



EAA Newsletter

March 2008

President's Message

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

As I write this, I am still coming down from the high of a very successful Symposium & Fleece Event that ended a few days ago (probably a month ago by the time you read this). Attendance was up dramatically, speakers were outstanding, neonatal labs were extraordinary, and the vendors were excellent. The Friday vet session was well attended, as were the Friday fiber workshops.

We've heard your requests for more fleece and fiber related programming, and this year's Symposium really delivered! At the Symposium, there were 12 hours of fiber-specific lectures: everything from skirting fleeces to yarn processing to basic & advanced fiber lectures, plus separate genetics lectures which also covered fiber issues. There were also 8 four-hour long fiber workshops on Friday! The Sunday morning fleece show oral discussion was packed.

The Symposium & Fleece Event is a complex event to arrange and run. There are many, many components: the Friday vet session, Friday fiber art workshops, speakers, vendors, meet & greet, fleece show, spin-off, skein & fiber art competitions. You really don't want to know too much about the complexities of doing the neonatal labs! As the Symposium coordinator, I have to send big "THANK-YOUs" to all of our great speakers at both the fiber arts workshops and the educational seminars; the hard working judges (Tim, Diana, David & Wini), the two superintendents (Cindy and Melissa), Scott Young, our fleece show coordinator; Drs. Camann, Paxson and Perkins who assisted Dr. Johnson in the wet labs; Don Tompkins for the online registration and support; all the many volunteers who helped with the Symposium and fleece/fiber arts shows, including the board of directors who were all involved with this event.

A very special thank-you has to go to those farms that kindly donated their deceased crias so we could do the wet labs. We received 18 crias that allowed us to conduct 4 neonatal labs for owners/breeders and a last-minute, special neonatal lab on Friday for the veterinarians.

Additional thank-yous go out to Chris Gilman and all the volunteers who staffed the Empire booth at the New York Farm Show in February. A big thank-you to the McCoy's for again bringing animals. The Empire booth had lots of visitors who took home loads of Empire brochures, pens and products. Chris and Polly Michaelis also "worked the room" and got some great donations to the Extravaganza auction/raffle!

I have one somewhat humorous (at least to me!) story from the Symposium weekend that alpaca breeders might relate to. Most of us have engaged in "unusual" (to the people sitting at the next table) conversations in public places and we often forget that people overhear our conversations. The topics may range from "the latest hot stud" to the color of the last baby born to detailed descriptions of poop. I was standing at the registration desk at the Symposium on Friday, on my cell phone giving my partner, Jeff, instructions on what he needed to bring to the Symposium on Saturday. A non-alpaca person who was walking by the desk overheard me say to Jeff, "I need you to go take 6 babies out of the freezer...". I was told that guy gave me quite the look! I kept expecting the police to show up at the Symposium and cart me off! Happy Spring!

EAA Board of Directors:

President:

Steve McCarthy ~ 518-794-6294
Spruce Ridge Farm

Vice President:

Cindy Cuykendall ~ 315- 685-7410
Song Meadows Alpacas

Secretary:

John Askew ~ 518-692-2083
Sunset Ridge Alpacas

Treasurer:

Sue Zelazny ~ 585-798-0867
Andes Dandies, LLC
Newsletter Editor

Members at Large:

Jeannine Andersen ~ 585-593-5077
Gaze Acres Alpacas

Chris Gilman ~ 315-689-1649
Riverside Alpacas

Ann Merriwether ~ 607-785-8226
Nuala Farm Alpacas

The Empire Alpaca Association would like to thank these gracious sponsors for their financial support which helped underwrite the 2008 Educational Symposium and Fleece Event.

Platinum Sponsors

**Autumn Mist Alpacas & Fiber Mill
Leslie & Jeff Jorritsma**

**Gore Mountain Farm & Alpacas of Maple Lane
Virginia French & Barry Finer and Phyllis & Steve Decker**

**Rosehaven Alpacas
Michele Armour & Rob Bruce**

**Spruce Ridge Farm
Steve McCarthy & Jeff Lick**

Gold Sponsors

**Autumn Hill Alpacas
Cindy & Curt Vars**

**Bentwood Alpacas
Suzanne & Mark Drumm**

**Calidad Alpacas
Sue Watts**

**Chatham Alpacas
Judith & Jeff Zimbalist**

**Helderberg Alpacas
Karen & Jeff Villeneuve**

**Quarry Ridge Alpacas
Faith & Herb Perkins**

**Song Meadow Alpacas
Cindy & Karl Cuykendall**

Membership Renewal

~ John Askew, Sunset Ridge Alpacas

In February of 2007, Empire started pro-rating membership renewals through May 31, 2008. This was done in preparation for a single renewal date of June 1st for all members. This process is now complete and all members will receive renewal notices in May for the June 1st renewal. This should make renewals easier for the membership as well as for the coordinating Board member. To make things even easier, Don Tompkins hopes to have a credit card renewal system online in time for renewals.

Remember to look for your renewal notice in early June. Please be aware that junk mail filters can pick off EAA emails and you need to turn on HTML to get the correct renewal fee. It is also a tremendous help if you print the renewal page with your farm name and send it along with your check.

The transition to a single renewal date marks the end of my stewardship of the membership database. Cindy Cuykendall will be handling the new members and membership renewals in the future. I will be working with Cindy to clean up the inevitable loose ends.

2008 Empire Fleece Event

~ Scott Young, Show Coordinator

Another year for the fleece event has been wrapped up and again I think it was wildly successful. The Symposium and the Saratoga Hotel and Conference Center was the perfect backdrop for this year's event. What an amazing event the Symposium is, Empire Members should be so proud of this weekend, it is truly one of the top educational events of the year. For the last three years the fleece event has added to the weekend.

This year's show was guided by Cindy Vars in the Fleece Show and Melissa Young in the Auxiliary Fleece Competitions. We also had some special judges as well, Tim Lavan and Diana Timmerman judged the fleece Show and Wini Labreque and David Stensland judged the fiber arts, skeins and spin-off competitions. As usual the Competition was incredible, so many incredible fleeces and projects, the judges really had their work cut out for them. They did brave through it though and when it was all said and done the ribbons were placed and everything was set-up for display. Boy, did it look amazing in the fleece area. You want to talk about completing the circle? We had fleeces all around with their huge ribbons and banners hanging off of them, next you could witness skeins spun from mills and spinners from around the country, and finally finished products, no, make that *awesome* finished products. Public visitors could see the whole process right there in one place and was it ever cool.

Thanks to all of those that sent in entries, volunteered to help over the weekend and all that stopped by to see the results. Shearing season is right around the corner so make sure you pick out your fleeces you want to send in next year and keep them in a safe place. Like I have said many times, there is no alpaca competition easier than a fleece show so start planning your entries for next year this Spring.

As usual, our membership makes it amazingly easy to put on an event because of the support that is generated, so one more thank you to all that put their stamp on the 2008 event. The Extravaganza planning is in full swing now and it won't be long before we see you there!

Surviving The Improbable: Uterine Torsion, Dystocia, and Prolapse All in One Pregnancy

~ Mary Blowers, Aussie Hill Alpacas, Inc.

As I write this, less than forty-eight hours have passed since the improbable happened on our farm. As I have had time to sleep and to clear my mind and reflect on what has transpired, I felt the need to share our story with fellow breeders in the hopes that if you are ever faced with any of these incidents, you will be able to remember hearing our story and glean from it.

We had a female due to have her second cria in January. She had no problems with her first cria so we certainly weren't expecting anything different. In the middle of December we noticed that she was at times uncomfortable and seemed slightly colicky. We mentioned it to the vet when he was here, but of course the female acted perfectly normally while he examined her. He said she seemed fine, that possibly the cria was pressing on something to make her uncomfortable at times and that it was probably nothing to worry about but to continue to monitor her closely. She showed this behavior several times a week but then would seem fine in between bouts.

One week before she went into labor (on a Sunday of course), she was very uncomfortable and rolling so I put on the OB gloves, sterilized, lubed up and went in to discover what I thought was a uterine torsion. I felt almost like my arm corkscrewed as I went in and then I felt twisting of tissues on the top of the uterus and a twist on the bottom also. The vet came out that day and verified that it was indeed a uterine torsion. We are assuming that the torsion had been there for those several weeks she showed discomfort but it got to the point that it was damaging the uterus and she showed continual discomfort. Our vet un-torsed her easily by having my husband and I roll her slowly clockwise while the vet held the cria in place externally. Whew! We thought our problems were over. We took a deep breath and felt an overwhelming sense of relief since we had had another uterine torsion in our first year of business with a different outcome with the mom dying a week after an emergency c-section.

The next day she showed the same symptoms so I donned the gloves and went in again. I didn't feel a torsion but felt that the cria was mal-positioned. I called the vet to give him my thoughts after examining her and he felt he should come right over based on my report. The vet came out on an emergency call again and did an internal examination and

said no, she was not tersed again. His thoughts were that she was just sore from the previous day's events. She settled down the next couple of days but was very swollen and stretched the whole week.

The following Saturday morning she appeared to be in labor, we thought that we were in store for a regular delivery. I layered on the barn clothes so that I could watch her closely. After a couple of hours of really struggling, I knew something was wrong so I gloved up and went in again to find a mal-positioned cria just like I had thought I felt the week before. We had a head back position, which can only be solved by a vet or someone who has had a lot of dystocia and correction experience. What I felt was two legs but no head. I could tell it wasn't breach so I deduced it was a head back position. While checking the cria's position, there was a tear so the dam started to bleed. I called the vet right away and asked him to hurry because of the bleeding.

An hour later while I paced like an expectant first-time dad, the vet arrived and verified we had a head back positioned cria. He got the cria out but it took more effort than I was comfortable with. We have an excellent group of veterinarians that we have complete faith in so I relaxed a bit. He got the cria out - a beautiful female (our much anticipated first female out of our herdsire Smokey). I worked on the cria, doing the normal stuff and getting her dried while the vet worked on the dam to correct the heavy bleeding. She had torn several more times in the retrieval of the cria. The vet mentioned to us that he tried to pull the placenta out while he was in there. Needless to say, it didn't come out so we started her on Oxytocin to help contractions to aid in getting the placenta to come out. In retrospect, I wish we had not done the Oxytocin because she passed the placenta within an hour and yet kept having contractions. With the bleeding stopped, we thought again, our problems were over and took another deep breath to try to shake it off.

We started milking the dam to get colostrum into the cria, since the dam wasn't able to feed the cria yet. Thankfully I managed over the next 12 hours to get over 100cc's of colostrum into the cria.

Within two hours of the vet leaving, I noticed the dam down while viewing her from the camera in the house. I ran to the barn and discovered her uterus had prolapsed. I knew we had a major problem. I immediately called the emergency vet and upon telling him that we had a prolapse, he said "oh no," and would be there in an hour. After his comments, I knew it was a big problem so while I was waiting I got on-line to find out all I could about uterine prolapse in alpacas. There was not much to learn, unfortunately. The only article I found said that they had had success so I wasn't overly concerned at that point.

I now know that a uterine prolapse is extremely rare in alpacas and sometimes correctable. While waiting for the vet, we went to the barn with warm water and Nolvasan and cleaned off the uterus and wrapped it in a plastic bag to keep it clean and moist. My husband and I did this several times since every time she tried to get up we had to re-clean and cover it again. We tried to keep her down until the vet came. It was an hour that felt like 10 hours.

When the vet on call arrived here at 9:30 pm, he told us that he had never handled a uterine prolapse in an alpaca but had done hundreds in cows. He talked to our regular vet on the phone during his drive here who told him that he had only done one prolapse before and after pushing it back in four times, he sent the animal to Cornell. Cornell couldn't get the uterus to stay in so they amputated the uterus and unfortunately she then died anyway. He told us all this before we even started, so our confidence was pretty much depleted at this point, but we decided that taking her to Cornell wasn't really an option either.

We tried 4 times to get the uterus and horns back in their proper position but every time it would just pop back out. At one point we filled the uterus with fluid to weigh it down and help in getting the horns back in place. It is important that the uterus be totally everted to stay. The vet wanted to give up and euthanize her but I said no, I am not willing to give up yet. I said, "Let's get creative and figure this out (damn it!)." We got it back in and sedated her, and then stitched her up hoping that while she was sedated, the uterus would shrink in size and stay in with the help of the stitches. This took a couple of hours. The vet packed up and left and wished us luck but seeing the expression on his face, we knew our chances were slim.

Terry and I took shifts, mine from 11:00 pm to 3:00 am. During the whole time the mom kept contracting and each time the uterus would squeeze out of the small openings some and then retract again. By 2:45 I knew it was futile, so I came in and told Terry I was going to lie down while he watched and that if it blew out to call the vet ASAP and put her down. At 5:30 Sunday morning, that is exactly what happened. We gave it all we had but there was no hope. After the tears, we pressed on with dealing with an orphan and burying the dam.

With this one, everything that could have gone wrong did. We now have an orphan to feed every few hours, which is partly fun but will tie us down because we are a small operation with no employees.

The reason I share this with you is so you can watch for any of the possible signs in your females' pregnancies. Here are some "take aways" for others to learn from our tragedy (continued next page):

1. If you see colic in any girl in the last two months of pregnancy, have your vet check early for a torsion. Most of the books say that the mom will be rolling violently. We have found this not to be true. She rolled back and forth but not so much that we thought she had a torsion (we all know how stoic alpacas can be). The first one we had did not either. I now know how to tell a torsion by feel and between me going in to check and the vet, someone had their arms up her over 10 times in the last week and her muscles were so weak that it played a part in her uterine prolapse. Lesson learned: Don't go internally too often because of the damage that can result.
2. If you haven't taken a neonatal class yet, find one and do it. Eventually you will have delivery problems. You can only learn what to do by attending a neo-natal wet lab or lots of experience. I am so thankful that I had taken a neonatal clinic at Ohio State and knew what I had and what to do. I was able to diagnose it but knew that it wasn't something I could fix myself, and we were extremely fortunate to have our vet available to right the cria's position and deliver her alive.
3. If you are having any questions during a delivery and your vet cannot come right away, call someone you know who has had a lot of experience. Call me if you would like. We have certainly had our share of learning experiences at Aussie Hill. When in doubt, always call the vet, don't wait. I always feel bad about calling them on weekends and holidays, but as my vet told me, "That is what we do."
4. I have learned since this experience that pulling on the placenta could cause a uterine prolapse. Please make sure your vets know this, do not assume that they do. Alpacas are different and they can easily prolapse if you pull on the placenta. Our female prolapsed because of the whole week's events and the muscular system was simply too weak after so much happening.
5. If your dam hasn't delivered within 1 hour of definite labor, call the vet. They normally will deliver a cria within 20 minutes of starting stage 2 labor. It is probably mal-positioned if it is taking longer. There is a fine line between calling the vet too often or too soon and waiting too long. Unfortunately only numerous experiences and time can make each of us better at this. Again, call on me or someone else that has a lot of experience to ask questions. Don't try to guess at it if you haven't experienced it before. Waiting too long can kill the dam and cria.
6. Always know where you can get some colostrum and/or goat milk. Keep some goat milk in your freezer and powdered colostrum replacer in your cria bag. A cria needs to be fed every 2-3 hours for the first couple of weeks. Grocery stores do sell goat milk by the quart. Buy a bag of colostrum replacement to add to the milk. Store some goat milk in your freezer near your due dates. Some vets and breeders recommend powder formulas but many think the powders are not the right choice. Others advise whole cow's milk with or without some active culture yogurt. Talk with your vet to learn what his preferences are and also talk to other breeders to see what has worked for them.
7. Keep your vet's emergency phone numbers by a phone in your barn or programmed into your cell phone. Minutes can make a difference. For most of us, a vet could be an hour or more away.
8. Know how to milk an alpaca in case you ever need it. It is not like milking a cow and it takes a lot of practice. Practice on your nursing dams before you need to know how in an emergency situation. You should be able to milk at least 10-20 cc's out of a female at a time. It is really important to get all the colostrum from the dam down that new cria in case the dam dies. If you know the dam is dying, keep milking her for the sake of the little cria...she will understand.
9. Don't allow too many internal examinations to be done. It causes too much stretching and harm. Keep it as limited as possible when they are close to their delivery dates.

I hope something good can come out of our bad news if it helps to teach something to another breeder who may recall this at a later date.

We will miss our alpaca...I don't think it has hit me just yet. We do have a beautiful female cria from our herdsire Smokey (with an IGG of over 1000!) and although it will be a big commitment to bottle feed the next several months, I am so thankful the cria has survived. We have her in the garage with a weanling female who is cuddling up nicely to her and will move her into the main area soon and pray that another nursing female will find it in her heart to nurse this beautiful criation.

~Post script: Mary is happy to report that the cria continues to do well, is still being bottle fed but also is eating hay and grain, so Kudos to good veterinary care and good herdsmanship in the face of such horrible circumstances!





We would not be able to conduct the neonatal wet labs without the very gracious generosity of the farms who donated their deceased crias to the labs. From their tragedy, we will hopefully be able to help future crias live. A big “thank-you” to all the farms who donated crias:

Judy Leon & Kim Atkins
Alpacas of Haven Hill
Greenwich, NY

Cindy & Curt Vars
Autumn Hill Alpacas
Andover, NY

Pamela & Ron Harshman
Camp Camelid
Fort Myers, FL

Jenny & Les Foshay (3 crias)
Champlain Valley Alpacas
Bridport, VT

Carol Karsten
Hidden Hill Farm Alpacas
Antrim, NH

Sharon & Mark Gilbride (2 crias)
Lazy Acres Alpacas
Bloomfield, NY

Vicki & John Askew
Sunset Ridge Alpacas
Valley Falls, NY

Deb Wright
Wright Choice Alpacas
Castleton, VT

AOBA Show Rules Input

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

The AOBA Show Rules Committee (SRC) has requested that the Affiliate Congress obtain from their affiliate members feedback and suggested changes for the 2009 Show Division Handbook. Each affiliate will then submit one document to the Affiliate Congress, who will combine all affiliate responses and submit one combined response to the SRC. If you have suggestions, please send them to me at Sprucridgefarm@aol.com by April 7, 2008; I will compile them and send them to the Affiliate Congress.

Individual AOBA members may also send their written feedback and suggestions directly to Betty Brock, the AOBA Show System Administrator, at admin@aobashows.org or mail to her at AOBA ~ 5000 Linbar Drive ~ Suite 297 ~ Nashville, TN 37211. The SRC will not accept any feedback or changes for the 2009 Handbook after April 15, 2008.

2006 Financial Audit Results

~Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

Our certified public accounting firm completed the audit of Empire Alpaca Association's 2006 financial statements and issued an unqualified or "clean" opinion on the financials statements. An "unqualified" opinion is the best type a company can receive and means that the auditors did not identify items that would "qualify" or "limit" their expression of an opinion on the financial statements.

A financial audit has nothing to do with the IRS or tax returns of an organization, but rather it is audit performed by an independent certified public accountant (CPA). The auditing firm reviews a company's policies, procedures, system of internal controls and transactional systems and then performs testing of those systems as well as substantive testing of the asset and liability balances to determine the reasonableness of the assets, liabilities, income, expenses and changes in net assets. Examples of the procedures that the auditing firm would perform include reviewing bank reconciliations, confirming bank and investment balances directly with financial institutions, and reviewing documentation of expenditures paid. The conclusion of the audit results in the expression of an opinion on the reasonableness of the financial statements. The auditing firm also issues a letter to management that identifies weaknesses in the system of internal controls and recommendations for improvements.

As discussed at the October annual meeting, this is the first time Empire has had a financial audit done of its financial statements. EAA's by-laws read: "The Treasurer shall cause the books and records of the Association to be certified annually by a certified public accountant." That one little word "certified" has a very specific meaning in accounting and requires full-blown audit of the financial statements. Due to an unintentional oversight, EAA never had a "certified" audit done in the past. As a CPA and the EAA president, I could not ignore the by-law requirement even though I personally believe that certified financial statements were unnecessary for an organization of our size. I brought the matter to the board and it decided that we would propose a by-law amendment to change the audit from a requirement to an option at the board's discretion. The board decided that before we could go to the membership with the proposed by-law change, we first had to have an audit done to make sure there were no issues and to avoid the appearance that the board was trying to hide something from the membership by requesting the amendment.

Now that we have a "clean" opinion on our 2006 financials, the board will propose a by-law amendment to make the audit optional. The 2006 financial audit cost EAA \$8,000, a significant amount for the organization. Under the current by-law, this is an annual requirement and the board believes we could put this \$8,000 to better use. We will propose a by-law amendment for the 2008 annual meeting. As a side note, I asked the other affiliates in the Affiliate Congress if any of them have certified financials done and not one other affiliate does, including those affiliates that are much larger than EAA.

The auditors also issued two formal letters to the Board: one noting weaknesses in our system of internal controls and the second with suggestions for various improvements. One weakness that the auditors noted involves the lack of segregation of duties, a typical issue for an organization of our size. Although the auditors did not note any items of impropriety, we have implemented several changes that will enhance our controls and our financial reporting.

Another issue of concern to the auditors is the way we handle the Extravaganza members' product booth. They believe EAA may have NY State sales tax liability exposure because of the way the product booth was conducted in the past (EAA collected receipts from customers including sales tax, processed credit card payments under its name and remitted the funds to the individual farms that sold the goods, including the sales tax receipts. The farms are responsible for remitting the sales tax receipts to the state). The board will meet in March to discuss this issue and develop a solution.

You can review the financial statements and the auditors' letters to management on the EAA web site www.nyalpacas.com under "Members Information."

Alpacas in the 2009 Rose Bowl Parade

~ Kim DeVos, AOBA Rose Parade Task Force

The AOBA Rose Parade Task Force (RPTF) has been hard at work spreading the word among AOBA members about the grass roots effort to fund a Rose Parade Float in 2009. Check out www.alpacaroseparade.com for all the information regarding the donations and the Parade itself.

As RPTF moves forward with this effort, we hope that members of AOBA will see the benefit of the float. There are so many wonderful events happening in 2009 for the Alpaca Industry:

AOBA is hosting the 2nd Annual World Alpaca Conference
AOBA will be 25 years old
The Tournament Of Roses will be hosting its 120th Parade
2009 has been declared the International Year of Natural Fiber
Let's also add the first ever alpaca float in the Tournament of Roses Parade!

The Task Force is dedicated to answering questions and getting the word out about the benefits of having the float. Please help us by visiting www.alpacaroseparade.com and looking through the site. Go to the **Contributors** page and see who is helping in this effort. The Contributors are listed by Levels and as they donate and continue to donate, the name and farm name move up the levels automatically. There is also a PowerPoint that any Task Force member would be happy to send via email. It is full of all sorts of information.

Advertising is a strange beast. When people saw alpacas on The View or on Animal Planet or Dirtiest Jobs.....who knew that all kinds of people would talk about them for a very long time. Folks still talk about the baby alpaca born on Animal Planet and that was shown a few years ago. You can never know who will be your next client....it could be your neighbor down the road. We will never get so great an amount of advertising for so little money. 40 Million Viewers.....think about it.

We have an immediate need for your help to raise the funds to get us rolling and show that as members of AOBA, you want the exposure through the Rose Parade. So please don't delay and go to www.alpacaroseparade.com and click the Donate link on the front page to show your immediate support. Your Task Force would like to thank you in advance for your support of this event and we look forward to seeing you at shows around the country this year. We'll be there looking for your support and answering questions regarding the Rose Parade Float. See you there!

Your Rose Parade Task Force

Kellie Butsack- kbutsack@comcast.net Eastern Representative
Yvette Jacoby- alpofvalhalla@msn.com Northwest Representative
Jean Riley- surialpacas@yahoo.com Southeast Representative
Katy Spears- alpacas@bellsouth.net Southern Representative
Diane Watson- sweetheartalpaca@hotmail.com Midwest Representative
Becky Zierer- LZBalpacas@aol.com Rocky Mountain Representative
Shari Prichard- autumn@mtco.com Midwest Representative/Marketing Liaison
Kim DeVos- kad@incafashions.com Southwest Representative/BOD Liaison

Fiberart – Inspiration & Influence

~ Jeannine Anderson, Gaze Acres Alpacas

As you approach your next fiber project, why not look to a new source for inspiration? A simple point of reference can influence you in unimagined ways and you may just like where it leads you. Get your creative juices flowing, find some quiet time and enjoy the process of designing a project that is truly unique.

Sure, you may need a pattern to follow if you are making a garment. But that is just the support structure, much like a canvas, on which you make your mark. Many decisions get made from the start to the finish of a handmade garment and you are free to explore all the different possibilities.

Sounds daunting? Start with a simple point of reference. A good starting point may be a piece of art or music or a favorite landscape. From that source you can draw the answers to your design questions using the Elements of Design: line, shape, space, value, color and texture.

Do you have your reference point? Now, what does it feel like? If you think of it in terms of lines would they need to be sharp, hard edged lines or soft and flowing lines? Great! Now lets move on to shape. Again, thinking of your reference (art object, music, landscape), what kinds of shapes are appropriate to convey the same feeling? Big and bold shapes, or smaller and more subtle? One shape, two, or several? All shapes alike or contrasting shapes? Geometric or biomorphic? Very Good! You are designing. Don't yet worry about how you will make this, let yourself design freely with no constraints.

Value is the lightness or darkness. What feels appropriate? Is your reference point dark and brooding, light and airy or have sharply contrasting values together? Or maybe a soft gradation from dark to light would be appropriate.

Color is an endless playground of possibilities and loaded with expression. When we use expressions like – I've been blue, I saw red, or I was green with envy, we are attributing emotion to color in a culturally agreed upon way. All color has an emotive quality. Going back to your reference piece once again, what are the colors that you are responding to in that piece? Or if it is a piece of music what colors does it bring to mind. Think back to the 1940 animated Disney film "*Fantasia*" for very good examples of making music visual. Better yet, order it from Netflix or get it at your library and enjoy the visual feast while paying special attention to how color, line and shape are used to portray music and express emotion. It is very interesting when viewed in this way. And the hippo ballerinas are a hoot!

I have digressed, but I think you get the idea. Your inspirational piece, whatever it is, holds the answers to your design questions. When faced with the question of texture, you once again ask what would be appropriate to the piece. Of course all our alpaca is soft and that's a good thing, but how you knit/weave/crochet/felt (did I forget anything?) can add texture with patterned stitches versus smooth even fabric.

We have endless inspiration around us everyday. Why not bring some of that into your fiber work and create something truly unique?

I sure have asked a lot of questions. I hope you enjoy finding the answers.

Symposium Wrap-Up

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

When I wrote the Symposium article for the March 2007 newsletter, I asked how we could top Dr. Tibary and the 2007 speakers because they were so highly reviewed. Well, I think we did it with the 2008 Symposium! Reviews for 2008 were off the charts: speakers, vendors, hotel, food – someone even raved about the pillows in their hotel room! Attendance was also off the charts – in the prior four Symposiums, we have never had more than 118 people register, but this year we had 158! The conference rooms were packed to capacity since we estimated 125 - 130 attendees when we booked the hotel. We never expected 158! We also had 61 attendees for the Friday fiber workshops and 40 vets for the Friday vet session.

Dr. LaRue Johnson is truly a treasure in the camelid community. His alpaca health lectures and four neonatal wet labs were outstanding. We were able to get 100 people through the neonatal labs on Sunday. When I first discussed with Dr. Johnson the idea of Saturday lectures followed by 4 back-to-back labs on Sunday, he didn't think we could pull it off. I was able to find three great vets (Gillian Perkins of Cornell, Julia Paxson of Tufts and Christine Camann) to help him with the labs on Sunday, so all participants got very close attention in the labs.

Dr. Chris Cebra's lecture on "Emerging Diseases and E Mac" overflowed with people wanting to hear the "e mac guru". The Symposium was structured so that we also had a "Questions & Answers" session with Dr. Cebra on Saturday that allowed people to pick his brain. Unfortunately, Dr Cebra was only able to lecture on Friday at the vet session and on Saturday since he needed to travel back to Oregon on Sunday. It would have been great to have him lecture on Sunday as well. Maybe another time!

All the speakers – Dr. Johnson, Dr. Cebra, Dr. Andy Merriwether, Wini Labrecque, Diana Timmerman, Richard Dickinson (CPA), Dave Belt, Dr. Christine Camann – got great reviews. The big complaint was there was not enough time to cover all they had to cover. Next year, I hope to extend the class times so we have a bit more time for each lecture.

We also had an outstanding group of diverse vendors this year. Many attendees did not realize that the tapestries hanging around the registration and fleece areas were all made with alpaca. They were designed by Evan Young-Walentine and looked incredible. Many people thought they were part of the hotels décor! See the photo spread for a picture of his 12' by 7' tapestry that hung over our registration desk.

All in all, I was very pleased with the 2008 Symposium. The speakers were excellent, the venue, although crowded, worked pretty well. People seemed to like Saratoga Springs because it is such a great town to walk around for shopping and dining, although some people thought it was too far East.

Now the dilemma is: what do we do for 2009?!

Effective Guerilla Marketing

~ Theresa Reyes-Stassel, Hagen Heights Alpaca Farm

It is tough to gain a marketing advantage in today's world of intensive marketing. There are, however, some tried and true methods that can help set your farm apart from the crowd. Budgeting, Market Saturation, Consistency of Image, and Effective Print techniques all add up to success in getting your farm recognized.

Budgeting: You should plan early on to budget a portion of your operating capital for marketing your farm or products. Don't skimp here. Just having a website is not enough. Investigate all avenues of marketing to find those that fit your budget and reach the greatest audience with noticeable returns. Showing, donating breedings or products at shows, email blasts, national ads and garnering newspaper stories all bring people to you door. AOBA's marketing survey is available to help you determine the best use of your marketing funds. If you have an area of expertise, by all means promote it! Newsletters are an effective marketing tool, as is writing for alpaca related forums or journals. Remember, most successful new businesses devote nearly 80 percent of their operating budget to marketing.

Market Saturation: Repeated marketing efforts and consistent use of your logo helps people to remember you amidst the barrage of marketing material they receive. By diversifying your marketing methods and regularly sending out fliers or mailings, you keep your farm name visible, whereas only one attempt at marketing is quickly forgotten. You should have, at the very least a membership in a national website for alpacas at all times, and other regional listings as well.

Finding other non-alpaca related but agricultural publications reaches people in other areas of livestock who may investigate alpacas as an additional enterprise. Press releases to announce a new product, service or event will often lead to newspaper coverage if you send them to editors on a regular basis. Editors often need to fill a spot in a paper and if you regularly contact them they might select your farm to promote or plan an article on your farm.

Maintain a mailing list of farms to send this press coverage to familiarize them with your farm. Invite those farms within a reasonable distance to an informal get together and exchange of ideas amongst farms. Contacts can be made that lead to sales or breedings. Promote the idea of a regular meeting of those farms at a different farm each month or so - to create a network of farms with common goals. Keep those lines of communication open at all times - to congratulate each other on births or ribbons, for example. Investigate bulk purchases of grain or hay and shearing services for those farms in your network.

Consistency of Image: Each and every piece of communication you send out should contain a consistent image, such as your logo, farm slogan, and contact information. Invest in professional business cards, stationery, farm baseball caps as giveaways, farm shirts or jackets, and brochures. Keep a supply on you at all times and actively mention your endeavor to whomever will listen. Speak up with news of any successes you have in the ring or new additions to your herd. From your doctor to your local quick stop, hair dresser, and feed store, your marketing materials should be displayed and will lead to many referrals.

Effective Print Techniques: Learn how to take good photos using your digital or manual camera. Invest in a graphics program that will allow you to crop photos, add text, and email or print out your own advertising materials. Local print stores will print your items for a minimal cost. Investigate programs that allow you to set up your own website, at a fraction of the cost of having others maintain it for you. Keep your web site up to date and fresh, so that people always find some new idea or hint to help them. Return visitors to your webpage is the goal.

Symposium Evaluations Indicate a Great Experience!

~ Ann Merriwether, Nyala Farm Alpacas

Sixty-five of the 151 attendees returned evaluation forms for the 2008 Symposium and the overall response was that this was a great experience! Symposium attendees are connected to alpaca organizations, of those responding 83% were EAA members, 87% were AOBA members. It appears that most of those attending were focused on the speakers, as only 36% of those attending showed fleece or fiber arts and only 36% participated in the fiber workshops. However, those that attended the fiber workshops overwhelmingly rated them as well chosen and informative (the average rating was 4.78 on a scale of 5). Several symposium attendees expressed regret that they could not attend the workshops that were held only on Friday. Several who did attend the workshops reported wishing they could attend more workshops, but time conflicts made this impossible. As one person commented, it was hard choosing which ones to attend! The speakers were well received this year with an average rating of 4.98 out of 5.

Most responders felt the symposium was a valuable learning experience (with an average rating of 4.91 out of 5). More than one person wrote in that really it was off the 5 point scale, a "10"! Comments included "Best I have ever attended!" and "Superb!" In general, the Saratoga was considered an appropriate venue with an average rating of 4.62 out of 5. Of course it was not convenient to all Empire members and several commented that they hoped it might be closer to their farms next time. Others said they were pleased it was so close to their farm. Many commented on how much they appreciated the neonatal lab with Dr. Johnson. The hands-on aspect of the neonatal wet labs was considered a very valuable learning experience. People gave lots of constructive comments that the board will consider in planning for the next symposium and we would love to hear ideas from those that were not able to attend. Many attendees gave great suggestions for the next symposium's speakers and topics. We will be discussing those options at our next board meeting.

Evaluation Summary:

1. Are you a member of the Empire Alpaca Association? 54/65 were
2. Are you a member of AOBA? 57/65 were
3. Did you enter any fleece or fiber arts? 24/65 did
4. Did you participate in any Friday fiber arts workshops? 24/65 did
 - 4a. If yes, were the instructors well chosen and informative? Average response 4.78/5
 - 4b. Please give us your opinion of the workshops and instructors:

There were lots of nice comments about learning new things and having fun while doing it.

The questions below had a 5-point scale response with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. The number represents the average response out of 65 responders.

5. The symposium met my expectations. 4.89
6. I felt the symposium was a valuable learning experience. 4.91
7. The symposium was managed efficiently 4.95
8. The information I received prior to the symposium was adequate and informative. 4.69
9. The Saratoga Hotel was an appropriate venue. 4.62
10. The meeting rooms were adequate 4.67 (a couple did mention seating issues)
11. The speakers were well chosen and informative, professional as well as encouraged and answered questions 4.98
12. Given this experience I would attend another EAA symposium. 4.94

Thanks to all that took the time to complete an evaluation. These have been really helpful!!!

Appreciation Note From Vet

~ Steve McCarthy, Spruce Ridge Farm

After the Symposium, I received numerous emails and thank-you notes from vets and alpaca owners. Below is a reprint of a hand-written thank-you note I received from one of the veterinarians who attended our free vet session on February 29, 2008.

To the Membership of the Empire Alpaca Association (and a special thanks to Ulla & Richard Jonassen for the invite):

It is with deep appreciation that I applaud your Association for its brilliant and forward-thinking "investment" in your veterinarians by providing us a day with your invited speakers at your annual Symposium. I cannot tell you how valuable this information is, as there is so little out there. It was a pleasure to listen to Drs. Johnson & Cebra. Their presentations will definitely allow me to provide my alpaca clients with better service.

*With sincere gratitude,
Terri MacKenzie, DVM
Midvale Vet Clinic
Nelliston, NY*



434 Route 13
Old Chatham, NY 12136

Upcoming EAA Elections

It's time to begin planning for the 2008 election of new members to the board of directors of the Empire Alpaca Association. Two seats will be up for election, and the election will take place at the end of the summer. The two members of the current board of directors whose terms expire this year are John Askew and Chris Gilman.

The nominating committee will be actively recruiting candidates over the next several weeks and will nominate a list of candidates by early summer. The members of the nominating committee are: Wayne Jarvis, Richard Jonassen, Cindy Vars, Sue Watts (chair), and Karin Young. If you know of someone you would like to see run for election to the board of directors, or if you want to run yourself, please contact Sue Watts at sue@calidadalpacas.com or 212-563-0287.

Candidates can also be nominated by petition. The petition requires the signatures of three EAA members in good standing and must be delivered to the nominating committee no later than Wednesday, August 6, 2008.

We anticipate that ballots will go in the mail to voting members by the end of August. Results of the election will be announced at the Empire Alpaca Association's annual meeting at the Extravaganza on Saturday, October 25, 2008.