Alpaca Shows:
The Blame Game
or
Fair and Friendly Competition

By
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The 2005 Alpaca Show season started off with a bang, not your typical pyrotechnic bang, but the type that comes with change and the disruption of business as usual. The fuse was a series of new show rules that address the issue of grooming alpacas. Grooming is out and natural paddock condition is in: The fat is in the fire.

The grooming of alpacas in the United States dates back to the very first alpaca show in Grass Valley, California. The rules against grooming are rather recent and have generally occurred in reaction to the practice of show fitting that has become a high art among some exhibitors. This persistent practice of preparing show alpacas brought us to the point where something needed to be done.

To illustrate this need, I will tell you about a rather ugly incident that began at the Kentucky Classic in Louisville, Kentucky and continued on to the North American Alpaca Show in Springfield, Massachusetts—but not yet. The new anti-grooming rules that have caused all of the consternation are no small matter—we are talking about playing by the rules versus cheating. Should we groom our alpacas like show poodles or present them as production quality livestock where our focus is superior selection and genetic gain?

GROOMING VERSUS NATURAL CONDITION

The struggle over whether we should be allowed to groom our alpacas like poodles, primped for a fancy dog show, has serious implications for our industry. Take, for instance, the trimming or sculpting of haucayas into perfectly (in the eyes of the artist) prepared statues of perfection. Is this bad? After all, they look great after only a few hours of precision clipping. The suri surely looks a lot better with a little sculpting, curl enhancement, and artificial luster. What’s the harm?

From the point of view of a large majority of AOBA members, these practices were the first step down a silicone slope, and they have devolved into a series of practices that have obscured the basic premise for shearing alpacas: measurement, fleece collection, and good husbandry. Once an alpaca is
trimmed, the breeder is no longer able to obtain accurate measurements for fleece weight or staple length at shearing time. A suri with a luster enhancer applied to its fleece cannot be reliably selected for its most important trait. In other words, these artificial enhancements, which are undertaken to win show ribbons, are detrimental to breed improvement.

If our show ring rewards clever handlers who know all of the tricks of the trade—who don’t mind spending the money or time to gussie up their animals—who are willing to bend and break the rules—what happens to the honest breeder who plays fair and takes his alpacas straight from the pasture to the show? I think they lose their enthusiasm, become discouraged and either join the grooming competition or drop out of the show system.

The truth is, very few in our industry favor grooming. The Suri Network recently conducted a survey of AOBA members who own suris. Sixty-one percent of the respondents agreed with the new AOBA grooming rules and another thirty-six percent specifically objected to the practice of enhancing luster with show sheen and the manipulation of locks by twisting and stripping. Only 3% of the survey respondents supported a rule change that would give exhibitors free rein to groom their animals in any way they choose.

Dick Walker, in his capacity as president of the Suri Network, said it best in an email sent to the AOBA show rules committee (SRC), Judges Training Committee (JTC), and the Judges Advisory Committee (JAC):

“We would strongly encourage our AOBA judges to do a better and more consistent job of this [enforcing the new grooming rules] in the upcoming show season. Only through consistency can we guarantee the atmosphere of ‘fair and friendly competition’ that is so vital to our industry. We at Suri Network want all those involved in administering our show system to know that our membership strongly supports fair and consistent application of these rules in the showing…”

THE HISTORY OF GROOMING

The concept of grooming did not begin with alpaca shows. There are more than a few of us who look forward to a trip to the beauty parlor or barber shop. George Washington was fond of his powdered wig and Sampson liked his hair, although Delilah and her shears were a problem.

The AKC began sponsoring dog shows in 1884 and sheep shows began in England in the 1800’s. Here is what Charles Massy had to say about grooming sheep at shows in his book, *Australian Merino.*
“In addition, attempts are made to further disguise, mask or screen the relative value of sheep to each other and to the paddock conditions for which, apparently, they were designed. Most major show studs have a box of tricks, some less ethical than others, used, in euphemistic terms, to ‘get sheep up’. Skilful shearing to disguise body faults and create increased staple length, plucking undesirable wool from the face, the use of white-cleaner or similar substitutes to hide black spots, and meticulous breaking up of staple surface with the fingers to create the illusion of density or softness, the working of colour-stained wool between the fingers to remove this fault, hitting the wool with a tennis racket or similar implement to improve handle, and the doctoring of secretly guarded feed recipes to to ensure the ‘correct’ development, including the addition of special-purpose amino acids and even hormones, are just some of the tricks used by some studmasters in the game of disguise and presentation.

The issue is not just about the dichotomy between the show-ring and the paddock, but about genetic honesty.”

The Dutch geneticist A.A. Hagedon, who wrote the famous text Animal Breeding, had this to say.

“Of very great importance, especially in some animals, is a thorough knowledge of the non-inherited factors that go to the making of a first-class show animal in prime condition. In some dogs and sheep one must know just where to trim off some more hair, to make the animal appear bulky in one spot, slender in the other, according to the fashion of the moment.”

The alpaca show winners in the early 1990’s were all brushed to the nines. I remember attending the National Show in Estes Park, Colorado every year and seeing lines of alpacas tied to the white rail fence behind the barn, 20 or 30 of them at a time, with their owners frantically brushing their fleece. An industrial strength blower was standard equipment. I still have mine—nowadays we use it to blow the fleece off the shearing surface once a year (See Photo 1). In the beginning, I was as enthusiastic as anyone about grooming and used to pay for a local expert to accompany my Dad and me to the shows to prepare our alpacas. We kept her busy. In those days we hardly ever sheared our alpacas, and they often had 12 or more inches of staple length. Oh yes, there was a whole lot of brushing and blowing going on. Photo 2 shows the lineup at the first alpaca show in Grass Valley and photo 3 shows a 1990’s model Northwest Alpacas show animal groomed to the max.
The current, more sophisticated alpaca grooming practices were borrowed from Australia. I remember attending the 1998 Australian Alpaca Association National Show in Melbourne; Dr Julio Sumar was the judge. On the last day of the show he adjudicated the get of sire class. His decision caused quite an uproar among the Aussie breeders. Dr. Sumar waited, as more than twenty entries were brought into the ring at the Royal Exhibition Building. They made a beautiful sight. Julio took to the microphone and addressed the crowd, saying that since the show was drawing to a close, he wanted to offer a few words about what he had observed over the past few days. "I think maybe this practice of
clipping and trimming your alpacas has gone too far,” he said. “I wouldn’t mind if you trimmed about the head a little to make the alpaca more pleasing to the eye and to allow the animal to see a bit better, but all of this clipping over the body of the animal I think is too much. We need to be able to assess the natural characteristics of our animals. We should not be shortening the staples and making the fleece weigh less.”

Dr. Sumar then proceeded around the ring, and, without looking at a single one of the fleeces, he pulled out the three alpacas owned by Bill Robbins, a famous Australian alpaca judge, and placed them first. When Julio gave his reasons he said, “I have placed these alpacas here in first place—they are in their natural condition and have not been prepared.” The remaining breeders, standing there and holding their trimmed and tapered entries, were shocked. A buzz went up in the pavilion. I had seen the future.

Anthony Stachowski was the first American breeder to copy the Australian grooming practices. His alpacas came into the ring perfectly sculpted, the obvious product of preparation. Others would follow—it was legal then. Soon suri breeders were shampooing, adding oil or silicone to the fleece, and stripping and twisting locks to assist their independence. Grooming became the in thing.

I attended the Suri Network meeting at the Fleece to Fashion conference in February, 2005 at Atlanta, Georgia. Anthony Stachowski gave an impassioned presentation in favor of shampooing suris. In addition, he wanted to institute a test at ringside that would have the judge clip a lock from each suri entering the ring and test for chemical residue (the alpaca industry’s version of baseball officials testing for steroids). One wise observer at the back of the room said he didn’t like that idea because he was afraid that his competitor might slip into his pen, under the cover of darkness, and spray his otherwise natural animals with a prohibited preparation oil. There were nods of agreement around the room.

THE SHOW RULES CHANGE

The AOBA Show Rules regarding show preparation have changed dramatically over the last three years. The following summaries demonstrate the magnitude of the changes. The original rules drafted in 1989 were silent on these issues.

The 2003 AOBA Show Division Handbook, Section 7, Rules for Exhibitors, stated the following rules pertaining to excessive show preparation.

3. Fleece preparation for huacaya alpacas entered into full fleece halter competition:
   a. The practice of cutting, trimming or otherwise altering a huacaya alpaca’s fleece in the blanket or prime fleece
area, other than a uniform annual shearing(s) for the purpose of removing the entire blanket fleece, is prohibited. When evaluating full-fleeced huacaya classes of ages yearling or older, if such cutting or trimming is determined by the Judge to artificially enhance the alpaca’s appearance by:

1) evening the length of the fleece to hide medullated fibers and/or guard hair;

2) making the alpaca appear to be more conformationally correct than it actually is;

3) reshaping the alpaca to create an appearance other than its natural body shape, or trimming a suri alpaca’s blanket fleece to alter or enhance the appearance of the alpaca, the Judge may reduce the placement or disqualify an alpaca, at his/her discretion, based on his/her evaluation that one or more of these provisions has been violated.

(The 2003 rules were pretty straightforward: no trimming. These rules, however, were rarely enforced by the judges.)

b. Fleece Preparation for suri alpacas entered into full fleece competition.

1) **Washing with appropriate shampoos is allowed for the purpose of de-tangling matted fleeces allowing access to the skin.**

5) **Grooming** to eliminate tangles and mats in advance of the show is **appropriate** to allow access to view luster and lock formation at the skin.

(The grooming of suris was actually encouraged by the 2003 rules.)

In 2004, the AOBA rules were revised for suris to prohibit the use of shampoo and the manipulation of locks as follows.

4) **Fleece Preparation for suri alpacas entered into full fleece competition.**
b. **Grooming** shall be limited to the removal of debris. Twisting, curling, or other enhancing practices that will alter or enhance the lock structure is strictly prohibited.

In 2005, the AOBA rules for grooming huacayas took a step backward and the wording was changed as follows:

O. Unethical Fittings and Preparation: the artificial enhancement or alteration of an alpaca to gain advantage in the show ring.

1. Fleece preparation of huacaya alpacas entered into Full Fleece Halter competition
   a. The practice of cutting, trimming or otherwise altering a huacaya alpaca’s fleece other than an annual uniform shearing for the purpose of removing the entire fleece, is prohibited, with the following exceptions:

   3. trimming juvenile alpacas to remove the outer amniotic cria fleece.

   It is the removal of the language permitting the shampooing and stripping of suris and the addition of language allowing the trimming of juvenile huacayas that has caused all of the consternation. Part of the problem for exhibitors in 2005 has been the result of lax enforcement of the rules by the judges and the changing back and forth of the rules by the AOBA Board.

   **ENFORCEMENT: THE GROOMING POLICE**

   Exhibitors need to be careful about what they ask for when they place sole responsibility for enforcing the rules on the judge. If the judge becomes solely focused on enforcing rules, they may make mistakes, thinking that a very high luster suri is too good to win because it “might have been enhanced”. If our shows play out on a level surface, and the exhibitors refrain from grooming, everyone will be happier with the results.

   Should judges spend their time enforcing grooming rules or should they focus on evaluating the characteristics of the classes that they are asked to place? Do we really want our judges to be grooming police? I think not. Our industry needs to take collective responsibility for the show rules. It is simple: play fair and follow the rules.

   The truth is that the exhibitor’s peers are in a far better position to discover a fraud than the judge. They are in the show barn with the animals, they can visit
their neighbor’s pastures, and they can compare those animals, seen in their
natural condition, to those being shown. They know the tricks of the trade. They
know who is abusing the rules.

I would submit to you that it is the exhibitors’ responsibility to file a protest
against another exhibitor who they know committed a violation. Rule A-4 on
page 89-90 of the AOBA show manual says that participants shall be responsible
for the following activities:

4. lack of compliance with show division rules including
attempts to circumvent rules or procedures.

Pages 81-85 describe in detail what is illegal. For instance: the
removal/stripping of matted, cotted felted dead fleece is prohibited, twisting,
curling or enhancement is prohibited, shampooing is prohibited, etc., etc.

All of these unethical grooming practices are protestable offenses.
Exhibitors need to police themselves. Each and every exhibitor, with the support
of the judges and the AOBA regulators, need to take responsibility for the rules. I
would like to share some of Jude Anderson’s remarks, made in an address to the
exhibitors at the North American Show in April, 2005. Jude, at the request of
the JTC, the SRC, and the Show Administrator, put forth AOBA’s position on the
grooming rules. Jude called a spade a spade. She said, “Grooming animals in
contravention of the show rules is cheating.” She went on to say that cheating
has several consequences:

1. If you break the rules, you cheat yourself because you cannot
accurately assess groomed animals for your breeding program.

2. You cheat your farm’s reputation by becoming known for breaking
the rules. (Believe me, your competition knows who is cheating.)

3. You cheat the gene pool at large when you sell show stock based
on a false record, that then go on to be the “elite” studs and dams.

4. You cheat the entire industry by creating a hostile competitive
environment.

I think about the new breeder who attends an alpaca show and overhears
complaints about so and so cheating. This is not a pretty picture. It’s a turnoff.

DETECTING CHEATING

The judges are on the case. We have had several conferences on the
subject of cheating. We will focus on illegal grooming practices at the judges
clinic in Golden, Colorado this summer. The rules will continue to be enforced
and the judges will become more adept at identifying unethical exhibitor behavior. Here is what the judges will be doing to assess entries for cheating:

The judges know that suri alpacas that have been prepared will most likely exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Animals exhibiting perfect cleanliness.
2. Perfectly twisted locks that twist all the way to the skin.
3. The complete independence and free movement of all locks with no evidence of cotting.
4. Perfect uniformity of lock size.
5. A high degree of luster both inside and out, especially on the outside of the fleece.
6. A fleece that has an oily or slippery feel that leaves a shiny residue on the hand after rubbing the fleece.
7. An unnaturally clean fleece condition not typically found in the pasture.
8. The smell of show sheen or an unnatural odor from the fleece.

Suris in pasture or paddock condition will generally exhibit the following characteristics which are what the judges expect to see:

1. A lack of complete independence between each individual lock.
2. Evidence of some overlapping or tangling of fibers between the locks.
3. A natural luster on the inside of the fleece next to the skin.
   (This is because the luster is closer to the skin and is not dulled by the same environmental influences that affect the outside of the fleece.)
4. A suri that is in paddock condition is often not as lustrous near the tips, due to the presence of a dust barrier that occurs a few inches from the skin.

Groomed huacayayas will generally exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Excessively short or uneven staple length over the entire animal.
2. The lack of weathered tips on the outside of the fleece.
3. Staple length of less than 3 inches for animals shorn more than 6 months ago.
4. Longer staple at the shoulder or hip than found at the midside or topline.
5. Solid color huacayayas exhibiting variation in color over the outside of the fleece.
6. Complete absence of any visible guard hair on the surface of the fleece. (Some very good examples of the breed may not have
guard hair, but a judge can usually assess this by plucking samples of fleece from the animal and checking the sample for guard hair.)

Huacayas that have not been trimmed will exhibit the following characteristics:

1. The presence of weathered tips—naturally formed staples that end in an angled tip on the outside of the fleece versus those that are very blunt, and open at the tip.
2. Shearing patterns that allow for an even regrowth of staple length over the entire animal.
3. The existence of a dust line as barrier in the fleece that protects the fleece’s clean condition nearer to the skin.
4. The presence of guard hair on the outside of the blanket and at the chest.
5. A uniform color over the exterior of the fleece.

It is important to understand that it is legal to full body shear cria. In my opinion, this practice is good husbandry and encourages uniform record keeping for important selection traits, although I have heard from breeders who say that a dam may reject a cria after it is shorn. Breeders should shear their cria in plenty of time to allow adequate regrowth for winter weather.

The following are some of the oral reasons that you are likely to hear for placement of alpacas that exhibit a natural state over those who are suspected of being groomed:

1. I find evidence of natural luster versus a slick feel (positive in suris)
2. There is unnatural uniformity of lock in this suri (negative)
3. This animal is in paddock condition (positive)
4. Fleece conditions are almost too perfect on my second place alpaca (negative)
5. I like the natural luster I see when I part the fleece and lift the locks. (positive)
6. My second place alpaca carries a beautiful luster on the outside, but I am surprised not to see the same luster next to the skin. (negative)
7. The luster on the inside of my second place animal does not match what I see on the outside. (negative)
8. The huacaya in first place has uniform staple length. (positive)
9. My second place alpaca has a variable staple length from the blanket to the shoulder to the hip. (negative)
10. The huacaya in second place has medullation in the fleece but an absence of guard hair at the chest and on the outside of the blanket. (negative)
THE UGLY INCIDENT

Grooming has become a very emotional issue, as AOBA Senior Judge, Amanda VandenBosch was about to find out. Amanda had just completed judging the first day of the suris at the Kentucky Classic in March of 2005, and was exiting the ring when no less than eight suri breeders approached her, whiskey bottle and shot glasses in hand. They were aggressive in their displeasure with Amanda and soon accused her of disregarding the suri grooming rules and placing a particular suri in first place, which they said was in violation of the 2005 AOBA show rules.

“That suri has been prepared”, they said. “We all looked at it and we know he’s been prepared.” “I don’t believe it has”, said Amanda, and “it was, by far, the best alpaca in the ring.” After another round of whiskey, the conversation got louder. (It should be noted that each of these exhibitors was in multiple violation of the show rules standard of conduct.) “That is David TenHulzen’s suri. “We know it was prepared,” they insisted. “What has been done?” asked Amanda, “I would like to know.” No answer to the question was offered even though Amanda repeated herself several times.

Amanda said, “If you believe the suri has been prepared in violation of the rules, you should file a protest against the exhibitor. And if you believe that I have failed to judge the animal properly, you should file a protest against me.” The confrontation ended on that note, but the incident did not.

That evening, one of Amanda’s most vociferous critics set about stripping his alpaca’s fleece for the show. The stripping was observed by an AOBA show official. (This is the illegal practice of preparing the individual locks of a suri fleece to make them appear to be more independent.) This animal was subsequently exhibited at the show (in front of a different judge) and was awarded a ribbon.

The show closed, but the rumors persisted, and the animosity against the judges for not “enforcing” the show rules also persisted, surfacing again at the North American Show three weeks later, when the same suri was again entered. By now the exhibitors were saying that Randy Wellman, who was the handler employed by the suri’s owner, David TenHulzen, had confirmed that TenHulzen had prepared the suri, enhanced the luster and twisted the locks, and that TenHulzen had bragged on the internet that the suri was prepared.

At dinner, on the first evening of the North American show, Amanda, Jude Anderson, and I discussed the accusations in great detail. We found it curious that David had admitted preparing the animal because he had been a public advocate against show grooming. The gossips were saying that he was setting the judges up by trying to prove that they were unable to detect his grooming
practices, thereby supporting David’s purported public position on the testing of winning alpacas. (He has advocated that the only way to enforce the grooming rules is by using a standard chemical test of all winners that would scientifically detect cheating.) The next day, we decided to inspect the suri (which had again won its class) and question Mr. Wellman first hand about his interactions with the breeders.

At noon on Saturday, just before the seminar on breed standards, we had show management produce the suri in question, together with Randy Wellman, at center ring. The three of us inspected the animal from head to toe. It was our collective, professional opinion that the suri locks had not been stripped or twisted (at least in the recent past). The locks were irregular, solid (lacking volume), and they exhibited the normal cross fibering that one would expect in a paddock condition alpaca. We did agree that the suri, a black, had exceptional luster. But, try as we might, we could not find an oily residue, uneven luster, or other proof of tampering. We decided that it was just as likely that the suri exhibited superior luster as it was that he had been conditioned with show sheen. We could find no evidence that would have allowed Amanda to penalize the alpaca’s placement.

We then turned our attention to Randy Wellman, asking him the following questions and noting his responses.

Judges: We understand that you have been telling people that this alpaca has been groomed. Is that true?

Wellman: No, no, I have not said that. (He’s looking a bit nervous, at this point.)

Judges: If what you say is true, then someone is lying, because we have been advised that you told several people that the animal was prepared, and that you allowed breeders in the pen to see the alpaca in support of your statements.

Wellman: No, I even asked David if he had prepared the animal and he said, “No.”

Judges: Then are you saying that the breeders, who told us that you said the animal was prepared, are lying?

Wellman: No, I am not saying that, either. What I told them was that I thought something was done to the alpaca. I never claimed that David said he did anything.

Judges: Do you have any proof that the alpaca was groomed?
Wellman: No!

Judges: Did you prepare the animal?

Wellman: No! All I did was rinse him with warm water just as I was told to do.

Judges: Then to your knowledge there has been no illegal grooming of this animal.

Wellman: That’s right!

More than anything, this incident exemplifies the need for exhibitors to take responsibility for the show rules by acting ethically, avoiding rumors, and not placing the judges in the role of grooming police. Exhibitors should file protests if they are aware of grooming violations. They should not play gossip and gotcha with the judges. The system will not function without everyone participating in enforcing the rules: beginning with their own show practices.

As a postscript to the “ugly incident,” it is interesting to note that both of the exhibitors who came in second to the infamous black suri, personally took the time after the shows to confide in Amanda that they believed she had made the correct judging calls and that the best animal had won! And a search of the internet found no mea culpas from David TenHulzen.

**ALPACA JUDGES**

Alpaca judges are generally damned if they do and damned if they don’t. I cannot think of a show where someone is not mad at the judges. People are constantly speculating about a judge’s bias for fineness, density, conformation, head type, or size. All of this speculation becomes a rationale for losing. The winners, of course, think the judge got it right: This time.

On the issue of a judge’s bias, I have to laugh. I do not know how an exhibitor could determine bias, when each class is judged on different placing criteria. In one class all the alpacas might have good conformation and equally dense fleece. They could end up being placed primarily on fineness. The next class might be fairly equal on fleece and be judged primarily on breed type or conformation. The truth is that each judge’s primary bias is a desire to place the alpacas correctly, according to the rules.

I have had exhibitors tell me how they tricked two judges in a row by putting their hand over a color spot on an animal’s back when the judge looked at the fleece. Another breeder told me that they had been winning with an alpaca that had excessive guard hair. He said that Dr. Sumar caught the trait at a recent
show and it was placed down. I guess I have heard it all, but rarely does someone say that they were beaten by a better alpaca.

Showing an animal means that the breeder is publicly taking responsibility for his breeding and purchasing decisions. Taking responsibility also means accepting the consequences of the judge’s decision. Breeders may want to look at their decisions rather than play the blame game with the judge. The problem with this industry is that it’s very young. It also has some type A members who are accustomed to success and being in full control. This makes it difficult for them to accept a judge’s decision that places them in a losing position.

The truth is alpaca judges are somewhat like referees at sporting events. We don’t always make the right call. We are asked to judge 200-300 alpacas in 8 hours with 30 minutes for lunch and no breaks in between. The exhibitors are sometimes like basketball players who grab, elbow, and push, and then feign innocence when they are called for a foul. Some of them, like all competitors, take advantage of the rules. Some even think they should have a white animal in every color class.

For me, and for all of the judges that I know personally, our most fervent desire is to be correct in our class placings: every time. When we give our reasons, we do not mean to hurt an exhibitor’s feelings. No judge that I know has ever set out to humiliate or abuse exhibitors. Our reputation for fairness and honesty is on the line every time we judge. Our competence and expertise is constantly under a microscope. No judge wants to be known as incompetent or unfair.

**THE FUTURITY AND MAPACA**

The Futurity is the most competitive show of the year. There is a lot of prize money and prestige at stake. This year the show was judged by Amanda VandenBosch, Jude Anderson, and Kristin Buhrmann. The stage was set for a clash between the rules and the competitors. I was there with my ear to the ground and it didn’t take long for the fireworks to go off.

Exhibitors with trimmed and groomed animals, often accustomed to winning, were soon madder than wet hens. One exhibitor, enraged after losing a few classes, withdrew from the show, exclaiming that the blankety-blank judges were “judging by the rules and not the fleeces.” Oh, my God, could that be true? The competitors that remained hurried gleefully to fill the void, accepting the ribbons that were left behind. The winners celebrated, and the losers cried foul.

At MAPACA, judged by Dr. Sumar, Jude Anderson, and me, the water was calmer. One hundred fifty entries were pulled prior to the show. In other words, the field was trimmed back a bit. Inside the show ring alpacas were
generally found in paddock condition. Is this the calm before the storm? I can only hope that it becomes the norm.

By next year, there should be no one who is not clear on the grooming rules. If the majority of the exhibitors follow the rules, the cheaters will be more obvious to all. Will there be the occasional cheater, testing the limits? Probably. Will the show system be better off if we enforce the rules? I think so.

FAIR, FRIENDLY COMPETITION

I think all of us want the same thing. We want fair judges who place the animals on their merit and disregard the handler. May the best alpaca win. We want consistent judging from show to show. We want to remain friends with our competitors through the heat of battle. Our hope is that our friends and neighbors are honest and play by the rules. We want a “fair and friendly” competition. AOBA’s Show System is an integral part of the alpaca market, and, at some level, we hope that it contributes to the genetic improvement of the breed. It is every participant’s responsibility to see to it that our shows are conducted based on the alpacas’ merit and with integrity.