

# NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ALPACA BREEDERS' SOCIETY

January 2019

Volume 5, Issue 11



## AND SO ... I WENT TO PERU !!!

Part III  
By Di Kruger



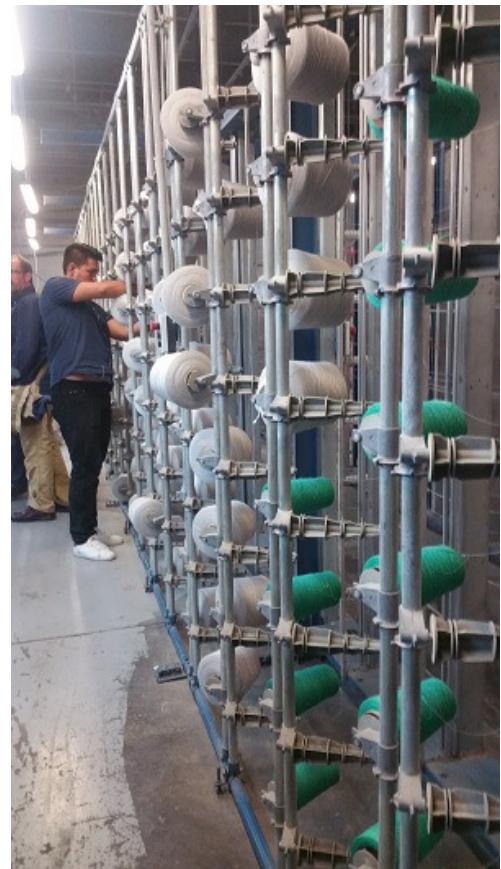
### 24 OCTOBER – A TOUR TO TWO FACTORIES – INCAPERU AND MICHELLS

The sheer scale of these processing facilities blew my mind – they were ginormous and it was all absolutely fascinating. Raw fleece is sorted by hand and then sent through the numerous processing stages. The factories also have their own in-house micron testing equipment.



Washed and cleaned

Their fleece starts off in the same way as mine – generally filthy – but by the end it is lustrous and clean, having gone through multiple levels of processing – and some of those horrible little burs could be seen hanging on for dear life through many processes!



The scale ...



The processing part of the factory is highly humidified, there is water spraying from sprinklers all the time to reduce the static. Once the fleece is clean then there is the spinning, the weaving and the compilation of garments and product. Ladies sit with light tables to check the woven cloth as it comes off the looms.



**Weaving on a truly industrial scale ...**



Then some of the cloth is cut and sewn together – other yarn is knitted and joined. The knitting machines can knit the front and back of a jersey at the same time so it is very quick.







**Checking the finished cloth**

No matter how you go about it – the transformation from fleece to finished product is labour intensive, even on this scale. And at all levels, there is checking, checking and checking yet again in order to always produce a quality product.



**Checking on the light table for flaws**

## SAABS 2018-2019 COUNCIL MEMBERS

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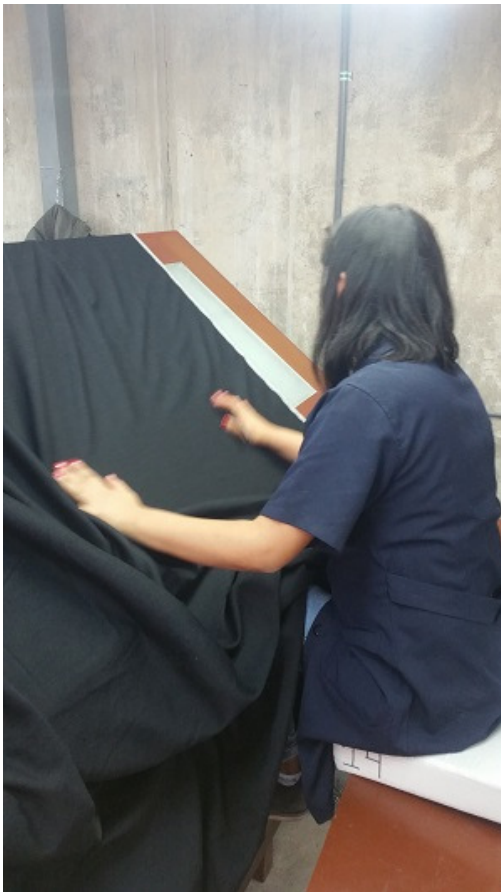
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At the Inca Peru factory there were five black alpacas tethered outside on the lawn – they were part of the “Save the black alpaca initiative”.

Black alpacas make up a very very small proportion of the total alpaca population of Peru, and if they were a separate species would have been declared close to extinction.

**Checking and more checking ...**



**Each person has their own little bit to sew**



**Ironing**

They are doing a lot of genetic research into what makes them black.

At each factory we were royally treated with snacks and drinks and the day ended with musicians serenading us and the gift of a lovely scarf from the Michell Mill.



**A vicuña jacket, only \$7,000!**

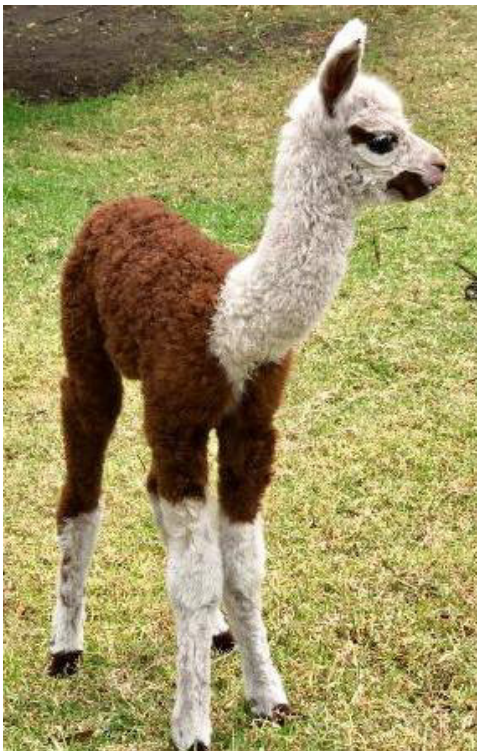


## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One of the things I most enjoy about this alpaca business we embarked upon way back when is the *personal-ness* of it all. The thrust of our work is to make one-off exclusive items in pure alpaca, largely on commission for clients. So sometimes we'll be given an old favourite jersey to copy (and we've even been asked to mend some of these 'old friends' as well) and sometimes we'll design according to clients' wishes. I have to say some have been, well, not exactly my taste ... but that's fine, the customer is king.



We have a lot of email chat with our clients - we don't do online shopping per se because we don't have lines of products on offer and besides I prefer to keep it simple! We make only one of anything. Best of all are repeat clients, and I can think of a doctor lady in Johannesburg who loves alpaca and must now have about eight of our jerseys, some she's bought off the shelf and some we've made for her. I enjoy the chat with clients, and those who want to keep a gift a secret from their spouse - and next week we are to organise a somewhat clandestine delivery of a purchase for another!



A few years ago I visited the Eastern Cape in search of processing options and my travels took me to a wise old fowl, well known to many - who's probably forgotten more about fibre and spinning and weaving than the rest of us will ever learn! His sage words of advice to me were, "Alison keep your business small". What he didn't realise was that Alison didn't have the resources to go large anyway and even though we have grown our business over the years, we have still maintained the same number of staff to help us. I do support what Richard Branson advocates, which is to train people well enough so they can leave, and treat them well enough so they don't want to. Doesn't always work of course.

On the other end of the scale Di's account of the enormity of IncaPeru and Michells' factories is indeed mind blowing, daunting!

So National Alpaca Day will be upon us again soon - April the 27th, Freedom Day. I wonder what everyone is going to do this year. And birthing season is already under way - I always look forward to people posting pictures of their newborns.

I think Gabby van Heerden's Marigold takes the cake so far this year! Here's a pic of her. What amazing markings and how thoughtful of her to make it so easy for her shearer when the time comes.

Thank you Di once again for setting up the SAABS WhatsApp group. It is proving over and over again that this form of platform is invaluable for us all when in need of help, advice and emergencies especially for breeders in the sticks where vets are not always readily available.

Chat next month everyone ... and keep those stories coming please! A

### SAABS REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

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## TAKING TIME OUT ...

For the first time ever Di Kruger and I got together recently, while both of us were off duty. Off SAABS duty that is! Di came to the Western Cape for a wedding and drove to Helderstroom where we had a good old natter and the following week we met en famille in Hermanus for lunch. Di's husband Johan, daughter Samatha and son Michael were all there. So before we got any older Michael took this pic.



## THE ALPACA ONLINE SHOP

Dear alpaca breeders and alpaca lovers,

Over the last months we have made some very good progress on building up The Alpaca Shop, the online shop for ALL alpaca products nationwide and Southern Africa. It's a large undertaking, takes plenty of time and resources but will be absolutely worth it on completion in around two months' time. The site is on maintenance mode, but for those who would like to know the domain: [www.alpacashop.co.za](http://www.alpacashop.co.za)



If you would like to join us, please send me a mail: [info@tatz.co.za](mailto:info@tatz.co.za) for more questions, infos or straight away send us: ● A product photo ● product name ● price ● short description – your company name and logo.

You'll be set up as a "vendor" and form the backbone of this site. Once we have reached a certain stage of completion we will check up on you personally on your collection points, delivery methods, banking details and how it all works so everyone is on the same page.

As mentioned in my brief in Alison's October newsletter 2018, the site will offer latest SEO implementations and centres around the customer who looks for alpaca products and gets alpaca products, while at the same time keeping the Vendor as a brand in the spotlight.

Best Regards,  
**Christopher Tatzreither**  
**TATZ Creative Media**



Soft, sensational and sure to enthrall ...

# ALPACAS



Meet South Africa's  
best kept secret!



The **SOUTH AFRICAN ALPACA BREEDERS' SOCIETY** Save the Link!  
**INVITATION** to an Open Day venue near you ... [www.alpacasociety.co.za](http://www.alpacasociety.co.za)

**SAVE THE  
DATE!**

**SA National Alpaca Day**  
**Saturday 27 APRIL 2019**

## CONCENTRATES CANNOT REPLACE ROUGHAGE ...

by Tawheda Schuitema

I had an eight year old female that was struggling to keep weight on. We dewormed her over a few months with different dewormers and gave her extra rations and lucerne but she still dropped weight slowly. I've heard of other breeders having similar problems with a few of their animals. The obvious bases were covered but it wasn't helping. I gave her a course of Tetracycline. No effect. Her eye started weeping gunge so we treated it, it cleared up but started again. I reached the point of deworming her every three or four weeks but she was now becoming skeletal and I didn't want to poison her.

She was eating large amounts of good feed with great enjoyment. After a deworming, she would seem to pick up a bit and her eye would clear, but a week later she was back to what had become normal. I had also heard and read of horrible diseases that cause wasting.

I spoke to the vet again and she scolded me for not euthanasing the poor girl. But it's very hard to euthanise an animal with such a zest for life! Well good sense prevailed, the deed was done before a deworming was due and we did a post mortem.



She had developed pneumonia and would have died soon, which was a tremendous relief for my workers, and my own guilty conscience. The pneumonia was secondary though. She didn't have worms, everything was pretty normal except that her C1 gut lining was completely smooth instead of being covered with little projections.

She could no longer absorb the nutrients so she had starved in the midst of plenty. Evidently this can be caused by heavy worm loads or by a lack of roughage at some stage of their lives. I think with her it was probably the latter.

This was an extreme case of what Jane Vaughan was warning us about. Concentrates cannot replace roughage!

RIP 20.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

- **Organic, Fair and Ethical Trade Event**, 19th February 2019, Cape Town International Convention Centre - see page 13
- **National Alpaca Day**, 27th April 2019 - countrywide



## BKB AND WHAT THEY WANT FROM US

Alison Notley

In a report presented to SAABS dated 24th October 2017 we were advised the criteria for BKB's acceptance of alpaca fibre included inter-alia:

### **"Fleece**

Fibre is divided into four lines:

22 microns and less – labelled as A grade fleece

23 to 26 microns – labelled as B grade fleece

27 microns and more – labelled as C grade fleece

Cria fibre – a young alpaca, not shorn before, also with a minimum length of 50mm. On a young alpaca this fibre could be taken from all over the body. Labelled as D1 grade fleece. Cria fibre that is 20 to 50mm, label as D2.

### **Neck**

Fibre is divided in to two lines:

26 microns and less – labelled as A grade Neck

27 microns and more – labelled as B grade Neck

This line can be fibre taken from other areas of the body, as long as it fits into the length requirement.

### **Shanks**

26 microns and less – labelled as A grade Shanks

27 microns and more. – labelled as B grade Shanks

### **Legs**

Fibre in this line is only distinguished according to the colour categories. It can be matted fibre, fibre with seed in or vegetable matter too dirty to go into the other lines. Labelled as Legs."

### ***BUT - did anyone spot the deliberate mistake ... or was it?***

I took this up with BKB at the very end of December last year pointing out that the above requirement definitely lays more emphasis on *shank* fibre than *leg* fibre (and who would do that?) and received a reply from their Etienne Bezuidenhout on 9th January 2019 who agreed, "yes it should be the other way round" - that they had indeed transposed the criteria of Legs for that of Shanks. So in future when grading your fibre for BKB please take note that these sections should read as follows:-

**Legs:** 26 microns and less – labelled as A grade legs

27 microns and more. – labelled as B grade legs

**Shanks:** Fibre in this line is only distinguished according to the colour categories. It can be matted fibre, fibre with seed in or vegetable matter too dirty to go into the other lines. Labelled as Shanks.

**Leg fibre** is classified as being shorn from shoulder to knee, or thigh to hock

**Shank fibre** is taken from the knee, or hock to the fetlock or ankle joint!

***Don't do yourself out of your hard earned cash!***

## ALPACAS AND ROSES

### A VISIT TO OUR ALPACAS AT THE BEGINNING OF NOVEMBER 2018

by Verena Hinsch

*(Owing to an error entirely due to the editor - and for which I profusely apologise to Verena here is the full version of her last month's newsletter article on her lovely alpacas in the Karoo) ... Alison*



**N**ovember is one of the most beautiful and work-intensive months of the alpaca year. Roses are adding beauty and colour to the Karoo during the dry months.

I returned with five huge feed bags stuffed with our latest shearing (just the saddles) - as I went to the farm and back by Intercap bus. It must have been a sight to behold ... a huge suitcase - as I packed too much clothing in case it would snow / rain / be hot.

Enquiring at the main office in Cape Town about taking the bags of fibre we were told that each extra kilogram would cost us R5.00. Okay, so that was reasonable. When Sally dropped me off at the filling station in Graaff Reinet I must have been a strange sight ... usually the indigenous people travel with bags and sacks ... here this oldie is sitting on her huge heap of baggage. After ensuring that it was not weed I am smuggling, the person in charge of baggage was happy to just throw the bags into the baggage compartment - needless to say, I did not have to pay extra. I disembarked in Somerset West at the filling station at 5 in the morning, waiting for my daughter to collect me on her way taking her son to school ... and we all fitted into the little Golf ...



... I had had a wonderful time at Sally's - the first few days I obviously had to acclimatise myself with the different rhythm of things.

I was fortunate to be able to participate in the shearing, though in a very small way, i.e. helping Sally pack sorted fibre into the correct bags for BKB. Shearing is done with sheep shears, as has been done all the years before. It's a slow, though very calm and rewarding exercise.

**The magnificent youngsters**





**Unshorn - and shorn ... and shorn by hand too, a skilful technique not frequently practiced by many alpaca breeders**

I admire Sally's mode of work and sorting. Each fleece goes through her hands, the skirting, the measuring of fibre, weighing and very important, she writes a brief comment on each batch according to feel, quality, etc. I am fortunate - in all the years that we have alpacas, I have learned a lot from each of the people who have taken care of our animals.

The first day, after my arrival, we went out to the farm where our females were stationed - some good grazing in the veld gave them an extra boost in this terrible drought. It took us about two and a half hours for 23 kms to the camp.



**Karoo gymnastics ...**

*After ensuring that it was not weed  
I am smuggling,  
the person in charge  
of baggage was happy to just  
throw the bags into  
the baggage compartment!*

When they heard Sally call them, they came running and obviously hoped for some extra feed - Martin, the farm worker, rounded them up and like a good shepherd led them through two huge farm camps down to the loading station where a truck and our trailer waited for them to be taken to Crickleywood Farm. We had to do another trip with the trailer since they did not all fit in one haul.

Two days later Sally collected the males from another farm and the herd was complete.



I am impressed by the strength, the good overall health of the animals that graze out in the veld. Though the drought is taking its toll on some of the females that are older or not as strong, the herd looks good. Of course, the highlight of each day was to be able to see, sometimes even get very close, to our own and all other alpacas.



How I missed them - it's been two years since we've been at the farm. When the vet came to do the pregnancy scanning on all girls I stood in the paddock 'engulfed' by humming and inquisitive furies. I have to admit that my heart sang with joy when first I arrived and called out to the older girls, "RockOn", "Allegra", "Blues" ... and they all recognised me, acknowledged me being there and then got on with grazing and just 'chilling'.

**Karoo alpacas after shearing ...**

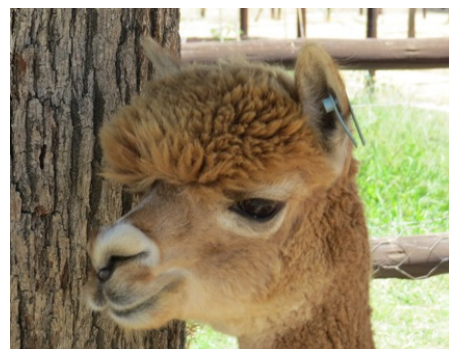
I obviously had to get to know the younger crew. Having only seen them on photos it was now time to meet and greet. My late afternoon / sundowner was usually spent by taking a drink down to the garden, where I could sit under shady trees and look out onto the camp with all girls and the cria. Life is good.



**The *Peace* rose in Sally's garden**



**Helderstroom Alpacas' Vichy on the left doing his Mr Chad bit whilst our oldest alpaca Browntop from Chile (19 years old this year) looks on ...**







**T**he Delegation of the European Union to South Africa and the African Farmers Association of South Africa would like to invite you to a meeting and workshop that will address opportunities for South African producers into the growing European market for sustainably produced goods.

The focus of this event will be on agricultural products for the emerging farmer sector.

**Speakers include:**

Hon. Sfiso N. Buthelezi, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Mrs. Cecilia Malmström, EU Trade Commissioner.

**The event will be held in Cape Town on Tuesday 19 February 2019, from 10.00 – 17.30 hrs at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC).**

Learn more about this event and secure your participation by clicking on link below.

**[MORE INFORMATION](#)**

Final programme and further information will be shared later in January



## GOING BACK IN TIME ... PART V

**T**his amusing excerpt, written by one of South Africa's original alpaca owners Warren Kay, is extracted from Gavin's SA Alpaca Breeders' Club newsletter No. 5 dated March 2004. I think all of us can relate to this!

*"We become alpaca farmers when we are first alone with our animals, our friends and well wishers have left and the care of the animals rests in our hands. Anxiety can reach out and make us putty in the hand! The "sunbathing" alpaca is a classical example of almost instantaneous stress in our lives. The scenario is as follows: several of the herd are lying flat, eyes closed and something does not seem right. They remain immobile as one approaches with increasingly heavy footfalls, closing the gap. They appear to be DEAD, your're almost stamping your feet as you get close enough to touch your most expensive, most pregnant female when she suddenly leaps to her feet causing a chain reaction with the others - and yourself!*

*With huge enlarged eyes that maintain contact with hers for a split second you realise that all is well with the herd, life is great, your investment is alive and spitting and that sunbathing won't fool you again next time (well maybe by the tenth time)!"*



And finally ... the "three wise men" of the desert - recognise anyone?!