



FLOWERDALE ESTATE ALPACAS

Selection, Judging and Showmanship

Why do we show alpacas?

Showing any animal in a show ring is a way in which breeders can measure one animal against another in a show situation. It is a means to promote your breed and your stud, and to those who are still learning gives them an indication as to how they are going in their breeding programme. Comparing your animals against others and talking to other breeders is what showing is all about, and if you happen to win a ribbon then it makes it even more exciting. However there can only be one winner in each class, and although you may disagree with the judge's decisions, you must accept and respect the decision. It is only one judge's opinion on a given day. If you have an animal that is placed in the first three positions at any show, then you know you have a very good animal. After all, you have taken your animals to the show to have a judge give an opinion, if you do not agree with him/her that's fine however don't criticise the judge to others, it makes it unpleasant for other exhibitors and nobody likes a poor loser, and they soon gain a bad reputation.

Showmanship

Showmanship is the way you present your animal to the judge while in the show ring. Many long hours must be spent training and preparing your animals, prior to taking an animal into the show ring. Showmanship is presentation and how well you've trained your animal to perform to the best of its ability, doing what you want it to do in the show ring, used to noise, standing still, used to the fleece being opened and its legs being touched. It's not just a case of teaching it to walk, that's the easy part of showing.

Showmanship is also about being courteous to other exhibitors, trying not to have your animals jumping over their animals. If you haven't trained your animals correctly, have thought for the people who have, and try to control yours. If you think you can teach your animal in a few days to be a perfect show alpaca, well think again, it takes hours of patience, and even once you've trained them they do not always perform the same on any two given days.

Choosing your show team

Knowing which animals to choose to put in your show team also takes practice, and must be thought out months before a show. There are certain things I look for, which may help you in your selection. At birth there are some animals that just stand out, they stand up and say, look at me, they have a presence about them at birth. This accompanied with a tight crimping fleece at birth is something I look for.

Not all animals will be like this, but if they start off like this, they can only keep improving. While still wet I also check the fleece on their tails, by parting it down the middle, I have found the ones with tight crimp in the tail go on to develop that same crimp through their body fleece. The majority of your animals will be born with a wavy birth coat and these take a little longer before you can tell whether they will make the show team.

At around 3 -4 months of age I have found the fleece develops down under the belly then gradually develops throughout the body, conformation can also be checked at this stage. This is when I usually choose my show team, but of course there will be some that don't make it and others who will improve. When choosing your final animals to show particularly young males or stud males, make sure you have assessed them thoroughly.



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These males are going to be on display and will represent your Stud; they are an indication of what you are breeding and where you'll be heading in the future. Males have a huge influence on a large number of females over the period of their breeding life; so if they don't come up to standard, don't use them.

A true stud sire should look like a Macho with strong bone and excellent conformation, he should have presence and be well proportioned moving evenly through the show ring. His fleece must be of the highest standard, after all this is what we are breeding them for. The qualities I like to see in a fleece is first of all fineness and softness, this is what its all about, however it is no use having this if he only has a hand full of fleece on his body, so he must have density. I look for a blustering slippery fleece, this usually indicates a low CV and a lack of medullation. Coverage on the head, legs and belly are also an indication of a dense animal and these finishing points are what give the animal presence in the show ring. Finally I like to see a high frequency deep amplitude crimp carried evenly over the entire body through into the legs belly and chest.

How to prepare your show team

Have your alpaca halter trained and basically bomb proof. This should be done around six to eight weeks before the show. Practice holding the animal still, in a show position and have another member of your family practice opening the fleece and handling the legs. This makes it easier for the judge to assess your animal correctly giving it every possible chance to win a ribbon. Never allow your animal to sit while being judged, this will almost definitely stop your animal being assessed correctly, and as an exhibitor it is up to you to present your animal to the judge.

As it gets closer to the show day more attention should be given to the show team. Have them used to being inside and make sure the animals are kept dry. Make plenty of noise in the shed as this prepares them for the long stays they will have at the showgrounds.

- Check if showing a young male that its testicles are present and that he has two.
- Make sure your animals are registered well in advance of the show or you may miss out on your entries.
- Trim toenails well in advance to ensure the animal is walking correctly on the day.
- Have your animals used to eating hard feed well in advance of the show, this ensures the animal is in top condition and it will be able to cope with different food for the length of the show.

Fleece

Fleece preparation - There are many different ways to prepare the animals fleece, Clipping, Blowing, Washing, just to name a few. These animals are show animals and must be shown in show condition, while at the same time the judges are looking for an animal in as close to paddock condition as possible. What does this mean? It really depends on where you live as to what paddock condition means. If you live in a wet area, paddock condition could be covered in mud, or in an area with natural bush, it could mean covered in twigs and burr. Obviously it means a happy medium, and finding this is difficult. Judges don't want to see snow white washed animals, but at the same time it would not be correct to show an animal covered in mud.

Brushing and blowing are definitely OUT this will only distort the fleece and remove all the crimp the animal has. By attending shows and watching and listening, you will see the many



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different ways animals are prepared. You will soon get an eye as to what looks over prepared and what looks normal which will give you an indication of what is meant by show condition. Most judges prefer the animal that is in a natural clean condition. Clipping should only be done if you need to take an animal through to the end of a show season. Animals should be shorn annually both for fleece quality and animal health. If there is a need to clip an animal lightly, do it weeks before the show, so that it has time to settle down and looks natural.

Body condition - When you hear a judge say an animal is not in show condition this does not usually mean its fleece is not prepared correctly, it is more likely to mean that it is in poor body condition.

Show day

1. The chief steward on the day will explain the way the animals will be paraded, listen carefully; all animals should be paraded between you and the judge.
2. Move into the show ring calmly and smoothly, don't drag the animal and don't rush. This is where the judge is checking for correct movement and conformation.
3. Line up in a straight line, there is no excuse for not standing straight, if you have prepared your animals they should stand still. Make sure the animal is standing correctly in a correct stance.
4. Concentrate on what your doing and never take your eyes off the judge. You may be asked to move an animal into another position so watch carefully, and don't forget to make sure your animal is still standing correctly.
5. We all have animals that play up on the day, no matter how well trained, if this happens don't stress, be patient and firm and try to calm the animal, if you get upset the animal will sense this and may get worse.
6. Once the judge has placed the ribbons, congratulate the other winners, and listen carefully as to why the animals have been placed in these positions, this is how you will learn.
7. After the show is completed most judges make themselves available to discuss any matter with you regarding your animals. Take advantage of this and listen carefully, you have everything to gain and nothing to loose.
8. Never forget your animal after the show, if they placed or not, they have performed to the best of their ability & deserve to be treated like a champion at all times.

Judges

Judges are human and make there own decisions based on a lifetime of knowledge and experience. All judges in all breeds look for the same type, to meet their breed standard, however some place more importance on good and bad points than others, and as exhibitors you wouldn't want it any other way. A good judge is one that has been consistent throughout the day, and has explained his decisions in a confident manner. Judge's decisions quite often don't meet with the approval of the exhibitor, however there can only be one winner and many losers so it is natural to be disappointed with the decisions, however you must respect the decision gracefully. Be a modest winner and a good loser, as no one likes a whinging exhibitor, and bad reputations are soon gained.

Showing and judging should be taken seriously, but it should also be a friendly event where fellow breeders can meet, compare, learn and improve their stock for next time. It's the showpiece window for our industry and an excellent way to promote your stud.

*Dianne Condon
International judge, co-owner of Shanbrooke in Australia*