



SURI

Network News

SPECIAL EDITION

a publication of The Suri Network

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Suri Breeder,

The Suri alpaca industry and the Suri Network need your help. We want your input. We value your opinion and feel that no one should be left out of the process of determining a Suri Alpaca Breed Standard. This goes for members of SN as well as nonmember Suri owners. All of us are in this wonderful industry together and if we work together and stick together I know we can develop a breed standard acceptable to the majority of breeders.



This is an exciting time to be in the Suri business. Being involved in the creation of a national breed standard is a unique opportunity. An endeavor such as this occurs infrequently and we want to make sure you have an opportunity to be involved. I'm certain that the development of a broad based, consensus driven, breeder determined standard will be a pivotal event in the future success of the Suri industry.

This special edition of *SNN and Survey* is being sent to you for two very important reasons. The first is to bring all of you up to date on what the SN has done for it's membership regarding breed standards. The second and most important is to provide everyone with an opportunity to give us their input on the content and substance of a Proposed Suri Breed Standard. This is very much a "work in progress" and your opinions are extremely important to the success of this process.

The SN board is aware that many of you have questions, concerns, and perhaps even misgivings regarding this whole process of breed standards development. It is my hope that this newsletter and survey will address many of these issues and give you a better understanding of the process. If anyone has concerns not addressed by this material I would strongly urge you to contact myself or any member of the SN Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Dick Walker, President, Suri Network

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BREED STANDARDS IN THE ALPACA INDUSTRY

Over the past five or so years several countries and organizations have developed alpaca breed standards. This along with the general growth and maturation of the industry led to the realization of the AOBA leadership that breed standards were a logical 'next step' for the US alpaca industry to consider. Therefore, to initiate a dialog amongst members about breed standards, AOBA held three yearly panel discussions on this topic at successive Winter Conferences starting in 2003. In recent years several entities in North America have developed their own prototype alpaca breed standards. In 2004 the Suri Llama Association developed a breed standard for Suri Llamas.

In the fall of 2004 the SN elected to survey our membership regarding breed standards and a majority supported the concept of developing a Suri Alpaca breed standard. It was also felt by the majority of our membership that the SN should take the lead in facilitating the process of developing this Suri standard. Therefore, in November 2004, the SN BOD announced to our membership that SN would take the leading role in pursuing the development of such a standard.

As a first step in this process the SN BOD sought out the advice of Zane Aikens, a breed standards expert within the livestock industry. Input has also been sought from Dr David Ames and Dr Bret Kaysen both from Colorado State University and recognized nationally as experts in this field.

In August 2005 at the SN Summer Symposium in Estes Park, CO an initial Suri Type Conference was held to begin the process of developing a Suri Alpaca Breed Standard. The results of this conference form the basis for the survey contained in this issue of SNN.

In September AOBA announced the Northeast Alpaca Type Conference in Springfield, MA, on December 10, 2005 hosted by AOBA, NEAOBA, EAA,

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and PAOBA. With this development AOBA clearly indicated their desire to have the affiliates take the lead in developing the Alpaca Breed Standards at the grass roots level.

Following these developments four action steps were taken:

- 1) A letter was sent to all AOBA board members informing them of the intent of the SN to take the leading role in facilitating at the regional and national level the development of a Suri Alpaca Breed Standard.
- 2) A conference call was held with all members of the SN

- 3) To ensure broad based breeder input into the development of this standard a letter was sent to all Affiliate presidents regarding the role of the SN in facilitating this process. A copy of this letter is included in this issue of SNN.
- 4) This special issue of SNN and Survey dealing exclusively with breed standards was designed to bring all suri breeders up to date on this topic as well as to solicit input on every aspect of a Suri Alpaca Breed Standard.

BREED STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Reprinted from SNN3 by Dick Walker, Board Liaison

The Breed Standards Committee meeting at the Estes Park Suri Symposium was a resounding success. This was the Suri Network's first meeting on Suri Breed Standards. Attending were nearly 100 breeders, veterinarians, judges and several AOBA board members. There were two one and one half hour sessions both moderated by SN President, Dick Walker.

The conference opened with spirited discussions on the purpose of having a Suri Breed Standard, the role of the SN in establishing a standard, and the value that a breed standard will bring to the Suri industry. Dr David Ames, professor and Department Head of Animal Sciences at Colorado State University, addressed the conference regarding the importance of developing a standard. Dr Ames stated that development of a standard would put the Suri alpaca industry on the fast track to even greater success than we have now.

The SN Breed Standards Committee established the following Purpose and Goals.

Purpose: To develop a document that delineates specific Suri characteristics and traits with regards to Phenotype, Conformation, and Fleece.

Goals:

1) Utilize a broad based, breeder derived, consensus building process incorporating input from all interested stake holders. The first step of this process was taken at our Summer Symposium held in Estes Park.

2) Be as inclusive as possible of a wide variety of suri characteristics while still developing a standard that will provide a solid platform for the future enhancement of the North American Suri.

3) Provide criteria that owners can utilize to add value to their suris as well as enhancing the value of their fleece.

4) Incorporate scientific data, when available, regarding health, fiber production, genetics, heritability, etc. Also to provide a foundation for the future scientific investigation of fiber characteristics, fiber production, reproduction, and other animal husbandry issues.

5) Eventually to provide education, training, selection tools necessary for herd improvement.

6) Provide a basis for judge's training and thereby facilitate more objective consistent evaluation of Suri alpacas and their fleece by AOBA judges.

7) Recognizing that breed standards are dynamic and should be subject to periodic review, an orderly mechanism for future review and amendment must be established.

At the Summer Symposium we addressed the following major components of a Suri Breed Standard.

- 1) The Phenotype of the Suri Alpaca
- 2) The Suri Head
- 3) The Suri Body
- 4) The Suri Legs and Movement
- 5) The Suri External Genitalia
- 6) The Suri Fiber

A paragraph describing each component was written with group consensus. Related positive and negative traits were discussed and listed. Implications for show ring assessments were discussed.

This is a work in progress. The SN Breed Standards Committee will be reviewing the input from this conference, soliciting further input from member and non-member Suri breeders as well as from other stake holders. A draft version of the Suri Breed Standard will eventually be made available to all members and other interested parties for review and comment.

As the SN forges ahead in this process it is gratifying to know that we have the support of the AOBA board. According to Steve Hull and Anthony Stachowski who were both present at our conference, AOBA is looking to their affiliates to take the lead on this issue. We are and will continue to be in the lead. Representing over one-half of all Suri breeders who own in excess of 70% of all suris we feel strongly that we are doing the right thing for our membership as well as the industry as a whole.

To present the Suri Network's progress on a Suri Breed Standard President, Dick Walker, will be attending the upcoming AOBA / Northeast Alpaca Regional Type Conference on December 10th in Springfield Mass.