



## March 2014 Newsletter of the Maine Alpaca Association

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Hello Alpaca Friends,

The new MAA Board is off to a terrific start! MAA will be represented in the Statehouse in Augusta on March 12th for the state's Agriculture Day. Our booth will be front and center, manned by MAA volunteers. This is a great way for Maine's alpaca farmers to interact with their legislators.

In addition, we have arranged for several farm visits for members to learn about parasites and fiber information. Further, we have a speaker lined up for the March 22nd membership meeting in Augusta at Margaritas. Red LaLiberte of Misty Acres will talk about the charms and challenges of making an alpaca farm business work. Red will share many of his ventures, including a recent decision to hire a marketing agent.

The new board has established goals to serve the membership both formally and informally. We will be working in a more focused way with new members and further aligning all of our communications and projects to our mission.

Sincerely,  
The MAA Board of Directors

### NEXT MAA MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Saturday, March 22, 11:30-2:00 PM at Margarita's  
Restaurant in Augusta, ME  
Lunch is \$5/members, \$10/non-members  
See you there!



## IT'S A GOOD ALPACA LIFE

ROBIN FOWLER AND CORRY PRATT, [NORTHERN SOLSTICE ALPACA FARM](#)

Life on the farm at Northern Solstice Alpaca Farm has been busy, busy...and snow, and snow and more snow. Unlike the human members of the family, the alpaca family seems undaunted by the messy weather. Could it be that they have very comfortable accommodations, their food is hand delivered on a regular basis, and their bathroom cleaned twice daily? Such is the alpaca life here.

We've had a lot of inquiries about a couple of features in our barn that we thought we would share. These conveniences have made chores more efficient for us and improved cleanliness for the alpacas. First, our interlocking barn mats. The mats are lightweight but very sturdy. We purchased them from Farm Tek and they are called Dyno Heavy-Duty Interlocking EVA Mats. At 39.3" x 39.3" and .78" thick, weighing only 5 lbs each, they are the perfect size for handling. They withstand steady foot traffic, alpaca toenails, pressure washing, sweeping, scraping and squeegeeing. They're much easier to lift and clean than the heavy stall mats. We put the mats down over our sand barn floor. After scooping and removing any stuck-on debris, we use a leaf blower to clean them, in lieu of sweeping. It makes clean up much quicker and easier – especially with stray hay chaff.

The second feature we are frequently asked about is our alpaca potty boxes. Alpacas naturally use a communal manure pile, so we just took advantage of their natural tendency, but made it simpler for us. They had a favorite spot in the barn they would use when they didn't want to brave the elements and go outside or were just feeling like going inside. It seemed impossible to get them to stop, so we decided to work with it. We put down 4 of the heavier style stall mats and left an opening about 2 x 5 ft. in the center, dug down about 6 inches framed it out with 2 x 6 pressure treated boards. We use wood pellets on top for absorption and voila...a potty box that the alpacas really use. Of course there is the occasional missed shot, but the cleaner we keep their surrounding the more they seem to hit the spot. We welcome you to come and check it out for yourself.

Happy scooping!

**Calling all members!**

Help the board develop a media contacts list!

Please send the names and contact info for your local newspapers and print media to Mike O'Brien at [sucayafarms@gmail.com](mailto:sucayafarms@gmail.com)

## Northern Solstice Alpaca Farm

Is Proud to Offer "Out of This World Genetics"  
To YOUR Farm!

### AG Space Cowboy

ARI# 3107790 D.O.B. 7/18/2007

Proven, Medium Fawn, Huacaya Male

### TGF Ludicrous

ARI# 32097887 D.O.B. 7/10/2010

Medium Rose Grey, Huacaya Male

These two multi-champion, award winning Alpacas have fiber with amazing brightness, density and crimp from root to tip. Fine micron, and uniformity carried from the neck through the legs and tail along with outstanding conformation. AG Space Cowboy has over 20 outstanding offspring ranging in color from white to black and 75% female. Ludicrous offspring will be arriving starting in May 2014.

### An Outstanding Offer!!

Now through July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 book your drive-by breeding with **AG Space Cowboy** for \$2,000 and get a **2nd breeding** with our award-winning **TGF Ludicrous** for only \$1,600.

**A \$400 Savings!!!**

Book now while appointments are available. Call today for more information 207-356-2464



FOR SALE - House and outbuildings on 23 acres in Benton, ME. Previously used for alpacas. Three acres fenced and cross fenced, three stall horse barn, chicken coop and hay barn, all with electricity. For more details, please see <http://www.cbplourde.com/realestate/detailview/150//1122022/> Or contact Jill at (207) 660-5276 with any questions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS....

- March 22 NEAOBA Hydroponic Fodder Workshop, S. Windsor, CT [www.neoba.org](http://www.neoba.org)
- April 4-6 North American Alpaca Show, Springfield, MA [www.naalpacashow.com](http://www.naalpacashow.com)
- May 2-4 Northeast Alpaca Expo, Syracuse, NY [www.NEAlpacaExpo.com](http://www.NEAlpacaExpo.com)
- May 3-4 Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD [www.sheepandwool.org](http://www.sheepandwool.org)
- May 10-11 New Hampshire Sheep & Wool Festival, Deerfield Fairgrounds, Deerfield, NH [www.nhswga.com](http://www.nhswga.com)
- May 16-18 North East Livestock Expo, Windsor Fairgrounds, Windsor, ME [www.northeastlivestockexpo.com](http://www.northeastlivestockexpo.com)
- May 24-25 Massachusetts Sheep & Woolcraft Fair, Cummington Fairgrounds, Cummington, MA [www.masheepwool.org](http://www.masheepwool.org)
- June 7-8 Maine Fiber Frolic, Windsor Fairgrounds, Windsor, ME [www.fiberfrolic.com](http://www.fiberfrolic.com)
- July 27 Open Farm Day [www.getrealmaine.com](http://www.getrealmaine.com)
- Oct. 17-19 Green Mountain Alpaca Fall Spectacular, Essex Junction, VT [www.vtalpacashow.com](http://www.vtalpacashow.com)
- Oct. 18-19 NYS Sheep & Wool Festival, The Dutchess County Fairgrounds, Rhinebeck, NY [www.sheepandwool.com](http://www.sheepandwool.com)
- Oct. 23-26 Greater Appalachian Llama & Alpaca Association (GALA) Conference, Portland, ME [www.galaon-line.org](http://www.galaon-line.org)

Please visit [www.maineairs.org](http://www.maineairs.org) for agricultural fair dates in your community



## Maine Alpaca Criations

### **Pam Drew, Pamelamas LLC, Arudel, ME**

Pamelamas Drifter's Dolly, H, F, DF, dam: FMA/PML  
Greybeard's Chalice, sire: TGF Drifter, DOB 6/30/13

### **Jill McElderry-Maxwell, Bag End Suri Alpacas of Maine, LLC, Pittsfield, ME**

BESAME Arin, S, M, TB, dam: Blackbeard's Treasure of Briar Rose, DOB 5/7/13

BESAME Bellas, S, F, WH, dam: Orbit's Isilmë, sire: Young Princeton, DOB 5/17/13

BESAME Galad, S, M, MF, dam: Shavano's Annasinyë, sire: LCA Stetson, DOB 5/23/13

BESAME Tára, S, F, F, dam: ATV Empressa, sire: WRSR Peruvian Payday, DOB 6/7/13

BESAME Norn, S, M, WH, dam: Summerlin's Jade, sire: WRSR Peruvian Payday, DOB 6/21/13

BESAME Pia, S, F, WH, dam: Linn's Accoyo Dutchess, sire: WRSR Peruvian Payday, DOB 6/27/13

BESAME Radagast, S, M, MB, dam: Savannahlinn, sire: Titan of PVA, DOB 7/6/13

### Parasite Identification & Management Seminar

Sponsored by the Alpaca Center of New England

Regular fecal testing allows you to monitor the parasite levels in your herd so you can **treat only when appropriate.**

Learning to do your own testing can reduce expenses while maintaining the health of your herd.

**Date: Sunday, April 13th, 2014**

Time: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Price: \$75 per household/farm

Microscopes, centrifuge and supplies will be available for your use during the class. Feel free to bring your own equipment and up to 6 samples (paca poop) to test.



#### **Location: Northern Solstice Alpaca Farm**

141 Crosby Brook Road

Unity, Maine 04988

For more information,

Visit: <http://alpacacenterone.com/fecalseminar2014.pdf>

Or call 207-948-3828





## **Maine Has Become a Perfect Place to Raise Alpacas**

**Bonnie and Terry Callery, [Village Farm Alpacas](#)**

As the last of the baby alpacas or crias are born this fall, Maine's alpaca herd is expected to reach a record high level of these valuable fiber producing animals which are originally from South America. With its abundant farm acreage, hearty cold winter climate, farming tradition, excellent bloodlines within its foundation herds and strong opportunity to capitalize on the State's tourism industry, Maine had become perhaps the perfect place in the nation for raising alpacas. Maine's climate in particular is perfect – the alpaca's incredibly warm fleece takes them through the winter and they are shorn in May once a year before the heat of the summer. Since you can raise 6-8 alpacas on an acre, a very high percentage of Maine residents have the minimum 3-4 acres required for a profitable ranching operation. The small land requirement combined with available pasture acreage has helped to fuel demand for alpacas in Maine.

Alpacas are extremely attractive, medium-sized and easy to care for members of the camelid family. "Like nothing else on earth," these creatures were created by the ancient Andean cultures of South America, including the Incas. Centuries of selective breeding have resulted in one of the finest of natural fibers, some measuring under 20 microns (fine human hair is 100 microns in comparison). Their intelligence and quiet demeanor is captivating. They are raised for their fleece and for sale as breeding stock and they have become one of the very hottest alternative livestock in New England...now estimated at a 50 million dollar industry.

Maine's alpaca farmers enjoy the fact that the herd goes lightly on the land. Alpacas are environmentally friendly, having soft padded feet with toe-nails. Pastures that contain orchard grass are kept well manicured since alpacas do not rip grasses out by the roots, but instead nip them off. And since alpacas naturally go to one communal dung pile, pastures are fresh and clean, as well as nicely groomed by grazing. Alpacas require only a simple three-sided shelter for protection... although much of Maine's herd is housed in great old barns or out buildings that Maine's ranchers have adapted to their needs. Many of the state's alpaca farmers relish the idea that these terrific old horse and cow barns are finding renewed use in an alternative livestock revolution. Alpacas weigh an average of 160 lbs, so the flake of hay and cup of grain they eat daily makes them economical to feed. One Waldoboro farm reports that the cost for orchard grass hay, Blue Seal alpaca grain feed and the year's veterinary bills has been the same amount of \$300/animal four years in a row.

The laws of supply and demand have helped to keep prices strong for Maine's alpaca farmers. Alpacas birth just one baby each year and almost never twin. They can not easily be artificially inseminated and most importantly, they can no longer be imported from outside the country. The national alpaca registry has been closed to all alpacas from outside the country since 1998 putting an artificial cap on the supply. All serious breeders have registered animals which are recorded with microchip and DNA blood samples.

There are approximately 60 farms in Maine which own a total of just 3,000 animals, so the average farm is quite small. Small farms which tend to hold onto their foundation animals do not have large numbers of animals for sale. Prices for alpacas in Maine are about \$5,000-8,000 for a young, quality, bred female. These prices have been stable in part because only a fraction of the total herd is actually for sale. Many of Maine's alpaca farmers start small...with just a few bred females. As the herd multiplies, the investment grows. There are many tax benefits to alpaca ownership for those who have breeding stock, including capital gains and depreciation as well as taking the loss of a growing ranching operation that has not started to sell livestock against other income a farmer may have. With sound business plans and the high value of alpacas, breeders in Maine have the potential to generate substantial income from modest size herds. This in turn helps to fuel the demand.

A growing number of alpaca farmers have opened small farm stores on their farms in order to market 100% alpaca yarn spun from their herds as well as other high end alpaca products. Maine's strong tourism industry dovetails nicely with this "agri-tourism component" of retail sales that can be added to a farm's business plan. Maine's strong fiber industry (as exemplified by the Maine Fiber Arts Group in Topsham) and the large number of small, custom fiber processing mills, support Maine's alpaca farms.



## MINIMIZING YOUR HERD'S EXPOSURE TO BARBER POLE WORM

Jill McElderry-Maxwell, [Bag End Suri Alpacas of Maine, LLC](#)

*Haemonchus contortus*, also known as barber pole worm for the red and white striped coloring of the adult female, is one of the most economically devastating parasites facing small ruminant producers around the world. Barber pole worm is common throughout North America, including Maine.

*Haemonchus* is a strongyle, but not a typical one. Unlike most of the “stomach worms,” barber pole lives in the abomasum and feeds directly on blood, rapidly causing anemia and death in severe cases. It can reproduce very quickly under ideal conditions – adult females are capable of laying 5,000 to 10,000 eggs daily over their several month lifespan. When conditions aren't ideal, *Haemonchus* worms can enter a state of suspended animation called hypobiosis, embedding themselves in the gut wall and waiting for conditions better favoring larval survival. The worm has a prepatent period of approximately two to three weeks, during which time adults are active and feeding, but not yet producing eggs – meaning that a host may sicken and die before ever having a positive fecal exam.

If this weren't enough, barber pole mutates very rapidly and may develop resistance to a dewormer in as few as two exposures, according to the work of Dr. Lisa Williamson at the University of Georgia. The historic practice of routine, herd wide deworming on many ruminant farms has created populations of *Haemonchus* that are resistant to all available dewormers, even levamisole. So what's an alpaca farmer to do?

There are several ways that husbandry practices can minimize the impact of barber pole on your herd. One of the most important is maintaining a low stocking density. Too many animals on too little land creates a number of issues that lead to increased parasitism. Crowded animals are stressed animals, particularly if they are low in the herd hierarchy. Dominant animals may keep others from food, water and resting places, or physically harass lower ranking animals. Any source of stress lowers an animal's ability to fight off parasitic infections, and *Haemonchus* is quick to take advantage.

When many animals share a limited area, they also tend to eat closer to manure piles, as well as to eat their preferred forages down to the ground. Both practices increase the number of larvae alpacas are likely to ingest. *Haemonchus* infective larvae live in the pasture at the base of grass blades. When the grass is long, alpacas eat above where most of the larvae are located, but when they eat the grass short, they also eat the larvae. The larvae crawl higher on the grass blades when it is damp or wet – keeping your herd off pasture until the dew is dry will minimize their exposure to the infective larvae.

*Haemonchus* likes moist, warm conditions – eggs and larvae typically do not begin developing until the weather is 50°F or warmer, and development slows or stops when the weather becomes hot and dry. This means that timing your herd's grazing can also help avoid the first flush of larvae each season – keeping them off that beautiful grass in the spring until it has been growing well for two to three weeks (as hard as that is!), will allow the first hatch of larvae to develop and either die, or be located below the level where the alpacas are grazing. Your local veterinarian should know the time of greatest risk to ruminants in your particular area.

If at all possible, rotate your alpacas through multiple pastures. Moving animals every three weeks to fresh grazing limits exposure to the parasites deposited in that pasture –that pasture should not be grazed again for at least a month or ideally, even longer. Larval survival is very poor in hot, dry conditions, but in warm, moist weather, infective larvae can live up to six months. Running a monogastric behind your alpacas can further reduce the number of parasite larvae present, as horses, donkeys, pigs, etc. can all ingest ruminant parasites without harm – and the parasites they leave behind are harmless to the alpacas in turn.

Even with the best husbandry, it is inevitable that *Haemonchus* will get the upper hand in some animals. Routinely checking fecal samples is an excellent way for breeders to track parasites in their herd. Most experts feel that barber pole cannot be visually distinguished from other strongyles, but the University of Oregon offers positive identification through the peanut lectin assay (<http://vetmed.oregonstate.edu/diagnostic/haemonchus-contortus-identification>). During periods of high risk, weekly weighing and the use of FAMACHA scoring (<http://www.scsr.org/SCSRPC/FAMACHA/famacha.htm>) can also help to identify animals with barber pole, even if fecal results are clear.