

LLAMA and ALPACA SHOWS

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Showing what? Yes, alpacas and llamas! This year there will be several hundred shows throughout the United States. There are national show associations that keep the records, establish show standards, qualify judges, etc. Placing well at local shows entitles the animal to go to regional and national competitions.

While showing is a lot of fun, it is also competitive. There is a great deal of camaraderie among owners, which is demonstrated at shows throughout the industry. Shows are a great opportunity to illustrate the quality of your breeding program and find out how your concepts fit in with other breeder's ideas. There are always suppliers of lama tack and supplies, so it is a good opportunity to restock, as well as visit with friends. There is a spirit of reasonable competitiveness but it is not overbearing or all consuming. Everyone is a friend, and that remains paramount.

Since llamas were developed as a beast of burden and alpacas as fiber animals, the differences are such that separate shows are the rule. Just a note here: alpacas and llamas are both members of the camel family. The camel family developed in the Mississippi River Valley some 40 million years ago. There have been hundreds of subspecies of which only six remain today: the wild Bactrian and Dromedary camels, the Guanaco and Vicuna. The latter two are the species from which the llama and alpaca were developed by the Indians of the Andes in South America about 6,000 years ago and are the genus *Lama* (note the single L).

Shows for lamas include all facets. There are halter (conformation) classes which are divided into male and female groups, then further divided by age – under one year, one to two years, and adult. This is pretty much true for both llamas and alpacas. Alpacas are divided into color sub-groups, while fiber coverage and length separate llamas into heavy, medium and short fiber classes. There are also performance classes such as obstacle courses, packing classes, Jackpot events, and many local get-togethers just for fun. Events are generally open to all owners; it is possible to travel to events in other areas, if desired.

Judges are qualified by attending training courses and by assisting qualified judges. New judges are limited to smaller shows until they have demonstrated their capabilities for further responsibility. There are over 100 fully qualified llama and/or alpaca judges.

Shows are held throughout the United States and Canada, with the most shows being in the Ohio area. Some shows have several hundred animals and over 100 owners represented. Generally, animals that place well at smaller, local, shows qualify to go to the Regional shows, and from there the winners may go to the National show. Earning a Blue Ribbon, or possibly even a Grand Championship Ribbon, Does great things for your ego, reputation, and even the value of your breeding stock. It is well worth the effort, and fun.

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