



AUSTRALIAN
ALPACA

AUSTRALIAN ALPACA FLEECE LTD

Newsletter – March 2007

FLEECE QUANTITIES

As of the 8th March we have received 46,000 kg of fleece – this is very encouraging as it is around 13,000kg more than this time last year.

However we still have quite a way to go to reach the required 65,000kg of fleece for the year and urge all growers with fleece sitting in the shed to contact your FLO or Matt at AAFL for packing and transport information.

AUSTRALIAN ALPACA FLEECE LTD CUT-

OFF DATE FOR FLEECE RECEIVALS

Due to unprecedented demand for alpaca fleece from manufactures AAFL is extending the cut-off date for fleece receivals for this financial year till the **31st of May**.

This is largely due to significant forward orders for a number of fleece types that must be filled by the middle of May. We would like to remind all growers that for AAFL to meet these orders it is very important that all clips are sent in as soon as possible (preferably before the end of April to allow enough time before mid May for classing).

Another advantage we have this year is that the classing of grower clips is considerably closer to the date of receival than it has been in past years – currently classing is around 3 weeks behind the date of receivals.

Remember AAFL is seeking all fleece types – including all colours in huacaya and suri, hairy pieces and VM fleeces.

A number of regions have held pressing days however most still have fleece awaiting shipment to AAFL so any growers who still have fleece stored are encouraged to contact their FLO or the AAFL office for further details.

TRANSFER OF FORMER COOPERATIVE

AAFL SHARES TO AACL SHAREHOLDERS

On 21 February the AAFL Board received from the Alpaca Cooperative Liquidator a transfer of shares to just over 900 former AACL shareholders. The Board then approved the transfer of these shares to all the shareholders listed in the Liquidator's Schedule, using his ratio of 3.6883 AACL shares for every 1 AAFL share.

Following discussion on the resulting large number of new shareholders with less than the desirable minimum for efficient shareholder administration of 2000 AAFL shares, the Board agreed to try to encourage small shareholders to privately offer to sell or buy small lots to rationalise their holdings. The AAA President has suggested that the AAA Forum might provide a useful venue for such private trades.

The Board also agreed that a Chairman's letter will be sent to all shareholders in late March, including some up-to-date financial information, an explanation of the share transfer process, and possible ways to rationalise small holdings. This mailing may also include a copy of the new AAFL colour sales catalogue

NEW AAFL WEBSITE

During this month a new AAFL website will be launched. The updated site will contain much more information on a range of fleece topics and up to date information on the happenings at AAF, plus a registered shareholder section.

The new site will also contain illustrated listings of new high quality products being made under the Australian Alpaca Connection label, and secure card order payments can be made through our NAB link. (See them at the AAFL shop too.) The website address remains the same at www.aaf.com.au

ORGANIC FLEECE SURVEY

A survey has been sent out to the regional FLOs to be passed on to growers seeking information on the production of organic alpaca fibre in Australia.

The market for organic clothing is growing very fast and is one we believe alpaca fibre would be perfectly suited to with its range of natural colours. However before AAFL can look further into this market we need to establish what quantity of fleece is being produced under organic standards currently and into the future.

The survey form is available from your FLO or by contacting Matt at AAFL.

For information on Organic standards see www.aqis.gov.au/organic or <http://www.organicgrowers.org.au/> or <http://www.nasaa.com.au/>

NEW PRODUCTS FROM AUSTRALIAN ALPACA CONNECTION

Shortly a range of beautiful high quality suri coats will be available through Australian Alpaca Connection. The coats come in a range of styles for both men and women.

Other new products include King Size alpaca socks and boucle throw rugs, which are available in both the natural colours and a range of dyed colours.

AUSTRALIAN ALPACA CONNECTION CATALOGUE

During March a full colour catalogue of the Australian Alpaca Connection product range will be mailed out to all growers. Growers are reminded of an automatic 15% discount off the Recommended Retail Price on all AAC products

For further details on products contact Jennifer Worland at AAFL on (03) 9311 0933 or jennw@aafl.com.au

NEW RETAIL FACTORY OUTLET IN SUNSHINE

Following our entry into the wholesale business with the launch of Australian Alpaca Connection, a lot of these products have been passing through our Sunshine Vic. warehouse and thus have not been readily available to be either viewed or purchased by growers dropping off fleece or visiting the fleece classing operations there.

To address this problem, while also attracting new sales from the Melbourne tourist industry, we have now opened a factory shop. On sale display here are all the products AAFL produces, plus products from our strategic partners. Thus a wide range of the latest releases in alpaca homeware and fashion are now available here.

Merchandise in the shop is offered for sale to all growers and members of the general public, with a **15% discount off the recommended retail price for all alpaca growers.**

It is intended to have this shop open 5 days each week during AAFL working hour; however at first we will probably restrict this to Thursday and Friday to test customer demand. Please feel free to come and see our latest designs.

ULTRA FINE BALE PROJECT

The Ultrafine bale project from “Alpaca Ultimate” and supported by AAFL has been completed.

Pleasingly the 92kg bale has been core tested by the Australian Wool Testing Authority and has returned a micron test slightly finer than expected at 17.9 micron. A second Superfine bale was also put together and tested and returned a result of 19.6 micron.

AAFL has been in contact with some of the top superfine worsted processors both in Europe and also Peru where we believe there will be significant interest for this bale and much publicity can be created through its sale. It is our hope that in the future with the involvement of more breeders an even greater quantity of this fleece type can be collected.

THE ULTRAFINE BALE PROJECT
From Paul Vallely, Australian Alpaca Fibre Testing.

By now, most alpaca growers would be aware of the 'Alpaca Ultimate Ultrafine Bale' scheme.

For those who are not, the scheme involved growers from around Australia identifying fleeces that were white, shorter than 100mm, having comfort factor above 99% and have an average fibre diameter of less than 19 microns.

An initial mid-side test was conducted before fleeces were submitted to Australian Alpaca Fibre Testing (AAFT) of Crookwell, NSW. Fleeces were then grid tested to confirm they met criteria and classed to remove contaminants before being placed in either an Ultrafine bale or superfine bale.

AAFT negotiated an agreed 'one-off' price with AAFL of \$60 per kilo for fleeces consigned to the Ultrafine bale and \$40 per kilo for fleeces consigned to the Superfine bale.

The Ultrafine bale achieved an Australian record for the finest alpaca bale ever produced with an average fibre diameter of 17.9 microns.

During the testing phase, AAFT conducted an evaluation of the relationship between mid-side tests and a grid test of the saddle area of the respective fleece. The evaluation involved 483 fleeces.

It should be stressed that this evaluation was based on a small number of fleeces and used basic methodology and statistical analysis.

The evaluation found the mid-side test was on average 1.4 microns finer than the grid tested average of the saddle area. The difference ranged from one fleece where the mid-side was 0.8 microns broader than the grid test average, to another fleece where the mid-side was 4.9 microns finer than the grid test. About 66% of fleeces had mid-side tests being within 0.4 to 2.4 microns finer than the grid test. These results appear to be similar to those published in RIRDC report by Knox & Lamb, 2002.

One factor that tended to increase the difference between the two tests was the test method used for

measuring the mid-side sample. It is believed that testing without scouring or cleaning the alpaca fibre samples can cause error, depending on the 'Correction Factor' that is commonly applied, based on wool testing methodology.

Implications to the industry arising from AAFT's evaluation will be presented at the next National Alpaca Fibre Seminar in Ballarat on 28 July 2007.

For further details on the National Alpaca Fibre Seminar contact: paulvallely@bigpond.com

.....
REGIONAL NEWS:

WA SOUTHERN REGION

To stimulate fleece receivals and to encourage growers to actively participate in sending in their fleeces, we have organised a Fleece Seminar on the 10th & 11th February.

We would have to be the smallest region in Australia members wise, but I dare say we could be the largest in area. Logistically this is a real challenge to get members to meetings, and fleece in for processing to the AAFL.

This Seminar has created amazing interest, with speakers from the WA Agriculture Dept talking about "Fleece Health Through Pastures" and "Identifying and Understanding Histograms" Matt McAninly has agreed to come over and will talk about AAFL's role, and on the Sunday Matt will go through the procedures from shearing alpaca to skirting, pre-classing and getting the fleece ready for transporting.

Last year WA Southern Region sent 402kg of fleece, this year we have forecast 1000kg, and I think we will come pretty close to achieving this if the response to the seminar is any indication.

FLO – Greg Smith

WA CENTRAL REGION

WA Central is about to send its biggest single consignment of 17 or possibly 18 pressed bale in the vicinity of 2500kgs. At the time of writing a

shed is in the process of being cleared out and the contents will find its way to me shortly.

I had a very successful pick up at our recent OGM. A flyer advised that fleece needed to be delivered to the collection centres prior to the meeting or delivered to the meeting. The result was an alpaca float full of wool packs and a heavily loaded Nissan Patrol Ute, netting 890kgs. My shed already had 10 pressed bales waiting for this lot.

There is still fleece sitting in a few sheds but growers have to choose between the moths and AAFL. No one else can do it for them.

FLO – Kate Fysh

VICTORIAN EASTERN REGION

Victorian Eastern Region made presentations to Hoogies of Yarra Glen and Pakenham Produce, major agricultural/hardware suppliers.

Both have been instrumental in getting VER to a position of major fleece supplier to AAFL. Growers can take their fleece to these transport points, or have it collected from the farm gate at a very moderate charge. The two companies are placed at each end of the Dandenong Ranges, east of Melbourne. The greatest concentration of VER growers is found in the Dandenongs, which form the western boundary of Gippsland. Thanks, in the form of plaques, went to these major farm suppliers in appreciation of their efforts over several years.

VER would once again like to express their sincere thanks for the support given to the industry as it continues its steady growth into world elite fibre markets.

FLO - Rudy Balde

HAWKESBURY-BLUE MOUNTAINS REGION

The Hawkesbury-Blue Mountains Region held a Fleece Collection Day on Sunday 11 February, at which 41 members provided sufficient fleeces for us to press 16 bales, with a few fleeces left over. The final tally for the day exceeded 1,700 kilograms. It was encouraging to see some breeders who had not submitted fleeces for

several years finally getting round to emptying the barns.

Our plans now are to hold another collection day on Sunday 1 April, in conjunction with a Regional General Meeting. Once those collections are completed, the bales will be transported to AAFL.

The H-BM region is fortunate in owning its own wool press, as well as having several members experienced in its safe use, so there haven't been any fingers lost so far.

As a further encouragement to breeders to submit fleeces, the region also pays for transport costs to AAFL for those fleeces submitted and baled on Fleece Collection Days.

FLO - Matt Ridley

SOUTHERN NSW REGION

With probably the largest number of alpacas of all 14 AAA Regions, as expected a large quantity of fleece is shorn in SNSW each season. So far 67 fleece bales of up to 185 kg each have put together by a 'hard-pressed' FLO using presses, storage and bale loading facilities kindly provided by Gordon Litchfield Wool at Yass, and then delivered to Sunshine by Murphy's Wool Transport. It's hoped that another 5-10 bales can be gathered from late entrants this season.

Many SR growers participated in the Ultrafine bale project too, generating a lot of important interest in the difficult challenge of gathering and pre-classing the high quality, clean and fine fleece with outstanding handle and softness that is critical to the growing value of our industry. This exercise showed that we still have a long way to go to reduce the guard hair contamination that rules out a lot of otherwise very fine fleeces from achieving classed higher value. And we all need to take more care about colour contamination too – both in our breeding decisions and in the shearing shed!

FLO – Bob Richardson

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS-

Please submit information you would like to share in this newsletter to: Stella Butler – stella.butler@anembopark.com.au Clearly identify in the subject header reference to – AAFL newsletter, so that your submission is not mistaken for virus or scam email.