

A brown llama with a shaggy head and neck stands in a grassy field. In the background, there is a green fence, a large evergreen tree, and a clear blue sky. The text 'AMERICAN LLAMA' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# AMERICAN

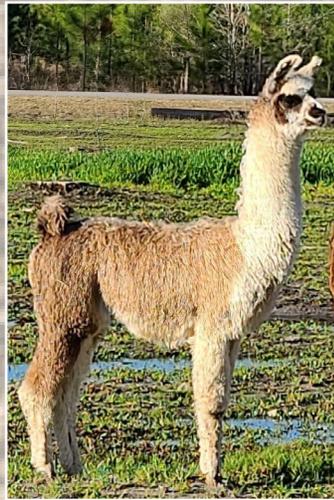
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Promoting Our Industry*

Issue Six

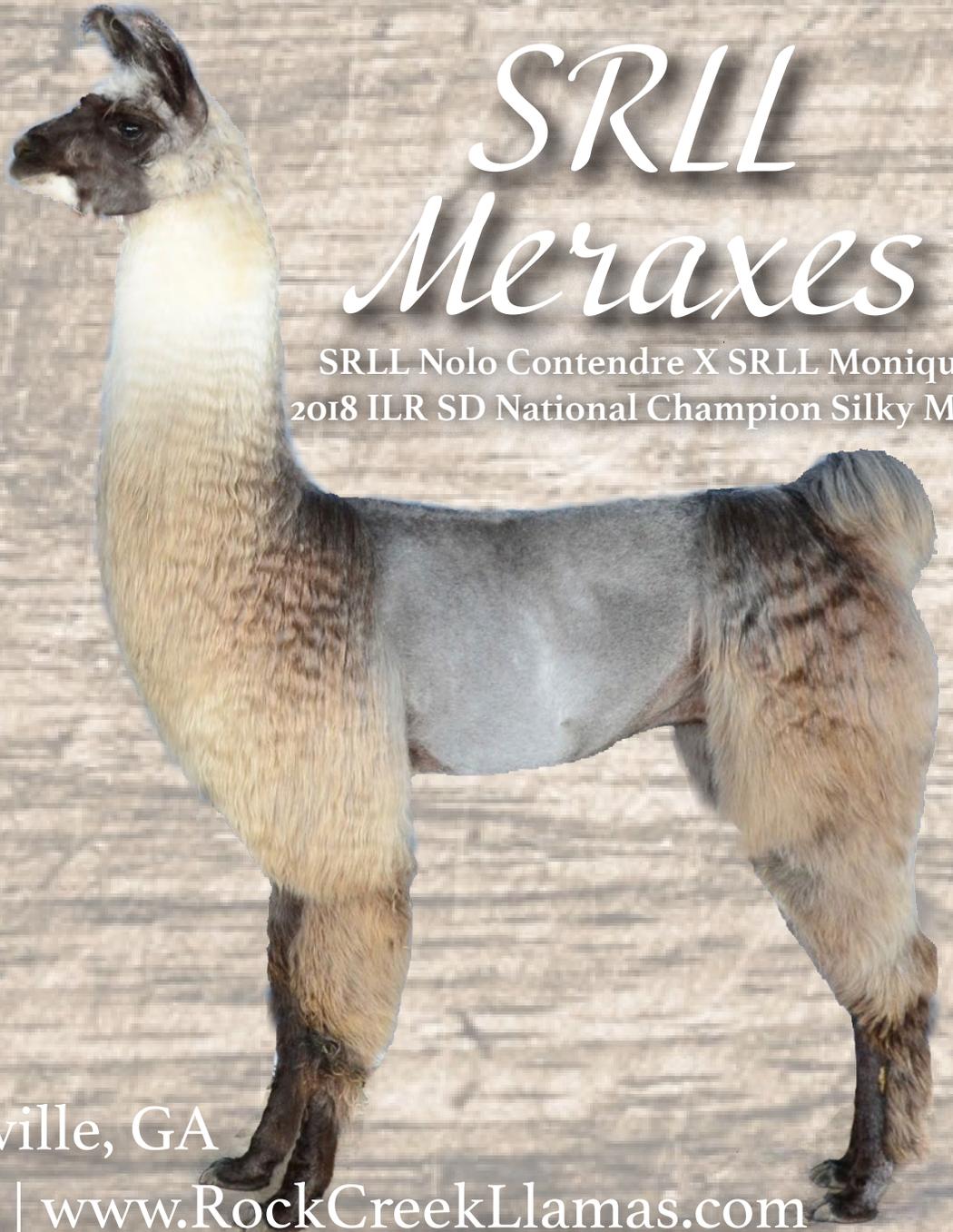
March 2021

# Rock Creek Farm



## SRLR Meraxes

SRLR Nolo Contendre X SRLR Monique  
2018 ILR SD National Champion Silky Male

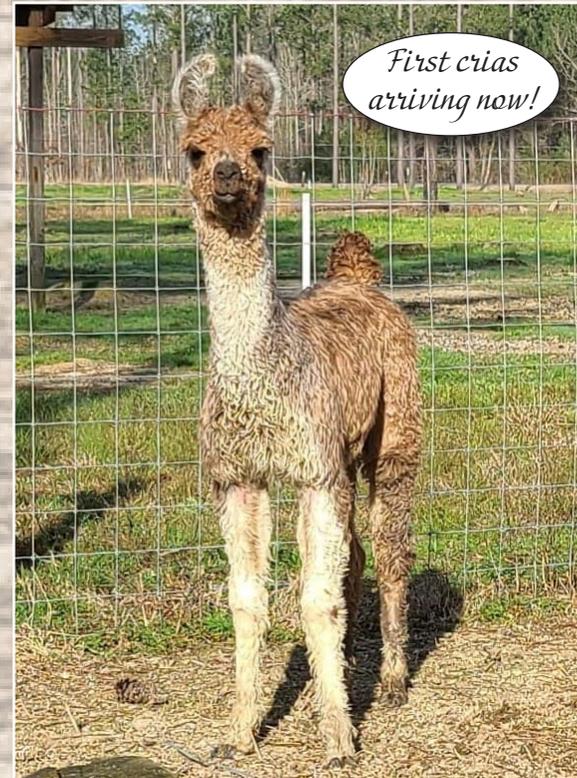
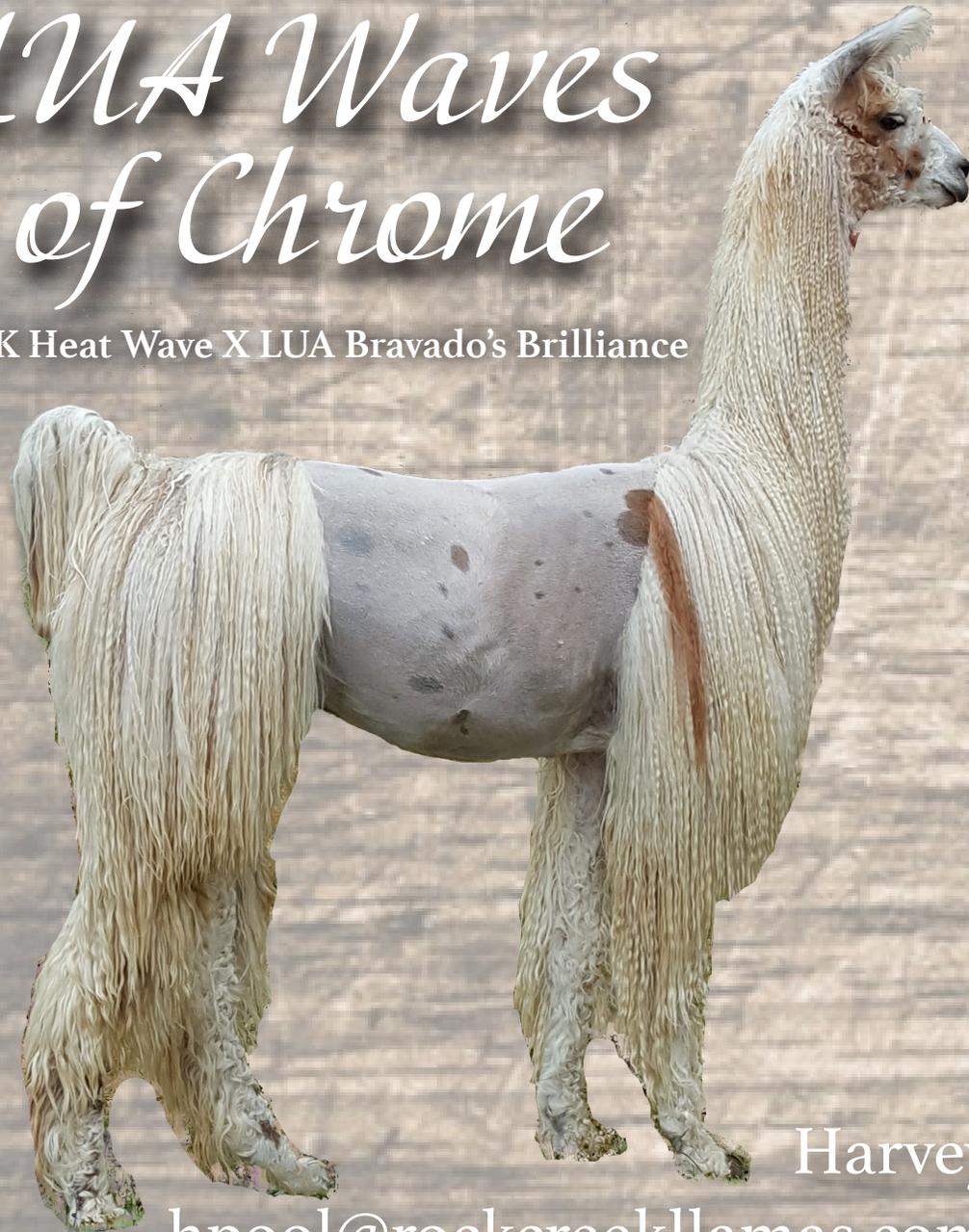


Harvey and Lisa Pool | Abbeville, GA  
hpool@rockcreekllamas.com | www.RockCreekLlamas.com

# Rock Creek Farm

## LUA Waves of Chrome

WLK Heat Wave X LUA Bravado's Brilliance



Harvey and Lisa Pool | Abbeville, GA

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March 2021

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## *Letter from the Editor*

This is our sixth issue of American Llama Magazine, and I think that this may be the issue I'm most proud of. As the llama community continues to grow and thrive, we believe that American Llama Magazine will grow and thrive along with it.

We are excited to bring three interviews to you in this issue, something we haven't done before, and may not do again given the hours of hard work it took to make it happen. The first interview was conducted by phone with Tom Simmons, co-founder of Celebrity Sales. Tom told us about the early days of the industry, the founding of Celebrity sales, and shared a few stories from his more than 20 years running Celebrity sales with Tim Vincent.

Celebrity Sales featured prominently in our second interview, when we traveled to Bozeman, MT in June to meet with Paul and Sally Taylor. Paul and Sally are llama industry pioneers, starting their breeding program in the mid 1970s, breeding some of the finest llamas in the country (including some record sellers at Celebrity), and blazing a trails in the llama industry and beyond.

Our final interview came in October, when we interviewed Ron and Gail Wilkinson to be our featured farm for this issue. Ron and Gail have utilized many of the Taylors' best lines from their Argentine importations as a key ingredient of their herd. One of their lead herdsires, Argentine Mach One, is one of the last and best offspring bred by the Taylors.

In addition to the interviews we have articles on a variety of topics that are sure to interest llama breeders of all stripes. Be sure to watch for more details on our next issue, the first edition of "American Llama Sires," coming in September. More details can be found at the end of the magazine.

Happy Reading,  
-Kyle Mumford

### *About the Editor*

Kyle Mumford and his wife Jerrika live in Ridgefield, WA and own Volcano View Ranch, a herd of approximately 25 llamas. The Mumford family has owned llamas since 1980.





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# CONFORMATION SPOTLIGHT

## *Front View Conformation of the Foreleg* *By Jerrika and Kyle Mumford*

This article is the first in a series on conformation, in which each part will focus in depth on one area of conformation in llamas. We consider ourselves students of conformation, we would not claim to be experts. This series will be a learning experience for us as well. As we dive into sources, we will do our best to explain the strengths and weaknesses of conformational traits and illustrate what they look like.

We will begin this series with an in depth look at the front legs of a llama, when viewed from the front. The ideas in this article largely come from two sources, llama conformation articles written by Murray Fowler, DVM and The Horse Conformation Handbook, by Heather Smith Thomas.

An ideal front leg will appear straight and have free flowing movement in a straight line. Front legs should bear equal weight and the feet should be equal distance from each other as the distance between the legs at the shoulder. Ideal front legs will move in the most efficient way and will have the least amount of stress on bones, tendons, ligaments, and muscles.

If one or both forelegs have imperfections, lameness is more likely to occur. Legs will not move straight if they aren't straight. At best, there is loss in efficiency when on the move, and at worst the added strain will lead to injury or lameness. (2)

### **Why horse conformation?**

Some readers may be wondering why we are using a horse conformation book in our llama conformation studies. Many of the knowledgeable breeders we have interviewed have come from the sheep and horse industries, and they mentioned how many conformational ideas translate well from species to species. We have found that pairing llama conformation articles with horse conformation theories has been a good way to get a deeper understanding of the concepts.

## **Gaits**

When discussing llama legs it is important to keep the bigger picture in mind- how llamas are built and how they move. Llamas have three common gaits, the walk, the pace, and the gallop. The pace is used in other species, but llamas use this gait more frequently than most. In the pace, the legs on the same side of the body move forward together. As the llama moves in a pace, the body weight is transferred from one side to the other. This is typically not an efficient gait, and more physically demanding than other gaits. However, camelids have evolved to make the pace more efficient. Relatively longer legs, a more narrow chest, and limbs set closer to the midline help reduce energy expended from the side to side weight transfer as the llama moves. (1)

## **Imperfections and Movement**

Leg issues can sometimes be spotted when the animal is standing still. However, leg and shoulder fiber can hide imperfections, or even make a straight legged animal appear flawed. Standing directly in front of a llama while in motion can help you spot imperfections that may not be obvious when the llama is standing still. If a llama's feet dish inward or wing outward on the move, this is generally an indication that the leg bones are not straight. A foot may strike the opposite leg when moving quickly. If the feet swing inward or outward due to leg imperfections, the added stress on the joints may result in lameness over time. If a leg is crooked, the legs will not bear equal weight, which places a higher strain on one leg. No llama will have perfectly straight legs that move in perfectly straight lines. Slight imperfections are normal, and usually do not make an animal unsound. Because no llama is perfect, it becomes a judgement call on what should be tolerated in conformational flaws. (2)

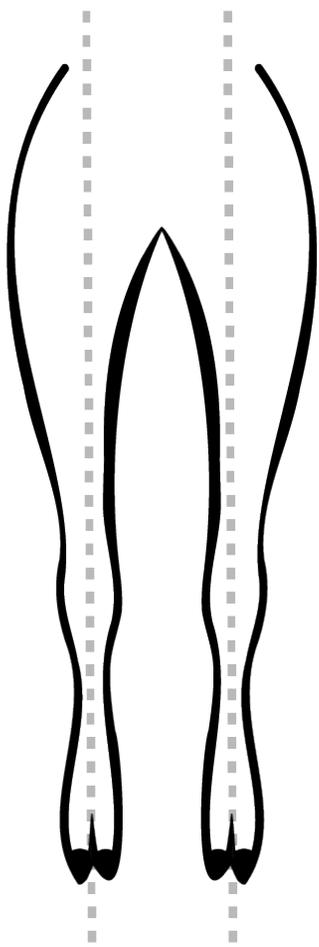
## **Common Front Leg Imperfections (Illustrations on Pages 9-10)**

### **Base Wide**

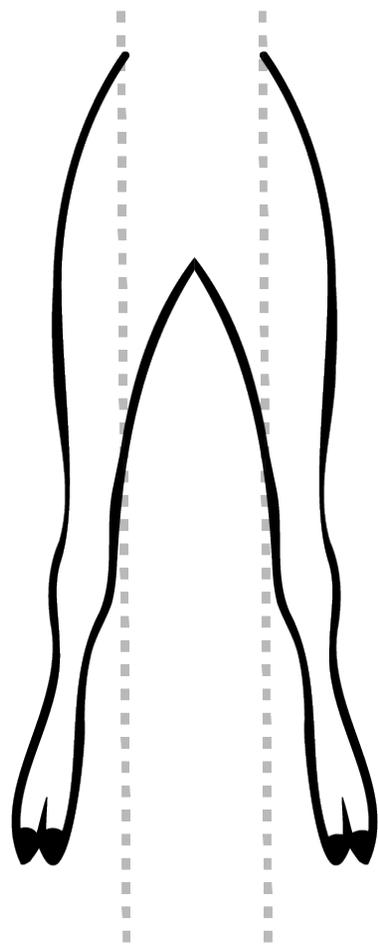
The feet are wider than the shoulder. This provides stability, however efficiency is lessened due to the legs moving in arc. When landing, more weight is placed on the inside of the foot rather than evenly throughout. A base wide llama in motion will tend to "wing out".

### **Base Narrow**

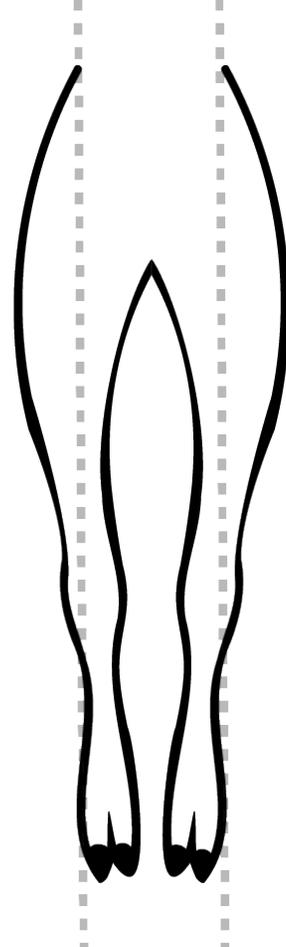
The feet are narrower than the shoulder. This increases instability when on the move. When landing, more weight is placed on the outside of the foot rather than evenly throughout. A base narrow llama in motion will tend to "rope walk" (appear to walk as if they are on a tightrope).



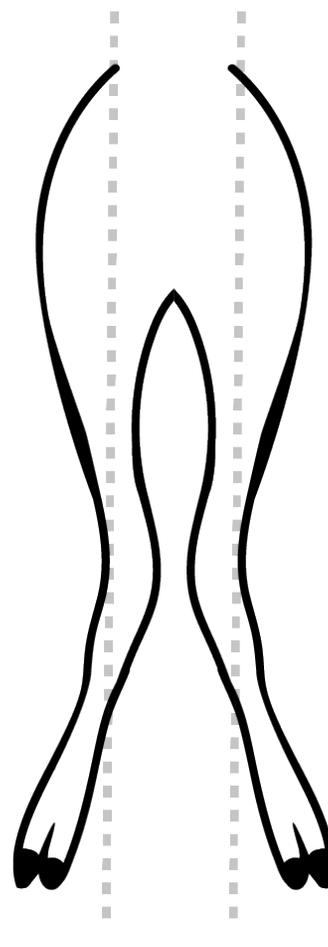
Normal



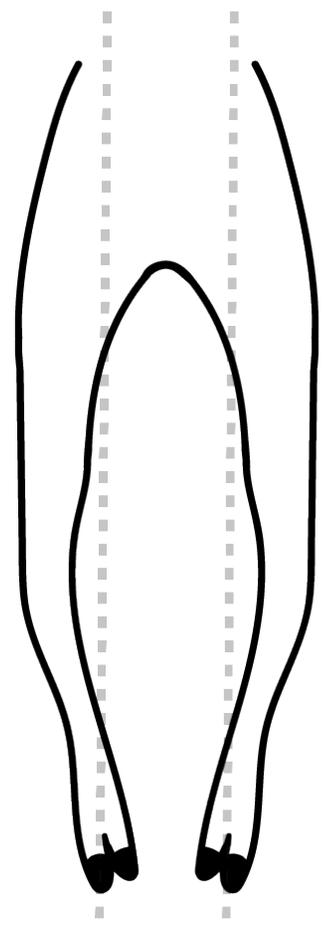
Base Wide



Base Narrow

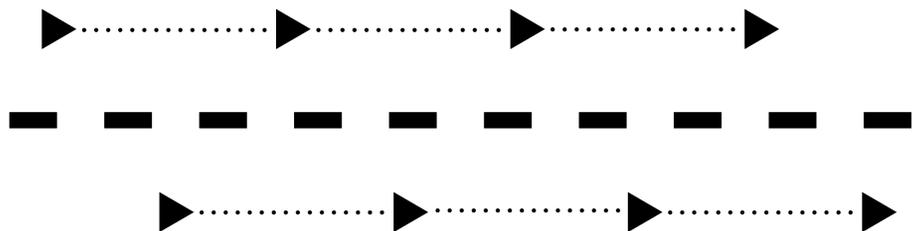


Knock Knees

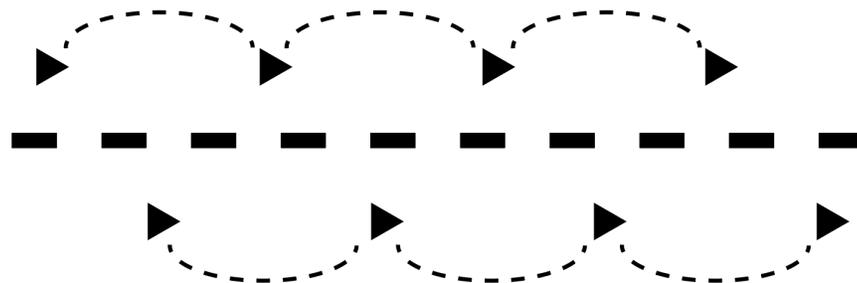


Bow Legged

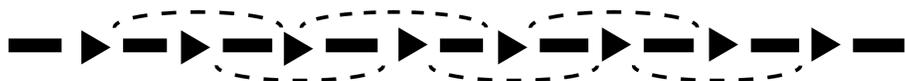
Normal Gait



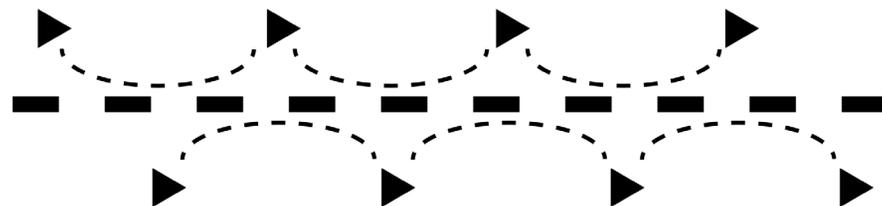
Winging Out



Rope Walking (think tight-rope)



Dishing In



## **Knock Knees**

The leg curves inward at the knee. This places extra stress on the legs and the knee joints are more prone to injury. Fiber can make a llama appear to have knock knees, or hide it. Pay close attention to movement from the front view if fiber makes it hard to tell. Minor knock knees are common in llamas, and some believe it is normal. Murray Fowler, DVM concluded that there is no benefit in camelids with a slight knock knee and that straight legs were preferential. A llama in motion with knock knees - the front legs will “dish in”

## **Bow-Legged**

The leg curves outward, usually at the knee or hock. This places extra stress on the knees. Bow-legged is considered the weakest construction of the legs, and thus should be selected against most harshly. A llama in motion with bow legs - the front legs will “wing out”

## **Conclusion**

Crooked legs, as well as other flaws in conformation, may be a trait that is inherited, the result of a nutritional deficiency inhibiting growth, or the result of injury. A llama’s forelegs carry a higher percentage of weight than the rear legs, so it is more common to see lameness in the front than in the rear. This isn’t to say the lameness in the rear can’t happen, rather there is a slight more importance on the front legs when evaluating structural soundness.

When evaluating a llama’s structure, correctly conformed legs are important, but other aspects of conformation are important as well. Overall balance and correct proportions of a llama’s structure play a fundamental role in the correctness of the legs. In our next issue, we will go in depth on another aspect of llama conformation.

## **References**

1. Fowler, Murray E., DVM. “Form, Function, Conformation & Soundness.” Llamas Magazine November/December 1986: 45-53.
2. Smith Thomas , Heather. The Horse Conformation Handbook. Storey Publishing, 2005.

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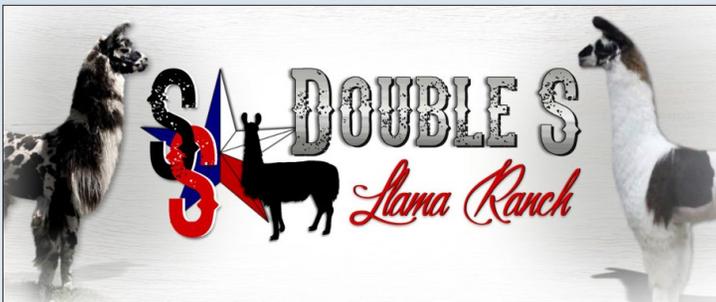
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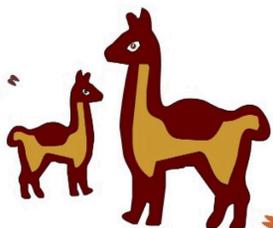
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# Questions and Answers with the ILR

with Ron Wilkinson, ILR President



**Note:** A regular feature of the American Llama Magazine is a question and answer segment with ILR President Ron Wilkinson. If you have questions that you would like answered in future issues of the magazine, please submit them to the editors who will pass them along.

## **What are the new recognition programs for outstanding sires and dams?**

There are two new programs beginning in 2021 to recognize outstanding sires and dams in the industry. The first is the establishment of UAP Top Ten recognition for Get of Sire and Produce of Dam point winners. The second is to recognize sires and dams that have established themselves as truly outstanding producers, the Sire of Distinction and Dam of Distinction program. Both new programs rely heavily on the performance of offspring in the show ring.

## **Why has the Board of Directors chosen to add these recognition programs?**

Since the beginning of the Universal Awards Program recognition in 2008, there have been discussions about adding the Get of Sire and Produce of Dam recognition. Other priorities have stood in the way of doing the computer programming necessary to establish the program. Participation in those classes in halter shows around the country has significantly dropped in the past decade and the Board hope is that establishing this recognition will significantly help to increase participation and competition in the GOS and POD classes in our shows. As the Board was making the decision to move ahead with the Top Ten recognition, the discussion shifted to trying to find a way to establish a system for recognizing the truly elite sires and dams that have consistently produced top offspring for their owners that have gone on to achieve great success. After hours of committee work, and multiple drafts the new Sire of Distinction and Dam of Distinction recognition program was established.

### **How do I qualify for the UAP Top Ten?**

Like with the current recognition for halter, performance, fleece, youth, and beyond the showing, we will now have within our halter recognition the added categories of Get of Sire and Produce of Dam. Points are earned for showing placings and the current chart of points, which is dependent on number of participants and placings, will apply. Like with all UAP results, when you participate in an ILR-SD sanctioned show, after the show results are turned in by the show superintendent and they are recorded automatically in the ILR-SD and the UAP results summary for your animal. If you participate in a non-ILR sanctioned show, the owner must track and submit the results for their animal. Once the points are recorded the database tracks the points for the Top Ten in each category. Once results for all shows during the year are reported, the record is closed and the Top Ten are recognized. No other action is required by the owner.

### **How do I nominate an animal for the Sire of Distinction or Dam of Distinction program?**

These programs are designed to recognize animals that have established significant records of producing outstanding offspring. It is the feeling of the Board that this is an award for truly established sires and dams, not the “new kid on the block.” It is also the belief of the Board that elite sires and dams are those that consistently produce, not the animal that has an occasional outstanding produce. Multiple offspring of animals nominated must have established impressive show records (details below). A nomination form is available from the ILR office or may be downloaded from the website soon. A \$75 nomination fee is required to cover the cost of this program.

### **Tell me more about this new program**

The Sires of Distinction and Dams of Distinction program is designed to recognize truly elite sires and dams from across the nation. This is an award based on a nomination of animals that meet the strict criteria (see qualifications below). It is the responsibility of the owner to track show results, determine that their nominee meets the eligibility criteria, complete the nomination form, and pay the nomination fee. Since the eligibility criteria includes Certificates of Excellence or Certificates of Championship earned by offspring of the nominee, ILR is in the process of creating a link on the ILR database to look up Certificates earned by offspring. Show results of offspring and the nominee are currently available by looking up the UAP show results for the animal being searched.

### **What kind of recognition is planned for animals reaching Distinction status?**

A listing of all animals that have achieved the Sire of Distinction or Dam of Distinction status will be maintained on the ILR website. In addition a personalized banner, that may be displayed at shows or on the farm, of the recognized animals will be produced for the owner.

### ***Sire of Distinction Qualifications***

- At least 15 offspring must have won at least one Grand Champion award or three Reserve Grand Champion awards in halter.
- At least 10 offspring must have met one of the following standards (12 offspring if sire does not meet the Get of Sire/Production Pair criteria):
  - Earned a Certificate of Championship in halter
  - Earned a Certificate of Excellence in halter and a combined 100 points in halter, performance, and fleece
  - Earned a Certificate of Excellence in halter and a Certificate of Championship in performance or fleece.
- Offspring representing both sexes must be included.
- Sire must have two wins or earned a minimum of 10 points in Get of Sire or Production Pair classes. Documentation of 2 additional offspring that meets the second criteria above may be used in lieu of the Get of Sire requirement.

### ***Dam of Distinction Qualifications***

- At least 5 offspring must have won at least one Grand Champion award or three Reserve Grand Champion awards in halter.
- At least 3 offspring must have met one of the following standards (4 offspring if dam does not meet the Produce of Dam/Production Pair criteria):
  - Earned a Certificate of Championship in halter
  - Earned a Certificate of Excellence in halter and a combined 100 points in halter, performance, and fleece
  - Earned a Certificate of Excellence in halter and a Certificate of Championship in performance or fleece.
- Qualifying offspring must be sired by at least two different sires.
- Dam must have two wins or earned a minimum of 10 points in Produce of Dam or Production Pair classes. Documentation of 1 additional offspring that meets the second criteria above may be used in lieu of the Produce of Dam requirement.

### ***Other requirements***

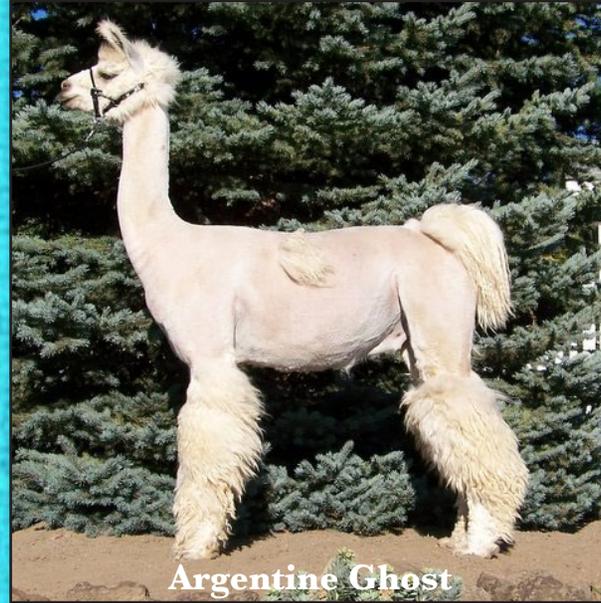
- The owner nominating an animal for Sire of Distinction or Dam of Distinction recognition must be a member of ILR and the ILR–Show Division.
- Nomination fee of \$75 must be submitted at the time of nomination.

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**Mach's Captain Jack**



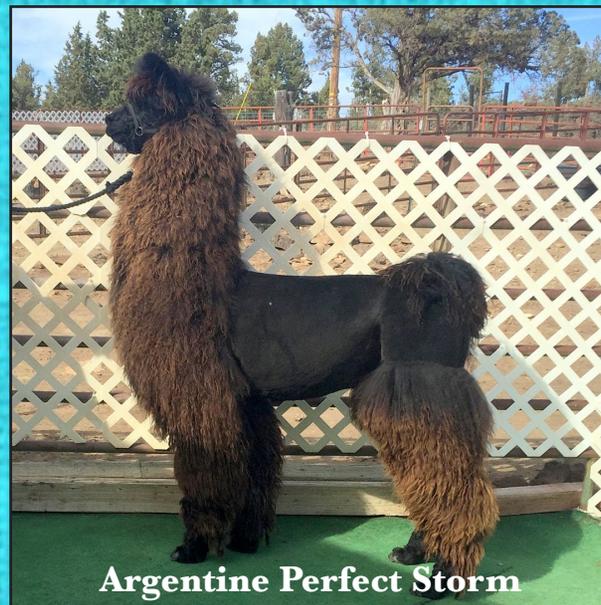
**Argentine Ghost**



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**Argentine Perfect Storm**

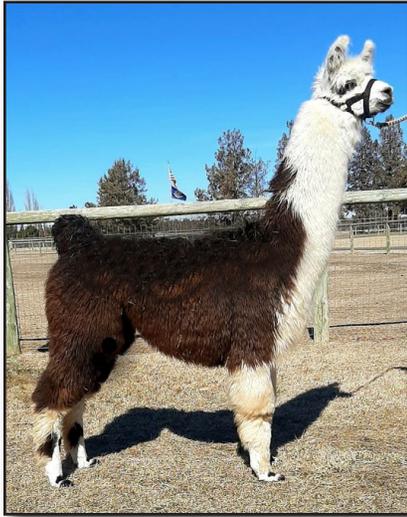


**B Bar Z Bella's Giovanni**

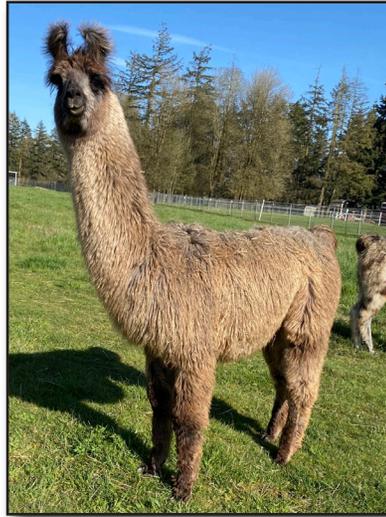


# Cascade Llama Sale Preview

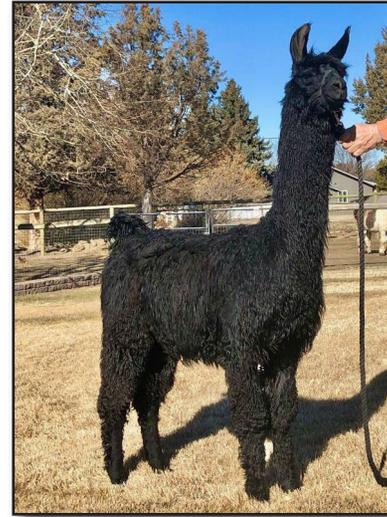
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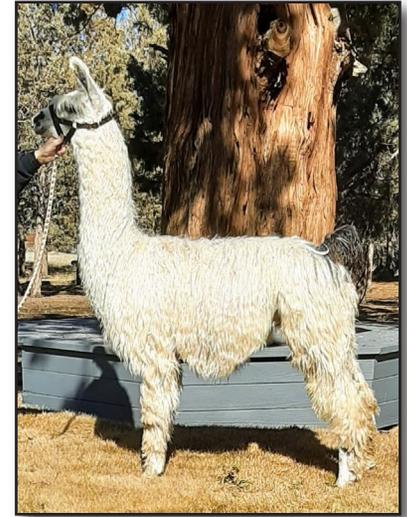
WOL Chiri Tanada



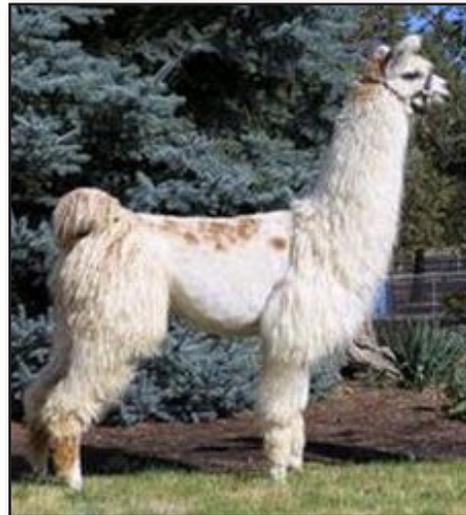
Adelina MVR



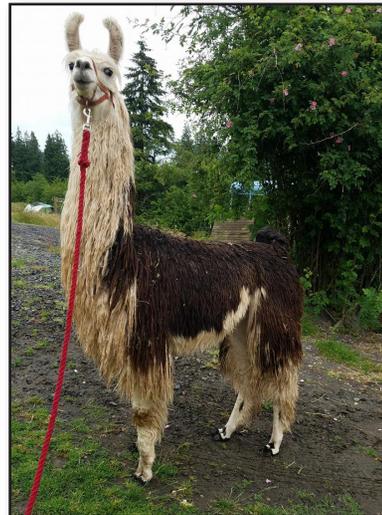
RGA Blackhawk's Onyx



WOL Chiri Prevost



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Little Miss Mikey



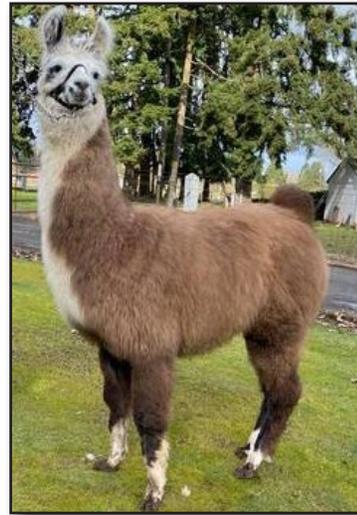
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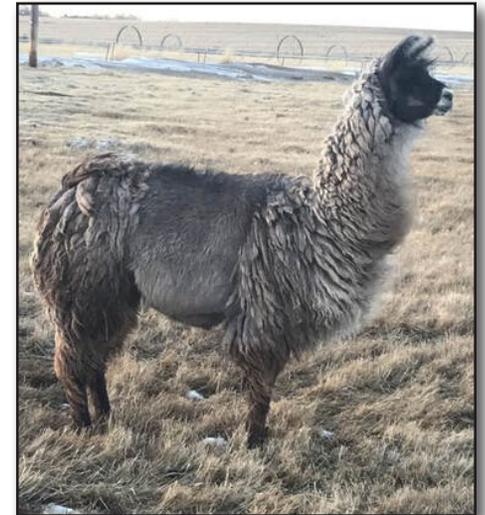
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RGA Blackhawk's Azalea



Amelia MVVR



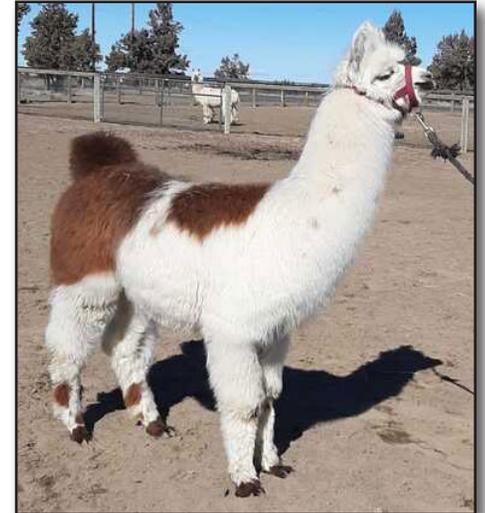
Cloud Peaks Tiara



Ikul



Cloud Peaks Lilac



McKenzie Lake Windsor

# Structural Guidelines for Pack Llamas

By Wes Holmquist

I have recognized ten structural guidelines by seeing llama types that work well on the trail. These guidelines were developed by hindsight, not foresight of the brilliant. I love all my llamas and admire them for their spirit but have found that a packer cannot work on heart alone. The fact is that some are not physically capable of making the grade. In the llama world we can help our llama offspring make the grade by breeding to select studs and structural types that have proven themselves on the trail.

Notice I said structural types. These llamas don't have to be classic llamas. What is a classic llama? It doesn't matter here!!! Our concern is selecting llamas of certain structure; wool length is unimportant. What does it take to shear a llama-about 20 minutes? So if they have longer wool, 20 minutes of shearing every other year is not much of an investment in a pack llama that happens to have long wool. Of course, many llama breeders do not pack but they can benefit by following structural guidelines of selection developed by llama packers. I only expect my guidelines to be references, not God's word. They are one man's opinion based on experience and will give you a place to begin.

Any llama can pack and any willow stick is a fishing pole—right? But after we've fished a few times our taste in poles changes dramatically. There are lots of in's and out's in fishing pole types just like there are different llama types. For instance, a pole for fly fishing is built differently than a bait pole and a deep sea pole is different still. Similarly, a tall llama works better in places like getting over logs and creeks and has a great advantage in endurance over a heavily built shorter llama. A medium sized llama may be less intimidating than the larger muscle llama. Muscle llamas don't hold up as well in the heat as the tall or medium sized because of their bulky inefficient muscling. Just as there are over 80 different horse breeds there are also different types of llamas.



Llama conformation is something often talked about but its hard to find strong guidelines as to what type suits a particular need. Given straight enough legs and top line and good general conformation, where do we go from there? I have tried to answer this question with my Ten Llama Selection Guidelines and Ten identifiable Llama Structural Types. In my opinion, learning what works mechanically in a llama or any kind of animal or machine has to be learned in the field by testing and trial and error. There is no other way.

Certainly, there are many reasons to have llamas other than to pack with them. Historically their primary use was and is as a pack animal. One way to determine ideal structure is by testing llamas by working with them in the mountains. Long wool certainly should not deter a llama from being used as a packer. Fancy llamas can be packers too but they need adequate structure to perform adequately. Neither will a large llama be good just because he is big. The bigger the llama is, the more critical the structure because of the extra mass he is carrying. One of the biggest pitfalls I have been through is buying llamas just because they are large. I've owned several llamas over 500 pounds and today I wouldn't give you a nickel for them. I have certainly seen many long wooled llamas that fit the requirements for a pack animal. I have also had many big llamas that were big heavy slugs.

Llamas are worth owning just to have and are wonderful to have around. They fit the bill much better for a suburban farm than larger livestock because they are quiet, safe and inexpensive to care for. If you keep in mind the ideal llama types and establish breeding goals your llamas will be healthier, happier and be worth much more in the future. If you want to raise fancy llamas for show be aware that wool is desirable on the neck and legs with some color variations and blood lines bringing higher dollars. While you're looking for wool, keep in mind the ideal structural types detailed below.

## **Guidelines**

### **1. Llamas should be over X inches at the withers.**

To develop a long stride and get over logs and not continually be snagging packs on downfalls llamas should be over X inches at the withers (shoulder). I have chosen 43" as the magic number to assure an adequate performance. Certainly there are good pack llamas under this number.

### **2. Llamas should have longer legs than depth of body. Deep wide bodies are not a plus.**

Short legged llamas don't have a chance of keeping up. Deep bodies limit limb movement and add unnecessary weight. I quote Murray Fowler DVM, "Natural pacers, such as camelids, have relatively long legs. This allows the animal to develop a long stride." It is this long stride that allows the good packer to work efficiently.

**3. Llamas should have a level topline. It is common, but not desirable, for a llama to be lower at the shoulder than the hips.**

Llamas that are excessively short in the front legs have a difficult time negotiating down hill trails with a load. Longer legs in the front are a distinct advantage which allows him to develop a longer stride. Mules are higher in the withers than the hips which give them a noticeable advantage over horses in the mountains. Some wild animals such as wolves and mountain goats are noticeably higher in the shoulders. It follows that llamas should not be lower in the shoulders compared to their hips.

**4. Llamas should be under six inches between the forelegs. It is an obvious disadvantage for the llama to be wide between their front legs because of their natural pacing gait.**

Llamas that are wide in front usually have weak shoulders or just a big wide body that produces a weak and waddly gait.

**5. Llamas should have a narrow to medium width frame.**

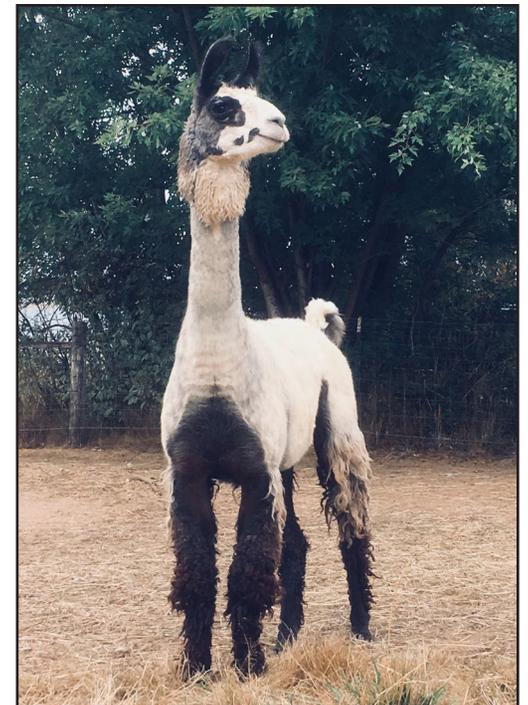
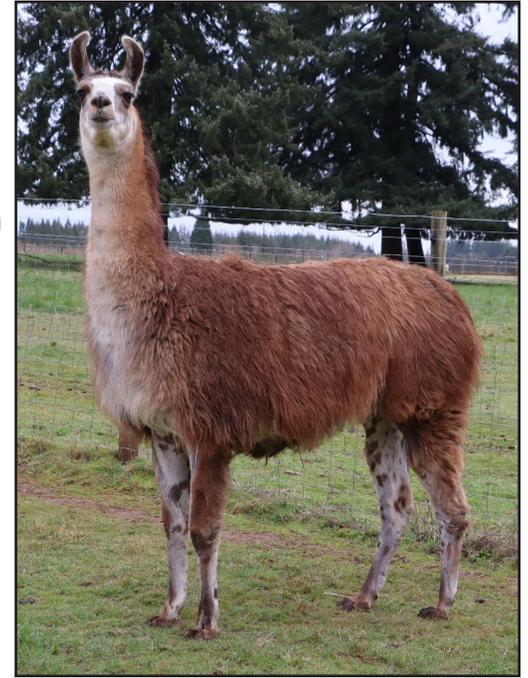
There is no functional advantage for a llama to have a wide body and it means he is packing extra bulk that will bog him down, shortening his endurance and causing a waddly inefficient gait.

**6. Llamas need evident chest muscling to tie their forelegs to the chest.**

Chest muscling is a well recognized necessity in horse breeding. Good chest muscles complete the shoulder attachment and keeps these tissues from sagging and getting fibrous, stiff and sore.

**7. Llamas should not be gelded before 1.5 years. Its preferable to wait until their fighting teeth are fully mature (around three).**

Many llamas gelded early get sore and stiff joints and develop lameness. I've seen it many times and don't care to buy a llama gelded too young.



**8. Llamas should have a long free stride with their front legs in order to have endurance on the trail.**

Avoid llamas that have a short stride in the front end and often need to trot to keep up with a normal pace. This forces the animal to work harder than necessary and they will tire quickly on the trail.

**9. Llamas must have good general conformation with strong ankles (pasterns).**

Weak pasterns is a common failing in llamas. Watch them when they walk and trot and make sure their ankles do not have a spongy weak action.

**10. Llamas should be under X pounds. Extra weight is a disadvantage for pack animals not a plus. Bragging about a llamas weight does not indicate that he or she is an excellent packer.**

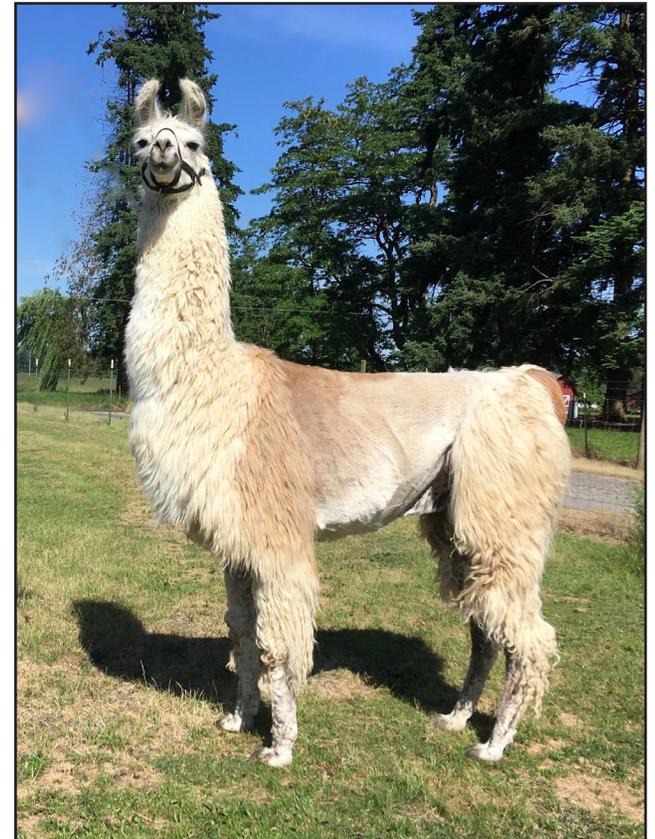
A small obese llama can easily weigh over four hundred pounds. A llama's weight needs to correspond with its height and build. My personal goal is to keep all llamas under four hundred pounds. I own a 49" llama that will pack 110 pounds and weighs about 340 pounds. I have also owned several llamas over 500 pounds that could not keep up on the trail even without a load.



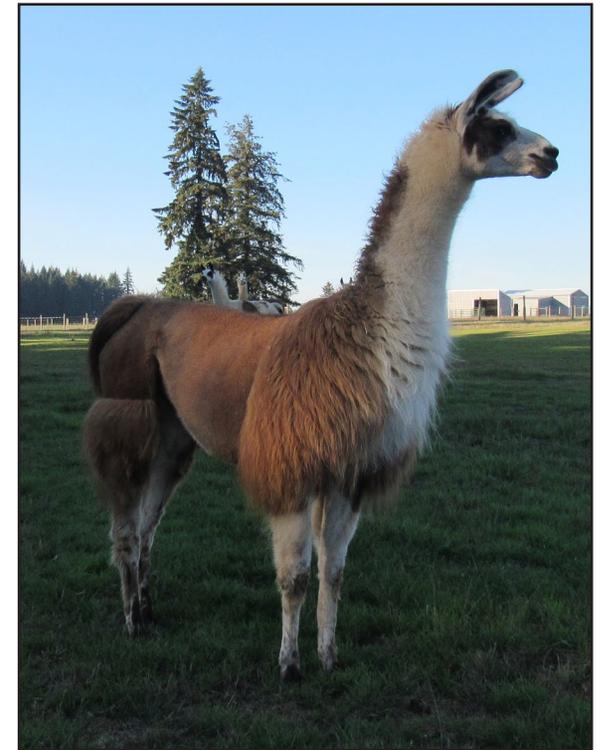
## **Llama structural types**

### **Ideal Types**

1. Tall Narrow frame, long legs, medium bone, medium length back, chest muscling evident. Tall llamas must have a shorter back proportionally than medium sized types.
2. Full Sized Big bone, but narrow frame and excellent ground clearance. Medium length back.



3. Muscle llama, Medium width frame, big bone, big muscling with good ground clearance and medium length back.
4. Medium Narrow frame, medium height, a lot of ground clearance, medium bone but longer back.
5. Compact Shorter wither height, medium to large bone, longer legs than depth of girth. Can be big muscled and wider proportionally between the front legs and still be light, athletic and have good endurance. Many of the good compact llamas fall into the medium llama type too and do well in the mountains. The shorter llamas are limited in the weight they can pack but do well if they are structured as outlined here.



### **Undesirable Types**

6. Tall weakling - Chest muscling not evident, tall and skinny, may have been gelded early. It is easy to mistake this type for the Tall ideal type.
7. Bulldog - Deep body, wide body, long body with short legs and neck. Big bone.
8. Duckwalker - Wide body, wide between front legs, waddling gait and weak shoulders.
9. Long Back - Long saggy weak back
10. Heavyweight Giant llama - deep and long bodied, labored stride, wide body, obese.

## Summary

All llamas come in variations of these ten distinct body types. The distinctive type recognition is important because of how the change in one of the elements of structure will affect another. For instance, a taller llama should have a medium length back, but a small or medium sized llama will be structurally sound with a proportionally longer back because shorter limbs lessens the stress on the lumbar area. Observe in nature that animals like alligators and badgers have longer backs in combination with shorter legs. Giraffes, on the other hand, have very long legs and short backs. These various animals function well because their mechanics are correct for their structure.

There are ins and outs to selecting a llama, but it is not as complicated as it seems. Keep in mind the structure guidelines and watch your animal move. If the llama moves effortlessly it will most likely have what it needs mechanically. Movement and function are the result of excellent structure. If you have experienced dragging a llama up the trail a few miles, you quickly become a connoisseur of structure and function. When breeding for show it is hard to bypass beauty for a slight structural defect. The ultimate goal in llama raising is to have beauty and function. This is a tough order to fill but I believe it is possible and can be an attainable goal.

## Photos:

Charmaign, Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch

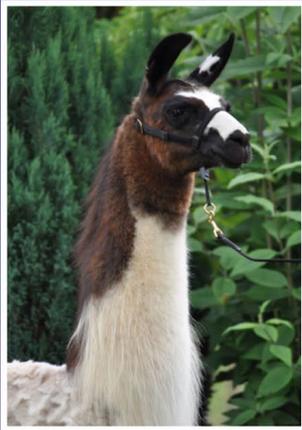
GNLC Switchfoot, Volcano View Ranch

Undeniable, Volcano View Ranch

Linda's Crown Jewel, Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch

THE ULTIMATE GOAL  
IN LLAMA RAISING IS  
TO HAVE BEAUTY AND  
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TOUGH ORDER TO FILL  
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# Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch



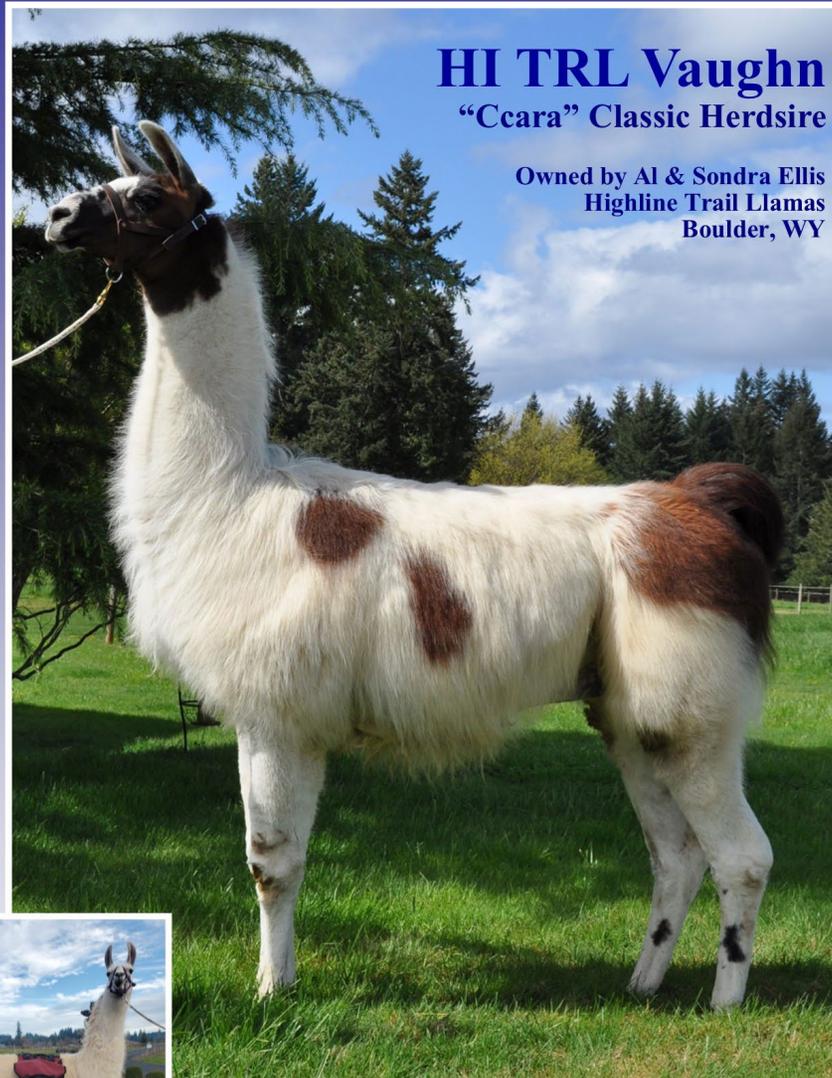
*HOLR Shayla (F)*



*HOLR Sgt. Pepper (M)*



*HOLR Maverick (M)*



**HI TRL Vaughn**  
"Ccara" Classic Herdsire

Owned by Al & Sondra Ellis  
Highline Trail Llamas  
Boulder, WY



*HOLR Evaughna (F)*



*HOLR Jasper (M)*



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# R&G ACRES

AN INTERVIEW AND FARM TOUR WITH RON AND GAIL WILKINSON

BY KYLE MUMFORD



R&G Acres is located in the birthplace of the US llama phenomena, Central Oregon. Ron and Gail Wilkinson have called Bend home since 1998, and have owned llamas for more than twenty years. After buying their first llama as a guard for their renowned Montadale sheep program, they were hooked on these special animals, and soon after found themselves breeding and entering shows. Ron and Gail are active members of the Central Oregon Llama Association, an organization for which Ron has served several terms as President. Ron has also served on the Board of Directors for the ILR, including three terms as President. We traveled to interview Ron and Gail about their journey in the llama industry in October of 2020.

**“WE’VE ALWAYS HAD OUR ANIMALS AND EDUCATION. THOSE ARE OUR TWO PASSIONS.”**

Gail Wilkinson said these words a few minutes into our interview, and I couldn’t possibly think of a better way to start this article. Ron grew up in the 4-H and FFA programs raising a variety of livestock. After they were married, Ron and Gail had one of the top Montadale Sheep programs for thirty years, as they moved their farm and family around the Northwest following their other passion, education. They purchased their first llama more than twenty years ago, and llamas have played an increasingly important role in their lives ever since.

Between the two of them, Ron and Gail have 75 years of service in public education. Ron started as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. He was excited to share about how he grew the FFA program at his first teaching job decades ago. He took a struggling program with a handful of members and made a thriving organization more than a hundred members strong, with most of the student body leadership taking part. Ron’s career was a long, winding journey that culminated with him serving seven years as the superintendent of Bend-La Pine School District.



Gail's chosen career was also in education, but her passion was for younger elementary school students, as she primarily taught kindergarten and first grade for the entirety of her career. She mentioned the joy she got from teaching students to read throughout the interview. Gail continues to use her favorite story books, collected from years of teaching, as decorations in the Wilkinsons' home, swapping them out with the seasons.

The word "education" may not be sufficient to describe the lifelong passion of Ron and Gail Wilkinson. Some readers may be envisioning a bland history lecture or a multiplication worksheet. That really does not do justice to the interests of Ron and Gail. I would suggest something like the following definition for the word "education" when you are talking to the Wilkinsons:

*Education:* Improving and enriching the lives of individuals by giving them access to knowledge and experiences.

### **"I Tried Not to Like a Farmer!"**

Ron and Gail both grew up in the 4-H program. They met at a 4-H leadership function when Ron was a Junior and Gail was a Freshman. Gail said, "I was in knitting, and Ron was in every livestock group. My girlfriends and I didn't know any of the other people and so we were just going for fun. I saw this guy that went from group to group to group and everybody seemed to know him and he got every group laughing."

At that time raising livestock was already one of Ron's passions. Ron said, "In 4-H I was in sheep and dairy livestock projects, plus forestry, cooking, woodworking, and entomology. But when I got into high school and started in FFA, I added swine and beef enterprises too. So yeah, you could say I had interest in all livestock."

Gail, on the other hand, was not particularly interested in livestock at that time. Ron summarized Gail's livestock experience before they met, "Her family went to the State Fair every year. Her parents thought that it would be good for the kids to go through the barns, so Gail would reluctantly plug her nose and rush through the barn so that she did her duty. She definitely was not a livestock person." After she met Ron at the 4-H event, she found herself in the barns at the fairs more frequently. Ron continued, "Her friends couldn't believe that she wanted to go to the barns at the fairgrounds, but she found somebody she wanted to see."

Gail laughed as she added, "I tried not to like a farmer! I really tried." Gail told us that she finds the llamas much more enjoyable to keep than their previous sheep endeavors, though she loved watching their three kids showing sheep in 4-H.

"IN 4-H I WAS IN SHEEP AND DAIRY LIVESTOCK PROJECTS... WHEN I GOT INTO HIGH SCHOOL AND STARTED IN FFA, I ADDED SWINE AND BEEF ENTERPRISES TOO. SO YEAH, YOU COULD SAY I HAD INTEREST IN ALL LIVESTOCK"

## “You Don’t Raise Kids in Town”

Gail talked us through their early years of marriage as they were getting their education careers off the ground, “We lived in town because we couldn’t afford land. When we got our teaching jobs we got a beautiful house, then Mandy (their first child) was born. While we’re still in the hospital, Ron goes, ‘Oh my gosh! We have to move to the country, we have a baby!’ We have this new beautiful house in town and I had done all the wallpaper and decorated her room.”

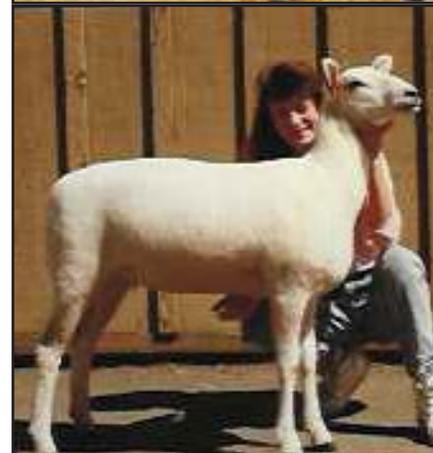
With a shrug and a smile Ron added, “You don’t raise kids in town.”

Gail continued, “At one week old, we have our baby and we’re out looking at property. Five months later we moved to our first farm.”

## Montadales

One of Ron’s brothers and his dad had been raising Montadale sheep for several years by the time Ron and Gail moved to the country. Ron sheared their sheep each year and was impressed by several of them, so he decided that Montadales would be the perfect project for their new little farm. They initially purchased a few ewes from Ron’s dad and a few from the leading Northwest breeder named Louis Schacht.

Ron and Gail quickly found themselves striving to produce the best Montadales in the country, “We went to Nationals in ‘77 and bought the National Champion yearling ram and two spectacular yearling ewes. We brought them back to Oregon and when we hit the first couple of shows everybody was really impressed with these big Montadales, bigger than they’d ever seen before. So when we got into Montadales we started with really good ones and therefore were very competitive from the beginning. We were Premier Breeder at Oregon State Fair at least ten years in a row. Over the years the R & G Montadale flock produced more than 15 national champions and reserve champions.



Ron quickly started organizing other Montadale breeders in the Northwest. Part of his work included starting the NW Montadales newsletter. Ron explained that he has always been driven to “try to find ways to include more people and connect them.”

Ron served on the National Montadale board for 27 years, including two terms as president. He said, “During that time we completely reorganized the National Montadale Association. When I joined the board, about 90% of the board lived within 200-300 miles of Springfield, Illinois, where the annual national show and sale was held. So we created a new structure with representation from across the country.”

One of Ron’s special accomplishments during their time in Montadales was starting the “Montadale Regeneration Project.” Montadales are one of few breeds developed in the United States, originally created by crossing Cheviot rams on Columbia ewes. After a few years the registry stopped accepting first generation crosses, and the foundation of the Montadale breed was set. The genetic base of Montadales shrunk over time as fads came and went and show winning bloodlines became popular and easily accessible. Ron came up with the idea of going back to the roots of the Montadale breed and creating new lines. With their friend and partner, George Murdock, the Wilkinsons purchased a group of Columbia ewes and a particularly long and meaty Cheviot ram and started the first approved regeneration project flock.

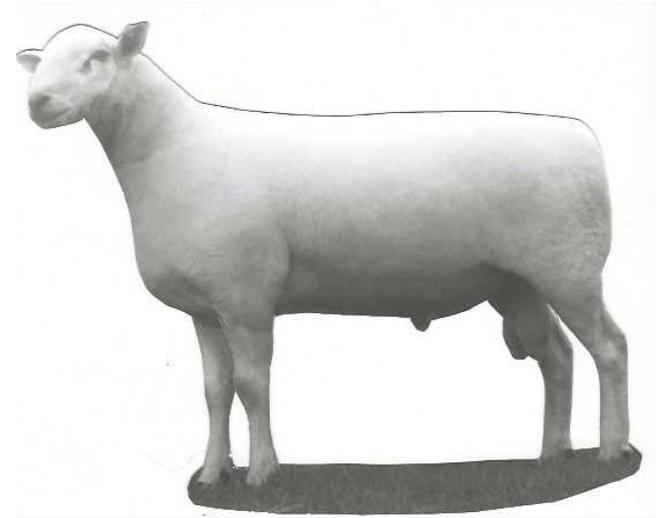
## Orange Express

Ron: We had several National Champions. Our first National Champion was Orange Express.

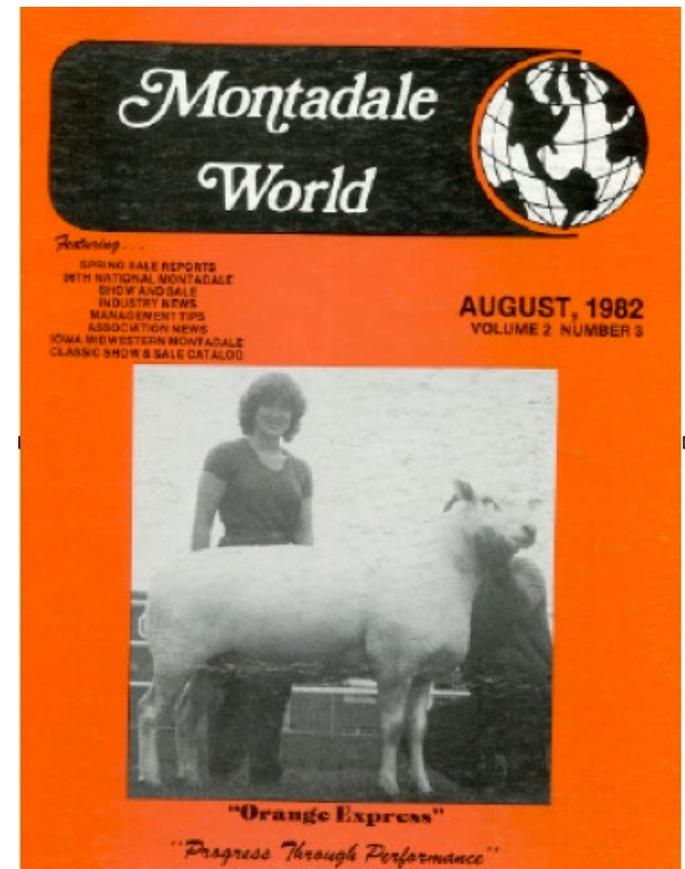
Gail: The Beaver Basketball team was called the Orange Express

Ron: That’s when the Beavers were number one in the nation. The radio announcer would say ‘The Orange Express is rolling!’

Gail: And we knew he was a great one; that he would do well. And he did.



Orange Express



## Lenny the Llama

In 1997, while the Wilkinsons were living in Walla Walla, Washington, they were having problems with predators attacking their prized sheep flock. Ron had heard a thing or two about guard llamas over the years, but never gave it serious thought. Then one day at a lamb auction, three llamas were also for sale. Ron jumped at the chance to purchase one for less than \$100. Gail named him Lenny the Llama, and he did an outstanding job protecting his charges.

Ron: "When we got Lenny I had heard that you should walk the new llama around the perimeter of the pasture to let him know his boundaries. So we did that and it was like the Pied Piper as the sheep lined up and followed him. It was the funniest thing I had ever seen."

Gail: "Single file, this long huge line."

Ron: "They immediately bonded. I didn't know anything about his history. But he was a great guard."

Gail: "Lenny did a good job. It was a miracle because we had been losing a lot of sheep."

Ron and Gail didn't know much about llamas when they bought Lenny. However, years prior, Ron had worked with someone who was getting started with llamas in the early '80s. Ron laughed as he shared a couple of items of misinformation he had picked up about llamas while his co-worker was learning the ropes, "I heard that they always had difficulty with birth, so you had to have a vet present every time they had babies. And you never sheared them because they would be embarrassed. If you wanted to take off any fiber you had to comb it out."

### "You get three in one!"

When the Wilkinsons moved to Bend in 1998, they brought Lenny and the Montadales with them. A few years later Lenny passed away and the Wilkinsons were on the hunt for a new guard llama. A friend of Ron's was helping a retiring llama breeder disperse their herd. Knowing they had recently lost Lenny, Ron's friend offered them one of the females and offered to breed her too. Ron had learned that it was best to have at least two llamas, so he started to look around in the



Lenny with Montadale Regeneration Project Lambs

classified ads of the local papers. It wasn't long before he came to Gail sharing a deal that was "too good" to pass up, "Gail this is a really good deal, you get three in one!" Soon after Ron was driving to pick up their newest bred female llama, and her daughter at side. Not long after that, another bred female from the classifieds joined the Wilkinsons' growing llama herd. Ron remembered, "All of a sudden we've got four llamas and three of them are bred, and I still don't know much about llamas."

Ron's coworker from years before, Jim Carpenter, had continued to raise llamas. Ron decided to give him a call and then made the short trip to Prineville, OR to visit Jim and his wife Sandy. The Carpenters had learned quite a bit of new and accurate information since Jim had shared those interesting theories with Ron years before. They spent the day with the Wilkinsons and sent them home with books and articles.

At the time of the Wilkinsons' visit, Jim Carpenter was experiencing some health problems, so he was considering reducing their herd. Within a few months of their informational visit, Ron and Gail would own the majority of the Carpenters herd, six breeding females and two breeding males. Ron and Gail Wilkinsons were now bonafide llama breeders, and they had a better idea how to raise the animals. However, they were still working out a direction for their program. "Now we've got more than ten llamas, and babies on the way, and I still don't have any real direction. We just knew that we liked them."



Among the Wilkinsons' first purchases was a silky male named Classic Front Page, who served as an early herdsire at R&G Acres

## A Focus on Utility

The Wilkinsons' llama herd was growing fast. They knew that they were growing fond of these interesting animals, but they still didn't know what they were going to do with all of these llamas. Coming from the sheep industry they expected fiber sales and products to be a viable use. Ron told us, "I went to my first COLA get-together and I said, 'So what do you guys do with your fiber?' and someone says, 'Oh I usually burn it.' And somebody else says, 'Oh I just haul it to the dump.' I'm standing there shocked."

Ron did some research and eventually got into contact with Larry McCool, the founder of the Pacific Northwest Llama Fiber Cooperative. The coop was just getting off the ground at that time. Today it is known as the Llama Fiber Coop of North America, with members from coast to coast. Ron and Gail joined when the organization was still in its infancy, and attended the group's second fiber sort. Ron invited Larry to speak to COLA members, and soon there was a big group of fiber coop members in Central Oregon. Ron and Gail hosted a fiber sort at their ranch, and have now done it twelve years in a row.



COLA Members at a recent fiber sort

## Central Oregon Llama Association

The arrival of one of their early llama purchases was not quite the lovely, humorous moment that they got when they introduced their first llama, Lenny, to their sheep herd. When they brought a female named Tattoo home they let her go, thinking she would find the other llamas. Instead she saw a stampede of sheep running toward her because they thought it was feeding time. Tattoo jumped the perimeter fence and took off running into a Bend residential neighborhood. Ron and Gail were unsuccessful in their attempts to find her and it was getting dark, so they contacted the authorities.

They were quickly told by the dispatcher that they had received a report of a loose llama and had contacted the Central Oregon Llama Association rescue number. A COLA member had caught Tattoo and taken her back to their house. Ron and Gail were extremely grateful as they picked up their frightened llama and made a donation to COLA's rescue fund. They soon found themselves attending COLA classes and functions. Within a couple of years Ron was asked to run for COLA's board, and he has been serving ever since, aside from a brief hiatus while he was Bend's school superintendent.

COLA is one of the country's oldest llama organizations, and they run one of the longest running llama shows every spring (the 32nd Annual COLA Festival is expected this May). I asked Ron and Gail about what makes their regional organization special. Gail told us that it helps that the group just seems to "like each other," and that they do fun things like go on hikes with their llamas. Ron emphasized that COLA members work together to help one another. In that spirit, Ron has helped organize group shearing and herd health days, where the COLA members bring their llamas to a central location. This saves the shearer and the vet a lot of time, and saves the llama owners money.

“My background is in livestock,” Ron said. “When we got started in llamas we knew that there had to be some utilitarian value to these animals. Getting the fiber going was a way of doing that. Then we started actually selecting more for fiber and really trying to produce outstanding fiber. We’ve had a fiber focus from pretty close to the very beginning.”

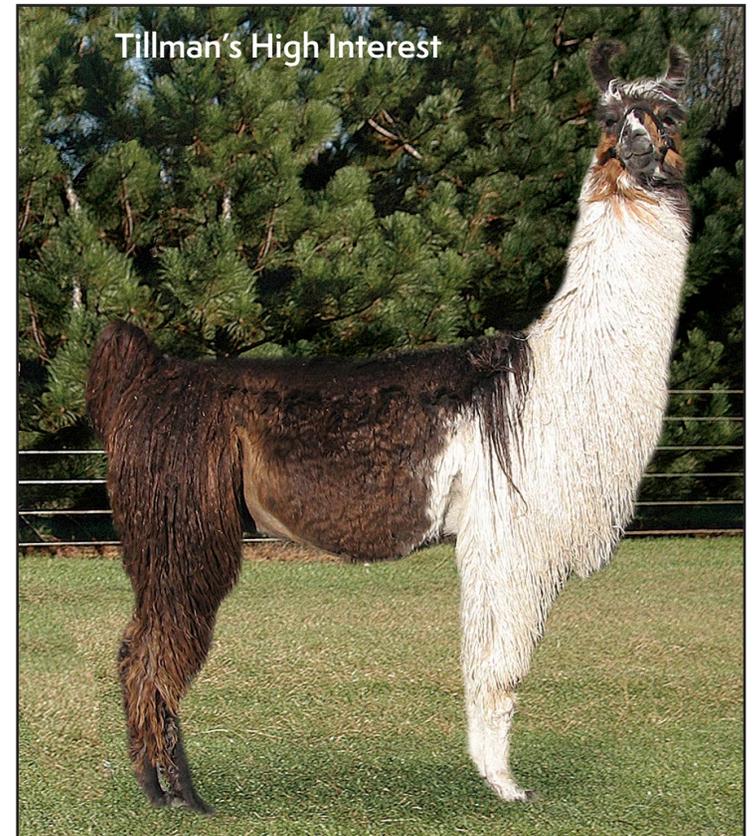
Gail added, “Lambs are so practical. We had lamb barbecues every year for family, friends and organizations. And that’s really why we wanted to be part of the fiber coop. To show people that llamas produce something, that there’s something practical about them too.”

As we all know, fiber is not the only use for llamas, Ron and Gail have tried to keep other llama uses in mind with their breeding decisions as well. “We’ve always thought of the utility end of the industry,” Ron said. “That’s part of why I think big, stretchy, athletic llamas are really cool. Because packing is one of their uses, though it’s not something we’re personally involved in. We’ve never really specialized in packers, but we still want to produce big, athletic llamas that provide that option to buyers because I think that’s an important use in the industry.”

## Suris

With their fiber focus in mind, the Wilkinsons set about adding to their herd. Ron and Gail quickly found themselves torn between two directions. On one hand they were drawn to the heavy woolled Argentine llamas that had been recently imported by Paul and Sally Taylor of Montana. Paul and Sally were having an online sale, and Ron said that he “practically had the sale catalog memorized.” The other llamas of interest were suris, which were quite popular in the llama industry at that time. The Wilkinsons went to Andy and Cheryl Tillman’s ranch in Bend, and the Tillmans helped to convince Ron and Gail to pursue suris. The Wilkinsons purchased half interest in a young Over Exposed son named Tillman’s High Interest.

While the Wilkinsons would eventually purchase a couple of suri females, they primarily bred High Interest to bigger bodied woolly llamas. Ron explained, “The trouble with the earlier suris is so many of them had poor conformation. Their tail heads dropped off at about a forty-five (degree angle). And the other big issue with a lot of the early suris was very fine bone.” Gail added that the early suris were also more high strung than the Wilkinsons like.

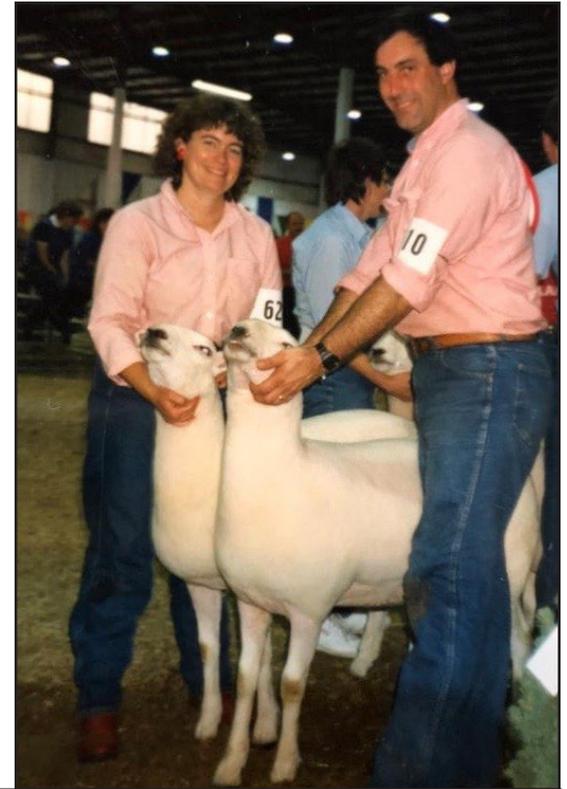


Ron noted that High Interest brought R&G Acres “some notoriety, particularly in the Northwest.” He produced a high percentage of suri offspring, usually with flashy markings. A reverse appaloosa son of High Interest, RGA Rocky, is a herdsire in the Grand Harvest Llama Company appaloosa program.

## Moving on from Montadales

In 2006, as the Wilkinsons were hitting their stride as llama breeders, they made the difficult decision to disperse their elite Montadale flock. Ron explained, "We had thirty great years in Montadales. We were at a point where my work made it really hard. Llamas are so much less work than sheep. We were kind of at a point where if we were going to get back on top in Montadales we were going to have to do some pretty serious redirection of our flock, and I just didn't have the time."

A common theme throughout Ron and Gail's story is that they don't do anything halfway. One of Gail's passions on the farm is gardening. The landscaping at R&G Acres is immaculate. Flowers can be seen in window boxes, decorative planters, in flower beds throughout the property, and in cute pots inside the house. Gail has claimed naming rights on all of the female crias, which are given names of various flowers and plants. Ron is the driving force behind why the Wilkinsons have 30 to 40 llamas instead of 2 or 3 llamas. If Ron joins an organization, it is statistically probable that he will end up on the board, be elected president, and work to improve the organization in some way. This all-or-nothing mantra made maintaining a top rate sheep program, building a competitive llama program, and continuing to pursue their education careers impossible for the Wilkinsons.



## Argentines

After several years breeding beautiful suris, Ron and Gail decided it was time to mix a new ingredient into their herd. Ron said, "We produced some really nice suris, but I wanted to get some more substance and definitely some more bone on our animals. At that point there was a lot of interest in Argentines in the Northwest. We had seen some great Argentines at shows and on farm visits, and thought they were exactly the type of llama we wanted to add to our program."

Ron felt it was important to mention that some breeders' visions of short, fuzzy Argentines don't match up with the type of animal they chose for their herd, and have been breeding in recent years. "When we started in the Argentines, we bought llamas from all across the country and we tried to find some of the best Argentines we could find," Ron said. "We selected for larger, longer necked Argentines that definitely exhibited the Argentine type. Some Argentines don't have the type, the characteristics that were selected for in the original Argentines imports. We were pretty picky on which ones we went with."

In the first few months of this endeavor they added several Argentine females from herds across the country and two males. Their first full Argentine male was a light brown proven male from the Abbotts in Montana, Argentine Acacio (ET). Their second was a young dark brown and white male named Argentine Lumberjack, from Courtnee and Robin Benson of Texas. Acacio was able to go to work in their breeding program immediately, adding bone and substance to the Wilkinsons suri and silky females. Lumberjack went into the show ring with tremendous success, winning two Best of Show awards and multiple championships at a young age.



## Turning Over the Herd

Late in 2015, when the Wilkinsons were about a year and a half into adding Argentine influence into their herd, they began a conversation with their friends Gene and Betty Moe about co-hosting the Argentine Impact Sale. The Moes had decided to reduce their herd, but Ron and Gail were still adding Argentines to their herd. The Wilkinsons consigned 13 animals, some of their early part-Argentine production, and a few of the females from their foundation herd bred to Argentine studs.

Ron explained, "From back in my sheep days I've gotten used to turning my herd over. At times we have let some great breeding females go to let someone else enjoy them too, and then we have room to keep one we raised or bring one in from another farm."

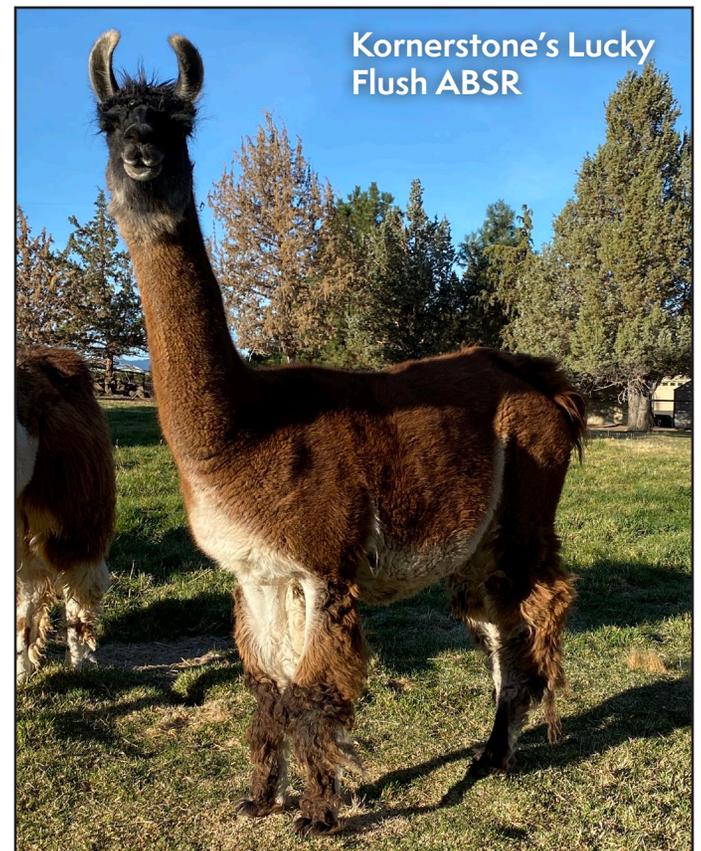
Gail added that it can be hard to let some of them go, but that it's an important part of being a breeder. She mentioned one particular animal that she still regrets parting with, but she emphasized that they have to err on the side of selling too many, not too few. "If we're going to have all these babies we have to sell some," Gail said. "We can't be collectors, we're breeders. If someone really wants that llama and they're going to love the llama, we need to share them."

The Argentine Impact sale is a perfect example of Ron and Gail strategically parting with animals so that they could improve their herd and advance their goals. They sold several animals from their foundation herd in that sale, but added four stunning animals in their place. The first was Argentine Mach One, who the Wilkinsons purchased half interest in prior to the sale. After the sale concluded they bought out the Moes' other half interest as well.

They also purchased Lot 2 in the sale, Kornerstone's Lucky Flush ABSR, who Ron had identified as perhaps the Moes' best producer. She had produced Mach's Macarena, by Mach One, so they felt strongly that adding her would give them a winning combination for years to come. She had also produced a son by Mach One and a daughter by Argentine Simpatico who were also in the sale. Lucky Flush sold with a two day old female cria at side, a full sister to Macarena. Amaryllis, as Gail later named her, has stayed in the Wilkinson herd. The Wilkinsons also purchased a yearling female, Simpatico's Pia Mia, who has grown into an outstanding producer.



Argentine Mach One



Kornerstone's Lucky  
Flush ABSR

As we toured R&G Acres in the Fall of 2020, the Argentine influence was on full display. But Ron and Gail haven't stopped turning over their herd as they continue to add new lines and try new combinations.

### **A Look Around R&G Acres**

Ron and Gail have called Bend, Oregon home since 1998. They have built their fences in a similar style to the Hinterland Ranch, and other Central Oregon Llama farms, with wood posts and top rail and no climb wire. A lovely wooden R&G Acres sign, framed by aspen trees, can be seen at the front entrance. Their front pasture has a big mound of lava rock, which Central Oregon is famous for, surrounded by beautiful irrigated pasture. They have one large barn, with several smaller outbuildings that allow them to separate their females into smaller groups, as well as separating studs, weanlings, and yearlings.

The Wilkinsons' lovely home is accented with Gail's beautiful flowers, some smaller trees around the lawn, and larger trees in the pastures. After we arrived we quickly made our way to the pastures to have a look around.



## Recent additions

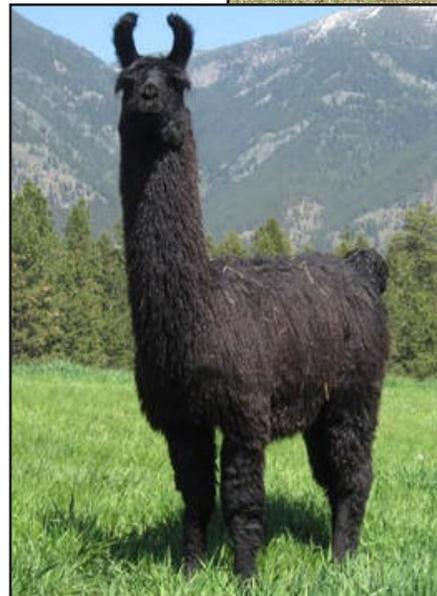
In recent years, Ron and Gail have added a few more part Argentines and several animals from the GNLC Merlin line. Their first Great Northern Ranch llama was GNLC Blackhawk, who they purchased from Steve and Sue Rolfing as a yearling. His sire is Maddix, and his dam is GNLC Davina, who is a full sister to Crocket and Hightower. He is a tall, striking male whose true black fiber does not bleach out in the Central Oregon sun. He paces the fence to keep an eye on the girls, but is interested in people and comes up for a visit as we walk near his pen. Ron told us that the Rolfings had several nice males for sale that year, and that Ron was initially drawn to one of the others. "Steve pretty much hand picked Blackhawk for me," Ron told us. "He said, 'This is the one you want'. And I thought, 'Ok, I'm not going to argue with him, he knows what he's talking about.'"

Ron explained his interest in adding GNLC animals to the RGA herd, "Part of my livestock background is knowing the value of bringing in a new bloodline. In sheep you talk about crossbreeding for hybrid vigor. In llamas we don't really have breeds, but when you have an established group like the Argentines, which are a fairly tightly clustered breeding group, they are as close to a breed as you're going to have in llamas. Likewise, the GNLC herd represents many years of careful breeding to produce a particular type and style. When you breed Argentines to another tight group like GNLC you are going to get hybrid vigor, the same thing that you get in crossbreeding other livestock. You get that bump in size and growth. I'm really excited about the results that we're getting with this strategy."

Blackhawk has been crossed primarily with Argentine females since he arrived, with great success. Three striking examples of this cross were on full display during our visit. Blackhawk seems to pass his athleticism onto his offspring, and the Argentine females add some bone and fiber coverage.



Above: Ron showing us Blackhawk in October 2020



Left: Blackhawk at Great Northern Ranch in 2016

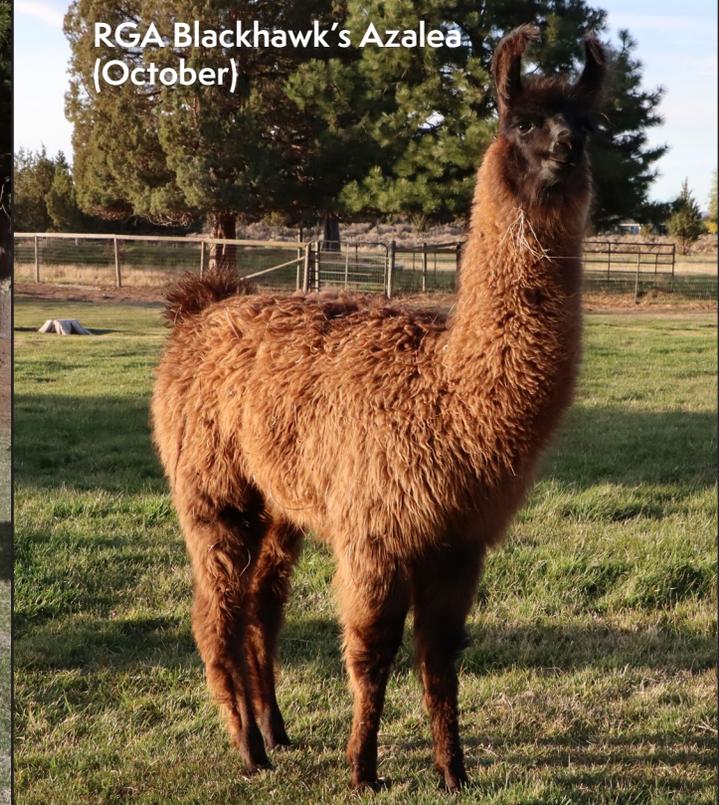
RGA Blackhawk's Tulip  
(October)



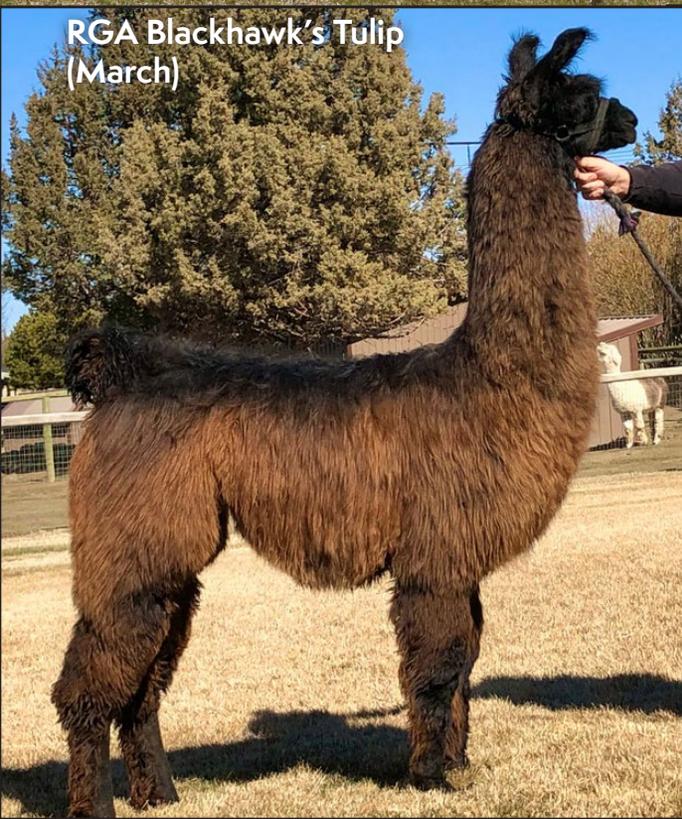
RGA Blackhawk's Sweet Pea Anni  
(October)



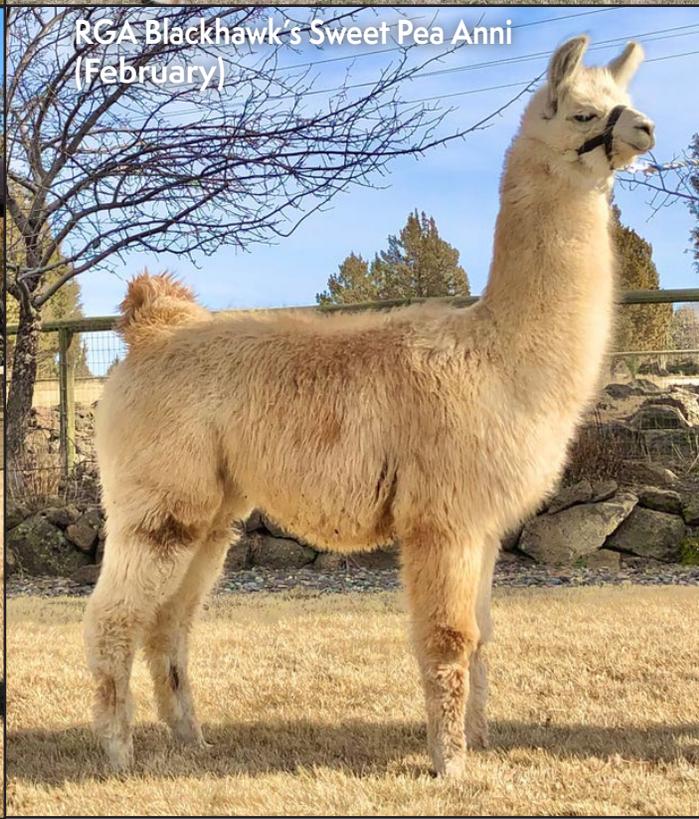
RGA Blackhawk's Azalea  
(October)



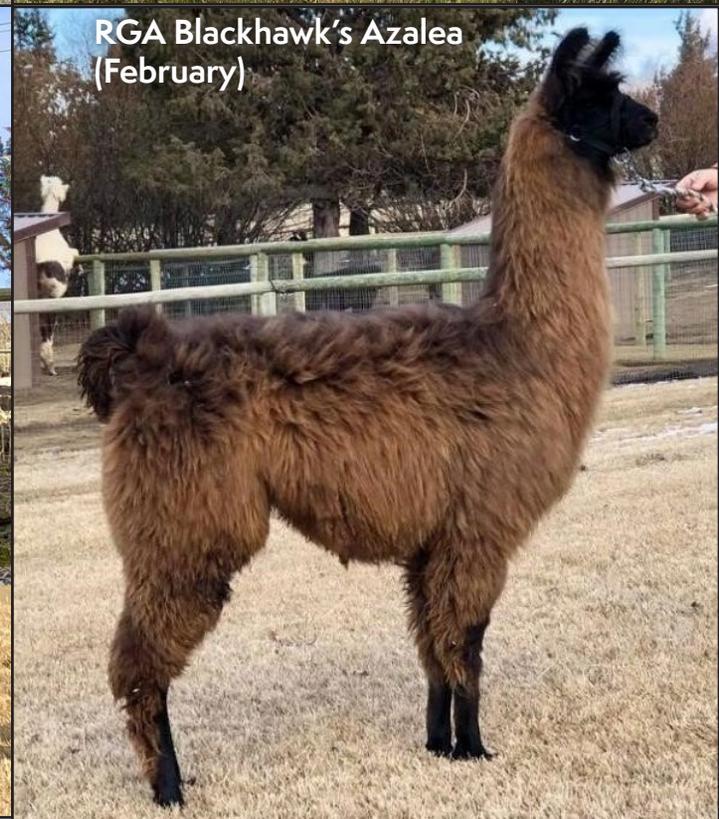
RGA Blackhawk's Tulip  
(March)



RGA Blackhawk's Sweet Pea Anni  
(February)



RGA Blackhawk's Azalea  
(February)



Since the arrival of Blackhawk, the Wilkinsons have also added several GNLC Merlin granddaughters. They purchased a Hightower daughter from the Rolings, two Crocket daughters from the Smiths, and, most recently, a Scorcher daughter from the Ciprianos. Two of these females produced stunning Mach One daughters in recent years, the pairing Ron had in mind when adding these females. RGA Mach's Mariposa is one of the most exotic llamas you will ever see, with abundant gray fiber and a calm disposition. But the star of our visit was RGA Mach's Iris Mirai, a daughter of Mach One and MSF Sterling Silver.



RGA Mach's Iris Mirai



RGA Mach's Mariposa

## Silver Stunners

We talked to Ron and Gail about their ideal llamas and an interesting exchange ensued:

Ron: I'm not sure that the perfect one is ever out there. No matter what you're raising.

Gail: Ron finds a fault with every one of them.

Ron: That's always been my goal, to produce the perfect one. I guess I've reached the point that I accept that every animal is probably going to have something you would change about it. I think you finally become a breeder when you can at least identify the faults. One of the first steps in being a breeder is being able to identify what you would change about an animal.

Gail listed MSF Sterling Silver as her favorite llama. Mark and Susan Smith offered this impressive Crocket daughter, out of a national champion female, at the 2018 MLM sale. Gail encouraged Ron to go after her and ultimately they were able to bring her home. Since then she has won several champions and Best of Shows, and has now shown herself to be an outstanding producer as well.

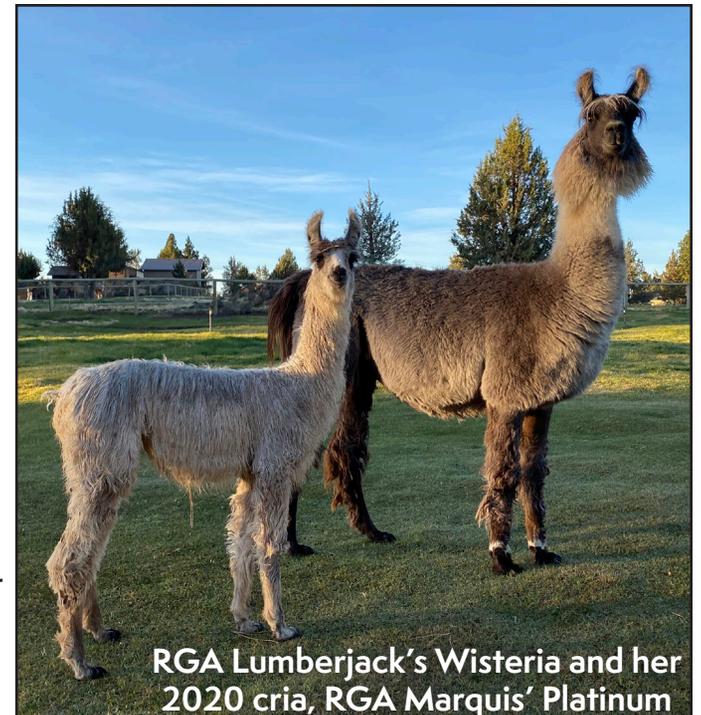
Ron took a few moments, weighing the strengths and weaknesses of a few animals, before he landed on RGA Lumberjack's Wisteria Ann as the closest animal to his ideal. Wisteria beat out Sterling Silver for Best of Show at one show, a moment that Gail remembered fondly. Wisteria's dam was also bred by the Wilkinsons, with her maternal grandmother being one of their early Tillman purchases. Wisteria's sire is Argentine Lumberjack.



Ron and Wisteria



Gail and Sterling Silver



RGA Lumberjack's Wisteria and her 2020 cria, RGA Marquis' Platinum

Ron described his ideal llama for us, "A structurally correct llama that's got great size and stretch, a neck that pops right up out of that shoulder junction, has bone, has substance, and a high tail setting. I'm probably more into substance than some people, I guess that's my livestock background. In the sheep when the industry went to those really extreme animals they didn't do a very good job of raising babies and thriving. I want a female that can feed her babies. I really like fiber coverage. I prefer a llama that has some structure to that fiber, some lock, plenty of luster, a single coated llama. We think the combinations we're putting together are working in terms of producing that, so we're pretty excited about it."

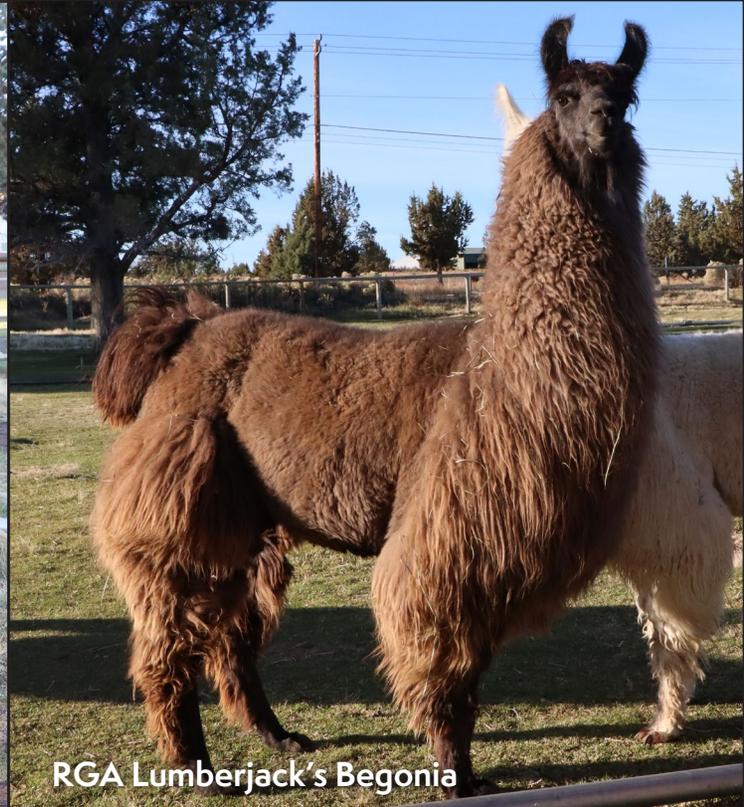




PH Lily



MSF Makaila



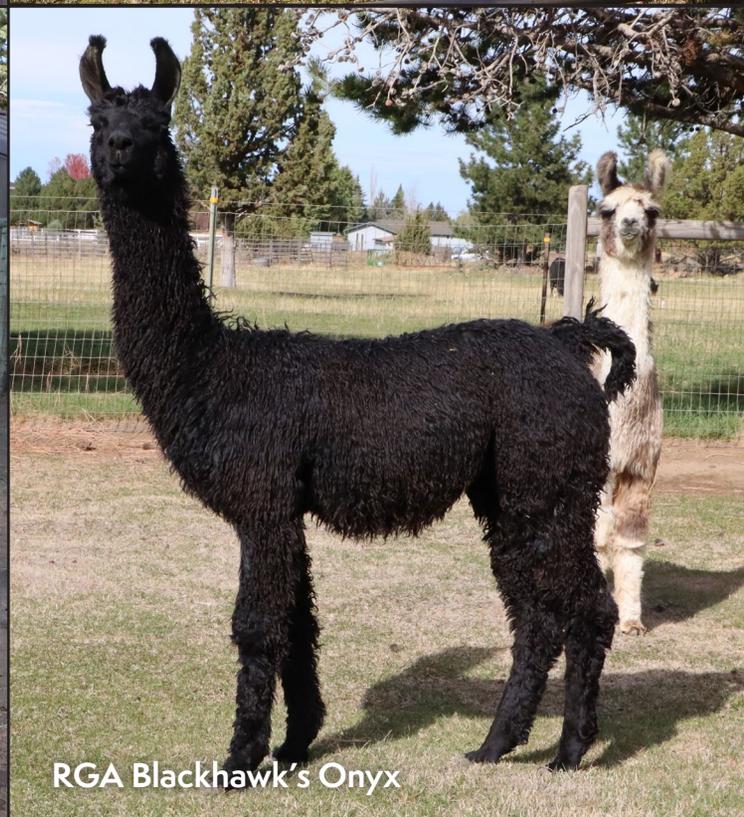
RGA Lumberjack's Begonia



Onyx and Granite



RGA Granite Man



RGA Blackhawk's Onyx

Ron went on to describe a few other traits that are also important to them, to a lesser degree, like a pretty head and interesting color patterns. Then we discussed personalities.

Ron: Personality is very important. In recent years we've done more selecting for animals that like people.

Gail: I like going out in your pasture and the llamas just hang around.

Ron: We like to be able to walk out and not have the llamas flee from us.

Gail: We have five grandkids and we want them to be able to enjoy them.

Ron: We're not big on treats, though. We've actually had some less than favorable experiences with animals from people who (give treats to) everything. As adults a lot of those ones that have been heavily treated as babies become really pushy. And when they weigh 300 or 400 pounds and are pushy...

Gail: I'm not very tall and I don't want to be around a big llama that's pushing into me.

Ron: So we don't want them pushy, but we do want an animal that likes people.



## The Boys

The Wilkinsons have three working herdsires at this time. GNLC Blackhawk, who we mentioned earlier, and two full Argentine males. Argentine Mach One continues to impress at 12 years of age. He is periodically sheared down the legs and up to the chin, but his lower legs and head show how much fiber this guy has. His head wool is reminiscent of his dam, Machi. His long neck and size are impressive for any llama, but particularly for a full Argentine. He continues to get his share of the Wilkinsons' female herd each spring, but he has now sired a quarter of their keeper females. Mach's Zenda and Mach's Macarena are two of my personal favorites. Mach One is the grandsire to two other RGA foundation females, McKenzie Lake Desert Zephyr, and our cover animal, Acacio's Zinnia Rose RGA. He sired an impressive female last summer, Iris Mirai, that may be destined to stay at R&G acres.

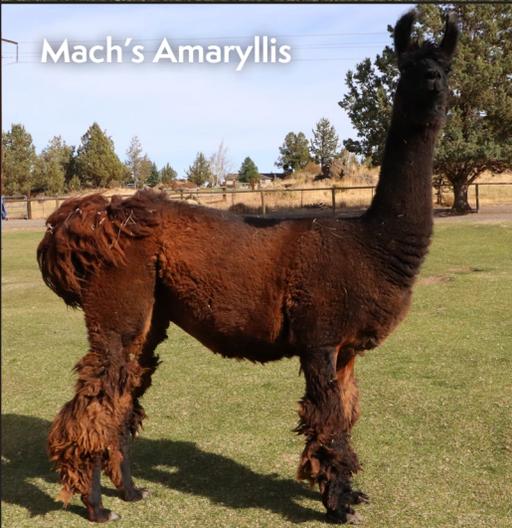




Mach's Zendaya



Mach's Macarena



Mach's Amaryllis



RGA Mach's Black Eyed Susan

Argentine Lumberjack is the other working sire at R&G Acres. Mach One has been more heavily advertised and has a bit more name recognition, but if you ask Ron and Gail which one of their Argentine males has been the better producer they will struggle to give you an answer. Lumberjack was too busy watching his females to pose for a picture so Ron haltered him up. He has not forgotten his show stance, as he stood at attention and perfectly square. Lumberjack has sired three keeper daughters for the Wilkinsons, and produced a striking paint female in 2020.





The Wilkinsons also have two promising young males. HOLR Vigilante's Armani, out of Acaisha. Armani was purchased in partnership with Rick and Mary Adams, but the Wilkinsons were recently given the opportunity to buy out the Adams' interest and own this promising male outright. "I'm very intrigued with what Armani can do," Ron said. "Obviously his dam is one of the unique special females in the breed and the industry. Vigilante, I think, has some beautiful fiber; I was very impressed with him when he sold. He is large with good fiber coverage and is an outcross to our Argentine females and our Merlin granddaughters. We're looking forward to seeing what he can do."

Their most recent male addition is a GNLC Crocket son, MSF Rolex. Ron told us that they weren't in a rush to add a new male, but that they were very impressed with the group of young males that the Smiths were promoting last summer. They had not been publicly offering Rolex for sale, but Ron decided that Rolex needed to come to Bend and was able to make it happen. Ron said, "The more I talked with Mark the more I knew Rolex was his pick of the group. He's out of Mark's absolute favorite female line. I happen to be a believer that you look at the female line when you're selecting studs. You're looking for animals that are going to produce that female again in the future. I guess that's something that comes from my livestock background."



Above: HOLR Vigilante's Armani

With Wild Oak Llamas' recent purchase of Armani's paternal brother, GNLC Dolomite, the Adams offered the Wilkinsons the opportunity to purchase their half of Armani. The Wilkinsons excitedly took them up on their offer.

Left: MSF Rolex

## More Time for Llamas

Ron and Gail both retired from their education careers in 2015, and have been enjoying more time with family, working on projects on the farm, and being with their llamas. Ron and Gail both wondered how they used to have time to fit everything in. Ron said that people used to ask them when they had time for their llamas, and he would respond, "Everybody has to do something between midnight and six!"

With some of his post-retirement spare time, Ron has served on the Board of Directors for the ILR the past five years, including three years as the BOD President. We asked Ron about his accomplishments during his time on the board. He shared that as he joined the BOD in 2015, the previous directors had just been through a very difficult period. Due to financial difficulties, they had sold the ILR's real estate holdings and laid off most of the staff. The staff went from a high of eleven employees, down to one part-time employee. Ron said, "Early on we were trying to get ourselves back on a really stable financial basis. We were very concerned each month about where we were financially, we don't spend near as much time worrying about that now."

Ron mentioned that the ILR Show Division was still fairly young at that time. Ron dug in and took a hard look at streamlining this young organization. Ron explained, "We simplified. We tried to consolidate where we needed to. We eliminated some of the committees that really weren't necessary." One of the committees that was eliminated was the Executive Committee, which had responsibilities that overlapped with the ILR BOD and the Show Division's Governing Board. They also eliminated the Guidelines committee and Finance committee, shifting the responsibilities to other groups.

Ron has also been a part of some reorganization in the broader llama community, with the Llama Futurity Association and the American Mini Llama Association merging with the ILR during his tenure. The biggest disappointment that Ron shared from his time on the ILR board is an inability to unify the ILR-SD and ALSA. "I think we're well overdue to reunite the llama industry," Ron said. "I understand some of the politics of why it was separated. It might have been the right answer at that time, but at this point in time we need to come together. We're not big enough to have competing show organizations."



Ron made efforts to unite the two organizations, but they ultimately fell short. He has wondered at times if unity could have been achieved if face-to-face meetings had been possible this past year. "It's going to take a group of people sitting down face to face and working through this stuff. Because you can't do all of that over the phone. It's going to take two or three people sitting down and actually drafting a specific proposal. And the proposal has to work for both organizations. It can't be 'your way' or 'my way,' it has to be both groups coming together. That's what I've done most of my life in different capacities, work to bring groups together. So I was hopeful that we'd be able to pull that off."

Ron shared that he does not plan to run for re-election this summer, "A five year term is a long time. We've got good people on the board that will keep it going, and I'm sure a great candidate will step up and take my place."

Aside from helping the ILR get on a more stable financial footing, Ron's most memorable accomplishment from his time on the ILR Board was starting the ILR youth scholarship. Ron told us, "Kids are the future of any organization in the long run. Giving young people a little encouragement and incentive for doing the right thing is great. We've had great kids apply."

Scholarships have become an important part of the Wilkinsons' education work since they retired. The ILR scholarship was one of three scholarships that they discussed during our interview with them, I would not be surprised at all if they are involved with more. They spoke about a vet tech scholarship started by the Central Oregon Llama Association, that Ron and Gail now help to facilitate and fundraise for. They also told us about a scholarship that was started from \$51,000 in Bend community member donations when Ron and Gail retired from the school district in 2015. The Ron & Gail Wilkinson Future Teacher Scholarship, started in honor of the Wilkinsons, supports future teachers throughout their teacher preparation programs. Gail was bursting with enthusiasm as she described the first winner that was selected for this award. One entrant amazed the panel of retired administrators that the Wilkinsons assembled to select the winner. One of the administrators commented that they wished they could hire her now, despite the fact that she didn't yet have a teaching degree. She was named the first recipient of the scholarship and Gail didn't reveal until afterwards that she taught this promising young graduating senior in first and second grade. Ron and Gail enjoyed discussing the career developments of their scholarship winners, who they try to meet with at least once a year. So far, eighteen different young people have benefited from one of their scholarships.

"I THINK WE'RE WELL OVERDUE TO REUNITE THE LLAMA INDUSTRY. I UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE POLITICS OF WHY IT WAS SEPARATED. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE RIGHT ANSWER AT THAT TIME, BUT AT THIS POINT IN TIME WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER."

## Combining their Passions

The Wilkinsons have used their llamas as a big part of their larger education mission. Ron held his annual get together for school administrators at the farm and Gail invited her students to visit the llamas each summer. Gail mentioned a couple of times how important it was to let kids who don't have a chance to grow up on a farm experience these unique animals. They both excitedly spoke about "Baby Days" at a local feed store, where a variety of livestock breeders bring young animals for the public to view. Gail told us that the operators always give them a call before scheduling to make sure several Central Oregon llama breeders are able to attend.

The Central Oregon Llama Field Day is another example of the Wilkinsons combining their passions for education and animals. The Llama Field Day is an exciting community event organized by the Central Oregon Llama Association, and hosted by Rick and Mary Adams of Wild Oak Llamas in 2018 and 2019. Ron and Gail mentioned that this event was something they had been dreaming about doing for several years, but they had trouble finding the right location for it. Ron and Gail helped the Adams find a house in Bend a few years ago, and Ron joked that he was also helping to find a perfect location for this community education event. After giving them an appropriate amount of time to settle in, Ron and Gail pitched the idea to the Adams. Hundreds of people have been able to enjoy llamas, alpacas, and even camels because of the combined efforts of Central Oregon llama enthusiasts. They plan to hold the event again this summer.



## Goals for the Industry

We asked Ron and Gail about their goals for the llama industry in the coming years. Gail said, "I think we need to get them out in the public more so people can appreciate them." She went on to talk about the importance of helping people get started with their first llamas, "We had a lot of people this year that just wanted two llamas for their small farms. You don't have to just be a showman to enjoy them."

Ron added, "Even though I personally love showing I realize not everybody does, not everybody needs to. One reason why I like showing is it's one way to get your animals out there for others to see. I think, whether you like showing or not, you need to be thinking about what you are doing to help others learn about llamas. Anybody can do that. There's so much public infatuation with llamas right now that it's a great opportunity to capture. We need to help people understand that they're not just a novelty, they are valuable productive animals".

## Goals for their Program

We also asked Ron and Gail about their goals for their own llama program in the coming years. Ron told us, "I think our goal at this point in time is to stick with the direction we're headed. We really like our female herd a lot, I don't think we're going to be buying as many going forward. I have taken a different mindset in the last two or three years on buying. I don't want to buy a female that's just a pretty good female; I want to buy an elite female that will help us take that next step in our program." Ron listed a few of their acquisitions in the last few years, Bella May RTC, MSF Sterling Silver, and McKenzie Lake Desert Zephyr, among others. "Those are very special females that are definitely helping to elevate our program rather than just expand it. So I'm very selective on buying anything right now. I won't say we are never going to buy another female because when the next sale comes out I'll probably want somebody in it."

Gail jumped in and said, "Every sale, Ron just studies and studies, and he finds a couple he really likes. And I say, 'I know they're wonderful, but we don't have unlimited money or space.'"

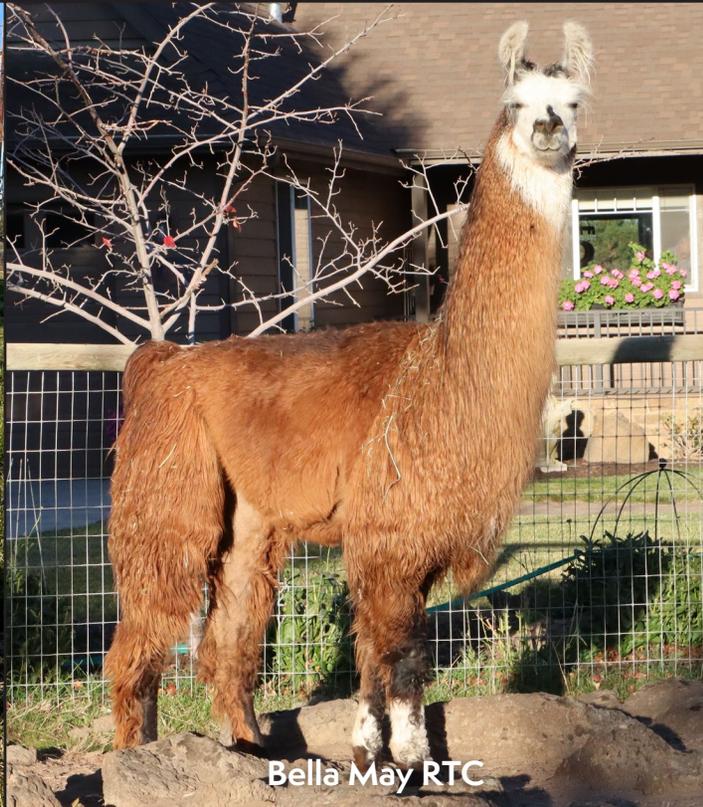
Ron mentioned that while he is always tempted to add new animals, another of his goals in the coming years is to tighten the genetic base of the RGA herd. Ron said, "I always look at all these great bloodlines out there and think, 'Oh we probably ought to get one of those.' When we started we kind of had one of this and one of that. What I really tried to do in the last three to four years is to get my herd tighter by focusing on a few families of animals. When your female herd is closely related you are able to introduce a new stud and find out pretty quickly whether he is going to make a difference. We did that in the sheep but it took a while to get there."



Ron with Armani



Mckenzie Lake Desert Zephyr RE



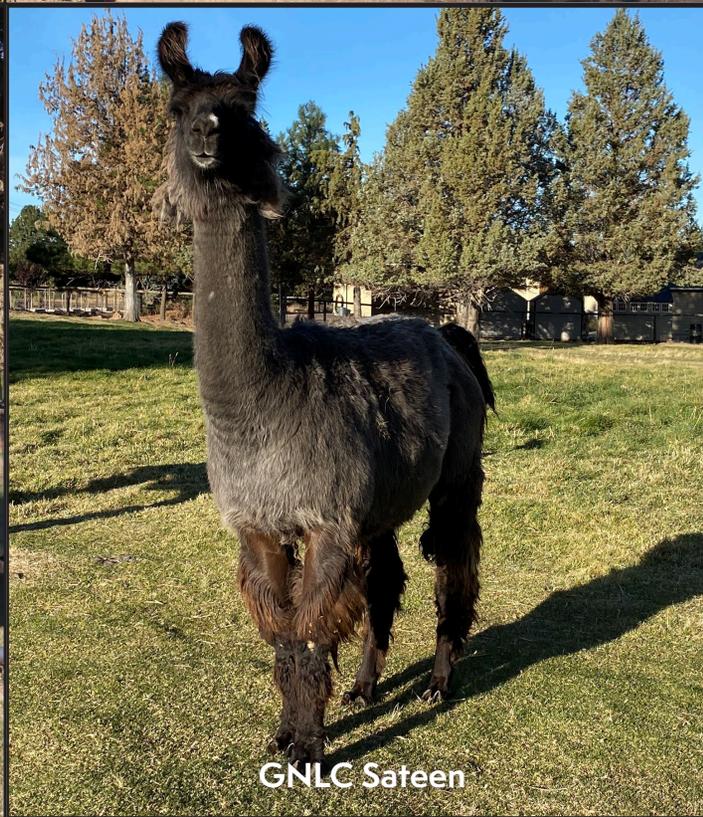
Bella May RTC



MSF Cora Belle



Aloha Remember Me



GNLC Sateen



Simpatico's Pia Mia

Gail went a different direction with her goals, “Just enjoy our place with our llamas. Have people keep coming and visiting, get them out there. I like seeing kids enjoy the big animals because not too many people get to live on farms anymore. Our grandkids, our oldest is 16 and our youngest is 4, only know this place. It’s really fun for them to come be with us and enjoy the llamas.”

### Wrapping Up

Going into our interview with the Wilkinsons we already knew them pretty well. We had shown alongside them for years, visited their farm several times, and spent quite a bit of time talking llamas. I thought it would be a struggle to look at their program with fresh eyes and take note of what would be interesting to others. Instead, I was amazed by the breeding theories Ron had that he had never shared with me, I was impressed by their investment in their community, and I came away with a deeper understanding of their commitment to education.

Ron was able to clearly articulate a breeding plan to us better than most breeders I speak to, but even more impressively there was a true connection between what he described and what we saw in the pasture. There were no animals that left me scratching my head wondering, “Why did they keep that one?” Which I think all breeders recognize is quite an accomplishment. Ron is a clear student of breeding, he clings tightly to the lessons learned raising livestock over a lifetime.



Amaryllis and Tulip



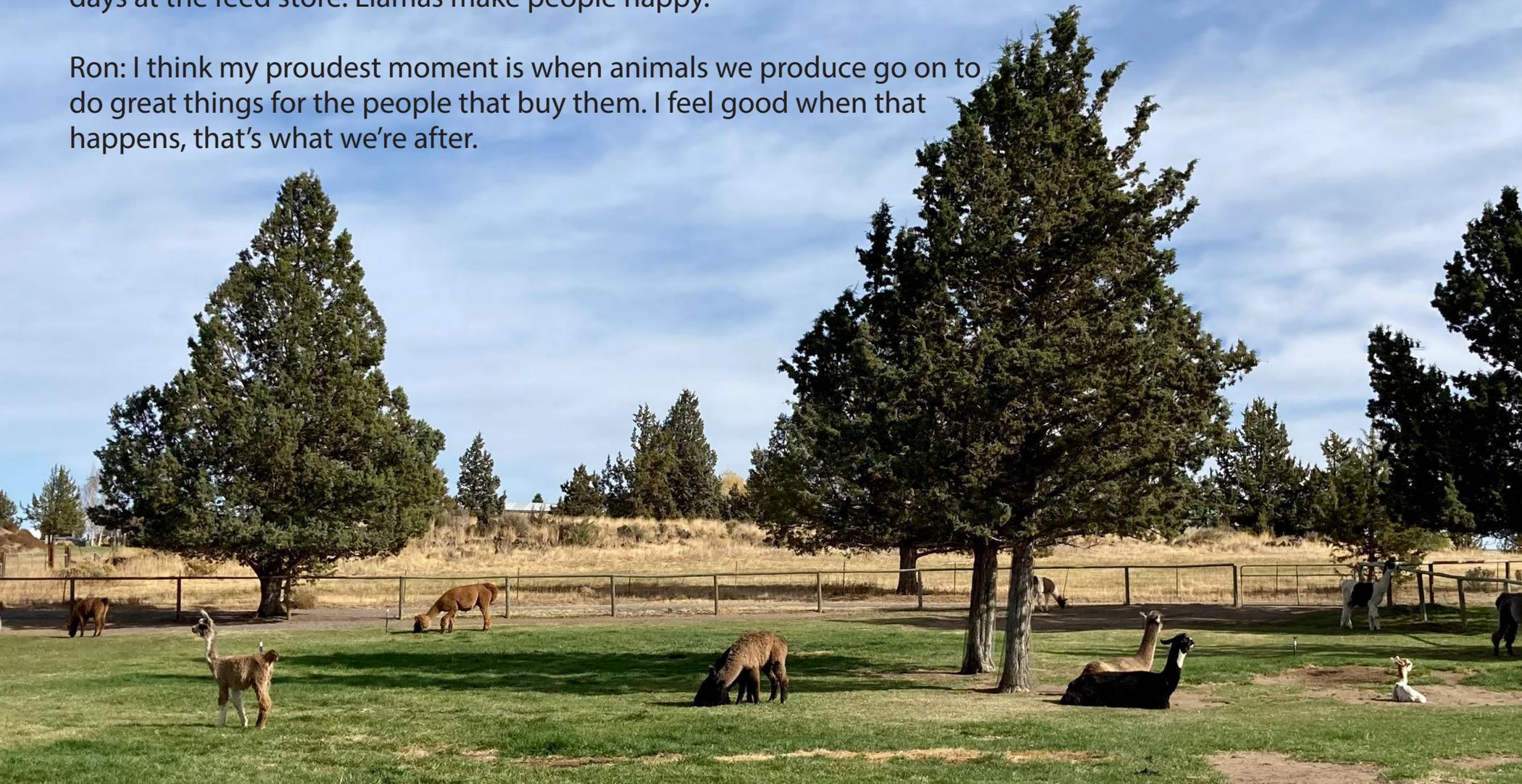
Primrose Mia

Ron and Gail Wilkinson breed outstanding llamas, but they are also tireless supporters of the llama industry and the people who raise them. They use their llamas, their gorgeous farm, and their wealth of experience in education to enrich the lives of their family, their community, and the llama industry.

We closed our interview asking Ron and Gail about their proudest llama related moment. They struggled for a bit trying to think of a show ring win or some other honor that stuck out above the rest. Eventually they landed on these perfect answers.

Gail: We just love it when non-llama people are enjoying our llamas. The field day, visits to the farm, baby days at the feed store. Llamas make people happy.

Ron: I think my proudest moment is when animals we produce go on to do great things for the people that buy them. I feel good when that happens, that's what we're after.



# WOL Chirí Tumalo

Offering his first crias at the  
Cascade Llama Sale, April 24th



## Wild Oak Llamas

Rick and Mary Adams

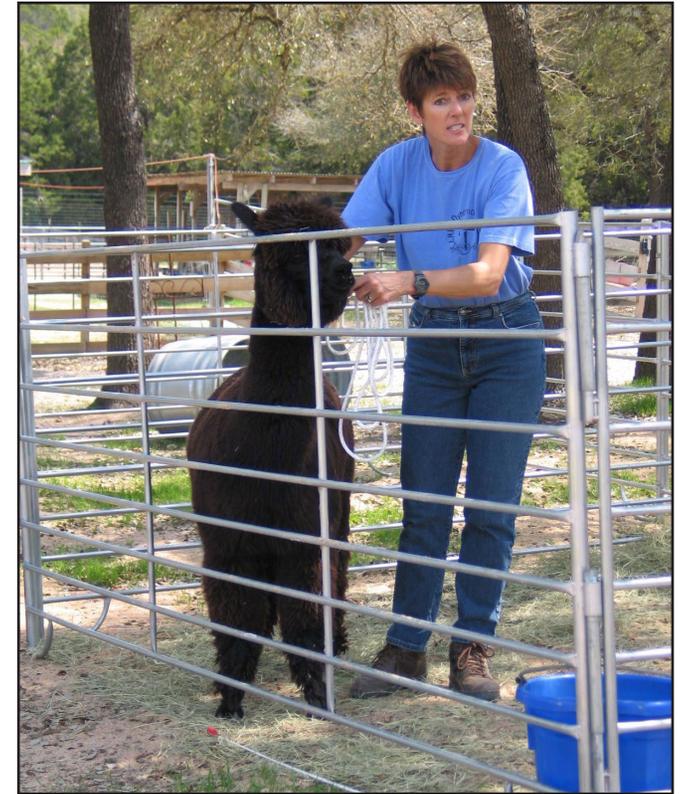
Bend, OR

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

# Llamas and Dogs

By Marty McGee Bennett

I have had dogs all of my life. I always thought I understood dogs and was good with them. I was wrong. My work with Linda Tellington-Jones (inventor of TTEAM and TTouch) and the evolution of my work with camelids has transformed the relationship I have with dogs. My dog Rocky\* seems so different from all the other dogs I have ever known; yet it is me who is different. Rocky is a seven-year-old golden retriever. Each day at about 4:30 we troop down to the dog park and meet up with Rocky's friends-whose people have become my friends. The dog park scene shares many elements of the camelid community camaraderie, information exchange, and problem solving. I have learned heaps about camelids by watching people and their dogs. I also realize that my work with camelids has given me insight into the problems people have with their dogs. Whether you have a dog or not the following techniques will help you with your llamas. If you have a dog you get two for one!



Camelids and dogs both crave balance. An animal in balance has self-carriage and self-control; he feels safer and is more tuned in with his human. Animals that are out of balance act out, don't think, and feel out of control. Mental physical and emotional balance is intertwined... affect one element negatively or positively and you affect all three. The physical manifestation of imbalance is pulling. Pulling is a universal problem with dog owners as well as llama owners. It is also a problem in both directions—both pulling ahead and lagging back. Whether you are pulling on your animal to come forward or pulling back to keep him from dragging you along, pulling sets up a resistant mental and physical, and emotional attitude. Extricating yourself from this cycle of resistance is a matter of adjusting the animal's balance. Adjusting an animal's balance means that you must truly communicate with your hands. It is much more than jerking randomly on the leash or lead.

\* I wrote the original version of this article a few years ago and have updated it periodically. Rocky has passed away now and we have two new dogs that have doubly reinforced the ideas in this article.

Manipulating balance effectively requires an understanding of what constitutes **contact** between a handler and animal. Contact is a connection with your animal through the leash or lead that does not change the animal's balance. When you have contact with your animal any signals you choose to give will be felt immediately. Contact is a connection. It is critical to your leading success that you have an understanding of contact and most importantly that you realize if you are one of the many people who unconsciously lead with a heavy hand. Leading with a heavy hand encourages the animal to use the lead or leash for balance. I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to test your hands by trying the following exercise with a human partner.

Put a long leash or rope (10 feet long or so) around the waist of a human partner. Establish what you think is contact. Now ask your partner to close his or her eyes. With contact your partner should be able to feel the slightest signal (subtle vibration on the rope) you offer with your hands and more importantly he or she will not be curling or gripping with the toes. If your partner cannot feel the signals you give, you do not have enough contact, if your partner is curling his/her toes you have a heavy hand. Adjust the connection with your human partner until you have CONTACT. This is the connection you will establish with your dog or llama.

Lets look first at llamas or dogs that won't come forward. Resistance is usually the result of two possible misunderstandings.

1. A lack of understanding... the animal simply doesn't know what is being asked. This would obviously be the case for a puppy or a weanling first learning to lead.
2. The animal may be frightened to come forward.

CONTACT IS A CONNECTION. IT IS CRITICAL TO YOUR LEADING SUCCESS THAT YOU HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONTACT... LEADING WITH A HEAVY HAND ENCOURAGES THE ANIMAL TO USE THE LEAD OR LEASH FOR BALANCE.

Approach resistance by pulling steadily and the dog or llama may learn to lie down, sit or simply get base-wide and put on the brakes. Pulling steadily causes the canine or camelid to stop thinking and resist instinctively. A steady pull allows and encourages the animal to use the leadrope or leash for balance as they throw their weight to the rear legs. If, on the other hand, the handler tugs and releases **completely** between tugs and the animal will only rock back and forth but never come forward. Un-sticking a stuck dog or llama is a matter of causing the animal to shift and ultimately lose his balance in the desired direction. A light pull on the lead, followed by a **PARTIAL** release is the key. Think of the signals you give with your hand as a ratcheting device that steadily but intermittently moves the animal's weight to the front until he must take a step or fall on his nose. I was thinking of how to describe this signal as I was getting my hair cut and it occurred to me that the device on a barber chair for raising the customer to the proper height is an apt comparison. As the operator pumps the chair the customer is elevated but not steadily—each pump provides a bit more up than down with the net effect of raising the an entire human being in the chair with only a small effort with the foot.

Remember to look at the llama's feet you can tell how well your signals are working to shift the weight. It is important to persist is giving the signals so that the animal comes to realize that the signals you apply to the head are actually intended for the feet. In the beginning it make take as many as ten to twelve signals to get your animal to take a step because you must physically shift the balance. Once the animal makes a connection between the signals and the foot, movement will result after one or two signals. Ironically many dogs and camelids walk politely on a lead but have no idea what a signal applied to the halter or collar actually means. Teaching an animal that a signal on the lead/leash has meaning will be useful for un-sticking your critter when he doesn't want to come forward. It will also be useful when it comes to slowing him down once he is walking with you.

What about the dog or llama that knows to come forward from a signal but is afraid? The easiest approach to fearful resistance and often all that is needed to solve the problem is Marty's potato rule. I am not a patient woman but I can always summon up thirty potatoes... one-potato, two potatoes, you get the idea. Your dog or llama may just need a few seconds to decide that the trailer or the vet's office or a doorway is a safe place to enter. Put slack

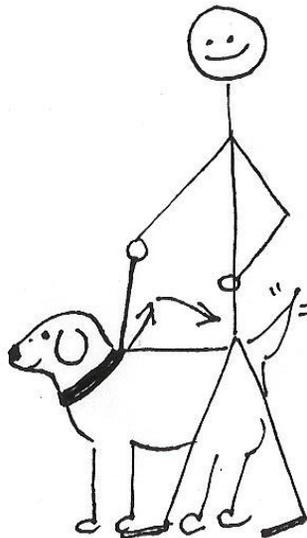


in the lead/leash and silently count to thirty potatoes and you will likely be rewarded with some forward movement. Resist the urge to offer verbal encouragement or repeated signals on the lead. You want your animal to concentrate on sorting out what he is afraid of. Signals and verbal encouragement become a distraction.

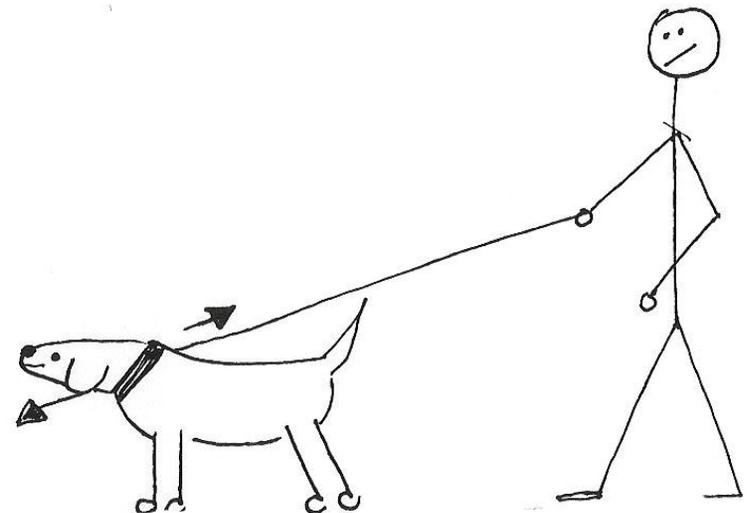
When it comes to pulling ahead dog owners use an amazing array of anti-pull devices some of which look like something from a medieval torture chamber. Many of these devices work by creating pain and or discomfort for the dog if he pulls. For most dogs a wide flat stiff collar is all that is needed to teach balance, but for some dogs, particularly large dogs that have practiced pulling a lot, a head collar is a great tool. A head collar offers the handler more leverage and control without pain and is a great way to solve pulling problems. Whether you are using a head collar or a collar around the neck, the re-balancing signals I describe are the same. Watch someone leading a dog that pulls. Look at where the dog's weight is...in general the dog is leaning out over his front legs to the point that if his person was not holding up his end of the bargain the dog would fall on his nose. Llamas that pull will lean their weight into the lead and push the head forward very much like a dog on a leash. The harder you hold or pull back the harder the animal pushes into the pressure. Ironically, holding back steadily is the same as pushing the accelerator.

How then does one stop the pulling if not by holding back? The idea is to get the animal to carry his weight and himself evenly on all four legs and learn to hold himself back despite a desire to charge forward to sniff, greet or fight—self-control. Teaching a dog or a camelid to walk politely in balance on a lead or leash has far reaching implication when it comes to other behavior. In addition to being annoying, pulling on a lead or leash increases aggression.

**With dog close to the handler  
an up and back signal  
transfers weight to the  
rear quarters.**



**With dog out front  
steady resistance  
encourages dog to pull.**



Correcting this imbalance isn't a just a matter of one big corrective jerk (to use the doggie vocabulary) to startle or hurt, appropriate signals will bring your animal companion into his own balance. Abrupt and powerful jerks only distract and frustrate the dog or camelid making the problem worse. In order to give subtle signals both the timing of the signal and its direction are important.

With dogs or camelids it is important to use an intermittent up and back signal rather than the more common straight back signal. Steady pressure back is a sure-fire way to turn on the pull response. When you lead your llama ,signal up and back and you will have maximum influence over your camelid's balance. Raising the head up and bringing the neck back brings the hindquarters under the animal, brings him into balance and slows him down. For you dog owners, the same physical principles apply. This is why it is easier and more quickly effective to teach your dog to walk in balance from a place beside your leg rather than out in front of you. With your dog close to you, your signal will naturally be more up than back.

In addition to the direction of the signal, it's timing is critical. This is where your understanding of contact really pays off. Notice when your animal is just beginning to use your lead or leash for balance and to make the correction as soon as you notice. Your aim is to stop the dog or camelid from ever using your lead or leash for balance. As soon as you begin to feel weight in your hand respond with one or two quick but light signals up and back. Make sure that you follow the signal with a total release and then resume contact. The strength of the signals depends on the size of your dog or camelid and how far behind you were in your correction. Noticing early when your camelid or dog is getting ahead or pulling allows you to correct with a softer, less distracting signal. Dogs and llamas, particularly young and inexperienced ones, will become distracted easily and begin to charge ahead. It is normal. Be prepared to remind your animal student regularly. If you are having trouble, double

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THE ACCELERATOR.

check that you are maintaining light contact rather than holding steadily back.

One final suggestion for leading is learning the balanced halt. Once you teach your dog or llama to walk with you in balance, you will want to stop in balance as well. There is more to a balanced halt than an up and back signal on the lead or leash and stopping. Most humans walking with their animals will decide to stop and do it as soon as they think it. A dog or llama walking forward will need a beat or two to feel a signal and react to it by stopping. If you stop as soon as you think of stopping, you will always be stopping before your animal. This doesn't present too much of a problem when going for a casual walk with your dog, but llama owners who do this in the show ring will find that their llamas will swing their bottoms to the outside and end up circling the handler. This is easily corrected by giving the signal but continuing to walk forward a step or two until your llama responds by stopping.

I attended obedience classes with my first golden retriever Molly McGee years ago, before I knew what a llama was. I used the choke collar and corrective jerk and my dog learned to cooperate eventually. Looking back I find it hard to believe that the word balance was never used. I realize now everything is a matter of balance and finesse not force.



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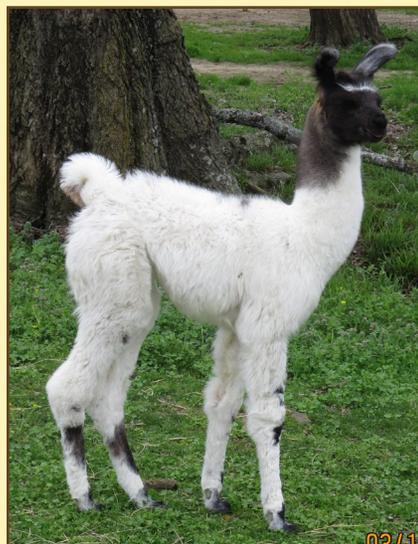
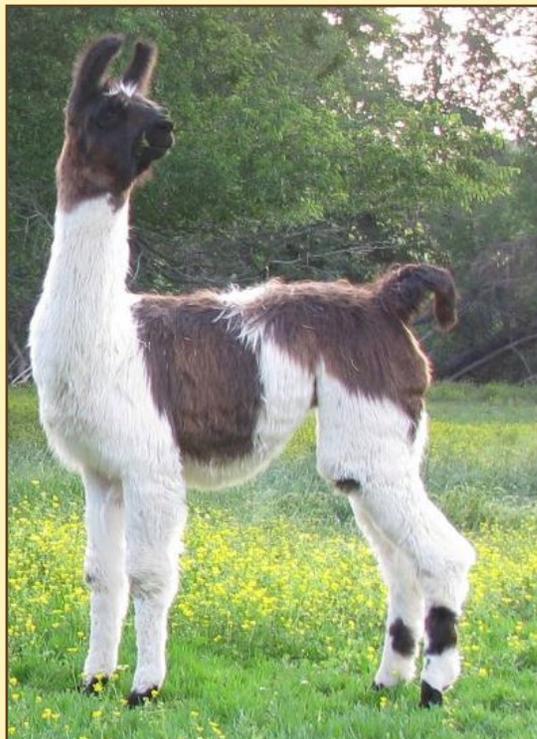
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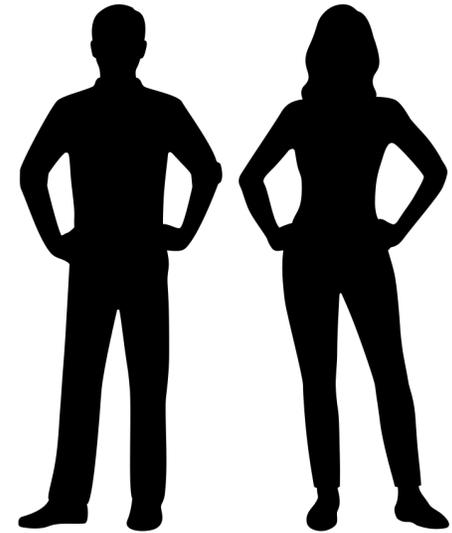
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# WILL YOU BE MY MENTOR?

MUSINGS ON MENTORSHIP AND THE FREQUENTLY GIVEN “FIND A MENTOR” ADVICE

BY KYLE MUMFORD



Among the most common advice I see given to new llama owners is some form of the following: “Find a mentor.” This tip is simultaneously the best advice that can be given, and also completely unhelpful. Experienced llama mentors don’t grow on trees, and even if they did, it’s not as simple as walking up to them and asking, “Will you be my mentor?” I was lucky enough to be born into the llama industry, so I don’t have experience diving in cold and looking for an experienced teacher to guide me. The most meaningful llama mentor to me growing up was my brother, Jacob. Jacob is 10 years older than I am; he was ramping up his breeding program when I was 11 or 12 years old. I joined him at ALSA shows and llama sales. He filled me in on what he knew already, and I was invited to go along with him as he learned more from other breeders and programs. I gained more from these experiences than I could ever hope to document.

As valuable as a mentor is, I must again say that you must have more of a plan for finding one than walking up to an experienced llama owner and asking, “Will you be my mentor?” I would argue that trying to get someone to formally agree to being your mentor is likely to be awkward and mostly meaningless. Instead, you should look to build a relationship with multiple llama owners. Build a network of people that you enjoy “talking llamas” with on a regular basis. Over time, one of them may stand above the rest, and they will become someone you can rely on during your llama journey.



Jacob (age 24 or 25) and Kyle (age 14 or 15)

As you start out I would recommend that you get involved with a community of llama owners, rather than trying to focus in on one perfect mentor. Good options for getting involved could include the following:

- Join a local organization
- Volunteer for or join a local 4-H club
- Volunteer at a show or event
- Facebook groups are another option. If you go this route plan to be an active participant, leave positive comments when people post pictures of their animals. Rather than leaving a comment like, "Beautiful!" Instead, comment something like, "I've noticed that all of your animals have great conformation and beautiful ears," which would be much more meaningful and memorable. The best option would be to use Facebook to connect with llama owners in your area to go on a hike or visit each other's farms.

Ideally you should find a llama owner or two who has several years of experience, and is knowledgeable, but humble enough to admit when they don't know the answer to a question. But don't limit yourself. Perhaps you will find someone who you enjoy being around, but only has a couple of years experience- learn with them! Maybe they will find a new friend with decades of llama experience, and they will end up mentoring you both. I mentioned that my brother Jacob was in his early 20s when I followed him around to ALSA shows and llama auctions. He ended up establishing a strong relationship with a friend and mentor named Stan Jacobs. Whenever Jacob visited Stan's ranch I was invited along, and suddenly I was learning from Stan too.

If you find the perfect unicorn of a potential mentor what do you do? Rather than asking them to be your mentor, ask yourself what you can bring to the table. If you email someone and ask them to be your mentor, you might not get a response. However, I don't know a llama owner that would turn down an email asking to help clean manure or repair fencing while talking llamas.

PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND  
SOMEONE WHO YOU ENJOY  
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HAS A COUPLE OF YEARS  
EXPERIENCE- LEARN  
WITH THEM! MAYBE THEY  
WILL FIND A NEW FRIEND  
WITH DECADES OF LLAMA  
EXPERIENCE, AND THEY  
WILL END UP MENTORING  
YOU BOTH.

Even though my mentor was my brother, I still brought some things to the table. I might have been invited to less shows if I hadn't offered to help with grooming animals. I would have missed out on llama chats at the farm if I hadn't been willing to help feed or work on projects.

If you only get one thing from this article it should be that the question, "Will you be my mentor?" is completely one sided. When I imagine someone asking me that question I am envisioning someone calling me if they have a veterinary problem or expecting me to drive to their house and deliver a monthly lecture on llama ownership. Instead, you should be planning to build a relationship with an actual human being. People generally like other people more when they add something to their life.

A few thoughts on how to get this more realistic version of a mentorship going:

- Volunteer to help on their farm. While it would be tempting to start by asking to help train babies, I would start with manure or other not fun chores. After you help clean the barn a couple of times ask if you can come to the next training session. You could even come with a list of questions in your pocket.
- Ask if you can help groom animals or clean up pens at a show.
- Invite them over for dinner to talk about your llama plans, or offer to take them to dinner
- Over time you could offer to farm sit when they are going on vacation. You will have a place in their heart forever, as a trusted farm sitter is as big of a dream scenario for an experienced llama owner as finding a mentor is for a new llama owner.

Another great way to find a mentor can be through the llama buying process. As we've interviewed breeders for the magazine, many of them mentioned the lessons they learned while buying llamas from experienced breeders. Llama breeders care a lot about their llamas and will care as much as you do about keeping them happy and healthy long after they have left their pastures. After you've bought your llama, you can use some of the ideas above to further develop the relationship, and potentially find yourself a mentor.

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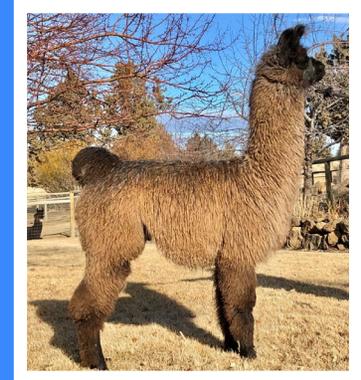


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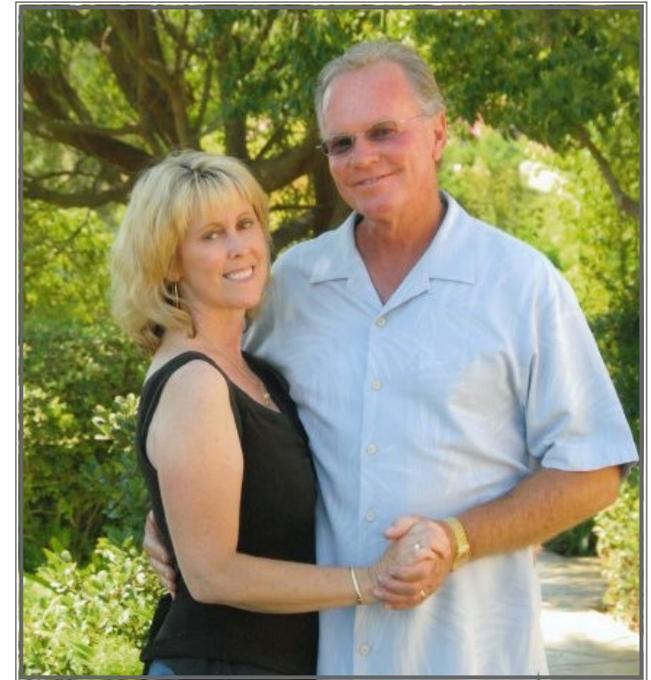
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AN INTERVIEW WITH  
TOM SIMMONS  
CO-FOUNDER OF CELEBRITY SALES

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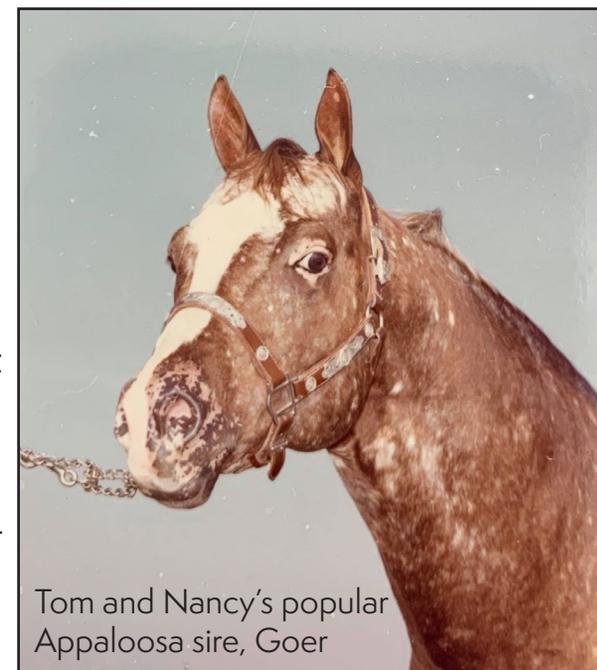
“HERITAGE PLACE HAS 1,000 SEATS AND THERE WAS NOT AN EMPTY SEAT, THERE WAS STANDING ROOM ONLY ABOUT 6 ROWS DEEP. THE WHOLE PLACE WAS JUST STUFFED AND IT WAS ELECTRIC, YOU COULD FEEL IT IN THE AIR.” - TOM SIMMONS

Celebrity Sales stood as the gold standard for llama auctions for more than 20 years, and it continues to be a pillar of the alpaca industry. From the very first sale in 1989 when record prices and averages were achieved, and much fun was had by all, llama owners were hooked and they kept coming back. Tom Simmons, one of the co-founders of Celebrity sales, spoke to us by phone in the summer of 2020.

Tom and Nancy Simmons, and their partners in Celebrity Sales Tim and Teresa Vincent, are a llama success story. As you flip through the old Celebrity Sale catalogs you can watch the llama business grow and change from the late 1980s to the late 2000s. Fads came and went: woollies, Chileans, Bolivians, Peruvians, suris, Argentines, and everything in between. Llamas sold from a few thousand dollars to \$175,000. Offspring of many legendary sires, bred by a number of storied breeders, walked across the Celebrity Sales stage. Tom Simmons was there for it all; promoting specific animals and breeders, advising new llama owners as they got into the business, and adding a great deal of fun to the llama industry.

Tom's livestock experience began with horses after buying his first few in the early 1960s. "From then on I was obsessed with learning everything I could about horse conformation," Tom remembered. "To learn conformation in horses is really difficult, but I put in the time talking to trainers, breeders and judges. I was in the horse business full time for over thirty years. During that time, we bred somewhere between 25 and 30 National and World Champion Appaloosas and also two World Champion Quarter Horses."

In addition to learning about conformation and how to evaluate quality in horses, Tom began buying, selling, and promoting horses. "I used to buy and sell a lot of mares. That was a big portion of our income. I would go to probably eight to ten auctions all over the country, and I would find the type of mares that crossed really well with my stud. We'd buy those and breed them. People would ship their mares to breed to our studs from as far away as the East coast. That gets really expensive, shipping them all that way twice, and boarding them. So (instead) people would often ask me if we had a bred mare for sale. I was constantly looking for really good mares that would cross well with my stud."



Tom and Nancy's popular Appaloosa sire, Goer

### **Forty Llama Farms**

Tom's interest in llamas started in the mid 1980s in the post office, of all places. "I was getting ready to fly back to Kansas," Tom remembered. "I walked into the post office, and I still remember the woman who worked there; her name was Jean. I said, 'What's all that ink I smell in there? You guys printing money or something?' She said, 'No, that's *Llamas Magazine*.' I said, 'Are you kidding me, I've never even seen a llama!'" Jean gave Tom a copy of the magazine for him to read on his plane ride. Jean told Tom that the publishers of the llama magazine, Bob and Cheryl Dal Porto, lived in their town. "So when I got back home, I drove over to their place and asked them a bunch of questions... I got a list of llama farms, and in the next month or two I went to forty llama farms. I had this quest to gather knowledge about llamas, to learn, 'What's the difference between a good one and a bad one?' and so on. I found that most people couldn't explain the difference from a livestock perspective; they just loved llamas."

### **The Only Game in Town**

Tom had been buying and selling animals at horse auctions for decades at this point, and had a horse auction company with his friend and mentor, Ron Kavanagh. Naturally, when he decided to add some llamas to his farm he started to ask about llama auctions, “Hartman’s was really the only game in town back then, so I went up to his sale in Grants Pass and saw the animals. At that time, because of the high demand and low supply of llamas, even the most common llama had a high value. If a llama was breathing and upright, it brought ten thousand dollars.” Tom had been used to top-of-the line horse auctions, and after seeing well-groomed llamas in *Llamas* magazine and visiting with llama breeders, he was caught off guard by the atmosphere of a Hartman sale. “My idea of doing an auction, and how I’d always done it in the past, was to have a really classy event. When I went to Hartman’s, it just wasn’t like that. The llamas were in little pens, and there was very little information available for the prospective buyer. A lot of times there wasn’t anybody there to represent the animal. It was just not what I was used to.”

### **Nobody Wanted to Sell Anything**

After being underwhelmed by his experience at a Hartman sale, Tom said, “From then on I had this idea in the back of my head that I wanted to do a llama auction. We had done some really class act horse auctions. I did a couple at my ranch, others all over the United States. We did the World Championship appaloosa sale for a number of years, so I thought to myself, ‘We could do a lot better than this.’ I had all these ideas about what I wanted to do, but I wasn’t sure how I’d go about getting consignments. Nobody seemed like they wanted to sell anything. For some people, it didn’t matter how much money you offered them, and I thought ‘This is really, really crazy.’ There was such a short supply compared to the demand.”

Besides wondering how he might put together an auction with dozens of consignments, Tom was having a hard time finding eight or ten nice llamas to start his own herd, “All the breeders just wanted to keep their babies to breed them and raise more. I went back to Dal Portos and bought a couple of starter llamas when I came back from this forty ranch tour, and then I bought one at Huffs’ sale, and I started picking one up here and there. Back then, you had to get on waitlists to buy something.” Eventually, Tom did what almost all would-be llama breeders did back in the ‘80s, “I got on Patterson’s list. About a year later he finally called me, so I hooked up

“I HAD ALL THESE IDEAS ABOUT WHAT I WANTED TO DO, BUT I WASN’T SURE HOW I’D GO ABOUT GETTING CONSIGNMENTS. NOBODY SEEMED LIKE THEY WANTED TO SELL ANYTHING. FOR SOME PEOPLE, IT DIDN’T MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY YOU OFFERED THEM”

my trailer, jumped in my truck, and made the eight-hour drive to Sisters, Oregon. I met with Richard and we started walking through the pastures. It was quite an experience walking through the pastures with Richard. He'd price one and then he'd say crazy things like, 'Well, I'm gonna knock \$1,000 off for each ear because it doesn't have perfect hooked ears.' He wasn't bashful about asking big prices for some of them, especially ones he kind of liked."

Tom was a discerning buyer with horses, and he carried that over to llamas. "The first few times I went to Patterson ranch, he wouldn't sell me the llamas I really wanted to buy," Tom remembered. "And I said, 'Richard, what's it going to take for you to sell me a good one?' And he said, 'Tom I've got to get to know you better.' So I went over to his calendar and every two weeks I wrote, 'Tom, Tom, Tom, Tom'. He said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'These are the days I'll be here, and by the time we're done you're going to get to know me pretty good.' And sure enough he just started selling me some of these really nice llamas." One of those really nice ones was Little Linda, a legendary dam in the late '80s and early '90s. Tom shared his auction plans with Richard, "He was totally against the auctions. Every time I saw him, he tried to talk me out of it. It didn't work, but he kept trying."

"WE WENT THROUGH AND THERE WERE ONE OR TWO LLAMAS I ASKED ABOUT WHERE HE SAID, 'TIM VINCENT IS ON THE DIBS LIST' AND I SAID, 'IF HE'S REAL SERIOUS CALL HIM UP AND HE CAN STEP UP AND PAY THE MONEY AND IF HE DOESN'T I'LL BUY THEM'"

### **Dibs and Hand Shakes**

After a few visits to the Patterson Ranch, Tom found out that breeders Richard trusted earned the right to go on his "Dibs List". This meant that Richard wasn't sure if he wanted to sell an animal, but if he ever did decide to part with it, someone had asked to have the first chance. Tom continued, "We went through and there were one or two llamas I asked about where he said, 'Tim Vincent is on the Dibs list' And I said, 'If he's real serious call him up and either he can step up and pay the money and if he doesn't I'll buy them and take them home.'" Richard called Tim, who lived only a few miles away, and Tim made the trip over to the Patterson Ranch to make a decision. Tom continued, "Tim looked at the one I really wanted and he said, 'Yeah I'm gonna take it.' And I thought, 'you bugger.' I don't even remember if I got anything bought that day. It wasn't the easiest thing in the world to get something really nice purchased from Dick."

While Tom may have lost out on a llama during this experience, he would end up gaining a lifelong friend and business partner in Tim Vincent.

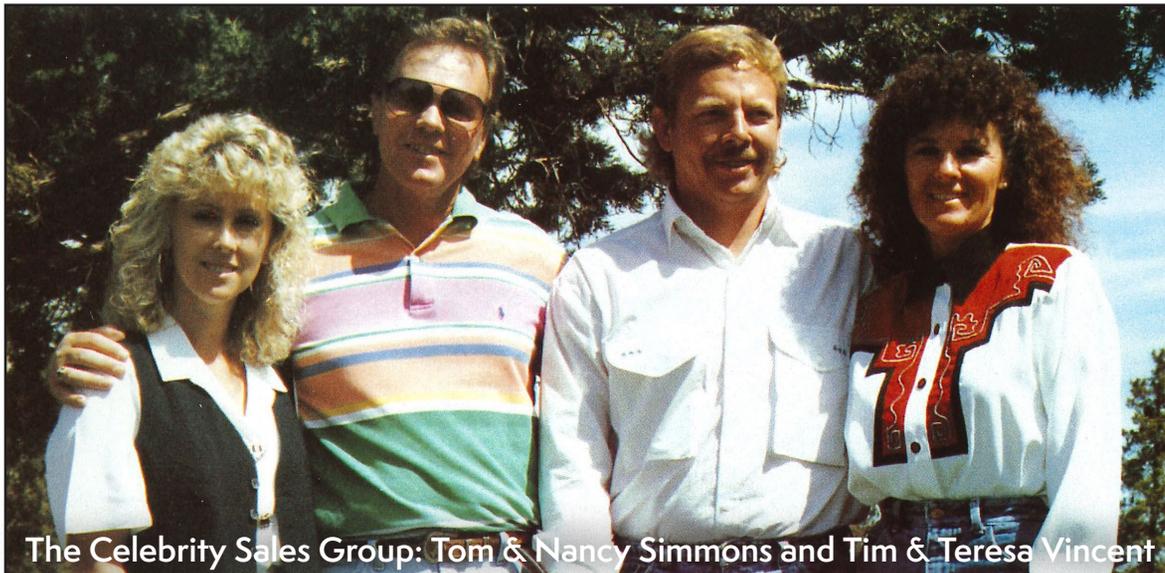
"Tim started asking me questions about my background, and I told him I was thinking about starting a llama auction," Tom said. "Tim was really excited to hear about the auctions, so I followed him

back to his house and we sat there and talked and talked. Tim had been in the llama business several years before I met him, so had personal relationships with a lot of people in the llama business, personally knew them. So we just sat there that day and did a handshake deal that we were going to do an auction together. I thought, 'This is a great blend because Tim knows a lot of these people, they trust him, and I have the auction background on how to do it.' We made the plans that day and we did it on a handshake. Tim and I were partners for twenty-five years, and we never had a contract; we just did it on a hand shake."

### **The Celebrity Room**

Tom and Tim then worked for the next year planning their first auction together. "The place that we initially chose as the location for the first sale was The Golden Nugget Casino in Reno. We went there and we talked to the management and they were really interested in us using their facility. We were shown the big ballroom that they called the Celebrity Room where they had done other auctions, it was really classy and nice. We ran into a problem on negotiating where to put all the llamas during the sale, so plans to hold the sale at the Golden Nugget fell through. But we decided we liked the name of the Celebrity Room, and we thought, 'Hey, Celebrity Sales.' So that's how the name came about."

Eventually, the newly formed Celebrity Sales duo chose Heritage Place in Oklahoma City to hold the first Celebrity Llama Sale. Heritage Place is a prestigious horse facility equipped with televisions to display the animals on stage, a tote board to show the current bid during the sale, and plenty of stalling for the llamas. Now that they had a facility, they went to work finding consignments. "We wanted to have the kind of llamas in the sale that would fit in the top of anyone's herd, and that was a difficult thing in those early days. People didn't want to let go of those kinds of llamas." Tim and Tom hit the phones and traveled the country to meet with breeders in person. "We just talked to them and promised a new type of marketing for their llamas. I think at the time, llama people were ready to support a first class event."



The Celebrity Sales Group: Tom & Nancy Simmons and Tim & Teresa Vincent



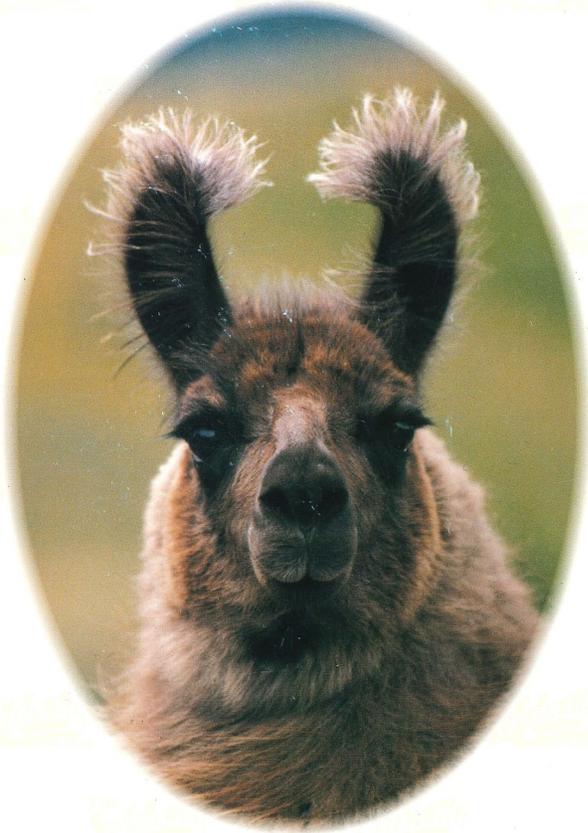
## First Class

Tom and Tim succeeded in winning over the best in the business with the Pattersons, Taylors, and Rolfings all agreeing to consign. The Pattersons consigned a mature male named Everest, a son of their popular sire Eclipse. The Taylors consigned Mirabelle, a look-a-like daughter of their rising star herdsire, The Fiduciary. And the Rolfings consigned their top herdsire, GNLC Catman, who was one of the most popular herdsires in the industry at the time. Many other well-respected programs were also consignors in the first sale, including: Twin Lakes Llama Ranch, East Fork Llama Ranch, Kesling Llamas, Hughes Llama Ranch, Tomalla Farm, Ivory Pond Farm, Tunitas Creek Ranch, McRoberts Game Farm, Baurnheim Llamas, Great Lakes Llamas, and Big Trees Llama Farm, among many others.

With their consignments in hand, a beautiful catalog was designed and sent out to the llama community. On the cover was the Taylors' best consignment, Mirabelle. In a first for the llama industry, Tom and Tim requested videos from their consignors, which they made into a compilation that they displayed at large llama events and mailed to high profile buyers. The sale was advertised in all major llama publications, as well as publications for horses and cattle. The Celebrity Sales team had done much to impress long before any llama breeders made their way to Heritage Place.

After a year of hard work, the weekend finally arrived. While Tom envisioned a "first class" event, it was not a stuffy black-tie affair. Among the top priorities of the Simmons and the Vincents was to make the event *fun*. A fundraising auction for the International Llama Association was organized, with guest auctioneers from among the attendees. The real auctioneer for the weekend, Ron Kavanaugh, kicked things off by auctioning the first item and giving a few pointers to the amateurs that would follow. It takes a brave soul to stand up and attempt an auctioneer's chant for the entertainment of hundreds of friends and acquaintances, among those brave souls were Sue Rolfing (Great Northern Ranch), Maggie Schuler (Baurnheim), and Taylor Phelps (Tunitas Creek). Also on the itinerary for the weekend was an "orgling competition" won by Nel Vickers, Tom Marino, and Lloyd Hiebert (Llama Banner Volume 2, Number 3).

THE MAIN THING I REMEMBER FROM THE FIRST SALE WAS THE SUPPORT WE HAD, AND THE EXCITEMENT IN THE PLACE. WE ENDED UP HAVING THE HIGHEST SELLING LLAMA TO EVER SELL AT AUCTION, THE HIGHEST SELLING FEMALE TO EVER SELL AT AUCTION, THE HIGHEST SALE AVERAGE THAT HAD EVER BEEN DONE.



**THE**  
*Celebrity*  
**LLAMA SALE**  
OKLAHOMA CITY '04

LOT 7 Consignment of Paul & Sally Taylor  
 Taylor Llamas, Bozeman, MT

## MIRABELLE

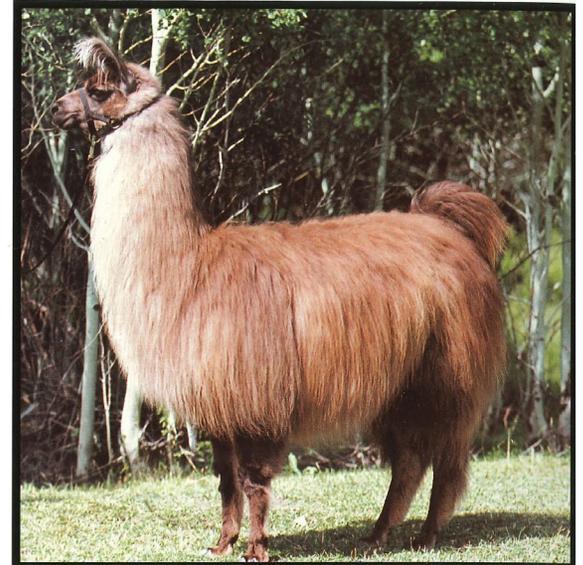
#56770 Bred Female D.O.B. 10/12/87  
 Service Sire: Catman

CLYDE #50373  
 THE FIDUCIARY  
 TIFFANY #50024

UNKNOWN  
 BELLADONNA #50001  
 UNKNOWN

MIRABELLE: Sired by The Fiduciary out of Belladonna. That should be enough but this gorgeous beauty is carrying a Catman baby, due in the early Spring.

Her body is correct, her presence breathtaking and her head is the most beautiful we've ever seen. Taylor Llamas proudly offers a truly great female, Mirabelle.



LOT 18 Consignment of Steve & Sue Roling  
 Great Northern Llama Co., Columbia Falls, MT

## CATMAN

#53459 Male D.O.B. 8/27/85

PONCHO VIA  
 ZORRO #48828  
 AUNTIE MAME

DR. DOOLITTLE  
 CATTAIL #53458  
 CAT BALOU

This prepotent, proven stud's richly colored, glossy, fine-wooled offspring are the best Great Northern has ever produced, exemplifying the consistency of beauty, strength and thrift the farm strives for. Catman's well-balanced conformation, black wool, handsome head and ability to greatly improve the quality of babies in other herds have made him tremendously popular for outside breedings, with many owners claiming Catman crias are the best they've ever had.



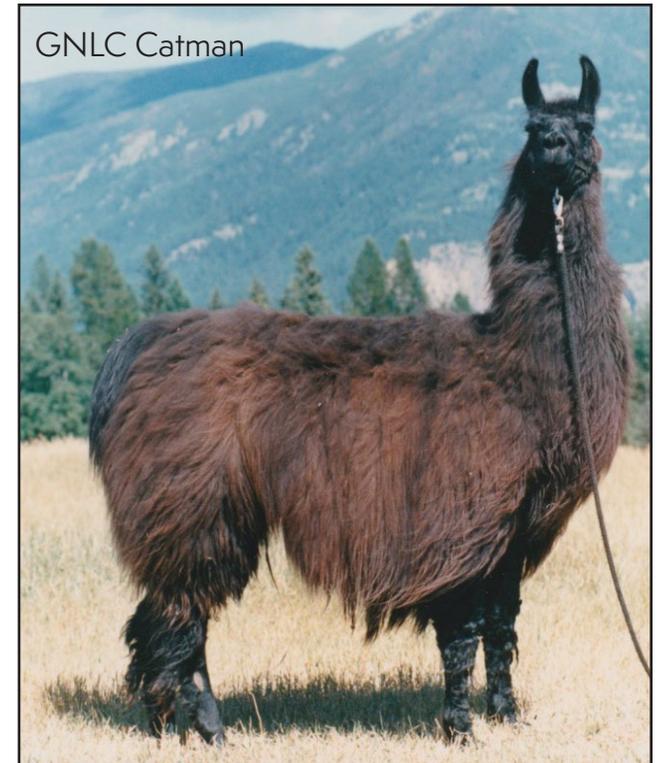
## Standing Room Only

The sale started reasonably strong, with the first five lots selling for \$23,000; \$19,000; \$44,000; \$49,000 (Patterson's Everest); and \$14,000. Lot 7, Mirabelle, is when the sale moved from respectable to legendary. Tom and Tim thought highly enough of Mirabelle to put her on the cover of the catalog, and the bidders agreed that this was a special female. Bidding escalated quickly, and the energy in Heritage Place was electric as llama enthusiasts witnessed Iris Christ standing on her seat with her hand in the air, fighting off all bidders until she and Donald had purchased Mirabelle for \$170,000. At the time, this was the highest selling llama to date, breaking the records the Christs had set at Hartman's sale just two weeks prior.

This record was destined to be broken, as many in the bidding audience expected Lot 18, GNLC Catman, to be the new record-holder before the day was through. Steve and Sue Rolfing did not consign their famous lead herdsire on a whim. For a more detailed account of their decision read Issue One of *American Llama Magazine*. Once the decision was made, the Rolfings made every effort to promote their herdsire. A photo catalog featuring all of Catman's offspring was available to potential bidders. Many owners of Catman offspring were willing to publicly state that their Catman crias were among the best they'd ever had. Catman was groomed to the nines, and was penned in a stall with curved panels that went out into the aisle. After showing him off to all of the attendees, Steve and Catman burst out onto the stage with an energy and enthusiasm that people still remember today. Catman broke Mirabelle's record, selling for \$175,000 to a group of Montana breeders that included Paul and Sally Taylor (Mirabelle's record for highest selling female llama of all time still stands.)

The sale had one other six-figure seller, a full Chilean female named Lotus. Lotus sold for \$100,000 to Marvin and Jan Bok of Indiana. A Macho Camacho son named The Great Gatsby, consigned by Jack and Julie Kelleher, brought \$91,500. Six other lots sold for \$50,000 or more. Among them was Palo for \$50,000, a youngster at the time who would grow into a herdsire of note. *Llama Life* reported the female average to be \$31,594 and the male average to be \$31,000.

In reflecting on their first sale Tom said, "So many people showed up. So many people consigned their very best animals. The bidding audience just supported it. Heritage Place has 1,000 seats and there was not an empty seat, and there was standing room only about six rows deep. The whole place was just stuffed and there was an electricity you could feel in the air. The main thing I remember from the first sale was the support we had, and the excitement in the place. We ended up having the highest selling llama to ever sell at auction, the highest selling female to ever sell at auction, the highest sale average that had ever been done. I think everybody felt relieved when it just took off. They just thought, 'We have a home, we have a place to go with our llamas.' It was a great sale; I'll never forget that first Celebrity Lama Sale. "



Tom and Tim didn't rest on their laurels. In their second year, they doubled down on their efforts to make the Celebrity Llama Sale the classiest and most fun event of the llama breeders' year. A '50s theme was added to the event, with a sock hop dance the night before the sale. Tom and Tim were once again able to convince a breeder to sell a well publicized sire, as Tunitas Creek offered King Bolivar. King Bolivar was purchased at Hartman's 1987 sale of Bolivians, and had been heavily advertised and bred in the years following. He was the high seller of the second Celebrity Sale at \$147,000. Andy Tillman consigned the highest selling female, Tillman Lopez Star, at \$100,000. Eight other lots sold for \$50,000 or more. The llama industry and the US economy as a whole had deflated a bit between the fall of 1989 and the fall of 1990, and consequently the record average from the first Celebrity Sale came back down to earth to some extent. The Celebrity Sale fared better than the Hartman auction, where approximately 40 more llamas sold at the fall 1990 sale than did in 1989, but the sale gross was down more than a million dollars. The high seller at the sixth fall Hartman sale was \$64,000, significantly lower than the high sellers at Celebrity. While Celebrity Sales was only wrapping up their second event, they had become the consensus go-to auction of the llama industry.

Tom explained that Celebrity was more than just an auction, "Before each auction people would come two or three days early, just to hang out with their friends and talk and party and go out to dinner. It got to be quite an event." Tom remembered, "We started putting on the parties and they were wild. People were out there dancing. We did a western theme and had instructors on the dance floor teaching people to do the two step. We had Butch Wax and the Glass Pack do the '50s theme. Even if people weren't interested in buying animals, they still came to have fun." A spread on one of the early sales in *Llamas* magazine showed photos from a western themed party, with Richard Patterson walking on stilts while wearing chaps, an oversized cowboy hat, and a faux handlebar mustache.

### **Futurity**

As the Celebrity Sale event continued to grow, a Spring Celebration sale was added, which would eventually become the flagship Celebrity Llama event. As the event grew, adding a show became an obvious next step.

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Tom approached Tim with an idea before their first sale of 1995. Tom said, "I decided we ought to do a futurity. Of course, most people in the llama business didn't know what a futurity was. When the futurity started, I told Tim that we're going to have to guarantee that we'll pay out a certain amount of money. When he asked how much I said a hundred grand. He said 'What?!' and I said 'Yeah, we're going to have to guarantee that we're going to pay out \$100,000 in prize money.' It was a little scary the first time because we're thinking, 'Man if this doesn't work out, we're going to be stuck with a big bill.' But fortunately, it all worked out and people flocked to it."

ALSA was gaining in popularity at the time, typically with single judge shows. By contrast, the Celebrity World Futurity would have three judges. Tom explained that with the amount of money at stake, they couldn't give the responsibility to one judge alone. The futurity would also be judged quite differently than an ALSA show, with marketability playing a big factor. (Marketability, in this case, means the overall eye appeal in addition to the llama's conformation that adds value when buying or selling a llama.) ALSA was judged strictly on tracking, conformation, and balance. "We got a little flack from ALSA because they wanted us to follow their guidelines and rules. I said, 'Guys, I don't want to be disrespectful, but the whole reason we're doing this is that I don't want to follow any of those rules. The way you guys judge makes no sense to me.' I can remember I did an interview for *Llamas Magazine* and they asked me who I expected to win the futurity classes and I said something like, 'Well I just feel like if the winner of that class were to sell at auction it would probably be the high seller. Marketability is a big thing. The fanciest animals ought to win, assuming it also has correct conformation.' I didn't realize what a stir that would cause at the time in

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the llama business. Especially from the ALSA people. I just told them that's how I feel, and that's how all other livestock is judged, so I don't know why the llama business has to be different. I was trying to get everybody in line with the rest of the livestock world. I did get a lot of flack for that for a long time. People did come around, not everybody, but certainly the people that signed up for the futurity classes. And the futurity was big; we had four classes and there were often sixty in each class, so we decided to give awards down to 10th place."

## Giving Back

From the very first Celebrity Sale, extravagant awards were given to auction consignors and show exhibitors. Steve and Sue Roling received a new trailer at the first Celebrity for consigning the high selling animal. As the years went on many trailers were given away, as well as new pickup trucks and cash prizes. Special awards were added, each with a special limited edition bronze sculpture. These included the Ron Kavanaugh memorial award, given after Tom's mentor and Celebrity Sales auctioneer passed away. The small breeder award was designed to reward the breeders with small programs who were successful in the futurity show. The Craig Wilkins Memorial Sportsmanship Award was presented to deserving breeders after Craig and his son were tragically killed in a traffic accident on their trip home from Celebrity. They also honored the spirit of Linda Pierce by presenting an annual sportsmanship award after her passing. "We tried to give back as much as we could to the llama community," Tom said. "We were really appreciative of what they had done for us and wanted to make each event as much fun as possible."



Many of the breeders we've interviewed have kept their awards won at Celebrity prominently displayed in their homes. Pictured is a sampling of those awards, including a Craig Wilkins Memorial award won by Steve and Sue Roling, and Futurity trophies won by Darrel and Merlene Anderson.

## Life on the Farm

Eventually farms were invited to host Celebrity auctions, and breeders contacted Celebrity Sales to run production sales. Tom shared wonderful memories from many of these sales.

The first Celebrity farm sale was at Mark and Karen Brant's Twin Lakes Llama Ranch in Michigan. "At Mark Brant's ranch, he had a circus tent looking thing with big wooden poles. A big storm came in... this was one of those storms that had a *name*. The poles were starting to break because there is so much water sitting on the roof. We got the tent company to come out in the middle of the night. We had about two or three inches of water through the whole tent. Mark did an amazing job quickly getting tons of straw so we could put straw in the tent and everywhere people were walking. Mark also arranged for parking at the local church and a bus to shuttle people from the church to the ranch. It was cold and rainy and windy, so we had to run in and rent a bunch of space heaters to put inside the tent. There were definitely challenges, but we've noticed that every time we had bad weather like that, we always had a good sale. Most likely that is because everybody's inside instead of out wandering around shooting the bull. It was an outstanding sale, but a lot of work."

"WE'RE GETTING THE TABLES SET UP, AND HE'S PUTTING A BOTTLE OF MOSQUITO SPRAY ON EVERY TABLE. IT WAS CRAZY. I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY MOSQUITOS..."

Dan and Dale Goodyear of Berry Acres Llamas held a sale which continued the bad weather theme. "We did one at Goodyears in June in Pennsylvania. The sale went great. They did a great job of setting up a nice parking area and a tent. But it started raining right at the end of the sale. So, we were hurrying up trying to get the paperwork done because people were wanting to leave. After we got back to the hotel, it just started pouring, and this storm came through there and took out part of the tent. They had to drag cars out of there with the tractor. If that sale had gone on an hour longer, we would have been in really deep trouble."

"Michael Pierce's (Co-Rect Llamas) was an interesting one," Tom said. "It was in July in Minnesota. Michael said you only have about thirty days of weather there that you can do an auction outside, so we picked a day in that time frame. We had a big tent set up, but when I went in the office, I saw that Michael had a bunch of boxes stacked up. And I said, 'what's in all these boxes?' And he said, 'Oh it's mosquito bait.' We're getting the tables set up, and he's putting a bottle of mosquito spray on every table. It was crazy. I've never seen so many

"SOMETIMES YOU COME THROUGH THESE THINGS THAT YOU THINK ARE GONNA KNOCK YOU DOWN AND IT ALL WORKS OUT IN THE END."

mosquitos, and it was crazy hot. Sometimes you come through these things that you think are gonna knock you down and it all works out in the end.”

My favorite story that Tom shared about the farm sales was from Llama Woods, in Bend, Oregon. “I can remember one time with Iris, she said, ‘I’d like to have some entertainment before the sale. Why don’t you guys pick somebody out?’ So, Tim and I made some phone calls to see who might be available at a workable price. Well, it worked out that Willie Nelson was going to be coming right through (Central Oregon). Because he was on his way to another gig, the price for one show was reasonable. His deal included a specific number of cases of beer and had to have a place to park his buses. Tim and I were thinking, ‘Man, we’re gonna party with Ol’ Willie for a couple days here!’ So we told Iris, ‘Hey, we’ve got a deal, we can get Willie Nelson here. He’s just passing through Oregon going somewhere and he’ll play for us!’ And she says, ‘Well, who’s Willie Nelson?’” Tom remembered that eventually she asked to see a picture of him, and she decided that Willie wasn’t quite what she was picturing for the entertainment at her classy llama sale. Tom continued, “We’re thinking, ‘Oh bummer, we thought we were going to hang with Willie for a couple days!’”

In reflecting on the farm sales, Tom said, “Each of those sales had something unique about them. We had different people to work with and we tried to use as many of their ideas as we could and some of our own and kind of put those together. We kind of got a chance to go around the country a little bit. Crazy things happened. It’s all fun and they’re great memories, the good times, and even the bad times. In the end it all worked out really well.”

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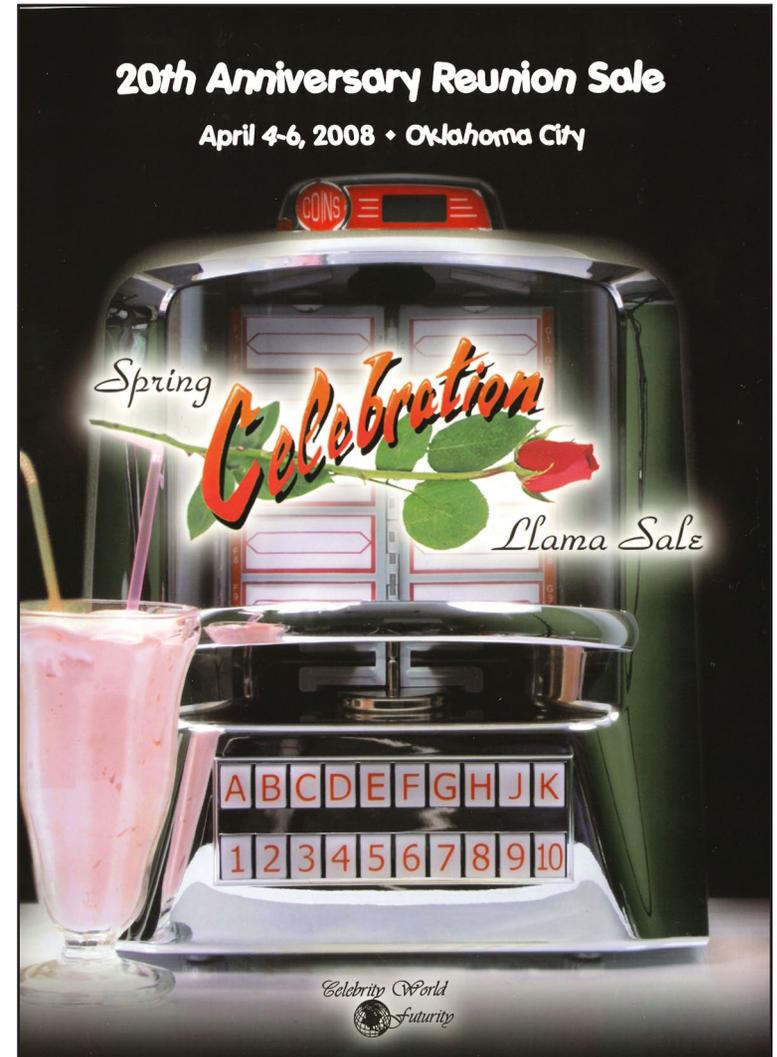
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## 20 Years Strong

At the time of the first Celebrity Sale, llamas were the main show in town and alpacas were the lesser known cousin. The ILR registered alpacas, and alpacas had small sections in each of the llama publications. As importations became more common and the alpaca population grew, so did their popularity. In 1994, alpacas were added to the Spring Celebrity Sale. Over time, the alpaca and llama events were separated, and the alpaca sales became stand alone events.

In 2009, Tom and Tim decided to sell the llama side of their business to focus on alpacas. "I wanted to get to 20 years," Tom said. "We had our 20 year reunion sale. I can't remember if Miltons approached us or if we approached them about buying the Celebrity Llama Sale. I thought that they were a good fit because they had been there since day one, and they knew everybody in the llama business. We wouldn't have turned it over to just anybody. The Miltons had been very involved. They used to do seminars on raising llamas and marketing. It was a hard decision; that sale was our baby. We created it from nothing and nurtured it for 20 years. It was a hard decision, but I did feel comfortable with Dan and Marilyn." Dan and Marilyn ran three more successful events, under the name Celebration Sales LLC, but eventually the Great Recession and conditions in the llama industry made running a profitable llama event at Heritage Place too difficult. The last Celebration Sale at Heritage Place was held in the spring of 2012.

After a few more years running the Celebrity alpaca auctions with the Vincents, Tom decided it was time for him to retire. Tom has continued to watch the llama and alpaca industries from afar, and has regular chats with Tim Vincent about Celebrity Sales. Throughout our conversation, Tom reflected on the high character of the llama owners he grew to love, "One thing that really impressed me, I don't know how many millions of dollars worth of llamas we sold. I'm guessing around 100 million dollars during the years. During that time, not once did we ever have a check bounce. Sellers always backed their animals up. I remember Dan Goodyear and also the Miltons telling me about sellers refunding money because of a breeding problem in an animal they sold. It really impressed me that breeders stood behind their animals like that, and the fact that no checks bounced and we never had to run after anybody to collect money. When doing horse auctions, that was not always the case. I think it was just we had such good people in the llama business."



## Retirement

I asked Tom about what he's been up to since retiring from Celebrity Sales. He responded, "I have always enjoyed painting. I know a lot of people picture old people sitting around painting, like George W. Bush when he retired, but that's not the kind of painting I do. For years I've done custom painting on show cars, but in my younger years I didn't have time to do it as often as I would have liked. But after I retired and wasn't doing the llama or alpaca auctions, I started doing custom painting on motorcycles. I still have my Harley and ride my Harley. I have made three trips to Sturgess (bike rally). I had a one man art show at the Ritz Carlton, with painted metal butterflies. We actually made the butterflies from scratch, machined the bodies, and painted them. We had a big show at the Ritz Carlton, and they liked them so well that they kept the art display of over 50 custom butterflies on their walls for three months."

As we wrapped up our conversation, Tom quickly moved the conversation away from his painting, and back to that first Celebrity llama auction that took place more than thirty years ago. "We had 1,000 seats in there, and people started bringing in name tags to reserve their seats. It was crazy, there was so much energy and enthusiasm. Some of those people are no longer in the business, but some of them still are thirty years later. It's an interesting business and really nice people. Those were exciting times, and it was a lot of fun. I wish we could do it all over again, but I'd have to be a lot younger. It takes a lot of work to put on events like we did. But it was a good time, and I think, for the most part, people really enjoyed it."



Above: Tom at his Butterfly art show

Below: The Celebrity Sales group with one of Tom's painted show cars





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# Basics of Grooming

## by Connor Cook

Grooming! Some people love, some dread the task, others are simply not sure where to start. Regardless of your feelings on grooming it is an important skill to have when owning a fiber bearing animal such as our beautiful llamas. With the 2021 show season quickly approaching there is no better time to get started learning. We will talk about everything from basic grooming etiquette, grooming for show, different types of brushes, and even a bit on handling mats. This article is meant to introduce you to the basics of grooming, this article should act as a supplement to your llama education. I strongly recommend finding a mentor who can help you in person with not only grooming, but with the integrity of your llama journey. Without further ado, let's start with the tools you will need to have on hand to successfully groom your llamas.



### Tools of the Trade

There are many kinds of brushes and for the most part they are all pretty versatile. Of course, some brushes are better suited for some tasks over others. Regardless of your favorite fiber type, it is best to have at least one of each brush on hand, you never know when you may need a particular brush. There are also a few non-brush tools mentioned that are extremely helpful to have in your grooming tote that will make grooming easier on yourself.

\*Please take note that some brushes may have multiple names. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the names used by retailers so you can better source brushes\*

## Slicker

The slicker is most likely one of the most used brushes in the llama world. This brush can be used to get surface debris off your llama and is a great brush for deep grooming. Slickers are a mild brush that will not pull too much on your animal's fiber, making it a good brush for people just starting out grooming llamas.

## Rubber Curry Comb

The rubber curry comb is a mild brush that is ideal for suri llamas. Curry combs can be used in a very similar to a slicker brush. The only real difference is the larger soft teeth which make it less effective for deep grooming.

## Wand

That wand is a great tool for knocking off large bits of hay and bedding. It also brings smaller bits of hay to the surface. Wands should almost always be followed up with a slicker or rubber curry comb to remove anything brought to the surface but not removed by the wand. Once an animal has been deeply groomed the wand is great for maintain cleanliness on the top layer.

## Metal Comb

If you have mats that need to go, or a llama with a high amount of dead fiber, the metal comb is the go-to. However, the metal comb can be a very harsh brush when used in the wrong way. It is critical to take your time when using a metal comb and to be very aware of your llama's reactions. I highly, highly, and once more for good measure, highly discourage this brush be used on very young animals not used to being groomed yet as it does have a fair amount of pull on the skin. Normally once your animal is comfortable with the slicker you will be able to introduce the metal comb. But with steady hands and practice the metal comb is a miracle worker.



Click on any of the photos to see current pricing on Amazon. If you order from our link we get a small commission to help support our work, at no additional cost to you!

## Blower

A good blower is great to blow out dust from a llama's coat. Using a blower before bathing you llama will greatly reduce the amount of dirt and dust that will need to be washed out. If you have a friend to help you, or are coordinated enough, you can use the blower to lift fiber up as you groom allowing you to "deep groom" your llama, especially heavy woolled llamas.



## Bristle Brush

The bristle brush, weather stiff or soft, is used for any part of the animal that is sheared. Using a bristle brush on the sheared parts of your llama is a good way to remove top dust and remove bulky debris from the area. It can be used on non-sheared parts of the body to smooth fiber but is not the ideal brush for the job. If you do use a bristle brush to smooth out fiber, be sure to always be followed with mist or a wet wipe to prevent static.



## Shampoos and Conditions

When it comes to shampoos and conditions there really is not a wrong or right answer. Some people prefer to get modest products to save money, others buy salon quality to add a special touch. There are shampoos made to whiten white llamas, these shampoos should be used very carefully. When left on too long whitening shampoo can turn your once white llama into a pink or purple fantasy llama. This will not harm your animal in anyway way, but the only way to fix this problem is lots of time and rinsing. Llamas that have dry or sensitive skin react best to medicated shampoo. Two products that are very helpful are Miracle Groom and Cowboy Magic Detangler/Condition. Both these products help keep fiber relaxed after a grooming session and the same relaxing qualities help to work mats out of your llama's coat. At the end of the day go, with which ever product you like.



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## Fingers

Yes, you read that right, your own fingers are a great grooming tool. Sometimes grooming requires you to nitpick after tiny bits of hay here or there, or that one piece of hay sticking out before you head into the ring is begging to be plucked. The lock splitting method can be performed only with your hands.

## Grooming Etiquette for the Groomer

While grooming llamas can be tedious at times, there is nothing overly complex involved. The absolute worst-case scenario is that you have a llama that is so matted and cotted that you need to shear it nude. Otherwise, time and a little product fixes all, not too scary is it? But here are some basic things to keep in mind when grooming to make life easier.

When grooming your llama, the general rule of thumb is to start top to bottom. Start at the top of the neck and work down to the shoulders, then continue to groom from the topline down. This keeps all debris and hay moving in unison down the llama's side, instead of moving it onto an area that was already clean. This also applies to washing your llama, especially when rising out any product out of the coat.

At the first stage of grooming is best to remove the largest pieces of hay from the coat. This is what I refer to as surface grooming as you are simply grooming the top part of the coat. When surface grooming, a brush with open teeth works best for this job such as a wand or rubber curry comb. Slickers work as well, just be sure to stop and remove built up hay and dead fiber from the brush often to have good efficacy. This will make the llama look cleaner already!

Once surface grooming is complete you can begin to groom the under coat, this is the deep grooming phase. This can be done with any brush that is suitable to your llama's fiber. Deep grooming is more about lifting the fiber and spreading it apart so you can groom from the base of the fiber to the tips. This will require you use one hand to move the fiber where it is needed as the other hand works the brush. Take your time when deep grooming, it takes time to build your coordination, and speed will eventually come with time.

Most of the time, the worst parts are the base of the neck (withers), and the fiber under the tail and around the anus. The withers are easiest to groom when the llama has its head down as it flattens out the area. Feeding a bowl of grain on the ground is a easy way to achieve this while making grooming a more positive experience for the llama. Grooming around the rump simply takes time, often you will find it best to visit this area multiple times in a grooming session to prevent your llama from being irritated.



For some llamas, especially with those who get dirty or have dry fiber, it is a good idea to apply Miracle Groom or a leave in conditioner to help the fiber relax and bring bits of hay to the surface. This also helps dry fiber regain its healthy form. You will also find the next grooming session easier after having conditioner in.

### Training your Llama to be Groomed

Llamas are not born knowing how to behave for a grooming session, you must teach them. As the teacher you must compose yourself with calmness and clarity. When working with your animal, not just grooming but all training sessions, keep in mind the llama does not understand it has to stay clean because there is a show coming up, or because they are being sheared tomorrow.

One should never put a time limit on grooming llamas, rushing leads to mistakes and an anxious llama, which leads to frustration and results in disappointment for the groomer and a poor experience for the llama. Be sure to take all the time that your animal needs. If needed do a little bit everyday to make it more feasible.

In my experience, keeping training simple and clear is the best way to teach a llama. Llamas often do best with lots of reward over punishment, as punishments often make the llama more anxious. It is your responsibility to set your llama up for success. When your llama doesn't do something correctly, words of praise, a treat, and removing pressure are a must. When your llama does something wrong, you simply try again, in some cases a calm "no" may be appropriate. If you find you are struggling with something, such as your llama constantly kicks at the brush, it is likely you are asking too much of the llama at its current point in training. Take a few steps back and start with some basic desensitizing and work your way up to brushing.

Desensitizing a llama to brushes should be done at the llama's pace. It is best to get the llama used to having your hands on them. If you have a very reactive llama, using a broom handle to act as an extension of your arm is a good alternative to using your hands at first. It is important when your llama moves around that you keep applying gentle, consistent pressure (the pressure in this case is touch) and only remove the pressure (stop touching the llama) when he has stopped moving around. Doing this will teach your llama that humans touching them is no big deal. Once your llama allows you to touch them all over their bodies, introducing a gentle rubber curry comb or a wand should be very feasible. Once your llama is accustomed to a gentle brush you can start with a slicker, and by the time the llama is desensitized to a slicker they are normally willing to accept any brush when used correctly.

With time and consistency your llama will learn very easily. No matter what happens, always be sure to end on a positive note.



## Washing your Llama

It is important that your llama is thoroughly groomed before you attempt bathing. Failing to do so will result in a wet sloppy mix of soaked fiber with millions of bits of hay cemented in. As discussed in routine grooming, before applying product, it is important to wet the fiber. Often you will need run your fingers though the fiber or lift small areas at a time to allow the water to work down to the skin. This is the preferred method over increasing the water pressure, as overly strong pressure can be uncomfortable for the llama.

Once the llama is wetted down you can apply your chosen soap either directly onto the fiber or squeeze a few drops into a small pail of water for more concentrated shampoos. Use your fingers to gently work in the soap. Start on one side working from top to bottom, once you have completed second side, the first side will be ready for rinsing. It is very important to take you time when you rinse and make sure that all soap has been cleaned out of your llama's coat. You will be able to see the number of bubbles decrease as you rinse. If you are not sure if you got out all the product, simply thoroughly rinse an extra time. If you plan to use conditioner, apply it after you have rinsed out the soap. The same steps apply when you use conditioner, and once again rinse thoroughly!

## Dealing with Mats

Mats and cotted wool are a nightmare to all llama owners, and with good reason. Non-cotted fiber allows air flow to the skin, this air can either cool the llama or act as insulation. When fiber mats, it creates a solid mass of fiber that prevents air circulation. If moisture sits below the mats, microorganisms can start to form with the potential of starting a number of problems. Mats are also heavier than non-matted fiber creating extra weight to pull on the skin. All in all, mats are simply unpleasant for your llama.

In extreme cases of matting, it is best to simply shear the fiber off for the welfare of the animal. In smaller quantities, mats are easiest to remove with a comb as they have larger teeth. There are times you will be using the comb and find it is not able to complete a pass due to the density of the mat, do not pull even harder to break through the mat as it can be uncomfortable for the llama. If you cannot finish a swipe, back up and try a different angle and gradually work the mat out. Using detanglers such as Cowboy Magic relaxes the mats and makes it easier to remove. Don't be discouraged if it takes multiple grooming sessions to rid your llamas completely of mats, but the sooner you can remove them the better off you will be.

It is very common for the locks of suris to mat together. In most cases, lock splitting is the easiest plan of attack. On suris you will be able to see the tip of each lock at the bottom of the mat. Grab a hold of two tips, and gently pull them apart making sure to split all the way to the skin. It may be necessary to use a slicker to remove dead fiber, yes use a slicker on the suri. Fair



warning, a real suri after the locks get wet will lock back up to its original, and often better, form. With a suri-silky you run the risk of losing lock structure. But it is more important to have a comfortable silky than a uncomfortable matted up suri.

At the end of the day dealing with mats is a pain in the neck for both you and your llama. Preventing mats with regular grooming and the use of conditioners is more favorable than removing mats.

### Grooming for Show

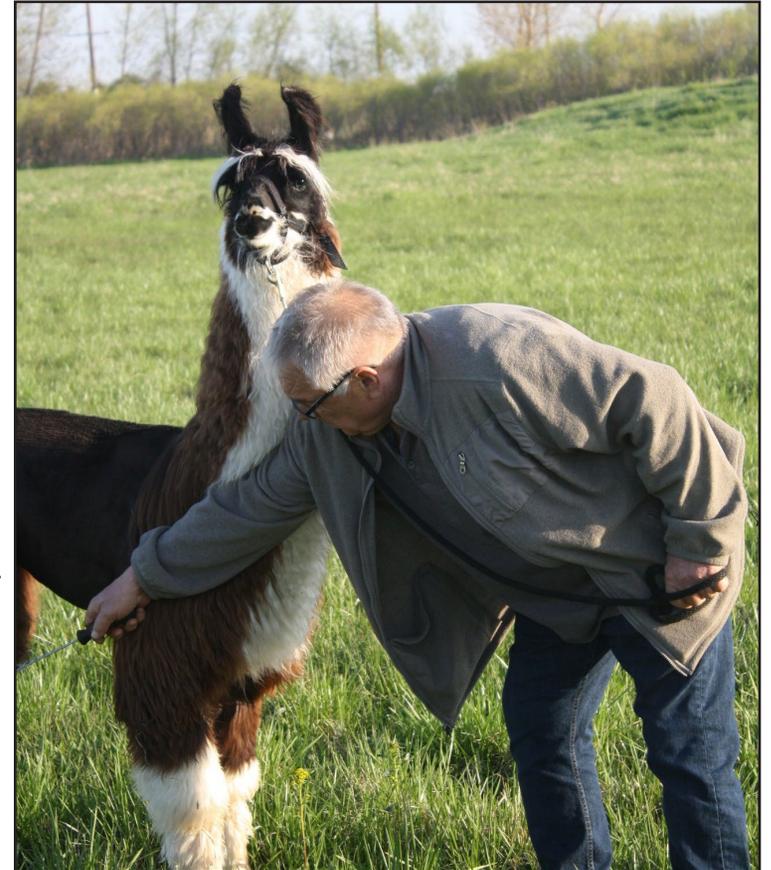
Unless you plan on attending a Hobo show (shows that where exhibitors are encouraged or required to not groom their llamas), you will have to spend some time grooming. A well-groomed llama is a sight to behold and is more aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

To make the show weekend as stress free as possible, it is best to start grooming your animal a week or two in advance and maintain cleanliness before leaving for the show. Doing a small amount of deep grooming every day or every other day will get rid of large amounts of small vegetable matter and remove dead fiber. This also gives you time to see how your llama's coat will react to different grooming methods and products, greatly reducing the chances of running into an unwanted surprise at the show.

If you have prepared thoroughly before arriving at the show, grooming at the show should be very minimal. Washing should always be done the day before your class. If you show performance on Saturday, wash on Friday. Halter on Sunday, wash at the latest on Saturday preferably Friday. The more time your llama has to dry the better!

### Final Words

At the end of the day, grooming, simply put, should be quality time spent taking care of your beloved llamas. Whether it is routine, or in preparation for a show, grooming should bring you into a somewhat meditative state. With practice and continuous learning you will find grooming will come to you as easily as leading your llama. I hope you have learned something useful to put into your toolbox, and a good understanding of basic grooming practices. Now be sure to go practice grooming with confidence, and above all, enjoy your time with your beloved llamas!

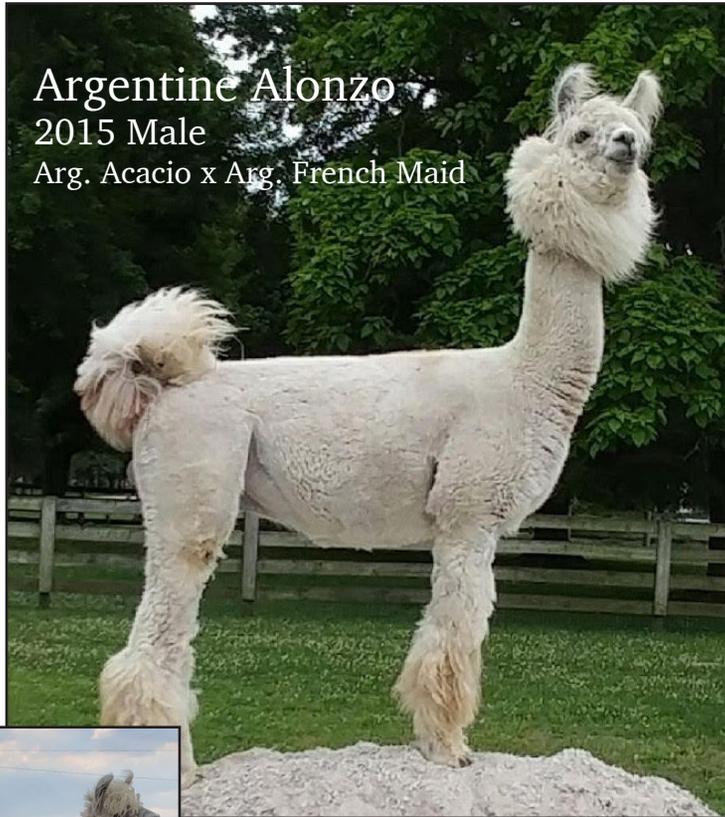




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# TAYLOR LLAMAS

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
**PAUL & SALLY  
TAYLOR**

BY KYLE MUMFORD



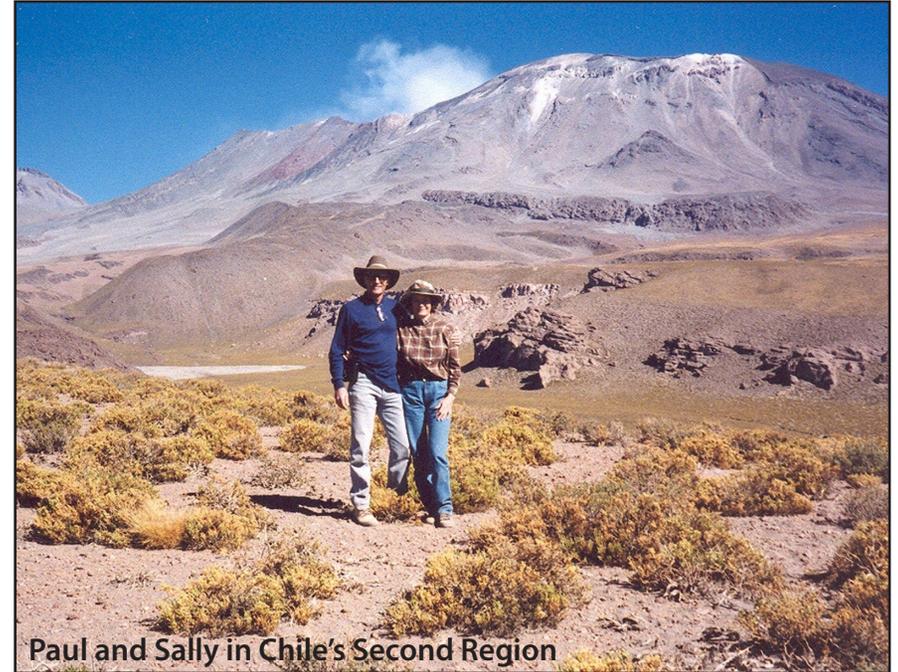
*At the culmination of their decade long*

search for the "Perfect Llama" in Chile and Argentina, Paul and Sally Taylor had been told about a remote valley in Argentina where dozens of the most exotic llamas in the world could be found. There was a two-rut dirt road that led up and over a mountain pass. Some of the locals they spoke to told them it was only accessible by mule, others had heard that a few brave souls had made the trip in a four wheel drive vehicle. Ever the adventurers, Paul and Sally rented a little truck and started their climb. They zig-zagged their way up with one tight switchback after another. When they reached the final switchback before the summit they found a turn that their truck simply couldn't make. Directly to their left was a ten foot tall vertical rock face; to their right was the barren 1,000 foot slope that they had just traversed. They, their travel companions, and three men with mules who happened to be passing by, had spent hours attempting to manually move the back end of the truck. They just couldn't get it in position. Turning around was not an option, and attempting to back down the mountain would be dangerous.

Paul had an idea, but it was risky. Paul got in the driver's seat, seatbelt off and window down in case he had to attempt an escape if the truck tumbled toward the valley below. Sally clung to the hood, providing some extra front end weight for the "power slide" Paul was about to attempt. Paul started toward the switchback with Sally on the hood, picked up speed, turned the wheel, and hit the brakes. Their crazy plan worked.



Their little truck, or "camioneta"



Paul and Sally in Chile's Second Region



The view from the switchback

As Paul recounted this story to us he started by saying, "Well, that was one of our greatest adventures." It's subtle, but I hope you caught his use of the phrase "one of" in that sentence. I *think* this is the most exciting story that Paul and Sally have to tell. I think, but I don't know for sure. This story is not an aberration for them. They have been taking risks and blazing trails for their entire lives. I wish I could promise you that every paragraph in this lengthy article will be as exciting as the one I have started with, but I can't. I can, however, promise you that every chapter in Paul and Sally Taylor's story so far is equally interesting and inspiring. I can also tell you that when my wife Jerrika and I had finished the interview we stood on the top of the world, inspired and motivated to take some risks in chasing what we want in life. I hope that by the end of this article you feel the same way.

Paul and Sally Taylor have been pioneers of the llama industry since 1975. When I was growing up I heard about their high selling llamas, their importations from Chile and Argentina, their cutting edge embryo transfer research, and had read and re-read most of the articles they'd written. In June of 2020, we were invited to Bozeman to talk to the Taylors about their storied 45 years raising llamas. As we made the long drive, Jerrika and I shared a thought that neither of us have had since middle school, "I'm worried that the people we're about to meet are too cool for us."



Fiduciary's statue is the first thing to greet you as you arrive at the Taylor Llama Ranch. To my knowledge he is the only llama who had a statue commissioned of him; a fitting tribute to such a legend. Their small group of aging Arabian horses are in the front pasture. Ten llamas can be seen grazing in the distance, a small remnant of their herd that once numbered in the hundreds.

The entirety of the Taylors property is sloped, down to a peaceful creek surrounded by quaking aspen trees, and then back up again into a treed area where elk cows and calves are seen each summer. The only flat spaces are a large area around the house, and a fenced riding arena. There are panoramic views of the snow capped Bridger Mountains. Wildflowers are growing in some pastures that are returning to nature without regular grazing. Paul and Sally apologized multiple times for a few fences that had fallen into disrepair, and other minor blemishes on the property. I don't think I bothered to look at a fence the whole time we were there. It is truly serene.



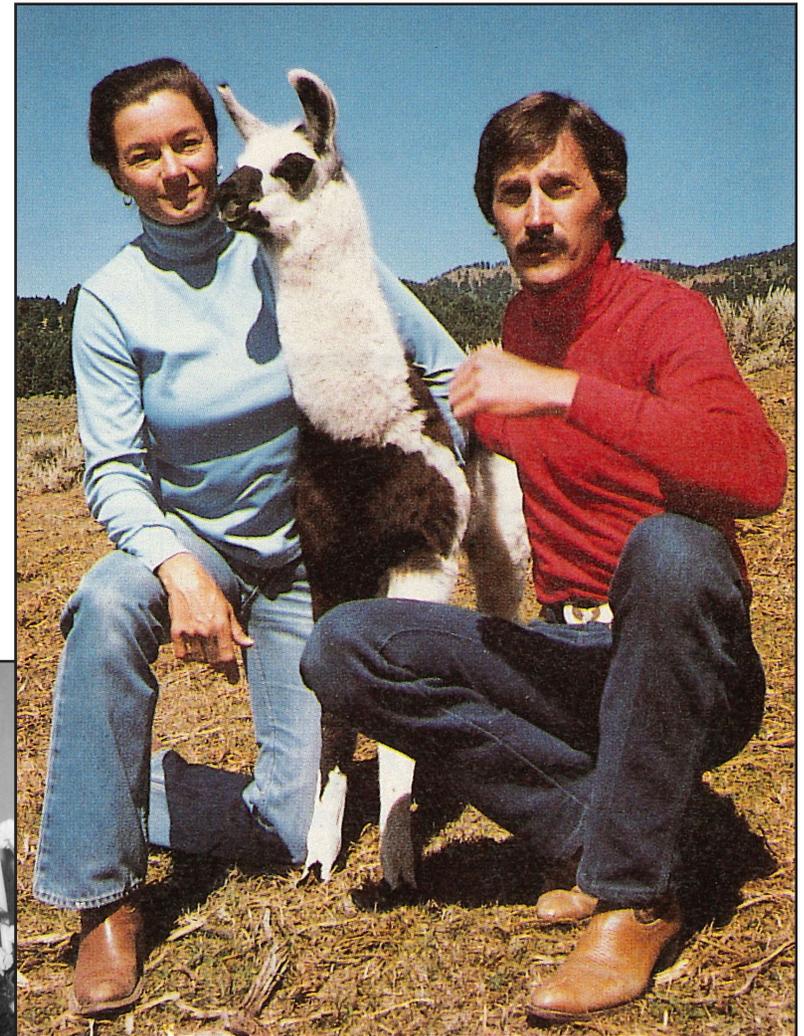
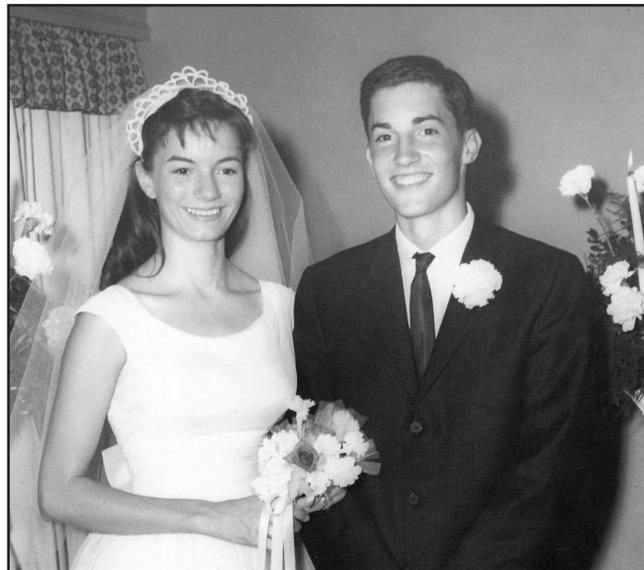


The Taylors were very welcoming and friendly when we arrived. Paul is charismatic, and is a natural storyteller. He could easily grab and hold the attention of a room, though he has stated that he is more shy than he seems. Throughout their llama breeding careers Paul has attempted to stay out of the spotlight, but the spotlight has found him anyways. Sally is more quiet, in a “still waters run deep” kind of way. At times during the interview she would gaze off into the horizon, and I feared that she didn’t find my questions interesting. Then Paul would lose his train of thought and Sally would pick up right where he left off and add in a dozen compelling details.

### Rama Llama Ding Dong

“We got involved almost as a joke,” Paul said of the first llama purchase he and Sally made. “We were living on five acres in Sebastopol, California and we had a couple of steers and pigs. We got quite attached to the pigs actually, but had to have them slaughtered; they got too big. We were doing all the things you could do on five acres with livestock. My nephew said, ‘Well, what are you gonna do next, get a llama and name it Rama Llama Ding Dong?’ Which were the words to a song that was popular at that time. And so we started checking into it and we did find a male for sale in Central Oregon. We made the trip up there and got this guy and named him Rama, Rama Llama Ding Dong.”

At the time the Taylors were running their own dental office, Paul was the dentist, and Sally was the office manager and dental assistant. Visitors to their small farm were riveted by their new addition. Paul and Sally took notice and they decided to try their hand at selling a few llamas. From their experience buying Rama they had learned that female llamas were expensive and hard to find, but males were affordable and readily available from most llama breeders. A trip was arranged to the Patterson Ranch in Sisters, Oregon to pick up some male crias that Sally



Above: Paul and Sally shortly after their move to Montana

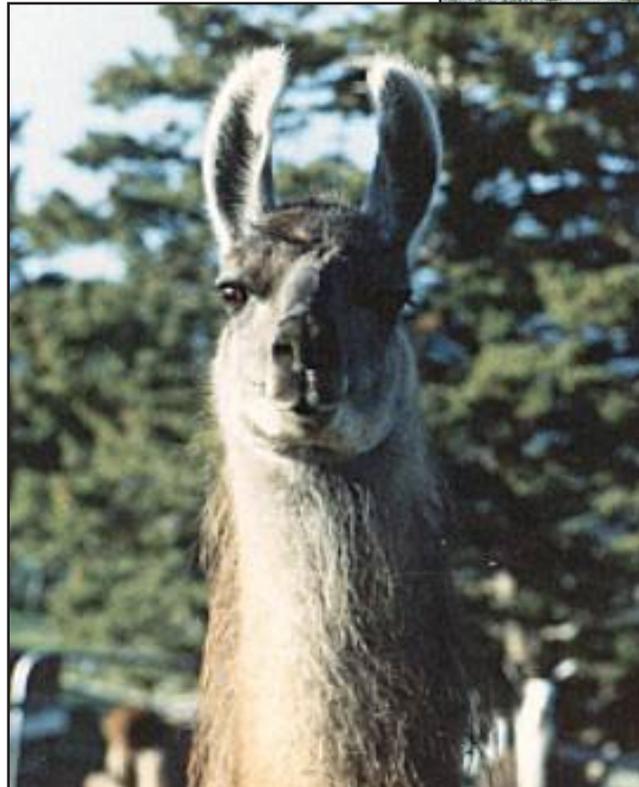
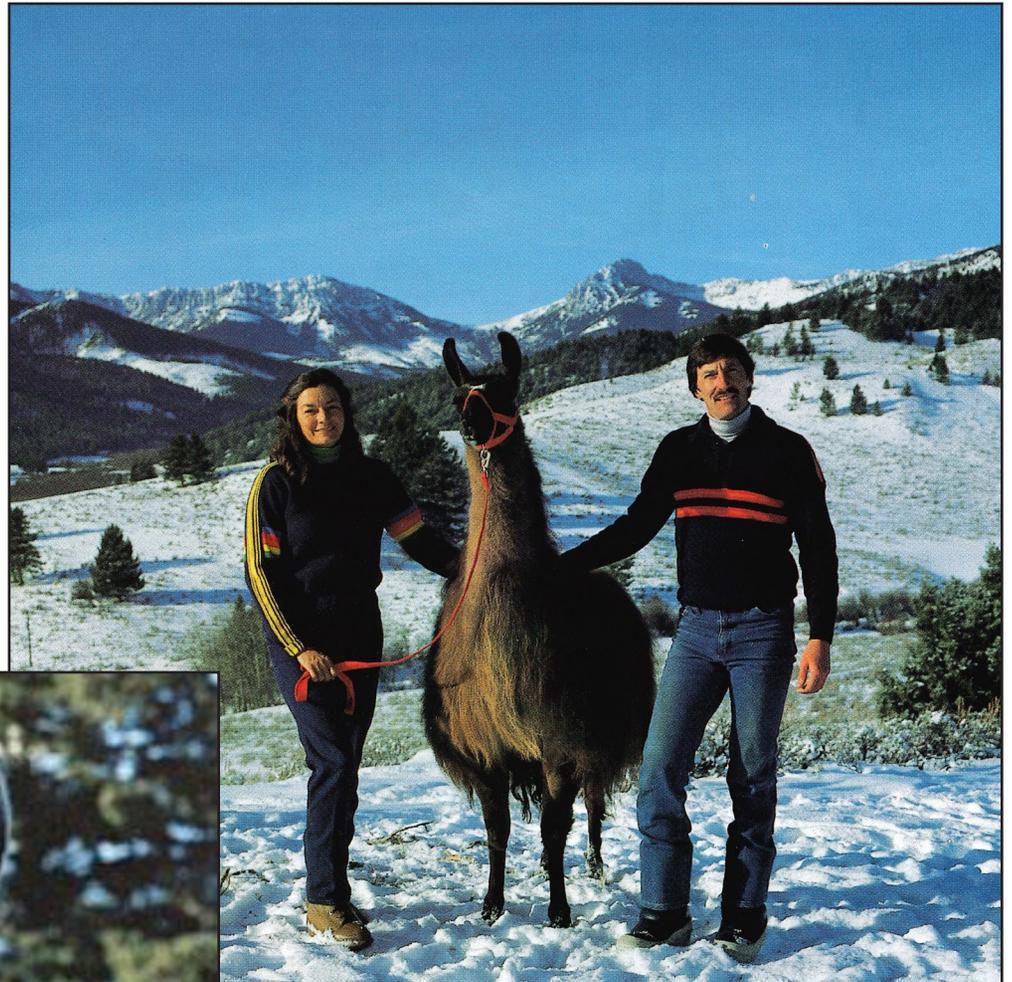
Left: Paul and Sally when the only thing they were leading experts in was being adorable newlyweds (1960)

and Paul would train and re-sell at a small profit. Paul explained, "Three different times we bought groups of ten weanling males from the Pattersons. We trained them to lead and then resold them in the Bay Area; we were near Santa Rosa. We learned an awful lot about llamas in that time."

Paul continued, "Eventually we realized if we had a female or two we could deduct all the expenses on the landscaping of the property. We had no hope of making any money."

I asked Paul and Sally what they were looking for in their first breeding stock and Sally responded, "We wanted long ears and four legs! They were what Taylor Phelps (of Tunitus Creek Llamas) used to call E.H.s, Egyptian Hairless. Long legged, short woolled. We bought two pregnant females and a baby female that was part guanaco."

Paul added, "We had two males by then and neither of them was what we would have considered breeding stock just a few years later. The two females we got were not really breeding stock either. But we had a foot in the door. We sold their offspring, and they helped us get the money to buy better animals." Eventually the Taylors' breeding herd in California numbered more than 40 llamas.



Above: One of the Taylors' early herdsires, Teddy. While his birthdate wasn't known it was estimated that Teddy lived to be more than 30 years old. The Taylors educated others on caring for geriatric animals as they helped Teddy in his later years.

Left: One of the Taylors' early llama purchases, Belladonna. Belladonna stayed in the Taylors' herd for many years, proving herself to be an outstanding producer. She is the dam of Mirabelle, who will be mentioned later in the article.

Teddy and Belladonna were bred together several times. This pairing produced Franklin in 1983, the sire of Garbo's Count Zorach and Crazy Mountain Man.

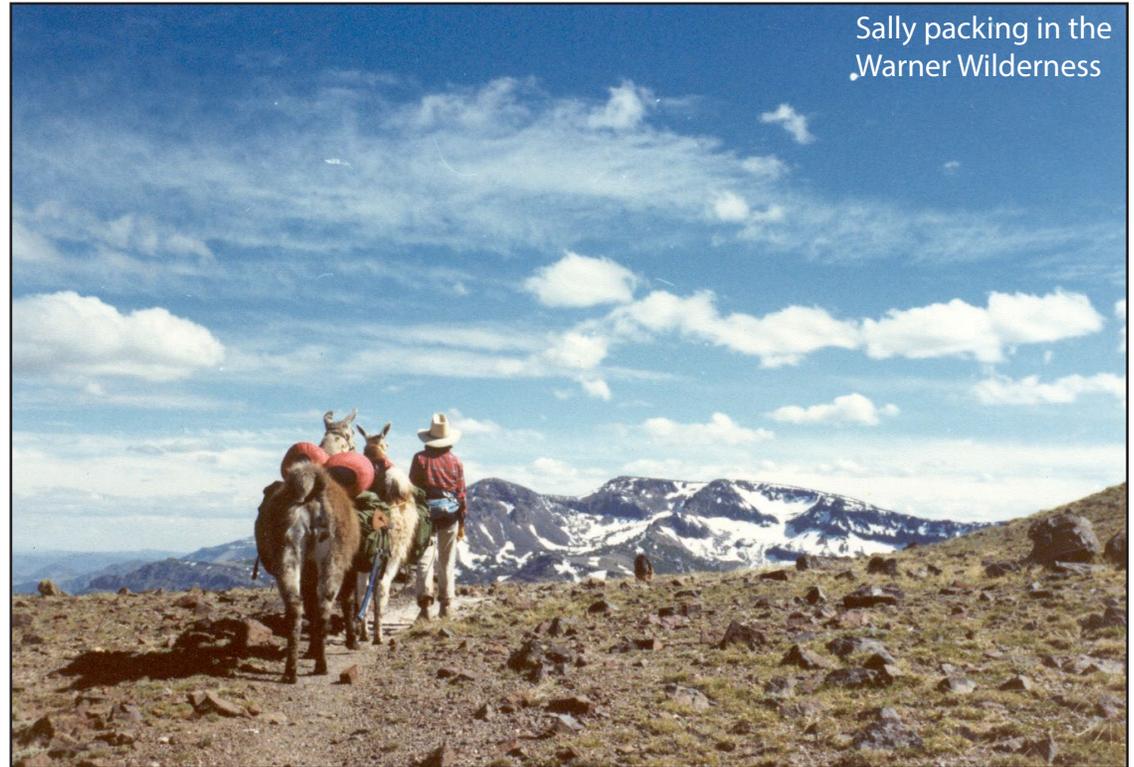
## Saint Sally of Sebastopol

The Taylors discussed the lack of information that was available about llamas at the time. "That was an interesting time," Sally said. "When we bought our llamas nobody knew anything. I mean no one even knew what the gestation period was, and the misinformation was just rampant." Veterinarians typically had little to no experience with llamas, very little information was available in literature, and the word "Google" was a couple of decades away from being invented. The only way to learn was by doing, and Paul and Sally Taylor were willing to dive in and learn.

"When we started we had a good veterinarian in California. His wife is still my best friend," Sally said. "He passed away about twenty years ago, but he helped me figure out what was going on and I wasn't afraid to roll my sleeves up and try things. And so we figured out ways to take care of the newborns and really maximize their survivability. So I just said, 'Well if anybody wants to call me I'll tell them what I know.' I wasn't going to try to protect that kind of knowledge if I could help somebody save their baby. We had a lot of calls through all the years, we'd been doing it for so long. I never minded. I didn't mind if they called me at two o'clock in the morning if it was something really important. To have somebody to reach out to can be a real good thing."

In reflecting on those fledgling years of the llama industry, Paul said, "I have to say that Sally was the most popular person in the whole llama community. There was no llama community to the extent that there wasn't any communication, no formal organization. A lot of people admired her because we were among the first llama breeders, we actually knew something about the animals, and because Sal was willing to help people. She's always been a great communicator. I was then and am now a recluse. I was socially distancing long before it was necessary." Paul laughs and continues, "Sally was far and away the most popular person in the llama phenomenon at that time."

Paul and Sally would eventually use their llama expertise, gained from years of learning by doing, to release a series of videos titled "All About Llamas." Their insights on training, feeding, breeding, birthing, and everything in between helped countless new llama owners.



Sally packing in the Warner Wilderness

# REFLECTIONS ON SAINT SALLY OF SEBASTAPOL

## BY SUE ROLFING

We met Sally Taylor in fall 1980. That summer, our first with llamas, Steve's experience packing with them as a forestry timber cruiser was so successful that we planned to offer llama pack trips in and near Glacier National Park. In preparation we went to Northern California to visit the only two commercial llama packers then operating: Guy Peto of Mama's Llamas and Stephen Biggs, near Mount Shasta.

At that time, there was virtually no literature on llamas in the English language. We pestered Stephen and Guy with endless questions, and they patiently answered all they could. Whenever we stumped them, the answer was inevitably, "Gosh, I don't know! You should ask Sally in Sebastopol."

We didn't know Sally, and we had never heard of Sebastopol, which is north of San Francisco. But they spoke of her with such reverence that I started calling her Saint Sally of Sebastopol. And of course we had to go find her, too. Sally truly was a saint. Back then, one of the impediments to llama ownership was the inaccessibility of expert help. Sally removed that barrier. She graciously answered her phone at all hours to calmly talk owners through their difficulties, and freely shared her knowledge, which surpassed that of many veterinarians, at conferences and events whenever asked. While she wasn't the only one to generously help new owners, she was certainly the model for many of us. And in many ways, she still is.

We were thrilled in 1983 when Sally and Paul moved to a spectacular ranch about six hours from us. Over the years our respect for them has only grown through a diversity of collaborations on committees and boards, conferences and events, breeding projects, family vacations, pack trips and even parrots.



Steve and Sue Rolwing  
with GNLC Merlin

## ILA & LANA

In the summer of 1980, the first conference of llama owners was held. A group of llama owners planned the conference and establishing a formal organization for llama owners was one of the top priorities of the conference.

The following year two different organizations were formed, first the Llama Association of North America (LANA), and later the International Llama Association (ILA). Paul and Sally remembered that LANA was primarily made up of small-time breeders and hobbyists. The ILA was created by some of the power brokers in the llama community, with Paul & Sally, Andy Tillman, and Richard & Kay Patterson among the founders. Some of the hobbyists in the LANA group criticized the for-profit llama breeders in the ILA, and some of the big-breeders in the ILA failed to consider the opinions of the “little guy.”

Paul and Sally did their best to keep a foot in both camps, attending the early meetings of both organizations. Paul strongly advocated for uniting these two groups when they were both in their infancy. Neither Paul or Sally could remember substantive differences in policy between the two organizations, instead it all came down to differences in personalities and goals. The two national associations never joined forces.

During our interview, Paul repeatedly shared his regret that his efforts to unite the two factions, and the two organizations, were unsuccessful. Paul went as far as to nominate one of the LANA founders as the president of the ILA, despite the fact that this person had previously sued the Taylors. With Paul’s support he was elected, though it did little to move the groups toward unity and the new ILA board removed Paul from the import/export committee.

## CIS

While LANA and ILA never united, Paul and Sally’s efforts at unity paid dividends in the creation of a unified llama registry, the International Llama Registry (ILR). Paul and Sally were the creators of the most successful prequel to the ILR, the Camelid Identification System (CIS). The CIS was a Taylor initiative, launched under the umbrella of the ILA. Paul explained, “The CIS wasn’t the first registry. It was the first registry that required any proof of anything; the first registry that wasn’t a hearsay registry.”

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Paul and Sally played a role in convincing llama owners that registration was necessary. When asked how they made their case, Paul said, “The market was beginning to take off at that point and people were paying attention. They saw that this had to happen.” Sally added that they had to show people “the importance of genealogy and sound breeding practices.”

To help convince people to register their stock, the Taylors and the ILA kept fees low to start, very low. Sally remembered, “We registered the first 3,000 at no charge. After that it was three or five dollars, I’ve forgotten. But that money went into the CIS, it didn’t come to us.”

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Paul told us that the CIS records were kept on an Apple 2 Plus, an early personal computer. He laughed as he described an hour long process to input data involving 7 or 8 floppy discs. He added, “But it got the job done. When the ILR came into being we were able to provide them with really good records that were verified and stood behind by the people who provided the information.”

In light of the disagreements between LANA and the ILA, it is important to note that a unified registry was not a forgone conclusion. If the Taylors and the CIS had refused to fold into the ILR there could be competing registries to this day. Instead, the ILR started on strong footing and has been able to outlast the handful of competitors that have popped up over time.

When the ILR was founded, Sally served as one of the original directors and continued to serve off and on for the next twenty years. I asked her what her goals were during her time on the board, “I was just trying to try to keep the peace. Like a mother hen getting all these little chicks together and keeping them going down the same road. Telling people to be careful with their animals and careful with their breeding. I wasn’t really in favor of seeing these huge prices and people getting into breeding llamas who had never owned anything more than a puppy, some of them not even that. I was worried about the health and welfare of the animals and what was going to happen to them.”

### **Llamas and Only Llamas**

Llama prices were continually on the rise as the Taylors expanded their llama breeding operation and began selling offspring of their own. What started as a small hobby-business for tax purposes quickly escalated into a profitable enterprise. Paul and Sally took out a bank loan to purchase ten additional females, and decided to reduce the hours at their dental practice from five days a week to three.

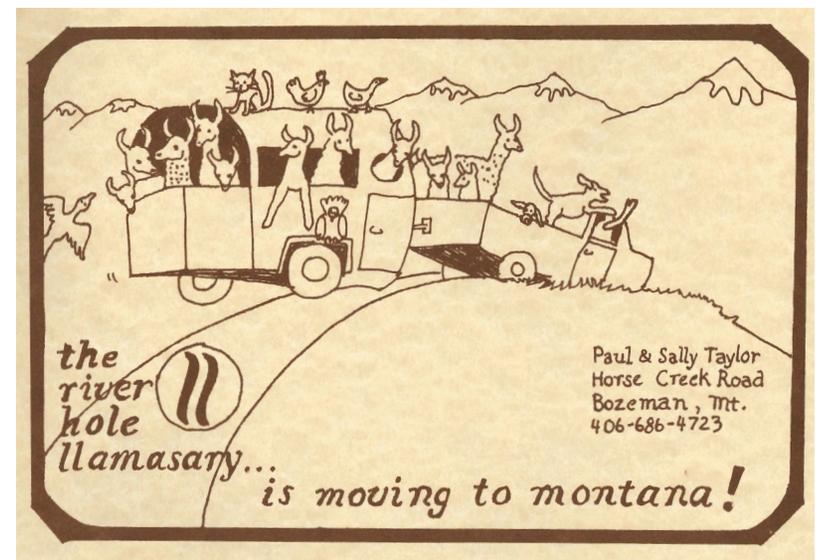
In 1983, the Taylors did something incredibly bold. They closed their dental practice for good, sold their house in California, and purchased a 20 acre ranch in Bozeman, Montana. Their plan was to earn their income for the foreseeable future from "llamas and only llamas."

"I didn't even renew my dental license," Paul said. "We were really committed." Without missing a beat, Sally joked about what a crazy idea this was as she said, "We should have been committed..."

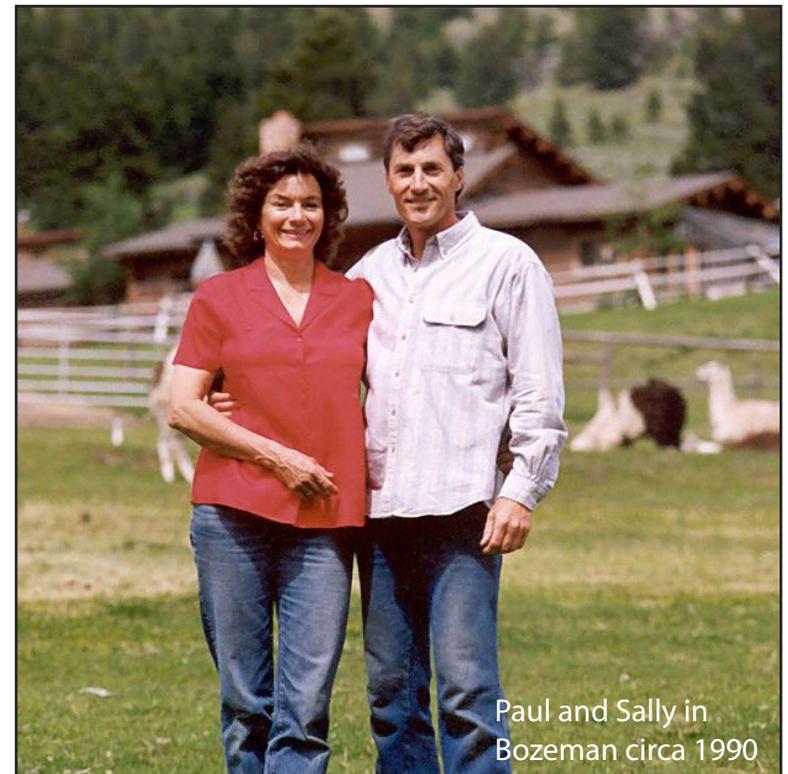
While their stories of daring adventures in South America, and various other escapades were more exciting, I think this decision in 1983 was the bravest thing they did. During the interview I was really drawn to this moment in their story, and I tried to get them to share their experience in making this huge decision. They largely shrugged these questions off. I got the impression that Paul and Sally feel that aggressively pursuing what you want in life ought to be a given, that their bold move wasn't worthy of attention. I asked them what their friends and family thought of this decision and Paul responded, "I don't recall. I'm not sure we cared."

Sally talked us through the logistics of their move, "We moved 49 animals in a double decker truck from California to Bozeman. My brother and Paul came up and made three pens. There were no fences, no barns, no nothing. Just the house. We had three pens so we could keep three males separate from the girls. And that's all we had, it was pretty hectic." In an interview with Llamas Magazine in 1986, Sally explained that the driver they hired to transport the llamas slept in the truck holding a loaded shotgun, because he was moving the most valuable cargo he had ever hauled.

Once in Montana, the Taylor Llama herd continued to grow and change. They refined what they were looking for in a llama and their selection criteria for new purchases became more strict. Paul shared that he believed the entirety of the herd they moved from California had been sold and replaced with new breeding stock within a few years. Sally told us, "At one point we had about 300 animals on the place. That included a herd of 100 that we boarded and managed for Bob and Margie Harrington. That was most we ever had and we had full time help then. It was a big deal and we had a lot of people coming to the ranch."



Above: Taylor Llamas ad in 3L Llama announcing their move



Paul and Sally in Bozeman circa 1990

## Fight Against Mass Importation

“THERE CAME A TRANSITION WHEN I REALIZED THAT OUR FUTURE DEPENDED ON THE LLAMA MARKET. I BECAME VERY INTERESTED IN THE LLAMA MARKET AND DECIDED TO DO WHATEVER I COULD TO PROTECT IT. THAT’S ABOUT THE TIME I REALIZED THAT MASSIVE IMPORTATION WOULD DESTROY THIS FUTURE THAT WE HAD PLANNED COMPLETELY.” - PAUL TAYLOR

1983 brought the first two importations of llamas to the US in over 50 years. Both were brought in from Chile through the high security quarantine center, the Harry S. Truman. At the same time, Chile was on the verge of receiving Foot and Mouth Disease free status by the US government. It was a long, arduous process that took nearly ten years. Upon receiving this status, llamas and alpacas would be eligible to be imported from Chile to the US through low security quarantine. Low security quarantine would have been much less expensive, but also brought more risk of disease transmission. Paul argued that the borders in South America were not secure. Just because Chile was Foot and Mouth Disease free, didn’t mean that the animals being imported hadn’t been walked over from a neighboring country the week before.

His most effective argument was with regard to the FMD test that was used at that time. “The argument I made was that nobody had ever done the research to know for sure that the bovine tests for FMD were accurate on camelids,” Paul said. “So the argument was that the llamas should be required to go through the high security quarantine until this research was validated. The counter argument was, ‘You’re only making this argument because of your economic interests in the llama market.’ And the counter I had to that was, ‘Yes, but I’m right.’ I got the signatures of 48 of the 50 state veterinarians on a petition saying exactly that.”

Paul traveled to Chile on behalf of the ILA to discuss llama import and export with Chilean authorities. He told us that the Chileans were very proud of the FMD free status that they had worked so hard to achieve, so he had to speak carefully. He told them about the petition signed by the state vets, and that it could slow down Chile’s FMD free status. He explained that the ILA would support Chile receiving FMD free status if they agreed to voluntarily require camelids to go through high security quarantine. Though no formal agreement was reached, the Chileans eventually followed through with the request.

The FMD test at the center of Paul’s argument would eventually be proven to be accurate in camelids, but the warnings from Paul and the state vets were certainly justified. The consequences of a few FMD positive llamas being allowed into the country would have been disastrous for all US livestock breeders. The leading importer of the day, Tom Hunt, found himself allied with Paul in his crusade. It was to Tom’s benefit for the path to importation to be difficult and expensive, as it prevented competitors from entering the fray. The actions of Paul and Sally Taylor helped to prevent a rash of importations from happening in the high dollar days of the US llama industry.

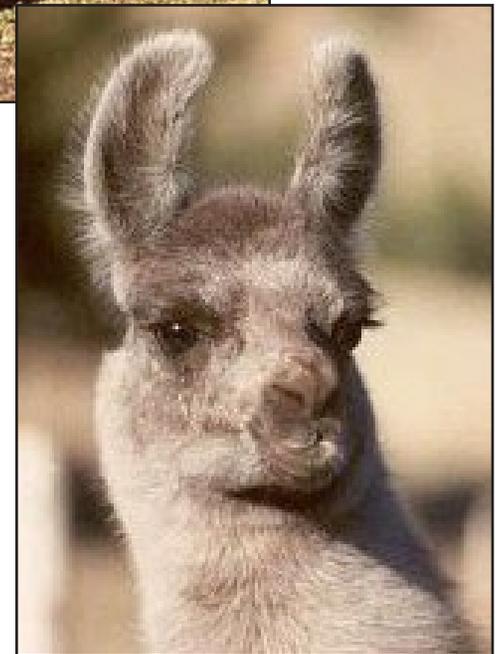
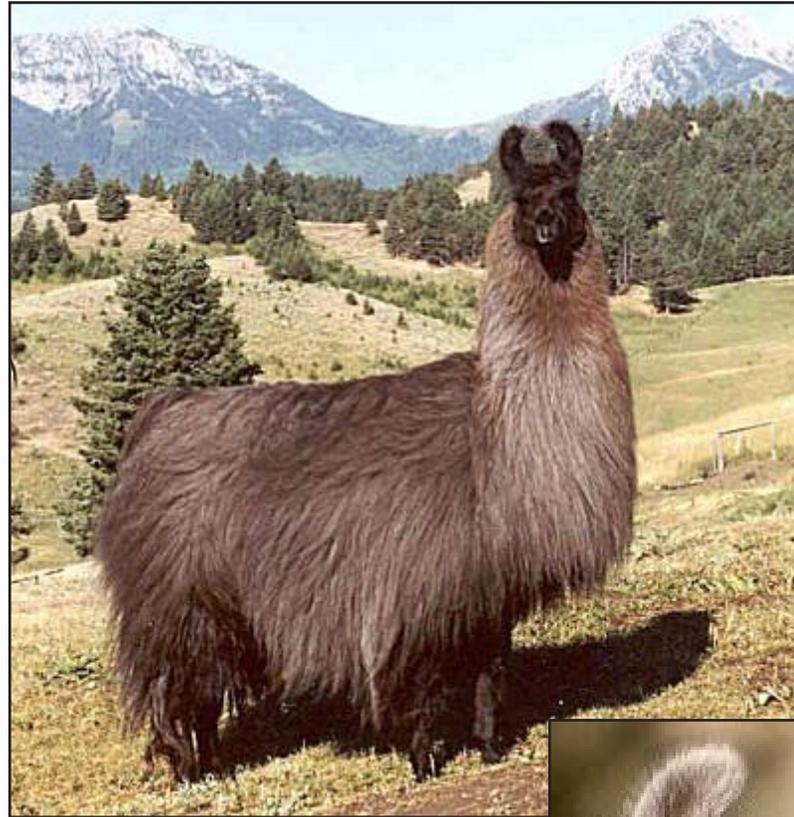
## Fidoosh

In 1984, as the Taylors were nearing their tenth year as llama breeders, their program hit new heights. A showy male cria with a gorgeous silver-gray color and long banana ears was born. They named him The Fiduciary, and forevermore that name was to be mentioned in the same breath as Taylor Llamas. Fiduciary sired two offspring that sold for more than \$100,000 at public auction, GNLC Prospectus and the highest selling female of all time, Mirabelle. He would go on to sire 344 registered offspring, a record that is unlikely to ever be broken.

Both of his parents had black and white tuxedo markings, and neither were particularly “long woolled,” which was en vogue at the time. His dam was an athletic light-wool female, bred by some small breeders in Wyoming. Sally remembered, “(Tiffany) was amazing, you could breed her to a Golden retriever and get a beautiful llama. She had one really nice baby after another.” Paul added, “She was pretty but plain. You wouldn’t have picked her out of a lineup. She would have never won a show.”

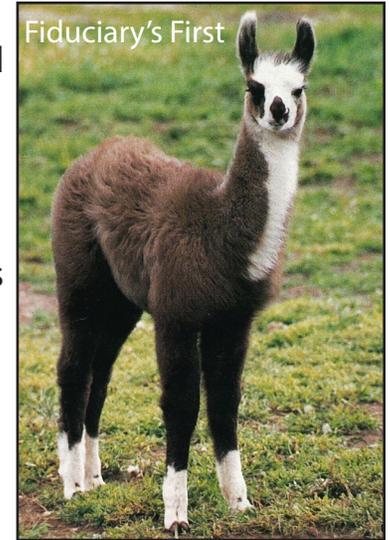
The Taylors leased his sire from the Safleys. His name changed a few times in the years before the ILR was founded, but was eventually recorded as Oak Hill Clyde after he was purchased by Richard and Pamela Freeman of Oak Hill Ranch. Clyde was bred by the Lindemanns of Catskill Game Farm, purchased by the Pattersons, and then re-sold. When I asked Paul about their decision to breed Tiffany to Clyde he said, “When I saw Tiffany I was going to buy her no matter what... We brought her home and bred her to Clyde. We can’t even claim any special talent in making the decision who to breed her to. That was the best stud we had available, that was our first chance to breed her, and Fiduciary was the result.”

In his 2005 tribute to The Fiduciary, Paul wrote about that fancy gray cria they found in the pasture in 1984, “From the day we came home to find him lying beneath his mother... we knew he was special. That was not just because he was a rare light gray color and

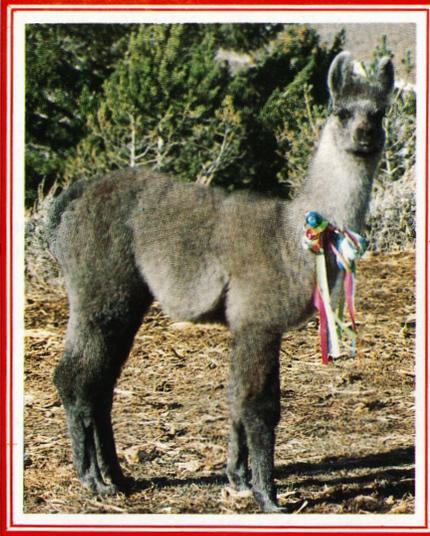


well conformed, but because he had a presence and an awareness that we had never seen before. He was a unique animal and he commanded respect and admiration from the beginning.” We asked Paul when he knew that Fiduciary was going to be a once-in-a-lifetime kind of llama and he said, “You’re going to think I’m exaggerating, but I think I knew the day he was born.”

Flipping through the old llama publications you can see the Taylors’ photogenic young stud advertised from a very young age. The name Fiduciary was known throughout the llama community long before his first crias hit the ground. Paul and Sally recalled that some llama owners told them that Fiduciary would never sire crias that were as beautiful as he was and that gray was a recessive gene and wouldn’t show up in his offspring. Fiduciary did not take long to prove his doubters wrong. His first cria, named “Fiduciary’s First” was a beautiful gray and white tuxedo, born to Bob and Margie Harrington. Also among his first group of crias was Mirabelle, a gray female who closely resembled Fiduciary.



WE ASKED PAUL WHEN HE KNEW THAT FIDUCIARY WAS GOING TO BE A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME KIND OF LLAMA AND HE SAID, “YOU’RE GOING TO THINK I’M EXAGGERATING, BUT I THINK I KNEW THE DAY HE WAS BORN.”



*Seasons Greetings from*  
**Taylor Llamas**  
Quality Breeding Stock  
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Paul & Sally Taylor  
14666 Horse Creek Rd.  
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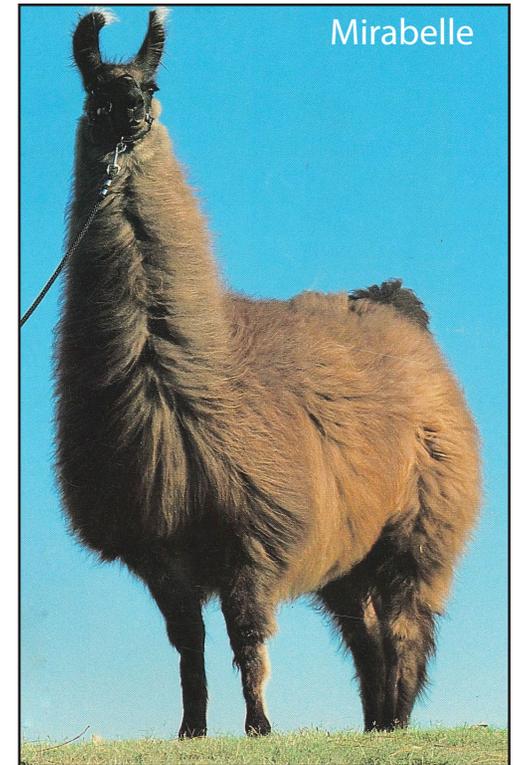
52000 / THE FIDUCIARY  
50373 / Clyde x 50024 / Tiffany)

Taylor Llamas ad in 3L Llama Winter 1984, featuring The Fiduciary, who had just been born that September.

Mirabelle was consigned to the first Celebrity sale in 1989, and became the highest selling female llama to date at \$170,000. We spoke to Sally and Paul about that exciting time. Paul told us about a surreal moment where he found himself sitting between a Vanderbilt and a Nordstrom at a dinner before the sale, both of them already competing to own the beautiful llama that he and Sally had bred. The next day Iris Vanderbilt-Christ would be the winner with the record setting price. Sally was the person at the end of the lead-rope when Mirabelle sold. She said, "I was just clueless that she would bring that much. When we went there someone asked, 'What would you like to get for Mirabelle?' and I said, 'Oh my God, if we could get \$20,000 for her I'd be over the moon.' I couldn't believe it, just couldn't believe it. I was astonished."

The following spring Tom Hoffmaster visited the Taylor Ranch while building his Mill Creek Farm herd. Paul remembered, "He looked around at the best of our babies and we had one great Fiduciary male baby. He was gray and gorgeous; we had named him Full On. Tom wanted Full On and asked us to put a price on him. We didn't want to sell him so we said, '100 grand', and thought that would be the end of the conversation. Well, he bought him! That made quite a difference for us (financially)."

Fiduciary's stud fee was set at \$5,000, which was a common fee for the top studs in the industry at that time. He would end up servicing nearly 200 outside females, almost all at the advertised \$5,000 fee. Eventually the Taylor's built a separate paddock and shed for visiting females. For six years he was the highest paid stud of any species in the state of Montana.



In addition to selling the highest selling female at the the first Celebrity sale, the Taylors were also a part of the newly formed "Catman Associates," a group of several Montana breeders who purchased GNLC Catman in partnership for the record price of \$175,000.

Pictured is Steve and Sue Roling, who consigned Catman, and Iris Christ, who purchased Mirabelle.

Fiduciary's first public appearance (off the ranch) came at 13 years of age. In his younger years llama shows and auctions were not commonplace yet, and as he began his career as a stud he became very territorial toward other males. As he aged he grew more comfortable around other males, and in 1997 the Taylors decided that Fiduciary would make the trip with them to Oklahoma City as they sold one of his daughters at the Celebrity Sale. It was a raging success. Llama owners were literally lining up for a chance to take Fiduciary, or "Fidoosh" as he was known by that time, for a loop around the grounds. Paul described a system where one adoring Fiduciary fan passed the lead rope off to another throughout the day, and Paul and Sally were hardly involved.

Later on, during the '97 auction, came a moment that both Paul and Sally listed as their proudest memory in their more than 45 years as llama owners. Paul described it in his 2005 Tribute to the Fiduciary:

"When it came time for our consignment to sell (one of his daughters) we arranged for Fidoosh, as the sire, to be led into the sales ring behind the sale animal as was common in those days. Sally led the young female in when her lot number and name were announced. There was some confusion about who was the buyer of the previous lot, so Tom and Tim were a little distracted and didn't get organized to announce the entrance of The Fiduciary. I was leading him, and I decided to give him a slack line, just walk along beside him and see what he did. He walked straight out to the front and center of the stage, pushed his chest against the velvet rope and scanned the audience from one side to the other. Still nobody had announced him, but a few people in the audience recognized him, were riveted by his presence, and began to applaud. Fidoosh stood stock-still and watched as the applause swelled. "The Fiduciary, ladies and gentlemen," Tom Simmons finally said as he realized what was happening. The audience rose, everyone, really, giving him the only standing ovation I ever saw given to a llama at Celebrity. When it was over, he turned and led me off the stage without looking back."

In describing that moment from over 20 years ago Paul said, "It gave me chills then and it gives me chills to think about it now. He was in command of that group."

"IT GAVE ME CHILLS THEN AND IT GIVES ME CHILLS TO THINK ABOUT IT NOW. HE WAS IN COMMAND OF THAT GROUP."



## Fiduciary meets his final cria, named Fiduciary's Last



During our interview Paul and Sally reflected on the llama who had such a meaningful place in their lives.

Paul: "He was lovable. Of all the llamas that I've come in contact with over the years I had the closest relationship with Fiduciary. Very mellow disposition, produced babies with beautiful faces and mellow dispositions."

Sally: "He was cool. On our way to that (1997) Celebrity Sale we stopped for lunch at a big truck stop that had quite a big parking lot. I was making the sandwiches in the back of the pickup truck and I looked out and Paul just turned Fiduciary loose in the parking lot. I thought, 'What the hell is happening?!' But he just kind of wandered around for a while. Then he came over and stood by the truck and we put him back in the trailer."

As Fiduciary reached the age of 20 his health started to fail. He was losing weight and having trouble standing; the Taylors knew their time with this special llama was coming to an end. One day they decided to let him out with a group of moms and babies (he was no longer capable of breeding). This move brought him a second wind and they were able

to enjoy a few more weeks with him interacting with the crias and dams. He was even able to meet his final cria, named Fiduciary's Last. One day he was waiting by the gate, asking to go back to the pasture where he had spent many years posing for photos and showing off with his front legs up on the fence. His health declined quickly from there and the Taylors made the difficult decision to put him to sleep. The Fiduciary passed on a few months before his 21st birthday.

In September of 2005, Paul wrote a short note on the Taylor Llamas website announcing the loss, "We buried him in his pen, only a few feet from the spot where he loved to stand up on the fence when he was in his prime. There was a bad moment when Sally and I stood at the graveside to say goodbye and thank this once-magnificent animal for all he had done for us. Up 'til that point we had been occupied with doing what had to be done, but then the reality hit us that we would never see him again when we looked out the back window, and visitors to the ranch wouldn't find him ready to pose for photos on the hillside."

During our visit we wandered Fiduciary's pasture, stood in his stall, and took photos of his statue. We discussed the big impact he had through his 344 offspring, and the much larger influence he had by giving generations of llama breeders an archetype llama to aim for in their program.



## The Temuco Project

“THOSE WERE THE MOST EXCITING, MEMORABLE ADVENTURES OF OUR LIVES, THOSE TRIPS TO THE ALTIPLANO. 50 OR 60 MILES FROM THE NEAREST GRAVEL ROAD, WE JUST TOOK OFF ACROSS THE SAND IN THE HIGH COUNTRY BETWEEN CHILE AND ARGENTINA AND ALONG THE BOLIVIAN BORDER. THAT’S WHERE THESE EXOTIC LLAMAS WERE FOUND.” -PAUL TAYLOR

The Taylors herd had changed a lot between the height of Fiduciary’s popularity and his passing in 2005. By that time, the majority of the Taylors herd had been selected or selectively bred in South America and imported from Chile.

During his first trip to Chile for the ILA, Paul was introduced to a man named Heinrich Von Baer. Paul said, “He was keenly interested in llamas. He had come to this conclusion that Chile had a valuable resource in the llamas and wanted to do things to help the people on the altiplano.” The Taylors and the Von Baer family reached an agreement that Paul and Sally would help to select an elite breeding herd from the altiplano, and those animals would be brought to the Von Baers’ ranch in Temuco, Chile. Eventually the llamas produced in Temuco would be used to improve the llama population in Chile and in the US via importation. The plan was given a name, “The Temuco Project,” and the llamas were registered with “de Temuco” as an identifier.

I asked Paul and Sally what the difference was between their importations and the earlier importations that they had fought against. Sally told us, “We were very selective and I’m proud of that. We were intent on only bringing the best animals we could possibly bring and only a few at a time.” They would arrange for three importations to the US, and altogether they imported less animals than one of the early importations by Tom Hunt.

The second key difference is that they had strict selection criteria. Paul and Sally told us about their selection process, which involved quickly sorting the “maybes” from the “definitely nots,” and then doing a thorough inspection of those animals in less than 2 minutes each. Paul estimated that they didn’t purchase more than one in every 250 animals that they were shown. Not only were they very selective about who they purchased on



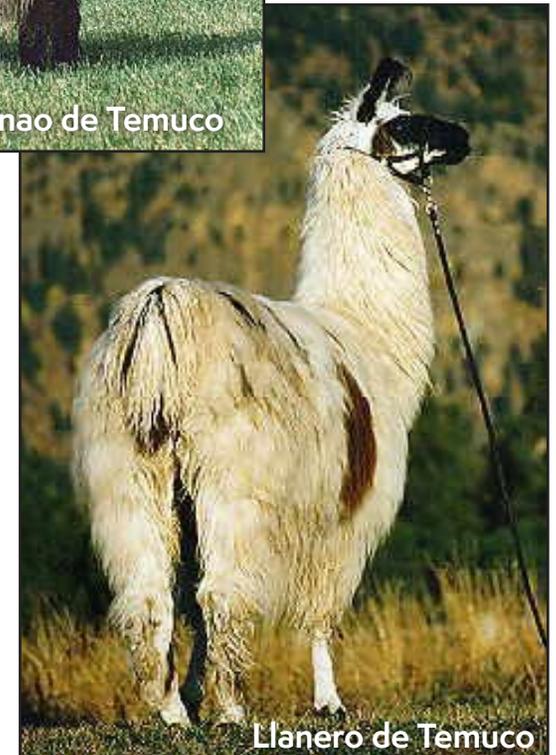
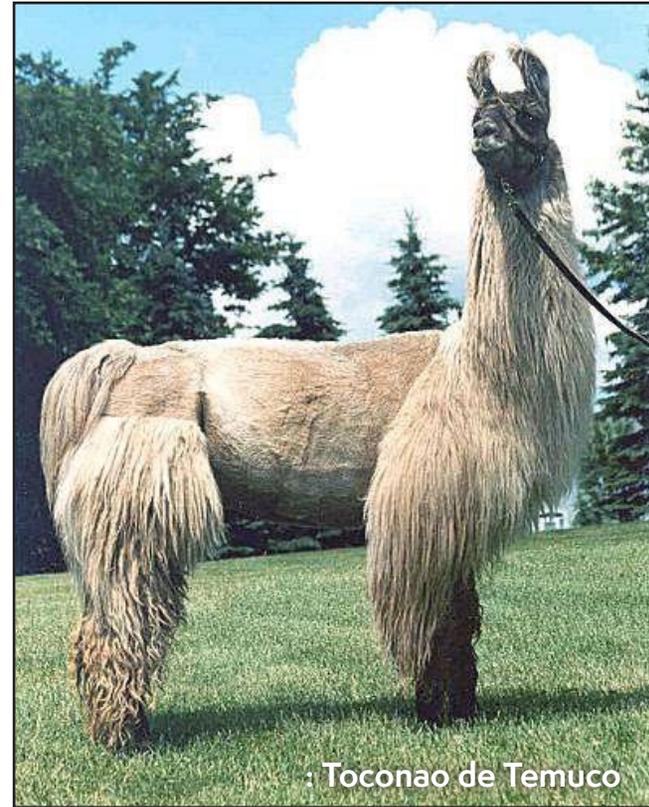
Sally selecting llamas in Argentina

the altiplano, but the majority of the animals they selected were not imported. The selected llamas were bred at the Von Baer ranch in Temuco, and later at Llamichos in Argentina. Initially, only offspring of these animals were imported, and then later some of the excellent proven animals that were selected in Chile and Argentina were brought into the US as well.

The first selection trip came in 1991 with Paul and four other llama owners. The group had begun to call themselves "The Five Amigos." Paul said, "Steve Rolfing, Brad Sprouse, Taylor Phelps, Stosh Thompson and I went down there and met with Heinrich. Heinrich had arranged to take us on a tour of the altiplano in (Chile's) first region. Chile is made up of regions; I think there are 12 regions stacked one on top of another in this country that's only about 70 miles wide. The first region is the farthest North. It includes most of the Atacama Desert and borders Peru straight to the North and Bolivia out to the northeast. Heinrich was an important man in Chile... he had a lot of national influence and he had arranged for important people to be our contacts in the first region. So this little group of Americans toured around and looked at lots and lots of llamas. The llama herds in the first region had already been pretty badly picked over by Tom Hunt and they were almost all of the ccara type."

The Five Amigos did select some animals from the first region, and arranged for them to be transported to Temuco. Paul and Sally participated in one additional selection trip in Chile's first region, selecting about 70 animals in total. The Taylors did not see a need to return to select animals in Chile's first region for the foreseeable future.

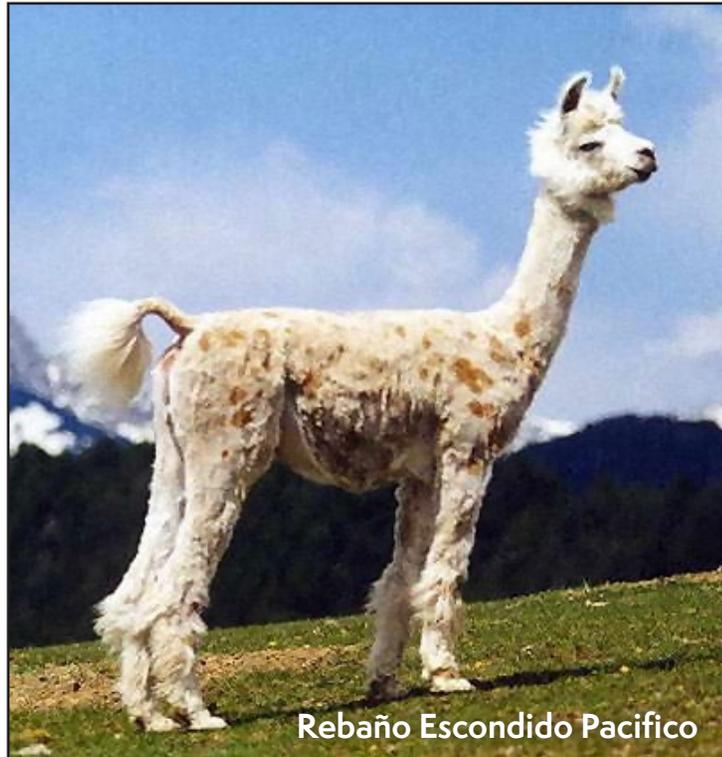
In 1994, a select group of the "de Temuco" animals were imported to Montana. Among the most impactful was Tocanao de Temuco, who was retained by Paul and Sally. He was a gray male with great ears, and bore a glancing resemblance to the Fiduciary. Another important Temuco Project male was Llanero de Temuco. Llanero became an integral part of the Great Northern Ranch program, and is GNLC Merlin's maternal grandsire. Both of these males were selectively bred and born at the Von Baers' ranch in Temuco; born of parents that the Taylor's selected on the altiplano.



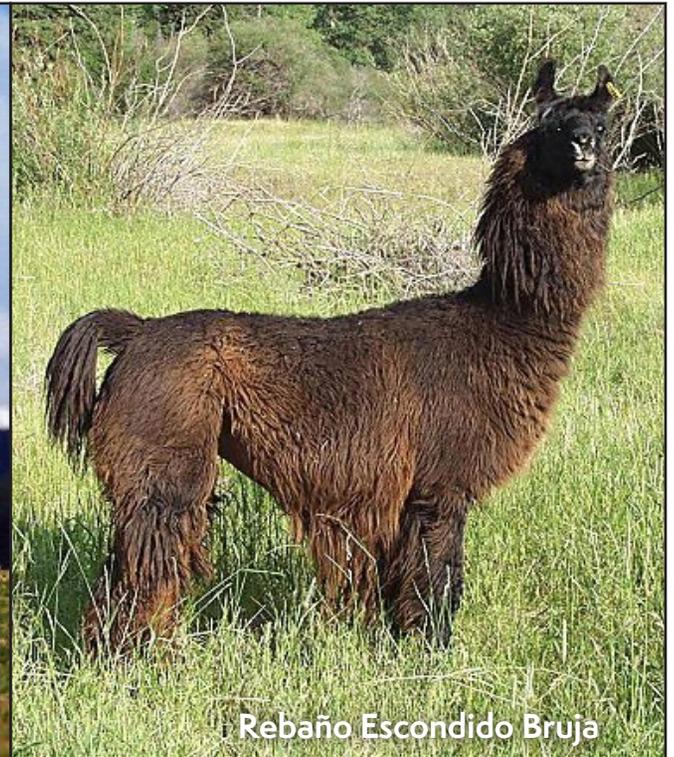
## The Hidden Herd

After the 1994 importation, the Temuco Project herd was in need of an infusion of new llamas. This time arrangements were made for Paul and Sally to select animals in Chile's second region. During this trip Paul and Sally found llamas that were unlike any they had seen in North America. Paul said, "We found a lot of these animals that were more exotic, had good bone, big feet, and dense fiber. These interesting ones I'd say, 'Where did this one come from, and the guys would point East toward Argentina. So we started to call it the 'Argentine Type.' In the second region, the animals had not been picked over by Hunt or any other gringo, so that's where we focused."

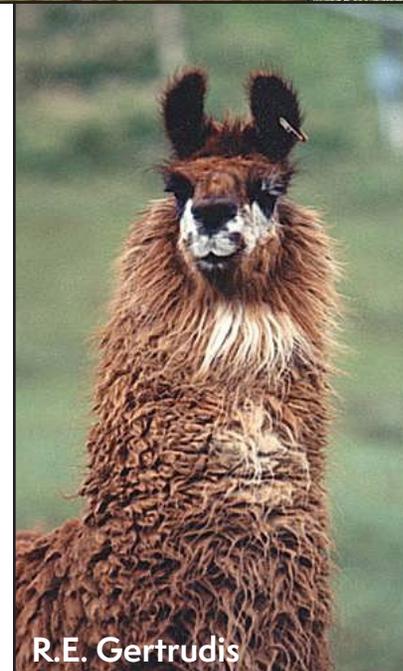
Paul and Sally selected many animals of the Argentine type while in the Second Region, and labeled the group the "Rebaño Escondido," which means "Hidden Herd." Paul said that the Rebaño Escondido animals were "some of their favorite llamas" looking back. Many Rebaño Escondido animals were imported to the US as well, and continue to have an impact on the US llama industry. Among the most impactful of these animals was Rebaño Escondido Pacifico, an exotic appaloosa who was exemplar of the Argentine type. These exotic Argentine-type llamas became Paul and Sally's focus during their time in Chile, back home in Montana, and eventually in Argentina.



Rebaño Escondido Pacifico



Rebaño Escondido Bruja



R.E. Gertrudis



Rebaño Escondido Nubarron



Paul called these llama selection trips “The most exciting, memorable adventures of our lives.” Paul and Sally shared a story from their selections in Chile that I found especially charming and entertaining.

Sally: One time the clutch went out on this little truck thing that we had.

Paul: Let me backup. (The first vehicle we ever owned) had a hydraulic clutch so there was a hydraulic line hanging down. Several times that got ripped off or broken or whatever and then you just didn’t have a clutch. So I knew how to drive a vehicle without being able to clutch.

Sally: We’d have to stop kind of on a little bit of a hill and I’d get out to push.

Paul: Luckily it had a good starter motor and a good battery or we could not have pulled this off, because you had to start it in gear.

Sally: The clutch went out right away, we were barely out of the village.

Paul: We carried on like that for four days. In some of these places where everybody had to be out pushing to allow this to get started one or two people didn’t make it back in the vehicle. Of course you couldn’t pause at all. You’d have to circle around back by slowly with the doors open.

If you are having trouble picturing the above scenario, I strongly recommend the movie *Little Miss Sunshine*.

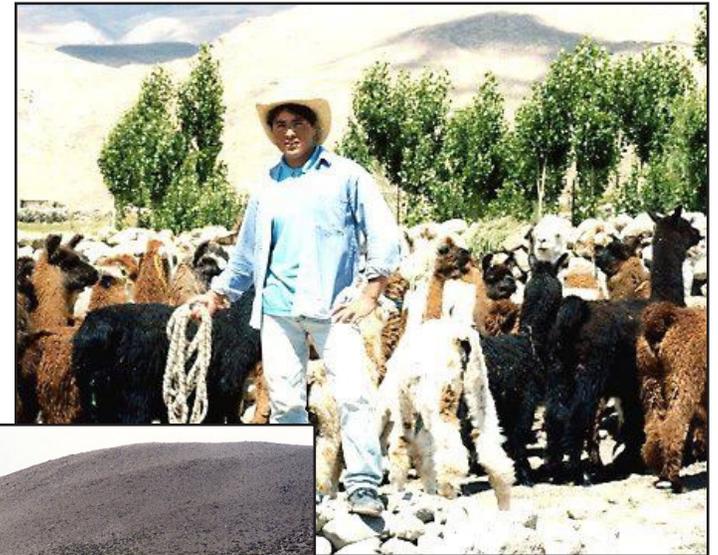


## In Search of the Perfect Llama

After continually hearing that more exotic llamas could be found in Argentina, the Taylors made efforts to select llamas there as well. They found a commercial llama herd in Buenos Aires to serve as their partners in Argentina. The program, owned by a company called Llamichos, selected llamas for meat and wool. Llamichos had many animals meeting the Taylors' selection criteria, though they did not breed for beautiful heads or nice ears. The Taylors purchased some of the finest llamas from the Llamichos herd, and Llamichos agreed to assist the Taylors with selecting llamas from the Argentine altiplano.

On their final selection trip in Argentina, the Taylors found themselves in the predicament that we began this article with. Paul described what happened after they made it past that switchback in his article *In Search of the Perfect Llama in Argentina*, "We made the final steep traverse to the ridge without further incident. We stopped the truck and looked around. Up here on top was a small shallow valley, only a mile or so across. It was a beautiful scene, with vivid green grass and a small lake. A few flamingos walked around in the shallow water at the edge of the lake... We began a gradual descent into a huge valley. I was reminded of the legend of Shangri-la, the mythical high valley in the mountains of Tibet. This place was beautiful, and its isolation and inaccessibility added to the sense of unreality that we often feel at high elevation in the Andes."

The llamas they found in the valley did not disappoint, and several were purchased to add to their growing herd of Argentine-type llamas. It was not possible to import the llamas directly from Argentina to the US, so the Taylor's new Argentine llamas were first imported to the Von Baer's ranch in Chile. Paul explained that the importation process from Argentina to Chile was just as long and difficult as the process to move animals from Chile to the US. While llamas cross back



and forth between Chile and Argentina regularly without government intervention, the Taylors believe they were the first to have arranged for a legal importation from Argentina to Chile. Once the Argentine llamas arrived in Temuco they were selectively bred, and the best offspring were imported to the United States.

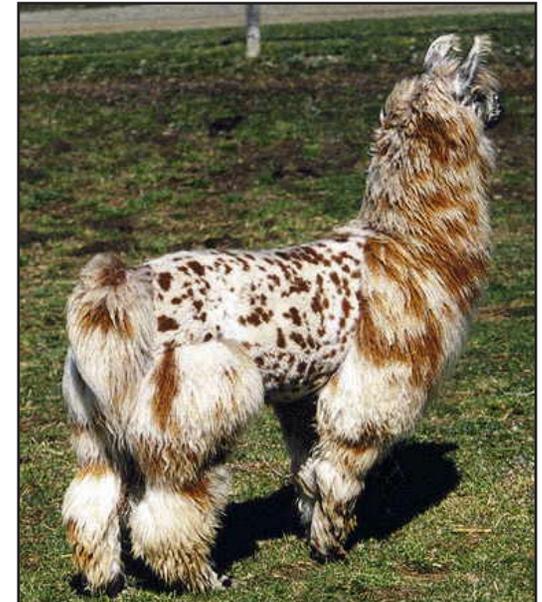
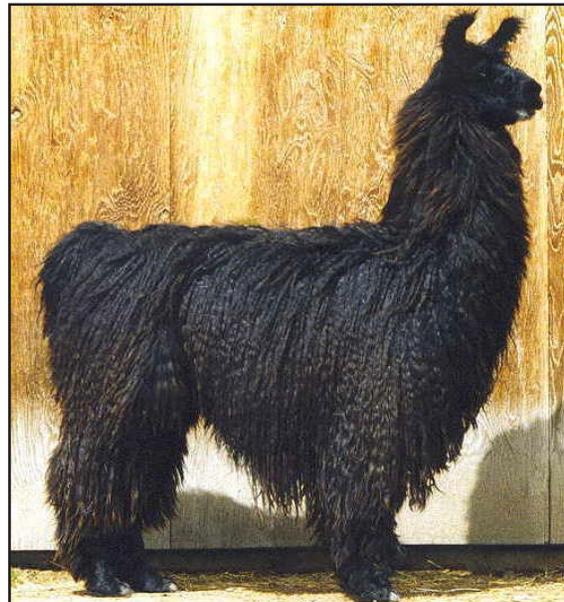
Among the first seven Argentine llamas imported was a trio of yearling males who were born in Temuco, though their parents were purchased from the Llamichos herd in Argentina. Argentine Kobra, Argentine Pecos, and Argentine Novio came to be called the “A-Team,” and the Taylors sold shares in these three exciting males to four other farms after they arrived in Bozeman. “Those guys were spectacular,” Paul said. “They were beautiful; good examples of the Argentine type.”

Kobra and Pecos went on to become two of the biggest building blocks in Argentine llama breeding. Novio, however, produced multiple defects and the majority of partners agreed to geld him at a young age. Paul explained that Novio wasn’t the only example of an exceptional imported llama who threw defective babies despite the Taylors rigorous selection criteria. They had similar problems with animals from the Temuco, Rebaño, and Argentine groups.

“The llamas we selected were very special and did not have any visible genetic defects,” Paul said. “But still the number of defects that turned up in some of their offspring was just really disappointing. Crushing. Some that were superstars by their appearance were just disasters genetically.”



Above: The “A-Team” as yearlings  
Bottom Left: Argentine Kobra  
Bottom Right: Argentine Pecos





Argentine Llamas (and a couple of cows) at Llamichos in Buenos Aires



Argentine Llamas in Temuco

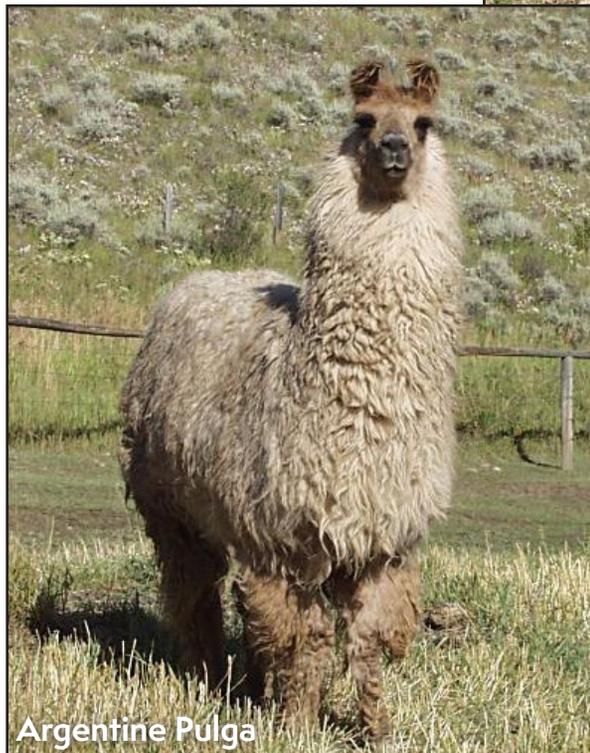
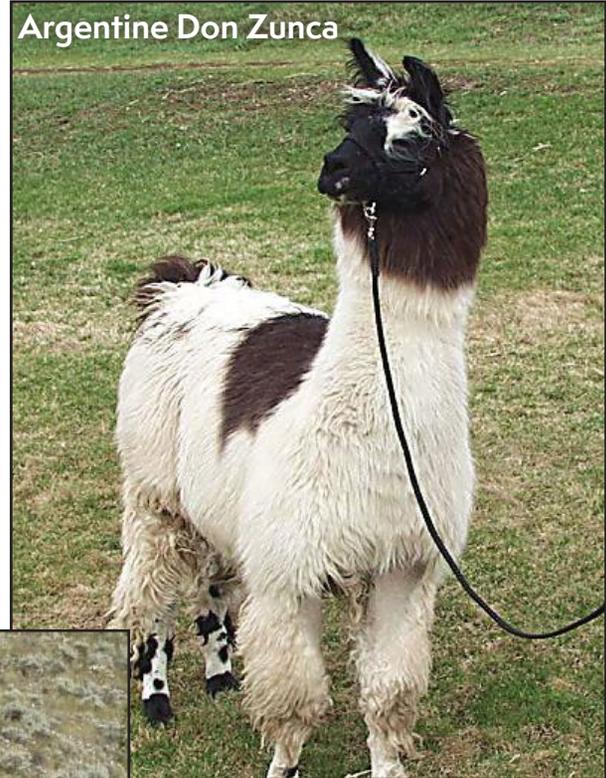
Sally added that this experience was not unlike the early days of sorting through the US llama gene pool, "The North American herd was mostly from the Catskill Game Farm and (William Randolph) Hearst and they just put a male out with a bunch of females. I wouldn't say that the North American gene pool was any better or any worse than the South American. We not only had to weed through the North American herd with problems of inbreeding and genetic defects and all of that, we did it with Chileans and Argentines too."

In the fall of 2000, the Taylors and their Partners in Chile and Argentina became concerned about the risk of FMD in the region. A decision was made to disperse the Temuco project herd, and the Argentine llamas. An auction was held at the Von Baers' ranch and was attended by many llama owners in the US including Randy Cipriano, Cheryl Cave, and Gayle Woodsum. The Taylors arranged for their final importation, bringing the purchases home for the buyers. Among the notable animals in this sale were Argentine Don Zunca and Argentine Saltarin.

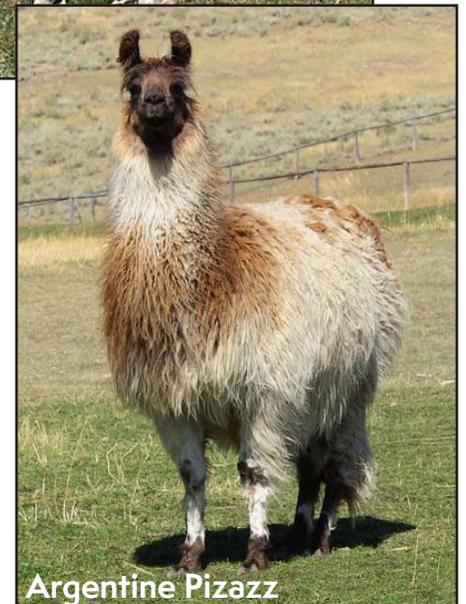
### Argentine Advice

We asked the Taylors how they would advise breeders to use the Rebaño and Argentine bloodlines that they worked so hard to bring to the US. "Most people want to keep the Argentines separate," Paul said. "That is destined to fail, it's the same problem the ccara breeders have. It's destined to fail if you can't introduce new genetics. And really the Argentine crosses were much more interesting to us. You pretty much knew what you were gonna get when you cross two red-brown Argentine llamas, you're going to get a red-brown."

Argentine Don Zunca



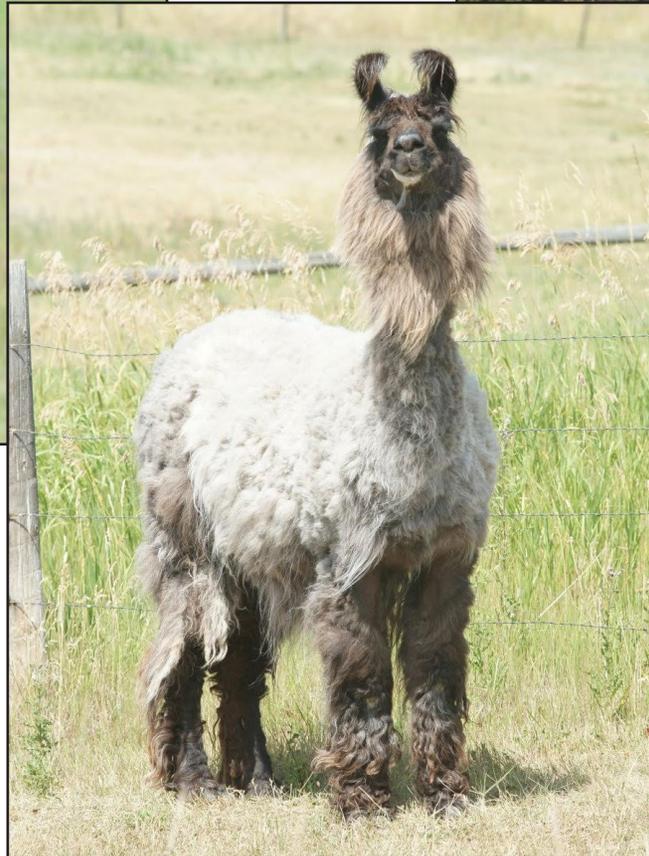
Argentine Pulga



Argentine Pizazz

Sally added, "No matter what the color the parents are, if you cross two Argentines together you may get red."

Paul continued, "I didn't make a big effort but I have kind of lobbied against staying inside those boundaries and not trying other kinds of crosses. Really I think a couple of the most interesting animals that we ever produced are the result of third generation crosses to Kantu mixed with some Rebaño and Argentine. The mixture resulted in animals that had true suri wool, very long necks and gentle dispositions. Some of the most interesting llamas we ever produced, ever saw really!"



Pictured are three of the Taylors' remaining llamas, those pictured are all crosses of Kantu line males and Argentine/Rebaño females.

Sally told us, "Llamas are just the most wonderful animals. There's no reason in the world for us to have ten llamas that I have to feed every day and worry about every day. But I would hate to not have one."

## Advanced Reproductive Technologies

“THAT WAS A HUGE ADVENTURE. NOT QUITE AS DANGEROUS AS SOME OF THE OTHER STUFF WE DID, BUT STILL QUITE AN ADVENTURE.”

-PAUL TAYLOR

Around the same time that the Taylors began their work in Chile, they became interested in Advanced Reproductive Technologies in llamas. They believed that effective use of these technologies could potentially eliminate live animal importations to the US, by providing a cheaper and safer alternative. They briefly experimented with artificial insemination (AI), and even had some AI offspring. Interestingly, they found that collecting semen from the male was the biggest obstacle to effective use of AI. They quickly moved their efforts to embryo transfer (ET).

For those who are unfamiliar, the term “Embryo Transfer” can conjure up visions of llamas laid out on surgical tables. This could not be further from the truth. “It’s a glorified enema,” Paul said, when I asked him to describe the procedure in layman’s terms. “You’re just putting liquid in.” In very simplified terms, embryo transfer is the process of fertilizing an egg inside of a donor female, flushing it out with saline solution, and transferring it to a recipient female who grows, births, and raises the cria as her own.

Embryo transfer is not a particularly invasive process for the llamas, but it is quite complicated. Paul joked that he hesitates to explain the process to people because he has reliably seen “their eyes roll back in their heads” after he gets a step or two into the process. It involves daily monitoring by ultrasound and palpation, a couple of well timed injections, and a lot of skill and luck to keep the recipient and donor females “timed” together.

The most uncomfortable part of the procedure for the llamas is rectal palpation, a procedure which concerned the Taylors initially, but eventually became routine. They had heard horror stories of veterinarians rupturing the rectum during procedures like this. With caution, and eventually years of experience, they never injured a llama during palpation.

EMBRYO TRANSFER IS THE PROCESS OF FERTILIZING AN EGG INSIDE OF A DONOR FEMALE, FLUSHING IT OUT WITH SALINE SOLUTION, AND TRANSFERRING IT TO A RECIPIENT FEMALE WHO GROWS, BIRTHS, AND RAISES THE CRIA AS HER OWN.

Over time Sally, who got the privilege of doing these procedures because her small, strong hands, grew to be incredibly skilled at palpating. She could determine whether an animal was bred, the size of follicles, and even which horn an embryo was being placed in with the ET gun- all by feel.

Sally described the llamas reaction to the procedure, "They were so good about it. I think almost 100% of the time they would just roll their eyes, if they could do that. A lot of times you didn't even have to tell him to lie down; they just walked in and lied down in the chute. They tolerated it. We were really careful with them, I don't think they were uncomfortable much."

When the Taylors started attempting embryo transfers there had only been a couple of successful ET pregnancies from experiments done by Universities. When they sought out advice from experts in llama reproduction, they were told that what they were trying to do was very unlikely to succeed. Undeterred they attended a training on cattle AI, subscribed to an embryology magazine, and invested in an ultrasound machine. It took nearly five years of trial and error, but finally it all paid off.

"I remember the first transfer where we saw a heartbeat on the ultrasound," Sally said, "And I started to cry, I cried for about four hours. I couldn't believe it. After all the work we'd done it finally happened. All the people that told us it couldn't be done. It was amazing." Sally listed that first heartbeat among her proudest llama related moments.

The Taylors used their favorite Argentine and Rebaño females as egg donors. The biggest practical benefit seemed to be that a great female could have more of an influence on their breeding program. The use of ET allowed great females to have multiple crias in a year, more offspring in their lifetime, and allowed the Taylors to repeat a successful cross multiple times in one year. One legendary dam, Argentine Machi, produced 22 crias in a five year period using ET technology. She was an impressive female in terms of her extreme type, but I asked the Taylors if there was anything special about her fertility that allowed her to be this prolific. Sally responded, "Every third or fourth flush she would give us two embryos, and for some reason her embryos seemed to be very viable. Quite often we got two pregnancies from one flush."

## RECTAL PALPATION: "GLOVING UP" AND MANUALLY FEELING THE OVARIES FROM ABOVE



Sally palpating while delivering an embryo.

I asked what the limit might be on the number of babies a female could produce using ET. Paul said, "Thirty" and I was relatively impressed. Then he clarified that, "Thirty or so in one year would be a practical limit." And my jaw was on the floor.

Of course the donor female is only half of the equation, the process also requires a recipient female. Paul explained, "There are some recipient females that you favor because they've got a track record of carrying transferred embryos. Some llamas are just far better at that and we don't know why. But it's very important in an embryo transfer program to be able to identify those females. They become quite valuable. They're not as valuable as the donors, maybe, but still very important." Paul told us that it was advisable to have at least two recipient females ready for each donor female, in case one of the recipients showed signs of infection or the donor produced more than one embryo.

The Taylors' recipient females were picked up for affordable prices wherever they could be found. Paul even said that one of their recipient females had fused toes, a genetic defect. She proved to be a good mother and milker and served them well as a recipient female. Paul estimated that only about half of the females they tried the procedure on were effective recipients.

Paul and Sally also shared memories of the strong bonds between the recipient mothers and their crias. Paul said, "The white female we have out here, her recipient mother was Dupli-Kate. They had such a close bond. A while back Dupli-Kate finally died of old age, she was almost 20. And this fully grown surrogate daughter of hers was just heart broken. We actually thought she might die. She quit eating. That was a bond that had nothing to do with genetics."

Sally remembered a little full blooded alpaca cria that was born to a llama recipient mother, "We had an alpaca baby, we did some contract embryo transfer, and the baby was born blind. Born to this great big recipient mama. We put a bell on the recipient mother. When she got older she gained her eyesight, but as a baby she'd go around bumping into things. But with the bell on her mom she recognized where the bell was. The (recipient) mom protected that baby and took care of it. She almost had to squat to let it nurse. But they figured out how to get along with each other and she was really upset when we weaned that baby."



Above: Argentine Machi. Through the use of Embryo Transfer Machi was able to produce 22 crias, all DNA tested to prove parentage. This makes the Taylors the owners of the most prolific female and male llamas of all time (the male being Fiduciary with 344 registered crias).

## Frio and Helada

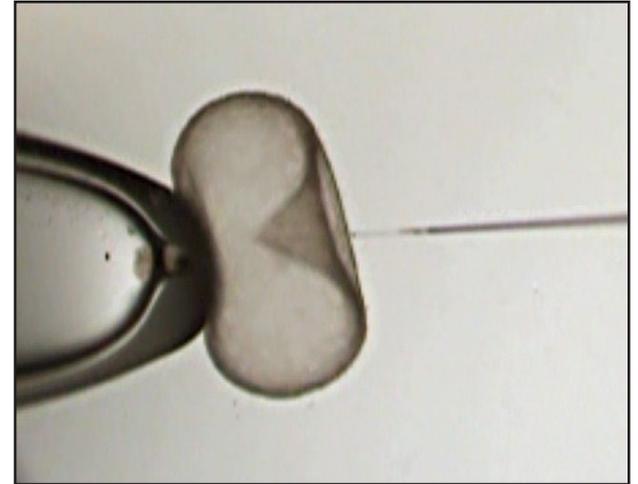
“IT CAME TO BE ALL ABOUT THE TOOL. THE LAST SEVEN YEARS HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF THE TOOL.” -PAUL TAYLOR

The eventual goal of the Taylors' embryo transfer work was to be able to import embryos from South America, and export embryos from the US to other parts of the world. They quickly found out that in order to export embryos they would need to be frozen, and in order to freeze them they would need to have the excess fluid drained. After those problems were solved governmental regulations would need to be changed to allow the export. The biggest obstacle turned out to be the draining of excess fluid, which the Taylors have been working hard to solve for the past two decades.

Paul explained that camelid embryos are “almost supernaturally” hard to puncture to release the fluid. He showed us a photo of a magnified llama embryo being punctured the traditional way, with a holding pipette (tiny suction tube) on one side and an injection pipette (tiny needle), on the other. The injection pipette had pushed one side of the llama embryo into the other, and it would not be punctured until it was pinched on the other side. Needless to say this process is incredibly damaging to the embryo, and would not be a reliable procedure for a commercial operation.

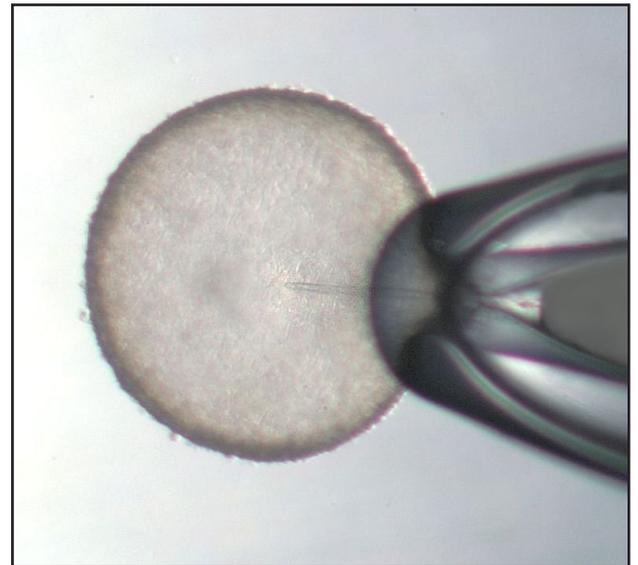
Paul described what came next like this, “It was an amazing series of unlikely events that led up to us spending almost 15 years trying to figure out how to freeze llama embryos. Being a compulsive problem solver fed into it. Having been a dentist and used to working with medical instruments fed into this. Having our whole future depend on the llama market fed into it. Having access to a big herd of llamas fed into it.”

In 2005, Paul had a breakthrough when he decided to try placing the injection pipette inside of the holding pipette, an idea the Taylors ingeniously named the “Dracula Pipette.” Within a few weeks of developing the first prototype, the Taylors had a successful pregnancy with a frozen and thawed embryo. The first offspring were born a year later and named Frio and Helada, meaning cold and ice. Helada is still at the Taylor Ranch, and was later used as a recipient female.



Above: Attempting to puncture a llama embryo using the conventional method. The holding pipette is on the left and the injection pipette is on the right.

Below: the Dracula Pipette. The tiny injection pipette can be seen emerging from inside the holding pipette.



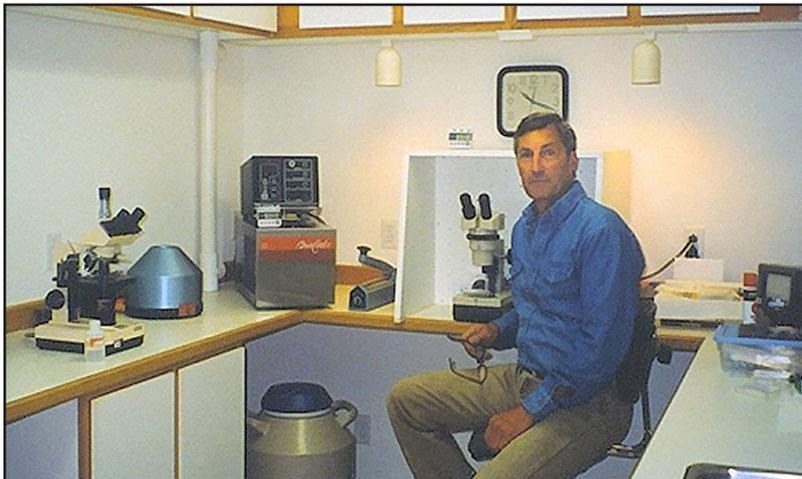
Paul and Sally had proven it was possible to freeze and thaw llama embryos, but from that point on it became “all about the tool.” The Taylors continued breeding llamas using their embryo transfer techniques for a few more years, but as the recession hit and the llama market turned with it, their focus turned from practicing their embryology to developing the Dracula Pipette. While they were able to create a prototype of the pipette, Paul told us that it was “just too frustrating to use.” Sally described a process of spending hours perfecting a tiny glass injection pipette only to have it shatter during use. This meant having to spend hours cleaning up microscopic glass particles from around the embryo, and starting again.

Eventually the Taylors were encouraged to apply for a grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH) to perfect the Dracula Pipette. Embryologists who Paul was in contact with believed that his tool likely had applications in human embryology and in vitro fertilization. Their first application failed, but they were allowed to re-apply one more time. Their second application failed too, and the Taylors were devastated.

Paul said that he thought it was game over at that point, and thought they might need to look for a nine-to-five job for the first time since they were in their early 30s. “I didn’t know it at the time, but one of the most powerful people in NIH had taken an interest in this principle. Anyway, the rules are the rules and I thought we were done... I didn’t hear anything after that rejection for about four months. Then one day someone phoned and said that there had been a meeting. Some powerful people in the organization had overridden the peer review on the second application. We had passed and they declared it high priority! This was just beyond my wildest dreams.” Throughout the seven years that their



Left: Frio, Right: Helada



Helada

research was funded by the NIH the Taylors had to continually re-apply for funding. Three times their application failed both peer reviews, and had to be rescued by higher-ups in the NIH.

After spending several years working on the Dracula Pipette a huge breakthrough came when the Taylors found a company that could stretch plastic to make their tiny tool. Instead of continually cleaning up broken glass injection pipettes the Dracula Pipette is now ready to be mass produced in a form that Paul believes would survive being dropped from an airplane.

Paul and Sally have mostly stopped their research now, and their attention has turned to finding the right buyer who can produce the tool and make it widely available. "Ten years from now you'll see it on TV," Paul said. "This is going to be the way Embryology is done."

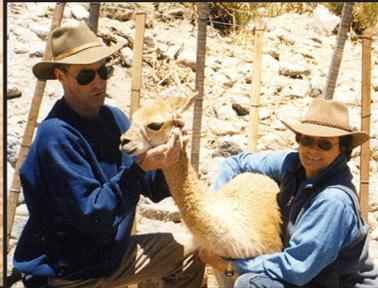
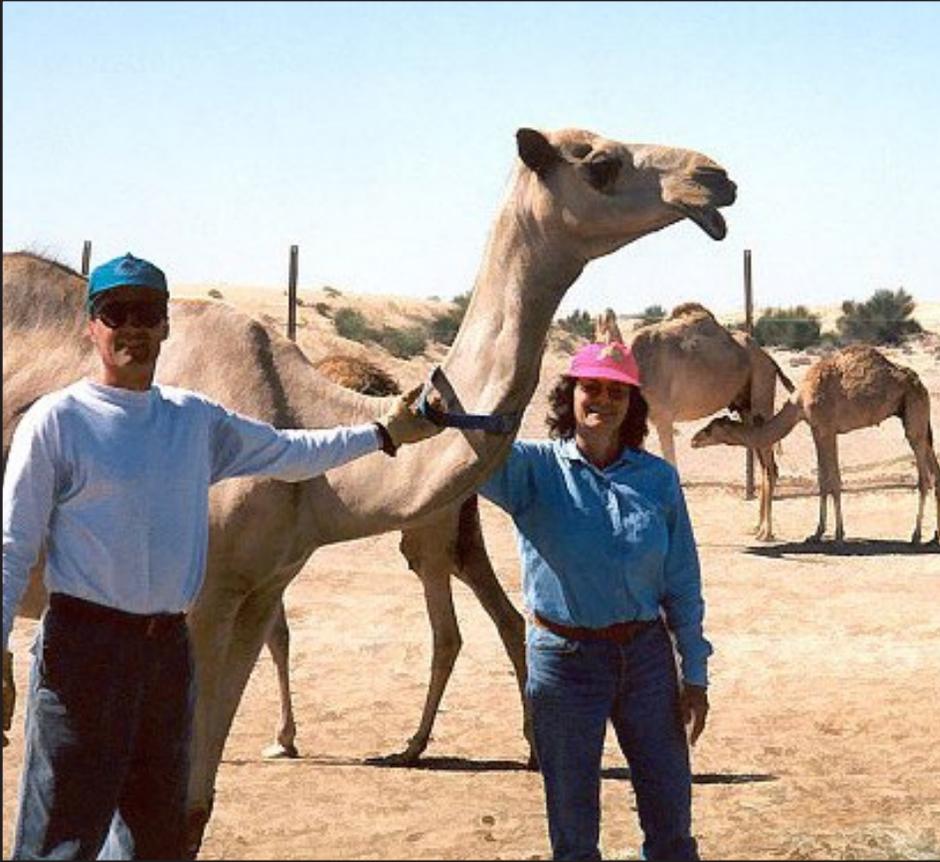
While the Taylors' attention may have turned to human applications, they did not completely lose sight of their goal to make it possible to import and export llama embryos. Paul brought his ideas to the embryo movement subcommittee of the US Animal Health Associations import export committee, and a resolution passed paving the way for the importation and exportation of frozen camelid embryos. There were still more steps to be taken, but Paul did not pursue them because they no longer had access to a herd in Chile, or an interest in importing embryos. By that time it had become all about the Dracula Pipette. But Paul said that, "It would be fairly simple to get the USAHA to act on a pathway for importation now."

It is entirely possible that in the next decade llama embryos could be imported from South America, though Paul and Sally told us in no uncertain terms that it won't be them doing the importing.

## Wrapping up

With as much as there was to be said about our time with the Taylors, there is so much that has been left out. Paul spent a day in Peru that began with him having ceremonial vicuña blood smeared on his face, spent several hours herding vicuñas on horseback, and ended with his car being surrounded by rioters holding farm implements. Paul and Sally traveled to Dubai to capture llamas at the palace of a Prince. Those llamas were later successfully crossed with camels, using some of the embryo transfer research that they helped to develop. Paul, and several other legendary llama breeders went down in a helicopter crash and all were relatively unscathed. Paul and Sally received a genuine smoke signal while traveling in Chile, and ended up buying some llamas when they tracked the herder down. In addition to these, there are many stories from the early days of the US llama phenomenon. Unfortunately this piece must be an article, and not a book. Luckily, the Taylors have done a better job than most at documenting their various llama escapades, and we hope to share more of their stories in issues to come.

"TEN YEARS  
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YOU'LL SEE IT ON  
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DONE."



As we wrapped up the interview we talked with the Taylors about their plans for the future. They shared that their old friend Fiduciary was coming through with one last favor. The Taylors did not come to the llama industry with wealth. Their dental practice helped them buy their first 20 acres in Bozeman, and they had a very successful llama breeding operation that sustained them for many years. Over time as they sold an expensive Fiduciary offspring, like Mirabelle and Full On, they added onto their ranch by purchasing additional tracks of undeveloped land. They recently sold off a couple of parcels and have found that they had increased 1,500% in value. The purchasers plan to put the land into a nature preserve and allow the Taylors to continue to hike the land and watch the elk.



Below: Paul and Sally on their 50th Anniversary



The Taylors plan to stay in Bozeman as long as they can. Paul told us, “We wouldn’t want to live anywhere else.” Now that the Dracula Pipette no longer requires full time research, they have had more leisure time on their hands. Rather than going on a Caribbean cruise like many retirees, they found a company that allows you to charter a yacht, and Paul got a license to pilot it. By the time this article is published the Taylors will be cruising in the Sea of Cortez, staying in the sunshine until they miss the charms and nature of Bozeman.

After the interview, the Taylors lent us one of their ATVs and allowed us to explore their property. We drove to the top of the hill, feeling like we were on top of the world, literally and metaphorically. We talked about everything we had heard. At some point it dawned on us that we were just a year or two younger than the Taylors were when they bought their first llama, a decision that they had no idea would change the course of their lives forever. We stood on the hill about 10 years younger than they were when they took a huge risk, gave up their dental office and moved to Montana to raise llamas full time. We stood on the hill 20 years younger than they were when they started a breeding program on another continent and tracked down exotic llamas in remote regions of Chile. 30 years younger than they were when they took that risky drive in Argentina. 40 years younger than they were when they got their first patent and a research grant. The thought of it all became overwhelming. A tear or two was shed on top of that hill. Plans were made; promises were made. The next day we shared thoughtful goodbyes with Paul and Sally and we drove home to get to work on following our dreams.





# Volcano View Ranch

Kyle and Jerrika Mumford - Ridgefield, WA

## Consigning Our Best to Cascade 2021

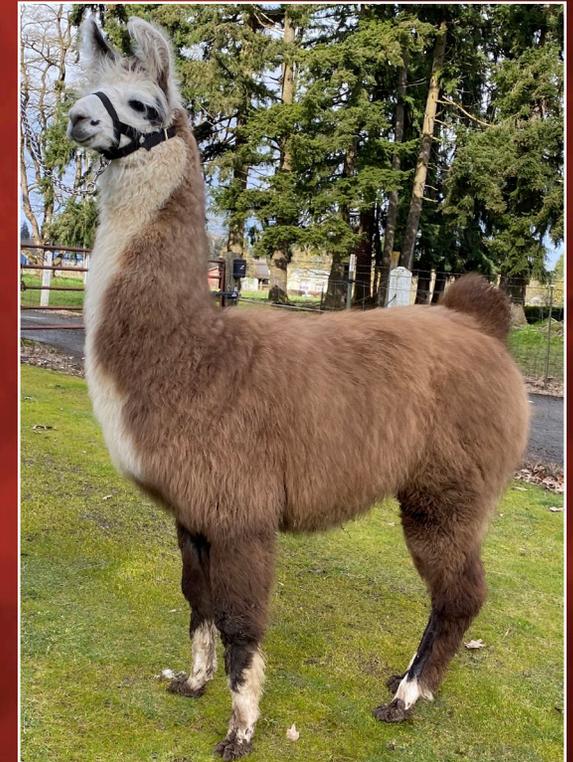


Adelina MVVR  
GNLC Switchfoot x Adelaide

Sire:  
GNLC  
Switchfoot



Maternal  
Grandmother:  
Ayni



Amelia MVVR  
GNLC Switchfoot x Amelie

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

# LLAMA ELYSEE'S STORY

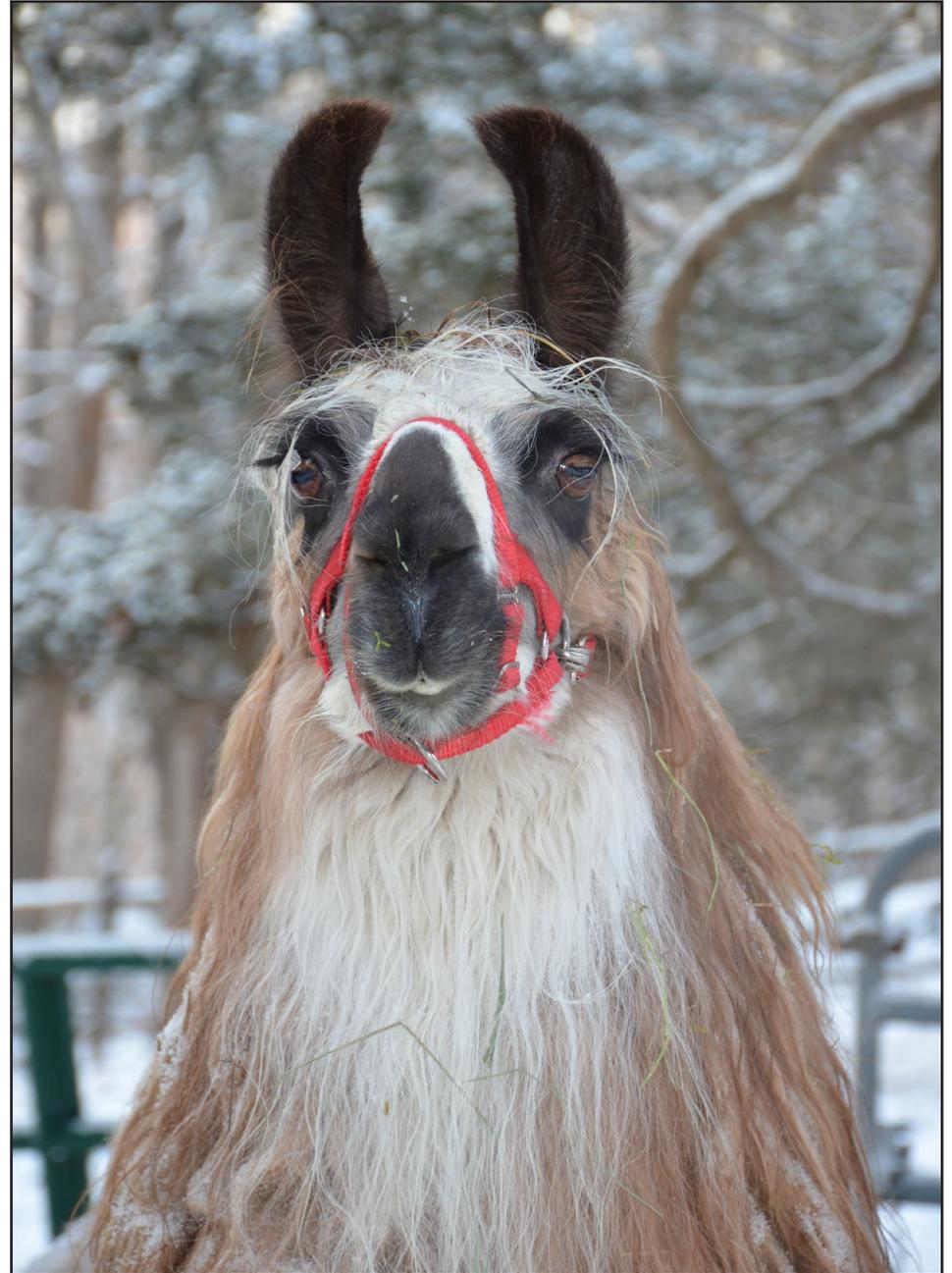
## by Jane Hamilton-Merritt

Beautiful, gentle Elysee, the last living offspring of the famous llama stud, "The Fiduciary," came to Poverty Hollow Llamas in 2014 as a rescue.

Elysee spent the first 18 years of her life on Richard Snyder's llama farm along with 60-100 llamas, depending on the year. Then tragedy. Just before Thanksgiving at his farm in Milford, Pennsylvania, Dick fell down the stairs in his house, resulting in his death. Suddenly there were over 60 llamas to disperse. The estate attorney wanted all the llamas gone immediately. The word went out to the GALA community that Dick's llamas needed re-homed expeditiously.

GALA members responded to the call. Immediately those who were breeders scooped up the breeding mothers and their crias. The breeding males went fast also. Then there were the old gals who no one particularly wanted. I got a call from Dick's farm manager asking if I would consider taking two old females--Louetta, a classic black girl, age 15 and Elysee, a heavy fiber cinnamon-colored girl, age 19. I knew nothing about these two, except it was necessary to find new homes for them immediately. I hadn't seen their registration papers and no one mentioned their genealogy. I had no idea Elysee was a special llama in U.S. Llama History.

I knew what was in store for these two old girls if I didn't take them. It was too sad to even contemplate. I had no moral choice but to rescue them.



Elysee TA01, Daughter of The Fiduciary  
Age 26 and Living at Poverty Hollow Llamas, Redding, CT  
Photo Credit: Jane Hamilton-Merritt

In spitting snow and nasty winds, my son Schuyler and I made our way from CT to PA with our trailer to pick up these two llamas. Upon arrival, we were told that Louetta had never been in a trailer; Elysee had been trailered once as a youngster. The farm manager told us that in dispersing the herd some llamas had to be pushed and dragged into the trailers. I certainly didn't want that to happen.

We spent some time hanging out with these two girls observing them. The black one allowed me to come fairly close. With the hope to return before dark, we had to make a move. Haltered by the manager, I took the lead of the black one and told Schuyler that I thought I could entice her into the trailer. If I were successful, he was to follow closely behind with the other one. The farm manager would close the trailer as soon as we were inside.

One hesitant step after another, the black one followed my slow movements and encouraging voice up the ramp and into the trailer. The cinnamon one, not wanting to be separated from her herd mate, stepped gingerly and furtively up the ramp behind us. Up went the trailer gate. We were loaded!! No dragging or pushing. Thank goodness.

The winds persisted sending sharp points of ice-snow into our faces as we bid farewell to Dick's farm and his manager. It was dark when we returned to our Connecticut farm and it is here at Poverty Hollow Llamas that Elysee's story continues. With Elysee and Louetta in quarantine, I watched them closely in those first days. Everything was new and different for these shy girls. They were curious but absolutely missing their previous farm. Here there was no big herd, no running water trough, no grain and hay troughs. Instead, it was hay bags, small black grain bowls, and heated water buckets. It took several days to convince them to drink from the water buckets.

Many months later, Elysee's registration papers arrived. It was then I discovered that she was "The Fiduciary's" daughter, and while Elysee had lived on Dick Snyder's farm she was owned by his graduate school classmate, Ann Morey, who lived in California.

In time, Elysee felt safe here. She liked grooming, unlike the other llamas, and she claimed a special relationship with neighbor Todd. She would often lay her head on his shoulder as he whispered "sweet nothings" to her.

The young llama care-takers here on the farm all admire her beautiful face and ears and are astonished at how tall and long she is. These helpers are impressed with her gentle disposition, her wisdom, her soft fiber--and her age. At 26 (born on Dec 8, 1995), she is older than many who assist on the farm.

I HAD NO IDEA  
ELYSEE WAS A  
SPECIAL LLAMA  
IN U.S. LLAMA  
HISTORY...  
MANY MONTHS  
LATER, ELYSEE'S  
REGISTRATION  
PAPERS ARRIVED.  
IT WAS THEN  
I DISCOVERED  
THAT SHE WAS  
"THE FIDUCIARY'S"  
DAUGHTER

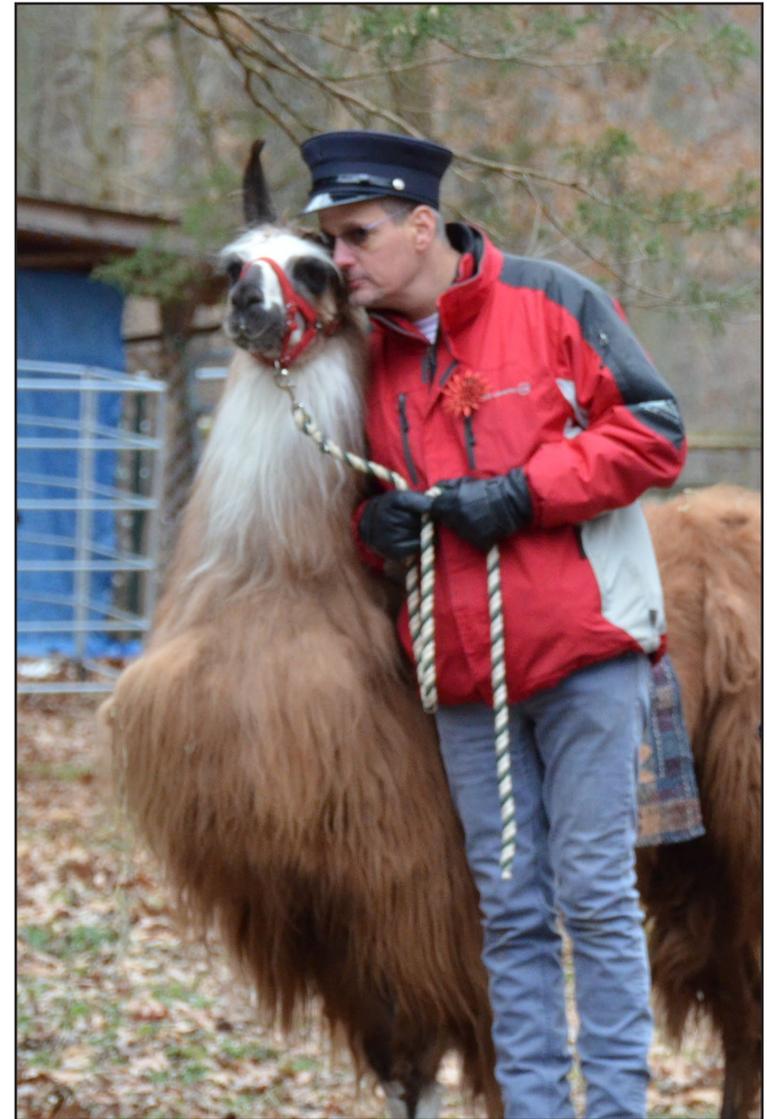
As a high school and college student, Jake helped take care of Elysee for four years. “We often say llamas are ‘old souls.’ Elysee surely is one. She is a pleasure to be around, especially once she gets to know you. She can be apprehensive at first but opens up and shows her personality when she trusts you. She enjoys eating apple slices from your hand and will lean into you afterwards as if she is giving a hug as a thank you.”

Farm helper, Olivia observes: “Elysee is the sweetest and most gentle llama of all! Although shy, once she is comfortable with someone, she loves attention. She has beautiful eyes that are always watching and observing her surroundings, and trying to guess her caretakers thoughts! She has a graceful stride and movement that her fellow girls haven’t established yet. Maybe it’s all those years of life?”

Elysee’s Vet, Dr. Shannon Brighenti reports: “Elysee is healthy and in great condition for her age -not many llamas make it into their late 20s. She is very gentle and always a pleasure to work with. Over the past few years, we have been dealing with some tooth issues that cause her to have trouble chewing her hay. This is a very common issue in llamas as they age and their teeth start to wear down unevenly. Despite this, she has still been able to maintain her weight and condition with special diets and dedicated care.”

This cold and snowy winter, Elysee wears a purple coat and shelters in her dedicated stall, content with her basket of chaf and her warm grain porridge made daily for her because of her tooth problem. Every morning as I enter her field with her food, I whistle and call her name. Thankfully and magically that lovely head appears and those huge golden-brown eyes monitor my approach.

If only this routine would last forever.



Elysee TA01 with her special friend, Todd Bidwell at an Open Barn, Poverty Hollow Llamas, Redding, CT

Photo Credit: Schuyler Merritt

# Rebaño Escondido Llamas of Caledonia Llamas

Caledonia Llamas founded on the dream of a young boy, who at the age of 12 was introduced to llamas by a very patient, knowledgeable group of North Dakota llama breeders at a local county fair. Fast forward to Cameron's college years, his llama herd was founded on full Argentine studs used on a variety of bloodlines including full North American, Bolivian and Chilean bloodlines. The focus of the herd was on tall, heavy fibered animals with easy going dispositions. Lynda Carothers recommended that Cameron start trying to preserve the Rebaño Escondido gene pool. Upon doing research he found out what she meant by the Rebaño Escondido (RE) llamas-the "Hidden Herd" and Cameron was "hooked." They were a group of llamas imported from Chile by Paul and Sally Taylor. Cameron started looking at the remaining RE llamas in the US and Caledonia's Rebaño Escondido breeding program was born.

Being an avid Arabian horse breeder as well as a llama breeder, Cameron looks at being a successful breeder as being the combination of a chef and an artist. Having followed the breeding programs of many successful farms, he realized that it is an art form sometimes to create the next great animal. Also, breeding is the combining of many ingredients, i.e. fiber, conformation, height, stretch, disposition, etc. For Cameron the Rebaño Escondido gene pool brought many great "ingredients" to his llama breeding program. Being 6 feet tall, Cameron personally likes tall llamas. He also like lots of fiber, great conformation, good type and great dispositions. The goal of the Caledonia breeding program is to maintain these qualities as well as provide bloodlines that are genetically diverse to the existing gene pool in the USA.

The Caledonia herd is genetically diverse with a goal of maintaining rare Rebaño Escondido bloodlines, but there are some bloodlines that are the heart and soul of their breeding program. One of those lines would be Rebaño Escondido Pacifico/Rebaño Escondido Doppler. Both \*RE Pacifico and RE Doppler lived out the last of their days at Caledonia Farm. Doppler came to them later in his life, but added so much to their breeding program. He was the epitome of heavy fiber, heavy bone structure and easy-going personality. Even when bred to light woolled females with fine bone, he would do an exceptional job of improving on the dam. Rebaño Escondido Doppler recently passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 22. Caledonia Farm has retained a couple daughters and a couple sons to keep his bloodlines going strong.



Rebaño Escondido Doppler

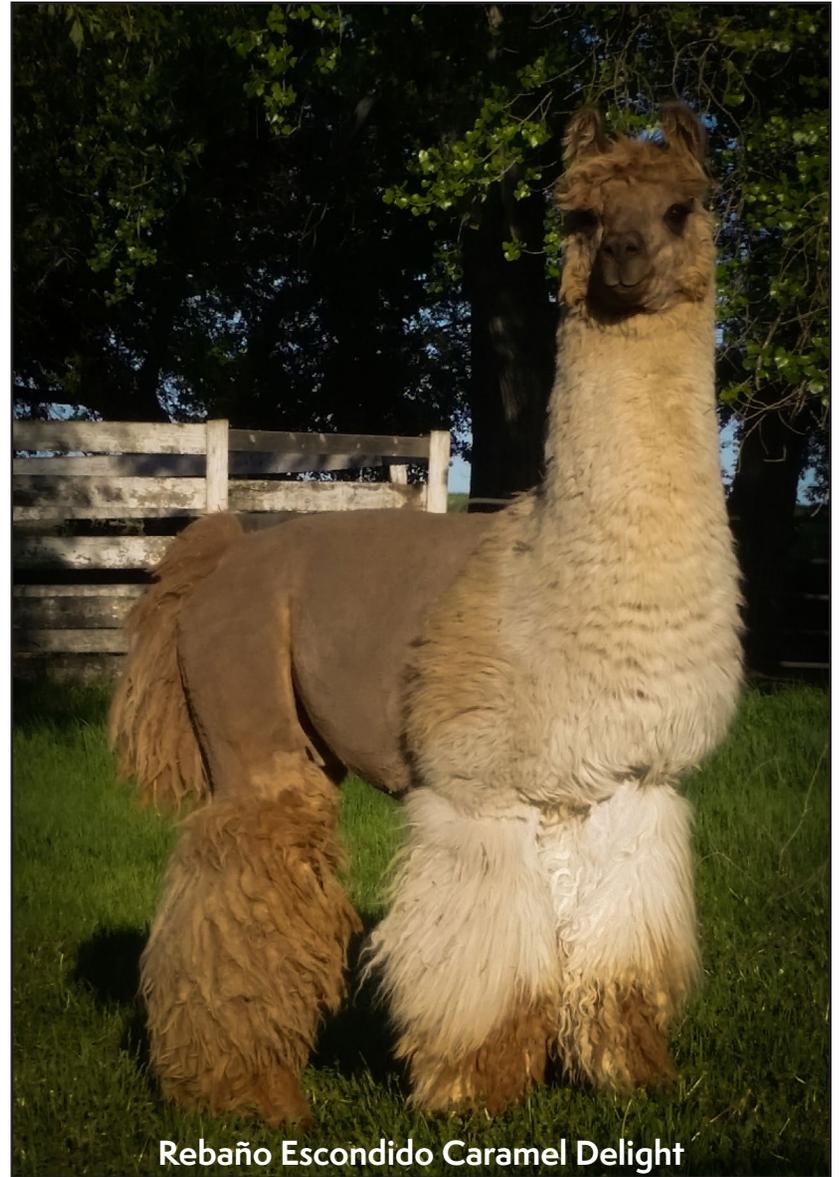
They have been really excited by what his oldest son, Rebaño Escondido Caramel Delight, has already produced. He is taller, has more fiber and even better presence than his sire. They look forward to the future of the descendants of Doppler.

Rebaño Escondido Fantasma was Cameron's ideal example of his goal for the Rebaño Escondido type llama. Fantasma was a beautiful, very tall llama with great conformation and stretch. Her beautiful dense fiber went from the top of her head to her toes. Fantasma had a such a regal presence and easy going personality ,as well as being an exceptional mother. Though Fantasma has recently passed away of the complications of old age, her genetics are represented well in the Caledonia herd. Her two daughters, one by \*Rebaño Escondido Julio and the other by \*RE 450 (aka Painter Boy) are exceptional llamas, great producers and outstanding mothers. Two of Fantasma's grandsons are now part of our stud line up.

The third line that makes up the core of Caledonia's breeding program is Rebaño Escondido Triana. Triana is still alive and doing well at almost 23 years old. Another one of Caledonia's very tall girls, she has created a dynasty for herself. Her progeny are some of the biggest in the herd. They are slow to mature but they are worth the wait! Triana has excellent conformation with the best stretch in the herd, as well as beautiful ears and a refined face all of which she passes on to her crias. Triana's son, Rebaño Escondido Panda Bear, is a cornerstone of the Caledonia stud lineup. RE Triana's daughter and granddaughters are integral parts of the Caledonia breeding herd.



RE Fantasma



Rebaño Escondido Caramel Delight

Caledonia Farm continues to maintain a collection of rare Rebaño Escondido lines along with the core of their breeding program. They have found that crossing RE studs with other bloodlines has resulted in some very special crias. This proves Cameron's theory that the Rebaño Escondido genetics should be maintained to provide outcross bloodlines to the llama industry.

Each year the gene pool of Rebaño Escondido bloodlines continues to grow. Many of the beginning years of the project resulted in only one or two female crias, which made it difficult to expand the gene pool. With the RE gene pool expanding at Caledonia Farms, they are continuing to share the genetics with breeders across the US. Some of the resulting crias have been spoken for shortly after conception and many are spoken for prior to weaning, all of which is a true compliment to their breeding program.

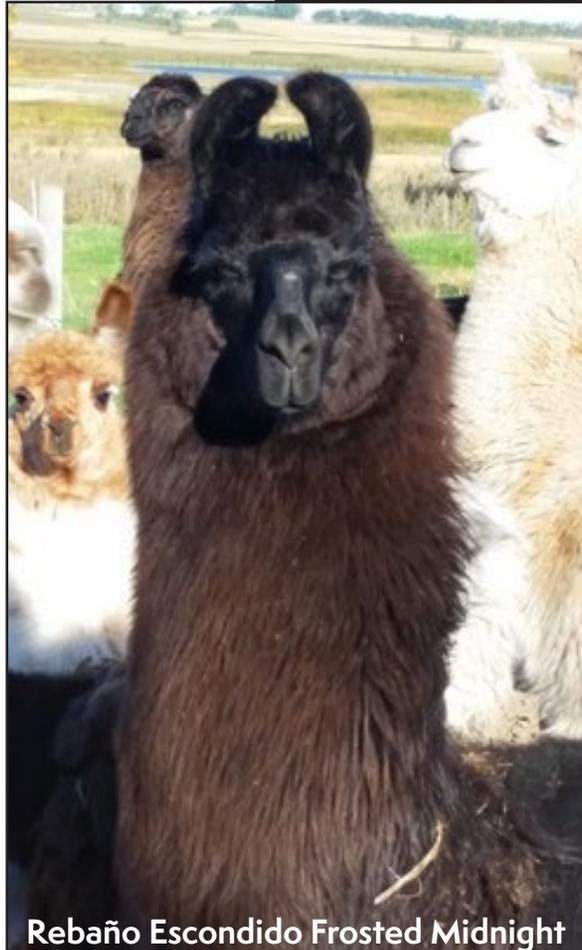
Even though there has been many ups and downs with the Rebaño Escondido breeding program, when rare lines were lost with the deaths of old animals, to Cameron maintaining the Rebaño Escondido herd, it has been a true labor of love. Many old RE imports have lived out their days at Caledonia Farms- \*Rebaño Escondido Pacifico, \*Rebaño Escondido Quintas, \*Rebaño Escondido 450, \*Rebaño Escondido 709, \*Rebaño Escondido Dot, to name a few. Some of the original imports left progeny in the breeding program, and others just enjoyed the TLC at the end of their life. Caledonia's breeding program will be forever grateful to those original imports that were brought to the US. It is Caledonia Farm's goal to share their bloodlines so that other breeders can recognize how special the Rebaño Escondido bloodlines that Paul and Sally Taylor imported really are. Exciting things continue to happen at Caledonia Farms each year!



RE Screwball



Caledonia's Iced Mocha



Rebaño Escondido Frosted Midnight

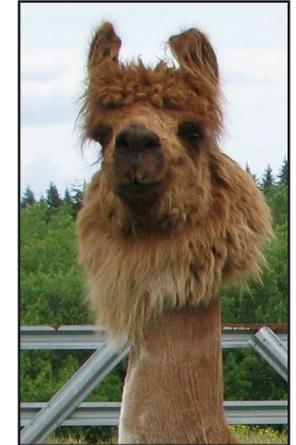
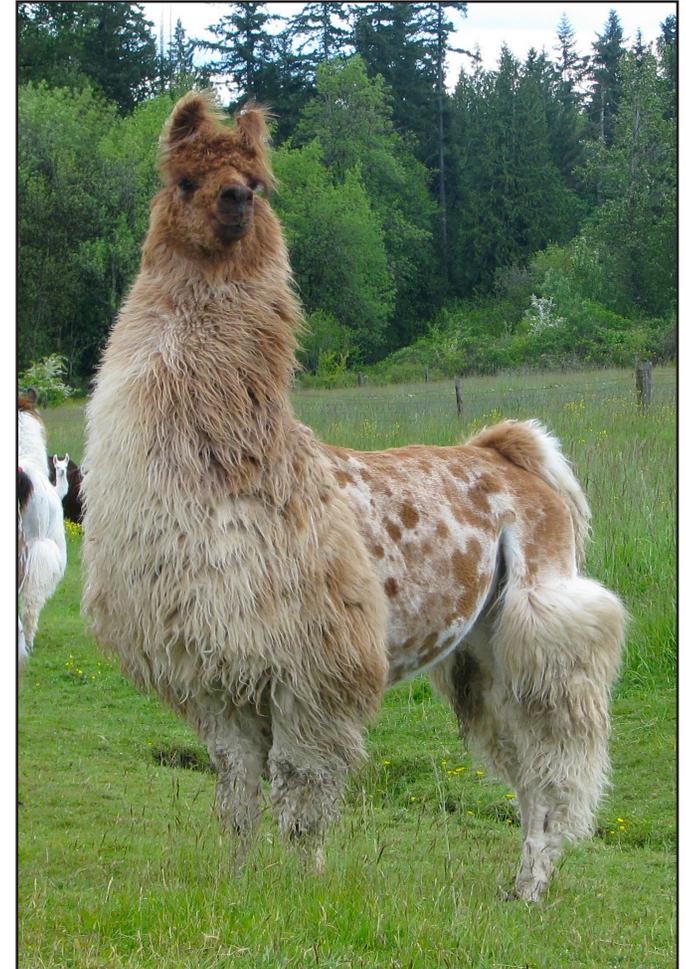


Rebaño Escondido Triana

# RE Cleo (ET)

By Kyle Mumford

I'm sure most herds out there have an animal or two that other breeder's admire and inquire about from time to time; RE Cleo was one of the animals in our herd who developed a small fan club over her years at our farm. She was bred by the Taylors through their ET program, born in Montana, and sold to the Rasmussens in Oregon when the Taylor's dispersed their breeding herd. I first saw her at Justin Timm's farm in 2008 or 2009. She was the most unique and exotic llama I had ever seen, and to this day I haven't seen another llama quite like her. At the time she wasn't for sale, but I bugged Justin about her every few months and eventually was able to talk him out of her in 2010. She was the jewel of our herd for 7 years, until we lost her suddenly at the age of 13. The Taylors set off to Chile in search of new and unique llamas, and Cleo was certainly a shining example of the success they found in their selections, and in their breeding herd in Montana.



# Embryo Transfer Argentines

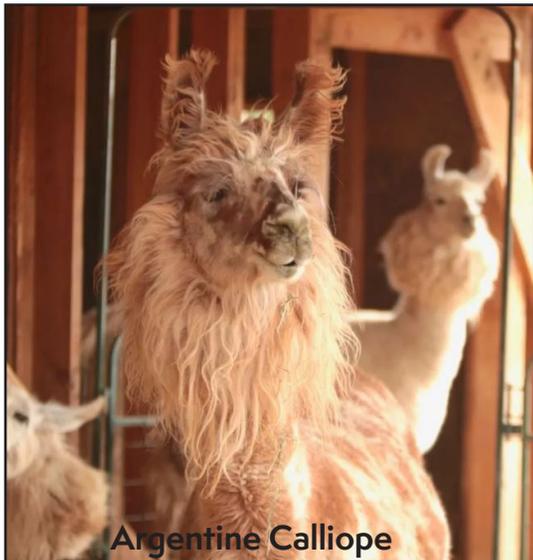
By Sonja Boeff

Are there any donors out there from the Taylor's ET Program? There are three donor females in Arvada, Colorado at Zander Farms. We feel truly blessed and honored to have them part of our breeding program. We understand why the Taylors chose them to be donors.

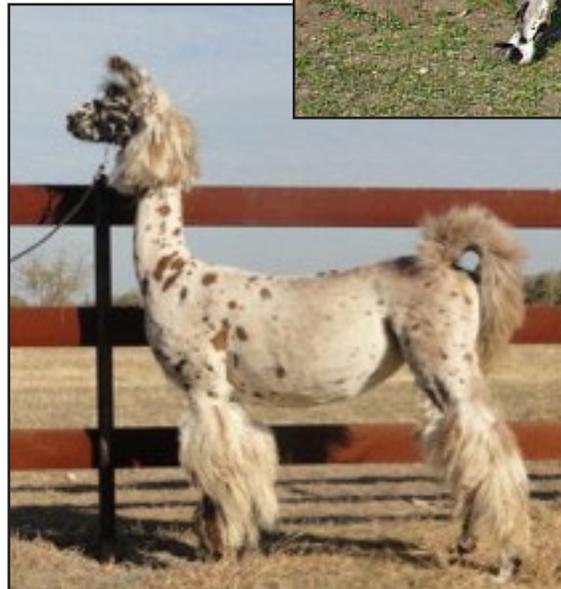
Argentine Aida (ET), is an appaloosa that will be turning 18 this year. She is out of the great Argentine Kobra and the colorful paint, Argentine Trupa. She had her first cria at 11 years old and had two more after that. She's had 7 ET crias for a total of 10 crias. One of her most notable offspring is Argentine Acacio (ET) that the Abbotts, then the Wilkinsons, and now the Parkers in Bend, Oregon own. Aida is tall and stretchy, plus a sweetheart. She has produced many colorful offspring.

Speaking of loud appies, Argentine Calliope is just that. She caught our eye in the middle of a pasture. She is so stunning to us. Calliope is by Argentine Chavo (Argentine Yecu x Argentine Arica 0077) and out of Argentine Novena (ET) (Argentine Novio x Argentine Naranja). Calliope will be turning 18 this year along with Argentine Aida. Calliope

has had 9 ET crias and three of her own. She gave birth for the first time at ten years old. Calliope has produced lots of colorful crias. Her most notable offspring is Argentine Sugabo (ET) owned by Eileen Ditsler in California. He's a powerhouse.

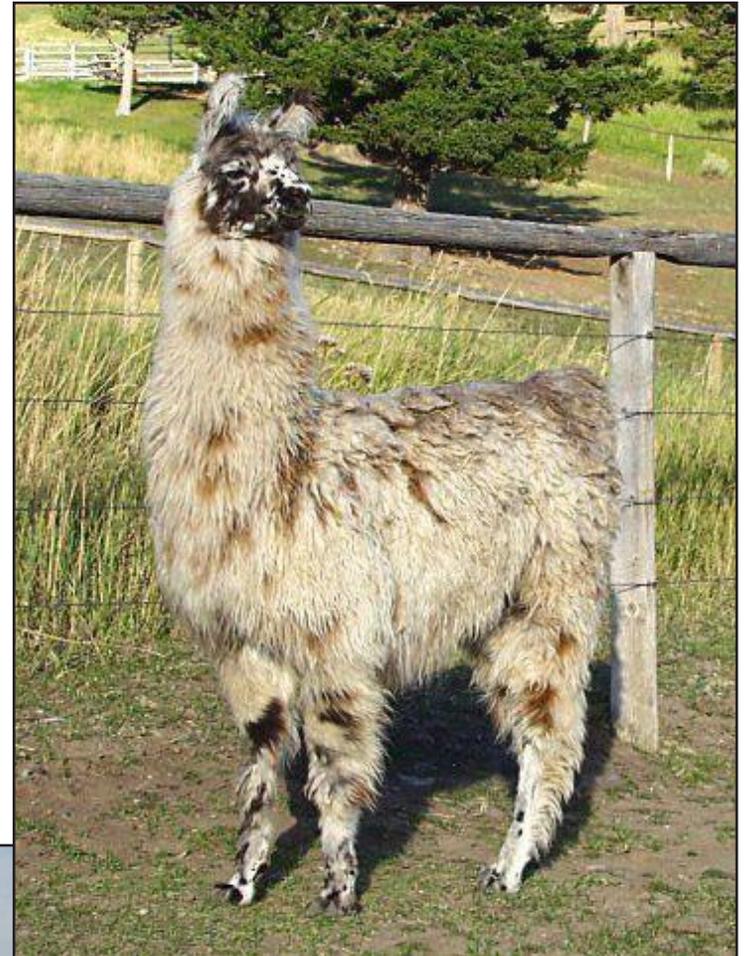


Argentine Calliope



Above: Argentine Aida as a yearling at the Taylors

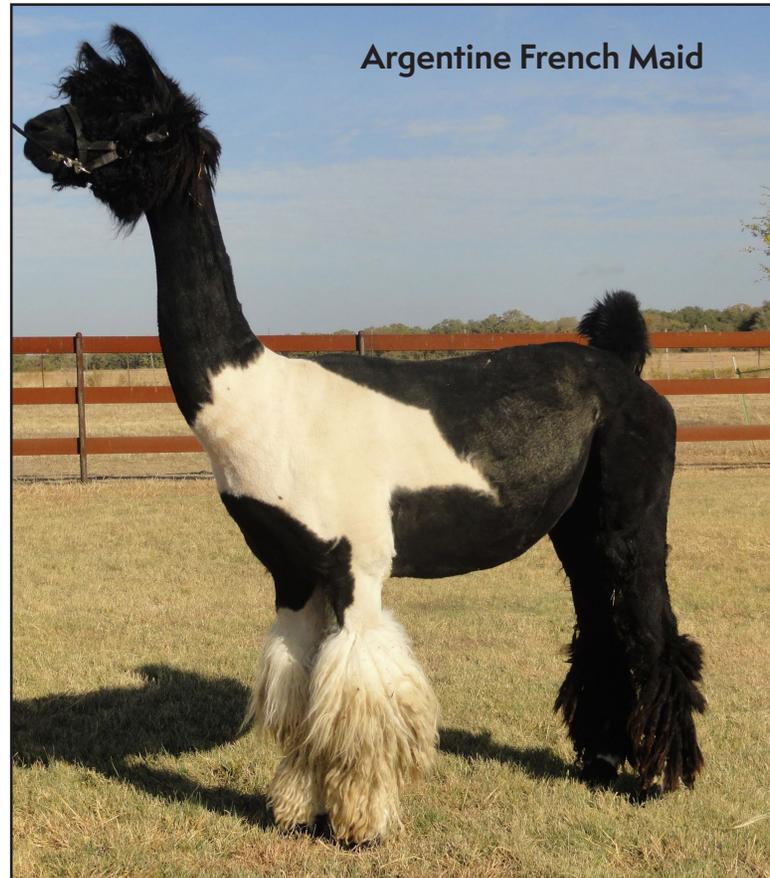
Left: Argentine Aida at Sapaveco Llamas



Another powerhouse is Argentine Lumberjack, owned by Ron and Gail Wilkinson in Bend, Oregon. Lumberjack achieved his ILR Certificate of Achievement in Halter, is a UAP Top Ten winner, and won Best of Show three times. He's been producing show champions as well. His maternal younger brother, Argentine Sasquatch owned by the Aulds in Garden City, Missouri, has won several grand championships in halter and fleece as a weanling and yearling. He also has a Best of Show under his belt. Their dam is Argentine French Maid (ET).

Argentine French Maid (ET) is out of the legendary Argentine Don Zunca and the greatest imported female ever (in our eyes), Argentine Machi. French has had two ET crias and six of her own. She is due at the end of March for her ninth cria. Her last five offspring have been males so we're really hoping for a female. French is a true black and white paint. She has silky fiber, even at age 14, which is hard to find on full Argentines.

Are there more out there still? There probably is. The donor females were a very important part of the success of the Taylor's ET program along with the herdsires and female recipients chosen. To read more about the Taylor's journey and selection process, you can read it at <http://argentinellamas.com/the-argentine-type-llama/>. Please let us know if you have a donor female.



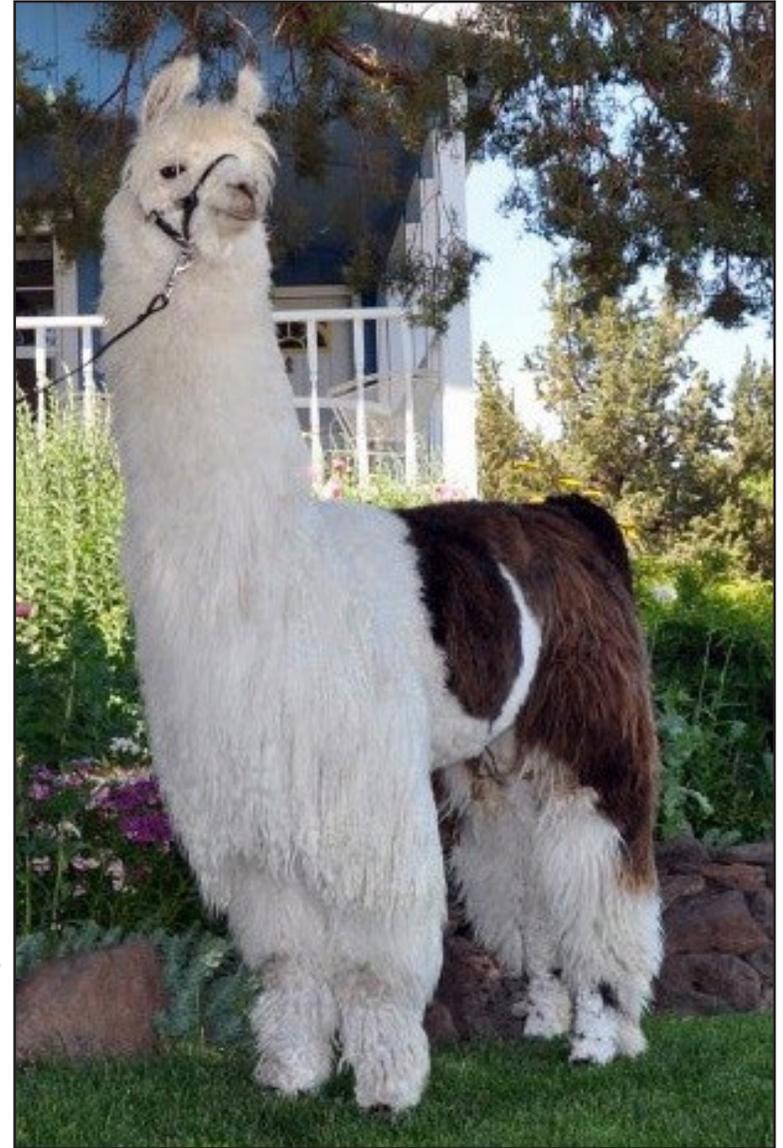
# Argentine Mach One (ET)

By Ron Wilkinson

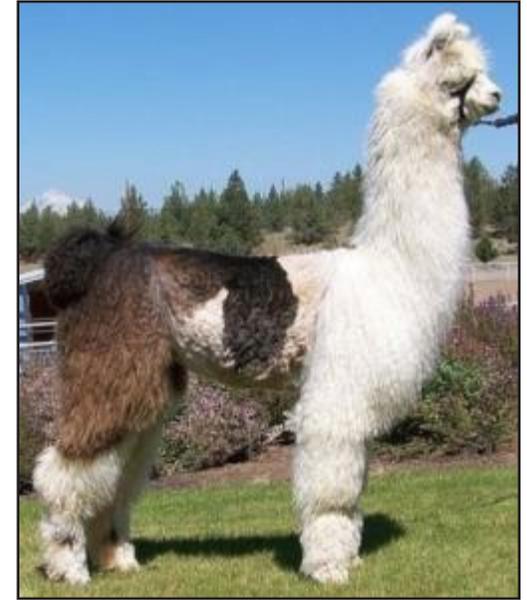
When Gene and Betty Moe began their search in 2008 for a full Argentine stud that would set their newly formed Argentine herd apart from all others, they spent hours studying the ILR database, contacting breeders from coast to coast, visiting farms, and reading, reading, reading. By early 2009 they were zeroing in on a special male from California, when they got a tip on a phenomenal six-month old male that Paul and Sally Taylor had in Montana. After a couple of phone calls and review of photos and video, within 48 hours they had a check in the mail and Argentine Mach One was theirs.

Argentine Mach One (ET) was the final offspring from the matriarch of the Argentine llama world, Argentine Machi. Due to Taylors' work with embryo transfers, the amazing imported Machi produced a total of 22 registered offspring - more than any other female in the ILR database. His sire, Argentine Hildalgo (ET), was a special long-necked Argentine Don Zunca son. As it turned out, Mach One was one of the last and perhaps the most influential cria that Taylors would produce during their illustrious llama breeding years.

In many ways, Mach One represented all that the Taylors could have dreamed of when they began their excursion into the Argentine mountains in search of a special type of llama. Their hope was to import and breed a type of llama that would significantly impact the North American llama industry for years into the future. Mach One was covered in exquisite, long, dense, silky fiber from head to toe. He had the exceptional bone and substance for which the Argentine type had been selected. He had a beautiful head and a neck that popped straight up out of the neck-shoulder juncture. He also had the sweet temperament that they were looking for. But what set him apart even more was his perfect balance with long legs, long neck, and moderate length of body – a look and style that were somewhat unusual for a full Argentine. While many of the full Argentines were smaller and more compact in stature, even at an early age it was easy to tell that Mach One was going to grow into a very large, athletic llama.



Ron and Gail Wilkinson joined their friends Gene and Betty in the Argentine world with the purchase of their first Argentine female in 2013. By 2015, we were looking for that Argentine stud that would make a significant impact with our herd. We also had spent hours scouring the country and the ILR database, but could not find any male that we liked better than the Mach One line. We were close to making a deal on a Mach One son that the Moes had sold a couple of years earlier, and whom we had admired since birth, when we recalled that Betty had made the comment on several occasions that she and Gene were needing to significantly reduce their breeding program. She had added that if they ever sold "Machie," she only wanted us to have him. On our way home after checking out the son, we stopped by Moe's to see how serious they were about the possibility of us purchasing even part interest in Mach One. Within a couple of weeks we had a deal to purchase half interest with an option to purchase full interest the next year. Also from that meeting emerged the initial plans to have a joint production sale in 2016, which would become the highly successful Amazing Argentine Impact Sale.



You could say, "the rest is history" as Mach One has become the lead stud in the R & G Acres Llama herd since 2015. We would argue that history is still being written. Mach One has established himself as arguably the most impactful full Argentine male produced in the United States, with more registered offspring than all but three of the original Argentine imports (Kobra, Don Zunca, and Pecos) and a Kobra son, Argentine Kobra's Kornerstone. Of Mach One's 71 registered offspring, 29 have won at least one show grand champion award. Those 29 animals have won a total of 115 championships including 65 in halter, 29 in fleece-on, and 21 in shorn fleece. The number of best of show fleece awards won by Mach One offspring is significant. Among the most famous offspring of Mach One, and a great example of the temperament and fiber he passes on to his babies, is HD Mach's Caesar – "The No Drama Llama" who has received international media attention for Larry McCool. We believe Mach One will be one of the initial elite sires recognized in ILR's new "Sires of Distinction" program. Best of all - he is still producing winners!

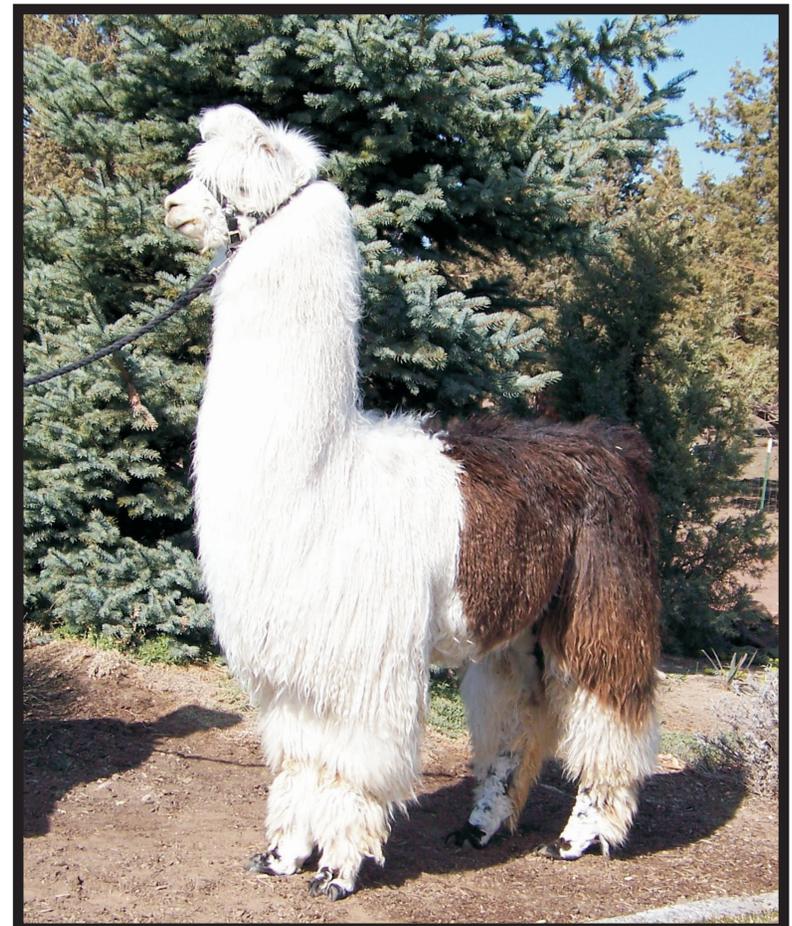


A huge thank you goes to Paul & Sally Taylor for producing this beautiful animal and to Gene & Betty Moe for allowing us to purchase him.

**TWO OF OUR FAVORITE PHOTOS OF "MACHIE"**  
**WE KNEW EVEN THEN HE WOULD BE A STAR!!**



**Argentine Mach One (ET)**



**Argentine Mach One (ET)**

**LLAMA DREAMS ARGENTINES**

**LAMABETTY@AOL.COM**

**GENE & BETTY MOE**

**541-548-4158**



## Argentine Llama Aficionados

### Our Mission

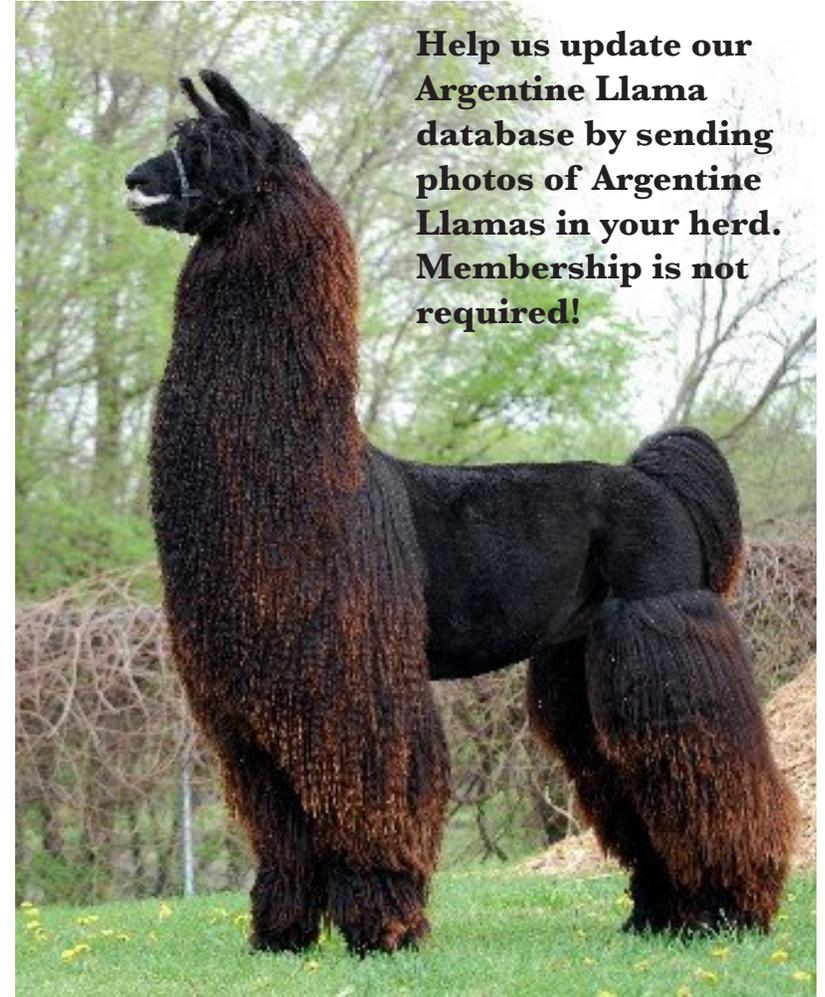
*Argentine Llama Aficionados (ALA) consists of a group of Argentine llama owners as well as those who just want to learn more about this rare and exotic llama. We think of ourselves as a fan club, fans who enjoy the Argentine type of llama – robust build, heavy bone, fine dense fiber and great disposition. ALA's goal is to promote the Argentine llama and to keep a directory of all pure Argentines in the United States and Canada.*

**Please consider joining the ALA and supporting the Argentine llamas.**

Membership benefits are:

- Semi-annual newsletter
- Member listing on the ALA website
- Access to post llamas for sale on the ALA website
- Members may add their llamas to the only directory of Argentines llamas

On the website, we have several interesting articles, Argentine traits, an Argentine database, including their photo, llamas for sale, a list of all our members, and how to join. Please visit our website.



**Help us update our Argentine Llama database by sending photos of Argentine Llamas in your herd. Membership is not required!**

Please contact Sonja Boeff for more information.

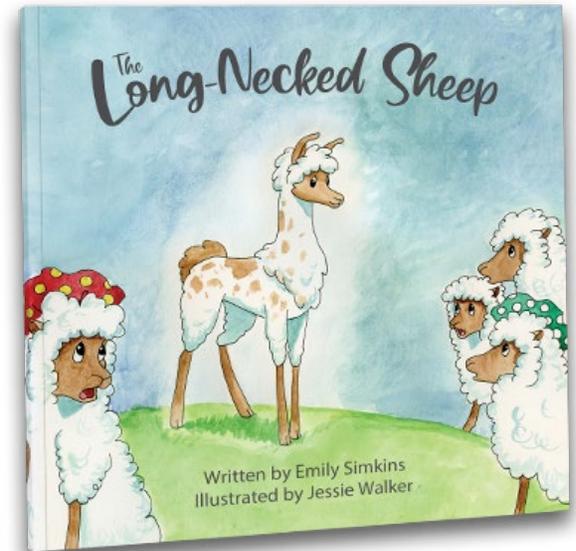
Email: [czandera@yahoo.com](mailto:czandera@yahoo.com)

Phone: 303-257-6733

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

# The Long Necked Sheep

## Q&A with Author Emily Simkins

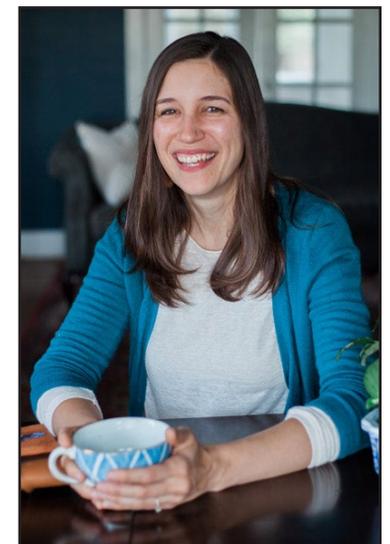


American Llama: How did you end up writing a children’s book about llamas?

Emily Simkins: I always enjoyed writing in school, and I have always thought llamas were special. They are such a unique farm animal, and they have always been one of my personal favorites! So, when a friend told me that farmers will put them in with their sheep to protect them from predators I thought, “Ok, that is too cool! That would be such a great concept for a children’s book.” At that moment, I kind of logged it away in my brain, and then one day I finally sat down to write it. It took me about two years to finally finish the book.

ALM: Where had you seen or heard about llamas before you wrote the book?

ES: I have always noticed llamas when driving from place to place. They really stand out from all the other farm animals, but in a good way! They have always been one of my favorites at petting zoos. Actually, it was after I finished writing the book that I finally got to see my first cria, and it was absolute love at first sight!! I could have watched that little guy all day...if I could see through all the happy tears in my eyes!

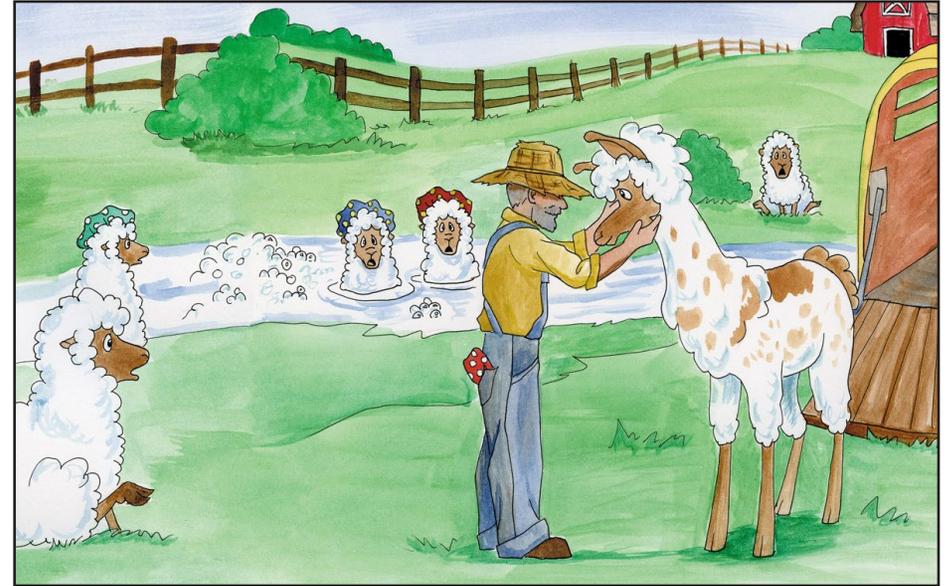


ALM: Was the book always going to be about a guard llama?

ES: Yes. The guard llama concept is really what inspired the book, and I knew that I wanted a llama to be the hero of the story right from the beginning.

ALM: Did any authors or specific books inspire you to write a children's book?

ES: Many of you probably knew about Bill Peet long before I did, but I just recently discovered him at our local library, and he has quickly become one of my family's favorite authors. I love his style of writing and his wonderful illustrations, and I love how his heroes are always the "odd balls." He was an incredibly talented man, and definitely was part of my inspiration in writing, "The Long-Necked Sheep."



ALM: Did you conduct any research on guard llamas while you were writing the book? What were some of the key pieces of information that helped you?

ES: Well, I'm a bit embarrassed to say that I had completely finished writing the book before it occurred to me to check out the accuracy of my friend's little llama fact. Thankfully, when I googled it, I found many articles about the guard llama concept. I have actually learned more about guard llamas since the completion of this book. People have been more than willing to share information, amazing llama stories, and photos of their sweet llamas. I am learning more and more that llamas are incredibly amazing creatures!!

ALM: Did you visit any llama farms prior to writing the book? Or any since?

ES: I have not had the privilege of visiting a llama farm yet, but I really want to! When I was in college, I always drove past a llama farm on my way to class. It was an old stucco farmhouse, and it always looked so picturesque with the llamas grazing in the barnyard. I would always daydream of living there one day.

ALM: What age range is your book intended for?

ES: I would say the intended age for this book is 0-10 year olds, but I really think this is a book that adults will enjoy reading as well. There is a lesson in it for all ages!

ALM: What do you hope children learn from reading your book? Other than becoming lifelong llama enthusiasts of course...

ES: I hope that when children read this book they understand that they have been created just the way they are for a special purpose. When the flock of sheep make fun of Llama for being different, he tries so hard to be like them. But in the end, they all learn that the wise farmer had placed him there for a reason, and that being different was his greatest strength. I hope this book encourages and inspires children (and adults) to be unique and to be themselves! In a world where we encounter so much diversity in life, from different ethnicities, to eye color, skin color, physical characteristics, likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, I hope that children can learn to see others as beautifully and wonderfully made by their Creator, and that they can choose to love others for their differences rather than looking down on them.

ALM: Do you plan to write more children's books?

ES: Yes. I am actually working on another book right now about a strong little boy named Michael. I have also had several people ask if there will be a sequel to this book, and, while I haven't started writing one yet, I do have a few ideas up my sleeve!

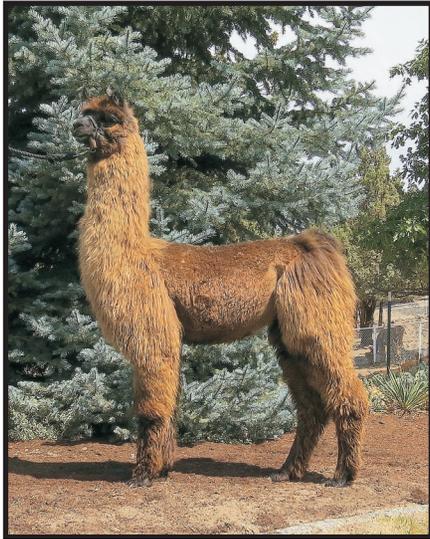
Note: Emily has since published The Long Necked Sheep coloring book



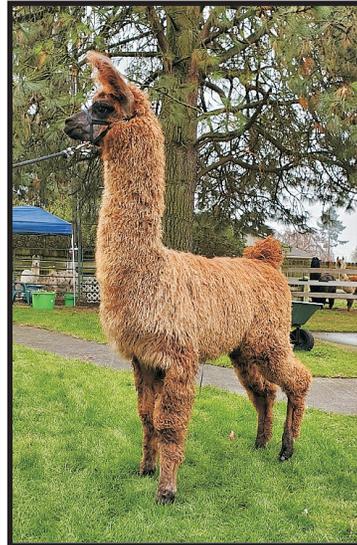
Click Here, or on the photo, to see current pricing on Amazon.

If you order from our link we get a small commission to help support our work, at no additional cost to you!

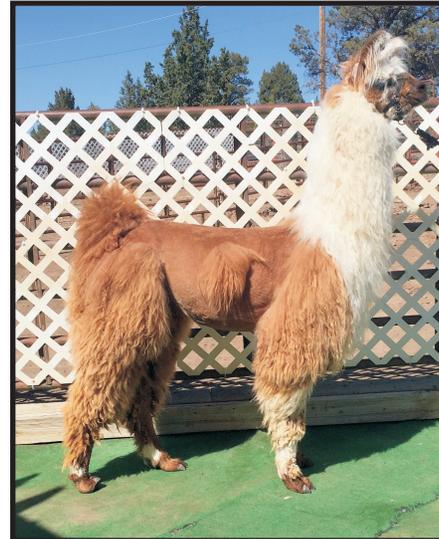
# We are Carrying on Argentine Mach One's Legacy...



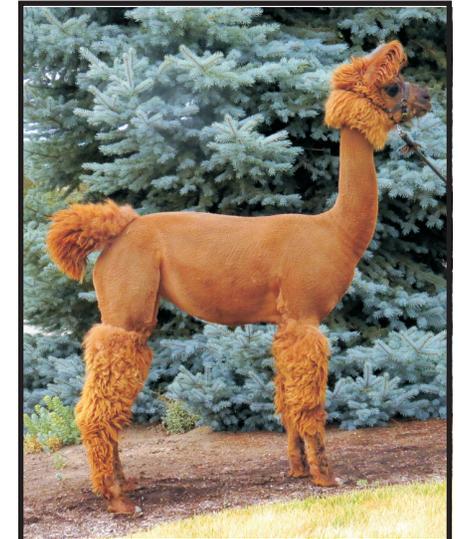
**Argentine Autumn Dream**  
10-14-12  
Arg Mach One (ET) x  
Arg. Paiva



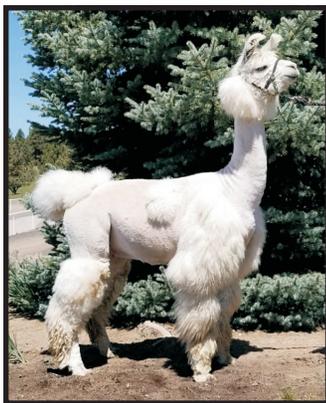
**Argentine Autumn Breeze**  
7-1-20  
Arg. Artemis x  
Arg. Autumn Dream



**Argentine Caramel Sundae**  
9-26-17  
Arg. Mach One (ET) X  
Arg. Tippa Rari  
Bred to Arg. Tuaca  
for September 21



**Argentine Tippa Rari**  
3-15-14  
Arg. Simpatico x  
Arg. Paiva  
Bred to Arg. Artemis for Fall 21



**Argentine Artemis**  
5-25-16  
Arg. Cerrado x  
Arg. Goosebumps



**Argentine Tuaca**  
9-7-16  
Arg. Iroquois x  
Arg. Kamora

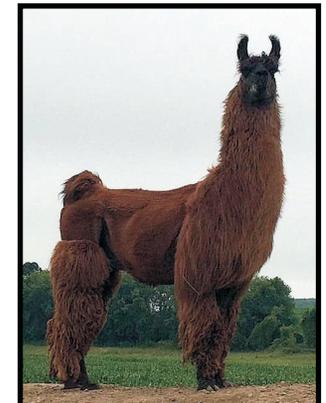
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**BONNIE DOBLE**

**Bonniesfarm2703@gmail.com**



**Argentine Ontono (ET)**  
12-20-2002  
Arg. Don Zunca x Arg. Primavera

**Please e-mail for information on any Argentines  
or part Argentines we have for sale!!**

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# Meningeal Worm in Camelids

## By Charlene Arendas, DVM

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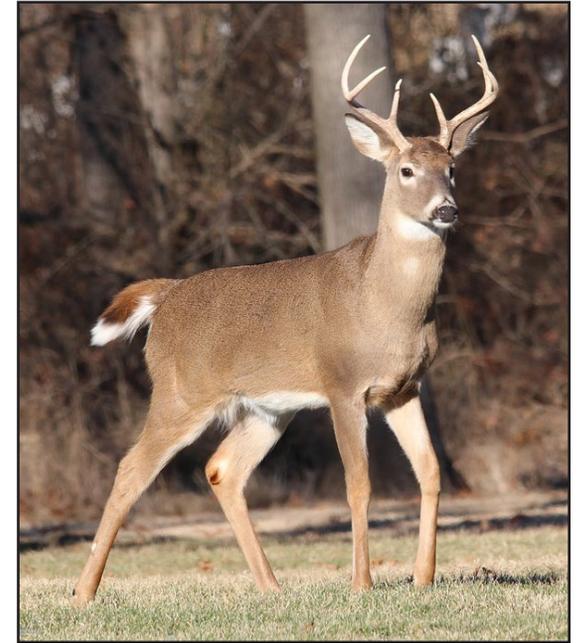
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Chances are, if you own llamas or alpacas, you've heard of meningeal worm. Meningeal worm may or may not be a concern in your region (see map on page 160), depending on if you have a white-tailed deer population. Timing is certainly of the essence when identifying and treating suspected infections. However, do be aware that other diseases can cause similar "neurologic" symptoms in camelids, such as Listeriosis (circling disease), Polioencephalomalacia (PEM), Rabies, and others. Work with your personal veterinarian to prevent, diagnose, and make treatment plans for your animals.

### **LIFE CYCLE:**

*Parellophastrogylus tenuis*, commonly referred to by many as *P. tenuis*, Meningeal Worm, M-Worm, Deer Worm, or Brainworm, is a common parasite of white-tailed deer. The life cycle is perpetuated by deer and a gastropod (slug or snail). The infected gastropod is inadvertently eaten by a grazing deer. The larvae then migrate through the deer's stomach wall and travel along nerves to reach the spinal cord. They spend 3-4 weeks developing in the spinal cord and eventually migrate to the deer's brain, specifically the meninges. Once they have reached the brain, the larvae develop into adult worms, reproduce, and lay eggs on the dura mater layer of the deer's brain. When the eggs hatch, the larvae enter circulation and migrate to the deer's lungs, where they are coughed up and swallowed. The larvae pass through the GI tract and are excreted in the mucus layer with their fecal pellets. A gastropod comes along to feed off the mucus covering the deer droppings and the larvae penetrate the gastropod's foot to take up residence, and the cycle continues! It is estimated that **80%** of deer are infected in endemic areas, but it is rare for it to cause disease in the deer itself. The real problem comes when something besides a deer eats the slug or snail.

Many animals are susceptible to meningeal worm infection, including llamas, alpacas, elk, moose, goats, sheep, camels, and mule deer. Other species that can be infected less commonly are cattle, horses, black-tailed deer, caribou/reindeer, big horned sheep, and pronghorns. When a camelid is grazing and accidentally ingests an infected gastropod, the larvae begin a similar journey as they do inside the deer. The larvae penetrate the stomach wall and begin migrating along nerves until reaching the spinal cord. This is where things go terribly wrong. Because the larvae are in the wrong host, they aren't adapted to the biological differences. As they wander confused through the tissues in the spinal cord, they wreak havoc, causing immense inflammation and damage. Most of them never find the brain, but occasionally some will, and others may migrate to other areas of the body!



## **SYMPTOMS:**

The symptoms are seen once the larvae reach the spinal cord, which in experimental conditions typically can be anywhere from 30-60 days after ingestion of the infected gastropod. However, it should be noted that on rare instances, a period of 5 days from ingestion to symptoms was reported! The type of symptoms you'll see really depends on where in the spinal cord the parasite is located. In most instances, you will see rear leg weakness, stumbling/falling, difficulty rising or inability to stand, "drunken" walking (ataxia), or wider than usual leg stance. As the disease progresses, signs can quickly progress to rear limb or four limb paralysis, front leg weakness, loss of sensation (especially in limbs), and loss of muscle mass. In some instances, if the larvae have actually reached the brain, you could even see a head tilt, tremors/twitches, seizures, and loss of consciousness.

## **TREATMENT:**

Many meningeal worm infections CAN be treated successfully, but often times we may not notice the subtle symptoms before irreversible damage has been done to the spinal cord. When I have a camelid with meningeal worm symptoms, my personal treatment protocol includes:



- 23cc fenbendazole (Safe-Guard or Panacur) per 100# body weight orally once a day x5 days. If you have the paste form and not the liquid, weigh your camelid and give 10x the label dose. For example, you would dose a 200# animal as a 2000# animal using the dial-a-dose tube! All forms of Safe Guard or Panacur are the same concentration whether it's liquid or paste or labeled for horses, goats, or cattle. Do not use the pellets, it would be way too much volume to get them to consume in one sitting.
- Flunixin meglumine (Banamine) 1cc per 100# SQ once or twice a day for 3-5 days

Fenbendazole & Flunixin are the mainstays of meningeal worm treatment. The fenbendazole is able to penetrate the blood-brain barrier and thus help kill the larvae in the spinal cord. Flunixin is an anti-inflammatory drug that helps reduce the inflamed spinal cord tissue and thus help alleviate symptoms. Other medications that may prove useful during meningeal worm treatment are:

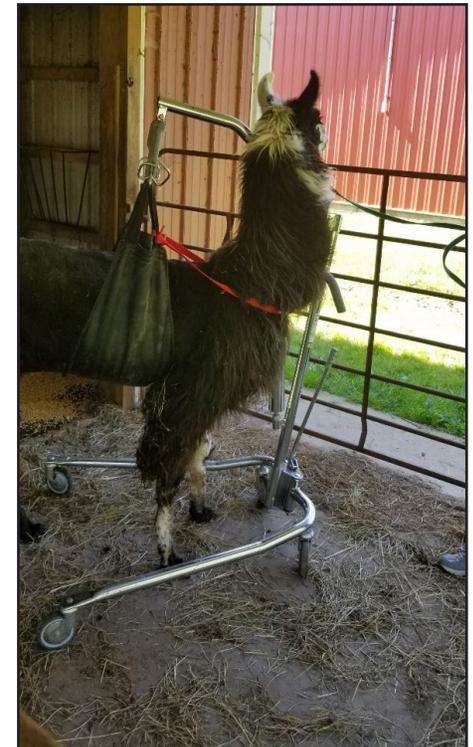
- B complex vitamins (oral and injectables of varied concentrations available). The B-vitamins are water-soluble, so over-dosage should not be a big concern. B-vitamins help speed up nerve repair & recovery.
- Vitamin E (a fat-soluble vitamin and overdosing CAN cause toxicity). Comes in many oral and injectable forms with varying concentrations. Consult with your vet for dosing instructions. Vitamin E has anti-oxidant properties.

- DMSO (a potent anti-inflammatory that might be administered by your vet if deemed necessary)
- Steroids (such as injectable Dexamethasone or oral Prednisone). Steroids have a reputation of not being well-tolerated in camelids. However, if the situation is truly dire, your vet may discuss with you the need to try one of these medications. In severe cases that have not responded to flunixin, I have used oral Prednisone successfully, but it does not come without risk. You must discuss and understand the risks of steroid usage with your vet.
- Ivermectin DURING TREATMENT is controversial. This drug normally does not penetrate blood-brain barriers and thus SHOULD NOT be effective in treating the larvae within the spinal cord. Concern also exists that when larvae cause inflammation in the spinal cord, this may disengage the blood-brain barrier, risking that the drug WILL penetrate the nervous system. Since there are well-documented neurologic adverse effects of ivermectin, especially if overdosed, this “open” door to the nervous system could be a huge concern. Another school of thought suggests that while giving a dose of ivermectin won’t be effective for the larvae within the spinal cord, it would still be useful to kill any other larvae still in migration before they too reach the spinal cord. There are many strong, differing opinions on this but the current prevailing thought amongst vets is NOT to give it during an active meningeal worm infection, but to resume injections some time after treatment has been completed. Whatever you decide to do, it should be an informed decision you make along with your vet, due to the potential risks involved.

Not only does successful treatment of meningeal worm require medications, but you also need to dedicate some time to physical rehabilitation and daily hygiene. Even if a camelid is “down” and unable to rise for a few days, muscle stiffness and muscle atrophy can occur, along with urine scald and feces accumulation. The extent of care needed depends on the severity of the animal’s symptoms. Livestock slings and specifically llama slings are available online. You can also fashion one yourself at home. A used human medical Hoyer Lift can also be utilized if you don’t have an overhead area to attach a sling. Every attempt should be made to get the animal standing twice daily, whether it is by their own strength or by using a sling or other lifting devices. Massage the limbs to stimulate nerves and blood flow. Flex and extend all joints of the limbs and move them through the normal ranges of motion. While the animal is elevated in a sling, shift their weight as needed so that the animal has the sensation of bearing weight, and try to



Photo Credit:  
www.RehabMart.com



encourage them to place their feet and take a “step” forward by pushing them slightly. You can even go as far to elicit the help of a local animal chiropractor or acupuncturist to assist you in stimulating the nerves, possibly even using a TENS unit. Although the parasite did its damage quickly, rehab can take weeks to months. In most camelids, a quick response to treatment will be seen within the first few days and they may live relatively normal lives with nothing more than an altered gait. However, some animals may not show any response even after 5 days. These are the critters that will need some extended care to determine if they can ever achieve independent walking. Every case is different and while there are stories of animals progressing to seizures and death, there are also success stories of animals being sling-lifted for months and are now walking just fine. I think it makes sense to give them a chance but also to be cognizant of their quality of life.

### **PREVENTION:**

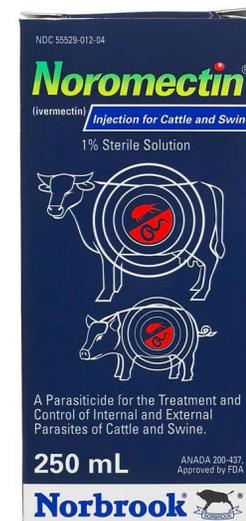
Two INJECTABLE drugs in the avermectin group of macrocyclic lactone drugs have historically been shown to be useful in prevention of meningeal worm infection in camelids. These are ivermectin (Ivomec, Noromectin, other generics) and doramectin (Dectomax). There is one other newer injectable drug (Eprinomectin, aka LongRange) that theoretically should also work, but it lacks sufficient study for me to recommend it or even try it out on my own animals just yet. These drugs kill the *P. tenuis* larva after they exit the stomach and are on the way to the spinal cord. I insist you always use the INJECTABLE forms of ivermectin and doramectin, as the oral drenches and pour-on formulations have been shown to have VERY POOR ABSORPTION and are ineffective in camelids. When reading the labels of these injectable drugs, you might notice that they are technically labeled to treat a long list of GI parasites. Do not believe the label. Because of many factors, including our traditionally frequent usage of ivermectin to prevent meningeal worm, we have effectively selectively bred for GI parasites that are now resistant (immune) to these drugs. Thus, I advise you to use ivermectin or doramectin ONLY for meningeal worm prevention (or mite treatment). Never ever rely on these drugs to treat or prevent GI parasites in your camelids.

- Ivermectin – 1cc per 50# SQ every 30 days (Ivomec, Noromectin, other generics)

**-OR-**

- Doramectin – 1cc per 40-50# SQ every 30-45 days (Dectomax)

Everyone has varying opinions on the dosing and frequency of these medications. You’ll read about lower doses of ivermectin at 1cc per 70#, you’ll see people that might use doramectin every 8 weeks. We can debate it for weeks. But what’s truly important is that



you discuss it and make decisions with your own camelid-savvy vet for your specific geography and situation. Doramectin has been shown not to last as long as originally thought (4-5 weeks versus 6-8 weeks). Ivermectin is much less expensive if you buy generics, and not brand name Ivomec, although some products might be more irritating. Additionally, ivermectin is metabolized the quickest in the body, and it's been around the longest, so it has the most research and safety data. That was enough to make my decision to use ivermectin with my herd.

But what about the frequent injections? It is true that some camelids will get injection site reactions (lumps) or even an abscess from time to time. Does everyone truly give these injections to every single animal once a month? Some do, and I applaud them. But realistically, not everyone can do it. When your herd gets to be a certain size, these frequent injections can be a logistical headache. As a veterinarian, I will absolutely tell you that your animals will have the best protection if you can do this with every animal on a monthly basis. But if you need to strategize, I offer you the "busy persons timing of meningeal worm protection." First of all, remember, in order to become infected, you need slugs or snails to be active, you need a white tailed deer population in your area, and you need the animals to be grazing. And don't forget, most symptoms will occur 4-6 weeks after ingestion. So let's think about this – animals on dry lot or snow covered pastures – probably not a big risk. However, how excited do your animals get in the winter when the snow melts and they see some grass poking through? Or if you have a wet soggy mild winter? That's a riskier time.

Spring rains? Risky. Dry drought? Less risky. In the autumn when leaves are falling in the pasture – snails & slugs love leaf litter – risky. So here's how I handle our herd – everyone gets a shot when they're sheared (April/May); everyone gets a shot entering the fall (Sept/Oct); everyone gets a shot in late winter (Jan/Feb) or after snow melts since they'll try to graze the short dead pasture. If we take the animals on a hike off the farm or into the woods, those animals get a shot when we get home. Additionally, if I catch animals for other random reasons like grooming, nails, halter training, health concerns, etc – they get a shot (as long as it's been at least 4 weeks). Is it perfect? No. It's a calculated risk. After going over 25 years of health records, the handful of meningeal worm cases we've on the farm had have been in February, March, October, and November. But remember, I'm in northeast Ohio. Things are likely different where you live, the topography and drainage of your land, your fencing, your weather, your deer population, etc. Work with your veterinarian to

## **Risky Conditions:**

Lush green grass

Leaf Litter

Soggy, Mild Winter

## **Less Risky Conditions:**

Snow/Frozen

Dry/Drought

come up with an ideal plan and do what you can to work towards that. But also, create a fallback plan that you can realistically achieve that will still offer protection for your herd.

There are also a multitude of non-medical interventions that might be helpful in reducing the risk of meningeal worm in your herd. Deer-proof fencing should help keep deer (and their feces) out of your pasture. Wide gravel strips along the fence lines have been suggested to help deter snails and slugs from entering the pasture. Try to address low-lying moist areas in your pasture with drainage solutions. Because snails and slugs love leaf litter, raking up these areas should help eliminate a habitat. Keep in mind that pastures next to woodlands will likely have higher deer populations. Also, newly-cleared wooded areas that are made into pasture may be contaminated with deer feces and extra vigilance should be taken with animals on those pastures.

In conclusion, if you live in an area where white-tailed deer are carriers of m-worm, be aware that meningeal worm infection is a risk. Work with your veterinarian to make prevention and treatment plans. Recognizing the symptoms early can make all the difference!

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## Non-Medical Interventions

- Deer proof fencing
- Gravel Strips along fence lines
- Pasture drainage
- Raking Leaves



The shaded area represents the known distribution of *P. tenuis* in North America. The dotted line is the western edge of white-tailed deer distribution. Image courtesy of Lankester 2001

# SPACEY ACRES LLAMA RANCH

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# A HARD SELL

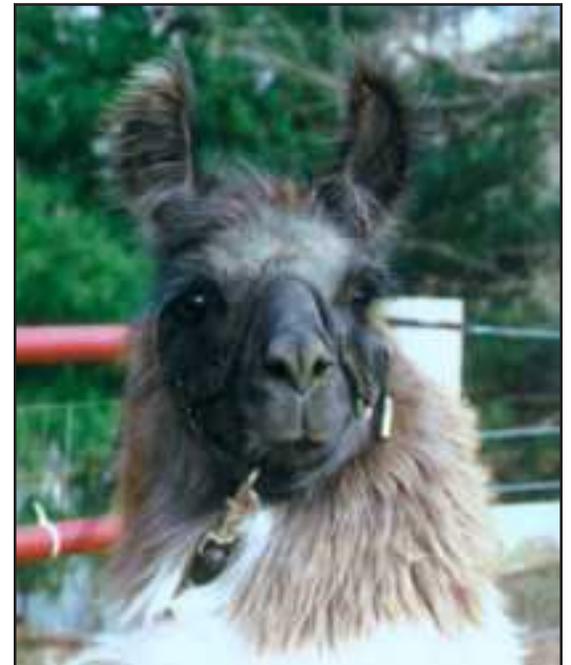
## BY LAURA KELLER

### *A note from the editor*

In issue five of American Llama we published a remembrance of Llama Woods Farm, including interviews with Donald Christ and Pam Clark. We are excited to share another breeder's remembrance of Llama Woods, as Laura Keller traveled to Bend in the mid '90s in search of a new herdsire. This article was originally published on [www.ywl.com](http://www.ywl.com).

As I time goes by, it gets harder and harder for me to sell a llama. This is a quandary, since we have decided we need to reduce our herd in order to allow us to do some genuine traveling in the next few years (something other than llama shows, weddings and funerals.)

I have a beautiful cria born this fall who might be a good show prospect. His fiber is to die for, and the color of light caramel or clover honey and cream. It is very close to the color of our wonderful llama, Tia Juanita. I covet her fiber which gets used or sold every year. This little boy has much finer fiber, and is liable to remain here in the "fiber herd" that I am building in my mind for the future. He also reminds me of Tia's first baby, a beautiful little boy who we sold, and who I will always miss. The fact that this little guy lets me pick up his feet and is nearly halter broken at only three months of age is also a plus. I know if we show him and someone makes us an offer, he needs to find a nice home where he can hopefully pass on his wonderful genetics. But I can see this will be hard, both emotionally and practically. Unless we make it to some more shows than we have recently, the problem may not come up. (Is this a self-fulfilling prophesy?)

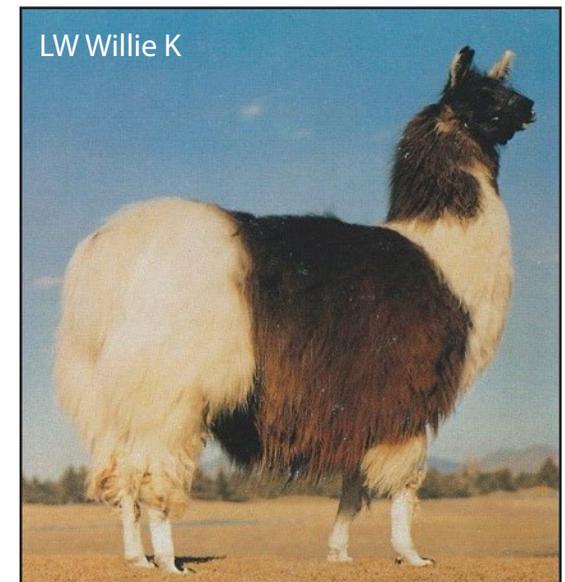


LW Captain Curry

I am reminded of our visit many, many years ago to Llama Woods in Oregon. We had heard a rumor that if Iris Christ did not like you, then she would not sell you a llama. I suppose I am like that too, maybe more so now than ever. I have become more protective of my charges over the years. Of course, Iris could afford to keep every llama if she wanted to. And her llamas were in such demand at that time that she could afford to be choosy.

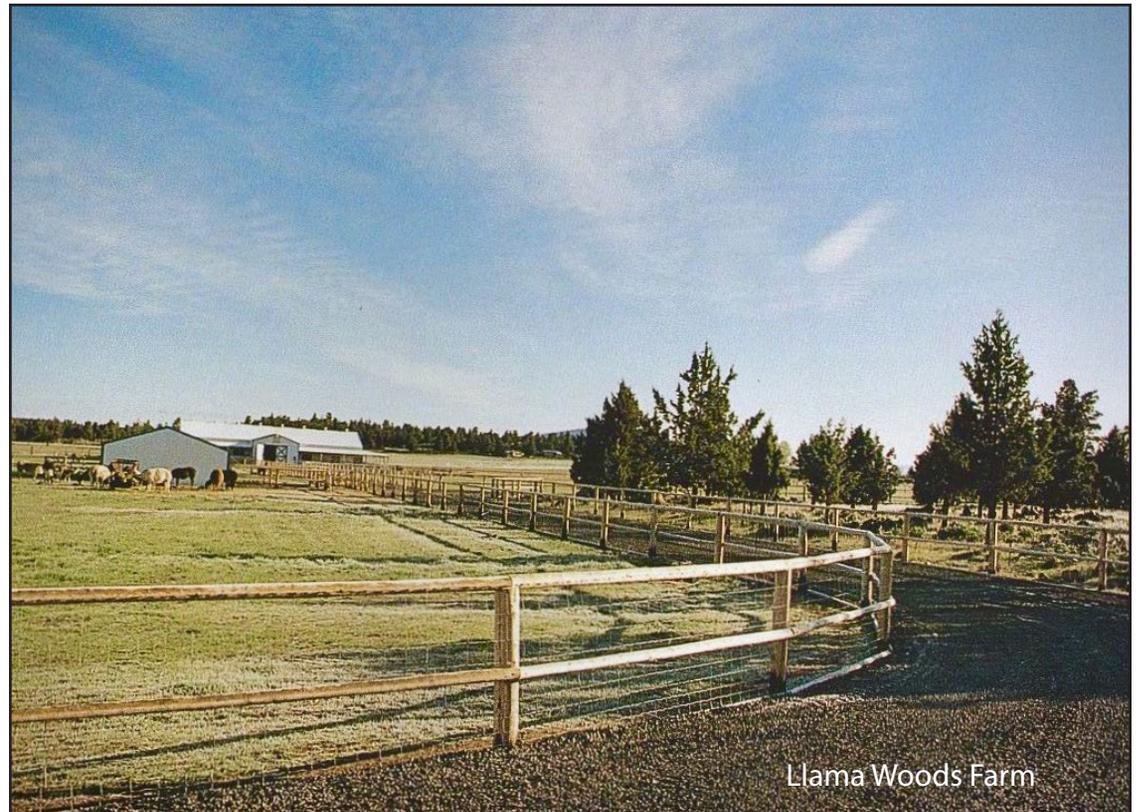
We arrived at Llama Woods with another couple who were our friends and llama-mentors. Most of our time that first day was spent with Pam, Iris's long time friend and farm manager. While the visit and the day was all that we could have imagined, I remember the chilly reception given us by Iris's dogs, two Bichons Frises. Despite their perfectly quaffed pom-pom appearance, they took very seriously their guardianship of the castle. Underneath all the white puff, they were sturdy little dogs. They barked and yipped and acted for all the world like they could make quick hamburger out of our ankles. I did not feel all too comfortable near the house and yard that served as the office. I was happier out in the llama pastures where the llamas were much less judgmental. I couldn't help but hope that Iris did not use her dogs to divine for her whether to sell to someone or not.

The second day, we had begun to negotiate the purchase of one of Iris's males, a Willie K son named Captain Curry. Our friends were also interested in a couple of llamas, including a future herd sire. We had entered into the realm of serious buyers now, not just sight-seers who were not destined to be worth the time that was spent on them. We had lunch with Iris and her husband Don on their patio at the farm. While at our home, our silverware saved for holidays is simply our good stainless, it was not surprising that this Vanderbilt heiress served our casual, home-made lunch on gold-plated dinnerware. Their house, however, was a typical ranch-style home on the outside, nothing very pretentious. I think the house and the older farm house/office may have been on the property when they purchased it. While I did not go in the house, a glance through the back door confirmed that inside it was impeccably decorated. Perhaps done personally by Martha Stewart herself, I thought. After lunch, our friend, who was much higher on the



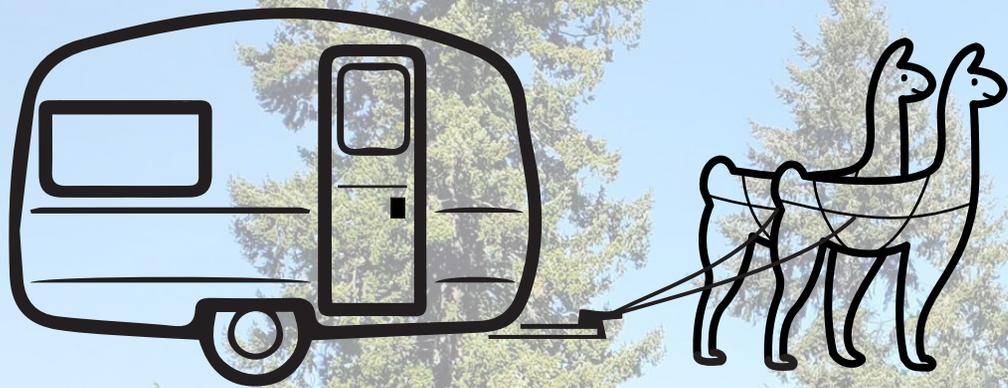
llama social ladder than we, was invited inside to see some of Iris's art collection. We remained on the patio enjoying the warm Oregon spring day, wonderfully devoid of the humidity that plagues our home in Indiana. The whole time we ate and conversed with our hosts, their Bichons were alternating between begging for their owner's attention, and stealthily sniffing our feet and ankles. At first I was worried a sudden move would illicit an attack, but the dogs minded their manners. Perhaps they were taking cues from their masters that we were to be treated as guests, since we were dining with them. By the end of lunch the dogs were a little less concerned with our presence and I felt a little more relaxed around them.

On our third day, we returned with our decisions on which llamas to purchase. Today, the Bichons seemed genuinely happy to greet us at the office door. No doubt they remembered us from lunch the day before. I recall sitting on the large overstuffed couch in the office waiting area, which was once the large family room in this remodeled farmhouse. My husband and I were finalizing travel plans for our new herd sire, and going over paperwork and the purchase contract. The year was 1995, and the price for a fine llama, especially one bred and owned by Llama Woods, seemed nearly astronomical. This was a huge investment for us. I remember sitting on the couch, writing out the check with an awful lot of zeros in it. The Bichons were happily sitting next to us, asking for attention and enjoying the excitement. They now accepted us and were our trusted buddies. What a difference from two days ago! I am sure we smelled the same, whether that was good or bad from a dog's point of view, I don't know. But they certainly knew us now and included us in their circle of trust. Apparently, Iris felt the same, as she not only consented to the purchase of our beloved Captain Curry, but also suggested a female to go with him. I have often wondered if the dogs accepted us because Iris had, or if it was the other way around. Or did they respond especially to that "check writing moment?" I'll never know, but the visit and the critical acclaim of those two dogs will always remain in my memory. Perhaps I need to get a Bichon Frise to help me determine who should purchase one of my llamas!



Llama Woods Farm

# HAPPY CAMPER



# LLAMA SHOW

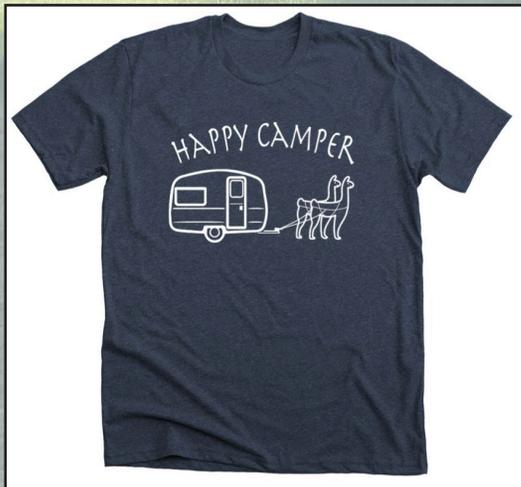
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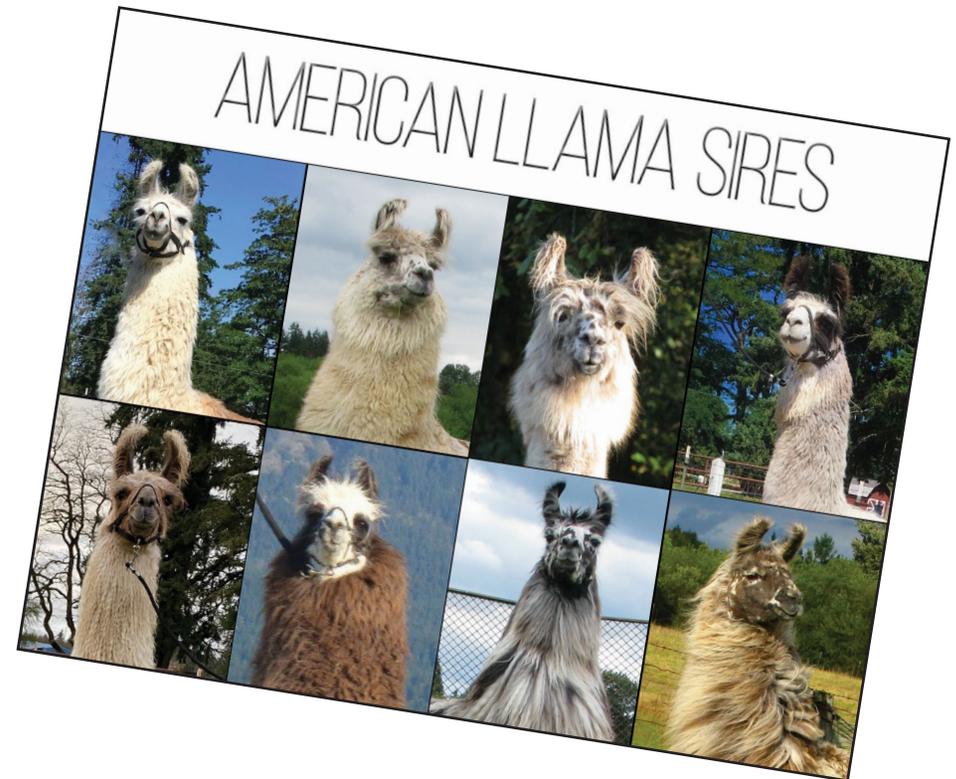
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THANK YOU TO THE WILKINSONS FOR SPENDING THE DAY WITH US IN BEND. THANK YOU TO PAUL AND SALLY TAYLOR FOR OUR TIME IN BOZEMAN. THANK YOU TO TOM SIMMONS FOR SHARING YOUR STORY BY PHONE.

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