

Breeding...it's all in the bloodlines

Without apology, we confess from the outset that this is our pet topic. It is our belief that alpaca breeding is far more predictable than some would have you believe. For example, we are able to predict our show team with about 90% predictability before they are born, based on the bloodlines involved and the history we have on those bloodlines. This is because we are generally working with proven formulas, as opposed to some who use what we call the “scattergun” approach to breeding. These people wax and wane with the latest flavour of the month, and wonder why their breeding results are less than predictable. A classic example is the imported stud male. Of course there is no problem assessing the phenotype of such males, but generally nothing or little is known about their genotype. Hence results from using these males can be disappointing.

We are very proud of our show results, including hundreds of place ribbons and well over a hundred broad ribbons. Our males sire the vast majority of alpacas we show. As well as the paternal side of the breeding we place equal importance on the maternal line. Year after year our best show stock often comes from the same maternal lines. To give you just a couple of examples of our elite maternal lines:

The “Ella” line:

Ella was a black Chilean. Put with Purrumbete Highlander she produced Eleanor, a black winner at various shows, including the Nationals. Eleanor put with one of our black males Julius produced Elvis Presley, a black stud male, Norika, a black female who won at the shows and was subsequently exported to NZ, and Nostradamus, a black full brother to Elvis Presley who is also a stud male. Mated with Timbertop The Scud Eleanor has also produced Noble Warrior, unbeaten nationally in the show ring. With our Dorchester, sired by Julius out of our Dot, another black Chilean, Eleanor has produced Gladiator, Alpacaspecialist Ella (named after her grandam) and Alpacaspecialist Eliminator.

Gladiator has had great success in the show ring and has been syndicated. He is now working and has many pregnancies. His second fleece had a spin fineness of 16.3 microns. Young Ella is pregnant to Black Thunder, another of our black stud males who has also been syndicated. Again, Thunder is bred from our bloodlines, being by Zeus out of Lisa Marie, an Elvis Presley female. Eliminator will be shown this year. So far he is looking fantastic.

We have now commenced our embryo transfer program, and needless to say Eleanor will be a key participant as a donor.

Ella herself has produced elite offspring. She has produced two black full siblings from herself and our Brutus, a stud male Ellano (who has only ever been beaten nationally by other of our black males) and an elite female Ellen (who was only ever beaten by one female, whom we subsequently bought). Unfortunately we lost Ella a few years ago due to old age.

The “Bonnie” line:

Bonnie Lass is a mid fawn female out of a coarse brown Chilean with white points, Brassy. Bonnie's sire is Brutus. She won multiple championships, including Junior Champion Female at the Royal Melbourne Show, one of the most prestigious awards in Australia.

Mated with our Drambuie she has produced a stud male, Dynamite. He was never shown due to severe injuries as a cria when attacked by dogs. Her next cria with Drambuie was a lovely mid fawn female Destiny. What a name to live up to! Like her mum Destiny also won multiple championships, including Junior Champion Female at Royal Melbourne. We think it is the only mother and daughter combination to do so! Destiny is maintaining a superfine fleece as a mature breeding female.

Another result of the Bonnie and Drambuie joining was a rich dark fawn female, Desire. She won numerous ribbons including blue at Royal Melbourne. Yet another Bonnie and Drambuie combination was Alpacaspecialist Distinction, who is maturing nicely and showing stud prospects.

Last but certainly not least Bonnie had two other females in the middle of all this, Daisy a lovely brown by our Lancelot and Delight a stunning mauve grey by Condon's Rasputin. Delight did quite well at the shows and is now pregnant to Julius. Daisy missed out on the shows, as although her fleece is stunning she has some white on her face and front feet. These things happen from time to time!

Destiny's first male by Condon's Tulaco was sold as a stud male. Her second male by Condon's Rasputin, Alpacaspecialist Destination, is looking great and he will be part of this year's show team.

Desire has had a roan/grey female by Lancelot, Alpacaspecialist Design. She is quite stunning and again she will be in the show team this season.

Bonnie and Destiny are now in our embryo transfer program.

Conclusions?

We think evidence such as this is a good reason to research bloodlines when making breeding decisions. It also proves to us the value of so called old Chileans.

We have talked about these lines proving elite in the show ring. In our opinion whilst isolated show results are of little merit, continued success with bloodlines over the years and numerous shows speaks volumes for the worth of that line.

In addition, the objective statistics of these lines are excellent. Ella was around 24 micron as an old breeder and Eleanor is 22.9. Ella is 17.6. Bonnie is 23.7, Destiny is 18.7 and Desire is 23. Daisy is 21.4 and Delight is 17.9. These are the current spin fineness results of these mature breeding females who are on excellent nutrition.

It is exciting to think that we now have the chance to increase the productivity of our elite lines by means of the embryo transfer program. Those who have done their research on our bloodlines are already keen to see the results. The pregnancies from autumn involve Julius x Gyn & Tonic (a black Brutus) and Gladiator x Graffiti (a black Brutus) and Gladiator x Teah (a fawn Brutus). The spring program will involve our males Brutus, Julius, Gladiator and Greenvale Giacomo (a white Auzengate male). The females will include Eleanor, Gyn & Tonic, Graffiti, Teah, Kahlin (a black Brutus), Bonnie, Destiny and Duchess (a fawn Brutus).

So next time you're tempted to go with the latest show winner, import or most expensive alpaca, give some thought to doing your homework on bloodlines and what ones have been doing the job over the years.

Happy breeding,

Jane Wray & Glenn Russell, The Alpaca Specialists.