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## Alpaca – Rarest of Breeds, Ultimate Natural Fiber

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Jim Barker, *President* ←

It seems like only yesterday that we put out the last Suri Network News (June of 2008). So many exciting things are happening in our Suri World that we need to communicate once again to our members. Hopefully, you all had as good a summer as we had here in Ohio. Lots of sunshine, not too humid, and just enough rain to keep the pastures green for our Suris.

The highlight of my summer was the annual Suri Symposium in Estes Park, Colorado last August. Thanks to the 100 plus breeders who gathered together for the best symposium ever. A full recap will be found in the upcoming PurelySuri Magazine that will be in your hands later this fall. Talking about the Symposium, plan on attending next year's event on August 13-16<sup>th</sup> in beautiful Estes Park (no rain in the forecast). Fellow Board member, Kathleen Cullen, is planning an even better event with more time for networking. I challenge each of you who have attended in the past to come again, but this time, bring another Suri breeder with you. I see no reason why we can't double the attendance next year.

As you read through all the great articles in the upcoming PurelySuri magazine, please consider advertising in the next issue. Rates have been reduced and there are many ad sizes available. I know advertising budgets are tight but without your help we can not keep producing two issues a year.

As prospective Suri buyers visit our farm, I give them a copy of prior PurelySuri magazines (available very inexpensively through the office) and the new marketing folder. Boy does this make Suri breeders stand out from other alpaca owners. Use these tools to your advantage. Remember that for each new membership that you gift to a new member, you will receive 10% off your renewal membership. See a write-up in this SNN about all the benefits of Suri Network membership.

I have just returned from a meeting of the Ohio Alpaca Breeders Association and some AOBA board members about the upcoming National show that will be in Cleveland, Ohio next June. Our Suri judges will be Diana Timmerman and Tim Lavan, two highly respected judges. AOBA is working hard to keep the costs down. Remember two years ago in Louisville when the number of Suris shown was greater than Huacayas? I bet we can do even better this year. Plan on attending and bring your best to show.

As the days get shorter and the nights colder, I look forward to a very successful Fall for all Suri breeders both in the show ring and in sales. Let's keep the momentum going as we promote the Suri Alpaca-Rarest of Breeds, Ultimate Natural Fiber.



### SURI NETWORK

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

by Mike Murphy, *Marketing Cmte.* ←

As a member, do you really know what all Suri Network has done for you? As members, you have access through our web site or direct with the office to obtain marketing materials to promote suris and your farm. So, you think you can pass this test? Select the correct answers from the list below:

- A. A marketing folder including a DVD, Breed Standard, Purely Suri and other educational information.
- B. Marketing DVD promoting Suris and their fiber.
- C. Fliers from the Suri Network telling about Suris.
- D. Suri Network folder which can be used to place your farm information for prospects.
- E. Order free-standing banners at a reduced rate with picture of SAM (shown here) and your farm logo.
- F. Past issues of Purely Suri available for your customers.
- G. 10% discount on your annual membership for each gift membership given.
- H. Various SN logo items.
- I. A free bred female for each year of paid membership.
- J. All the above.
- K. A thru H above

Your board and committees work hard for you...take advantage of the great products and opportunities available to you. See below for the correct answers!

*Correct answer for the Marketing test: K. Everyone who picked I or J has a great impression of Suri Network, but sorry to let you down on that one!*



# SURI NETWORK YOUTH PROGRAM UPDATE

by Kelly Jarvis ←

The Suri Network Youth Program (SNYP) has taken off introducing Suri alpacas to the youth of America! We currently have eight Suri Network farms who have volunteered both their time and facilities to instruct students on all aspects concerning Suri alpacas and the alpaca industry. Suri Network members are also completing the necessary applications to donate alpacas to the SNYP program allowing students the opportunity of alpaca ownership.

We need your help getting the word out...please download the Suri Network Youth Program application from the Suri Network web site and pass out to students in your area. The cost is just \$10.00 for a one-year membership and allows them to apply to receive a scholarship Suri alpaca. Consider sponsoring one or two students by paying the membership fee for them. The SNYP membership includes the PurelySuri magazine, Suri Network News and listing in the membership directory. We want to make sure these students are kept abreast of current issues affecting our industry.

Do you have a little extra space for one or two more alpacas? More host farm sites are needed to take in the donated Suris for the youth program. The goal is to have at least 2-3 host farms in each state within this next year. You don't necessarily need to lead a 4-H group or FFA student, but instead be the "site" for weekly/monthly meetings. Visit the SNYP page on the Suri Network web site for 4-H office contacts in each state and to download an application to be a host farm.

The goal of the SNYP is to engage students (both 4-H and Future Farmers of America) from across the country by providing education on all aspects of the Suri alpaca industry. Both 4-H and

FFA organizations have strong foundations with years and years of experience working with students in agricultural/livestock fields. FFA was founded in 1928 and currently has over 500,000 members, whereas 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth organization and seven million strong! Just think of the gains we could make by educating not only students involved in 4-H and FFA, but their parents, family, friends, etc! That's a lot of new individuals exposed to the Suri alpaca industry.

Please think about volunteering either your farm as a host site, donating a gelding/fiber Suri alpaca or offering your time to participate in this incredible program. The youth are the future of today and our future Suri alpaca owners!

More information can be found on the Suri Network web site at [www.surinetnetwork.org](http://www.surinetnetwork.org)

Thank you to the following breeders to be host farm sites for the SNYP:

Jim and Laurie Konyn, Hums of Faith Suris  
Karl and Jan Heinrich, Long Hollow Suri Alpacas  
Kathleen Cullen and Holger Caban, Foothills Suri Alpacas  
Joe and Christi Osborn, Christi's Dream Weaving Suris  
John and Holli Cox, Hidden Hilltop Alpaca Ranch  
Tim and Beth Sheets, Heritage Farm Suri Alpacas

Thank you to the following breeders for donating a Suri alpaca to the SNYP:

Jim and Laurie Konyn, Hums of Faith Suris  
Peter and Nancy Canning, Summit Suri Alpacas

## SUCCESSFUL FARM DAY FOR SN MEMBERS

by Kelly Jarvis and Kathleen Cullen ←

The second annual National Alpaca Farm Day occurred on September 27-28<sup>th</sup> this year and many Suri Network members participated, but was it a success?

Success from a weekend like this can be measured in many ways. Of course making an alpaca sale on the spot or selling out of all your alpaca products is fantastic, however it might be the more subtle successes that are difficult to see. For instance, the neighbor who has seen your alpacas from the road for years decides to stop by for your open farm day and learns that there is more to Suri alpacas than just their looks. They go home and talk to a relative who has lots of acreage and has been looking for some way to make their property

work for them. That relative then gives you a call a few months later and viola! You've just sold a group of foundation females! Or the family that comes by with all their kids who ooh and aah at all the cute cria, you didn't realize it but the mom is part of a large knitters group who has never actually worked with alpaca fiber. Right before shearing season you get a call from this mom and her group wants to purchase a large quantity of raw fleeces from you. Bam! Another sale you might not have had otherwise just as a result of opening up your farm for a weekend. Beyond actual sales you may have also sparked an interest in many of the students visiting your place to join 4-H or FFA. One farm

reported two different families visiting for NAFD and left with their kids applying for membership to the Suri Network Youth Program!

Every person who is exposed to the Suri alpaca industry in a positive way will pass along that experience to someone else. The more the public understands this business and all of its benefits the more interested they become. So weekends such as the National Alpaca Farm Day are a great opportunity to get the word out and expose these unique and profitable animals to the public. Keep up the great work and if you have yet to participate in National Alpaca Farm Day start thinking about opening up your farm for September 26-27, 2009!



Luster is one of the defining characteristics of Suri alpaca fiber, yet for something so important today we rely heavily on subjective assessment methods, primarily relative comparisons between animals. The challenge is, there are so many factors affecting luster - consistency and quality of lighting, dirt and debris, fiber character, and individual perception - to name a few. Why does this matter? Luster as a key Suri trait is a candidate for inclusion in the EPD (expected progeny difference) database. A quantitative measure of luster gives credence to an EPD for luster.

In Phase I of the luster study, the SAMBA hair system developed by Bossa Nova Technologies was evaluated as a potential candidate for objective measurement of luster. The initial report for Phase 1, The Characteristics of North American Suri Fiber, is available for viewing at [www.surinetwork.org/images/char\\_of\\_na\\_suri\\_alpacas.pdf](http://www.surinetwork.org/images/char_of_na_suri_alpacas.pdf). Phase 2 of our Luster Research Study has been approved and funded! Here is where you come in. We need fiber for the study. The investigators, Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc., and Dr. Chris Lupton of Texas AgriLife Research (Texas A&M University System) need a minimum of 300 samples for initial measurements. From these 300 samples they will select 100 representative samples for the study. To be meaningful, the samples need to cover the spectrum of luster, fiber diameter, and color (with a few restrictions). The Suri Network is co-funding the first portion of this study. The normal fee is \$30.00 per sample which includes a luster and color evaluation using the SAMBA Technology and OFDA, 100 which includes the list of data below.

Once 300 samples are shipped in, you will be notified via e-mail if you did not make the first 300 sample cutoff. You will also be notified at that time if the lab is able to run your sample for the normal fee of \$30.00. You will have the option to have your sample returned to you or tested with an additional \$15.00 fee for a total of \$30.00.

### **What do you get for your investment?**

#### **SAMBA testing of the sample includes:**

1. Scour duplicate samples
2. Make three measurements on each sample for luster
3. Make three measurements on each sample for color
4. Measure five staples for length

#### **One measurement of luster and color using SAMBA and the OFDA100 which includes the data listed below:**

- Mean Fiber Diameter
- Standard Deviation
- Coefficient of Variation
- Spin Fineness
- Fibers Greater Than 30 microns
- Comfort Factor
- Mean Staple Length
- Length Standard Deviation
- Length Coefficient of Variation
- Mean Curvature
- SD Curvature
- Medullated Fibers (on white or light colored fiber only)

**Note: Please save the remaining fleece; if your fleece is selected as one of the 100 fleeces for further evaluation, additional samples may be required.**

#### **SAMPLE PREPARATION:**

1. Samples must be from the 2007 or 2008 shearing
2. A maximum of 5 samples per farm will be accepted until the quota of 300 samples achieved



cont. on back side

3. Colors accepted: Samples of uniform color: TB, BB, DB, MB, LB, DF, MF, LF, BG, WH, (Grays, Fading Fawns and Multis will not be included in this study.)
4. Staple length between 5 to 7 inches
5. 200 grams (7-1/4 ounces) of fiber are to be packaged in a clear gallon zip lock bag with all staples laying flat in the same direction, keeping the fibers as straight as possible with minimal vegetable matter.
6. The bag should be identified with the animal's ARI number and name and a copy of the ARI certificate is to be submitted with the sample.
7. There is no age restriction as long as the samples meet the criteria above.
8. When packaging your fleece samples and labeling the box, please be sure to mark the label as directed below, with SAMBA under Yocom McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc.

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Include a check written to Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc. for \$15.00
2. Submit samples from October 15th – November 15th, 2008
3. Ship to the address below, being sure to write SAMBA on the box:  
 Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc.  
 SAMBA  
 540 West Elk Place,  
 Denver, CO 80216-1823

Please call the Suri Network Office if you have any questions. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!  
 The Suri Network Board and Advisory Committee

## SURI NETWORK SUMMER SYMPOSIUM

by Kathleen Cullen, Symposium Coordinator ←

### August 13-15, 2009 - A Conference For All

Mark your calendars now for Symposium 2009. The conference will be held again in beautiful Estes Park, Colorado. The slate of 2009 speakers and workshops will offer **something for everyone**: from fiber workshops (sorting and felting) to the latest scientific research updates certain to enhance your alpaca breeding decisions as well as the continued growth of the alpaca industry. Whether you breed Suri or Huacaya, you are sure to find this conference beneficial and well worth your time.

Stay tuned for more details in the coming months.



# SURI NETWORK BREED STANDARDS COUNCIL MEETING REPORT, AUGUST 2008

by Susan Tellez ←

The Breed Standards Council Meeting, held Friday afternoon during the Suri Symposium, attracted more than 60 enthusiastic Suri Owners to hear updates on progress made since our gathering in 2007.

Dick Walker reported on the involvement of the Board of Directors in the utilization of the Breed Standard Document with regard to the on-going AOBA Suri Judges Clinic, held in Ohio for all AOBA judges. Another smashing successful Clinic offered judges the opportunity to become more familiar with current Suri Alpaca knowledge and approved Suri judging techniques. This knowledge was practiced judging numerous classes of Suris provided by owners in the Ohio area. Utilizing the Trait Priorities established through the Breed Standard is the ultimate goal.

A brief synopsis of the Road to the Scientific Future was documented by the trail leading to the approval of the Breed Standard, followed by the endorsement of a Classification System to gather data on our Suri Alpacas for utilization in establishing a program for measuring and providing values for the Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs).

*\*\* Dick Walker, as a member of the AD Hoc EPD committee, announced the cooperative effort with the Alpaca Registry Inc. (ARI) in developing and utilizing an EPD Program for Alpaca Owners. This is moving forward with an Owner Survey and Program development with Cornell University.*

## **CLASSIFICATION REPORT**

A Trial Model Classification Program was developed and put into practice for the review and evaluation of both Subjective and Objective measurable traits on almost 300 Suri alpacas in herds across the US. In order to gather data in a consistent manner with acceptable accurate techniques, the practice has involved recognized Suri judges, long-time owners, statisticians and alpacas ranging in age from 3 months to 19 years. This data, collected in a system based on the Suri Network Breed Standard with Prioritized Traits, will be utilized by Mark Enns in the

development of the EPD Program database for collection of Owner Data.

Fiber Data collected by Testing methods will be directly imported into this program from the Test Labs. Owners will sign a Waiver to allow the release of the data to that program for National Suri Herd figures. Owners will make a decision to have their data private or made public.

The Presentation on Classification showed the measuring and evaluating which will take place on an individual animal basis within each herd that chooses to participate. This will be a Voluntary Program. Conformation and other objective data will be collected according to the Breed Standard Criteria. All measurable data will be assembled from documented test data.

A Training Program for Persons to become Classifiers will be utilized to provide a small group of consistent personnel available to work in different regions of the country to gather the critical data from each alpaca within the specific herd. This information will be available to the Owner for as a Tool for In-Herd Selection and Breeding Improvement use. The information will become part of the National Suri Herd Database on an anonymous basis, and realized for public viewing only after the Owner signs a release.

The data gathered will provide the beginning levels for establishing the EPD program for owners to eventually be able to select certain Sires to improve specific traits based on their ability to transmit a strong positive influence on progeny (offspring). Owners will be able to make genetic gains and increase the consistency of those steps for improvement in each generation.

Most Important Traits to be included first (by sub-committee decision) included LUSTER, CV and/or SD, FINENESS or DENSITY, BIRTH Weight/Weaning WT, Correct LEG Conformation, TESTICLE SIZE, and AGE at first LIVE BIRTH (indicating age of maturity to settle and conceive).

All measurable data will be provided by Owners using acceptable Testing

Methods for the normal Fiber Trait figures, (AFD, SD, CV, Spin Fineness, Comfort Factor, Curvature), the Luster, Follicular Density, Tensile Strength. Studies are being done to evaluate methods and procedures to insure accuracy of results and data. Estimated time for implementation is about 1 year.

A presentation by R. Mark Enns, Animal Science Department at Colorado State University, provided attendees important facts and information on the basics involved with establishing and utilizing an EPD Program for the Suri alpacas. His Department is developing the format for Owners to provide necessary measured facts on fiber, conformation and phenotype to establish the database of Suri criteria for the EPD Program. This work will correlate with that of Cornell and form the basis for the Alpaca EPD program.

The presentation emphasized the long-time basis for the utilization of data gathered by more than 60 different Livestock Breed Registries and Associations for use by owners in making decisions and selections to meet their breeding improvement goals. It has become the most used TOOL for the Purebred Seed Stock Breeder in many species, and Enns emphasized how valuable it can become for the Alpaca Owner. Current programs (Herd Ease, Herd Logic and My Alpaca Co.) will be reviewed for ease of incorporation as a tool to collect and export data to the Suri Herd Database program.

These presentations are available for viewing on the Suri Network web site under the Breed Standards Council Information.

Persons involved with the Classification Program:

Dick Walker, Jim Morgan, Miriam Donaldson, Kathleen Cullen, Ray Rodriguez, Linda Kondris, Gary Truitt, Mary Reed, Ruth Elvestad, Brett Kaysen, Mark Enns, Angus McColl, Ian Watt, Cameron Holt, Susan Tellez

*Report presented by Susan Tellez,  
Council Chairman, September 2008*



# SURI NETWORK PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

by Liz Vahlkamp, Chair

The Suri Network Product Development Committee (SNPDC) continues to move ahead with fiber initiatives to support the membership. We have just set up a blog at <http://surinetworkfibercommittee.blogspot.com> which is open for all members to view. Our goal is to update it monthly with topics we are learning about, results of initiatives, announcements, etc.

Our first fiber booth was set up on October 9 at SOAR and it was a big success. This was an important event for us in that a large number of attendees were experienced spinners, and ones that can “spread the word” about our fiber. As of this writing, we do not yet have feedback from Rhinebeck, but we will post the information to our blog at the end of October. As promised, if you donated raw fiber or roving to this project, we have posted your name and contact information on the Suri Network website, and we are handing out business cards to anyone that enters our booth. The cards direct them to our website and that particular page. PLEASE REVIEW YOUR INFORMATION ON THE WEB PAGE AND MAKE SURE IT IS ACCURATE. IF NOT, PLEASE NOTIFY MARSHA AT THE SN OFFICE AND SHE WILL MAKE THE NECESSARY CORRECTIONS. If you have not yet donated fiber and wish to do so, it is never too late!

Below is an article from one of our committee members, Donna Rudd, on the use of long fiber. She's got some great ideas, so enjoy the read!

## DON'T THROW OUT THOSE OVERGROWN SURI FLEECES

By Donna Rudd

Just because fibre processing mills cannot comb or card Suri fibres that are seven inches and longer, doesn't mean there is no use for them. There are other options available.

Speaking for myself; a fibre artist, spinner, weaver, felter and dyer, I would like to share with you some ideas I have been working with for a number of years. Suri fibre has some very good qualities that I like to work with, namely the wonderful luster, the fine micron count, the wide range of natural colours available, and Suri locks with great length.



When I weave Suri locks into rugs and wall hangings, I use an old Swedish technique called Rye Weaving. When using this method, I knot the long lustrous locks into the weaving warp via Larks Knot. This allows them to drape naturally and provides maximum exposure of the lovely lock structure and luster. Sometimes I use a hand spun warp and weft, but often I have found that because of time spent spinning, that using a 'camelid commercially prepared' yarn gives the strength that my project requires. Every single lock is carefully separated from the fleece, washed, rinsed, and measured, then counted before my

project begins. Once I have the number of locks and their length determined, I plan my project from there. Lock length can vary from 10 – 24 inches. Sometimes I will do a project with all similar length locks or use various lengths within the project to obtain a totally different look.

Some fleeces are somewhat matted and have very long locks that cannot be separated. It is with these fleeces I like to consider

a totally different approach to utilizing the fibre. After time spent arranging the fleece as naturally as possible, either as a whole or one side cape, and after skirting has been completed, I use a good felting wool as adhesive and felt the Suri fleece as a matt. Using a Mongolian method, the cut side is well felted and strong, allowing the locks on the top to be partially felted. This whole concept gives a floor matt with wonderful texture, strength, luster and color. To make the project just right involves some trade secrets, but the result is absolutely fabulous. Suri fibre felts surprisingly well and I love to use it as a lustrous top layer over merino wool for yard goods, resulting in bright and beautiful vests, jackets and bags.

Did you know that there are still other ways to use show fleeces that are too long? Suri locks can be easily dyed as a lock and used to create wonderful 3-D wall art and other craft materials. I love to create wall hangings that have depth.



My agricultural background and years of developing textile related skills have shown me what a wonderful and versatile fibre Suri is. As a Suri breeder, I hope that you will consider having your wonderful, precious stash of Suri fleeces put to use by a textile artist in one of the above methods. What a great way to display and utilize your Grand champion fleece or your favorite herdsires/dams longest fleeces. May I take this time to encourage you to look for and develop a use for those precious, long lustrous locks from this rare unique fleece.

