



a publication of The Suri Network

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### SURI INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

As we look forward to the beginning of 2008, it is a good time to look back to the origins of our industry so we might better appreciate what the future may hold. For all of us in the Suri business, knowing where we came from and what the present looks like can facilitate a better understanding of our future potential. Developing future expectations on a clear understanding of our past and current positions gives credibility to those aspirations.

Let us look at our industry from the perspective of promoting the Suri alpaca as the "Rarest of Breeds, Ultimate Natural Fiber"



### RAREST OF BREEDS

In a relative sense this statement is as true today as it was 16 years ago when the first Suris came to the USA. These few words capture the essence of the investment opportunity by positioning the Suri as a rare and unique commodity relative to many other investment options. We are still a very young industry. The numbers speak for themselves. In the 10 years 1998-2008 Suri numbers have only increased approximately 10 fold from 2,500 to 25,000. To those breeders who participated in the birth of this industry that may seem like a lot. It's not! Relative to any other domestic livestock breed these are miniscule numbers. There are now approximately 100,000 Huacaya alpacas in the USA. Four times the number of Suris. Amongst all camelid breeds the Suri is, by all definitions, uncommon and in SA it is estimated they represent less than 3-5% of all alpacas. These are not, however, *exotic animals*. They are domesticated livestock that have been bred for thousands of years to produce *exotic fiber*. There are very compelling reasons for not promoting them as being in the exotic category. In the beginning alpacas were market as being valuable primarily as a function of their scarcity. This concept, although still applicable, can no longer stand alone to drive the industry forward.

Within our industry there remains some controversy about whether Suri alpacas are a tax sheltered investment opportunity or a sustainable livestock industry. In reality they are both. We are in a period of transition, moving

*From the President - Cont. on Page 11*

## MARKETING COMMITTEE

*by Jim Barker, Board Liaison*

**What a great conference we had this year in Estes Park.** We hope that more of you will plan to attend next year. We will again have the event in Estes Park beginning August 14-17. Please see some articles written by attendees elsewhere in this issue of Suri Network News.

We are continuing to focus on marketing as one the primary Suri Network objectives. The DVD video has been completed and was previewed at the 2007 Summer Symposium. A complimentary copy was sent to every member. Additional DVDs can be ordered from the office. You can also go online to SuriNetwork.org and click on Order Materials. The cost for additional DVDs is \$10.00 for one; \$7.50 each for 2-5, and \$6.00 each for 6 or more (all plus S&H). The DVD is a great way to introduce Suris to your prospects and we encourage you to use it and keep additional copies on hand to give away or send out.

The design work is complete on the new Suri Marketing Folder and will be soon be available. This folder is designed so that information about Suris, the Suri Network, and/or your farm/ranch can be included in a professional looking package. This folder adds another marketing tool for your farm. Every member will receive one complimentary folder and an opportunity to order more.

We are continuing to experiment with various ways to produce leads and are beginning to capture leads through the SuriNetwork.org guest page. Nearly all these new leads are coming through the internet via searches or links. We encourage all members to include a link to [www.SuriNetwork.org](http://www.SuriNetwork.org) on your website. Leads are available to Suri Network members. To find out the cost and numbers available, contact the SN Office.

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# 2007 SURI NETWORK SYMPOSIUM FLEECE SHOW

*Amanda VandenBosch, 2007 Fleece Show Judge*

On August 16<sup>th</sup> 2007, I found myself flying over the Rockies into Denver International and then driving to the gorgeous location of Estes Park. I was honored to be invited back to judge the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Suri Network Fleece Show.

Along with fellow judge **Ruth Elvestad** from Canada, we embarked upon a sea of 275 Suri fleeces. Fleeces had either been brought to the show and hand-delivered or many breeders utilized the mail-in option by sending the fleeces to the business office prior to the show. **Freda McGill** was the Fleece Superintendent, along with the assistance of her husband **Carl** and their skilled crew; they executed the organization and flow of the Fleece Show with great skill and enthusiasm. This was an exciting year as there were such a diverse group of entries from all over the country.

Along with the fleece judging and ongoing Symposium, the Suri Network stepped up and offered an incredible opportunity to two AOBA apprentice judges. **Ken Hibbits** from California and **Kathy Klay** from Ohio, each were awarded with a \$500 scholarship to help defray the costs of apprenticing. An opportunity to continue their education in regard to Suri fleece. What an opportunity it was! I can only say a huge "thank you" to the Suri Network as this was the first of its kind, a positive step forward in the development of skills helping them along the way. I had made a request to the AOBA Judge Training and Certification Committee and AOBA BOD to take two apprentices (normally only one apprentice per judge, per show) this was granted and a valuable training opportunity unfolded. With the help of **Mary Lou Clingan** from Alpaca Jack's, we set up a "mock fleece show." The apprentices had the opportunity to start from the ground and work up, organize fleeces into age and color groups, and then go through and individually judge each fleece. This was a detailed training experience with immediate feedback and a problem solving element that was invaluable.

Over the two days we worked away and watched the fleece show unfold, with columns of boxes displaying fleeces and ribbons. I was fortunate to judge the White, Beige, Light Fawn and Mixed Combined with Ruth Elvestad completing the Blacks, Browns, Fawns and Grays. This certainly kept us out of trouble for two days! On completion of the show on Sunday morning we gave our fleece show observations to the group along with the Champions

and Special Awards. An observation made was that the darker fleeces were improving in fineness compared to previous years and generally showing some good luster and overall uniformity. The white fleeces gave some mention for concern as it was noticed that the juvenile class (6-12months) were higher in micron than previous years.

Skirting was also a theme; Mary Lou Clingan had given a workshop prior to the fleece show. One attendee was proud to announce that she had been to the workshop and learned how to skirt her fleece properly and was a very proud recipient of a Reserve Color Champion ribbon. Throughout the judging we did experience a number of fleeces that had not been skirted with belly and leg fiber mixed in and various debris from rocks, twine and excess dirt. Also we noted that some fleeces had been over-prepared and did not resemble a natural fleece. So either way points were deducted. We have a motto when skirting, if in doubt, take it out!

The show was very well run thanks to Freda McGill and her crew and the support staff, Ken & Marsha Hobert from the Suri Network Office, along with all the exhibitors that entered fleeces; together this all made for a very successful show.

The Suri Network Board challenged the attendees at the Symposium to bring a friend next year doubling attendance; I think the challenge of doubling fleece entries should be set in motion too.



*If you have an upcoming Suri event that you would like included on the Suri Network website, please email your information to: [office@SuriNetwork.org](mailto:office@SuriNetwork.org)*



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# SURI NETWORK PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (SNPDC)

## Committee:

Liz Vahlkamp; Chair - saltriveralpacas@yahoo.com  
Eric Morti; Co-Chair - morti@globaleyes.net  
Gini Barker, Peggy Broz, Holli Cox,  
Christine Perala Gardiner, Claudia Raessler

**Vision:** The purpose of the Suri Network Product Development Committee is to focus on U.S. Suri Fiber and to discover the numerous outlets for the National Suri Clip. The mission is to keep the SN membership informed therefore involved in this discovery process.

**Goal:** The goals of the Suri Network Product Development Committee will be to:

- Gather Suri Fiber information pertinent to US Suri breeders
- Determine quantity of annual US Suri fiber production
- Define scope of national Suri fiber industry
- Educate Suri breeders on suri fiber characteristics and its ultimate usage
- Discover numerous outlets for US Suri fleece clip
- Develop Suri products
- Pursue buyers for end products developed from Suri fleece
- Pursue manufacturers of Suri end products

**Action:** The actions are several fold:

- 1) Complete gathering the 2007 fiber survey results and analyze the data
- 2) The members have broken into sub-groups to research a set of five products to determine which will be viable for the US Suri clip:
  - a. Suri knitting yarn
  - b. Suri weaving yarn
  - c. Suri fabric for scarves/hats
  - d. Suri fabric for clothing
  - e. Suri fabric for office furniture/cubicles (this is strictly for seconds)
- 3) Once the products have been researched, and viable end markets have been identified, we will narrow the above list to one or two products to start with. Considerations will include 1) Interest level of end purchasers; 2) Estimated profitability to SN Members; 3) Quantity of raw fiber needed; 4) Production and design requirements and capabilities inside and outside the U.S.; 4) Sorting needs and capabilities inside and outside the U.S.; 5) other miscellaneous considerations.
- 4) Once a product is identified as viable, the SNPDC will develop a subsequent action plan to present to the SN BOD. That action plan will involve details of the development and sale of the end product to purchasers.
- 5) The SNPDC proposes to educate the SN membership by establishing a written column in either the Purely Suri magazine or the SN Newsletter that will tackle a variety of topics related to developing an ongoing market for US Suri fiber.

**Who:** The teams are as follows:

- Suri knitting yarn and Suri weaving yarn:
  - a. Eric Morti, Claudia Raessler, Christine Perala, Gini Barker
- Suri Fabric:
  - b. Liz Vahlkamp, Christine Perala, Holli Cox, Peg Broz

**When:** Action items 1, 2, and 3 will be completed by the end of the SNPDC meeting on December 17.

Action item 4 will be completed by the end of the SNPDC meeting on February 18, 2008 and will be submitted to the SN BOD subsequently.

Action item 5 will be implemented, with SN BOD approval after the November meeting.

## Committee Members:

Sandy Morden, Chair ([info@pineriveralpacas.com](mailto:info@pineriveralpacas.com))  
Gini Barker, Holli Cox, Mary MacGyver, Sandi Nesbitt,  
Jan O'Neill, Joe Osborn, Claudia Raessler, Beth Sheets



*Sandy Morden*



*Mary MacGyver*

Suris farm as a test pilot host farm and Bob Irwin of LaPeer High School in Centerville, OH who is a FFA Advisor.

It's only been 4 months since the start of this program and much has happened and there is an unlimited amount of work to be done. If any SN member would like to get involved with the SNYP committee or any of its projects, please let me know. We also encourage all members to contribute to the Suri Network Youth Program – it can't be done without resources. Any money contributed to SNYP will be used for youth program expenses.

The youth program was born out of a few comments made by **Brett Kaysen** about long term marketing concepts involving young people (FFA/4-H) at the 2007 Summer Symposium and took root during the Saturday night Live Auction when **Jim Weir's** Herdsire breeding was being auctioned. **Mary MacGyver** pledged \$2,000 additional for the breeding if the amount would be earmarked for youth programs; and then she challenged the audience to raise another \$2,000. In the end \$8,700, was pledged and \$4,850 has been received to date. The youth program began that evening.

It has a name now; Suri Network Youth Program (SNYP). The vision is: "To partner with the National 4-H and the National FFA for the expansion and support of Suri alpaca youth ownership; Suri alpaca education; and alpaca husbandry."

SNYP Committee Chair, **Sandy Morden**, attended the National FFA Convention in October with a Suri Network livestock booth. Afterward she reported: "Wow, what a week!!! I met 1000's of America's best and brightest. These FFA members are the most amazing, "have their stuff together," organized mannered people I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. Many would love to be included in SNYP! I met a few teachers that have agriculture programs at these high schools that would love to be advisors for alpaca projects..... All in all, I was just in awe of the entire program."

Here is some general FFA information:

- Over 450,000 members (35% female and 47% females in leadership roles)
- 27% of FFA members live in a rural farm area
- 39% of FFA members live in a rural non-farm area

There is an FFA advisor at each participating school with whom we will need to work with directly.

FFA members work to earn different "degrees" based upon background research; academic requirements set the school FFA advisor as well as Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) proficiencies that we (SNYP) would create.

Our next step is to establish an FFA SAE with proficiencies. A test pilot program is being developed with the help of Joe Osborn of Christy's Dream Weaving



*SNYP booth at National FFA Convention*

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*Outgoing board member Mike Murphy (2nd to the left)*



*Some of our vendors*



*MaryLou Clingan*



*Newest SN member attending the conference*



*Marsha Hobert showing off her famous shoes*



*Spin-Off Judge Kaye Collins showing off her suri fiber shawl*



*Caroline Mixon & Vicki Hinsbaw*



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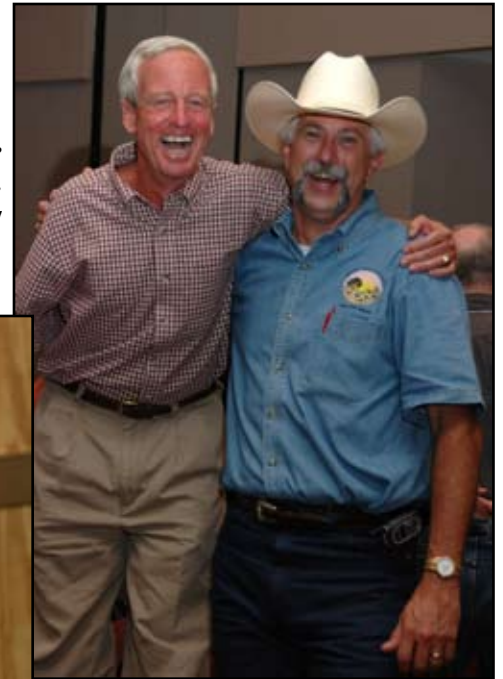
*David DeGroot and auctioneer Brett Kaysen*



*David Barboza and auctioneer Brett Kaysen*



*Nancy & Dick Walker w/Brett Kaysen*



*The two "ringmen" Jim Barker & David Barboza*



*Cynthia Fronk & Jean Morgan*



*Jeanine Mensch, American Livestock Magazine donated advertising*



*Susan Tellez & Ray Rodriguez enjoying the auction*

*Lark Meadow-Mapes donated a bracelet*



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*Lots of negotiating and FUN going on...*



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## SKIRTING FIBER CLINIC

by Nancy Walker, *SuperSuris Alpacas*

Mary Lou Clingan's clinic on skirting fiber was simply the best hands on workshop I've ever taken. I have paid for and attended other fiber clinics, which disappointingly talked only about huacaya fiber. Now the industry finally has someone who knows volumes about suri fiber! I learned not only how to skirt a show fleece, but how to evaluate consistency of my fleece in terms of density of lock, staple length and fineness. I learned how to evaluate luster in my fleece and was given a tool to help me judge it on my own. I learned all about tensile strength and how to test my fiber. I feel this workshop has given me the tools to present a show fleece that will help me market our animals and our farm.



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## DISCOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION IN TONI COTTON'S NEONATAL CLINIC

by Mary MacGyver, *Sagebrush Alpacas*

A native of Los Angeles, I moved to New Mexico a year ago. Having studied alpaca ranching online for a year and a half, I took what I had learned and began more formal training under the tutelage of Amanda Evans, former owner of Sagebrush Alpacas, Santa Fe, and Leslie Stoddard of Albuquerque Alpacas. By August of this year, I had purchased Amanda's beautiful Sagebrush Alpaca Ranch – lock, stock and barrel. I had barely signed the papers of my purchase before I was speeding along New Mexico I-25 to attend the Suri Symposium and Toni Cotton's Neonatal Clinic in Estes Park, Colorado. And there I was: A rancher – an alpaca rancher! “Leaping tall building in a single bound,” I had done it! I had formed a new life and a new passion.

Suddenly I found myself swept into two conflicting and overwhelming feelings: complete euphoria over my purchase, coupled with tremendous anxiety at realizing how much I didn't know about all the details and surprises in caring for alpacas.

Making my way on into the Gateway of the Rockies, I decided to divert my attention from doubts by thinking about what the days ahead might bring. And then I froze... What was I thinking! I knew nothing about birthing crias... And Science was my worst subject in school! I had no foundation for this clinic... And it seemed I was headed straight for “the dreaded Science Class” of my past. I pictured myself sitting in confusion, feeling unprepared and lost. Apprehension was ripe.

Now, don't get me wrong: I have never been one to let an opportunity to learn pass me by. And, as I continued up the road, if nothing else, the fact that I had just invested my life's savings in an alpaca ranch created enough motivation for me to finally jam my fears behind me and set my determination that I would not let the past form my future!

Holding that thought, I entered the classroom and opened the notebook Dr. Cotton passed out to us. Once everyone had introduced themselves, I realized I was sitting in a room filled with seasoned alpaca ranchers, two of which were medical doctors. But all my fears were laid to rest the minute Dr. Cotton walked into the room and introduced herself. A pint of a woman with a ton of



personality, knowledge, and expertise, she was an articulate instructor possessing that unique talent of knowing how to “educate” not just teach. Most notably of all, she conveyed a genuine love and respect for these camelids called alpacas. And I found myself relaxing into that shared relationship.

Toni Cotton's engaging manner, casual common sense and highly informative approach to the subject of raising, breeding and caring for alpacas (pregnant or not) washed away any remaining doubts I had in my ability to process the massive amounts of information she would offer us. With every passing moment my confidence grew.

The first half of the day flew by as everyone became fully engaged in the processes of raising, breeding and birthing crias. The second half of the class was hands on, roll up our sleeves, jump in and practice what we learned. The focus was to apply knowledge in an emergency situation. We were now placed in a

*Neo Natal Clinic - Cont. on Page 9*

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### *Neo Natal Clinic - Cont. from Page 8*

lab environment simulating an actual dystocia birth, and were called to work through the learning curve of many varying situations and their solutions, just as if we were novices training in a vet school. Yes, we were using the sad little bodies of real crias who had not made it into life. But there is a visceral reality in this fact that makes the teaching lab an incomparable wealth of experience.



And what an incredible experience it was: We all took turns learning how to manipulate “hooked” legs, turn a twisted head, rotate a turned body. We learned to ascertain if a uterus was twisted, which way it was twisted, and how to untwist it. We learned to close our eyes to more accurately “feel” the problem and to determine how best to alleviate it. We learned to use our hands and minds, and to trust sensory perception to assess a situation. We learned to finesse, not force, the resolutions... to slow down, center ourselves, breathe and work with “hooked” legs, turn a twisted head, rotate a turned body. We learned to ascertain if a uterus was twisted, which way it was twisted, and how to untwist it. We learned to close our eyes to more accurately “feel” the problem and to determine how best to alleviate it. We learned to use our hands and minds, and to trust sensory perception to assess a situation. We learned to finesse, not force, the resolutions... to slow down, center ourselves, breathe and work with the mother... to make gentle adjustments within the rhythms of her contractions... to carefully push the cria back slightly in order to create the room needed for the manipulation – not only so that the cria would be property aligned for delivery but also, importantly, to ensure the

mother was not damaged for future pregnancies

In these ways, we learned most of all how to protect the mother and the cria from our intervention. We learned when to go in, and when to stay out. When to let the mother do what she needs to do. And when to call the vet. I learned there is equal importance in “reading” how to help in a dystocia birth, and knowing when to step back and allow the mother to proceed. Toni

taught us all that and so very much more!

It was a profound learning experience. I was lifted rungs up the ladder of knowledge and self-reliance, and made strides along the critical-path of emergency care and herd health. Through it all Toni Cotton helped me to understand that “seating” what I learned came through “the doing.”

I realized, whether novice or experienced, I cannot always predict outcome. But what I can do is continue to learn from the experience and expertise of others. And that is through watchfulness, receptivity and the subtle perceptions I garner from my herd that I can best steward these wonderful animals.

An exceptional gift. And I am steadier and more capable for Toni Cotton’s mentorship and guidance. This is an exhilarating class. If you have not experienced it take it, if you took it years ago, take it again. Knowing how to keep an emergency from becoming a tragedy is essential. Learning to quiet ourselves enough to sense and follow the safest pathway of a process is invaluable. And, with outstanding teachers like Dr. Toni Cotton, I feel a huge door has opened, I’m on my way... and I’m takin’ it back to the ranch! ...

## **MARTY MCGEE BENNETT TRAINING CLINIC**

*by West Livaudais Jr., MD FACS, Alpacas of Champoeg*



On the occasion of my second visit to Estes Park for the Suri Network conference, I elected to participate in one of the pre-seminar training sessions. Marty McGee Bennett, I discovered, is an Oregonian who is well-known in alpaca circles and has an admirable reputation for managing alpacas.

She denies being the equivalent of “the horse whisperer,” but I am not convinced. Our seminar began on one of those beautiful Rocky Mountain days when being inside is criminal. However, as I looked around the room, a generous number of “seasoned” alpaca ranchers were punctuated with a few young couples, all interested in discovering “how to handle alpacas.” As part of the introduction, Marty explained how we would learn to understand the alpaca's interaction with its owners, and how we, the students, at the end of the seminar, would halter and lead a totally unknown alpaca, and put him/her through the paces.

So, I says to myself...right!

Over the next six hours we listened to Marty expound and explain some of the “common sense” aspects associated with alpaca management. The common sense approach Marty espouses is just that. An alpaca is an alpaca and has no agenda. Some, like humans, appreciate touch; others

not. They need food, water and shelter. Their handling is best approached in a non-threatening manner while always leaving an escape route. Calm and patience is mandatory. Perhaps we can all learn from the alpacas.

I found Marty's clinic so rewarding and helpful that when I returned to Oregon, I scheduled my wife and I to attend one of Marty's courses in Bend. What a deal! Just more advanced training, and well worth it! If you have the chance to take one of the seminars next year, don't miss out. They are worth every penny.

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# INFECTIOUS CAMELID RESPIRATORY DISEASE AFFECTING MAJOR AREAS OF U.S. HERD

Between the months of June and October 2007, an unknown number of respiratory cases have been seen across the US varying in severity from sub-clinical, mild to severe respiratory disease with fatalities. This recent occurrence of infectious respiratory disease has gone through most of the large camelid population areas in the US leaving many animals affected, some with fatal results.

In The Ohio State University Veterinary Hospital, the initial information we received came from telephone calls and referrals of some animals (mostly alpacas) with mild respiratory signs including nasal discharge, coughing and fever. We examined several animals here and submitted samples for serologic testing and virus isolation through our Ohio Veterinary Diagnostic laboratory and the Veterinary Diagnostic laboratory at Oregon State University. To date, most of the samples submitted for serology have come back negative. I have spoken to individuals from the West and East coasts and have read on the various listservs (Veterinary) that their testing has resulted in similar findings. In some of our cases we have had serologic positives for Adenovirus, (reported in association with pneumonia in llamas); however, this virus is reportedly a common finding in camelids. Others I have spoken to suggest Parainfluenza virus may be involved and the possibility that a Coronavirus may be involved is also being investigated.

The demographics of the animals we have examined include: Older females (>10 years of age) who are in late pregnancy or early after giving birth (<3 weeks), who present after abortion, or after normal gestation length and delivery of healthy crias. Several llamas with high respiratory rates, fever, abnormal lung sounds and pleural effusion survived after extensive treatment and supportive care. Several older Alpaca females (>10 years of age) with healthy crias (~ 2 weeks of age) presented in respiratory distress, pleural effusion and severe lung consolidation. These animals died en route or were euthanized due to severe pneumonia. Their crias survived without evidence of respiratory disease.

Based upon our local findings, and

those reports provided to me from other locations in the US, this viral respiratory disease can have serious consequences with bacterial secondary infections. The viral agent is as yet unknown. Many groups are actively conducting tests and accepting samples for future testing once the causative agent has been identified.

Recommendations for Those Owners Experiencing This Problem:

1. Enforce strict bio-security protocols to prevent animals from bringing this agent to your farm. I would consider animals that return from shows/breeding farms as potential vectors even if not clinically affected. House these animals separately from the breeding stock for a minimum of 5-10 days before re-introducing them to the herd. As the identity of this agent has not been determined, longer isolation periods may be prudent.

2. The quarantine facility should be separated in all aspects from the remainder of the farm. Separate personnel should tend to these animals during their quarantine period. Animal handlers, groomers, etc should be provided with disposable outer wear (including caps and shoe covers) to prevent the spread of infectious agents to other animals through contamination of clothing, footwear, etc. Clean equipment, bedding, feed, and all materials to be used in contact with these animals should be kept separate from the rest of the herd.

3. Maintain strict bio-security of bred females, especially older animals. In our experience these animals are the most severely affected. Limit the stress of handling of pregnant females by evaluation of respiratory rates in pasture (from a distance) and physically restraining only those with an unexpected rise or work in breathing.

3. Have your Veterinarian examine all animals with clinical signs at an early stage. If deemed necessary due to fever, respiratory rates or other concerns, treatment should be initiated. If your Veterinarian needs information on or about this respiratory condition, please feel free to pass this information on to them. Contact information for experienced Veterinary personnel is posted at the bottom of this statement.

4. Obtain blood samples (for serum) from those animals demonstrating the

common clinical signs (nasal/ocular discharge, coughing, fever, open mouth breathing) and submit these samples to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory for respiratory serology. Although we may not get information back on what is causing this problem soon, those individuals investigating this respiratory condition indicate that future testing of frozen (banked) serum, especially paired serum samples taken 2-4 weeks apart may be useful in gaining an understanding of this problem.

5. Treatment of those animals with more severe symptoms (fever, pneumonia), should include broad spectrum antibiotics which are effective against gram negative and gram positive bacteria. Those animals we have examined have had a number of opportunistic bacteria isolated from their lungs.

Contact Information for Respiratory Condition of Camelids:

Barbara Baker or Nancy Medland, Co-Associate Directors, ICI;

Ph: 614-403-1016 or

associatedirector@icinfo.org

Dr. Jeff Lakritz, Director, ICI;

Ph: 614-292-6661, ext.1

Veterinary Medical Teaching

Hospitals: ask to speak with any veterinarian working with camelids

The University of California, Davis

Veterinary Medical Teaching

Hospital, Ph: 530-752-0290

California Veterinary Medical

Diagnostic Laboratory,

Ph: 530-752-8700

Colorado State University Veterinary

Medical Teaching Hospital;

Ph: 970-221-4535

Colorado Veterinary Diagnostic

Laboratory; Ph: 970-297-1281

Oregon State University Veterinary

Medical Teaching Hospital;

Ph: 541-737-2859

Oregon Veterinary Medical Diagnostic

laboratory; Ph: 541-737-3261

Washington State University

Veterinary Medical Teaching

Hospital; Ph: 509-335-0711

Washington Animal Disease

Diagnostic Laboratory;

Ph: 509-335-9696

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from one toward the other. This is not an either/or situation. As an industry, it is imperative that we understand, embrace, and over a period of time, facilitate this evolution. It is tremendously important, within the industry, that we have a clear understanding of this. To many of us the tax advantages of the depreciation allowance on alpacas was an important aspect of our investment decisions in the past and remains so today. Such 'tax advantaged investments' are available to investors in many livestock industries, not just alpacas. Depreciation is an important part of many business models and is especially important in the early phases of a new business or industry. In part it helps to offset the risk of investing in an entrepreneurial venture. The Small Business and Work Opportunity Act has been extended thru 2010 and the maximum annual deduction currently stands at \$125,000. Therefore it will remain an attractive factor supporting industry growth in the future.

As marketing strategies, scarcity and depreciation allowances alone may not be sufficient to propel us into becoming a long term, profitable, sustainable industry. To do that requires the evolution/adoption of the next stage of the business model. The 'Livestock Model' as presented by Brett Kaysen, PhD in the current edition of PS will make it possible to achieve that long term goal of sustainable profitability. Dr. Kaysen's article is a must read for every Suri breeder. This is a package that we can 'sell' to the marketplace and one that will take our industry successfully to the next level of validation. The success of this transition hinges on our promotion of the 'Ultimate Natural Fiber'.

#### **ULTIMATE NATURAL FIBER**

Ultimately our industries foundation and long term future is to a large degree about fiber. We have a compelling story to tell the consumer. How we present our industry's story will, in large part determine our future. Suris produce an environmentally friendly, naturally lustrous fiber with exquisite handle that feels luxurious next to your skin. It is more lustrous than cashmere, hypoallergenic, finer than mohair,

more cuddly than silk, strong, durable, washable, and naturally flame retardant. When spun into yarn and woven into fabric it produces some of the finest textiles on earth. In 22 distinct natural colors Suri is truly the eco fiber of future. The number of these incredibly unique animals had dropped to dangerously low levels and crossbreeding/hybridization was endangering their unique genetic heritage in their native lands. Suris are now undergoing a successful renaissance here in the USA. They have been rescued from extinction and are now raised with care on America's small farms. That is the story of our industry that we bring to the marketplace.

SN is evaluating the concept of "Certified Suri Fiber" as a marketing tool similar to the concept used in the beef industry with "Certified Angus Beef", a marketing technique used to add value to the product in the consumers mind. **Fiber with a story**, that is what the high end consumer is looking for. By creating a unique image for the consumer of the **ULTIMATE NATURAL FIBER** we carve out a market niche that **ADDS VALUE TO OUR FIBER**. Enhancing the value of the fiber ultimately adds value to Suris at all levels of the Suri livestock production model.

How do we get from where we are today to where we want to be in 5-10-15 years? Every aspect of our lives proves time and again that we can not achieve at the highest level in the future by relying on methods of the past. We must choose between stagnation or innovation. Nothing stands still. The future is rushing our way at an accelerating pace. What will it look like? Quite literally, that future is vitally dependent on our vision and actions today! The SN has chosen a bold vision for the future of this industry!

#### **TO BECOME THE WORLD'S PREMIER PRODUCER OF SURI GENETICS, FIBER AND VALUE ADDED SURI PRODUCTS**

Can we do that? Of course, and it starts with you seeing this vision as your own. It is then a matter of telling our story well, supporting it with technology, and delivering this vision to the marketplace. Only in this way can we secure our place in

the luxury fiber market. Will you embrace this vision? Change the way you think – change your future!

What better way to Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Suri alpaca. Those are the missions originally envisioned by the founders of SN. They are as appropriate today as they were years ago but require more aggressive strategies in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

You may ask yourself, how is this possible? Peru, Bolivia, and to a lesser extent Chile have always been the leaders in this industry. How can we challenge that leadership? A quick look at the numbers validates the possibility based on numbers alone. Currently the US has about 25,000 Suri alpacas, Peru/Bolivia/Chile have about 300,000 and this number is relatively stable as the Suri is a very minor sector of their alpaca industry. How long will it take to grow the US herd to comparable numbers? Estimates are somewhere between 10-20 years. Adequate time to develop the infrastructure needed to deliver on our vision of being the world leader in genetics and creation of value added products. No matter how many Suris we produce in the USA they will always be rare in relative terms to the Huacaya and other fiber producing livestock. Being a dominant player on the world scene is achievable for the US Suri population, a possibility not shared with the Huacaya whose numbers in South America are in the millions. The U.S. truly has a unique opportunity to become a dominant world producer. Now that's exciting!

What about quality of genetics? How do we lead the way in this category? The answer is technology driven by objective data utilizing proven livestock models. The application of advanced animal science techniques developed in other production livestock models to the breeding and production of Suri alpacas can vastly accelerate the rate of genetic gain and advances in the quality/quantity of fiber. These techniques are not yet being applied on a large scale to the breeding of Suri alpacas anywhere in the world.

As members of the SN you have taken a very big step in the right direction with

*From the President - Cont. on Page 12*

# SURI NETWORK SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2008

by Toni Cotton DVM, SN Board Liaison  
to the Education/Conference Committee

Mark your calendars for August 14-17, 2008, as the planning for the third annual Suri Network Summer Symposium is well underway! The fleece show will once again be managed by Freda and Carl McGill and our judges will be Jude Anderson and Tim Lavan. The fleece show will continue to provide apprentice training for two AOBA judge apprentices. The Suri Network believes in judges' education and this provides an excellent opportunity for the apprentice judges as it is the largest annual Suri fleece show!

There are some new and exciting all day seminars planned for Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup>. Ruth Elvestad and Mary Lou Clingan will be teaching a full day on Suri fiber sorting. In fact, Mary Lou will bring with her the knowledge that she will be gaining this coming January as she works hand in hand with the Peruvian fiber sorters in Arequipa, Peru! Dr. Pam Walker's clinic is a full-day on parasitology, including a hands on fecal technique lab. Dr. Toni Cotton will once again provide her neonatal class which is a valuable tool for all Suri breeders. The attendance in these classes will be limited so sign up early!

Some of this year's speakers for the conference will be Ian Watt presenting "Skin Biopsy in Suris" Ken Hobert presenting "The Joy of Alpacas - The Power of Pedigree Marketing" based upon of show data, Dick Walker on marketing, and Brett Kaysen. There will be a panel discussion of Fiber Processors and presentations on current health issues of the Suri. On Saturday evening, we will have a social evening hosted by the SN and Brett Kaysen will be the master of ceremonies. If you attended last year's Symposium, you know that you cannot miss this year's event. We hope that you will plan to visit beautiful Estes Park, Colorado in August 2008 and please bring a fellow Suri breeder with you!

# UPDATE ON THE SURI NETWORK RESEARCH PROJECT, NOVEMBER 2007

by Toni Cotton DVM, Liaison to the Suri Network Research Committee

Phases 1 and 2 of the Suri Fiber Research Project have been completed. We are in the final phase of the project. This first step in luster testing and tensile strength testing have provided some very exciting and promising results and have given researchers in the fiber industry a basis from which to conduct further funded research. This is a huge step for the Suri fiber industry. To have Suri fiber recognized and incorporated into future research is a huge step for the Suri Industry

Phase 3 of the project consists of the evaluation of the data by a research statistician to determine the relationships that may exist between the specific characteristics identified by the project. With the skin biopsy results, scanning electron microscopy, tensile bundle strength, serum selenium and elemental panels, luster testing, color testing, blood chemistry and CBC results the statisticians will surely have their hands full! This work is being performed at The College of Textiles at North Carolina State University.

The Suri Network Research results will provide The Suri Network Fiber Committee with valuable tools to test true color, luster and tensile strength of Suri fiber. This information will be extremely important as they develop a marketable end product made from North American Suri fiber. This, in turn will provide Suri breeders with an outlet for their fiber and will unite Suri breeders and move the industry forward as not only a breeding industry but a fiber industry.

The Suri Network will be represented at the First International Camelid Genetics Workshop in February, 2007. Dr. Dick Walker will be attending and a synopsis of the Suri Network Fiber Research will be included in the conference notebook.

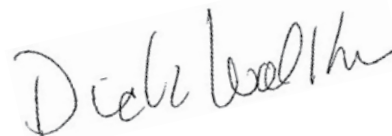
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the development of a Suri Breed Standard. With the collection of appropriate data, development of tools to calculate Expected Progeny Differences, EPDs, and the institution of a classification system our/your vision of world leadership can move toward reality. Long term results depend on actions taken now. The SN is facilitating those actions through the functions of the Breed Standards Council, formed in August 2007. Increasing numbers and quality are both vital to the future of this industry! As an active, informed, member your involvement in this process is vital to our success.

Achieving such an ambitious goal requires a plan, a path toward that goal and in August the SN took an important step by developing a Strategic Plan. This plan is designed to serve as a guide to future SN activities and a prioritization of those activities and actions. This plan is designed to propel the industry toward a very profitable and sustainable future.

- **To become the world's premier producer of Suri genetics, fiber, and value added Suri products.**
- **To promote the Suri Alpaca as the ultimate livestock investment.**
- **To brand our production as "Certified Suri Fiber" CSF.**
- **To enhance value at all levels of the Livestock Production Model.**
- **What can your industry become? Really!**

It's your choice! Can you see it?



*Suri Alpaca - Rarest of Breeds, Ultimate Natural Fiber*