



# HIDDEN GEM NEWS

An informational newsletter published by Hidden Gem Ranch

January 2009

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## ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

- ◆ On January 1, 2008 we had 9 alpacas and 1 llama. On January 1, 2009 we have 23 alpacas and 3 llamas!
- ◆ The Southern Select Alpaca show will be on March 7 & 8. Come and see us there!
- ◆ Our farm name and logo comes from a play on words. We are hidden from the main road and our alpacas are the GEM!
- ◆ Alpaca fleece is 5-7 times warmer than wool!

Hidden Gem Ranch  
464 S. Industrial Park Rd.  
Coalmont, TN 37313  
931-692-3397

WWW.HIDDENGEMRANCH.COM

## Happy New Year!

Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. This newsletter will be published periodically and will be posted on our website. In addition, all of our customers, acquaintances, and anyone else who is interested will receive a copy via email. If you would like to be added to our email list send us an email requesting to be added. If you do not wish to receive the newsletter by email, just reply with stop newsletter in the subject line.

The main purpose of this newsletter is to provide news about alpacas. News items may include animal care, tips & tricks, herd health, and industry news. In addition we will give you an update of what's happening here at Hidden Gem Ranch and will feature some of our alpacas. We hope you will enjoy this newsletter and find it to be interesting and beneficial. Feel free to send us any suggestions that you have to make it even better.

## Alpacas and the economy

With the economy in a downturn, you may be wondering how investing in alpacas is doing. Over the years, people have invested in many things as a "hedge" to protect themselves in difficult times. Some people will buy gold or oil. Some will stuff their mattresses with money. We still see alpacas as a "long term growth" investment. With long lives, long gestation periods, low cost of upkeep, and the ability to produce 2 products (babies and fleece) alpacas can give some stability to your portfolio. We like to say that our investments are out in the pasture increasing in value everyday. Plus they are insurable to reduce risk of total loss. They also give us a tax benefit as a breeder of livestock.

We haven't seen prices fall much and there aren't too many people who own alpacas. Demand for alpaca fleece is growing. Just recently (Dec. 1) CBS news aired a segment about alpacas. You can see this on YouTube at this address:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2wK7IakTRs>

We aren't worried about our investment and believe that the alpaca industry is still in a growth mode.

## Important alpaca information

With winter here, it is important to make sure that your alpacas have plenty of water to drink. They actually drink as much or more water in the winter as in the summer. This is because the hay is dry, the humidity is lower, and the cool wind dries out the mouth. We use heated water buckets to keep the water from freezing. Adding electrolytes to the water will also encourage them to drink more.

WWW.HIDDENGEMRANCH.COM

## Thank you, our customers

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our customers who bought alpacas this past year. We hope that you are enjoying your alpacas as much as we do! Thank you very much.

Skippy, sold to Jason & Amy

Lakoda & Andrew, sold to Daniel & Amy

Rocketman, sold to Jane

Manga, sold to Ray & Susan

Lora Lou and Lulu, sold to Lynn & Danielle

Sky, sold to Brad & Kris

## Featured Alpaca(s)

It was a difficult decision to select an alpaca for our first newsletter, but we decided on our first alpaca. We bought Romeo in December 2006 as a yearling with 2 other males to “practice” alpaca farming. Everyone who saw Romeo just fell in love with his personality, temperament, and cuteness. It wasn’t until we had our first shearing in May of 2007 that the shearer said “I think he has grey in him”. We bought a color chart, and sure enough, he was light rose grey. Our first “Hidden Gem”! We knew that we had something special and once he was old enough, we bred him. He “settled” his first girls early in 2008 with his first cria due in March. When we had him shorn in May of 2008, we had taken special care of his fleece as we planned on entering it in some shows. We prepared his fleece and sent a sample in to the Virginia Alpaca Owners and Breeders show for a spin off and judging. We were very pleased that his fleece had won first place! Another Hidden Gem! We sent another sample to the Alpaca Heritage Events in New Jersey and he was awarded third place for just his fleece, no spin off. We have sent his fleece to Oklahoma for judging in February and to the Southern Select show here in Tennessee for judging in March with hopes for more awards. We are also planning on entering him into the Southern Select show to see if he wins any awards for conformation.

As long as we are talking about awards, we can’t forget about Joy. She won both first place and Grand Champion in her category at the Alabama Heart of Dixie Llama and Alpaca Show! Not bad for the first cria born at the ranch and our first show. Another Hidden Gem!

Dennis & Melissa McFail

Additional information, including photos and prices may be found at:

[WWW.HIDDENGEMRANCH.COM](http://WWW.HIDDENGEMRANCH.COM)

## Happenings at the Ranch

We have just completed our 2nd full year of raising and breeding alpacas, and boy, was it an exciting year. We had our first crias born this year (Joy, Quicksilver, Lulu, Rocky, Trinity, a new male yet to be named, and Lacy the llama). In addition we purchased additional animals to where we now have 23 alpacas and 3 llamas! Of course that meant more shelters and fencing. We participated in 2 parades and have taken our alpacas to fundraisers for missionaries to Peru. We were part of a live nativity again this year. We entered our first shows this year, and even won awards. And we sold our first females this year.

In 2009, we are expecting 8 new crias and are planning on entering additional shows. We just had a fantastic rose grey male cria born on December 28, so we will be watching very closely to make sure that he stays warm. Other crias are due in March (2), April (1), May (1), June (1), July (1), and August (2).

We are also getting ready for the Southern Select Alpaca show on March 6 & 7 in Shelbyville, Tennessee. This is the largest show in the southeast and is near us. We are planning on showing Romeo, Joy, Rocky, and maybe Harmony, Vanity, or Forest.

We just obtained 2 top quality grey males (suri and huacaya) and will be breeding all of our females to them this year in an effort to produce more grey. More information will be in the next newsletter.

