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Steve & Sue Rolfing
Columbia Falls, Montana
www.gnranch.com
Since 1979
2020 continues to be a year to remember for all the wrong reasons. In the Pacific Northwest, this summer has brought terrible wildfires that have displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and innumerable animals. Several llama owners have found themselves in evacuation zones, including two large herds. The llama community has answered the call, helping to move and house hundreds of llamas during these trying times. Justin Timm and the rest of the Timm family of Frog Pond Farm helped facilitate some of the evacuations, and housed the majority of the Sijama and Hidden Oaks herds. Many other members of the llama community stepped up to house small groups of animals, and llama owners from across the country stepped up financially to help feed the evacuated animals.

I heard similar stories in the aftermath of the derecho in Iowa, and I’m sure whatever pocket of the country you find yourself in you know of people who have helped their neighbor when they were in need. In troubling times like these it is comforting to know that we all belong to a community who will have your back if things go sideways on you.

In this issue, we are happy to bring you an interview and farm tour with Rick and Mary Adams of Bend, Oregon. They live less than a mile from the old Llama Woods Farm, previously owned by Iris and Donald Christ. We were lucky enough to speak to Donald by phone and he gave his blessing for us to share a few special photos as well. In addition to a trip to Bend, we are excited to share beautiful llama barns from across the country. Many thanks to all of the llama owners who helped us with this article. We hope that your llamas and your farm continue to be a refuge for you during these difficult times.

Happy Reading,
-Kyle Mumford
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In an August 31st rule change announcement from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, buried underneath lines of information about deregulation and newly opened hunting lands, was one line that read, “Lastly, we are prohibiting domestic sheep, goat, and camelid pack animals on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

If you don’t live in Alaska you may be inclined to think that this rule change is of little consequence to you, but there is a concern that it will create a precedent, which could be used to restrict the use of pack llamas on public lands in other states. Llama organizations and individuals are banding together to fight this rule change, led by the Greater Appalachian Llama and Alpaca Association. They have started a gofundme page to raise funds for the upcoming legal battle. Click here to visit the gofundme page.

The given reason for this rule change was “the risk of disease transmission to Dall’s sheep,” a risk for which there is little evidence. PackLlamas.org provides a myriad of documents related to this claim, including letters from revered llama veterinarians, Dr. LaRue Johnson and Dr. Murray Fowler. A quote from Dr. Fowler in a letter provided on their site seems to sum the situation up well, “There has never been a documented case of South American Camelids being responsible for disease transmission to cattle, sheep, goats, or cervids... I applaud the efforts to require health checks and parasite control, but I see no justification for cart blanche exclusion of llamas from wilderness areas.” Click here to visit packllamas.org for additional information.

This rule change did not fall out of the clear blue sky. The back-and-forth on this issue in Alaska dates back to at least 2012. Phil and Linda Nuechterlein, of Alaska Llamas, have done a great job of documenting the various attempts to restrict the use of pack llamas on public lands on their blog. Click here to visit alaskallamas.com for background information.

Please consider donating to the cause at the gofundme page set up by GALA. All funds will be used for legal fees.
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A few weeks ago I got it in my head that I needed a camera in our barn. It seemed like a fun thing to be able to pull it up and check on the llamas while I was away. While researching barn cameras, they all required internet access to be able to see a live view. This led me down a rabbit trail of how to get internet from the house to the barn. Luckily, I found an option to easily get WiFi in the barn and a barn camera setup with a process that took under an hour and cost around $200!
The most highly recommended option to get internet to the barn was to dig a trench and hard wire it. I also read about WiFi bridges, but these also seemed complex and difficult to setup. With modern technology, I was convinced there had to be an easier way. That’s when I found PowerLINE WiFi by Netgear.

The PowerLINE WiFi by Netgear sends the internet signal through your existing electrical wiring! One unit, the Powerline adapter, plugs into a wall outlet in your home and connects to your existing router or modem with an ethernet cable. The other unit, the Powerline WiFi access point, is plugged into an outlet in the barn (or shop, or garage; wherever you want WiFi that it doesn’t currently reach). The WiFi access point comes with a network name and password, so it will be separate from your current network in your house. The network name and password can be changed if you’d like.

When I was reading about this I had my doubts, it seemed too good to be true. I ordered it anyway and figured I could return it if it didn’t work for me. To my surprise, the PowerLINE WiFi system worked! An added bonus was that it took less than ten minutes to set it up and start using it. We have used the WiFi in the barn many times since, and it has worked great. If you read the reviews it doesn’t work for everyone (though it does seem to work for most), so I would recommend buying this somewhere like Amazon where you can easily return it.

It would also be advisable to check out [www.speedtest.net](http://www.speedtest.net) to make sure you have the bandwidth to run a camera, 2 mbps seems to be the minimum. Our barn WiFi (30mbps) is a little over half the strength of our house WiFi (50mbps).

Now that our barn WiFi was up and running I researched cameras that I could install in the barn. The main features I was looking for in a camera were exterior grade, high quality image, good battery life, and good night vision.

There are several different cameras, and if you use an existing system like Blink or Ring that may be the best option for you for consistency. We have a Ring Doorbell, so one option I considered was the Ring Stick-Up Cam, but the battery needs to be recharged every few weeks. It does have night vision, but I have heard that Blink’s night vision is better. The biggest
positive to the Ring option is that you can use a battery operated option, without monopolizing one of your electrical outlets.

The Blink Security Camera was recommended from a few people on The Llama Group, and from what I read it had amazing battery life (up to two years!) and great night vision.

The one disappointment I had with the Blink camera, is even though the camera itself is battery operated, it does have a small unit that plugs into a wall outlet. This needs to be within 100 feet of the camera. In our barn, we don’t have a lot of wall outlets, so it may be on the future project list to add a few more.

I setup the Blink Security Camera, and it was very easy to use. The app is installed on a smartphone, live view is easy to access, and the picture quality is good. It allows you to zoom in on different areas, which we can not do with our Ring doorbell. We moved it around the barn and picked our favorite viewpoint, which, for us, included a good view of the creep feeder that also functions as a stall when needed.

It has a microphone and a speaker. It could be used like an intercom system, or you can use it to talk to your llamas! We have had a lot of fun watching them react.

Another bonus is Blink has add-on cameras to capture different views, so this might be something we add in the future.

Click on either photo to see current Amazon pricing.
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Wild Oak Llamas
Rick and Mary Adams
Bend, OR

www.WildOakLlamas.com
Camelidynamics: Camelids and The Science of Applied Behavioral Analysis

By Marty McGee Bennett

Author’s note: You can teach an old dog new tricks! In this particular case I am the old dog. I began my work with animal training in the 1970s in college, studying animal behavior. I graduated from the University of Georgia with an interdisciplinary degree in the subject. This degree was to serve as the jumping off point for a career in veterinary medicine. Luckily, I discovered (by flunking physics) that I was better suited to the study of behavior than medicine.

Once I began working with camelids and after discovering Linda Tellington-Jones and her innovative approach to educating animals, I found the both the inspiration and the answers to my questions in her work--TTEAM and TTouch. I came to believe that the science of behavior was interesting but limiting when it came to working with domestic barnyard livestock and companion animals. Last year, one of my Camelidynamics students, Dr. Susan Brown, a veterinarian and camelid owner, reintroduced me to the science of Applied Behavior Analysis. I have now come full circle back to the science.

Based on Dr. Brown’s recommendation, I completed a course for animal training professionals, “Living and Learning with Animals” taught by Susan Friedman, PhD, from Utah State University. Dr. Friedman’s academic work is in the area of child psychology but a personal interest in parrots brought her to the world of animal training to share learning theory and applied behavior analysis with animal teachers. I am relieved and pleased to find out that what I have been teaching for, lo, these many years is completely supported by the science of applied behavioral analysis (ABA). After finishing Dr. Friedman’s course, I came away with a different way of seeing the work that I developed. I also have an increased understanding of learning theory and applied behavior analysis that will shape my work going forward.

Join a conversation about animal training and you will inevitably hear folks argue about whether or not animals can think. As it turns out, the entire animal kingdom, from bacteria to Bactrian camels, learns. **Learning is defined as a behavior change as a result of experience.** Recent studies reported in the journal *Science* have shown that even simple organisms such as bacteria are capable of pretty sophisticated “associative learning,” for example, using temperature as a cue to prepare for
upcoming danger. It follows then that whether or not animals think really depends on which definition you choose for the word *think*. Only the animals really know whether they think or don’t think, and does it really matter? Animals learn from their experience, and that is what is relevant to our interaction with them.

**Learning to Operationalize Behavior**

One of the most powerful lessons I gained from my studies in applied behavior analysis is how crucial it is to focus on the *behavior* instead of our human interpretation of the behavior. When I field questions about behavioral problems, owners want to create explanations for the problem… complicated stories about how the animal was raised, how he was treated by other animals or whether or not he was abused by humans. These stories are full of labels- words like obnoxious, dominant, stubborn, happy, sad, lonely- that we use to describe what we think is going on. Labels are problematic for a couple of reasons:

1. Labels give us a false understanding of the problem when we have only just given it name
2. Labels create self-fulfilling prophecies causing the owner to get what they expect.
   Additionally these labels are often handed down to the next owner trapping the animal in a box not of his own making.
3. Our interpretation or *misinterpretation* of the label can lead us down the wrong path when we try to change the behavior-perpetuating ineffective and unfair training methodologies like “I’ll show him who’s boss!”

We could all take a lesson from Sergeant Friday of *Dragnet*, whose famous line was, “Just the facts ma’am.” Focusing on the behavior, changes the description from: “my alpaca or llama is happy,” to: “my animal is quiet, is ruminating and doesn’t offer to get up when I walk close by,” or from: “my baby camelid is friendly or loves me,” to: “my baby camelid runs up to me in the field and presses his body against mine.”

Describing the behavior itself and not what we think the behavior means is called operationalizing it. Developing the discipline to think and speak this way will help you solve, and more importantly, prevent behavioral problems.

For example, labeling an animal as “dominant” is a common practice in our industry. In fact, as an industry we have gone one better and created a super label, the Berserk Male
Syndrome. This label makes it seem as if the llama or alpaca was either born with this malady or caught the problem like a cold. Someone hearing about an animal with the Berserk Male Syndrome might easily assume that humans had nothing to do with it.

Many years ago I offered a different take on the Berserk Male Syndrome. I proposed we call it the Novice Handler Syndrome instead. “Friendly” baby alpacas or llamas that run up to you in the field and lean on you might seem pretty innocuous. But a 200-pound alpaca or 300-pound llama charging up to you at full tilt and “leaning” on you without slowing down is a big problem. Encouraging behavior in a young animal that will become inappropriate simply because of the ultimate size of the adult animal has nothing to do with love or dominance. Novice handlers do not have the prior experience to understand that what looks like a pretty light in the distance, is really the headlight of an oncoming train.

The A-B-Cs of Behavior

Animals behave for a reason. They respond to a cue in the environment, try a particular behavior and if the outcome of the behavior serves a useful purpose, the behavior is repeated. This complex web of behavior can be simplified by using a process called the A-B-Cs of behavior. Each behavioral interaction is made up of three elements:

A = the antecedent- the stimulus or event that immediately precedes a behavior and sets the occasion for or signals the behavior

B = the behavior

C = the consequence- an event that influences the future strength of the behavior it immediately follows.

Dr. Susan Friedman, PhD, puts it this way, “The cause of behavior is found in contexts, not in animals. Behavior never occurs in a vacuum or sprays out of animals like water from a broken showerhead. There are always conditions on which behavior depends.”

The good news is that as animal caretakers we have considerable control over the environment in which our animals find themselves and we have control over our own behavior giving us considerable influence over both the antecedent stimulus and the consequences of a behavior.

To use the A-B-Cs of behavior to understand and change a problematic behavior requires that you first decide on a target behavior. For example, “my alpaca runs over, sticks his nose in my face and spits,” describes a whole string of behaviors. Once you have decided on the smallest meaningful unit of behavior, which in this case might be, “my alpaca spits,” then you
can observe its occurrence and determine what the animal gains from the behavior— the consequences and then note what is happening immediately beforehand—its antecedent stimulus, the stimulus that signals what behavior will be reinforced now.

In a herd environment, the consequence of spitting is that the thing being spat at usually goes away. The “something” might be, among other things, the unwanted advances of a male, a herd mate that is encroaching on food or a pesky baby that is being weaned. Why does your llama or alpaca spit at you? The short answer is probably to make you go away. You can avoid being spat on by understanding the effect of your behavior on the animal and changing your behavior if possible. I get that we must manage our animals and there are times when our llamas or alpacas want us to go away and that is just not possible, however it is amazing to me how often it IS possible to simply stop pushing the spit button or the kick button or the kush button, and so on. Of course, if you are going to avoid pushing these buttons, it is really useful to know where they are—identifying the antecedent stimulus will tell you.

I can remember many years ago working with a llama owner who described the llama that he brought to the workshop as a “terrible spitter.” As I stood inside the catch pen, this seemingly cooperative and placid llama watched me with interest as I quizzed the owner about the spitting. I asked, “What are you doing just before she spits at you?” He replied, “Well, usually I am picking little bits of straw out of her fleece.” Before I could stop myself, I replied, “Why don’t you just not do that?” My reply was genuine but sounded flippant, even to me. Far from being annoyed the owner very graciously said, “You know, I hadn’t thought of that!” We then discussed 1) Whether or not it was really necessary to pick things out of the wool 2) when it was necessary to remove debris from the fleece, as in show preparation, were there other ways to accomplish the same thing with less drama? As it turned out there were many options to change the behavior. Most importantly the owner looked at the llama with a new awareness… and didn’t see an unreasonable animal that was a “terrible spitter” but an animal that was behaving in a way that worked for her, for perfectly logical reasons.

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WILD OAK LLAMAS
AN INTERVIEW AND FARM TOUR WITH RICK AND MARY ADAMS
BY KYLE MUMFORD
In the late ‘90s, Rick and Mary Adams were living in town and working hard on their small pool service business. All their free time was spent out on the water. Rick said, “We were avid boaters for 25 years on the delta. We had a ski boat to start with, we went to a 30 foot cruiser and then went to a forty foot. This was all within like two years. We ended up with a 45. It took up most of our free time. We could never see ourselves being without a boat.”

For a few years they had less time on their boat than they would have liked because they were working through a headache of a court battle related to their pool business. The Adams had been paying royalties to a company in exchange for what they thought was proprietary technology for cleaning pools using gas chlorine. They found out that this technology was, in fact, being used by other pool cleaners in the area and they felt that the other company had no right to charge them royalties for it. They confronted the company which led to a lawsuit and a counter-suit. Six other companies joined the Adams in their suit, which would drag out for seven years. Rick continued, “Finally we went to a three week trial and everybody thought it was a slam dunk that we would win. We didn’t, they ruled against (our company) for 1.6 million dollars. We’re a struggling little pool business. I said, ‘We’ll be bankrupt.’ So we negotiated it down to about four hundred thousand. We sold the boat; we gave Mary’s brand new Cadillac to them as a show of good faith. We started over again pretty much. That’s when we moved to Vacaville (California), we didn’t want anything to do with city life. We haven’t looked back since.”

This isn’t the only time the Adams have been thrown a curveball and had to start over. Theirs is a story of perseverance; of getting back up off the mat when life knocks you down. As we sat with the Adams at their lovely home in Bend, Oregon overlooking their picturesque property and award-winning llama herd, Mary said, “Look at us now! I’m enjoying this life much more.” Then, referring to their new Prevost coach, she added, “Now we’ve got a land yacht instead of a water yacht.”

“I was hooked”

Rick grew up on a small family farm with a variety of animals, Mary did not have the same upbringing, she explained that growing up she “never even had a litter of kittens or puppies.” When they bought their small ranch in Vacaville, California they started to consider adding some livestock to their lives. Rick wanted cattle and Mary wanted horses. Before they had resolved their disagree-
ment they made a trip north to Washington and ended up stopping at Mary’s ex-husband Jerry Morris’ house. He and his wife had just purchased a pair of llamas to guard their sheep. Mary and Rick knew immediately that the argument about which type of livestock they would be adding to their farm was over, they would be getting llamas.

Upon returning home to California they made some phone calls and purchased their first pair of llamas from Margaret Drew (formerly Margaret Ricci) of Stonehenge Llamas. The herd expanded fairly quickly from there. Mary explained, “On Valentine’s Day Rick went back and got me two more. Those girls had been in competition before. So, Margaret said, ‘Okay Mary, we’ve got to get you to a llama show.’ So, we went to the Solano County Fair, just a small show. Margaret says, ‘You just stand right between me and my aunt (Debbie Hansen). And you do whatever we do.’ And I ribboned! I was hooked, I was hooked. So that’s how that all started.”

Leila, Larry, and Lucky
At one of their early llama show experiences Rick and Mary met one of their early mentors in the llama industry, the Crumrines. They were leading a large brown male named Kobra’s Phantom, today many llama breeders know him simply as “Tommy.” Mary said, “We had gone to the Grass Valley show. Leila and Larry (Crumrine) were there with Tommy. Rick went up to her and said, ‘How much would you sell him for?’ And she just looked at him like ‘Who the heck do you think you are?’ He was not for sale, no way. Anyway, by the end of the weekend we were good friends. And we ended up taking (two of our females) up to their ranch in Bozeman, Montana to breed to Tommy.”

While they were at the Crumrines, they inquired about a couple of Tommy’s younger brothers. One was a solid black male named Kobra’s Mighty Joe Young. The other was a red male that bore more of a resemblance to Tommy, named Kobra’s Lucky Lucianni. Lucky
went on to become the first stud at Wild Oak Llamas. He served them well for several years, though he turned out to be more prepotent for the reddish brown color than the Adams would have liked. Rick laughed as he said, “At first we must have thought they were all born that color.”

The Adams kept an interest in Argentines, though they have never been a large percentage of their herd. They currently have a half Argentine female, Lumberjack’s Spider Chrysanthemum, and a three-quarter Argentine male, RGA Mach’s Duke of the Desert. Their PR gelding, Papucho, is also part Argentine. Mary said, “I like what I get when I mix the Argentine with traditional types and suri. The density of the fiber seems to come through, and the bone. I don’t like skinny little legs.”
In 2005, the Adams sold their ranch in Vacaville and moved to Grass Valley, California. Their Grass Valley ranch was a lovely property with a steady, gradual slope down to a picturesque pond. That fall they purchased a young paint male from Dolly Peters who would end up being an important part of their program for more than a decade. RDL Prince Nikolai was sometimes overshadowed by WOL herdsires with bigger names, but he proved to be one of the Adams’ best producing males. They have retained three Nikolai daughters in their herd: WOL Maleficent (by Heylee), WOL Far Niente (by Lazafor), and WOL Cleocatra's Dancer (by Cleocatra). Mary feels that these three Nikolai daughters are the most important dams in their herd.

**High Profile Herdsires**

In 2009, the Adams made a big splash by purchasing half interest in a two year old male who was quickly making a name for himself, Silver Moon Chiri Alluro. Alluro was bred by Victoria Miller, but made famous by Dan and Marilyn Milton, who by this time were well versed in promoting herdsires. Mary remembered, “We never cared for the suris because they looked like alpacas. Alluro looked like a llama with those incredible locks; his locks were as thick as my finger. He had big bone too. The Miltons didn't want to sell him but they offered us a partnership.” The Miltons became another of the Adams mentors during these years as they grew from novices in the industry to accomplished, well-known breeders.

The following spring they added another high profile male, purchasing GNLC Santiago from the Rolfings at the Spring Celebration Sale. Santiago served as a herdsire at Great Northern Ranch for several years. Santiago and Chiri Alluro gave the Adams one of the best herdsire duos in the country, and they produced some stellar offspring for Wild Oak Llamas.

**Hitting the Show Ring**

As the Adams hit their stride in their breeding program, their love of showing grew. Rick and Mary discussed how their breeding goals changed as they gained experience in the show ring.

Mary: “When we started out it was all about a pretty face. Boy did that change. I like these babies with straight legs, very square. I like a good back to neck ratio. But I still love banana ears and I love the bangs.”

Rick: “We learned that just a pretty face didn’t work when we kept losing. I’d tell the judge, ‘Look at that face!’ I didn’t know anything.”
In 2008, Rick and Mary had a fabulous year in the show ring, culminating with them winning two National Championships at the well attended ALSA Grand Nationals. Heylee, a silver Kastizo daughter who had recently been purchased from Kay Patterson at Hinterland, came home with the suri female crown. Papucho, who the Adams still own, won in non-breeder. Rick listed it as one of his proudest llama related moments, and remembered, “It was a huge show then, a lot of competition.” The trophies are still proudly displayed in the Adams’ living room.

The Adams are competitive about showing and have a drive to be one of the top breeders in the industry. Rick and Mary had an interesting exchange about the balancing act between competitiveness and a desire to see their friends in the industry be successful as well.

Rick: “I don’t get upset anymore when I have an animal that I think is a nice animal and the judge doesn’t think so. There’s so many different views about what is right. I know that I could have the best animal in the world and some judges are not going to think so. So it doesn’t even bother me anymore.”

Mary: “You want to do well because it’s your animal. But boy am I happy when one of my friends gets that top prize. You give congratulations and it’s sincere. And when you do well and your friends come and congratulate you, it’s sincere.”

Rick: “You start getting into competition with friends of yours. You feel like you need to support them too. If they’ve got a nice animal you’ve got to appreciate it and tell them.”
The Unexpected Visitor

In 2015, the Adams received an unexpected call from the Internal Revenue Service. The Adams had spent more than a decade building their breeding program and sparing no expense in their care. All llama owners know that this can be a costly endeavor, particularly if you strive to purchase some of the top animals in the country. Rick remembered, "The IRS sent this little guy in who’d never been on a ranch before to decide whether or not we were a hobby farm. We thought it was a slam dunk. But they came back and said, ‘No, you are not a business, you are a hobby farm and you will have to pay two or three years back taxes.’ A hundred thousand dollars. It caught us at the wrong time financially. That’s when we had our auction.”

The hobby designation is dreaded amongst small businesses, particularly farms. The IRS uses a defined set of rules to determine whether a business is a hobby. The rules can be difficult to navigate, and the designation can be hard to avoid, especially for small farms. If you’d like to learn more about how the IRS classifies a business versus a hobby, see the Tax Tips article by Jerrika Mumford in Issue One.

Faced with a substantial tax bill, Rick and Mary decided to sell the majority of their herd at auction using Justin Timm’s platform. Their sale was only the third to take place on Justin’s site after the Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch production sale and the McRoberts Game Farm dispersal. It would turn out to be the most successful sale of the early Justin Timm auctions, and the proceeds went a long way toward covering the Adams’ tax bill.

Mary recalled, “The animals started leaving the ranch, thank God they didn’t leave all at once. I think the first ones were Jeff and Sally Rucker from Colorado. They were there the next day with their trailer. They got Lady Diana and Santiago. And they took some back for other people, I think. But we had five or six leave that first day. After that, they started slowly going and I thought, ‘Jeez, I do not like this. I really don’t want to be out of llamas yet.’”

Later in the spring, the Adams recommitted themselves to rebuilding a stellar llama program, purchasing a gorgeous pair of animals from the Rolfings of Great Northern Ranch at the Cascade Llama Sale. GNLC Inspirato, a black and white Hightower son, has been one of their primary herd sires in recent years. The other was an exotic silver female named GNLC Cinder; she was a daughter of GNLC Santiago, whom they had just parted with in their auction.
A Change of Scenery

The summer after their herd reduction sale the Adams decided to get away from their worries for a while and hit the road in their RV. They soon found themselves with a broken windshield, sitting in Central Oregon waiting for a replacement to arrive. Mary said, “I posted on Facebook that we’ve got some lemons and we’re making lemonade. We’re going to Oregon to get a new windshield and we’ll be in Bend tonight. All of the sudden I get a message from Gail Wilkinson, ‘We live in Bend, let us know when you get set up and we’ll come get you and take you to dinner and show you around town and stuff! So one thing led to another and later that night we had at least a dozen emails from Ron with properties for sale in Bend.”

I asked them what made them want to leave their ranch in California and Mary responded, “So many things had happened that took the happiness away from that ranch. Rick’s brother, Karl, and his wife, Carol, lived in the guest house for a while. Karl passed away from cancer, and he loved that ranch. Then we had the issue with the IRS and having to liquidate all our animals. We were ready for something new and fresh.

While they were waiting on their RV repair, the Wilkinsons ended up taking them to tour a few of the homes for sale. Rick said, “I’ll never forget the day that Ron drove us into this driveway, and we said, ‘Wow!’ It was all gravel roads, flimsy gate out there, it wasn’t anything fabulous, but it looked like it to us.”

Mary added, “The first thing he said was, ‘The llamas are gonna love this.’”

The Adams bought that ranch and have made the new home of Wild Oak Llamas a truly fabulous place. The property is 45 acres, 12 in pasture and the rest is a wilderness preserve. As we pulled up to Wild Oak Llamas in July of 2020 we were immediately impressed. The first thing you see is a large custom gate with the Wild Oak Llamas logo in the center. The Adams’ beautiful home, pristine pastures, and beautiful llamas are in full view as the gate swings open.
The pastures are irrigated and mowed and the manure is consistently picked up. If you took away the fences and the llamas you might be inclined to think you had walked onto a golf course. Their home overlooks the pastures and a beautiful pond. A large American Flag and Navy Flag fly in the middle of the property. The fences are no-climb wire with wood posts and top rails. They have all been added since the Adams purchased the property. The pastures are peppered with evergreen trees, and behind the house the property shifts to a high desert forest.
The Adams keep the males on one side of the driveway and the females on the other. They asked us where we’d like to start, and I started walking straight for the striking silver and white male who graces our cover. WOL Chiri Tumalo is Wild Oak Llamas’ past, present, and future. His sire, WOL Chiri Rondo, is a son of Chiri Alluro. His dam, WOL Far Niente’, is a daughter of Nikolai. Tumalo was one of the first crias born at the Adams new ranch. Tumalo is the name of the community inside of Bend where the Adams’ ranch is located.

**Herdsire Tour**

When we walked into Tumalo’s pen he checked us out for a minute to see if we brought him food, and he then promptly turned and walked over to stand on his rock. He posed while I took more than 50 pictures. The Adams were closer to the gate on the other side of his pasture; they hadn’t followed Tumalo over to the rock as I had. At one point I walked over to ask them a question, then I walked back and took more photos. Tumalo hadn’t moved, he was still posing.

At the time of our visit we had recently returned from Bozeman, Montana to visit Paul and Sally Taylor. We talked about their most famous llama, The Fiduciary. The Taylors said that llama breeders traveled from all around the country to visit their ranch and see Fidoosh. Paul talked about how Fidoosh would always walk to the fence to greet his visitors, usually striking his now iconic pose with his front legs up on the top rail of his fence. As we looked at Tumalo endlessly posing on his rock I couldn’t help but be reminded of what the Taylors had to say about The Fiduciary, perhaps the most popular llama stud in history. Tumalo seemed to be aware that we wanted to see him show off and he happily obliged. As we left the pen Rick declared, “Did you hear what he said? He said, ‘Make me famous.’”
The other WOL herdsires are also fabulous. MSF Summit, is a GNLC Crocket son and a LAMS Nutcracker grandson. He has long, gray, silky locks and a lot of stretch. He spent most of our visit gracefully trotting back and forth down the fence line nearest the females, who are across the driveway. He got his chance to prove himself in the breeding pen this year with some impressive results.

Next door is GNLC Inspirato, a large black and white Hightower son. He paces from one end of his long pen to the other, with his neck as upright as he can get it. He has produced five crias to date, all have been black and white paints. The first two, Bowtie and Dyamond, sold at auction with much fanfare and aggressive bidding.

The Adams have a young part Argentine male looking to prove himself in RGA Mach’s Duke of the Desert. He is a son of Argentine Mach One, and a full sibling to Mach’s Macarena, who is well-known on the West Coast show circuit. Ollendick Farm’s Camryn is another male at WOL. He had an illustrious show career with the Ollendicks and the Andersons before coming out west. As well as Camryn did in the show ring, there is another male owned by the Adams with even more awards to his name, their non-breeder Papucho. Papucho has eleven ALSA grands, including being named ALSA Grand National Champion non-breeder in 2008. He is enjoying his retirement days now. When we came into his pasture he came running to see if Rick and Mary would scratch his withers.
All of the boys may have been holding their heads a little higher and working harder to strut their stuff because they could sense that they are going to have a tougher time getting their share of females. A young black and white male named HOLR Vigilante’s Armani has hit two years of age, and the Adams and their partners Ron and Gail Wilkinson of R&G Acres are starting to test breed him. Armani is huge and has a very mellow personality. His sire is the great CTF Renegade’s Vigilante, whose sale for nearly twenty-thousand-dollars back in 2017 seems to have played a part in revitalizing the llama industry. Armani’s dam is one of my all-time favorites, a Hinterland bred Sipan daughter named Acaisha.

**Quality Over Quantity**

As we walked across the drive to the female field another Acaisha offspring, HOLR Ariana, immediately grabbed my attention. She seems to tower over you with her mile-long neck. The Adams had 60 llamas at their peak in Grass Valley, but today they keep a relatively small herd of 20 breeding females, making them the smallest herd to be featured in our magazine to date. What they lack in quantity they more than make up for in quality.
The Wild Oak Llamas female herd includes three National Champions. Aloha Heartstrings was named an ALSA National Champion in 2010. Sapaveco's Champagne Elegance, a Champagner daughter, was named an ALSA National Champion in 2015. MSF Purple Reign is their most recent National Champion, winning the ILR-SD crown in 2018. The Adams purchased her from Mark and Susan Smith at the 2019 MLM sale for $20,000. This was the first time this pricing milestone had been reached in several years.
An Exciting Spring

The Adams had fourteen crias this year, the most they’ve produced in recent years. The babies were active throughout the day. As we conducted our interview Rick lost his train of thought several times to laugh at a couple of babies racing back and forth across the field. “This spring has been incredible for us,” Rick said. “Having those babies out there the whole world is different. They keep everybody going. Just now you see them take off across the pasture. Look at that little brat, she’s fast! Having all these babies, we’re probably going to end up with fourteen or fifteen, it gives us so much pleasure seeing these babies running around here.”

Mary added, “It gives everyone energy. It’s funny you see the babies starting a conga line and then 300 pound females are right behind them.”

Though all of the crias are excellent, a couple caught my attention more than the others. One was WOL Vigilante’s Tatiana. Her sire and dam have been mentioned already, CTF Renegade’s Vigilante and Aloha Heartstrings. She was always posing throughout the day, with her striking facial markings and cute white socks. Mary expects to keep her as a replacement for her dam who is getting on in years.

Another cria who was always showing off was WOL Dancer’s Patron. Patron is one of the first crias from MSF Summit. His dam is Cleocatra’s Dancer, one of their Nikolai daughters. He was always finding his way in front of my camera with a perfect show stance.
From what Rick and Mary had to say Patron glides around like this every day.

Mary: “He’s got the ‘tude. He’s got the attitude. You just know when you put the halter on him he’s going to strut.”

Rick: “Have you ever seen his ears back?”

Mary: “No, not once.”

Rick (laughs): “He came out with his ears poking through. In fact, that’s how we got him out, we just pulled him out by his ears.”
One of the most exciting parts of the spring for Rick and Mary was the arrival of the first crias from WOL Chiri Tumalo. The first was a mostly white, silky male out of MSF Purple Reign. WOL Chiri Prevost is his name, and he has a great set of ears, strong bone, and lovely fiber. Given his parents show records he should have plenty of big wins in his future. Next was a BIG paint male out of GNLC Cinder, WOL Chiri Patriot. This guy was very mellow with lovely fiber, and seemed to be one of Rick’s favorites from this year’s group. The final Tumalo cria of the year came from a suri female named HD Midas’ Vanada. This girl may have had the most spunk of all; she was racing around the pasture throughout our interview.

All three are correct with lovely fiber and tons of presence.

I asked them about the personality traits they strive for in their crias and their training practices and Mary responded, “I don’t want them to be overly friendly but I want them to be approachable. It makes them a lot easier to halter them if they are. But I don’t want them to be so docile they’re not going to go out there and strut their stuff either. There’s a very fine line there.” They seem to be very successful at walking this fine line. Generally speaking their crias are interested in people; they regularly came up to check us out as we toured the pastures. But when I got the camera out, they were all ready to strike a pose.
One of my favorite things about the Adams setup is that they not only have a creep feeder, they also have a small pasture that the crias have access to. It doubles as their newborn pasture, and is equipped with a small shed that has a scale and medical supplies. “The babies have access to the creep room,” Mary said. “We put grain out there every day for them. And they have their own water and their own hay so they don’t have to fight the adults for it.”

Sharing the Ranch

The Adams’ facility has been perfectly planned and executed. They have separate paddocks for their males with tall, strong fences between them. The females have two separate pastures that can be rotated, and two separate open air, run-in style barns. As the Adams completed improvements to the ranch they began to look for ways to share their beautiful ranch and wonderful llamas with others. In June of 2018 and 2019, the Adams opened up their farm to hundreds of visitors. The Adams partnered with the other members of the Central Oregon Llama Association (COLA) to present the “Central Oregon Llama Field Day. “We wanted to do something that would be
educational to the general public that wouldn’t cost anything,” Mary said. “We wanted them to know what a llama is. We had Carolyn Hardesty from Burns with her camel, Gus; we had three camels here. Someone brought a couple of alpacas. Sherri Halligan brought her herd of packers because they’re used to complete strangers handling them. So, we put them in the arena with a little obstacle course. Rick had just gotten his new tractor, so we put the flat bed trailer behind it with some hay on it for hay rides and drove that through the pastures. And with the hay on the flatbed of course all the llamas come running up to nibble on it. Gail (Wilkinson), being an elementary school teacher had great activities for the kids. We had over 250 people come. We even had a retirement home bus come in. It’s so fun when you see an old guy with a walker going up, grabbing a lead rope, and going through the obstacle course.” It was a great disappointment to them all to have to cancel this event in 2020, but they look forward to its return in 2021.
Looking to the Future

We asked the Adams about their other goals in 2021 and beyond. Rick laughed as he said, “One of my goals is to not spend so much money. Just keep our herd and see what they produce. There’s going to be the occasion where we’re going to see something where we’d like to have that line or something. But I think we’re pretty much done buying.”

Mary added, “I think so too, we’ve got the lines we wanted.”

“We’ve also got a pretty young herd, so it’s not like we’ve got to turn them over before too long,” Rick said. “I also don’t see a desire to buy any more herdsires. We’ve got all our proven males and now we’ve got Armani. That is just a special animal. He’s so cool and gentle. He just stands there looking so regal.”

Mary then shared her goal, which seemed very appropriate for the year we are living through, “I’m just hoping to stay healthy so we can keep enjoying this. I’m getting up there in years. I want to be able to keep training them and showing them and doing that stuff for years to come.”

![Image of a llama and a person in a field.](image-url)
Up From the Ashes

2020 has been a year to remember for all the wrong reasons. I don’t think there is a person on the planet who hasn’t dealt with an unexpected challenge this year. Rick and Mary Adams are an example of the good things that can happen in life when you fight through adversity and keep going. The pool business, which Rick and Mary still own, started more than 35 years ago after Rick was laid off from his job. Anyone who has been laid off can tell you what a hopeless time it can be. In the Adams story, Rick getting laid off was a springboard to later success. They almost lost their business in the messy legal battle mentioned in the introduction to this article. The Adams still get together once a year with the owners of the other pool companies who lost that lawsuit over 20 years ago. “We call ourselves the Phoenix group,” Mary said, “because we came up from the ashes.” I wonder what their old friends think about how much Rick and Mary’s lives have changed in the past two decades. They gave up their boat, their car, and paid off a tremendous debt, but they persevered. Today, under the leadership of their son Ken, their business is stronger than ever. The Adams traded in their boat and city life for a quiet life with llamas that they have enjoyed every moment of. Mary told us, “We’ve gone through some tough times. It made us stronger as a couple and we’ve always ended up on top. Somebody’s been looking out for us.”

“We’ve been very…” Rick starts to say, but then abruptly cuts himself off, “My mom liked to say I was ‘lucky’. I went to Vietnam and came back a couple of times. She said, ‘You’re lucky. Some people don’t come back.’ And all the material things I’ve had in my life my mom thought I was lucky. I don’t like to use the word lucky around here. We’ve certainly been very blessed and very fortunate, but there was a lot of hard work involved too.”
Two of Our Favorite Girls!

Lotus Rose

Stage Stop Kalev

Foxie Starlight

Crunch By Hit JM01
A REFLECTION ON
LLAMA WOODS FARM

FEATURED INTERVIEWS WITH
DONALD CHRIST AND
PAM CLARK

BY KYLE MUMFORD

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LEY
The first ever Celebrity Llama Sale was held in the fall of 1989. There were many special animals consigned to the sale. Among the very best was Mirabelle, a look-a-like daughter of a rising star in the llama industry, The Fiduciary. As she was led on stage by one of her consignors, Sally Taylor of Taylor Llamas, the bidding quickly took off. Several bidders were involved, including Loyal Nordstrom McMillan and Iris Christ. Before long Mirabelle’s price was over $100,000 and the bidding was still going strong. Finally, Iris boldly stood up on her seat and held her hand high in the air until the other bidders saw the futility of attempting to compete with Iris Christ. When the dust settled on this iconic moment, Iris and Donald Christ had purchased the highest selling female llama of all time for $170,000. It is a record that is unlikely to ever be broken.

Iris passed away in 2006, and I regret that I will never get the chance to speak to this force of a person. But I do feel very fortunate that I had the chance to speak to her husband Donald Christ, and later to her longtime friend and farm manager Pam Clark.

I spoke to Donald by phone from his New York City apartment in July of 2020. Donald is a graduate of Yale, and practices law at one of the most prestigious law firms in the country. He speaks with an understated northeast accent, but I think the biggest giveaway that he is a New Yorker is the way he speaks so directly and concisely. I have only conducted a couple of phone interviews before, they usually start a bit more awkwardly than in-person interviews. This was not the case with Donald. After brief introductions, he dove right in. “You probably know about Llama Woods Farm, which was started by my wife Iris,” Donald said. “It burned rather brightly for quite a few years.”

**Quite a Sensation**

“I THINK WE HAD TEN OR TWELVE LLAMAS IN NEW YORK. IT WAS QUITE A SENSATION AT THE TIME.” -DONALD CHRIST

Iris’ interest in animals started as a child. Her mother bred dogs and had what Donald called “an extensive farm” in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Donald said, “When we married, Iris and I were married in 1976, we got a present from her mother of two donkeys. The donkeys were terrific. We had a nice place on Long Island; we had a barn and whatnot.”

Donald remembered the event that sparked Iris’ love of llamas, “Iris used to be the president of the Animal Medical Center. Sometime in the early ‘80s, I think it was 1980, they hosted a benefit in New York. And the guest of honor was a white
llama that came to the party all dressed up in black-tie. She fell in love with this guy and that started us on a crusade that ended up putting together the Bolivian herd and ultimately, by the time that we broke up the farm and dispersed it, we had about 350 animals.”

Pam Clark, who Donald called “Iris’ right-hand man,” was first hired to help care for the pair of donkeys. I spoke to Pam by phone in August of 2020. It was one of the more entertaining conversations I’ve had in a long time. Pam is outgoing and a great storyteller. During our interview she occasionally used colorful language to drive home a point; she is a hoot. At one point I asked her if she had formal education as a horse trainer and she responded, “I would not say I was a trainer. I have always been the worker bee. You say you want that done, I’ll go get it done.” She reminisced about the time she found out llamas were being added to the Long Island farm, “Iris said, ‘I’m getting some llamas.’ And I was like, ‘What the hell are llamas? Those two-headed things from Doctor Dolittle?’”

In the article Llama Lovers published in the New York Times on June 12, 1988, author Diane Ketchum called Iris “Long Island’s llama lover” and explained that “while some of her North Shore neighbors breed and show horses or dogs, she’s happy breeding and showing her llamas.” The article goes on to say, “While llamas, out West, are becoming more and more popular, here in the East they are not yet the rage. ‘I’m considered a curiosity by most of my friends,’ Mrs. Christ acknowledged.”

A Serene Place

The llama herd quickly outgrew the Christs’ Long Island property, so they set up shop in Bend, Oregon. Pam Clark moved west with them. A couple of years before the move Pam had accompanied Iris on a trip to Central Oregon to buy llamas. Pam remembered, “We flew out here... I was here for one day and I went, ‘Oh my god this is it. This is where I want to live.’ It took no coaxing for me to come out here at all.”

Central Oregon was the birthplace of the U.S. llama phenomenon starting at the Patterson Ranch in Sisters. Many other farms were established in the area as well, including the Tillmans, Halligans, and the Christs. It is a tradition that continues today. The featured farm for this issue, Wild Oak Llamas, is located less than a mile from the old Llama Woods Farm.
A 1988 promotional booklet produced by the Christ family described the farm this way, “This is a serene place where every detail has been thought of and nothing is out of place. The tall pines whisper in the morning light and the llamas graze contentedly, secure in the peace that surrounds them. With a commitment to excellence and a true love for llamas, Iris and Donald Christ are building one of the premier llama herds in North America.”

During our interview, Donald said, “The farm was really terrific. We had a bunch of employees, it looked like an estate. I kept telling them, ‘It’s a farm; make it look like a farm.’ But she kept it all very nice.”

If you get a chance to look through old llama magazines you will find Llama Woods advertisements with beautifully groomed llamas and picturesque backgrounds. Pam said, “We’d have Susan Ley (née Jones) come out once or twice a year, to do the calendars, brochures, and ad spots. I remember I groomed, I think it was like 18 juvenile females in one morning to get them ready for field shots. I got home that night and I went to pick up my dog’s water bowl and there was nothing there. My hand was totally numb. I can’t grip anything; I can’t do anything. I’m shot, that was my limit.”

She Comes to Buy

“THE HERD EXPANDED QUITE A BIT BECAUSE SHE WAS A VERY AGGRESSIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE HARTMAN AUCTIONS. PEOPLE USED TO SAY TO ME, ‘SHE WON’T QUIT!’ I’D SAY, ‘SHE DOESN’T COME TO BID, SHE COMES TO BUY.’” -DONALD CHRIST

When Iris Christ has come up in our conversations with breeders from the early days of the llama industry, we are usually discussing the auction ring. We have now heard three or four accounts of the purchase of Mirabelle, which I opened this article with, among other memorable stories. Iris took her llama breeding and llama buying seriously. I think Donald summed it up best when he told us, “People used to say to me, ‘She won’t quit!’ I’d say, ‘She doesn’t come to bid, she comes to buy.’”

According to Pam Clark’s recollection, the first llama auction Iris and Donald purchased from was Ben Huff’s 1986 sale. This was Darrell Anderson’s first llama auctioneering gig and is an event that several llama owners have brought up as a
turning point in the overall feel and presentation of llama auctions. “I think it kind of set the gold standard,” Pam said. “It was classy, it was set up in a beautiful tent. Everybody was in black-tie. I thought it was amazing.” Pam remembers Iris purchasing two females from that sale.

When the Christs entered the llama industry the main show in town was the Hartman llama show and sale. “The Hartman days were pretty wild,” Pam said. “We’d have to leave here, get there on a Monday, and then do the entire stall setup and groom and bathe everybody. We’d be there from Monday to Monday. It was a marathon because they have this sale and then that sale and then this show and then that show. It was pretty intense, but it was a lot of fun.”

An Adventurous Thing to Do

“I THINK THE BOLIVIAN IMPORTATION WAS THE BIGGEST THING THAT PROPELLED IRIS TO BUYING MORE ANIMALS AND MORE DIVERSE BLOODLINES.” - PAM CLARK

In the winter of 1987, the Christs made the most important purchases of their time in the llama business. In December of ‘87, yellow postcards began to show up in the mailboxes of llama owners across the country. They announced the long-anticipated sale of the Bolivian herd imported by Jergen Shulz of Catskill Game Farm and Tom Hunt. In the early days of the llama industry there was a great demand for genetic diversity, which caused breeders to place a premium on imported stock. This would be the first chance to purchase breeding stock from Bolivia, and many feared it might be their only chance. The importation was a two-year-long process, rumored to cost the importers more than a million dollars, and now the sale was finally announced. The postcards were sent in early December for a sale that would be occurring on December 19th, a week before Christmas. It was to be organized by Fred Hartman in Tecumseh, Nebraska, at 8 in the morning. Breeders from across the country packed their winter jackets, made last minute travel arrangements, and made their way to Nebraska. Fifty-five males and six females were offered for sale, arranged in one-hundred-thousand, fifty-thousand, and twenty-five-thousand dollar pens. Donald and Iris Christ selected two young paint males from the $100,000 pens at this sale. (1)

You may be asking yourself, “Did the importers really go through all the trouble and expense to import 50 males and only a few females?” Well, Jergen Shulz and Tom Hunt imported more than 50 females as well. 43 of the females were purchased prior to the Hartman sale by a couple of fellow New Yorkers, Iris and Donald Christ. (1)

“I was brought up on Long Island and I knew the Catskill game farm was run by Roland Lindeman back to the time of the Second World War,” Donald said. “He used to charge people a nickel to buy corn and grain to feed to
whitetail deer and that was the beginning of the game farm. He put together a herd of really interesting exotic animals, many of them from Asia, really interesting animals. When Kathy (Roland’s daughter) went to Africa one time she met Jergen Schulz who was a game hunter. Some of the animals at the game farm he actually caught in Africa and shipped them to the United States to Catskill. When Iris got involved in the llama business, I introduced her to Jergen, and she went ahead and bought this herd of Bolivians which was kind of an adventuresome thing to do.”

Pam Clark told us, “I went with Iris and Donald to Catskill Game Farm and to see the Bolivians. I was like, ‘Oh jeez, I hope she doesn’t buy this ragamuffin herd.’ They all looked like crap; they had just been through quarantine.” She laughed as she continued, “She bought the whole lot of them.”

The Bolivian herd was initially purchased in partnership with Sharon Herriges, but the Christs would own the herd outright in less than a year. While the Bolivians weren’t the first llamas purchased by the Christs, I think it is safe to say that this herd set the foundation for the Llama Woods program. While Pam wasn’t impressed by the herd initially, she remembered the quick improvement the animals made after arriving at Llama Woods. “I get a little annoyed with people that say well the Bolivians were all so small,” Pam said. “I’m like, do you know where they came from? They did not have the nutrition and the care that we give them here. We had probably two of the littlest animals, Kissam and Blossom, who gave birth to Blue Willow. Blue Willow was
gorgeous, and she was big.”

The two young males purchased at the Hartman event were given the names LW Kissam and LW Willie K. This pair of Bolivians would go on to become two of the most well known and loved llama studs in the country. “We called one of the studs Willie K and the other was Kissam,” Donald said. “Iris’ grandfather was William K. Vanderbilt and they were two family names. Willie K was Willie K. Vanderbilt and Kissam was his middle name, a family name.”

Willie K would go on to sire 187 registered offspring including Senor Guillermo TCL, LW Marcellus, LW Blue Boy, LW Sante Fe, and LW Dr. Zhivago. Kissam would go on to sire 149 registered offspring including LW Strawberry Field, LW Regalo, LW Strawbridge, LW Khismet, LW President’s Choice, and LW Gucci. Many of the best Llama Woods animals were sired by one of these males and a maternal grandchild of the other. Personally, when I think of an LW animal my mind immediately goes to Gucci, a Kissam son, with his jet-black fiber, long bangs, and silky locks.

A separate barn and facility were built for the Bolivians at Llama Woods. In 1988, a promotional booklet was sent out featuring the Bolivians, and it included a separate phone number for the “Bolivian Barn”. They maintained what they called a “domestic herd” as well, with LW Irridess as the chief herdsire. The herd also included Chileans and a few Peruvians. Other notable Llama Woods sires included: Palo, Macho Macho (co-owned with Kay Patterson), Flambe, Macho de las Montanas, Raja of Tunitas Creek, and PPF Prancero. The Christs even briefly co-owned the legendary Peruvian import El Fuerte with Kay Patterson.
LW Gucci
By: LW Kissam

LW Khismet
By: LW Kissam

LW Strawbridge
By: LW Kissam

LW Kissam
“EVERYTHING ON THIS FARM REVOLVES AROUND THE HEALTH AND COMFORT OF OUR LLAMAS. THE LLAMAS ARE THE ENTIRE FOCUS OF ACTIVITY HERE AND EVERYONE WHO WORKS HERE UNDERSTANDS THIS SIMPLE FACT.” - IRIS CHRIST IN A LLAMA BANNER PROFILE BY BARBARA FULLER

Based on the conversations I had and what I’ve read, I think the first thing Iris would want Llama Woods Farm to be remembered for was the excellent care they gave their animals.

“You know what I loved so much about working with Iris?” Pam Clark asked. “She spared no expense in the healthcare and the wellbeing of her animals. It didn’t matter which animal; it didn’t matter how much it cost. I had worked for shady horse people that did not want to call a vet for anything even though they had more money than they knew what to do with. If they had moldy hay, they wanted me to feed it. They were penny-pinching; they were tight with everything. It was really a breath of fresh air for me to work for somebody that said, ‘Yeah, if there’s something wrong we’re going to take care of it.’”

All the reading I did in preparation for this article reinforced the idea that Pam shared. The 1988 promotional booklet says, “Those who live and work at Llama Woods Farm are totally dedicated to providing the love and care that these wonderful llamas deserve.”

The Llama Banner article by Barbara Fuller is almost entirely about the excellent care given to the llamas at Llama Woods Farm. A new “foaling barn” is described. This was a facility devoted to new mothers and small crias. Crias received IgG tests in the first three days after birth as a matter of routine. She explained that they started a “wean screen” program, where crias were given a full blood panel prior to weaning to ensure good health before the stressful weaning period. Even the breeding program seemed to be described from an animal health perspective in the
Llama Banner piece, “One look around the fields confirms that the farm’s goal of breeding sound, healthy animals is being achieved.” Later in the article, Barbara described their program as “intensive management in its finest form.”

The New York Times piece, by Dianne Ketchum, explained, “...the worth of Mrs. Christ’s llamas is not in their monetary value. ‘They’re my friends,’ (Iris) said, as the multicolored herd of fluff gathered around her, gently nuzzling her and the box of raisins in her hand, their ‘special treat.’”

Pam discussed the raisin treats as well, “I was like the bad guy cause I was the foot trimmer, the wormer, and they’d see her coming with a box of raisins and everybody would charge up the field like, ‘oooh she’s got our treats, she’s got our treats!’ And she would just sit there and have her big ass box of raisins. And the llamas were like, ‘Yep there’s our real mom. That other one over there’s the mean one, she gives us shots.”

**International Llama Association**

Donald may not have been the driving force behind Llama Woods Farm, but he made his mark on the llama industry alongside Iris. “The ILA started around 1980. When we got involved with owning llamas, I got interested in it and ran for the board. And before long I ended up the President of it. I was very active trying to have the ILA be the predominant organization in the llama business. I had thought, along with several others on the ILA board, that we should use the model of the cattle association to try to put (all of the llama organizations) together and have a unified camelid organization that would represent the industry throughout the country and even up into Canada. That ultimately didn’t happen, although along the way we did a number of, I think, interesting things. We had some good conferences and conventions and helped the industry quite a bit.”

Donald recalled that the issue of importation was one of the biggest topics of discussion at the time of his involvement with the ILA. Many breeders feared that disease could be brought into the country via imported animals. “I also was very involved with dealing with the Federal Government on importation questions and things having to do with tuberculosis, foot & mouth disease and so forth… There were a lot of regulatory hurdles that were being placed in front of us all the time and I was dealing with state vets and the USDA on that question. It was all very interesting.”
**Saying Goodbye**

In 1998, the Christs dispersed the venerated Llama Woods herd. Donald explained that Iris had been experiencing health problems and “decided to go home to New York.” He added that, “Going out to Oregon and doing what we did was basically her decision and to bring it to an end was her decision also.”

Pam Clark shared, “I had just found out that I had cancer the week before the sale. I told myself, ‘Okay, all I have to do is get through this weekend.’ I remember before the sale, walking around. I was helping a couple of ladies from Michigan I think, and they wanted to know this and that. I’d been around forever, so I knew moms, grandmas, great-grandmas, who their siblings were. By the time they left I looked at the secretary and I just went, ‘That’s it. There’s nothing left in my head, they took everything.’ It was very hard saying goodbye to all those animals.”

Donald reflected on his journey in the llama business that ended over twenty years ago, “You know, it’s sort of funny; I find that every once in a while when I go to a dinner party I sit there talking to somebody and most of the time we end up talking about their golf game or something. But I start talking about llamas and people are dumbfounded by it. One of the classic questions is of course, ‘What do they taste like?’ Iris always used to say when people asked her that, ‘Well you wouldn’t eat your dog would you?’ People are so fascinated; they’re dumbfounded that anybody in New York used to live in Oregon and do that. It was really interesting for me to travel around the United States. I went to all kinds of places I never would have gone to and met a whole bunch of really great people that were just absolutely bonkers about llamas. I had a really good time and I loved the people that I met.”
Black Dog Ranch

Llama Woods Farm gave rise to Pam Clark’s herd, Black Dog Ranch. Pam said, “Iris gifted me my first llama I think in like ‘93 or ‘94. She had a baby and I took her to a sale in Kansas City. The llama market has always been just weird. It’s like, ‘Okay we all love black llamas, we hate white llamas. Oooh now we all want white llamas. Now we all want Bolivian llamas, oh they’re out now Chileans are in.’ And I happened to hit with my Chilean girl at the right time. I got $30,000 for her. And I remember my husband and I were both crying going, ‘Oh my god we can pay our bills. We can get out of debt.’ I just had my daughter; my husband and I were in debt because I had taken 6 months off of work to stay home with the baby.”

When the Christs dispersed their herd in 1998, Pam intended to stay in Bend at her ranch that bordered Llama Woods. During preparations for the dispersal Iris came to Pam with a very generous offer, “Iris gave my choice of like twenty females.” Pam said, “I picked the ones that I loved. It was just hard to see that whole herd auctioned off because I was there and took care of them when they were babies. I was there when some of their mothers were babies. It was a hard weekend. She let me have my pick of girls. Some of them I picked out of love, some of them I picked because ‘this is a nice llama.’ Most of them I picked out of love. I’m just kind of like a big squoosh when it comes to animals; ‘But you can’t sell that one, I love that one!’”

Among the animals Pam asked for was Willie K. She shared a touching story about his last days at the Black Dog Ranch. “Of course I said, ‘I want Willie K, I want Willie.’ He always had a kind eye if you know what I mean. All of his babies I just loved because they all carried that sweetness with them. Willie is buried at my old house. I said, ‘You’re coming with me bud.’ Willie had some eye issues, we eventually had to have one of his eyeballs removed. We estimated that he was in his early twenties and he was failing. It was wintertime, he’s losing weight, he’s old. I knew it was inevitable. And I went...
down, and I walked him from his stud run out back and I brought him up to the girls because I had a little ten by ten stall and it had a heat lamp. You know how females are just notoriously bitchy when they’re pregnant? Every one of those girls came up and touched noses with him like they were saying goodbye. And I came out the next morning and he was gone. That was a hard day. But it was like everybody knew. There’s just something about the llamas, it’s incredible. They all knew, and they were coming to say goodbye. That story always makes me cry. I loved Willie. He was, I would have to say, one of my favorite animals ever.

Iris and Donald Christ made a lasting mark on the llama community during their time at Llama Woods Farm. LW llamas can still be seen on the pedigrees of amazing animals across the country, and they set an example for everyone with regards to animal care and marketing. Pam Clark has now dispersed her own Black Dog Ranch herd and looks back wistfully at her llama owning days, and to her friend Iris who passed away in 2006.

Toward the end of my conversation with Pam, she shared a heartfelt sentiment that I think is a perfect way to conclude this reflection on Llama Woods Farm.

“One of the last times I talked to Iris she told me that the llama years were the best years of her life. And I really cannot agree more. They were really the best years; they were so much fun and with such great people. I feel lucky to still call a lot of them my friends. The golden years. They certainly were. When I met Iris was probably one of the luckiest days of my life.”

Sources:
“Llama Woods Farm”. Profile written by Barbara Fuller, published in Llama Banner Magazine.
R & G ACRES
“WHERE QUALITY LLAMAS ARE PRODUCED”

Young Females at R & G Acres

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Sugar River Llamas

Fran's Soukup cell 608-547-6504

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Lyndon Station, WI 53944

Lla-Mirage Deuces Wild x SRLL Maya (Male)

SRLL Eoghan x SRLL Nandera (Male)

SRLL Tyg x SRLL Elenei (Female)
LLAMA BARNs
TIPS FOR DESIGNING A LLAMA BARN
FROM FARMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Great Northern Ranch blueprint, courtesy of Sue Rolfing
Like most of you, it didn’t take long for me to fall in love with llamas. I added another and then another, and then my barn was too small. My family was at a point in our lives when adding another barn was possible. I had 30 acres and a blank slate; it was 2009.

There were a few factors, from life experience, that helped me decide what I desired in a barn. One of my rescue llamas was at the bottom of the hierarchy. Stella arrived with a disability, a bent leg that had been broken and never fixed; she hobbled. Cue Darwin and survival of the fittest; I was always moving llamas out of the single doorway to our barn so that Stella could get in. My new barn had to have multiple doorways, so that sweet Stella could always get in. I wanted Dutch doors for all the doorways that would allow me to close the top doors to keep the wind and cold out in the winter (no problem for llamas to duck under). The barn had to have shed roofs - just in case llamas were still able to block all the doorways.
I volunteered with my therapy dogs (three that I raised and trained) at many facilities for over 15 years. As I became more familiar with the gentle nature of llamas, I realized that some, like my dogs, had the potential to be therapy animals. **My new barn had to have good, non-slip flooring that would accommodate people with disabilities – walkers and wheelchairs.** I chose rubber stall mats and though expensive, they have been my best investment. **They are easy to keep clean.**

As I succumbed to the fact that my herd was going to continue to grow, hay storage was a consideration. **My new barn needed a loft for hay and storage.** Hay drop doors from the loft floor were a minor want, but have been awesome, especially when it is raining or snowing.

I was accumulating llama ‘things’. Medications, record books, ribbons, shearing equipment, trophies, grooming tools, and more. **My new barn needed a barn office with storage space.** Locker type cupboards, cabinets, and counter space were factored in. I also wanted the office walls insulated and a concrete floor so that I could turn the room into a medical emergency space if I needed.
My new barn had to have electric service and water access inside. I wanted a lot of outlets for fans in the summer, heated water buckets for winter, shearing equipment, and more.

I researched a lot of barn plans and listened to people who said to build it bigger than I thought I needed - can I double that now? I finally found plans for an eight stall horse barn with shed roofs that I really liked. I would nix the stalls to have open areas for the llamas. Males on one side and girls on the other. Fifty feet long with 12’ wide stall area on each side and a 12’ wide aisle. Shed roofs would give an additional 12’x50’ covered space on each side.

Next, I had to find a builder. But, then a sort-of-magical thing happened. I went to visit my younger brother to see an addition he had put on his house. It was fabulous! My brother was never a builder and he did not grow up learning how to build things. My brother is one of those people that can teach himself to do anything. Husband and I asked if he would like to build the barn and he said YES! We were much happier to pay him than someone we didn’t know.

It took a year to complete the barn; my brother built it by himself (except for the metal roof), with what help I could provide. I did a lot of the painting. A Nancy Drew fan my entire life, my brother didn’t hesitate to add extra secret hiding places within the barn at my request. I made him laugh, he made me so happy! In hindsight, spending that year with my brother, creating my dream, was a great gift. Despite my impatience at times, it was so much better than two months with an unfamiliar construction company.
My original dream was to move an old barn to the property, much too expensive. However, we had an old barn on the property that finished collapsing (due to roof neglect over the years) not long after we moved here. I spent weeks crawling through the rubble to salvage all that I could. One of my favorite saves was a wall with signatures and dates from the 1800s. My brother incorporated it into the new barn. I also managed to save a bunch of old barn doors and a couple were used for the office door.

We recently added WiFi and cameras to the inside and outside of the barn. I wanted cameras for years and they are wonderful.

The barn is eleven years old now and it’s changed my life, and the lives of many. The llamas are happy, and the design has made sharing the llamas a joy. I’ve had nursing home visitors, groups of adults with developmental disabilities, scout troops, school classes, visitors for llama walks and farm tours, spinning days with friends, open barn days, and the last few years – my 4-H group.
Barns are the focal point of my farm. The big original barn houses females, crias, and geldings. I also have a room for yearling males in the barn. There are six rooms in the barn with fans installed. I have a small creep room specially for the crias for supplemental feed. A wooden swing gate is used to separate the main east side room where the females live during winter and just hang out when it gets too hot.

There is an alley way between the west and east half of the barn. On the west half of the barn is the hydrant room then a feed room. Next is a mom and cria pen that I use to house them for the first couple of days to get a good bond. Next to that is a pen I use for young boys. All the pens have attached paddocks and have access to the pasture.
The single story building is the original chicken house that has been converted to a home for my four breeding males. Each male has his own amenities and a long run to the north. Both buildings have recently been rewired.

I love my old llama barn. It’s got some age on it but she stands stately as if she was built yesterday. Maintenance is necessary to keep the barn looking good. A lot of painting and tender, loving care is always a must. The black llama on the hay mow door is 1/4 inch steel. Created by a neighbor. We’ve adorned it with an automatic spotlight to really make it visible at night. Old barns are getting very scarce. They are such a big part of country history. I love my red llama barn.
Raising llamas in the heat & humidity is not easy. Llama Linda Ranch was located in the oak woods of north TX just five miles from the Red River & the OK border. Linda Hayes, better known as “Llama Linda,” designed a barn that would be cool for the animals but also large enough to hold indoor training events when it rained or the heat turned to the damp cold of winter.

Built entirely of cement block faced with cement “rock”, the building is cooler than wood or metal. Reaching 40-feet-wide by 84-feet-long, it has a double roof which sets two-feet above the lower one. It has a two-foot overhang which lets the heat out without letting the elements in. The 16 ft. aisle can be used for indoor training. The front third of the barn is enclosed with two show stalls opening to the grassy commons. There is a large tack & feed room, guest bathroom, laundry, and wash room. All with cement walls and Dutch doors.

Since the hours needed to groom for the winter stock shows will leave you with frozen feet, Linda had the washroom floor heated with hot water running through copper tubing. This also came in handy when crias were born in inclement weather. The barn has its own hot water heater and potable water supply. An air conditioner was added to the wash room as heat stress is a constant worry on the hottest days.
The sides of the barn are enclosed with commercial style overhead doors. These stay open most of the year. The llama half of the barn is divided into three open pens, each with automatic waterers, livestock fans, and misters. The back of the barn opens on the horse pasture. That floor was left with natural dirt which is more desirable for equines. Adjacent to the animal pens is the hay storage area.

The barn faced north toward the house and drive. The upper area above the entry contains a 16 ft custom stained glass window. Lit from behind, it is a welcoming sight when one drives up to the house at night. The art reflects the ranch. It included a horse, llamas, cats, the dog, and the local oak leaves.

Llama Linda has now retired to AZ where she still has a few llamas in the mile high cool near Prescott. She says that the things that she would never do without are the heated floors and the guest bathroom. Both make having llamas so much more fun.
I built my main llama barn myself in 2002 combining many of the ideas I had seen on other farms and ranches. It replaced an 85-year-old barn that was structurally and cost prohibitive to repair. This barn is 40’ wide by 70’ long with a 12’ wide covered porch on both the north and south sides giving the barn a total footprint of 64’ x 70’. In 2002, our llama herd was half what it is now.
In 2012, we built another very large 70’ x 120’ building that contained a heated farm shop and machinery storage with a 42’ x 56’ wing with a 10’x 56’ covered porch on the west side that we use for the llamas. This barn has 3 separate stud runs equipped with Dutch doors and automatic waterers.

In 2014, I built our “She Shed” a 40’x40’ 3-sided building that we use for our bred females that are not due for a while. This barn, along with all my barns, have automatic waters so that all llamas have clean fresh water available all the time and we do not have to use water tanks that have to be filled manually.

**If you are thinking about building a barn here are a few of my recommendations:**

- Build as big a barn that you can afford and have room for. Believe me that you will wish that you would have built it bigger!
- Add the open porches on the barn. Llamas love to lay under them. They are a great place to shear, groom and do herd health.
- Put OSB plywood or insulation under the roof if you are using metal roofing. This will keep you barn so much cooler in the summer.
- Put in automatic waters. Your llamas will love having clean, fresh water plus you won’t have to deal with a flooded barn because someone forgot to turn the hydrant off (personal experience).
• All of our barns have doors on all 4 sides. We are fortunate that we generally have a good breeze in the summer. Barns will have access to comfortable winds no matter which direction the wind is blowing. We’ve had 95-degree days that we didn’t have to run fans because of the natural air flow coming through. Our stall doors and windows are made of square tubing to let maximum air flow through.

• Have a heated tack/vet room for medical supplies, a refrigerator, and a wash sink.

• Include on one side of the building permanent stalls that can be temporarily enclosed during cold weather and heated for those times when you wish you had an area like that. If the barn is tall enough, add a hay mow on top of these stalls, all that hay makes a great insulation during the winter months. We keep one of our stalls set up as a creep pen year-round.
• Have a separate feed room
• Save space by building feeders along barn walls
• Use portable panels that can be moved to reconfigure your space as needed
• Have plenty of electrical outlets for fans when you need them

Click Here to Visit the MSF Facebook Page
Round bale feeders can be part of a streamlined llama breeding operation. Over time, as the llama population increases on your farm, it may be efficient to consider adding the round bale option.

Feeding chores are simplified as tractors deliver the hay to the feeder. You will probably still sling a few small square bales in pens with single breeding males or pens with a smaller demand. Round bales will soon win you over if you have the numbers to feed, in a reasonable time. Consider that an adult llama will eat @ 2% of body weight in dry matter per day. Locally sourced 4’x4’ bales are @ 5 to 6 hundred pounds. Let us consider 10 adults @ 300# each. If the pastures were snow covered and the llamas’ sole source of feed was a 600# round bale, then a bale would last 10 days. There will be some waste pulled to the ground and spoiled, and some rejected stems, so 7-10 days is more normal.

Round bales can be more nutritious and palatable from the same field for a couple of reasons. Round bales generally have more protein value points per ton than small squares. Square bales are harvested in a bale chamber that cuts & bends the forage into square bale shape. The mechanical action of this method causes more leaf loss and thus some lowering in feed value. In addition, multiple bends, brakes, and cuts create more stem ends that could impact a llamas eating desire. The younger llamas with a smaller
mouth will have more issues with picky ends and bends from square bales. Round bales are cut only at the ground and this leaves only one sharp end. The rest of the stem is rolled up without further bending and cutting. Llamas eating from a round bale will eat entire stems from cut to tip without having to navigate additional prickly cuts and bends. This seems a more palatable choice. We have in fact observed over the years that llamas in the same pen with access to round and square bales will spend more time at the round bales.

The mechanics of pasture traffic patterns is another consideration of round bale feeding. Most round bales are fed outside of a barn. This leaves design and placement of a feeder a big consideration. Placement requires enough llama access that the hay will be consumed before feed value is lost due to exposure to the elements. We also remove rejected or spoiled hay before we refill with a new bale eliminating contamination from musty bale leftovers. Efficient placement may include building your feeders at a sharing point between two or more pastures.

Keep in mind that loading the feeder with a tractor is simplified if you are on high ground, thus avoiding mud or snow issues. If you can locate the feeder where it can be loaded without opening multiple gates, you will thank yourself later. It is challenging to open gates, herd llamas away and move the tractor in and out loaded with hay. Snow, mud, or ice may complicate the task. A 4-wheel drive tractor is helpful as all the weight bears on the front tires when delivering bales. We have used some 4x5 and larger bales that have weighed over 1100 pounds.

Design size, style, and type of materials used play an important role in feeder construction. The focus is to get good hay to feed the llamas while protecting feed value. The llamas will spend a lot of time at the feeder, so it needs to
be a safe space. We have seven round bale feeders at Star Llama Company with each new one incorporating thoughtful upgrades. I will skip to the final feeder type and the details that have proven useful.

This final version is constructed with a metal type roof and a 3-foot overhang. The height at the facia needs to be higher than the tallest llama can touch. We have a 6/12 roof pitch for quick diversion of precipitation away from the feeder. From the roof down all wood is treated for exposure. The vertical pipes spaced @ 12” apart allow the neck & head access to the bale. The bottom of the feeder is raised concrete with an elevated dome in the center. If rain does get in the feeder it drains out under the knee boards, keeping the hay as dry as possible. The concrete surrounding the feeder is also tapered away to keep the area mud free. The hard surface around the feeder also helps trim toenails.

The knee boards are as high as an average llama’s front legs. The knee board height also helps contain the loose hay as they eat so it is not pulled to the ground and spoiled. Loading with hay is achieved by removing the front 5 pipes and notched upper retainer. You can than load up to a 6’ round bale.

No ceiling joists were used in this design to allow plenty of room to tip the bale into position.

We have also deterred birds by blocking potential nesting areas.
The feeder is positioned for 360 degree access from six different pens. Individual gates surrounding the area can be opened or closed to allow seasonal or rotation patterns. The feeder is also positioned to exclude llama interaction while loading a bale by closing several gates.

Right: The north side feeds adult breeding males separated with a male safe fence
We have a couple of other versions that are pasture specific. One that splits two larger pastures is situated on a fence line.

It is some distance from the main barn and allows a secondary feed choice. Multiple feed stations afford the benefit of mixing forage types like alfalfa or grasses.

Shade shelters are not uncommon for llama housing. This shelter has an attached round bale feeder big enough for 4x4 bales.

The feeder can be loaded from an access aisle without entering the pasture. Hard surfaces control ground softness. Feed can be accessed from both sides so timid llamas have options.
Another design is a double round bale feeder. This feeder is easy to fill with a tractor or truck. It can be loaded without entering the pasture by rolling a bale right from the truck or trailer. There is a large concrete apron around this feeder. Bales rest inside the feeder on a raised treated wood floor with spacing to allow chaff and water to exit. This feeder is supplemental to a 35-acre pasture. In the growing season, we always keep hay available but, of course, they would rather have fresh salad. Wintertime is the most used season with generally 20 to 30 adult females sharing this feed station.
A FEW RANDOM ROUND BALE FEEDING TIPS TO THINK ABOUT

- Store round bales in a protected environment. Ideally a closed barn will slow oxidation and loss of protein.
- Poly netting on round bales must be completely removed at feeding. The floss like strands could cause digestive distress in the extensive llama intestinal system.
- Keep an eye out for foreign objects that got rolled up with the bale. A crushed can may not be a problem, but a deflated mylar balloon with ribbons attached just might be.
- A side effect of dry forage feeding for some adult llamas is the naked nose. As llamas burrow into a round bale in search of the “good stuff” the top of the nose loses fiber coverage in the process. We refer to this as round bale syndrome and topical zinc oxide can be helpful.

If you are considering adding round bales to your feeding regime, go ahead and build yourself and your llamas one. You can always put small squares in it until you are ready to move up. Looking back after 37 years of raising llamas I wonder how we ever got along without them.

www.StarLlama.com
We built our barn in 1992 with the advantage of many years’ hindsight. It was quite a step up from our previous shelters in a ramshackle lean-to, a former chicken coop and an old granary. With 13 years of breeding and outfitting already under my belt, I had a good feel for how I like to work and how llamas behave, so I patterned the barn and laid out pastures and corrals to facilitate that.

**Our initial considerations**

- **Proximity:** We selected a site close enough to the house for convenience, but far enough to keep noise, smells and ranch traffic at bay.
- **Pretty:** We wanted this dominating landscape feature to be pleasant to look at.
- **Practical:** Our llamas had already proven they could thrive with nothing fancy. What drove my barn design were flexibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and personal preference. Good ventilation was a high priority.
- **Privacy:** On a working ranch with lots of visitors, we had to think about separating our home life from our center of business operations.
The original barn blueprint, with adjustment notes from Steve and Sue.

Architect: Jeff Balch, Arcus Design Group
The original barn blueprint, with adjustment notes from Steve and Sue.

The bottom set of doors is for a lower/basement floor.

Architect: Jeff Balch, Arcus Design Group
My structural considerations

• Keep the interior space as open and flexible as possible, then adapt as necessary.
• Know the prevailing wind patterns and plan accordingly.
• Can snow slide off the roof without injuring animals or blocking doors and paths?
• Maximize ventilation for health benefits
• Openings and clearances must work for a tractor or other cleaning equipment.
• Don’t make it llama-exclusive. A future owner may have different needs.
• For my convenience, and the use of ranch hands and visitors, our barn has a spacious, heated “office” with a closeted toilet, cupboards, counters with a large sink and microwave, plus a fridge for snacks, pack trip food and vet medicines. As an outfitter, this space doubles as my place to store, pack and clean equipment.
• I like our packed dirt floor, which we cover with leftover feeding stems or straw. It is replaceable, easy to clean, easy to neutralize with stall freshener and provides good traction, which cement does not.
• One insulated room with a cement floor and drain (for thorough cleaning) and an electric heater (mounted high for safety) serves many purposes: sick room, shearing, washing, grooming, quarantine area. For newborns we add a rubber mat for traction.
• Isolation area for special needs animals that allows barn access for the main herd, with room for a companion and within sight of the herd
• Good lighting
• Hay storage with flexibility for feeding from small square or large round bales, or whatever your supplier-of-the-year has available
• Theft-proof storage for valuable equipment; rodent-proof feed storage; clean storage for vet supplies
The Rolfing barn has a hay loft for small square bales. To the left there are two openings. One is for dropping bales to the main floor and the other has a chute that goes to the lower floor.

The loft, complete with rope swings for the grandkids

The chute, as seen from the main floor

The loft opening for the main floor

The chute, looking up from the lower floor
When NOT to use the barn and other herd management considerations

• Too much time spent in the barn is unhealthy. I feed as much as possible in open-air bunks. If there is snow, I plow paths to them.
• Isolation from the herd for birthing is stressful and increases problem births. Except during harsh weather, I run expectant mothers with the herd and keep an eye on them.
• A well-planned series of corrals and gates allows one person to easily sort and move animals.
• I keep studs well spaced, with no shared fence lines, out of sight of each other and the females if possible.
• Weanlings should be out of sight of their moms if possible
• Maidens sometimes need a temporary move to keep them from pestering newborns and their mothers.
• Quarantine space for new arrivals
• Pasture rotation, especially in spring, to allow new grass to get established
Our barn has served us well for 28 years, partly because I left things somewhat flexible so I could adapt as I got used to using it. I’m still learning new tricks and ways to make things simpler, and I spend part of every spring implementing efficiencies I envision over the winter. These are a few:

• A creep feeder has a small opening that lets babies in but keeps moms out of a special feeding area. Ours also has a large gate so it can double as a holding pen.

• The large, solid, sliding doors on three sides of our main barn restrict airflow when closed, so I added wire gates to them. I use these to pen animals in, and only use the big sliding doors during winter storms.

• Create temporary holding areas with portable panels and wall-mounted gates.

• I added clear panels to my metal roofing as “skylights” for better visibility.

• A corner-mounted gate that hangs flat against the wall can be swung open to create a triangular animal trap. Add a tie-out in the corner to make a work “chute” where the animal has 90° or less to move in.

• It’s easier to funnel animals through a corner gate that one in the middle of a long run.

• As I’ve gotten older I’ve transitioned from feeding only small, square, hand-carried bales to doing 80% of the feeding from large round bales that I move with my tractor. I surround a single bale in a large feed shed with three wide, wire gates to keep the llamas off it, and feed most of it with a pitchfork.
A note from the editor:
We asked Justin to participate in the barn feature earlier in the summer, and he agreed, and sent along his recommendations shortly thereafter. He hadn’t gotten out to take pictures for us yet... Then the terrible wildfires hit Clackamas County, and other areas of Oregon. The Timms graciously opened up their farm to hundreds of animals, and allowed quite a few people to stay on the farm in motor homes as well. To read more about what’s going on at Frog Pond visit the [gofundme page](#) started by Rick and Mary Adams.

**Our MUST haves for barns**

1) We typically have 3 sides that have a gate for a 12x12 stall so that we have the flexibility of moving animals with ease.

Using gates for an entire wall allows us to create 12x12 pens or a 12x48 area for the herd without having to move heavy panels around. Creating a pen can happen quickly and easily when needed.
2) We like to use “tracks” that we can place any 2x in for weather protection and shade on exterior lean to settings. It also allows you to have winter setup and summer setup to best fit your needs.

3) We have a paddocks (12x36) around the entire perimeter of the barn. This allows us to have an easy catch area for animals, house sick or quarantined animals or even house a stud during heavy use times of year.

What would I recommend to someone building or setting up a new barn? Keep it as open as possible and use gates as much as possible so you can make your pens as small or large as you need.

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VOLCANO VIEW RANCH
RIDGEFIELD, WASHINGTON
BY KYLE MUMFORD

The Mumford family’s Volcano View Ranch barn housed llamas and served as a local landmark for decades. We estimated it to be over a hundred years old, but no one in the family really knew how old it was. My dad remembered it being an old barn when they moved in when he was a kid. In the middle of the barn, old stripped logs were used where 6x6 posts would be found today. A rickety old loft that I never really trusted was on the north side. Underneath the loft was a section for animals with a wood floor. Almost every Mumford remembers that floor because it had nail heads that stuck out ever so slightly, so that you hit them with your shovel or pitch fork while cleaning.

A lean-to was built off the back for cattle, before the llamas arrived at the farm. It was constructed with ultra-heavy duty metal gates that could be latched in multiple places to create several different floor plans. A cattle stanchion was built into one of the walls. All areas of the barn had built-in wood panel feeders that are the only style of feeder I really care for anymore.

In the mid ’80s, after my grandparents’ llama breeding operation was well underway, the llama mural was added. It was painted by my Uncle Dale. The farm name “Volcano View Ranch” was written out below in huge lettering. It was a very common sight to see someone pulled off to the side of our road, which has always been
fairly busy, to take a picture of the old barn with Mt. St. Helens in
the background. A photo of the barn was included in 3L Llama’s
first feature on llama barns (3L Llama later became Llamas
Magazine). An area Fred Meyer (Kroger) included a large picture
of the barn in a mural of the community as you walk into the store.

Several years ago the farm sold to developers, and one day
we drove by to find that the old barn had been torn down. The
company in charge of the demolition was kind enough to allow me
and my brother John to dig through the wreckage and recover the
llama mural. It was still intact because it had been painted on a
large loft door. It was around that time that Jerrika and I decided
that we would take the family farm name for our own. Though
our barn and our volcano view don’t really hold a candle to the
original, we love our little farm and the llamas we raise here.
When Jerrika and I moved into our farm in 2014 it came with a little old barn that was over-run with blackberries. It had old tarps hanging off the side and a sagging roof. Years before, someone had strung tarps over the top in lieu of a new roof. When we moved in the barn was in rough shape because of it. We made a few appointments to look at renovating it, but it quickly became clear that the right move would be to knock the barn down and start over. Off the east side of the barn was a large (20x40) lean-to that had been built much more recently. It had a metal roof and was in great shape compared to the old barn. We worked out a plan to make the lean-to stand on its own while we replaced the barn. The lean-to would be the space for the animals, and the new barn would primarily be hay storage.

The old barn was framed on top of a cement foundation. I decided to leave the cement foundation on the east side and use that as the base for built-in panel feeders, as well as support for the lean-to. After shopping around for several quotes we decided that the barn of our dreams really wasn’t in the budget. We both had just recently graduated from college and had barely started our careers. The design would have to be fairly simple: no cupola, no wood siding... For construction we ended up going in a somewhat unconventional route. We had a metal building built on top of a cement footing. It was approximately half the cost of post and beam construction, and would be finished months earlier. While it took a few weeks of site prep on my part to tear down the old barn and pour the cement footing, the actual construction of the barn took less than two days. While these metal building companies offer rounded roofs that obviously look like carports, most offer an “A-frame” design. When they are fully sided they are indistinguishable from a post-and-beam barn. We did our research and decided that there were really no drawbacks to a metal building for what we needed this building for.
Since the barn went up five years ago we have made improvements every year.

- Converted an existing stall into a creep feeder
- Added more than 50’ of permanent feeder space
- Enclosed the south side with 2x6 tongue and groove lumber
- Removed the 4’ opening for the animals, replacing it with an 8’ opening
- Added a storage loft to the barn
- Added a small work area with a miter saw and shelving

We dressed up the barn a bit by adding a big white barn star and a llama weathervane, gifted to us by Kyle’s brother Jacob. Additional outbuildings have been added with the same color as the main barn, to give the property a cohesive look. We may not have the barn of our dreams but we do have a functional, clean facility for our llamas. We hope that sharing some details about our barn might inspire those of you who didn’t have the opportunity to design the barn of your dreams to make the most of what you have.
Volcano View Ranch
Kyle and Jerrika Mumford - Ridgefield, WA

Looking to the future... remembering the past

Matisse MVVR
Vaquerro x Pria
Grandson of Whist

Amaya MVVR
GNLC Switchfoot x Ayni
Granddaughter of Na Pali and GNLC Merlin

Araminta MVVR
Undeniable x Arabella
Granddaughter of Besakih

www.VolcanoViewRanch.com
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.

How can I register a llama if its parents are unregistered or unknown?
The opportunity exists to have the animal “screened”. Animals that have been screened may then have their offspring “registered”. To be screened, the animal must first be “Listed.” When importations from South America were occurring on a regular basis, the animals in most cases were coming from unregistered parents so screening was the only way to get them entered into the database and to allow for registration of future generations. We have found that when the economy struggled and llama prices dropped, many producers chose not to register the llamas they were producing and selling. Therefore, many llamas changed hands without being registered and recorded with the registry. As the llama industry has rebounded, many individuals are wanting to have registered animals and are looking to screening as the way to get there.

How do I go about getting my animal screened?
On the ILR website under “Registry Services” is a tab for screening. The information required to be submitted and the process is elaborated there. It involves a veterinarian inspection, DNA testing, photos from 13 different views of the animal, and ultimately a review of all of the information and photos by a review panel. The ILR Board of Directors currently serve as the review panel for screening of llamas. In the past several years, the BOD has screened quite a few llamas and the demand seems to be increasing. Ccara llamas are the group of llamas where the greatest demand for screening seems to exist at this time.

What fees are associated with screening?
The fee for screening was significantly reduced about two years ago by the Board in order to make this option more affordable to members. Please refer to the Fee Schedule tab on the ILR website under Registry Services. An animal must first be listed, then DNA tested, and then finally screened. The actual screening now costs just $100.
Are screened animals common in the extended pedigree of my llama?
If you review the pedigree and it has any line that does not extend to the full four generations listed on your ILR certificate of registration, those shorter lines undoubtedly begin with a listed and screened llama (see photo to the right). If your breeding program includes a number of animals that are only a generation or two away from animals that were imported, you could have many screened animals back there. As mentioned earlier, most imported llamas from Chile, Bolivia, Peru, or Argentina were initially screened in order to be added to the registry data base. In a number of cases one parent was known, but not the other. In other cases neither parent was known, however the animal exhibited the strong llama characteristics that were being selected for by the importer. Also, if you have llamas that are the offspring of animals where the owners neglected to keep registrations current, you may have a number of screened animals in the pedigree. We believe screening is an important means of getting animals registered and maintaining a valuable clearing house for llamas.

If I am buying a llama should I avoid llamas that were screened or have screened animals in their pedigree?
That is clearly an individual choice, however, as a board member and therefore part of the screening review panel, I know we each take that role very seriously. Animals must be physically sound and exhibit clear llama characteristics to be approved for screening. However, if you are purchasing an animal with somewhat unknown parentage there is more risk in predicting offspring characteristics. Likewise, our industry would not have advanced to where it is today if several dedicated and financially committed individuals had not taken the steps to travel to South America to locate quality animals that exhibited special characteristics and introduce them to the USA and Canadian llama herds. Most of our herds have benefited from their work. Fleece type and quality is probably at the top of the list of characteristics that changed due to importation. Broadening the genetic base of our llamas is one other important gain.
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.

Please contact Sonja Boeuff for more information.
Email: czandera@yahoo.com
Phone: 303-257-6733

www.ArgentineLlamas.com
Llama Shows – A New Dimension
By Merlene Anderson

The virtual llama shows were born out a few needs during a critical period of time in our world. Many things were being canceled and many changes were being forced on us. For the llama community, March Llama Madness was the first show to be canceled by the Homeland Security Department due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children were now experiencing a new method of learn at home, and could not see friends on a daily basis. No one could attend church, stores were closed, and you were to stay at home. We were heartbroken by all that was happening. The children and even adults in the llama community were heavy on our hearts.

In visiting with llama families, we knew that we had to do something to bring about a positive event, but what? We thought we were not able to help them until we came up with the idea of creating something fun, different, and exciting for them to do as a family. We approached Sam, our Grandson, to see what we could do virtually to provide a llama show for the llama industry. In what I would say was short order, we came up with a plan. The MLM Showdown was born.

It was imperative that we set up a simple walking pattern for everyone to set up at their own farm - keeping it as uniform as possible. We knew that the walking pattern was of high importance since the judge needed to see the llama walk in the best possible view for movement, foot placement, and at a good profile.

We went to our llamas and, with camera in hand, we went through many ideas that we had. The pattern we settled on was one we felt could best accomplish the desired results. That was the easiest part of coming up with MLM Showdown Virtual Show. We wanted to make sure that everyone had the same information on cameras and how to hold the cell phone, height of the camera, location requirements, and we even looked at what would be seen in the backgrounds. With all that settled on, we
needed to figure out how to enter on line, what information we needed from the exhibitors, how to make payment, and a way for people to upload their videos.

Sam spent many hours researching our options and assured us that we could come up with what we wanted to do. It took him many hours to put it in place and get all the programming just the way we needed. The big challenge was to develop this program with little resources and to find what was available at minimal cost to us. Once Sam had put it all together, we ran tests to see how the end product would work and look. Before long we were ready to go live. We posted on Facebook and it took off.

As the videos came in, Merlene viewed them to see if quality was acceptable, and if there needed to be any that would have to redo them. We were pleased with the great job everyone did with their videos. With Darrell being the judge for the show, he was not allowed to view them. That probably was the hardest part on our end. As Merlene reviewed the videos, she kept saying “Wow, look at that llama. Look how great they did in walking and recording.” Be assured that was a point of contention in our home. We needed it to be just like a live show where the judge does not know what or who is entered in the show. It was a challenge. For our next show that was not an issue as Darrell was not judging.

With the postponing of the Gathering, once again the disappointment hit our industry. After some encouragement, we started to plan another virtual show. With
Independence Day approaching and many celebrating America, we decided to add llamas to the celebration. The American Llama Show was born. We contacted Cathie Kindler to see if she was available to judge, after a couple of days she agreed.

We extended the entry period and added two stops in the walking pattern which added additional seconds needed. Setting the length of the video was a challenge, but we felt that giving them a guide would keep everyone on the same plane. Realizing that not everyone would have the same length of video, but that they would all be acceptable in putting them into the show platform. Again, we were so pleased with each and every one who entered the show, and we noticed that the quality of the videos had improved from the first show. We were so excited to see 98 entries for this show.

One of the most difficult things to remember when walking the pattern is to think this is a real show, and to show my llama the best that I can. Is the whole body, feet, legs, and head visible for the judge (camera)? Am I walking in a straight line to the judge (camera)? When walking away from the camera, is my llama in a straight view for the judge to see the tracking as the llama walks away? In many cases, we noticed the judges trying to get into position to be directly behind the llama.

So how does that compare to a traditional show? It is totally different. At an in person show, the exhibitors just walk away and the judge then has to move to be in a position to follow the tracking. In the virtual show, the judge cannot move into a better position to see that movement they are looking for. That is left up to the exhibitor to make sure that the llama is walking in the line from the camera’s view point. That is very hard. It is pretty critical that they pay attention to the walk away - making sure you have given your llama every opportunity to be seen. As we have shown llamas, we realize just how hard it is to walk that straight line away from the judge. But paying attention to the walk away at a live show will add greatly to the respect the judge deserves.

We were so pleased to see that the instructions for taking the video was applied - holding the camera at 4 feet, using the camera in a horizontal position not vertical, not walking with the camera, but still follow the llama as they walked, watching what was in the background, and keeping the sun at your back. These are all the things that we should keep in mind when taking photos and posting on the web.
We have heard many say that they were not too sure of doing a virtual show at first. But one of the biggest comments we heard was how nice it was that they did not have to load up after the show, drive a long distance, and unload and clean up. On the other hand, the biggest thing they missed with the virtual show was spending time with friends and making new ones.

Do we see virtual shows as part of the demographic in the show arena? It could add a new dimension to the industry. It gives opportunity for distant regions to be a part of a show where the whole United States and Canada are involved; New York can now show against Oregon; Texas against Minnesota, and all states in between. Don’t forget, this is on the world wide web, so in addition to having Canada and England, other countries could easily join in the fun. Just think of the potential to add a foreign division to our shows. Here is the good news: a big difference is in the cost of showing. No gas, eating out, and hotel cost; travel time is none.

You do give up physical contact with the virtual show, but it also allows you to showcase your breeding program. Viewers can see just what the distant farms or ranches are breeding with and for. They can see just what pieces are out there to add to the improvement for their herd. Really the cost is low for a great return on advertising.
Being able to see just what it is the judges are looking for is available for herd improvement. Virtual shows are a great way to increase your judging skills and study llama conformation, balance, and movement. Down the road, we see great potential for virtual shows as part of the showing activities.

The spring and summer of 2020 has taught us so many things about ourselves, the community, and the world. For us, not being able to reach out to others has been the hardest and most damaging part of our lives. Being able to put on two virtual shows gave us great joy to be able to see dear friends and their llamas.
Despite the challenges COVID-19 brought, the Nebraska Llama-Alpaca Association Show Crew still put on three successful shows this summer. I will admit that at first, I wasn't sure we would be able to pull it all together and was having a tough time wrapping by brain around it. The NLA performance crew rallied together though and made it happen.

The first show, the Camelid Classic and Retreat (dual ALSA/ILR show), was one of the first shows (if not the first) to be held once shelter in place and restrictions were lessened. The key to being able to hold this show was flexibility as this show was originally scheduled for Memorial Day weekend and in a different venue. Most counties in Nebraska went into Phase 2 starting June 1st which allowed for larger gatherings based on the size of the venue. Hamilton County, the original fairgrounds venue, stayed in Phase 1, so we quickly secured another fairgrounds venue in Clay County that was going to Phase 2. Another key ingredient is fresh air. Having open air arenas and barns with plenty of fresh air moving through helps move any germs along. The NE Dept of Agriculture provided a document of guidelines for putting on livestock shows during this time as well, not only for open shows but also for counties deciding whether to cancel or hold their county fairs.
We conversed with the Clay County Emergency Management Supervisor to also get the go ahead from him and held the show on June 5th, 6th, and 7th, two weeks after our original date. We had booked our judge prior to the Coronavirus shutdown. The judge was able to be flexible on his dates and waited to book a flight until closer to the show. He was as happy to judge as we were excited to show.

We provided the exhibitors with a copy of the COVID-19 livestock show guidelines and followed what was feasible. We had 108 animals registered and families attend from 6 states: California, Wisconsin, Missouri, Colorado, Iowa, and Nebraska. Those coming from out of state go through the hassle and expense of the testing requirements Nebraska requires.

We held a Retreat that has different topics and stations for people to rotate through. We were able to spread our small groups around throughout the fairgrounds, which allowed for social distancing in smaller settings. During meals, we had families sit at tables with their family groups and our servers wore masks and gloves. During the show we had masks available for those that wanted to wear them. We did not make them mandatory to show. There were exhibitors that chose to wear masks and those that didn’t. We had hand sanitizer sitting out in several places. We arranged our performance courses so handlers did not have to touch anything that would need to be sanitized in between exhibitors. We kept an empty pen between each family group of pens in the barns. We encouraged people to stay in their family groups when sitting in the stands and left the social distancing of all the kids, who are so excited to see their friends, up to the discretion of the parents. We received no reports of anyone from this show coming down with Coronavirus.

The next show we put on was the Wild N Wooly ALSA during the Keith County Fair in Ogallala, NE, the weekend of August 8th and 9th. Keith County had moved into Phase 4 by that weekend, so very few restrictions were in place. This was the first year for this show out in the panhandle of Nebraska. We had secured our judge prior to COVID-19 and he had no issues travelling or judging during this time. We still offered masks and hand sanitizer for those that wanted it. Masks were not a requirement to show. The temperature was 95 degrees that weekend so staying hydrated and keeping animals cool was the major priority. When it's that hot, social distancing comes nat-
urally. We received no reports of anyone from this show coming down with Coronavirus.

Our last show of the summer was the weekend of August 29th and 30th at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds in Aurora, NE. This County was in Phase 3 and masks are optional and not required for entrance into most businesses. When the NE State Fair cancelled the Open shows this year, we decided the show must go on. We decided to call this show Corona Camelid Capers ALSA/ILR show. Putting two shows on within three weeks time was more challenging than dealing with COVID-19, but we rose and exceeded the challenge. We were lucky to find two judges that had flexible schedules and weren't afraid to travel. We had 82 animals entered in this show.

By this show, most of the exhibitors had attended our other two shows and some other shows that weren't canceled. The fairgrounds had removed the bleachers from the arena for County Fair so we made sure to let exhibitors know to bring chairs. This allowed us to set up two performance courses at the same time which was such a time saver. People could sit in their family groups or by their friends as close or far away as they wanted. Even without COVID-19, I will request the bleachers not return to the arena at this venue. This show was reminiscent of pre-COVID-19 shows. Hopefully the trend will continue and in two weeks we can report that no one reported coming down with Coronavirus from attending this show as well.
THE WILD LLAMA ( Part II & III )
by Keith Payne

Most camelid owners are well acquainted with the history of how their animals originated eons ago in what today is the USA. Immigrating south through Central America, down the Andes to the bottom of South America. By the end of the Pleistocene Ice Age (10 – 12,000 years ago), earlier larger llama genera, Paleolama and Hemiauchenia, had become extinct leaving the two camelid genera, the guanaco and the vicuna. The genera of the llama and the vicuna are thought to have separated over 2 million years ago.

Origins of the two domesticated South American Camelids (SAC’s), discussed and speculated on for many decades has now conclusively been determined, the llama being domesticated from the guanaco and the alpaca from the vicuna. In some areas, in particular parts of Peru, there will have been some bi-directional hybridisation between guanaco and vicuna as evidenced in DNA analysis, but this is considered to have only occurred in areas where the two closely overlap, separated only by altitude. There are many other areas in the Andes where domestication has taken place without evidence of hybridisation between the two breeds.

I thought it might be of interest to mention a couple of interesting aspects of SAC development.
THE LLAMA PACE

As the guanaco was formed over millions of years during its gradual move to the south, a number of morphological adaptations took place:

- increased body size
- padded digitigrade feet for better support
- fusion of metapodials into a single stronger cannon bone
- loss of upper incisors (one became modified into a canine or fighting tooth
- development of a depression on the lower portion of the face to accommodate muscular development of a split upper lip
- higher crowned cheek teeth to enable both browsing and grazing
- shift of cranial orbits to provide what is termed a semi-stereoscopic vision; and the “llama pace!”

Now, the llama pace is quite interesting, and as most of you would have already observed, your llama does not have a true pace when walking. A pace is a gait where lateral limbs move in unison and both feet land on the ground simultaneously. But the llama pace does not exactly fit this description. At a slow walk it is easy to view that the llama’s hind foot commences its forward motion a touch before the front foot and equally lands on the ground before the front foot. The quicker the pace of your llama the more difficult it becomes to observe this feature and slow motion would demonstrate that the llama moves closer to a true pace as it quickens. But as it never achieves the proper definition of a pace, the llama is said to have its own “llama pace.”

Now the pace is a particularly quick, long strided and efficient gait for long limbed animals like the llama. However, there are disadvantages as lateral stability and maneuverability are compromised. Accordingly several anatomical adaptations needed to evolve to offset these disadvantages, such as:

- wide and splay toed feet
- strong ligaments to support the feet
- placement of the limbs near the body’s midline
- low forward placement of the neck which together with the head act as a counterbalance to the side-to-side sway during pacing
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GUANACO AND VICUNA

It is interesting to observe these differences as it assists us to more fully understand both breeds as well as the consequences of allowing the two to crossbreed. Each breed has a northern and a southern type. In both cases the northern animal is light brown, sandy coloured, whereas the southern is a darker almost reddish brown (primary colour). In both cases the northern animal is physically smaller. The northern vicuna has very distinctive light coloured long chest hair (bib like).

Guanaco are far more adaptable than vicuna. Vicuna are obligat water drinkers and preferred habitats are in close proximity to high altitude natural spring or glacier melt, known as bofedales in the north and vegas in the south. Guanaco, on the other hand, adapt quite handily to semi-dry, very dry, temperate, rainforest, altitude etc. When the first Europeans arrived in the Andes, guanaco population was thought to number 30-40 million whereas the vicuna population was estimated at 3-4 million.

Foraging behavior is divided into four parts: search for, selection of, ingestion of and digestion. Guanaco generally spend more time foraging than vicuna. Vicuna are traditional grass feeders but readily adapt for grazing on forbs and perennial grasses close to the ground. Their routine of forage incorporates a daily water intake, unlike the guanaco which often goes for days without. While guanaco and vicuna are generally considered to have identical nutritional requirements when corrected for body size, guanaco are shown to perform better on low-quality forages than vicuna which depend more on selecting high quality grass and forbs.

A major factor in the Andes is the presence of large numbers of domestic European stock, mainly sheep which seriously deplete the extent and quality of vegetation. Guanaco once again demonstrate an ability to adapt and they will frequently alter their foraging to include up to 60% browsing, vicuna tend to fare less well in this regard.

Throughout the Andes, the vicuna displays its preference for the wet areas of the higher plains and is comfortable at altitudes up to 4,800m. This also helps explain the superb quality of vicuna fiber! Guanaco, while proven to be comfortable at sea level to 4,000m plus, display little interest to spend as much time at the highest altitudes.
At the time of the Inca, the llama was the most important domesticated South American camelid. Llamas were far more numerous and of greater economic value and religious significance. Both alpaca and llama were important for their meat, hides, dung, fiber, etc. But the llama always carried more value in religious application, such as sacrifice. And perhaps most significantly, the Inca army depended heavily on the llama to transport its supplies, weapons, armaments etc. When going into battle. And all of this, not to mention the thousands of packing caravans which kept the wheels of commerce and trade flourishing in the Inca empire.

Today, the alpaca has replaced the llama in economic importance. Almost as numerous as the llama, they are intensively managed through advanced husbandry and breeding by national government and university research stations.

The fiber of the vicuna is still considered to be one of the finest on the planet, followed closely by guanaco fiber. Both animals have fully shedding double coats, their guard hair representing 5-12% of total fiber, therefore being very simple and inexpensive to remove. Leaving a very fine inner coat, the vicuna generally at 12-14 micron, the guanaco at 16-18 micron. A feature of vicuna fiber is its length, generally being slightly longer than that of guanaco, neither fiber is found to have a crimp, although the longer vicuna fiber has a characteristic ‘wave’. The vicuna fiber industry is well controlled by government and commercial interests, whereas guanaco fiber tends to find its way more towards artisan-craft usage.

Domesticates of guanaco and vicuna are of course the llama and the alpaca. Alpaca have undergone significant specialized breeding to increase body mass and accordingly the quantity of fiber carried. To a much lesser extent, the llama has clung to its repute as a beast of burden and a source of meat. Hybridisation of these two breeds subsequent to Spanish colonization has resulted in them being barely comparable to the original wild versions and many llama and alpaca farmers in the west have only a vague comprehension of their genetic strength, physical stamina and athletic prowess.
DIET

The wild llama has proven capable of adapting its diet to constantly changing environments and climates. Accordingly, it has become the widest ranging wild ungulate in South America. In particular, the wild llama has adapted to dry environments and their fragile ecosystems. Part of that accommodation to the harsh and unforgiving Argentine Patagonia has caused the llama to adapt its fiber type and coverage for the extreme heat of summer months and the need to manage and closely control water economy.

Llamas sweat rather than pant. While panting is efficient and the most common means of evaporative heat loss in animals, it is not the answer for llamas which have a dense fiber pelage and also a respiratory system needing to allow maximum gaseous exchange during sustained exercise, such as avoiding a predator. Llamas, as with horses and donkeys, respond to heat stress and infused adrenaline with a continuous output of sweat.

Llamas have a double coat of fiber. The long coarse outer coat, called guard hair, represents 8-14% of the llamas total fiber. The inner fiber is much more dense, is very fine and shorter. This fiber combination is capable of protecting the llama from extreme cold and heat, but also humidity, rain, hail, snow and wind. Studies have shown that the main stimuli for activation of llama sweat
glands are ambient temperatures from 20 C to 33 C. The greatest concentration of sweat glands are located in the axillary and flank regions, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the lower shoulder and forehead areas. These are also the areas where the llama has very short, sparse pelage. The evaporative cooling taking place in these key areas acts as the llama’s radiator. Passive transfer of water vapor in areas of dense fiber cover is negligible. The following photos show the llama’s axillary, flank and lower shoulder heat transfer areas and we can readily observe how the sparse pelage in these areas will compliment this.

But this built-in heat transfer mechanism only succeeds because the wild llama and its immediate domestic counterpart, the ccara, has sparse fibre in those key areas. Where breeders have selected llamas with a denser and thicker pelage coverage, they will find that sweat production does not translate into effective heat loss as there may be little evaporative cooling. These llamas will require to be sheared and also have fibre growth in these key heat exchange areas trimmed regularly.

- Sweat production does not correspond directly to relative humidity as it does to ambient temperature.
- Sweat gland distribution and quantity does not vary between males and females.
- Llamas do not gape at high temperatures, they increase breathing rate only in response to exercise.

MALE FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

I have found this area of study to reveal a fascinating aspect of the llama. These studies have of course taken place through observation of “family groups” and are usually expressed as a comparison with similar “family groups” of vicuna. The family territories, as established by the dominant male, are similar, except that the vicuna is more comfortable at higher elevations and always in closer proximity to abundant water supplies.

The status of the dominant vicuna and guanaco males is similar in regard to the defense of their territory (as set out by a careful placement of dung heaps). Response to the approach of other males is always immediate and with intention, they are simply not welcome.
But there are some surprising differences. First of all, the llama male will usually allow stray females to enter his area, to be dealt with by his girls. They in turn will seemingly make their assessment as to her being accepted or not, in which case she will be obliged to leave. The male will be on hand to support his girls, if required! The vicuna male, on the other hand, will himself decide the fate of a stray female and either allow her to enter or forcibly have her move on. In both cases the male’s determination appears to be motivated by an assessment of available food, but the llama females have the last say.

When male youngsters approach 10 months of age, both guanaco and vicuna males will physically force them away from and out of the herd. As we might expect, this is a stressful time for all concerned. The guanaco male will be unrelenting however, the young male will be physically moved away and the mother, if necessary will be physically obliged to let him go. The same scenario will be acted out in the vicuna family unit, except that the vicuna male will be much more heavy handed towards both the youngster and the mother.

And then a month or so later, just prior to new births, the female crias will be forced from the herd. And here is where it seems to get interesting, because the young ladies will tend to meander on the outskirts of the territory and then be permitted by the guanaco male to re enter the family group once the new births have taken place. Sadly it all seems to fall apart again and at approximately age 15 months the young girls are once again expelled from the herd, this time not to return. But there are no return opportunities in the vicuna herd and the male aggressively and physically will strictly suppress any suggestions of disagreement from family members.

Additionally there are many recorded viewings of females leaving a family unit for up to several months and then walking back in as if nothing had happened. Llama males tend to be much more tolerant of the wishes of the ladies and content to conserve his energy for marauding bands of males who may seek to harass his girls.
Interestingly enough, because llamas are not dimorphic, a macho (herd sire) will take deliberate interest in the approach of a solitary guanaco, being unable to determine if it is a male or female at a distance. As it gets closer, its body language will become more definite and the herd will then react accordingly. A solitary male seeking to steal a couple of females from the herd or alternatively prepared to battle the macho for the whole bunch will express his intentions through body language. A solitary female approaching a herd would express submissive body language.

Once a battle between males has begun, the girls will become very attentive spectators. Frequently the fight is over in a few short minutes after the incumbent establishes his willingness to fight to the end. Occasionally however the challenger may have a similar disposition and the battle can endure several hours. In some cases both combatants are damaged to the extent that neither is able to assume responsibility for the harem.

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STORING YOUR LLAMA FLEECES

By: The ILR-SD Fleece Committee

Your ILR Fleece Committee members have felt there has not been enough information available on how to prepare your fleeces for storing them until the next show season. We have had a collaborative effort of our members sharing procedures that have worked for them.

If your fleeces have been prepared to be shown and entered in one or more shows, they would be mostly ready to store, but do consider the suggestions in the paragraph below to correct any problems that could improve their score in their second year of showing.

It would be a good idea to carefully spread out your fleeces, one at a time, preferably on a sorting table and under good lighting. At this time, you can go over them to remove any second cuts that you might have missed or any matting that may have occurred during showing and transporting them. Some prefer to carefully place the locks with the cut edges down on a large, thin paper table cloth and fold over the edges then roll it up like a sleeping bag, but loosely. This is called noodle-ing.
Afterwards place it in a clear plastic bag or container. If your fleeces are not done in the noodle-ing manner, place in clear plastic bags or containers. It is preferable not to pack the fleeces tightly in the bags but do tie their tops securely. They do need to be stored in a relatively cool place, not in a hot or humid area. It does not hurt them to be in freezing temps. It’s also a good idea to place moth traps around your storage area, and check every month to see if you are having any moths. You can spray insect killer around the bags or containers to keep out any moths. If you have asthma or allergies to insect sprays, you can use lavender and moth traps in your area to deter the moths but do check for any sign of moths every month at least and then replace those as needed.

When you are storing the fleeces you have already shown, be sure and leave the last entry card you used for them in the bag to identify them and help you fill out the new entry cards with all the same information, but the new date of course, for when you show them for the second year. Be sure you remove the last ribbons you received on each fleece and fill out the relevant information from the fleece’s placing on the back of your ribbons including what show and judge etc. Hopefully you have looked at your score card where the judge may have marked that fleece down in certain areas so you can correct anything necessary if possible, before you show it again.

Remember moths like dark places but is not always possible to have a naturally lighted storage area, so do check monthly for moths.

The next show season open up your fleece(s), fluff them up and air them out, but do try to keep the locks and architecture together.
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