fowler had more impact on the camelid industry than any other person I know of. His legacy will continue in the hearts and minds of the innumerable owners, veterinarians and caretakers he has taught and influenced. Kathy assured me that I had all the latitude I implied I would need. As such, the following is what I am pleased to share:



In Santa Cruz, CA with veterinarian Lee Mattern

On May 18, 2014, the veterinary profession lost an icon colleague that I had the pleasure to call my special friend for over 30 years. He was always there to provide professional as well as personal input for situations that we all tend to encounter. From my perspective, there was never a medical or surgical situation that he was not inclined to attempt to resolve and, in most instances, resolved favorably.

Murray was my sponsor for a sabbatical leave at University of California (UCD) in 1990. Oddly enough, he was also taking an at-home sabbatical leave during this time to wrap up before retirement from UCD. During that time, I had a chance to observe the depth of his talents while not only dealing with camelid issues, but also the zoological medicine teaching and services he provided. Whenever there was a camelid conference that we both attended, Murray always went out of his way to visit any local zoo to renew acquaintances with, in many cases, former UCD students that were now on the professional staff of the zoo.

Murray was born on July 17, 1928 in Glendale, Washington, but the family moved to Utah in 1930. His upbringing in a hardworking Mormon family provided a work ethic that no doubt influenced his entire life. He graduated from Jordan High School of Sandy, Utah in 1946 and promptly enlisted for a two-year tour in the U.S. Navy to become a Hospital Corpsman 2nd class. Upon discharge, he enrolled at Utah State

Agriculture College (USAC). Murray married Audrey Cooley on June 5, 1950 in Logan, Utah. Audrey became his bride and his self-acknowledged proofreader for his many publications over essentially 64 years. An interest to become a veterinarian was stimulated by the veterinary science department at USAC. Applications were sent to several colleges and Iowa State University emerged to begin his professional training starting in 1951.

After graduation with a DVM degree in 1955, Murray began practice in Southern California as an associate in a two-man equine practice specializing in broodmares. The practice's proximity to the movie industry managed to get Murray to reluctantly see some odd critters, including llamas and as usual his ability to adapt prevailed such that he became in regular demand over and above his equine responsibilities.

In 1958, he received an offer to be an instructor of large animal surgery at the University of California Davis (UCD) with initially a primary assignment of livestock. It didn't take long before he pursued knowledge and expertise in plant poisoning and venomous bites or stings. He also began accumulating his nearly 60,000 Kodachrome slides he masterfully numbered and indexed for future lectures. These became another benefit of my sabbatical time with Murray in 1990.

Being a UCD faculty member provided a deserved sabbatical leave every seven years. So, the Fowler family of Murray, Audrey and their five kids (Alan, Gene, Janet, Linda and Patricia) headed to England for a year, as Murray wanted to extensively study fiddle neck fern toxicity.

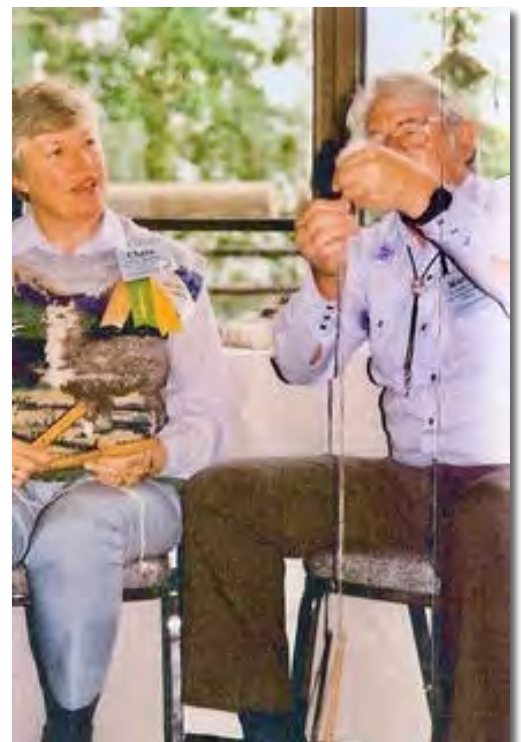
Most of us would not be aware of Murray's very accomplished horsemanship, as well as trick roping abilities. Both made for ease of conversation with equine clients as well as his involvement with endurance trail riding and horse show venues all over California.

Murray did not pursue an advanced graduate degree after a DVM, but not surprisingly made an effort to continue his education by auditing one course at UCD every quarter. These educational experiences along with his open mind to deal with any critter presented for attention allowed him to gradually drift deeper into a zoological medicine program that Davis became famous for under his leadership. Eventually the teaching and service program included regular visits to the Sacramento Zoo, but referrals to Davis were also common.

Among the referrals were llamas that were becoming popular in the area. Since many veterinarians had no desire to become involved with this species especially if anesthesia and surgery were involved, they referred them to UCD. Somehow, in 1973, Murray was able to get away from UCD responsibilities to further develop and demonstrate his talents by taking a one-year sabbatical at the San Diego Zoo. When he took me to the Zoo and Wild Animal Park in



Murray in Peru saying that I need to pay for the photo



Murray with Chris Switzer of Estes Park at an ILA meeting

1990, be assured that we received "red carpet" treatment as he obviously had left with a very favorable reputation. He also had had a sabbatical year in 1980 visiting zoos of Europe, collecting reference material for a bibliography on zoological medicine.

Administrative duties were also thrust upon him that by his own admission were not where he wanted his career to follow, but he was deemed by his peers as dedicated to the job while continuing clinical responsibilities. Along the way, because of his prominence, he was involved with establishing national professional organizations associated with zoos as well as wildlife animals and that reputation also went international, prompting lecture invitations for similar organizations as well as universities.



Murray photographing the Andes

When the very first get together of llama owners met in Bend, Oregon in summer of 1980, Dr. Fowler was there and he conducted a very informal session for veterinarians out under a tree. I had contacted Murray by phone a couple of times to share llama information. He preceded me in being invited to speak at the early International Llama Association (ILA) venues. I was, however, becoming involved with the Rocky Mountain Llama Association (RMLA). By the time our paths crossed, it was 1983 in Boulder, Colorado, as we were both speaking at the ILA conference. We went to a quiet room with any other veterinarians in attendance to share our experiences. It was there that Murray and I agreed to put together an annual Camelid Veterinary Workshop, initially in Santa Cruz, California, in conjunction with the ILA conference. That venue has subsequently met for the past 40 years, initially at UCD alternately at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colorado. As Murray and I retired from our respective universities, the workshop, currently referred to as the International Camelid Conference for Veterinarians. It is still meeting annually (Covid permitting), but alternately at The Ohio State University and Oregon State University.

Murray and I were regularly invited camelid venue speakers, and unless our spouses traveled with us, we were often roommates. On the occasion when we traveled to Peru, it was during this trip that I firmly discovered he had an addiction. I had suspicioned it during my sabbatical time at UCD, but he couldn't hide it any longer as he regularly had to have a "fix." Being a strict Mormon, he couldn't drink coffee because of the caffeine. However, his addiction was dark chocolate and the theobromine within. I took advantage of this by encouraging hosts in charge of venues he was attending to greet him on arrival with a large chocolate bar with my compliments.

Murray's Involvement other than as a practicing veterinarian includes a long period of being a Boy Scout leader and, of course, dedicated involvement with his Mormon church. The awards and recognitions he has received are as numerous, both professional as well as for public service. As you read this, I am confident that further pursuit and appreciation of the accomplishments of this special human being are best covered by acquiring a copy of his autobiography: *Hummingbirds to Elephants and other Tales*, ISBN0-9-646618-8-8.

Murray had a unique way of closing a conversation by saying "I'm sure glad you met me." I can only add that I was awfully glad I had met him. In closing, I can assure you that during my now nearly 87 years on this earth, 54 as a veterinarian, that there are few individuals who I have been associated with that have left a greater impression on me. I am confident that Murray was totally prepared for his last adventure in that his modus was to always be prepared for what's coming up next.



Murray and I dancing at an ILA event in Spokane, WA.

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SAFETY

Safety Recommendations for Llama Costumes

By Vicky Southwick

Editor's Note: as we head into the season of shows and parades, it may be time to consider the safety of the costumes we create. This article is from the Summer 2015 issue of the *RMLA Journal*. Originally reprinted with permission of the author from the *SSLA Llama Journal*, newsletter of the Southern States Llama Association Summer 2014.

As a llama owner and enthusiast, I particularly enjoy performance classes including the costume competitions. This is a popular class for participants of all ages and hugely popular with audience members as well. As a matter of fact, watching how patient the llamas are with all the hubbub and how much fun their owners and handlers were experiencing was a significant influence on my desire to own and train llamas of my own. Now I have not only taken the plunge into ownership, but for the past several years, I have helped people create costumes for local and regional shows, as well as for parades, etc.

As I view pictures of various costume competitions, however, I have become increasingly concerned in regards to some of the things I see. Competitors are encouraged to extremes which I feel could jeopardize the safety of both the handlers and the animals themselves.

I would like to inspire a conversation on safety guidelines during costume contests because it is my feeling that unlike "regular" performance classes, over time the focus on safety has eroded in respect to the costume competitions. Before an animal or a handler is unnecessarily injured, we need to resume the necessary focus to ensure that the guidelines for all performance classes are the same when it comes to safety. Some of my concerns involve the following:



A not so simple costume.
Courtesy Emma Hunt

Full body coverage: People are asking me to make full body costumes in order to accumulate the most points in the costume class. I don't make them because I think it is a safety issue for both the handler and the llama. We have animals who rely on their ability to hear and see what's around them, yet we routinely shroud their ears and all but cover up their eyes. To what end? To prove they will tolerate it, I suppose, and thus create a differentiation between competitors, but surely there are other ways to do that rather than handicap the animal and compound an already stressful situation?

On the subject of full-body costumes, it bothers me to see fecal matter and wet urine stains on a costume that does not have an opening for elimination. A proud clean animal such as a camelid cannot be happy nor comfortable standing around in a soiled costume and it is likely not pleasant for the handler either.

Covered feet: Obstacle class competitions do not allow bridges after a water obstacle due to the potential for falls, yet routinely there are numerous competitors with the bottom of their feet covered. How is it a safety issue to avoid water obstacles prior to a bridge but okay to fully cover the animal's foot? Have these people never worn a cast, or a slippery pair of socks? Why would they ask their animal to trust them when they disable the animal's ability to walk? I also suggest keeping costumes off the ground to keep the animal from stepping on it.

"Smothering" Communication: As a handler we are required to keep an eye on our animal and as such, we should be looking at them to discern behavioral indications that the animal is angry, concerned, and/or upset. We are all more than aware that they use their ears, tail, and eyes to communicate stress, flight, and fear. If you can't see the pout, the wrinkle under the eye, the ears back, and swishing tail, how will the handler have an early warning of potential issues? The animal is trying to communicate with us and others, but the handler has the animal under restraint. By leaving the ears, face, and tail uncovered, the handler can more easily discern there is a potential problem. "Smothering" their ability to communicate causes undue stress to the animal and could lead to an unfortunate incident which could result in injury to either the llama or the handler. A panicked animal bolting the ring is a recipe for disaster in any scenario!



A very simple costume.
Courtesy Linda Schlenker

General safety: Attachments that fall off or need frequent adjustments during the show are distracting to both the handler and other competitors. Avoid accessories that are sharp and could injure the animal or handler. Make sure the hats, scarves, and face masks don't obstruct the animal's vision. When attaching items to halter rings, think about what will happen if your animal puts its head down. Will the costume attachments poke them in the eye or ear to cause damage?

Heat Stress: Please consider the weather, temperature and humidity before asking your animal to wear heavy costumes in hot environments. Heat stress happens quickly and with long staging periods the animal could get overheated.

HEALTH

Ask The Vet: Urinary Stones and Urethral Obstruction in Llamas and Alpacas

By Robert J. Callan, DVM, PhD, MS, DACVIM
Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint from the Fall 2014 *Journal of RMLA*.

Llamas and alpacas can develop urinary stones, also known as urolithiasis, just like other domestic livestock, horses, cats, and dogs. Urolithiasis is a greater concern in male animals since their urethra becomes smaller than in females and the stones can become stuck in the urethra forming a urethral blockage or obstruction. When this happens, the animal cannot urinate. The bladder becomes distended and uncomfortable. The animal will show signs of discomfort, colic, and straining. As the condition progresses, metabolites such as urea and creatinine accumulate in the blood and the animals can also develop electrolyte abnormalities. If it goes too long, the animal can become severely ill, the bladder can rupture, and they can die.

The most common types of urinary stones observed in camelids and their characteristics are listed in the table below.

CALCULI TYPE	APPEARANCE	pH Formed	ABILITY TO DISSOLVE
Struvite NH ₄ MgPO ₄	White or tan, chalky, irregular and gritty calculi. Often form and adhere to the hairs of the prepuce	Alkaline	Good
Calcium Phosphate	White, tan, chalky.	Alkaline	Fair to Good
Calcium Carbonate CaCO ₃	Round spherical gold or bronze BB like calculi.	Neutral to Alkaline	Poor
Calcium Oxalate CaC ₂ O ₄	White or tan, flakey round calculi.	All, more common in acidic urine	Poor
Silica	White, spherical or irregular calculi.	All	Poor

Struvite and calcium phosphate stones are often considered the most common stones observed. However, in the Rocky Mountain region, we have observed several cases of calcium carbonate and silica urolithiasis as well. This is an important distinction because these other stones are very difficult to dissolve in order to clear the urethra. Thus, many medical and surgical procedures used to treat these animals fail to regain full patency of the urethra.

Predisposing factors for the formation of different types of urinary calculi are variable. Nutritional factors and water intake are major determinants of risk. This is another reason why it is so important to perform a forage analysis on

your hay every year to help determine your possible risk factors for urolithiasis. Decreased water intake and concentrated urine is a predisposing factor for all four types of calculi. Other predisposing factors reported for urolith formation are:

- **Struvite and Calcium Phosphate**
 - Pelleted Rations
 - Dietary P > 0.30% DMI
 - Ca:P < 1.5
 - Dietary Mg > 0.20% DMI
 - Dietary K⁺ > 2% DMI
 - Increased grain in diet
 - Alkaline Urine pH
- **Calcium Carbonate**
 - High Ca in Diet
 - Individual animal metabolism
- **Calcium Oxalate**
 - High Ca in diet
 - Lush clover pasture
 - Increased Oxalate intake
 - Increased Protein intake
- **Silica**
 - Silica accumulating soils and plants
 - Mature forages
 - Ca:P > 2.8

Urolithiasis Prevention Recommendations: It is best to work with your veterinarian or nutritionist to help formulate specific recommendations to decrease the risk of urolithiasis based on your forage analysis. Some basic recommendations include:

- **Provide Fresh, Clean, Warm Water at ALL times**
 - Hot, stale water can decrease intake during the summer
 - Cold water can decrease intake during the winter
 - Make sure water does not freeze in the winter
- **Provide Free Choice Electrolyte Water along with fresh water**
 - Use a commercial electrolyte mix
 - As a substitute for a commercial electrolyte mix, you can use a combination of non-iodized table salt and lite salt
 - 15g table salt and 5g lite salt per gallon of water
- **Increase salt (NaCl) Intake:**
 - Helps for all forms of urolithiasis
 - Use non-iodized salt
 - Free choice White Salt block
 - Mixed with feed pellets or dissolved in water and sprayed on the hay
 - Up to 2-5% Dry Matter Intake (DMI)
 - 0.4 to 1 g/kg BW/dy
- **Decrease Phosphorus, Magnesium, and Potassium Intake**
 - Most important for struvite urolithiasis
 - Phosphorus
 - No more than 0.30% DMI
 - 50 to 60 mg/kg BW/dy

- More likely to be high in grain
 - Magnesium
 - No more than 0.18% DMI
 - 25 to 36 mg/kg BW/dy
 - More likely to be high in hay
 - Potassium
 - No more than 2% DMI
 - 0.4 g/kg BW/dy
 - More likely to be high in hay
 - You will need to have a feed analysis for minerals done on all of your feeds to determine if these are in the appropriate level.
- **Restrict Excessive Grain feeding**
 - Decreases phosphorus intake and may help control struvite crystals

What About Alfalfa?

Limiting alfalfa in the diet is often recommended to help prevent calcium containing urolithiasis because of the higher calcium content of alfalfa hay. Unfortunately, it does not appear to be that simple. In our experience, cases of calcium carbonate urolithiasis seem to occur sporadically in individual animals rather than in multiple animals on a specific diet. These stones are seen in animals on grass hay as well as alfalfa hay. This suggests that other individual metabolic factors may be more important than simply the concentration of calcium in alfalfa. Feeding alfalfa may be appropriate for certain production animals. At this time, we have no specific recommendation to restrict alfalfa in cases of urolithiasis but rather recommend a full evaluation of all of the feeds relative to the preventive measures above.

How About Urine Acidifiers?

In cases of struvite or calcium phosphate urolithiasis, it is most important to follow the recommendations above for prevention. Urine acidifiers can be used to treat clinical cases of struvite or calcium phosphate urolithiasis, or when forage options are limited and phosphorus, magnesium, or potassium exceed the limits set above. It is very important to work closely with your veterinarian or nutritionist when feeding urine acidifiers. Too little will not help and too much can be detrimental or even fatal. We generally pulse urine acidifiers, treating for 1 or 2 weeks and then off for 2 to 3 weeks. Some important points about urine acidification are:


- Urine acidification can help dissolve struvite and calcium phosphate crystals and stones but NOT calcium carbonate, calcium oxalate, or silica stones.
- The salts used in urine acidification also increase water consumption. That can help dilute the urine and decrease all types of crystal and stone formation.
- Ammonium Chloride (NH₄Cl), Bio-Chlor and SoyChlor are the most commonly available urine acidifiers. Work closely with your veterinarian or nutritionist when using these products. You can have your veterinarian contact CSU for further recommendations on dosages for these urine acidifiers.
- Monitor Urine pH
 - Goal between 5.5-6.5 while on the acidifier.
 - This pH will help dissolve struvite and calcium phosphate stones. It will have little or no effect on dissolving other stones. That is one reason why the mineral analysis of the stones can be helpful.
 - Severe metabolic acidosis and death can occur when the urine pH approaches 5.
 - Purchase some pH paper that will read in the 5 to 8 range or wider to check urine pH while the animal is on treatment. The urine pH should fall below 6.5 but remain above 5.0. If the pH is >6.5, increase the amount administered. If the pH is near 5 or <5, decrease the amount of acidifier.



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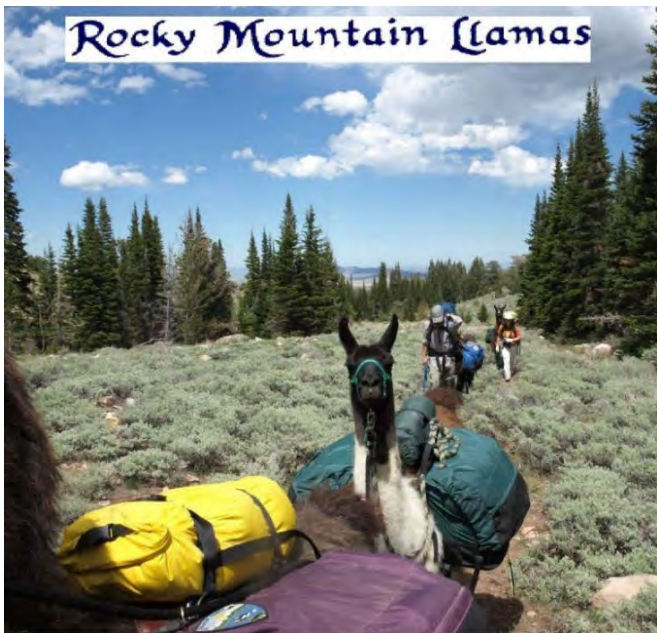
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The Importance of Setting Up the Perfect Pen

Marty McGee Bennett
Camelidynamics.com

There is nothing more important to your success as a handler than the perfect pen!

When I arrive to teach a clinic it is often a challenge to create enough pens for the participants. Even hosts that have a perfect catch pen will often not have seven to ten of them all in one place, so it is always interesting to create a clinic space. Out of necessity I often have to teach in pens that are reasonable but not perfect; and each time, I am struck by the importance of the size and shape of the catch pen.

I urge you to create at least one PERFECT pen, preferably two. With two adjoining perfect pens, you can have a working pen and a place to keep some other animals to create a sense of safety in numbers. It isn't that you can't work in a less than perfect pen, but all the techniques that I teach are much easier when the pen is just right. Often new owners will resist the hassle and expense of creating a perfect pen and compromise with something that is sort of in the ball park. The ironic thing is that once you have some experience, you are much more able to work well in a less than perfect pen; but when you are new at handling, it could NOT be more important.



A perfect pen is square: It is high enough that the animals won't even think of jumping out, and close enough to the ground that an animal can't crawl under. My preference is 9 feet square and 5 feet high with graduated rails not mesh. This is a great size for both llamas and alpacas.

The main reason we work in a pen in the first place is so that we can offer an escape route. In the right sized pen, the animal feels free to move, but the handler can control the animal's movements easily. The size of pen works perfectly with the length of the wand and the length of the catch rope. In a pen that is too big, the animal can get up a head of steam and will become adrenalized. In a pen that is too small, the animal can never get far enough away from the human to feel comfortable.



It used to be pretty easy to find these panels, and there are still a lot of them out there. You can often find them at farm auctions. On the other hand it may be just as easy to take a schematic of the pen to a local welder and have them fabricated. This might be comparable to the cost of new ones plus shipping.

A perfect pen is convenient: Remember this is where you will catch your animal so it won't do to grab your animal in the corner of a big barn, slap a halter on him and take him to the catch pen. You must be able to herd your animals easily to the pen. If you are only going to have one pen, a series of gates and laneways will be required to share the pen and working area with all animals on your farm.

Your catch pen should be inside a small paddock, one that you can control with a wand in each hand. It is no good to have a 9 x 9 pen in the corner of even a half-acre pasture much less a two to three acre pasture as there is no way to move the animals into it. It is fine to have the catch pen inside a barn; though my preference is to have it under an overhang rather than inside. Llamas and alpacas are a bit claustrophobic, and they will feel more comfortable if they don't feel completely closed in.



A perfect pen is safe: This means that there should be no pointy things inside the pen, nothing that offers a place to get a head or foot stuck. The rails should be close enough that an animal can't push their way through and climb out. I do like rails better than mesh. I think the animals feel less caged. Many people are frustrated by the animal's ability to put the head between the rails, but I have found that when you give a clear escape route inside the pen, the animal will not put its head between the rails. When an animal continually puts his head through the rails, it is a visual signal to you that he feels trapped. When the animal stops doing this and moves around the pen, it is a signal that you are providing a clear escape route inside the pen.

The pen should be securely attached to something: Even heavy panels are no match for a determined alpaca or llama. One or two strategically placed posts in the ground and some super heavy zip ties will do the trick.

Pleasant: Your catch pen should be in a place that is out of the wind, well-lit and the footing should be even and comfortable for you and your animal. It is also important to have all of your equipment handy to the pen so that no matter what you decide you need, it will be close at hand.

I promise the time you take to create the perfect set-up will come back to you over and over.

Packs and Llama Anatomy

by Sue Rich

Reprinted with permission from the author

I was trailing along behind the kids in the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine when I saw it. The adults were back in a classroom with the annual Cal-ILA meeting going on, and I had volunteered to accompany the 4H participants on a tour, led by members of the Camelid Club on campus. It was right there in the hallway: a skeleton of a llama. And I was flabbergasted.



Llama skeleton. Photo from the Vet Gazette, Oregon State University.

Who knew, certainly not me, that the vertebrae of a llama had fin-like projections pointing straight up from the spine? These bony blades make no pretense of lying flat. And I got it. I finally understood what all the padding on those llama packs was about. When I got a good look at the spine of this camelid beast of burden, I realized how important it would be to protect those high-rise “fins.”

Of course, Mother Nature takes care of most of that protection. There are muscles and fatty tissue that surround the vertebrae. But if you have ever gotten your hands on a thin llama, perhaps an elderly member of the herd, you know that those tissues can recede and leave a decidedly pointed ridge along the spine.

The design of packs, though, should also strive to protect the back by taking the weight and pressure of the payload off of the spine. That is why, when you look closely at a pack, you should see pads and sometimes rolls that redistribute the contact and weight to the barrel of the animal.

With daypacks, meant to carry a minimal load and used routinely in youth pack classes, you find two felted pads on either side of the center seam of the pack. These make contact with the barrel of the animal before the center seam can. There is air time directly under that center line.

With more advanced pack systems, those with saddles and panniers, the design often leaves the back open so that you can see the animal’s hide through the rig. One of the reasons it is critical to ensure that the front cinch is tight enough is to guarantee that the weight in the panniers is kept off the dorsal midline of the animal.



Day pack showing padding.



Experienced packer and llama breeder and trainer, Greg Harford of Harford Llama Farm, tells the story of being on the John Muir Trail with an experienced packing animal who started to cush. After a time, he realized that this particular animal was shallow enough in the barrel that the pack had shifted while on the trail. Once the weight found the spine, the animal cushed, sending the clear message that it was uncomfortable. Once the pack had been repositioned distributing the weight to its proper place, the animal continued on its way without complaint.

So, the anatomical lesson in all this is: watch where the weight of the pack bears down on the animal's body and ensure that the pack is appropriately padded!

HEALTH

Choke Revisited

By Kathy Stanko, Journal Editor

Imagine my surprise when I opened the Winter 2023 issue of the Llama Association of North America Newsletter and saw this radiograph of choke in a llama. Now we have a visual to go with the article on Choke that appeared in the Winter 2022 issue of the *Journal*. Thank you, Kathy Nichols, for permission to reprint.



Woolly Tidbits

by Chris Switzer
Estes Park, CO

As a weaver, I offer my Weaving Words of Wisdom.

Some yarns, put into a skein, should be washed (soaked, coolish) to get rid of shrinkage before winding warp. Certain dyed colors may bleed – e.g. black, red, blue. Cotton yarns, especially non-mercerized, will shrink. Some blends are questionable. Having a table runner end up shorter and not as wide as you wanted IS preventable. Yes, it takes time, but it's worth it.

I like alpaca yarn for warp and then something different on shuttle for weft (colors/texture/blends or loopy mohair, variegated smooth yarn or handspun). Try new ideas and new patterns. I wind two balls of yarn at the same time, at the warping board, counting by two's. It saves time. When winding warps, always recount to avoid being short one. If interrupted, write down number, and then go back to it (i.e., have notepad and pen near warping board).

Never use mohair yarns for both warp and weft as it sticks to itself. You'll have to use your hand to open EVERY shed !

What are your weaving hints ? I'd love to hear from you, chrisalpaca@aol.com.

Phil & Chris Switzer were on the founding committee for the Estes Park Wool Market over 30 years ago. In the forty years they raised alpacas, they had over 600 crias. Chris loves to weave with alpaca yarns.



HGF

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Tostito Could Do It All!

By Fiona Caruthers

Louisville, CO

Yes, I am a better human, thanks to my llamas, but this is the story of Tostito, our dear boy. It is hard to imagine a gentler, wiser soul than his. Tostito came to us as a lonely, slightly scared llama who did not trust his own abilities, and grew into a calm and trustworthy pack llama.



In April 2014 after one of our two llamas had passed away, we desperately needed a companion llama. It was love at first sight. We visited the farm and I took Tostito on a short walk down the lane. I invited him to join our family and show me if he would like to come with us. Immediately he picked up his pace and started walking briskly, pretending to be the most well trained llama – he had accepted my offer. That same day we brought him home and 12 year old Tostito became part of our family that now consisted of Pino, Pedro and Tostito. As he started to trust us more and more, his sensitive, loving and caring personality emerged. What a joy it was to have him!

But it took some effort: Tostito, a very strong animal, did not want to be haltered, and I landed on the ground more than once. It was a struggle. Then my mother suggested that I just give him a hug, and press my cheek against his. This is exactly what he needed: some love and comfort. This cheek-to-cheek became our signature interaction that we continued to the very end.

Slowly Tostito got the hang of what we expected of him. On our hikes he cautiously and a little reluctantly followed behind Pino, with Pedro pressing from behind. He was sandwiched between two experienced llamas, and that gave him courage to cross streams and maneuver steep and scary trails. In June, we started to go on the first mountain hikes. Oh, did he love that: the tasty grass, the cooling streams, the beautiful views high in the Rocky Mountains. However, it was a steep learning curve for him.

The flood of 2013 had washed out many bridges and the little streams had turned into deep ravines. We were proud of him for getting across one of those improvised bridges, essentially two boards, as he followed across carefully without hesitation. The story was different on the way back. The drop off must have



Pino, Tostito, and Pedro

looked much scarier from that angle. No way was he going to do that, and no way could we walk down the steep ravine to get across the stream. We had to get across that bridge. Pino had to walk a good dozen times across the boards and back to show Tostito that it was safe. Finally, Tostito followed and just before dark we made it safely back to the trailhead. And after many miles on the trail, by the end of 2015 he had become a willing and reliable pack llama, happy to explore wherever we were going.



In 2018 our lead llama Pino died. It was hard for me and hard for Tostito. Big tears rolled down his cheeks. Yes, llamas cry. We mourned together, helping each other through it, and our bond became even stronger.

Now at 17, Tostito's pasterns had started to soften, his packing days were over, and with it a new phase in his life started. We were growing our llama family again, this time with a bit more planning. First, we added a five-year-old rescue llama who we named Chico and who came with absolutely no manners. We believe he was human raised, because no llama would tolerate such disrespectful behavior! Tostito immediately took charge and set the rules in the barn and on the pasture. He developed an authority without ever fighting, rarely spitting, but clearly stating what was expected.

Pedro happily accepted Tostito's leadership and took on the role of watch llama, alerting everybody of coyotes, dogs, deer or mountain lions in the neighborhood. But it was Tostito who decided when danger was real. Then he would get up and chirp in; that's when we knew it was time to turn on the outside lights. It seemed that Tostito was developing a sixth sense.

He knew when danger lurked, he knew what we were up to, be it a llama hike or us leaving for vacation. He stayed calm and focused and his little llama herd trusted his judgment. By now we had added a female pack string, an eight-year-old and two two-year-old girls. While they immediately bonded as a little group of females, Tostito was their leader and he always looked out for his girls. With the help of CBD, THC and Meloxicam, he was a proud and content leader and protector of his growing herd.



A well-deserved snack after a hike

At the end of 2021 we had to evacuate due to the big wildfire in Boulder. It was scary! Tostito watched over his herd like we had never seen before. Everybody was rattled from the evacuation. Wrapped in a large sleeping bag at the fairgrounds in subzero temperatures, Tostito put his job first: he kept looking over the fence to make sure the girls were safe. Chico shivered despite a warm coat, not so much from cold, but from fear. We walked Chico around the arena to help him warm up and calm down. Tostito, now with progressing arthritis in his feet, walked round after round behind us, just to be there for Chico. What a caring soul! And how glad we were when we could return to our unscathed home a few days later!



Tostito at the evacuation center with his girls.

On February 13, 2022 Tostito stopped eating. The vet suspected an intestinal blockage and recommended we take him up to CSU for evaluation. When we loaded him into the van, Tostito turned around and took a long last look back at his home. He knew he would never see this place again and he said goodbye. The next morning, on Valentine's Day, Tostito was put to rest. One year later, on Valentine's Day 2023, on a reef on Kauai, I placed a flower lei in honor of Tostito. That night the high tide carried it away into the big ocean. Goodbye, Tostito, I miss you dearly; we all do. Thank you for giving yourself to the fullest during our life together.



John Mallon Honored

Reprinted with permission from the GALA Newsletter, February 2023

One of the llama industry's foremost trainers, John Mallon was awarded a lifetime honorary membership in GALA at the annual conference, held in Richmond, Virginia, last October. The honor was presented at the general membership meeting and received a unanimous vote from the board and the membership. With over 40 years' experience in the training of horses, dogs, and birds, John has devoted himself exclusively to all aspects of the llama and alpaca industry since 1981.



A popular featured speaker at regional, national, and international venues, and a longtime consultant with an international list of clients, John has averaged 50 to 60 clinics a year since 1994. The enthusiastic response to the Mallon Method has made it hard for him to cut down on road time in order to spend more time with his llamas, dogs, cats, and cutting horses on his 28-acre ranch in beautiful Chino Valley, Arizona. Believing that if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem, John has tried to give back to the llama and alpaca community some of his time and energy.

John was a member of the ILA from 1981 until it disbanded, attending its very first conference (and a majority of them since then). He served on the Show and Sale Committee, the Jamboree Committee, and was the chairman of the Events Committee. For his efforts on their behalf, he was awarded the industry's first Pushmi-Pullyu Award. In 1985, over concern for

llamas' and alpacas' welfare at shows and sales, he co-founded the Alpaca and Llama Show Association (ALSA). John was the performance judge at its first show and schooled apprentice performance judges for the next couple of years.

While living in southern California, John co-founded the Llama Association of Southern California (LASC). He served as its founding president with a second term, and served on its Ethics Committee. John also started shows in southern California and managed numerous shows in the region. John also served on the Australian Llama Association's Committee to establish the Code of Practice for the Keeping of Llamas in Australia.

As a member of over a dozen camelid organizations, John has spoken to and conducted clinics at their conferences and receives their newsletters. He keeps abreast of regional problems and concerns and their solutions as they evolve. An overview of the industry at a local, national, and international level has allowed John to assist large and small groups just starting up to avoid many of the pitfalls.

John purchased his first llamas in 1981, designing and building a ranch from raw ground in Northern Idaho. He expanded the herd and the facility until late 1984 when he moved everyone south 1700 miles to southern California. Here they once again cleared land, designed and built a state-of-the-art barn and fenced and cross-fenced over 28 acres. He has helped many other llama and alpaca owners design new or retrofit existing facilities around the country.

John was the author of the “Mallon Method” column published in *Llamas Magazine*, along with the popular “Paddock Pointers,” which ran from 1986 to 2000. He also wrote a regular column in *Lama Link*, and is a regular contributor to the *Australian Llama News*, the *Canadian Llama News*, and the *Camelids Chronicle* (magazine of the British Llama and Alpaca Association). John co-authored the original ALSA handbook and contributed to the Australian Llama Association’s Industry Standards. He also has contributed articles to many regional llama and alpaca association newsletters, as well as *Alpaca Magazine* and *Cutting Horse News*.

“John Mallon is one of those people who deserves to be honored,” said GALA board member Carol Reigh. “Not only has he presented his training techniques at the GALA conferences for many years, he has given selflessly to the llama community not just in this country, but in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain. If you have ever heard John teach, you know instantly that he truly loves these animals and wants his clients or his students to understand and learn how to have a relationship with their animals,” Reigh continued. “Having co-chaired numerous GALA conferences with John as our key trainer, he can never do enough. He would teach all day without a break if asked to, and he is constantly available to people day and night.” Mallon is also available for consultations. Once someone attends a two or three day on-farm clinic, he is available by phone to answer any questions. Those who have not attended one of his clinics may still call, for a nominal fee, to get his input and expertise. “John wants to make us better owners so the life of the llamas is better. He truly is the llamas’ best friend,” Reigh said. “We are proud to have him as a member of the Greater Llama and Alpaca Association.”



2022 RMLA Youth Awards Program Summary

By Sandra Schilling, RMLA Youth Committee, Liaison



The RMLA Youth Program ended 2022 with 13 youth members, almost double the number of members we started the year with. RMLA was thrilled to welcome six new members from a 4-H llama club in New York led by another amazing RMLA member, Teri Conroy of Wunsapana Farm. Teri leases her llamas to the youth club members in trade for barn work performed by the youth members. This tight knit group of youth members works as a team on most projects and truly care about each other and the llamas.

Our youth members were involved with training llamas, learning about their medical care, attending shows, making projects out of fiber, mentoring and many more community events. Many of their activities were featured in the *Journal* throughout 2022.

Congratulations to Bella Rogers, a member of the Wunsapana Farm 4-H club, for being presented the 2022 Outstanding Youth Award. Bella was involved with mentoring visiting youth about llamas, attending multiple llama shows, working on fiber projects, hiking with the llamas, participating in multiple community relations events and even wrote an article for our Fall 2022 RMLA Journal. Job well done, Bella.



Bella Rogers

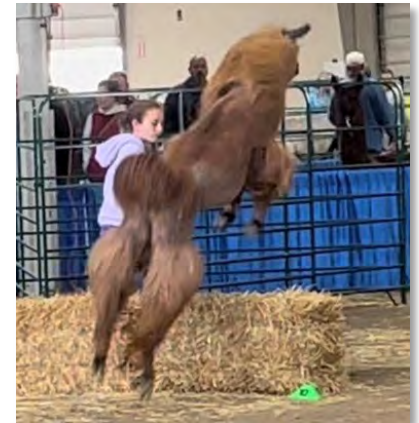
2023 Youth Awards Program

The 2023 Youth Awards Program is underway. Check it out on RMLA.com on the [youth page](#). From this page you can join RMLA as a youth and check out all of the activities that gain points. It is fun and easy.

Now, more photos from the 2022 program:



Paige Huntsman



Favorite moment 2022 Elara Newell: doing the obstacles with my 4-H llama Magic at The Big E. He is super sweet, he can jump really high, and he is very brave!



Favorite Moment 2022 Bella Rogers: watching a llama give birth and assisting with cleaning the baby after.



Sophia Bivona



Reese Huntsman



Favorite Moment 2022: Emma Hunt with Storm at The Big E in Costume Class as Sir Storm the Castle and Princess Emma

FIBER

Llama Fiber: An Exploration in Spinning and Knitting

How does adding silky llama fibers to your blends affect the outcome of your yarn?

By Barbara Kenny Landry

RMLA wishes to thank the following individuals for their permission to reprint this article and photos.

- Spin Off Magazine
- Author: Annamarie Hatcher
- Laura Rintala, Managing Editor, Long Thread Media
- Photos by Matt Graves

When Annamarie Hatcher suggested that we experiment with spinning and knitting silky-variety llama fiber, I was intrigued. Although I specialize in knitting and spinning in my work as a professional historic interpreter at Nova Scotia's Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site, silky llama falls outside my usual range of materials.

We anticipated using llama in blends with other fibers to spin for our specific goals. We aimed for one blend that would produce a hard-wearing, comfortable pair of hiking socks and another blend for a luxurious, lustrous shawl. To us, these goals represented two ends of a spectrum that would give us a better understanding of the llama fiber and all its possibilities.

Silk was a necessary addition for our sock blend to wick away moisture and provide strength for longer wear. The llama fiber would add strength to the sock yarn as well as softness and warmth. However, the lack of memory in the llama fiber would lead to a sock that would likely wrinkle under foot and sag at the ankle, so we added wool to the blend. We chose fleece from a locally produced Romney—a versatile fleece with a well-defined crimp—to make up for the crimpless silky llama and tussah silk (see Table 1).



Barbara tested several blends (lower left) combining Romney (top), llama (right), and silk (lower right).

TABLE 1

Fiber Characteristics			
Origin	Staple Length	Lock structure (crimp)	Color
Silky llama (raw)	3½ inches	No crimp, slippery	Dark brown
Romney wool (raw)	5½ inches	5 crimps per inch	Gray/mottled
Tussah silk top	5 inches	No crimp, slippery	White

For the shawl, we wanted a yarn that would sensuously drape over the shoulders and (the tricky part) provide crisp definition for the lace pattern. We thought that the llama and silk fibers would contribute to the first goal and the wool to the second.

We used a drum carder to blend the fibers, which I then spun in the Z direction and plied in the S direction as a two-ply laceweight or light fingering-weight yarn (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Blends on the Llama Spectrum						
Blend	Proposed application	wpi	Equivalent yarn classification	tpi (2-ply)	Angle of twist (degrees)	Grist (yards per ounce)
1) 100% silky llama	shawl	30	lace	4.6	20	87
2) 50% silky llama, 25% tussah silk, 25% Romney wool	socks	25	lace	3.6	35	92
3) 25% silky llama, 25% tussah silk, 50% Romney wool	shawl	21	fingering	3.8	28	77
4) 25% tussah silk, 75% Romney wool	socks	25	fingering/lace	4.2	30	103
5) 100% Romney wool	socks	21	fingering	3.6	27	86



Despite their rich brown color, the 100% silky-llama samples weren't suitable for either of our goal yarns.



The 50% silky llama/25% tussah silk/25% Romney wool swatches had the right combination of definition and body for hiking socks.



Airy and open, the lace swatch in 25% silky llama/25% tussah silk/50% Romney wool was just right for a lace shawl.

Sampling Yarns Along the Spectrum



From left to right: Blend 1, 2, and 3. Each of the three fibers in the blends enhanced a different aspect of the yarn.

To anchor one end of our spectrum, I used 100% silky llama (Blend 1), and for the other end, I used 100% Romney wool (Blend 5). To test our blends, we needed to swatch. For each blend, I knitted three swatches of 40 stitches: stockinette stitch on US size 1 (2.25 mm) needles; a simple lace pattern of yarn over, knit 2 together on US size 4 (3.5 mm) needles; and a pattern from Barbara Walker's *A Second Treasury of Knitting Pattern* called Celtic Cable, also knitted on US size 1 (2.25 mm) needles. These swatches told an interesting tale.

None of the 100% silky-llama swatches (Blend 1) held their shape after blocking. In the knitting pattern we used, we felt they were lackluster and flat with little definition and no three-dimensional quality. The second set of swatches was in our sock blend (Blend 2). The lace swatch was lovely but lacked the airy quality that we would want for a shawl. The cable swatch was perfect—sturdy and dense without being heavy, with good definition and visibility.

The third set of swatches was in our lace blend (Blend 3). They held their shape after blocking. The cable swatch was a better sample

than the silky llama alone, but it lacked the definition and density that would make a sturdy pair of socks. The lace sample popped! It blocked beautifully, gave the lace a lovely rounded quality, and felt light, airy, and soft as well. Success!

I also decided to swatch a wool/silk blend (Blend 4) to better understand the contribution of the llama to our combinations. Working with the Romney wool and tussah silk alone, I realized that the silky llama added depth and quality to all the blend swatches.

This has been quite an eye-opening experience for me. The possibilities that llama blends can offer is more apparent to me—and I know now that the true test of any yarn you spin is not just in the properties of the skein but in the textile that comes to life on your needles.



Blend 2 of silky llama, tussah silk, and Romney creates a beautiful heathered effect when knitted.

How the Higher Ground Fair Moved to the Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site, and the Llamas and Alpacas Came, Too

by Gayle M. Woodsum

There are certain things we bring along with us no matter how many times we change our lives, or life changes us. For me, for the last 25 years at least, llamas fall into that category. No matter how many times I move, how many relationships I create or leave behind, no matter how many projects I get involved with, llamas find their way to center stage. They ground me, keep me sane, keep me learning and growing.



Creating the Higher Ground Fair in Laramie, Wyoming has been no exception. From the first “it’s-only-a-dream” year in 2016, this unusual regional event that celebrates music, the arts, agriculture, food, animals, handcrafted artisan goods and more, has revolved around the presence of llamas and the people who love them.

After being shuttered for two years during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Higher Ground returned in September of 2022. Even then, it felt risky to step out into the world again in a big and bold way. Not only were we committing to picking up the pieces of a unique vision that had been dormant during a strange and frightening time, we’d made the decision to move from a traditional rural Wyoming fairgrounds to a State Historic Site.

The Wyoming Territorial Prison (WTP) in West Laramie was built in 1872, and for 30 years held such notorious outlaws as Butch Cassidy, and rebellious, little-known historic figures like Eliza Big Jack Stewart. In 1903, the year after the prison closed, the site was acquired by the University of Wyoming, which converted the building and more than 200 acres of riverside property into an agricultural experiment station until 1989. After that, local government stewards of the historic site struggled to not only save its land and buildings, but to find the best path for doing so. Yet the feel of a deeply mixed history had already taken hold of this place. In the early 2000s, it met its first llamas when I was invited to provide a weekly rotating visiting pair from my own herd to reside in the post-and-beam barn stalls and adjacent corrals during the summer months as part of the agricultural exhibits the site was using to try and attract a broader range of visitors.

I like to think that way back then, the die was cast. The Higher Ground Fair is attempting to provide entertainment, education, exhibits, opportunities for small innovative artists, farmers/ranchers and businesses as a means of celebrating the best of the Rocky Mountain region all in one place. A place where difference and variety come together to have a great time. Bringing the fair to the beautiful grounds and historic buildings of WTP suddenly made sense.

There was just one hitch. The 2022 version of this now officially designated Wyoming State Historic Site had lost most of its agricultural infrastructure. The beautiful post-and-beam barn burned down in December 2013. There was no stalling and no arena. No sheds for exhibiting livestock of any kind. Nothing on site providing facilities for a llama and alpaca youth, performance, fleece show. But the intrepid community of Rocky Mountain llama and alpaca lovers signed up for the show that’s come to be known for being really, really fun.

For nearly a year, I searched for stalls or panels to rent (not available within 500 miles) or buy (minimum investment of \$20,000). I looked for tents guaranteed to be sturdy and affordable (the one I found and we ultimately used cost \$6,000 for a three-day rental and still bucked and flapped in the Wyoming winds).

I was beginning to think there might be no llamas at all at the Higher Ground Fair, when the obvious solution hit me during one of the evening chore rounds at my place. I was reaching into a large corral where a few young llamas-in-training were hanging out, when the feel of the cool metal railing against my arm spoke to me. I have a 60-acre ranch. It's divided into six barn, corral and pasture areas to accommodate the varying needs of the 50-ish llamas living here. Every one of those areas is constructed of high quality, heavy-weight, "portable" corral panels. It turns out, I have about 70 of them, 56 of which could be spared for a weekend without reducing my entire ranch to open range.

So, I ordered the tent – technically two of them put together for a 40' x 80' total expanse. After disassembling my 56 panels and transporting them to Laramie and adding them to the 30 panels donated by my friend's local C & A Feed Store across the road from the WTP, I rounded up a half-dozen friends and a half dozen Higher Ground Fair staff members, we erected 30 stalls of varying sizes inside the tent that was waiting for us – enough to accommodate the roughly 50 llamas and alpacas who attended the Higher Ground Fair at its new home. We designated a show ring out of jump standards and flagging tape, the exhibitors figured out when to open up the tent flaps for ventilation in the makeshift "llama barn" and when to close them again, and the show was on once again.



Other than wrestling apart and dragging my dozens of very heavy corral panels across the half-mile length of my ranch to stack them for loading onto my stock trailer, this feat of returning llamas and alpacas to the Higher Ground Fair was not accomplished by me alone. Anyone who has been lured into being a llama show superintendent knows from the depths of their generosity, naivete, spirit, body and soul, that not only does it take a village to get the job done, it takes a damn army.



Since 2004, Rhonda Livengood and Nancy Jamnik have shown up to provide countless hours of clerking services for llama shows I've superintended. Ten years with me at the Estes Park Wool Market (and they're still at it for EPWM superintendent Jill Knuckles since 2015), they didn't hesitate to say yes to the Higher Ground Fair at the start in 2016 and have continued to do so every year since then. Clerking for a llama show is challenging enough, but Rhonda and Nancy keep showing up even though they know they'll be holding my hand, preparing score sheets, completing registration details for the show book at the last minute, and a slew of other tasks I kind of ran out of time for getting done regardless of my best intentions.

As much as my heart wants merely to provide the best possible showing and socializing opportunity for the llama community and their camelids, the truth is I count on them even more. Not just to show up, but to sign on for events like the Higher Ground Fair where it's as important to us to introduce the general public to the magic of llamas we're already in love with. I needed my human-llama family more than ever last September when all of us were shaky and reeling from two years of isolation and loss. They did not disappoint. When Jens Rudibaugh saw me scrambling to complete performance course designs just hours before the show was scheduled to start, he just asked me to point him in the direction of the obstacles I'd brought, strode over to my horse trailer full of my random selection, and went to work creating the multiple courses the show required, grinning all the while, and gathering up additional volunteers to help him along the way. Our judges, Cindy Ruckman and Terese Evenson, were spectacular at their expected jobs, and delightful with their help handing out ribbons and leading our daily parade.



Miss Wyoming meeting her first llama

That's just the way it went. As always, Peter Corley cheerfully fetched and carried anything that was asked of him, pausing only to shine with joy when we all sang Happy Birthday to him. Mary Wickman worked around her job as fleece show clerk to gladly use her judging credentials as a last-minute needed additional performance judge. To do full justice to acknowledging and thanking every volunteer who made Higher Ground '22 not only possible, but truly special, I'd have to list every exhibitor who was there from the 20 farms they represented. It's risky to name names when you know you're going to inadvertently leave someone out, but I do especially relive the hugs, suggestions, encouragement and loving interventions that came from dear llama-family friends like Sue Johnson, Brianna Evert, Sonja Boeff, Marcie Saska-Agnew, Judy Glaser, the Bentons, the Rowans, and all the amazing youth exhibitors I've been watching grow up with a llama or alpaca at their side, together with the ones who are brand new to me, and I'm still learning their names. Finally and importantly, I do feel the protective arms of the intrepid volunteers at RMLA whose work provides event sponsorship that gives us insurance coverage specific to the llama-related activities at the fair, and who also send us educational goodies to help educate the fairgoers about the exotic critters they love to see.

As they say, fun was had by all. Now it's the spring of 2023, and I'm shopping for stalling that doesn't require tearing down and rebuilding my ranch, with barn facilities that aren't quite so "flappy." I'm counting on the new group of volunteers who solemnly promised to take on more jobs for this year's show. Sometimes I do question my sanity just a bit when it comes to putting on the Higher Ground Fair every year. Then I remember how much fun it was to look up and see Miss Wyoming, crown and all, grinning from ear to ear as she met her first llama, and leading one during the noontime parade. And I can't let go of the moment famed singer Hazel Miller came up to me, took me into one of her big, warm hugs, and said about the fair, "This is the way the world is meant to be."

Most of all, I can't imagine any major event in my life without llamas, alpacas, and the rowdy, adventurous, loving people that come along with them, sitting squarely in the middle of it all. And so the countdown to September 15, 16 and 17, 2023 is ticking along to one more Higher Ground Fair, where camelids will rule supreme.



We Are Making An Impact!

Kathy Stanko, Journal Editor

Each issue of the RMLA Journal is shared with the Newsletter Network, an organization comprised of other camelid publications. Editors learn what is happening across the nation within other camelid groups and request to reprint articles.

In 2022, the articles listed below were written for and published in your RMLA Journal. Each was re-published in other camelid publications. RMLA appreciates the value other editors have found in educational articles in RMLA Journals.

Ask the Vet: Camelid Ulcers by Kaitland Mullens, CSU:
Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA)

Ask the Vet: Choke in Llamas & Alpacas Choke by Rachel OMAN, CSU:
California Alpaca Breeders Association (CALPACA)
Lamas of North American (LANA)

Our “Officially Amazing” Mama Mananita by Kate Blackburn:
California Alpaca Breeders Association (CALPACA)

Ask the Vet: Wry Face by Catherine Krus, DVM CSU
Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA)

Escaping a Fire By Nick Stone:
Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA)

Restoring Our Pastures by Kathy & Glenn Stanko
Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA)
Ohio River Valley Llama Association (ORVAL)

A Dyer’s Garden By Nancy Wilson:
Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA)
Ohio River Valley Llama Association (ORVAL)

Triangle Loom Weaving by Nancy Wilson:
Ohio River Valley Llama Association (ORVAL)

Agritourism And What It Can Mean For You by Kathy Stanko
California Alpaca Breeders Association (CALPACA)

My conclusion: your articles matter! Thank you everyone for sharing what you know.