



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,

"History" - Cont. on Pg. 2

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.

The following letter was sent to Affiliate Presidents and Liaisons

November 1, 2005

The Suri Network needs your help! As you may know, the Suri Network is the only country-wide AOBA Affiliate and represents the majority of Suri alpaca breeders in the USA.

At the directive of our membership, the Suri Network has taken on the task of developing a Suri Alpaca Breed Standard. Our Board of Trustees is determined to develop this standard with input from as many Suri breeders as possible. While the Suri Network represents the majority of Suri breeders across North America, we need your help in reaching out to those Suri owners who are not Suri Network members. We believe that their opinion regarding the substance of a breed standard is as important as is that of our members. Our goal is to coordinate the development of a broad based, breeder determined, consensus driven standard. To that end we are reaching out to every Suri owner in North America.

In August, at our Summer Symposium, the Suri Network held an initial "Suri Type Conference" in Estes Park, CO. This was very well attended by our members including several veterinarians, judges, and AOBA board members. After much debate this forum led to the development of a working draft for a Suri breed standard. This document is meant to serve as a stimulus for discussion amongst Suri breeders as we proceed with development of a standard. I cannot emphasize enough that this is a work in progress! This represents a very inclusive (value protective) approach to a breed standard and, I can assure you, it does not represent anyone's personal agenda. For more details see the attachment; "Breed Standards Committee, Type Conference Report".

The Suri Network Board of Trustees recently initiated a conference call with the AOBA Board. Several points were clarified on this call. The first was that the AOBA board is looking to their affiliates to take the lead in breed standards development. The second is that AOBA is looking at developing two separate and distinct breed standards, one standard for Suris and another for Huacayas. The third was the time table as delineated by AOBA with affiliate Type Conferences throughout 2006 culminating in a national Type Conference at Fiber to Fashion in November, 2006. A vote would then be conducted in 2007. The AOBA board was supportive of the Suri Network's efforts to coordinate the development of the Suri standard.

Please let your Suri breeders know that the Suri Network is asking for their input regarding a Suri breed standard. Furthermore, if your affiliate will be holding a regional Type Conference, the Suri Network is ready to help facilitate the dialog regarding a Suri standard. At no expense to your affiliate, Suri Network is planning to have a representative from our board attend all regional type conferences. With your approval this representative could assist by leading the Suri breeders through a discussion of breed standards. Dick Walker also has a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Why Breed Standards?" that could also be presented.

If the Suri Network can be of assistance please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Dick Walker, President (dickwalker@windwireless.net)
Miriam Donaldson, Vice President (AlpacaJack@aol.com)
Toni Cotton, Treasurer (bestbrd@bright.net)
Jim Barker, Secretary (jim@sweetsuri.com)
Mike Murphy, Member at Large (suris@helloearth.us)

PROPOSED DRAFT : Suri Alpaca Breed Standards

Purpose: To develop a document that delineates specific Suri characteristics and traits with attention 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 Type Conference 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 industry wide standards 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 a Type Conference attended by a group of 100 Suri breeders from across the country the following major components of a Suri Breed Standard were addressed.

- 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. Positive and negative traits, implications for show ring assessment, show rules, and judge training were briefly address. There was not sufficient time however to address these issues in sufficient depth and we are asking for your help with this now.

The next step is up to you. Your industry needs a little of your time. Your input is really important! Here is what you can do now to be a part of this.

- 1) Tell us what you think of the descriptive paragraphs at the beginning of each section.
- 2) For the positive and negative traits we want you to brainstorm a bit. A positive trait is one that you would like to see exhibited in your Suris and a negative trait is something you would not like to see.
- 3) Please be open and constructive in sharing your ideas on how you would like to see Suris judged in each specific category. This is a crucial component as training the judges to judge to a standard is one important purpose of a breed standard.
- 4) Feel free to utilize this **DRAFT Suri Alpaca Breed Standard** whenever discussing this topic. This would be an excellent tool to utilize in regional AOBA Affiliate Breed Standards conferences.

We would like to have as many comments as possible returned by December 5, 2005, so this information can be utilized at the Northeast Alpaca Type Conference on December 10, 2005.

SURVEY OF SURI BREEDERS

PHENOTYPE of the Suri Alpaca

The Suri Alpaca Phenotype should present a distinctive elegant profile with balanced body proportions (neck/body/legs) and constitutional vigor. The Suri head and fleece should exhibit fibers with the described characteristics of a straight, high luster, cool handling, and independently defined fiber. The correct free-flowing movement may be emphasized by the swinging of a drapey full length fleece.

Comments: _____

Positive Traits may be expressed in degrees of correctness for ideal selection. Negative Traits may be evaluated and described as Slight, Moderate or Severe in their expression

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Example:

Suri Fiber Style
Straight Fibers without Crimp

Non-Suri (Huacaya) Fiber
Evidence of Crimped Fibers

Show Ring Priorities

Example: Straight Fibers WITHOUT Crimp on a Suri style elegant body

The Suri HEAD

The Suri Head Profile should show a medium length nose proportionately balanced to the wedge shaped jaw, a tapered muzzle, with elongated nostrils, and a forelock with defined suri style locks. Ears should be spear shaped, medium to long in appearance, and proportionate to the head size. The set of the ear should be upright with placement not too low or wide on the head. The Bite and Jaw should have normal correct alignment.

Comments: _____

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Example:

Suri Fiber style Forelocks

Fuzzy, Huacaya Style Foretop

Show ring Priorities

Example: Suri Style Head with Suri Style Fiber Locks

The Suri BODY

The Body should exhibit a balanced proportion between the length of neck, leg and body torso, present sufficient width of chest, depth of body and capacity for maintaining adequate nutrition and reproduction. The Profile view should present a relatively level top line, sloped rump approximately at 45 degrees with a normal alpaca tail set. The alpaca should exhibit healthy body condition.

Comments: _____

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Example:

Balanced Proportions of
Neck/Torso/Legs

Unbalanced Proportions
Too Long, Too Short

Show Ring Priorities

Example: Balanced Proportions

The Suri LEGS and Movement

The legs should be of a length balanced to the neck/body proportions to provide flexible free movement in a correctly aligned square foot pattern (as viewed from front and rear). The alpaca should display a level top line and balanced stride in the profile view, with adequate strength and substance of bone. Correct conformation will be indicated by equal distance or a parallel line drawn between front legs (shoulder, knee to fetlocks) and rear legs (hips, hocks to fetlocks), viewed front and rear. The profile views will exhibit proper angulation of the shoulder and hock which allows for a free balanced stride and movement on upright pasterns.

Comments: _____

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

FRONT LEGS –

Front/Back View

Example:

Correct equal distance between legs
From shoulder – knee – ankle

Knock-kneed, Bowlegged,
Angular limb deformity

Profile View:

Example:

Upright Medium length flexible pasterns

Long weak, spongy or short stiff pasterns

HIND LEGS –

Front/Back View

Example:

Correct equal distance between Hips,
Stifles, Hocks, Fetlocks and Pasterns

Cow-hocked

Profile View

Example:

Balanced Proportions body/neck/legs

Legs too short/too long for
Body / neck

MOVEMENT

Example:

Balanced even stride in Profile View

Short stride/ Over-reaching

Show Ring Priorities

Example: correct leg conformation without medial deviations front or rear.

The Suri EXTERNAL GENITALIA

The External Genitalia should be anatomically correct in size, shape, consistency and position for the age of the animal, and have reproduction capabilities in each sex. The female should exhibit a normal size and shaped vulva, and show no evidence of hermaphrodite traits. Males should exhibit 2 testicles of appropriate size, shape and position. Both sexes should have 4 teats. Umbilicus should be closed and show no evidence of hernia or weakness.

Comments: _____

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Female –

Example:

Vulva Normal Size for Age

Too Small. Abnormal

Male –

Example:

Testicles; Two of Normal Size,
and Placement

Too Small, Abnormal placement,
Only one testicle

Show Ring Priorities

Example: External Female Vulva and Male Testicles should appear normal

The SURI FIBER

The Ideal Suri style fleece will be comprised of straight fibers (without crimp) which exhibit a high degree of luster, provide a cool slick handle, and exhibit uniform, independent, well-defined locks throughout the head, neck, body and leg coverage. Uniformity of luster, lock, staple length, fineness and density is important. Suri lock styles exist along a continuum from tightly twisted to straight. Current nomenclature recognizes five distinct types along this continuum: (1) tight twisted (pencil), (2) pearled, (3) curled, (4) flat twisted, and (5) straight. *All fiber evaluation should consider age and environmental aspects.*

Comments: _____

In Order of Priority

POSITIVE TRAITS

NEGATIVE TRAITS

Example:

Trueness to Straight Suri Type
Without evidence of crimped
character in the fibers

Huacaya style, crimp in the fiber

LUSTER

Example:

High degree of Natural Luster, throughout the entire fleece

Low degree or lack of Natural Luster

HANDLE

Example:

Cool, Smooth, Slick, Slippery

Warm, Fuzzy, Harsh, Rough

LOCK STRUCTURE

Example:

Dense, heavy locks

Open, light, voluminous locks

UNIFORMITY

Example:

Uniform Lock Structure / Style

Mixed Lock Styles

DENSITY and COVERAGE

Example:

Coverage head/legs

No coverage head/leg

FINENESS

Example:

Fineness is a positive trait, however
micron count is not a measure for Handle

Coarse medulated fleece

Show Ring Priorities

Examples: Highest possible degree of natural LUSTER

Possible topics for further discussion and consideration:

- 1) Time frame for future evaluation and update of this Suri Breed Standard. A suggestion would be 3 years for the first review and the every 5 years.
- 2) At One two and three years of age:
 - Desired height at withers expressed as a range or average
 - Desired weight expressed as a range at 6, 12, 24, and 36 months
 - Male Testicular Development, expressed as a range of acceptable testicular size relative to age
- 3) Desired neck to back length ratio (Neck / Back)
- 4) Disposition
- 5) Other:

PLEASE RETURN THIS SURVEY TO:

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REQUESTED**

Our current membership is 450 and our goal is to have 500 by the end of 2005. Buy a gift membership for your buyer(s) and receive \$10.00 off of your next year's membership for each gift membership you purchase. For further details, please visit our website as shown below or call the Suri Network at 1-970-586-5876.

JOIN US at the Northeast Alpaca Type Conference. The Conference will be a one day event December 10, 2005 at the Sheraton in Springfield, MA. This will be the first of the Regional AOBA Type Conferences. For more information visit:
<http://www.empirealpacaassociation.com/Information/industryNews.htm>

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