

# **FROM BEGINNING - TO SHOWING** **- TO THE NATIONALS**

## **Susan Haese – Yaringa Alpacas**

We purchased our first two alpacas as pets in 2000. Our fascination with these animals led us to purchase our first two girls in 2002 as we thought it would be fun to breed a few of our own and build up a little herd of say ten animals. How we moved from having two girls for fun to running over 80 alpacas in less than six years is a long story and has been a considerable amount of work.

The concept of showing animals was not new to me as I had been involved with horses and competition for about 20 years. In October 2004 we took two girls – a junior black and a senior fawn to Strathalbyn Show. In a way it was disappointing that both our girls were the only ones in their classes, however, the judge does not have to award any ribbons if he or she feels that the animal is not up to the required standard (it's like that when you show horses too so the concept was familiar to me). Our junior black female was awarded a first and the senior fawn a second. The judge said she was a "useful breeding animal" but "not show quality".



This was very useful feedback and we were glad we had taken her, firstly as this gave us a "benchmark" to gauge future animals against, and secondly because she was good company for the junior female who may have been very unhappy on her own.

### ***What does a beginner need to know about showing?***

1. Make sure you register your cria early enough that you have the registration certificates before the entries close for the show – it would be advisable to register three months before the date of the show.
2. Allow plenty of time to halter train your alpaca as an animal which leads easily and stands up in the ring does have an advantage over an animal which fights its handler and leaps about when the judge is trying to look at its fleece.
3. Make sure your halters are correctly adjusted to fit each animal.
4. Post your entries in plenty of time as the region will adhere to closing dates, and sometimes there is also a limit on the number of entries which can be accepted – and it's on a first come basis. Our region has a new "checklist" for doing entries – use it so you don't miss anything.
5. Check your alpacas regularly to make sure they are in good condition. Do not take an animal which is sick or injured.
6. Check your alpacas a week before the show and then again on the morning of the show to make sure they have their metal IAR tags attached. These are essential for showing.
7. Make sure you have the registration papers for each animal and a copy of your entries to take with you to the show.
8. Make sure you arrive at the showgrounds with plenty of time. For all South Australian shows, animals must be penned by 8.30 am.
9. Stay with your animals until they have been inspected as the person doing the inspection cannot check them without you being there.

10. Watch some classes before yours so you have an idea what you will be asked to do when you walk into the ring.
11. Listen to the announcements made and mark classes off in your catalogue so you know where the judge is up to. It is the responsibility of the breeder to have their animals lined up at the appropriate time and if you are not there, you will miss your class.
12. If you are unsure what is happening, or need help, ask. Other breeders will be more than happy to help you.
13. It is important to stay until the judging has finished. After judging, all breeders must pack up their own pens and you will be directed where to put your panels.
14. If you are unsure if showing is for you, come along and watch or better still, get involved by offering to help – you can learn a lot from this opportunity as well as helping the region by providing the vital manpower needed to run a show.

I really enjoyed my first show, and in 2005 we entered one animal for Mt Pleasant and four for Strathalbyn. In September 2005 I also joined friends to visit the Victorian Colourbration show. This was a valuable experience as this show had more than twice the number of animals of any show I had been to previously. I even had the honour of showing a young male who placed second in his class – and I was now hooked not just on showing, but on turning our little hobby into a serious business!

At this point we had seven females. As a result of this trip, we had the opportunity to purchase shares in three elite males and once we had purchased these, we also purchased two females which were considerably better than anything we had to that point.

In 2006, I decided to learn as much about showing as I could and to gain as much experience and exposure as possible. I still had only a few animals to choose from but we went to a lot of shows – Mt Pleasant, Werribee, the Australian Sheep and Wool show at Bendigo, Victorian Colourbration, Strathalbyn and Clare and my little team did surprisingly well.

#### ***What are the extra things you need to know about entering for interstate shows?***

1. Everything relevant to South Australian shows still applies.
2. You need to fill in and lodge with the Department of Primary Industries the appropriate paperwork for moving animals from one state to another. You will find these forms on the showing page of the regional website. Fill them in, fax them to DPI and don't forget to take the originals with you. If you don't do this, you can get fined!
3. At most shows you are able to move your animals in the day before and move out the day after, however, this is not possible at all shows so make sure you read the schedule carefully and contact the organiser if you are unsure.
4. With some shows you will need to book accommodation a fair while in advance.



In 2006, I also went to both the Melbourne Royal Show and also to the National Show and Sale in Canberra. I didn't take any animals of my own but again I had the opportunity to show some extras taken by friends and some of the males we have shares in were shown and did well. This was a great experience and gave me the opportunity to look at some of the top animals in Australia. Breeders from New Zealand and from Europe also visit these shows and it is interesting to meet and talk to some of these people.

In 2007, we had a few more animals to choose from for our show team, but didn't actually show more than we did in 2006. Why? 2007 was not about just gaining experience and making up numbers – I wanted to show animals which I believed could win ribbons. We showed at Mt Pleasant, the Australian Sheep and Wool show at Bendigo, SA Colour Classic, Victorian Colourbration, Strathalbyn and Clare. Although we took our suri female to Victorian Colourbration where she was awarded "Supreme all-colour suri" and to Royal Melbourne where she won her class, we opted not to enter her for the National Show as she was well past her best and another month was not going to improve the situation.

In August I looked at all the animals I had shown through the year and despite most of them having a few ribbons, I did not feel that they were of the standard required to win ribbons at the National Show. In April, one of our best girls had her first cria. "Victoria" was only just old enough to go to the Nationals so it would be her first show. I knew she was a lot better than anything else I had, so Victoria was entered.

As we were traveling with friends, Victoria moved into their "show team" about three weeks before the Nationals – actually the day she was weaned at five and a half months of age. This gave her the opportunity to make new friends, particularly with animals who had been to other interstate shows and were relaxed about traveling before the stress of the trip.



***When you are the youngest and the smallest in the team and you need to sit down for a rest it is good to have friends around so you know someone is watching your back!***

At the Nationals, I took Victoria into the ring knowing that virtually every animal in there would be extremely good. There were quite a few animals in the class and I felt that for us the show would be a success if we made the first cut. We made the first cut – and the second cut – and the final six – and .....



***As a new breeder, where should you start?***

1. Enter some animals for the South Australian shows this year to get some experience in the show ring and to start to gauge the quality of your own animals. Your results in large classes are a better gauge than your results in small classes.
2. Travel to Canberra in August this year to watch the judging at the National Show. The animals entered for the National Auction are available for public inspection on the Sunday morning – make the effort to go early and a look at them.
3. From time to time our region runs workshops on animal handling, show stewarding etc. These are a great opportunity to learn and also to meet other breeders in a social setting.
4. At each show you go to, ask if you can have a look at the animals which have won broad ribbons. Most breeders are more than happy to show their animals off. It is important to understand though that the more a fleece is “fingered” the faster the structure deteriorates so just look – don’t touch unless the owner invites you to.

***So what prompted me to write this article?***

South Australia is hosting the National Show and Sale in 2009. Our region needs the support of all our breeders to run this show. We need entries from South Australian breeders, and we need to make sure we have enough people to work as stewards and other helpers to make this show run really smoothly. If each stud was to contribute something towards this show, the job would not be hard. It is both an honour and a privilege to host the National Show and Sale, and we need to make sure that we do the best job we can. Let’s showcase what South Australia has to offer.

So, whether you are a new breeder, or perhaps a breeder who has been in the industry for a while but not shown interstate, if you are interested, now is the time to start planning.

Happy Showing!!  
Susan