

“WE RAISE ALPACAS AND THEY RAISE US”

AYMARA-SPEAKING HERDER, ANDEAN HIGHLANDS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ALPACA BREEDERS' SOCIETY

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CSIR CASHMERE FACILITY UP AND RUNNING IN EASTERN CAPE

MEMBERS WILL RECALL that toward the end of last year some of us met at Eva Dölitzsch-Tatzreither's home to meet Dr Anton Botha, Senior Researcher, Non-Wovens and Composites at the government's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Dr Botha had been tasked, together with the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, with the revamping of a dormant cashmere project in Eastern Cape.

The growth of our alpaca industry, together with pressure on the few

processing facilities has led breeders to look further afield and explore other options.

Romney van Ryneveld has explored and experimented with his fibre at the Standerton Cotton Mills, and Alison Notley has experimented with fibre at Jan Paul Barnard's mohair plant in Alicedale.

Neither has had a satisfactory outcome.

With alpaca being more akin to cashmere than to cotton or mohair Dr Botha expressed his willingness, indeed his desire, to help alpaca

breeders who want their fibre processed to the roving, or sliver, stage.



Alpaca fibre passing through carding machine

With over four million indigenous goats in the country this project received favourable government support.

In a recent email Dr Botha reported that the cashmere project in

Middleburg, EC, is now operational and their washing-line dryer and dehairing facility is running but that alpaca fibre still needs to be test run through the carder to see whether sliver can be made. If this is successful – and subject to confirmation the costs would appear to be very competitive – then this could be an excellent option for some of our breeders.

The person to contact at the processing plant is Laura Perry on 049 842 1829.

What's being made out there? Please send pics of your products –



So much to be gained from exchanging ideas!

STONEHILL

originals

INSPIRATIONS FOR NATURAL LIVING

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK *"Why have you chosen Felt as a main artisanal focus?"* I've always loved the texture of soft, woollen fabrics. With our son being at a Waldorf School, making and working with felt became a family skill as many school crafts are made from this non-woven textile. It's a fabric well-understood in many parts of the world but not so much here in South Africa.

Felt is the oldest form of fabric known to humankind. It predates weaving and knitting, although there is archaeological evidence from the British museum that the first known thread was made by winding vegetable fibres on the thigh. In Turkey, the remains of felt have been found, dating back at least to 6,500 BC.

Felting is the process of interlocking fibres with each other to create a durable mat of material. There are different ways to make felt: wet felting (*heat, moisture, friction*), needle felting (*repetitive piercing of the fibres*) and nuno-felting (*combining wool and other fibres into a new fabric*).

Having experienced the labour intensive and lengthy wet felting technique, I wanted to find a more sustainable approach to make new textiles. Coupled with this, my fibre stock of coarse micron was growing with no solution in sight. An article distributed way back when, by Di Kruger, had mentioned a machine called a FeltLoom. The search began..,

To fast-track the story, my FeltLoom arrived in early January this year after a circuitous route over the oceans, to Durban (by mistake) and then road-freighted from Durbs to Cape Town. It now has pride of place in my workroom (*read husband's ex-*

garage/workshop) together with an enormous light table which our son, Ehren, made for me as a school project.



The FeltLOOM Pro-Line 66 has a 66" bed and 800 needles, enabling varying sizes of products to be created as well as varying thicknesses (Max ½ in thick).



The process of felting on our Feltloom requires a premade batt (*which can be made by either Quenti Mill or Serena Alpacas - the size will depend on the size of the drum at each mill*). Generally the batts are approximately 1mx60cm. Batts can be joined together for a longer and/or wider piece of fabric should this be needed.

Rovings may also be used however this involves a longer preparation process which incurs a slight premium fee.

All preparation work is done on the light table to highlight any inconsistencies in fibre distribution before and during the felting process.



Texture, weight and possible uses:

Thin felt = 170-280 gms /m (eg scarves, shawls etc) * fine micron fibre, soft & luxurious.

Medium felt = 280 – 454gms /m (eg jackets, coats, ponchos, throws) *fine-medium micron fibre, silky, soft.

Thick felt = 454 gms /m and more (eg small rugs, insoles, place mats) * *this is a great way to make use of coarse fibre.*

The possibilities of felt are endless – it's up to your imagination! We would love to help you get your fibre out of storage and into the market-place!

Felting services prices will be made available by email or on our website. Give me a call or send an email to chat about possibilities – I will be delighted to help where I can.

Debbie Braunlich
info@stonehilloriginals.com
082 455 1601



Alpaca and merino felted Trenchcoat

NEW NEWSLETTER – CONTACT THE EDITOR !!!

HELLO EVERYONE, ALISON HERE!

For my sins I have volunteered to put together a newsletter for SAABS members. I have battled to set this out in some sort of readable form and I will try to do better next time. Please send in whatever news you have – the good, the bad and the ugly, and whatever there is to inform and breeders. wanted, job alpacas for and tax tips, yarn, garments ... send us your news – please email me on alpacas@helderstroom.co.za



Please whatever news good, the bad the veterinary there is out enlighten, assist fellow Items for sale or vacancies, sale, financial

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WHEN TO CALL THE VET ... PREGNANCY OEDEMA

Alison Notley, Helderstroom Alpacas

MID-MARCH and Pepper the smaller of our 2009 pair of celebrated twins is three weeks away from birthing. Her rear end is hugely swollen as well as the insides of the tops of both hind legs. Temperature normal and still eating well.

Our vet immediately diagnosed a pregnancy oedema which, until now, he had not seen in alpacas. Fairly common in first calving heifers and maiden lambing ewes, he told us.

Pietie explained – the dam when pregnant experiences an increased arterial blood supply to the uterus and udder to aid the development of her cria. The arteries expand in order to deliver the additional blood to where it is needed. In turn the venous and lymphatic systems return this blood to the heart.

In the case of a pregnancy oedema the veins have not enlarged, widened sufficiently to return this increase volume of blood to the heart.

Swelling was down in the afternoons but always up in the morning. Gentle massaging with arnica ice and reducing the cupful of crushed oats (protein) normally included in her daily ration and everything is back to normal

We await a big bouncing cria – hopefully not twins again.



The redoubtable Pepper



Why not use this space in the next newsletter
to advertise items for sale, workshops and seminars,
veterinary tips and other items of interest or, as these two cria are having,
a discussion group?



HAND-SPINNING – TOOLS OF THE TRADE

THE AGE OLD TRADITION OF HAND-SPINNING has not changed since Adam was a boy!.

Alpaca leaves a pretty insignificant carbon footprint as it is, and with hand spun yarn, even less.

Our raw fibre, hand picked of vegetation by us is sent away for washing, dehairing and carding and comes back to us as a carded batt. From these batts we begin the spinning process.



Fibre passing from hand to bobbin

Thankfully the recent ESKOM power outages do not affect us at Helderstroom – all we need is sufficient daylight for us to see what we are doing.

Traditional spinning wheels, bobbins, niddy noddies, lazy Kates, the beautiful and invaluable antique umbrella swift, soapy water and the Empisal ball winder are all we need to produce our hand spun yarns ... not forgetting of course Brenda, Theresa and Maritza our team of spinning ladies who not only spin solid colours but design our flecked, streaky and variegated yarns.



A selection of hand spun alpaca yarns

Once two “singles” have been spun and plied on the wheel, and then “rested” the yarn is wound around the niddy noddy, dipped in water and hung on the line to dry.

This wetting and drying establishes the “set” of the twist and prevents stretching or shrinking of the yarn when knitted and washed.

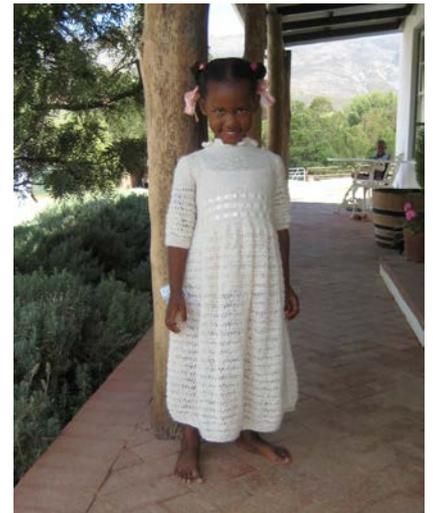


Pepper supervising skeins of yarn drying on the line

When dry the yarn, now called a skein, is removed from the niddy noddy, washed and dried and wound into balls ready for the knitting ladies. Simple as that!

Most of our yarns consist of two singles plied together – and spun to any gauge – fine laceweight for our gloves,

babywear, woven products and fine shawls, medium, or sportweight for jerseys, cardigans and general clothing and chunky or ultra-chunky when asked for it!



**HAND MADE -
THE
FUTURE
OF
LUXURY**



Balled yarn ready for the knitting needles

ANDEAN PASTORALISM



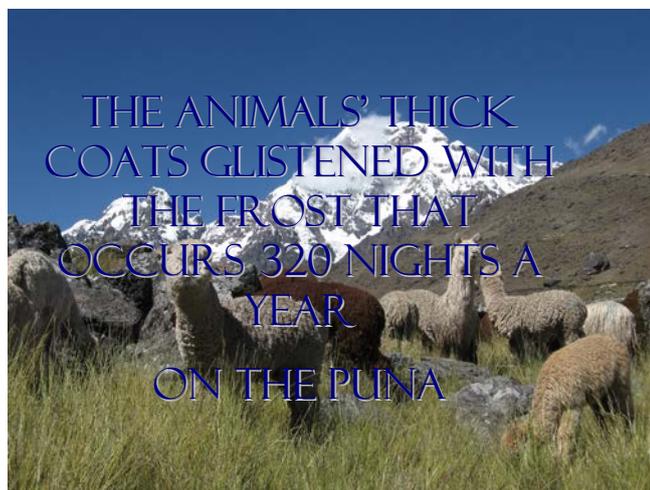
FROM ERIC HOFFMAN, *THE COMPLETE ALPACA BOOK*

THE AYMARA AND QUECHA people are the traditional owners of alpacas. A brief conversation recorded in the harsh physical environment of the Andes captures the essence of this way of life.

One cold night in the Andean highlands Felix Palacios and Nolberto Chambilla Mandamiento lay in their bedrolls looking at the stars. Around them knelt alpacas and llamas, their legs folded snugly under their woolly bodies. The animals' thick coats glistened with the frost that occurs 320 nights a year on the "puna", the high treeless plain.

Felix, then a graduate student in anthropology at the Catholic University of Peru in Lima asked Nolberto, an Aymara-speaking herder, "If all the alpacas and llamas died what would happen?" "We would die," Nolberto replied. "Why?"

"Because we raise alpacas and llamas and they raise us."



Nolberto's words represent traditional Andean pastoralism. His livelihood depended upon the exchange of animals and animal products from the inhospitable high altitude puna. The highlands herders share a kinship bond with their alpacas and llamas, a bond cemented by tradition, religion, genuine affection and harsh pragmatism.

2014 SHOWS, MARKETS AND EXHIBITIONS

COUNTRY FAIRS, OPEN DAYS, MARKETS AND SHOWS

are excellent platforms for getting out there and showing off alpaca products. It would be good to hear what shows, exhibitions and so forth are taking place around the provinces and which of these are supported by members, whether you are taking alpacas or setting up stands of your products.

We know there has been Design Indaba, Decorex is coming up, then Kamers and a whole load of country shows and regular weekly or monthly markets in our own areas. Let's hear about them, who's doing what and when.

The general public just love to hug an alpaca and show conveners are often delighted at the suggestion of erecting a boma or pen and bringing along three or four alpacas for

the day. Several of Kerstin and Dietmar's animals are beautifully halter trained and are the source of huge pleasure and much amusement at shows.



Newten Chakantetsa with alpacas, or the Pied Piper of Hamlyn

This picture shows our alpaca handler Newten with alpacas Aero and Cinnamon at the

Constantia Waldorf Fair in 2013 where Debbie Braunlich and her range of Stonehill Originals and ourselves, Helderstroom Alpacas, had side by side stands.

It is always advisable to stock smaller items at these fairs as punters seldom bring "alpaca money" with them. Attending a fair, often intent on making the grand purchase of a cup of coffee, a quiche and a second hand book, customers sometimes look askance when asked to pay alpaca prices. But ... it is all a learning curve, an education. Next time they'll come better "cashed up"

On this point, and perhaps I should not advertise on their behalf, but WAPPOINT (Wireless Authorised Payment) offers a facility whereby you may accept credit card payments on a cellphone. We have used this method for several years and it is extremely handy.

I'll try and made the next newsletter more newsy, more informative, better laid out and maybe include a letter from the Editor (ha!) but its not me you want to hear from, it's all of you out there. Don't make letters too long but do include pics. They're fun for everyone.

*That just about winds it up for this, our first Society newsletter.
I wish those of you in the middle of your birthing seasons lots of big, fit and healthy cria this year!
Best wishes, Alison*

