



Central Region Newsletter

January 2022

Your Monthly Central Region Newsletter From The Alpaca Association New Zealand



Cria- Ros Scott

Happy New Year to you all! I hope you all managed to have a break over the Christmas period and are ready for whatever 2022 may bring. It's a funny old time, so I always find taking the time to enjoy the simple things in life helps.

If Facebook is anything to go by there are plenty of beautiful new cria to enjoy out there. For those of you that aren't on Facebook it is a great way to stay connected with your fellow alpaca owners/breeders and there are some great groups you can join to ask questions and share knowledge.

There is plenty of great content in this months Newsletter and I would like to thank the team for taking the time to work on these articles for you. If you have any articles that you would like to share please feel free to send them through to us via this email address - centralregion@alpaca.org.nz or by contacting one of your Central Region Committee members (contact details are at the end of the newsletter). Likewise if you have any ideas as to what sort of topics you'd like to have covered off please feel free to reach out.

At this stage due we don't have any events planned, but will be working on ideas of how we can bring people together to share knowledge and have a bit of fun. In the meantime stay safe and enjoy the second half of our great New Zealand summer.

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Keeping Alpacas, Part 2. Routine Care – the Annual Cycle.

By Stephen Kellam and Rachel Norman

In this second part of a very short series we are covering activities needing to be done for your alpacas over the year. These and many more subjects are discussed in greater depth on pages starting on: <https://www.tekorito-alpacas.co.nz/alpaca-welfare.html>

So get out your new 2022 diary or calendar and mark in the following, and for every year after that.

- **Daily** - Watching your Alpacas
This might seem a bit strange or even obvious but alpacas are stoic – they will try to hide any illness or injury. In the wild, showing any weakness would make them a target for a predator. Every alpaca is different in their character, movements and habits so getting to know what is normal for each member of your herd will allow you to spot when something might be wrong. It doesn't take too long and watching them while leaning over the fence is very therapeutic anyway.
- **Every 1-2 days** - Dung collection.
Alpacas normally have a low worm burden because communal dung sites (middens) are used. They avoid feeding around them so worms and worm larvae are less likely to be eaten. However, stocking rates on alpaca farms and lifestyle properties can be much higher than in their native environment so middens can become widely distributed around the paddock. Regular and thorough removal of the middens is essential, especially for female groups as they tend to make many small piles. Males use very defined middens which are easily cleaned up. It goes great on the garden, no need to compost it first!
- **Three monthly** - Toe nails
Because of the soft New Zealand paddocks, the two nails on each foot may become too long. Overgrowth can have the effect of twisting/deforming the toes and making normal walking uncomfortable, occasionally even curling and pressing into the pad. The pedicure method is very similar to handling horses hooves. One person will hold the alpaca's halter whilst another, facing the tail end of the alpaca, will lift the foot at the pastern (ankle) and trim the nail so that it is level with the pads. Use straight-bladed clippers to cut off the excess. Some alpacas, particularly those with black nails, will only ever need slight trimming but most will need attention. Trimming once a year by the shearer is unlikely to be frequent enough so all owners should be able to trim nails. Checking of foot pads should be done at the same time as toenail trimming. Look for any cuts in the pads or if the tough skin is peeling. If either are found, they will need treatment.
- **Two yearly** - Vitamins AD&E
NZ is at lower altitude compared with the Andes mountains of South America so alpacas receive less ultraviolet light to their skin - this is needed to make vitamin D. It is recommended to give them a vitamins A, D and E booster via injection just under the skin up to twice per year. This is best done at shearing and at mid-winter.

Keeping Alpacas, Part 2. Routine Care – the Annual Cycle.

Actual requirement varies with the age of the animal and fleece colour. As a minimum they require a vitamin injection in the middle of winter but discuss this with your vet if unsure.

- **Three monthly** - Condition scoring

Maintaining your alpacas with the correct condition is important as it avoids a number of weight-related health problems. The great majority of alpaca owners will not own livestock scales so manual body scoring needs to be done on a regular basis. Keep records as part of managing your herd, even if you only have a few animals, it may alert you to a possible health issue or if you are under/over feeding your alpacas.

A good method for condition scoring can be found in the NZ Ministry of Primary Industries Welfare code for Llamas and Alpacas, download it on this link:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46039-Code-of-Welfare-Layer-Llamas-and-alpacas>

Most alpacas (except in late pregnancy or lactation) should maintain a body condition score between 2.5 and 3.25.

- **Six monthly** - Teeth checks

Alpacas have 30 to 32 adult teeth. At the front of the mouth are six lower incisors which make contact with an upper dental pad. Since alpaca teeth grow continuously they need to be ground down by grazing action but if there is poor alignment, the front teeth will over-grow due to lack of wear. Simply part the lips to show if the teeth are overgrown – overshooting the top palate. There are also the fighting teeth in males which may need cutting, particularly of the more aggressive animals.

Due to a recent change in the MPI Welfare code, cutting teeth may now only be performed by a Vet. Sedation of the alpaca will often be needed.

- **December- January** - Facial Eczema

This important subject was discussed in some detail in the December issue of the Newsletter. Prevention of FE is your best friend, so don't wait for the vets to announce high spore counts. In December you may like to get your paddocks sprayed with a specialised fungicide, but the majority use the Alpaca Zinc Pellets. This needs to be started at the beginning of January so hopefully you have this well underway. There are other alternatives including homeopathic FE spray or addition to troughs, there are also some multivitamin drenches that include zinc. Use all products correctly to prevent overdosing and causing copper deficiency, while at the same time at a rate that will protect against FE.

- **September** - Contact a shearer

It is a good idea to contact your preferred shearer in very good time, at least two months before your ideal shearing date. Once on their list, the shearer can include you on their first pass of his/her circuit. A list of the current shearers can be downloaded here:

<https://www.tekorito-alpacas.co.nz/assets/pdf/table-of-shearers-2021.pdf>

- **November-January** - Shearing day

This subject was covered in detail in the December 2021 newsletter – have a read!

Vaccinations. Adult alpacas require a vaccination once a year and this can be given while on the shearing table. Depending on your area, you may be happy using 5-in-1 vaccine but there are also 7 and 10 in-1 which cover more clostridial diseases and leptospirosis.

Match Making

By Rachel Norman

You have decided to breed - but who to choose!

Most people who decide to breed have females so lets start there. Choose a female who is 2yrs or older - by this age her body is well developed and it can support a pregnancy without stunting her growth. She should be in good health and generally keep good health throughout the seasons. The female should have good fleece stats - after all alpacas are mainly known for their fleece. However if you are breeding for meat, choose a strong healthy chunky girl. The female should have been sold to you as a breeding female, if she was sold to you as a pet, retired breeder or non-breeding female there is probably a very good reason she should not be used for breeding - respect the knowledge of the breeder you purchased the alpaca from and don't breed from her. The other thing to consider is colour, what colour you want to achieve and what is the most likely match to get that colour.

Now to choose a stud male, Macho. Firstly will you purchase one or hire one? Both have their advantages and disadvantages, but the main thing to remember is that a stud male cannot live full time with a herd of females without causing stress, health and behavioural issues for your herd. So if you don't have the space to keep a stud male plus at least one other male to keep him company in a separate paddock, then hiring a stud is your best choice. Again choose a male who is healthy, over 3yrs and has the fleece stats that suit your goals (colour, micron, style). Ask to see some of his progeny and the dams/hembra they came from - this will give you some ideas of what he throws. Discuss the female you have with the studs owner as they may have some ideas about whether he is the best choice to achieve your goals.

It is also important to check how closely related the hembra and macho are - this is only possible with registered animals as it can be looked up on the AANZ registry. Too closely related and problems can occur. Remember if you wish to have AANZ registered offspring the female must be AANZ registered and the male must be AANZ registered and certified.

A new boy being introduced to the existing boy herd, it could take some time until they accept him and they can all share a paddock in peace.
Photo supplied by Rachel Norman, Purely Alpacas (Acapella)



To breed? Or not to Breed?

Before breeding you need to ask yourself - why are you breeding and what is your goal? It is important you know this before you start. If the answer is just because babies are cute maybe rethink your decision - there are more and more unwanted alpacas out there who are in need of a loving home and you may be better to give one of them a home.

If the answer is because you want to improve the national herd or your herd, then its start to think about whether you, your alpacas and your property are ready.

Remember the whole process does come with risks to consider and special care. Pregnancy has its dangers with any species and it is no different for alpacas, although most of the time they go without an issue.

Things to consider:

- Do you have the space/grass to have a pregnant or lactating mum and cria - remember a female will eat more during these times.
- Do you have the space/grass to feed another alpaca as it grows - not just grass but hay or other feed.
- Do you have a seperate paddock for weanlings to be separated from their mums - especially important for young males who have been known to be able to impregnate as early as 6mths of age. Weaned boys may or may not be able to be housed with their dad/stud male - this will depend entirely on the temperament of the older male.
- Do you have the funds to pay for after hour vet visits if something was to go wrong - it is inevitable any problem will happen on a weekend, but even if it doesn't vet bills are something to consider. As well as the extra vaccinations, worming, ADE etc.
- Do you have the time to keep an eye on your alpacas. As with anything to do with alpacas you have the best chance of picking up on an issue the more you recognise subtle changes in behaviour. During pregnancy this is made all the more difficult as their behaviours often change from their usual normal - but the trick is to know if it is that animals normal "pregnancy behaviour" or not. And this time your ability to recognise an issue impacts 2 lives - mother (Hembra) and child (Cria).
- Do you have yards - yards are useful for so many aspects of alpaca ownership. Yards are used for mating; if there are issue during birth and a vet needs calling out; to feed a specific alpaca extra if required; for handling the young cria and halter training.

Once you have considered these things ask yourself again -
To breed or not to breed?

A little cria who had major struggles when he was first born is, after 10days, finally able to hang with the others and even begins to play!
Photo supplied by Rachel Norman, Purely Alpacas (Acapella)



By Cheryl Hunter

Skirting, Carding and Spinning.

The shearing is done and now you have bags individually labelled with your alpacas' fleeces in them. The first step, no matter what you decide to do with your fleece, is to sort and skirt your lovely fleeces.

A table frame with netting across will allow any fine or short pieces of fleece to be separated from the fleece. When you have the fleece laid out on the table, give it a shake to dislodge as much dirt and short cuts as possible.

Look at the edge of the fleece and see if there is any fleece that looks different from the bulk of the blanket, the fibre around the edge may be courser than the main blanket and so needs to be removed.

Remove any vegetable matter so that the fleece is as clean as you can make it. This is so that when you have your fleeces carded, the carded fleece has little to no vegetable matter in it to pick out. Also, the person carding your fleece may not do it if there is too much vegetable matter in the fleece.

While a table with netting or even a skirting table used by sheep breeders is most preferred, skirting on an ordinary table so that you do not have to bend is acceptable as well if you have not got one of the other tables.

Once the fleece is as clean as you can get it and has been skirted, rebag it. Then it is time to decide what you want to do with your fleeces, keep it for yourself and get it carded, send it to either Pacific Alpacas (<https://pacificalpacos.com/>) or Kiwi-Paca (<https://www.kiwi-paca.com/>) or sell it to crafters either as raw fleece or carded fleece.

Carding

You can do this yourself if you have a small carding machine or carding paddles or take or send your fleece to be carded. Carding is aligning the fibres of the fleece so that they go in the same direction, these are called slivers. This makes it easier to spin into yarn.

If you have not the time to card yourself there are places that you can get your fleece carded at are listed below:

Kane Carding – 1076 Otopo Rd, Dannevirke. Ph: 06 3745925

- They accept fibre for commission **carding** from anywhere in **New Zealand**. In addition to wool, they can card just about any other fibre you may have – Alpaca, Angora and Mohair are just a few of the fibres they have dealt with over the years.
- **Kane Carding** is owned and operated by Sara and Neil Thorburn and is now situated 16km east of Dannevirke.

Waione Wool Carding - 437 Fitzherbert East Road, Aokautere, Palmerston North

- Lyn Watson and Steve Clarkson
- www.woolcarding.co.nz

The Carding Shed - 151 Lowe Rd, R.D.1 Hikurangi, Whangarei.

- thecardingshed@outpost.co.nz
- www.facebook.com/TheCardingShedNZ

Jumbuck Carding - 177 Pinchgut Rd, Kaukapakapa.

- sharon@jumbuck.co.nz
- www.jumbuck.co.nz and also on facebook.

Mesa Mill: Tessa and Peter McKay

- Situated at Maraekakaho near Hastings in the Hawkes Bay.
- <http://www.mesamill.co.nz/>

These are places that you can get your fleeces washed and carded. You will need to check out their websites for what they can offer and their prices. Most will dye your fleeces if you have white fleeces and would like them dyed. But as I mentioned when skirting, clean your fleeces as much as you can, or the Carder will return your fleece as it came to them or charge you extra to clean it themselves.

Next newsletter - Spinning.



Sylvie's Story

By Virginia Darlow

Sylvie came to me in August 2019 aged maybe 8 days, she was a surprise to her new alpaca owners who bought two paddock munchers not realising that one was pregnant. Unfortunately her mother rejected her due to a damaged eye probably done around birth or shortly after so she was passed to the local vet to rehome or euthanize. Being one of the few clients who has alpaca I received a call asking for help – I couldn't say no!

I had never bottle raised a cria – lots of lambs for lamb and calf days and many, many calves so how difficult could it be! She came with a large bag of an lamb and a very good appetite. She had obviously had colostrum as there were no problems with her digestion or scouring at all and she went from strength to strength. At first we were on 5 feeds in 24 hours - I told her I wasn't into getting up in the early hours unless it was to go milking so the last feed was at 9.30pm and the first 5.30am with the rest divided in between.

She spent the first couple of days in a pen in the garage on a bed of hay while we got the routine going then was gradually introduced her to the outside - first the puppy pen in the shelter but on grass then once she fitted the cria cover we progressed to bigger yard with the weaned alpaca cria so she would learn what she was supposed to be.

Initially she was on antibiotics for 8 days to combat the infection in her eye and I also washed it with warm saline solution then drops. While this helped and all the swelling went down it was apparent that there was still and on going infection in the eye and the decision was made to remove it.

This was a first for the vets involved. While they were all used to doing similar operations on cattle, sheep and dogs an alpaca was a different story. A lot of research was done into the anaesthetising etc and finally a time was set. Sylvie was delivered to the surgery by 10am plus several milk feeds in case she had to stay, I left her there in the care of the vet nurses and went home to wait. I got a call mid-afternoon to say that all had gone well two vets had taken charge and many people watched but she was awake and demanding a feed in a very short time. We collected her at the end of the day and she never looked back.

She was 3 weeks old when the eye was removed and now staying out in the paddock during the day with the others eating grass pellets etc and inside at night. She steadily put weight on while not going to be big she grew well and was weaned at about 4 months and out in the paddock



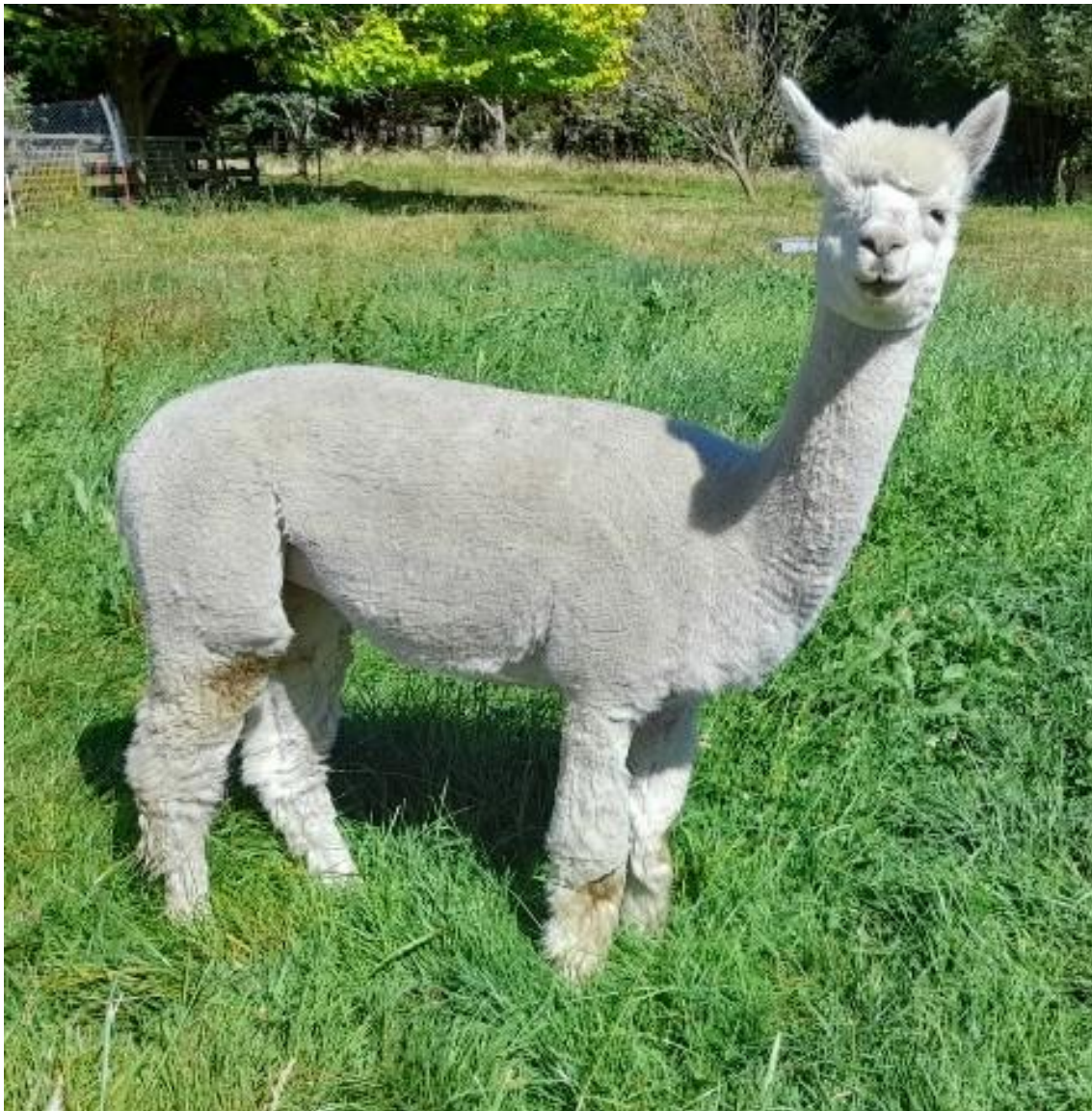
Sylvie's Story

Sylvie became a PR for the alpaca she featured at my granddaughters pet day. She was use to trips in the car or back of my station wagon and wasn't fazed by anything or anyone. From here we did visits to retirement homes and entertained the residents'. One of the nurses said the excitement of her visits almost surpassed that of Xmas. Sylvie handled the attention with aplomb and didn't mind being touched by all.

Her last appearance was at a local Carol service where she was the token camel, due to a downpour we ended up inside, again no problem we moved through the people accepting their attention and sampling the straw that surrounded the crib.

By now she was almost too big for the back of my car but she enjoyed looking out the back window not moving at all. I shall never forget pulling up at an intersection looking in the mirror I wondered what the driver behind was staring at in amazement then got their phone out to photo - of course it's not every day you see an alpaca travelling in a car.

Sylvie is now nearly 2 and a half ready to go to a stud. She has a wonderful fleece with one brown spot, still friendly as ever while being an alpaca and she's still my baby!



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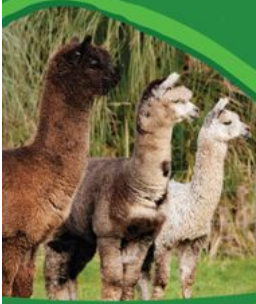



Based in the idyllic Wairarapa Valley we are here to connect you with your alpaca





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MALES AVAILABLE FOR STUD

EP CAMBRIDGE LEGIONARY
 IAR: 212507 Born: 25/11/2015
 Sire: Windsong Valley Firedragon
 Dam: EP Cambridge Dani
 Stud Fee \$800+ GST

Contact Cheryl Wheatley for more info
 Email: info@wyndward.nz
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ALPACASRSTYLE KARIBASUN
 IAR: 1014288 Born: 2/02/2014
 Sire: Futura Humdinger
 Dam: Ambersun Kariba
 Stud Fee \$800+ GST

