



SWAG Newsletter January 2013.

Dear fellow SWAG members,

I have very recently taken over the role of the Communications member of the SWAG committee and this is the first newsletter that I have had the privilege of putting together. With that thought in mind I would like to remind you that this newsletter is your newsletter, it is for your benefit and should contain what you want it to contain. So, if there is anything that you feel should be included in future issues, or indeed omitted from future issues, please do let me know. I know that it is impossible to please everybody but I will do my best.

My first duty as the new editor is to thank **Bernard Northmore** for his tremendous work in compiling the SWAG Newsletters over the past few years. Having read them without much thought as to the amount of time and effort that goes in to producing it I am now in the perfect position to let you know that a lot of time and effort does go into its production!

I am sure that you would all wish to thank Bernard for his efforts and I am hoping that I am able to in some way produce Newsletters with something approaching the professional touch that Bernard always gave them. Bernard will now have much more spare time on his hands which he will no doubt spend gazing lovingly at his alpacas!

Whilst I am thanking people I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Tim Hey** of Inca Alpaca for his sterling efforts on the SWAG committee. Tim has now been drafted onto the BAS board and I for one am reassured that Tim will be using all of his knowledge and expertise to assist the rest of the board, ably led by another SWAG member, **Peter Rossiter**, to take the British Alpaca Industry forward in the right direction.

Anyway now that the thankyou's are out of the way, back to this newsletter. May I say that this first effort of mine is at relatively short notice so please forgive me for the lack of content; I promise that I will improve as the year goes on.

It goes without saying that if any SWAG members have any useful, interesting or even amusing articles that they would like me to include in future newsletters please send them to me via e-mail at mark@patoualpacas.com.

I might also take this opportunity to point out that if you have any herd or product promoting adverts that you would like included in the newsletter free of charge, yes people, free of charge, then please send them to me via e-mail. If it arrives in a format that I can't deal with I will throw it back at you to try again, please remember I am no computer whizz kid, far from it, I would rather be outside in the rain and mud.

Thank you. **Mark Steele (Newsletter editor)**



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with competitive rates.

01884 38782

07773 440354

Email: alpaca2shear@yahoo.co.uk

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN.

A very Happy New Year to all SWAG Members

It was with pleasure that the Committee was able to welcome two new members Mark Steele and Andy Walker at our first meeting this year and subsequently Jean Field has accepted our invitation to join the committee. I hope you will give them every support.

Further to our AGM Defra have indicated that they will not be introducing rules for Camelids in the near future to go alongside the new cattle rules introduced 1 January 2013, so there will be no meeting for the moment.

I hope members have been able to read the Statement put out following the Camelid Forum meeting held on 17 December. A way forward is proposed for everyone. Please send your queries as suggested in the document.

The next stage will be to obtain agreement with Defra on the path forward and to develop the protocols. We should not expect instant answers and as members we need to support the Board and Forum in their endeavours.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the various activities planned for this year.

The Fibre Day is all about “alpaca to product”. Come and meet breeders who had a dream and listen to them talk on their journey that followed.

Something new this year is the Farm Visit to the Alpaca Stud which we hope will be the first of an annual visit to herds around the country.

The Autumn Show is for everybody. It is the first show of the show cycle when alpacas are in tip top condition and we look forward to seeing you there. We plan to run the show in as professional way as possible and fly the flag for SWAG .If you are new to showing this is the show for you.

Richard Beale (Chairman, South West Alpaca Group)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH WEST ALPACA GROUP.

Peter Doust (Bideford, Devon)

Carla Cortesi and Andre Shaw, Uruchillay Alpacas (Glastonbury)

STUD SERVICES FROM CHAMPIONS AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

ALPHA ALPACAS have the following stud males available in 2013 to meet your ladies, either mobile, drive by or stay on farm in West Dorset. All our stud males have good show records and are selected both for their phenotype and temperament.

ALPHA SATURN – Solid mid fawn – 1st Senior Fawn Male Bath and West 2010. Champion Adult Male BAS Spring Show 2008 and Best Fawn at RAS 2005 and 2006. Adds density, character and a soft handle to progeny

CONCEPTS OF PERU JACK – Solid white son of Kilawassi. – Reserve Supreme Champion Devon County and Three Counties Shows 2012, Reserve Intermediate Champion National Show 2011. 1st White Adult Male Bath and West Show 2012. We are delighted with Jack's first progeny who will be entering the show ring this year.

HANLEY HALL R A POLARIS - Solid white – son of the best Rural Alianza Wiracocha progeny - Hanley Hall Tiberius. Polaris's show record reflects his excellent genetics. 2010 National Show Junior Champion, Three Counties 2011 and 2012 Supreme Champion, Autumn National Fleece Show 2012 – 1st Intermediate White and Best British Fleece.

JESSAMINE REDLANDS – Medium grey – One of the first sons of the Alpaca Stud's Nyetimber, Redlands has a tremendous show record - Best Grey Male, National Show 2011, British Alpaca Futurity 2012, Devon County and Three Counties Shows 2012, Best British Bred Alpaca National Show 2011. He is a compact male with excellent bone and a fine, dense uniform fleece.

MOTCOMBE AMOS – Medium fawn - a strong boned male who carries an amazingly dense, soft , fine fleece with plenty of character. His second fleece weighed in at an amazing 6 kg. We are expecting the first cria from Amos in 2013.

For further details please contact Di Davies Tel 01308 488661/07739 382483 or e-mail didavies@alpaca.fsnet.co.uk. Further details are available on the Alpha website www.alphaalpacas.com

ALPACA SHOWS IN 2013

There is a full agenda of alpaca shows planned for 2013 and the following list, although not exhaustive, should give a good guide as to where and when you may want to show your alpacas and when to get the entries in!

(Thanks to the ever resourceful Di Davies for sending it to me!)

Show	Date	Location	Show Organiser	Type	Online entry	Closing Dates	Judge
British Alpaca Futurity	15 – 16 March	National Exhibition Centre Birmingham	Halter Classes – Mary Jo Smith maryjo@boztdown-alpacas.co.uk Fleece - Cathy Lloyd epcambridge@btconnect.com	Colour Fleece	Yes	11 Feb 13 13 Feb 13	Amanda Vandenbosch Jill Macleod
Heart of England Fiesta	27-28 April	Stoneleigh Park Warwickshire	Paul Stead Prs.stead@virgin.net	Colour	Yes	7 Apr 13	Mary Jo Smith
South of England	5-6 May	Ardingley West Sussex	Liz Butler llamaliz@hotmail.com	Colour	Yes	16 Apr 13	Rob Bettison
North Somerset	6 May	Wraxhall S Bristol	John Grover jwgrover@btinternet.com	Colour	Yes	6 Apr 13	Dominic Lane
BAS National	11-12 May	Bury Farm Equestrian Centre Leighton Buzzard	Halter Show – Mary Jo Smith and Di Davies Fleece – Julia maryjo@boztdown-alpacas.co.uk didavies@alpaca.fsnet.co.uk	Age Fleece	Yes	22 Apr 13	Val Fullerlove Liz Barlow Nick Harrington Smith
Devon County	16-18 May	West Point Exeter Devon	Peter Rossiter peter@rosewynalpaca.co.uk and Gareth Sanders garethsanders@aol.com	Colour Fleece	Yes (New for 2013)	3 Apr 13	Jay Holland
Royal Bath and West	29 May – 1 June	Shepton Mallett Somerset	Di Davies didavies@alpaca.fsnet.co.uk	Age	Yes	29 Apr 13	H – Mary Jo Smith S - Dominic Lane
Honiton	1 August	Honiton Devon	Lynsey Skinner dreamfieldalpacas@gmail.com and Jean Field fleecewitch@googlemail.com	Age – Short Fleece	Yes		

North Devon	7 August	Umberleigh North Devon	Ian Waldron info@langatonalpacas.co.uk	Age	TBC		
Romsey	14 Sept	Broadlands, Romsey	Southern Alpaca Group info@mvalpacas.co.uk Karen Ogelsby and Nikki Hayton nikkihayton@hotmail.com	Colour (No junior classes)	Yes		Nick Harrington Smith
Heart of England Autumn Fleece Show	6 Oct	TBC Organiser Paul Stead	HOE -Paul Stead Prs.stead@virgin.net	Fleece	Yes		
Scottish National Fleece Show	10 Nov	The Border Mill Coldstream	Juliet Miller hello@bordermill.co.uk	Fleece	Yes		Jay Holland
SWAG Winter Show	16 – 17 Nov	The Hand Equestrian Centre Clevedon Organiser – Di Davies	SWAG - Di Davies didavies@alpaca.fsnet.co.uk	Colour	Yes		

SWAG WINTER SHOW 2013

Following the discussions at the AGM 2012, work is now in hand to mount a SWAG Winter Show at the Hand Equestrian Centre Clevedon. The show will be a colour championship held on 16-17 November, with alpacas being able to arrive either pm 15 Nov or early am on 16 November. All the alpacas will be penned in the main arena and there will be two show rings. The show will incorporate the SWAG AGM 2013 on the Saturday evening. Further details will follow in the next newsletter, but please get the dates in your diary now. If you would be willing to join the organising committee or to assist with running the event, please contact Di Davies – didavies@alpaca.fsnet.co.uk

VISIT TO THE ALPACA STUD

The Alpaca Stud have very kindly agreed to host a visit by SWAG members on Sunday the 14th of April. This is sure to be a very valuable and interesting learning experience as there will be many animals to look at and Nick Harrington-Smith and his colleagues will be there to pass on their great knowledge about all things alpaca.

BLACKLANDS ALPACAS

BEAUTIFUL ALPACAS



Do you want female crias ?

Since we have owned him, Alta Lyn Octavian had given us 20 crias, of which 14 are female. The odds are clearly in favour of females – so much so, that we will offer a half-price return mating if your female has a male cria first time round !

Take a look at our website www.blacklandsalpacas.co.uk, where you can see photos of Octavian's progeny. You can also see on the website photos of how our Inca Picasso's progeny are improvements on their dams – amongst many gorgeous crias he has sired three beautiful greys, all from white mothers.

Call Bernard or Pat Northmore on 01934 733172 or 077 1515 9530,

email us at info@blacklandsalpacas.co.uk,

or visit our website www.blackandsalpacas.co.uk

I appreciate that time was tight but as I had no submissions of articles for this newsletter I have rehashed one I wrote a few years ago. So if you don't want articles written by me every newsletter send something in! You have been warned!

Making a success of being a small alpaca breeder. (No-one said it would be easy, but it is possible.)

Sue and I formed Patou Alpacas when we bought our first three female alpacas in February 2006. Three and a half years later we now have a herd of 18 alpacas, 13 of which are females (including this year's cria).

We are classified as 'small breeders'. It's not a phrase I particularly like but by virtue of numbers alone it is the category that we fit into. We are small breeders. There I've said it.

When we started we had a vision of where we wanted to be in 5 years and ultimately in 10 years. We formulated a breeding plan and decided how we wanted the herd to look. We were determined to use the best herd sires we could find that fitted in with our breeding plan. We wanted colour, our foundation females were black, light brown and dark fawn and that is how we saw the herd. I would stand and look at our little herd and imagine it much larger, 20 alpacas, 50 alpacas, a field full, all coloured, all with the Patou prefix to their name. All running up for a cuddle when I whistled, ok maybe that's a bit too far, they are alpacas after all.

We predicted that we would need 5 years of growing the herd before we would be in a position to start selling our own alpacas. In the meantime we needed to generate some income for stud fees.

First of all we needed to get established, we needed the herd name known, and we needed people to know that we were here. Patou alpacas had arrived on the scene and I felt the world needed to know about us. If no-one knew we were here there was no point, it was a non-starter; it would be like whispering into a dark hole.

In November 2006 a computer literate friend of mine designed a website for us. He taught me how to update and change it, a time consuming process for someone with a technology aversion, but we couldn't afford the set up fees of a website designer so it was a do it yourself job. We used Moonfruit (www.moonfruit.co.uk) a 'design and maintain your own website' company that allowed us to put as much or as little effort in as we wanted. The website has moved on a long way from where it was and it is now something I am quite proud of.

We advertised in 'Alpaca' and 'Alpaca World' magazines and we had some 'corporate' clothing made up with the Patou name, logo and web address printed on. We had some banners made, some business cards and an advertising leaflet. All done relatively cheaply. We then splashed out on a small marquee type thing, only 3m x 3m but emblazoned with the Patou web address and in 'Patou green', in fact everything was green, it was our chosen colour.

Once we were equipped with all that we entered as many shows as we could go to. I work full time and Sue works part time so we were a bit restricted but we entered every eligible animal we had into the Bath and West Show and the SWAG Spring Show, later came The Futurity. Our show team was basically anyone who was eligible; it was a short selection process! Our first year's cria, Lily and Henry both took rosettes as juniors, one in each show. We were up and running. Since then we have taken at least one rosette at every show we have been to, bar one, grrrrrrr. Testament to the commitment we have of sticking to our breeding programme.

We also took our alpacas to agricultural shows, village fetes, anywhere people wanted us to go basically. It was and still is great fun, everyone loves alpacas. It is a great feeling when everyone who comes up to see them thinks they are fab. If you haven't tried it you must. It is an uplifting experience.

So back to this money we needed for stud fees. We were lucky enough to have the help of Tim Hey at Inca Alpacas who encouraged us. He asked if we wanted to take on some animals to sell on behalf of their owners on a commission basis. It meant more responsibility and more work but the way I looked at it was that if we wanted to get on in the alpaca world we had to work at it. No-one else was going to do it for us. If we wanted to make it work then we had to move up a gear mentally and start thinking, not like a small breeder, but like a big breeder.

Taking on alpacas to sell meant that the website had to be seen, it had to be interesting and it had to attract people. We thought long and hard about when we were researching alpacas and what had attracted us to certain websites. We also thought about what put us off certain websites. It had to be personal, it had to be friendly, it had to be honest and it had to be fun.

In my job as a country bobby I had written a monthly newsletter which was very well received and it was something that I enjoyed writing. It was drivel really but drivel with a message about crime prevention or about being nice to each other. It made people smile and I figured that was the key. People like to smile, people like to be amused, and it makes things interesting.

I decided to delve even deeper into the internet world and started to write a blog. **Patou Patter**, *Ramblings from an alpaca farm in south Wiltshire*, was born and a link was posted on the homepage of the website.

At the same time I had to get the website seen. Initially a Google search revealed that Patou Alpacas appeared on page 42! Not good, you need real stamina to flip through 42 pages of alpaca sites. So various measures were taken to improve this standing and we now pop up on or near the front page most of the time, I still don't understand how it works but it does. In fact I have just had a look on Google and we are on the first page today, fantastic! The website now gets in excess of 50 hits a day and the blog is read by people from all over the world. Seriously, it is! I have a thingy on it which tells me where people are that read it, how cool is that?

So back to this raising money malarkey. In 2007 we took on some alpacas from other small breeders (who wanted to stay small) and some from EP Cambridge (not a small breeder!) and marketed and sold them on their behalf. We sold 7 alpacas that year, the commission paid for all of our stud fees. Last year we sold 6 alpacas, again on behalf of other people. Again the stud fees were covered. This year so far we have already sold 7 alpacas and summer has only just begun. It is the best start to a year we have had since we began selling and we are apparently in the middle of a credit crunch.

So why have we been able to sell alpacas? I don't really know the exact reasons but I think I know several things that may have helped.

1. People need to know who and where you are. You need to make this happen because no-one else will do it for you. Seriously, they won't.
2. You need to connect with people. Why buy from you? What makes you different from everyone else?
3. Honesty and integrity, without that you are not doing anyone any favours least of all yourself and you will be found out.
4. Think big, our motto is **'You don't have to be big to be mighty'**.
5. Think outside the box, be different, be brave.
6. Get out there and make it happen, have faith and be positive!

So there we have it, I hope it helps. We have massive faith in our alpacas and huge faith in the future. Doom and gloom have no place amongst the mighty Patou herd.

Alpacas are fabulous animals and they produce a fabulous product. People need to know about them. We as alpaca breeders, small or large, have a duty to spread the word. So what are you waiting for?

Mark Steele

THE NATURAL FIBRE COMPANY

The Natural Fibre Company has a special offer on all alpaca processing (ex carriage costs) in 2013, details as follows: 12% discount in February / 10% in March / 5% in April

If the above is added to their volume discount of 5% on orders of over 40kg it makes a very attractive proposition. For more details please contact the Natural Fibre Company via their website: www.thenaturalfibre.co.uk .

They can process Suri and Huacaya to woollen or worsted yarns, finished for knitting or weaving. They also have a dyeplant if you are looking for some interesting colours!

Laura Reed has joined the company to look after the alpaca commission spinning customers and she can be contacted by e-mail, laura.reed@thenaturalfibre.co.uk or via the old fashioned telephone on 01566 777635. Laura would love to hear from you and talk about all the options relating to spinning your fibre.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL – IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP OF SWAG CURRENT?

Have you renewed your membership of SWAG? If not now is the time to do so. At the end of this newsletter is a renewal form, please make the effort to renew. Go on, if you haven't done it, do it now!

RAFFLE at the AGM

At the last SWAG AGM a raffle was held to raise money for the Royal British Legion, please see the following letter from Russell Thompson OBE, Director of National Events and Fundraising, The Royal British Legion.

“ Thank you very much for making a kind gift of £64.00 to The Royal British Legion. Your donation will help us to reach our target of raising funds for our new Battle Back Centre as well as helping to run four Personnel Recovery Centres which are currently being created across the UK. These unique centres will help injured and sick Service men and women returning from Afghanistan, enabling soldiers to either return to duty, learn a skill that will equip them for a new role in the Army or retrain them for a successful future outside the Armed Forces. The Legion is committed to helping Service and ex-Service men and women in need with practical, financial and emotional support. Kind donations like yours make it possible for us to continue to provide:

- ***Funding for our seven Poppy Carehomes***
- ***Mobility aids for housebound veterans***
- ***Expertise to help claim pension and disability entitlements***
- ***Essential home repairs for the elderly and frail***

On behalf of the many who will benefit from your kindness, thank you .”

ALPACA PERFECT PROPERTY FOR SALE.

Relocation brings about sale of detached 3/4 bed roomed house with over 4 acres of land for sale in Somerset. Land divided into three paddocks with two shelters and a Dutch barn, lots of outside storage and a double garage with plenty of parking. Secure land and garden with no footpaths or bridleways and perfectly set up for ease of animal movement and handling. The house has a bespoke office with views over the private garden and the paddocks beyond. Here's the link, check it out

<http://www.roderickthomas.co.uk/Property/Residential/for-sale/Between-Castle-Cary-and-Somerton/Somerset/757>

SWAG WEBSITE – ADVERTISING.

The SWAG website (<http://www.swagroup.org.uk>) is a wonderful resource and a great place to start if you are new to alpacas. Not only that but there is advertising space available which is very undersubscribed and very reasonable priced.

A 'banner' advert on the SWAG website is just £50 for two years! How about that for value! Use the 'contact us' button on the website for details of how to advertise.

PLASMA – A LIFE SAVER.

A SWAG member suggested that we should have a list of breeders who hold a stock of frozen alpaca plasma for emergency use. On a personal note we have only just started harvesting (is that the right word) our own plasma and due to our vets never having done it before it was quite a palaver! However it was worth it in the end as three cria's lives were probably saved last year by the administering of plasma. Prior to having our own 'homegrown' plasma we were fortunate enough to have been able to use plasma from other very generous breeders. If you would like to advertise the fact that you have plasma for emergency use please let me know and we will either publish details on the website or in this Newsletter. Thanks. Mark (editor)

South West Alpaca Group renewal or application for subscription 2013

Name.....

Herd Name and BAS herd letters, if any.....

Address.....

Tel: Email address.....

Website.....

Vet's name and contact detail.....

.....

Your details will be kept in the SWAG electronic database by the membership secretary. Abridged details i.e. name, geographical area, herd name, telephone numbers, email and website addresses are distributed to members every year and are also displayed on www.swagroup.org.uk . **If you do not wish to be included in any of these please indicate here**

.....

Swag may pass on full details to third parties who have a direct interest in the alpaca industry. **If you would prefer that your details are not used in this way please indicate here**.....

Thank you for any constructive answers you can give to the following....

What suggestions do you have for training or events?.....

Tell us about any particular alpaca/fleece related interest.....

Please circle any of the following shows at which you would be willing to help – Bath and West, North Devon, North Somerset, Honiton, Devon County, Mid Devon

What role(s) would you be willing to take on at shows?.....

Do you hold any livestock qualifications?.....

The approximate number of animals in your herd is

None, 1 – 5, 6 – 10, 11 – 20, 21 – 50, 51 – 75, 76 – 100, >100

Please note here or overleaf any observations you have made about alpaca behaviour that would be of interest to other members.