



HIDDEN GEM NEWS

January 2010

An informational newsletter published by Hidden Gem Ranch

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Interesting items

On January 1, 2009 we had 23 alpacas and 3 llamas. On January 1, 2010 we had 31 alpacas and 1 llama.

Winter is a great time to treat/prevent lice. Rose dust is commonly used.

Most alpacas appreciate a nice bucket of warm water on frosty mornings.

Cold days are perfect for working with your fleece. Spin, knit, crochet, or weave the winter blues away!

Year in review

Happy new year! We just completed our third year in the alpaca business and wanted to share the results with you. This time last year we issued our first newsletter. We have had several positive responses throughout the year, but would like to ask you for suggestions or ideas. The primary goal of this newsletter is to provide timely and useful information for our customers and to inform all of those interested in alpacas in various subjects, as well as what is happening here at the ranch. Our intent is to keep the content to 2 easy reading pages and to send it out monthly.

Feel free to send us a note regarding format, frequency, length, topics, or anything else that interest you.

During 2009 we participated in our first 2 shows (Southern Select and Royal Alpaca Challenge). Our animals were awarded 2 first places, 3 second places, 3 third places, 2 fourth places, and 1 fifth place.

We have taken several classes and seminars to learn about alpacas and processing their fleece.

We opened our farm store with a few items and intend to add them to our website in the near future.

Mid winter blues

It is this time of year with the short cold days that most of us want to stay inside. Up north (where we are from) there are more instances of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and talk of cabin fever. Even here in Tennessee, there are days that you just don't feel like doing anything. May we suggest that you open those bags of fleece and do something with it? Have it processed or learn a new skill. Even raw fleece can be easily felted. You can examine it to help you determine potential breedings for improvement or maybe even prepare it for entry into a spinoff. It would be a shame to have these wonderful animals and their fabulous fleece and do nothing with it.





Consider donating it or even putting some outside for bird nesting material. Contact Melissa for ideas or suggestions. If there is enough interest, we can plan a date for a fleece party and spend a day sharing ideas and demonstrating dyeing, felting, spinning, knitting, crocheting, etc.. Bring a bag of fleece (or more), a dish to share, and enjoy the company of others in the business.

Happening at the Ranch

It's hard to believe it, but we have already made plans for the Southern Select show scheduled for March 6-7. They have been taking applications since November! We won't have any crias born for a couple more months yet. It was nice to have Dennis home for a few days over the holidays.

Alpaca Life and Death

Alpaca life is great, but with life there is sickness and death. We experienced our first alpaca death in December. Now, alpacas are very hardy and stoic (seemingly indifferent to or unaffected by pleasure or pain) and we take very good care of our animals. The sudden death of a 4 year old seemingly healthy male (EZ Street) is unusual and we wanted to know if we did something wrong. In Tennessee, we can have free necropsies performed by our state lab (C.E. Kord Animal Disease Laboratory). The report we received stated the abdomen had been contaminated by foreign (plant) material from the gastrointestinal tract. It was this material that caused the organs to swell and stop working (spleen, kidney, and liver), causing the death. The vet performing the necropsy could not find any rupture in the intestine and believes that it had healed. Although the death of EZ Street is sad, we were happy to know that we did not do anything wrong. This sudden death prompted us to question other alpaca owners in the area, and we have heard of several farms experiencing sudden deaths of healthy animals or trips to the vet. This is a very unusual situation to have so many alpaca deaths and we feel there may be some disease making rounds (similar to the swine flu in humans) affecting healthy animals. We doubt that there is a state or national database of alpaca deaths and most farms do not want to disclose any deaths and/or can have necropsies performed to determine the cause of the death. But it would be to all of our benefits if we could collect and/or report these deaths and their cause if known. This information would be very valuable to help in determination of the spread of a disease and/or epidemic among alpacas. We would be willing to collect such information and publish the results if any farms want to send us the information. We will keep all farm names anonymous.



Visit us on our website:
www.hiddengemranch.com

Upcoming activities

Southern Select show
March 6-7, 2010

Next issue

Survey results regarding this newsletter.

Show season preparations.

Contact Us

www.hiddengemranch.com

Annual **BIG** Sale

We are going to start the new year off with a **BIG** bang. To get the year going and make room for our 2010 crias we have **DRASTICALLY** reduced prices on **ALL** of our animals. (Most are 50% off or more!) We invite you to our website where you will see **BIG** reductions in our prices until we have made enough room. **ALL** of our standard terms still apply with this **BIG** sale. Don't miss out on this opportunity to obtain some high quality animals at **BIG** savings.

Featured alpaca(s)

This month's featured alpaca is Eclipse (Sally's Nightout) ARI 31066150. Eclipse is a true black huacaya with great presence and super fleece. He is just starting his breeding career and we are excited to have him. Check out our website or contact us for more information.



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