



AABA: a new association for alpaca breeders

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AABA COMMITTEE MEMBER (MARKETING)

The Australasian Alpaca Breeders Association Inc (AABA) was formed early in 2006.

AABA provides:

✎ *members with an open, transparent association:*

✎ association rules that ensure that the members are in control, not the committee

✎ members steer AABA, while the committee facilitates the desires of the members

✎ a friendly and responsive committee that considers all members, irrespective of size

✎ a committee that is responsive to serving members and committed to observing the rules

✎ *services at an affordable rate:*

✎ a broad range of services designed to help members solve problems and enhance breeding objectives, while encouraging member involvement

✎ a forum that brings together members in a friendly, inclusive, society, to discuss any issues concerning them

✎ low cost membership with a once only joining fee and low annual fee

✎ low cost registration of animals with a two tiered system covering basic or stud registration

✎ inexpensive DNA registration of stud animals with internationally recognised DNA markers

✎ future research into genetic traits, both desirable and undesirable

✎ an Online Market for members to buy and sell all things related to alpacas

AABA'S VISION

We at AABA have a vision that says that as long as AABA remains level-headed, committed to measurable results, focussed on the needs of members, and basically being receptive, AABA will succeed. To (firstly a viable and then) a thriving industry.

AABA'S OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Australasian Alpaca Breeders Association are to:

✎ promote and advance the breeding,

husbandry and fleece potential of alpacas, ✎ provide assistance to members owning and breeding alpacas, *and*

✎ establish an international standard stud register

AABA'S MISSION STATEMENT

AABA is dedicated to:

✎ bringing together people interested in alpacas and all other camelids (including Vicuña, Guanaco, Llama and Camel), for the purposes of breeding, fleece production and uses of camelid fleece,

✎ fostering and promoting a viable alpaca and camelid industry around the world,

✎ promoting public awareness and appreciation of the alpaca and camelid,

✎ liaising with Government, Statutory and Allied Industry bodies on matters affecting alpaca and camelid welfare and other related activities,

✎ educating the Membership on the care and breeding of the alpaca and camelid,

✎ encouraging husbandry and breeding practices based upon, but not limited to, herd health, overall soundness and fleece production,

✎ encouraging innovation in the use of alpaca and camelid fleece by industry and those with a craft interest,

✎ maintaining a world standard Register via an online electronic database,

✎ representing our members with honesty and integrity,

✎ the manufacture and marketing of alpaca products, the industries associated with those activities, and members' interests generally,

✎ obtaining information on all aspects of the alpaca industry for dissemination to those engaged or interested in the industry,

✎ establishing codes of ethics in respect of members' alpaca or camelid-related activities,

✎ conducting (alone or in co-operation with other companies, agricultural societies or associations) field days, shows, exhibitions, competitions, sales and seminars dealing with alpacas and alpaca products,

✎ advancing the association financially and in public esteem,

✎ encouraging and promoting ventures and research of benefit to the alpaca industry, *and*

✎ encouraging members to plant trees on their properties and to promote environmentally sustainable practices

THE AUSTRALASIAN ALPACA REGISTER (AAR)

Registration of alpacas on the AAR began in mid 2006. The AAR is the first in the alpaca industry to comprise two tiers.

The first, or lower, tier is for animals who do not have two full generations of DNA verified parentage behind them. These may be animals registered on other systems but whose parents haven't been confirmed, or unregistered animals. Previously registered animals are assured automatic entry, while animals of unknown parentage must be DNA tested before allowed entry on the first tier.

The second, or upper, tier is for alpacas with at least two full generations of DNA verified parentage behind them, and is automatic for any animal that meets this criterion. It does not cost extra to register on this tier, though there is the additional cost of DNA testing to advance animals to this level.

The upper tier of the AAR lays solid foundations for a scientific stud pedigree register.

Breeders can elect to register alpaca that qualify on whichever tier they see fit. Registration of alpaca on the lower tier allows for affordable registration of all alpaca born, while the upper tier allows breeders to enhance the value of their alpaca and participate in future scientific DNA profiling for use by the industry, in both breeding for positive attributes, and also identifying conditions or traits that are not so desirable.

The AAR is able to record traits not recorded elsewhere in Australia, or even the world.

For instance, AABA has retained the "traditional" colours (white, fawns, browns, greys and black), but added the colour "cream"

and split the colour known as “rose grey/roan” into two: rose grey and roan. “Cream” was added by member request and “rose grey/roan” was split so as to recognise the physical and genetic differences between the two.

AABA has gone a couple of steps further: the AAR also records colour patterns and the colour of things like eyes, eyelashes, noses, toenails and footpads. We recognise “appaloosa” and “bay black” as just two examples of recordable colour patterns. And we also recognise that the colour of eyes, eyelashes, noses, toenails and footpads are very strong indicators of an animal’s genetic colour makeup.

We are sure this will advance breeding enormously with proper scientifically based records being kept.

DNA TESTING

Previous methods of only DNA testing the sire have proved to be of limited value as samples were in many cases not tested and parent verification never carried out unless specifically requested. The passage of time now means many of those samples are of little or no relevance to a “pedigree register”. The ability to profile both parents of an alpaca is an AABA first in Australia, and is an affordable choice for breeders. Interest shown by members has been astounding, and there are now many members’ animals either now on the top tier or whose progeny will soon be.

The AABA procedure is inexpensive compared to other industry charges, being no more than a simple “do it yourself” mouth swab that does not require the attendance of a veterinarian. Members are assured that the DNA markers used for the AAR are recognised as an international benchmark.



Simple 30 second mouth swab with a cotton bud is all that is required to DNA test your animals—no pain, no vet

Feedback from all those who have already completed their DNA tests is that it is easy, with little if any distress to the alpaca, and is all in all a much more humane method than having to draw blood. The integrity of the top tier of the AAR is maintained by parent verification which is included in the cost and ensures that mistakes (or even attempted deceptions) are quickly recognised. Tests completed to date have already shown inconsistencies in existing parental records, and purchasers of alpacas from the top tier of the AAR will have confidence in the parentage and genetic base they are buying.

The DNA verification of parentage is but the first step—in response to members’ concerns regarding “unavailable” animals that would assist them in verifying parents, AABA is able to “retrofit” the DNA of animals who have died or from whom samples cannot be taken, by using related registered progeny results.

Following a recent invitation to the entire industry, AABA received fantastic feedback on desirable and undesirable traits breeders would like to identify in alpaca so as to better plan their breeding programmes. AABA supports scientific research into the alpaca genome, and will make such tests available to members as they arise.

THE AABA MARKET

The Market at www.market.aaba.com.au provides a venue for both members and non members to advertise anything related to alpacas (excluding sales of live animals and stud services). Anyone is welcome to buy on the Market and a comprehensive promotional campaign with direct mail to hundreds of craft clubs plus media advertising in craft magazines will ensure a wide buyer audience. Fibre artisans can buy direct from the “farm gate”, with no wholesale or retail markups, and deal directly with the breeder!

As AABA does not act as “middleman”, there are no insertion fees for ads and no commission is payable on sales. Just a small annual fee for members to list as many items as you wish, with an option to upgrade to your own store on the AABA Market. The best news for both members and buyers is that members can sell raw fleece for FREE at least until June 2007, meaning artisans and other craft people can get a good deal for fleece they can spin, weave and knit.

TEXTILE AND FIBRE DIRECTORY

AABA is currently compiling a directory

that will be available online to all members to locate all of the clubs, guilds, artisans, buyers, suppliers, processors and manufacturers of everything to do with fleece, fibre, yarn and textiles that they may wish to contact, in order to further their business opportunities in the industry. This directory will include names, addresses, phone, fax, email and website contacts as well as a brief description of services provided.

FIND AN ALPACA VET

The AABA website maintains a directory of alpaca and llama veterinarians around Australia and New Zealand. This is valuable information for new breeders, or for those that have moved properties recently, needing to find a qualified vet in their location.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

The AABA Forum is compiling a comprehensive list of FAQ from members and suggested/considered answers have been compiled to assist and inform on the many issues that are asked from time to time. Members are welcome to participate on the AABA forum and ask their own questions which will be answered by other members and/or the committee until a consensus is reached, thus allowing the Q and A to become part of the ever evolving FAQ.

BI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

“The Alpaca Breeder” is AABA’s official magazine for members and is archived online in the AABA Forum Members Library. The AABA Magazine is published every two months with plenty of news and updates for members. Low cost advertising space is available for both members and non members, and submissions and feedback are always welcome.

THE FUTURE

There are many more projects in the pipeline, and over the next year AABA will be announcing a range of new services available to members. You can keep up to date at www.aaba.com.au and AABA welcomes any enquiries regarding membership, registration or anything you wish to know about our new and vibrant association that is inclusive of members at every level.

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