PACA POWER

by Eric Hoffman

In the ranks of the North American camelid community there is a purposeful, dedicated and growing group who know the meaning of "paca power." They can act downright clandestine at times. Much to the befuddlement of other diners, a group of them was seen to lift their wine glasses and toast "paca power" in a restaurant at a recent llama gathering. "Pacas" are, of course, alpacas and though some camelid owners may feel security in shrugging them off as nothing more than the runt-sized cousin to the llama, the "power" alpacas have commanded as a marketable, lovable and utilitarian animal has seen few, if any, parallels in the history of North American livestock. The market is in its infancy and it has already achieved a price structure that has taken decades to create with other animals. And, the alpaca market has attracted a host of players from the international livestock community as well as dozens of everyday citizens whose partiality, when it comes to camelids, is with alpacas.

To locate believers in "paca power", merely attend a meeting of the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association. Be warned they are sometimes peculiar in how and when they meet. Last time they had a national meeting it started at 10:00 p.m. at the Salt Lake City, ILA Conference after the day's events had wound down. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 a.m. and though a few participants nodded off from time to time, only one person left the room while everything from joining an international wool association to affiliating with ILA and organizing a show committee was discussed. During the year AOBA meets telephonically in conference calls or communicates through *Alpacas!*, the organization's newsletter which was started by Cecile Champagne.

Known by its acronym, AOBA, the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association is a small, farsighted and somewhat zealous organization. In the short two years since they haggled through adopting their constitution and bylaws, they have created a vanguard registry -- the first closed registry with verifiable lineage in the camelid world. The Registry boasts 95 percent of the national alpaca herd and representatives of the Alpaca Registry have already begun discussions that are aimed at incorporating New Zealand born and other foreign born alpacas into the Registry. AOBA continually forges its own direction dedicated to the triangular purpose of protecting, educating and promoting the special qualities of alpacas. The International Llama Association noted this trait when it awarded AOBA a Pushmi-Pullyu Award at the 1989 ILA Conference in Salt Lake City. The International Lama Registry noted this when the ILR BOD indicated on December 2nd, their committment to adopt the essence of the Alpaca Registry for llamas.

Unlike llamas, alpacas are a brand new animal for North American animal aficianados. Llama origins in the U.S. have been traced to the Central Park Menagerie (now defunct) in New York City to a time shortly after Abraham Lincoln was President. It's fair to assume "The Great Emancipator" never turned his attention to the plight of llamas. Freedom for llamas from the confines of zoos to trekking on High Sierra trails and prancing across Fred Hartman's auction ring didn't come for more than a hundred years later. The alpaca story in the U.S. doesn't require an historical perspective -- most of it begins during Ronald Reagan's watch.

According to the San Diego Zoo's records of North American zoo inventories, alpacas were scarce in the U.S. and Canada until very recently. In 1984, the import partnership of Tom Hunt and Jurgen Schulz brought in 270 alpacas from Chile, and David Mohilef, the owner of the Pet Center, brought in 150. Prior to this a South American importation by Irv and Bea Kesling, a couple dozen English alpacas brought in by Dick and Kay Patterson, and zoo animals had served mainly to wet the appetite of would-be alpaca owners. With a 240 alpaca importation by Hunt and Schulz in 1988 and the healthy birth rate of national herds, the Alpaca Registry now records about 1,500 alpacas in the U.S. and Canada.

Vicuna Heritage/photo by Eric Hoffman

Just why alpacas seem to be generating their own energy field depends on who you talk to. Certainly the relatively small numbers of animals to supply increasing demand strengthens the market, but numbers alone don't explain it. Importer Tom Hunt: "Alpacas are an excellent animal for discriminating animal buyers. The market and enjoyment these animals generate has not fully developed." Jurgen Schulz, Tom Hunt's partner, says, "Considering the short time alpacas have been available, they've proven to be stronger in the market than we had anticipated." Relative newcomer to alpacas Antoinette Brewster of Charlottesville, Virginia explains why she took the plunge after first establishing a llama herd. "Alpacas have everything: strong aesthetic appeal, easy manageability and an elegant fiber, which is an end use that appeals to a great number of people." Brewster adds, "On a daily basis I love them because you don't need machismo to manage them. Their small size and agreeable dispositions aren't threatening to me. I've noticed women are attracted to alpacas." Dr. Ralph Uber of Yakima, Washington, a long time alpaca owner simply says, "If you can't get enthusiastic about alpacas, what can you get enthusiastic about?" Mike Safley, one of the more active members of AOBA, printed up bumper stickers with the slogan "Alpacas: the finest livestock investment." One corner of the sticker has a replication of the International Alpaca Association's (AIA) logo, the "Golden Mark," a stylized drawing of an alpaca that goes on every label of verifiable alpaca products marketed worldwide. Safley mailed his bumper stickers to members of AOBA free of charge.

Testimonials, rationales, conversions and sales pitches aside, there wouldn't be any alpacas for twentieth century North Americans to contemplate if it weren't for Andean pastoralism -- the ancient system of animal domestication that created for the world both the llama and the alpaca from selective breeding practices. The two animals have parallel histories but were apparently domesticated for different reasons. Despite their similarities, llamas and alpacas have different ancestories. Maintaining the unique qualities of alpacas that took centuries to develop has become a rallying cry among alpaca owners. These sentiments are manifested in the strongly supported Alpaca Registry (see sidebar).

Alpacas can be considered the oldest livestock in the Americas. Alpaca dentition strongly suggests that they descended from the vicuna *(Vicuna vicugna)*, the fine fleeced wild camelid, found only in the most remote and highest parts of the Andean highlands. Both animals are roughly the same size, usually between 90 and 140 pounds. Vicunas and alpacas have no enamel on the tongue side of their incisors. Both animals have the capability of regenerating their incisors and there is an absence of permanent roots in these teeth. These teeth are unique among wild ungulates and they are thought to have evolved as a survival strategy. A vicuna's reliance on a diet of herbs and short cropped grasses causes teeth to wear down rapidly. Continually growing teeth have allowed the animals with them to survive longer, giving them a reproductive advantage over animals with less advantageous dentition. It is thought that alpacas merely inherited their teeth from their vicuna predecessors. Though the species have similar teeth, there are subtle differences between alpaca and vicuna teeth that have conveniently helped archeaologists in piecing together the prehistory and history of alpacas.

The business of studying camelid teeth has contributed greatly to dating the domestication of camelids and un-

derstanding why a series of pragmatic pre-Inca cultures went to the trouble to domesticate two separate species. Understanding the differences in camelid teeth may ultimately help end the debate on how to go about classifying camelids whose phenotype makes it unclear if their ancestory is alpaca or llama. Simply stated, alpacas and vicunas have regenerating incisors with no enamel on the tongue side of their teeth. Guanacos and llamas have identical dentition with permanent adult incisors encases in enamel front and back. Llamas are thought to have descended from guanacos since both animals' dentitions are identical and they are similar in many other ways.

Dr. Jane Wheeler of the University of Colorado at Boulder has made great contributions in this area. She took understanding differences a step further when she found differences between vicuna and alpaca teeth. In 1984 at a dig called Telarmachay high in the Andes, Wheeler made a remarkable find. She discovered large numbers of ancient camelid skeletons at sites used by prehistoric man. The teeth in the skeletons she found were consistent with modern day alpacas, which have subtle differences from vicunas. Wheeler interpreted her find to mean controlled breeding had taken place, since only vicuna dentition was found prior to the discovery of the alpaca remains. From her work at Telarmarchay, Wheeler concluded alpaca domestication was well underway by 5000 B.C. Llama domestication is thought to have paralleled alpaca domestication, though the evidence is more circumstantial.

Since her original research Wheeler has become so convinced that alpacas are closely related to vicunas she is proposing the genus name of alpacas be changed. Presently many scientific publications list alpacas as *Lama pacos* the same genus as guanacos *(Lama guanicoe)* and llamas (*Lama glama*). Only vicunas (*Vicuna vicugna*) have an universally accepted separate genus. Dentition has long been a means of distinguishing between species. Largely due to Wheeler's recent work, alpacas may become officially known as *Vicugna pacos*, which will separate them in the scientific community from llamas and guanacos.

In the next 6000 years since domestication of alpacas and llamas a series of "high" cultures rooted in Andean pastoralism flourished and perished. Llamas served as the beast of burden and wool source; alpacas were shorn for their high quality fiber. Both animals were butchered. This level of domestication guarantees a steady source of meat, high quality textile fiber and a means to move large amounts of goods through rugged mountain areas. The Chavin, Moche, Nazca and later Huari cultures were each dependent on Andean pastoralism for their survival. The Pucara culture which flourished near Lake Titicaca about 2,500 years ago, is thought to have bred the alpaca intensely for high-quality wool production, which was maintained by ensuing cultures. The Pucara textiles that have survived are among the most attractive hand-woven wool items ever produced in the region. Although there was no written language in these Andean cultures and no record of the size of herds or volume of trade, anthropologists speculate that the trade surpassed all other prehistoric cultures in the Americas.

In the 1400's the Inca Empire became the last great pre-Spanish culture dependent on Andean pastoralism. Even though the Inca's domestic husbandry practices were never recorded in detail by the conquering Spanish, available evidence points to a committment to improve and keep separate the fiber qualities of alpaca and the carrying capacity of the llama. One Spanish chronicler described llamas capable of carrying 200 pounds and an elite Inca herding class responsible for the management of the royal herds. The scarcity of skeletons of llama-alpaca hybrid animals from the Inca period suggests that llamas and alpacas were kept from interbreeding. Hybrid crosses, known today as *huarizos* or *waris*, lacked the carrying capacity of llamas and the fiber quality of alpacas. Such an animal would not be useful. To this day, the descendants of the Incas, the traditional Quechua and Aymara speaking pastoralists, often butcher waris or castrate the larger males and keep them for packing. After the Spanish conquest much of the order established

The Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association

Known as AOBA, the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association has been operating with formal bylaws for two years. For what the organization lacks in size it makes up for in focus and getting the job done. There are about 120 members in AOBA. The governance allows for one president, who can only run for two consecutive one year terms. The president resides over a four member BOD. Together they conduct the business of the Association with equal voting power. The present AOBA board is made up of Phil Switzer, Diane Longo, Susan Stackhouse and Harry Goulder. Eric Hoffman is finishing his second term as president. AOBA membership spans the U.S. with the greatest number of members residing in California.

AOBA's priority for 1990 is to promote and educate the public about alpacas. To this end the organization has voted to develop a color brochure with text and pictures.

AOBA has a half dozen committees. The Show Committee and Research Committee are the most active. Mike Safley who chairs the Show Committee, is attempting to forge a consensus on alpaca judging prior to arbitrary marketing strategies doing it. Safley and his committee of fourteen should have a preliminary document to the AOBA membership by this month's end. The Research Committee, headed by Antoinette Brewster has also been active and has mailed a comprehensive health questionnaire to AOBA members that will provide valuable information about care and management of alpacas. The Research Committee has enjoyed the donations of $5,600 to date.

AOBA has involved itself in importation issues and contributed $9000 to ILA's efforts, while gaining separate recognition and representation for ILA's attorneys. The AOBA presence at the recent US Animal Health Association resulted in help in amending and altering resolution that eventually was accepted by USAHA. This USAHA decision will help in the camelid communities battles with the USDA.

Membership to AOBA and keeping abreast of AOBA news is handled by Evelyn Sharp, who has taken on the editor's role of *Alpacas!*, industry's newsletter. Membership in AOBA costs $30 per year and comes with the newsletter and a directory of all AOBA members. For a subscription to *Alpacas!* and membership in AOBA contact: Evelyn Sharp, Casa de Agudo, 860 Day Valley Road, Aptos, CA 95003, (408) 684-0850.

Besdies AOBA the only other alpaca organization in North America is *Calpaca*. *Calpaca* is a regional organization based in northern California. They've developed their own logo and created an informative fact sheet on care and management of alpacas. For more information contact *Calpaca* President Ron Brennan (415) 889-8944 or write to *Calpaca*, 35655 Palomares Road, Castro Valley, CA 94552.

over centuries old husbandry practices was disrupted and has never fully recovered.

Primarily because of their high quality fiber, alpacas are a viable economic resource in South America today. The South American herd population is estimated at 3,500,000 animals with 90 percent of them residing in Peru. Shearing, sorting and readying alpaca fiber for the international market is big business incorporating 35,000 breeders in Peru and large fiber processing mills such as Inca Tops in Arequipa, Peru. Inca Tops processes 60 tonnes annually while sorting wool into as many as 20 different natural colors and tones, as well as five different categories of fineness. Generally alpaca fiber is free of guard hair and falls between 20 and 32 microns in thickness (a micron is one thousandth of a millimeter). The predictable uniformity found in large numbers of animals sets alpaca fiber off from llama fiber which usually ranges from 25 to 70 microns and often contains varying degrees of unwanted guard hair. Among South American camelids, alpaca fiber is second only to vicuna (10-15 microns) which isn't readily obtainable since the skittish creatures do not take to domestication. Surprisingly, vicuna fiber contains thin guard hairs. Alpaca fleece are categorized as *huacaya* presence of crimp, a wavy length that enhances its use in spinning and weaving) or *suri* (lustrous, straight fiber with no crimp). About 90 percent of alpacas have huacaya fleeces. There are no known true suris in North America. However, there are a half dozen *chilis*, which are animals possessing an intermediate fleece that is suri-like in appearance but usually not as fine.

Alpacas are generally solid colors and are recognized as coming in eight basic colors: white, black, silver (or grey), red, coffee, caramel (gold), fawn and piebald (multi-colored on the body). White is the preferred color by large commercial entities in South America because it can be more readily dyed. However, all of the eight basic colors are marketable to natural fiber markets and are used in products woven at home by Quecha and Aymara speaking pastoralists. From the basic colors, fleece (or animals) can be sorted for subtle tones. For example, silver animals come in rose greys, blue silver, charcoal greys, etc. Susan Stackhouse of Hughson, California says, "The colors of alpaca fiber are astounding in terms of their breadth and beauty." Her personal favorite is caramel, a rare color in the U.S.

How the uniform, luxurious qualities and magical hues and colors of alpaca fleeces play in the budding North American alpaca market isn't entirely known yet, but measures have been taken to preserve fiber quality and not allow them to be erroded by llama or huarizo crosses entering the gene pool. The Alpaca Registry's reliance on blood typing that ties offspring to their parents provides this safeguard.

To date there have been no large alpaca show/sales similar to the Hartman format. (There have been a few "sidebar" show/sales in which alpacas were used to supplement a llama sale.) Successful large alpaca sales have been conducted by Bonny Doon Llamas and Alpacas (representing Camelids of Delaware, a Hunt/Schulz company) in the U.S. In these sales, Peruvian standards have been applied to a range of alpacas with prices assigned them according to the relative quality of a particular animal. Fiber quality, soundness, reproductive potential, dentition, age, color and presence contributed to the price. In the sale of 130 alpacas the average sale prices have been $8,500 for male weanlings; $17,000 for weanling females; $29,000 for adult females; and $28,000 for stud quality adult males. The high price for an alpaca sold at these sales was a male named Bravo Bravo who sold for $60,000 and now belongs to Edna Kennedy of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The top selling female, Vicuna Legacy, was sold to Evelyn Sharp of Aptos, California for $45,000. In the alpaca market the structurally sound, fine fibered, vicuna looking phenotypes, such as Vicuna Legacy, have drawn top dollar which contrasts to the llama market that often maligns wild guanaco-like markings. At the lower end of the market, pet quality alpaca males sell for $2,500. Besides a few large sales there is a lively private treaty market. The largest known single transaction involved the purchase of the Truckee River Alpaca Ranch herd of ten females, Bravo Bravo and other males for $370,000 by Edna Kennedy.

AOBA is currently working to establish a show format that involves input from the entire AOBA membership. Michael Safley, who heads up the Show Committee says, "Fiber will definitely be an important component as will soundness." Safley adds, "A novel ap-

The Alpaca Registry

The Alpaca Registry is the most advanced camelid registry there is. It is a "closed registry" requiring scientific verification of lineage through bloodtyping for any animal that is automatically eligible to enter it. The registry works in conjunction with the U.C. Davis Serology Laboratory and relies on 15 systems of identifying alpaca blood to distinguish between individual animals. Crias thought to be eligible must have a blood type compatible with both parents who must belong to the registry. Camelids with known huarizo or llama genes or crias whose blood type is incompatible with their parents have been denied entry.

Instituted in January 1, 1989 shortly after AOBA President Eric Hoffman finished writing it, the Alpaca Registry boasted 95 percent of the alpacas in North America by the time it closed on March 30, 1989. Hoffman sees the registry as protecting the North American alpaca herd. "The registry effectively deals with the delitirious affects of unwanted huarizo and llama influences creeping into the gene pool and erroding the unique aspects of alpacas. Basically the registry relies on science for accuracy, not hearsay." Presently the Alpaca Registry is housed in the International Lama Registry and is officially called the Alpaca Registry, a subregistry of the ILR. However, the registry's name may change. It is undergoing a review and possible amendment process that makes it more compatible with the ILR. It appears the Alpaca Registry's underlying concepts will become the direction of llama registration as well. In a signed agreement between the ILR and the Alpaca Registry Screening Committee both parties, "... agree to work with the ILR BOD with the goal of creating a single document for registering all South American camelids consistent with the underlying concepts and principles of the current Alpaca Registry. (The Alpaca Registry Screening Committee, known as ARSC, is made up of two ILR board members and three appointees from AOBA. The committee regulates entrance of animals into the Alpaca Registry with majority representation coming from the alpaca community). If the process ends satisfactorily for members of the alpaca community, who must vote on any changes to their registry, and if the registry is approved by ILR BOD, who must agree with changes in llama registration procedures, the Alpaca Registry will become known as the Alpaca Subregistry and be a permanent part of the ILR. Eric Hoffman and Dr. Dale Graham have been assigned to draft the proposed "merger" document.

A key to the future integrity of the Alpaca Registry is how to go about screening animals into the registry whose parents are not in it now. ARSC is assigned this task which will include animals not registered during the open period of the registry and imported animals (most immediately animals entering Canada from New Zealand). New Zealanders have expressed a strong interest in joining the Alpaca Registry and discussions are moving at a fast clip with New Zealanders and Alpaca Registry representatives.

Susan Stackhouse, the vice-president of AOBA, is the Chairperson of ARSC. For any special questions about registering alpacas contact Susan Stackhouse, Fantasy Farms, 5419 Clinton Rd., Hughson, CA 96326, (209) 883-0633.

Southwest Colorado Llama Breeders' Network

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Delta, CO 81416
303/874-3741

Borman, Tom & Nancy
⑦ **Valley View Ranch**
1333 Co. Rd. #1
Ridgway, CO 81432
303/626-5700

Craig, Roy
③ **La Boca Ranch**
Box 335
Ignacio, CO 81137
303/563-4645

Cranor, Paul & Fran
④ **Back Country Llamas**
P.O. Box 1287
Paonia, CO 81428
303/527-3844

Deutsch, Al & Terry
⑤ **Double L Corral**
3174 Co. Rd. 24
Ridgway, CO 81432
303/626-5502

Earley, Ted & Faye
⑥ **Earley's Llamas**
P.O. Box 97
Redvale, CO 81431
303/327-4511

Goulder, Harry & Jan
⑦ **TK BAR Alpacas**
3174 Co. Rd. 24
Ridgway, CO 81432
303/626-5502

Harper, Tom & Anne
⑧ **Log Hill Llamas, Inc.**
3868 Ouray Co. Rd. 22-A
Montrose, CO 81401
303/249-2516

Hast, Bernard & Erma
⑨ **Hast Llamas**
15251 - 6100 Rd.
Montrose, CO 81401
303/249-3083

Helgenberger, Stan & Arlene
⑩ **Helgenberger Llamas**
12484 - 5875 Rd.
Montrose, CO 81401
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Mancos, CO 81328
303/533-7284

Record, Ray & Gail
⑭ **Cedars' Edge Llamas**
2169 Hwy 65
Cedaredge, CO 81413
303/856-6836

Redwood, Bill & Jan
⑮ **Redwood Llamas**
38951 Hwy 184, Box 518
Mancos, CO 81328
303/533-7835

White, Wally
⑯ **Columbine Llamas**
P.O. Box 2347
Durango, CO 81302
303/247-1518

Youngs, Jim & Lawson, Judith
⑰ **Poppy Patch Ranch**
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Dolores, CO 81323
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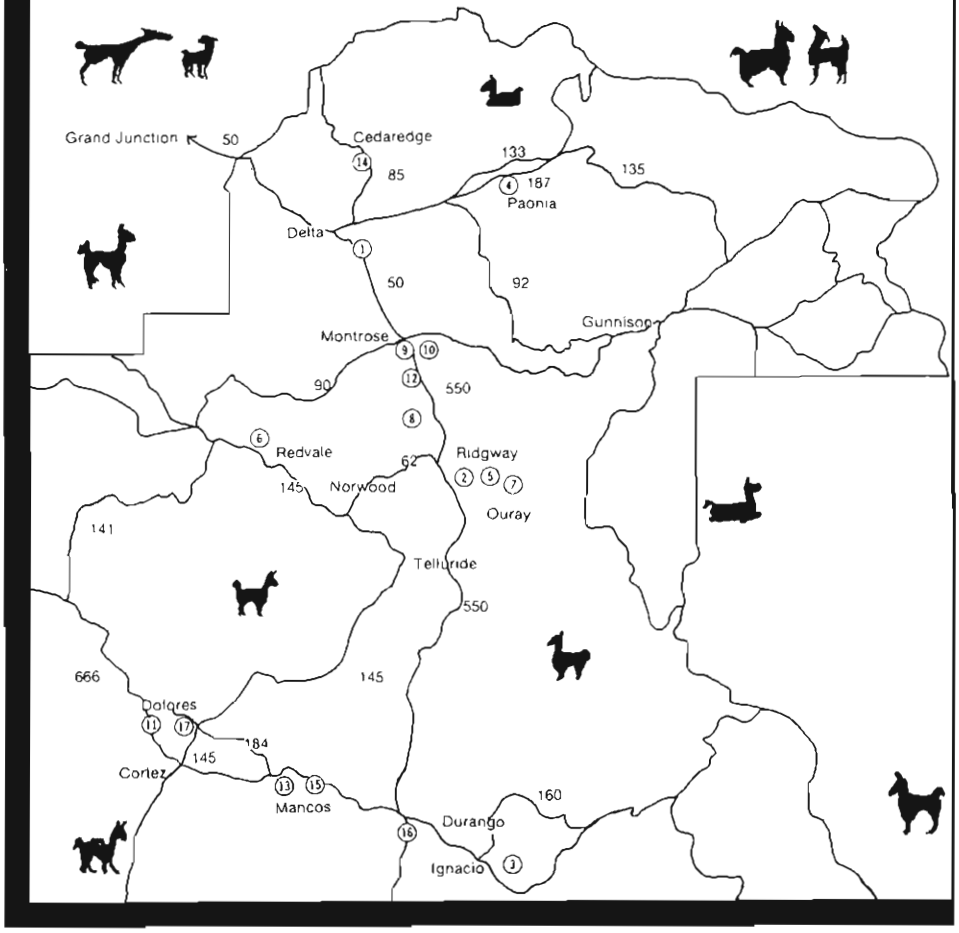

proach being talked about by some members of AOBA is to have show contests within the eight basic alpaca colors. This way we get more champions, broader participation and keep our gene pool broadly based. Most other livestock industries tend to pick a single champion who then dominates the gene pool. I personally see advantage in avoiding this kind of thinking." Tom Chamlee, a proponent of the eight color categories of showing feels show standards should welcome diversity. "Every alpaca breeder, large or small, should have a place to show. Old animals, young animals, shorn animals, animals with full coats and animals of all colors should have their place as long as fiber quality, soundness and alpaca characteristics are not forgotten."

Anthony Stackowski, the first large investor in alpacas (aside from the importers), has strong feelings about shows. Stackowski is a veterinarian and former Arabian horse judge. Stackowski: "I'd like to see judging breakdown about fifty percent on fiber which would include coverage and quality. I'd assign about forty percent of judging to conformation and the last ten percent to presence and manners. Judges must be highly qualified in their knowledge of alpacas." Stackowski cautions that the alpaca community should avoid the pitfalls of other livestock judging. "I feel we need regional shows to qualify for one national show per year. I am against accumulating points at local or regional shows for a champion of the year. It becomes a "trailer race" i.e., time and money will be recognized, not the best quality alpaca in most cases."

While alpaca owners define the qualities in their animals that they feel are most important, some of them have taken a more hands-on approach. Evelyn Sharp, former sheep owner, has made it her business to learn how to shear alpacas. After shearing her own animals and her neighbors animals, she feels both technology and technique need refinement. "Alpacas respond differently than sheep. Basically they are smarter and more sensitive. They are best shorn standing and the shearer should work slowly. We use horse clippers, not sheep clippers which can grab and tear the flesh. However, we haven't found a perfect blade yet. Alpaca fiber is too dense for horseclippers and we have yet to find the perfect clipper. The ultimate blade may have

to be invented." Sharp feels detailed knowledge of fleeces and how to care for them is at best in the formative stage. "We've found certain colors have different characteristics in terms of fineness. However, we don't know if we've shorn a large enough sample to make any hard and fast rules. We also think methods of keeping fleeces clean must be perfected. Top sheep are often outfitted with coats to keep their fleece clean prior to shearing. I'm not in favor of that for alpacas, but we need to come up with methods to keep debris out of fleece, if we are going to become serious about commercially harvesting fiber." Sharp has clipped on the average of about five pounds annually from the alpacas in her area. An alpaca with a four year growth yielded 12 pounds of fiber. Gretchen Quigg, an Oregon based alpaca breeder, has sold high quality, clean fleeces for $400 a piece to weavers and fiber outlets. Meanwhile AOBA has made overtures to International Alpaca Association to see how to go about becoming part of the international wool market.

Other alpaca owners have put their efforts into research. Antoinette Brewster chairs AOBA's Research Committee. She recently sent out a 25 page questionnaire to the AOBA membership that is aimed at understanding and improving alpaca health care and management. "We need to get some base line data before we can figure out what our research priorities should be. We need to know what areas of concern are specific to alpacas or shared with llamas." Joan Spiers of Solvang, California, another member of the AOBA's Research Committee, feels research is the single most important area for focus: "Alpacas are a new animal and there are subtle differences between them and llamas. We need to understand them better in order to give them the best possible care." This kind of diligence has brought new information to light for the entire camelid community. Rickets in camelids was first identified in an alpaca in 1988 and later found to occur in llamas.

The international livestock community has definitely focused on alpacas. New Zealand has led the charge with five separate exportations of alpacas from Chile. European nations are now applying for a slot in the Chilean rotation of exporting countries. Chile has set a ceiling of no more than 1,200 camelids being exported annually to anywhere in the world. The fact that exporting nations are primarily interested in alpacas instead of other camelids is seen as a healthy endorsement of alpacas. Andrew Duncan who represents two New Zealand entities says, "We'll be shipping crias to Canada on an annual basis." Duncan claims the maximum number of crias entering Canada from New Zealand in 1990 will be about 60 animals. He predicts maximum number in later years will be around 180 animals which will amount to about 17 percent of the annual cria crop of the North American herd. Tom Hunt and Jurgen Schulz whose herd exceeds 250 animals aren't overly concerned about New Zealand's entry into the North American market. Tom Hunt: "The New Zealand animals will probably serve to stimulate more interest. The numbers aren't great enough to adversely impact our market. Crias coming into Canada from abroad in 1990 won't be reproductively competitive until 1993." The New Zealand born animals can't be imported into the U.S. but their offspring can.

As the shakers and movers in the alpaca market do their thing, there are plenty of folks who just enjoy their animals for no other reason than their purely alpaca qualities. Arnie Feldsher of Sonoma, California looks out his window in one direction and sees vineyards and in the other direction he has a pasture dotted with alpacas. "To me they are living art as well as wonderful animals," says Feldsher. Vicki Morris of Florissant, Colorado bought two pet quality males because, "I fell in love with their cuddly looks and personalities. We didn't buy them for investment, but rather for the pleasure of owning them. They are so endearing. We get more attached every day."

"Paca power" is a different thing to different people, but to all of them there is a shared excitement and anticipation of owning an animal whose place in North America is only beginning to be appreciated.

About the Author

Eric Hoffman is President of the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association and author of the Alpaca Registry. He's a professional journalist who's written over 200 feature articles for over 20 different magazines primarily on the subject of wildlife. His latest book, *Adventuring in Australia*, an 1,100 page travel guide, the first of its kind on the outback, will be published in the summer of 1990 by Sierra Club Books/Random House.