Llama Glama Gazette – January 2023

Objectives of the New Zealand Llama Association:

1. To educate owners and interested members of the public in the needs, care and welfare of llamas.
2. To promote llamas and their uses as working and companion animals, and pets.
3. To facilitate and encourage fun activities with llamas.
4. To liaise with government and other authorities on behalf of members on matters pertaining to llama ownership, care and use.
5. To provide a communication forum for the sharing of news, ideas and knowledge relevant to llama ownership, care and use.
6. To negotiate, set up and operate agencies, or other arrangements with other Camelid organisations where applicable to achieve the objectives of the association.
7. To encourage compliance with a code of conduct for llama ownership
8. To provide a registry for the collection of information of all New Zealand llamas and for the registration of llamas.

From the Editor

Sincere apologies for the lateness of this edition of Llama Glama. The previous issue came out in April 2022, which is entirely too close to a full year ago!

AGM Report

Our 2022 AGM was online again. In addition to the usual administrative business, we had a very enjoyable and informative talk by Marty McGee Bennett the founder of CAMELIDynamics. Marty's clinics, books and videos have helped thousands of camelid owners more fully understand, appreciate and enjoy their animals.

A recording of our talk with Marty is available at

https://tinyurl.com/5hfnw8rm

It's a long recording so make yourself a cup of tea or watch over a few sessions.

The 2023 AGM will be coming up soon. Watch your email for more details.

The President's report from the 2022 AGM was circulated previously but is included here for convenience.

"Another year of fluctuating Covid restrictions meant that once again there were no face-to-face events this year. However, my twice postponed trip to Northland is booked again for 16th May so I am hoping to finally meet our new members up there.

I also hope that lifting of restrictions will encourage more in person event this year. We can learn a lot from each other, and local events are easier to get to than nationwide ones, so please get in touch with other llama owners in your area and let the committee know how we can help. We have funds to assist with promoting any events, and our Public Liability Insurance protects you if it is an NZLA event (at least one member attending and open to all members)

Membership has had a small increase this year but we are still only in the mid 30s. If the Association is to be effective we all need to look around and find ways to encourage others to join our group and get some activities going.

The lama glama is a vital point of contact with you all, but Kevin really needs your input. We all love our llamas so please next time you take a photo send it to Kevin so we can all share. Our Facebook page also is very underutilized, it is a great way to show people what we do with llamas, so please add a post.

Cria registrations were 10, this is less than previous years. Having your llama registered adds to its value and costs you nothing but the time to fill out the online form, so take advantage of it. Sales of llamas have been active, and the demand is for quality animals. Those that I know of have been around $1,500 for halter trained and $2,000 plus for pack trained llamas. Interest in llamas is increasing, and NZLA is often the 1st point of contact for many people. Don't forget that we have a "for Sale" and "For Stud" section on the website which is free for members to use.

I would like to thank the committee for their work this year, and also for putting their hands up again.

Thanks also to Web Master Simon Gurnsey for his valuable work.

I wish you and your llamas well for the coming year.

Judy Webby"

Local Workshop for Central North Island

NZLA members have said they would enjoy local "open days" to help us all get to know each other better and to share information about llamas. Covid restrictions made events like this impossible for a few years, but the NZLA

committee thinks the time is now right to test the idea in practice.

We are planning an open day near Raglan on March 11 starting at noon. This is a trial event so **you must RSVP** if you are planning to come. We won't have the day if there is not enough interest. Please **RSVP to me before February 17** at kevcollins20007@yahoo.com

Llamas Over the New Zealand Alps – by Keith Payne

Covid and bad weather forced changes to a multi-day trek across the Southern Alps that was previously reported here. However, a version of the trip did happen. This is the story of that adventure.

Ed Shand was early on the llama scene in NZ, keeping several on his large sheep and beef station in the NZ high country. Ed and I have completed a number of llama treks both here in NZ as well as the Rocky Mountains and were eager to tackle the Doubtful Valley track up and over the Amuri Pass before descending towards the west coast gold fields.

The Doubtful Valley Track.

Last time I did this trek was eight years ago and it was a tough one! But since then, several horse clubs had done work on the trail and by all reports it would be much easier. It is one of the heritage routes over which sheep and cattle were driven to hungry gold miners 140 years ago and is rated as Difficult/Experienced Only.

We left our departure date towards the end of March, possibly late in the season for this track. But we were seasoned in the bush and our llamas were experienced. On day one we arrived at the trail head on schedule and were promptly loaded and underway.

The Boyle river was our first challenge, it was a bit swollen, running swiftly but we were full of confidence and set off without hesitation, Ed in the lead. We were not far from the far bank when without warning Ed disappeared into a hole, his llama struggled with footing until he also found the hole, managing to get away from Ed in the struggle. At that point my boy suddenly disappeared under water and came up fighting, top load quickly dislodged, floating downstream, I lost my footing and went under but managed to find a lead rope and headed back to catch Ed's boy. Ed meantime was heading downstream to recover the floating top load items. It took us a few moments to collect ourselves, calm the llamas before finding what looked like a better crossing spot. We were very wet and cold, the llamas beginning to question our company, but we crossed safely, searched out the trail and set off. The sun rewarded us with some heat, Ed set a quick pace and the kilometres began to disappear behind us as we hiked along the trail.

A more straightforward river crossing!

Before long the well-marked track began to climb but as the day wore on, we started to realise it had received little usage for quite some time. For a horse track it evidenced little sign of horses. We began to spend time searching for the track in areas where it had been covered by landslides or swollen tributaries.

But the llamas were keen and we pressed on covering in total some 16/17 kms before arriving at an area called Phantom Flat by 3.30. It was time to make camp as dark would arrive in the valley by 5.15pm and this was the last possible camp site before the final climb up to the Amuri Pass. Phantom Flat was full of hunters who had been helicoptered in with their supplies. From these fellows we learned the horse clubs had discontinued use of the trail some three years ago as it proved to be dangerous for horses and riders.

We got a good start the following morning, grunted our way up to the Pass and after short break began to work our way down the West Coast side. Of course, the rain which has been light all morning began to build up to a steady downpour, destined to continue the next 36 hours. When finally we bottomed out mid-afternoon we began to experience difficulty following the trail, markers obviously washed or blown away. About 4pm we found a clearing and decided to make camp. Shortly after tethering the llamas a big stag rumbled into the camp, being attracted by the llamas. He froze amongst the tents for several seconds before giving a deep roar and smashing off into the undergrowth.

Day 3 saw us up and underway early, we knew this would be the day to make or break the trip. The continuous rain had swollen the river and it would continue as we beat our way downstream. We lost and found the trail a dozen times that day but made excellent progress, each time we crossed and recrossed the river it was a bit deeper and the current a bit stronger. Towards the end of the day our luck ran out where Slaty Creek converged with the Waiheke, becoming too dangerous for a crossing. Fortunately, there was an old but comfortable hut nearby so we staked out the llamas and set about getting a fire started in the hut.

The next morning we were greeted by blue skies and warm sun, enjoying a straightforward 14km trek along the river to our final destination. And although we had passed through some truly scenic country the previous days (in bad weather), that last day's walk (with dry feet) really did top off the adventure.

Smoko break?

Our good mate Tony Pearce was waiting for us, we loaded the llamas, packed the gear and settled back for the long drive back over the Alps to our homes on the east side.

And it is at this point that we must comment on the two llamas. If either of these fellows had faltered or experienced a problem, the trip would have been different. But they didn't!

Ed was supported by Joey, a 16/17-year-old ccara llama owned by Tony Pearce of Hanmer Llamas, without doubt the most experienced packing llama in NZ. Not a big fellow, but Joey knows only one direction, and does not have a stop button.

Manuel (11 years) was carrying my load, bred and raised on my farm, mother is guanaco/llama and father full guanaco. Very strong fellow, great athlete and like Joey, would never say "enough". Some of the terrain we crossed was very difficult, wet, slippery, sharp edges, boulder fields, windfall, swollen rivers, steep climbs/descents and so on. Not once did either of these boys hesitate, pull back or slow our progress. They seemed to relish the challenge and if anything, seemed more determined with each day passing. They each carried 70-75lbs.

Next year, Ed and I will be joined by Tony for a trek through one of the other passes, hopefully in better weather. Three old fellows in mid 70s, you can imagine the stories that get told around the evening campfire!

A Dung Beetle Update – by Kevin Collins

In the last issue, I told how we released dung beetles suitable for our property from Dung Beetle Innovations, https://dungbeetles.co.nz/

I released two colonies *Onthophagus binodis.* According to the company, these South African natives do better in the North Island and are attracted to alpaca and llama dung. Adults build nesting galleries at the end of burrows approximately 20-30 cm below the dung pile. Galleries are packed with several dung masses or brood sausages each with one egg.

In the year-plus since the release, I regularly see beetles in the dung and signs that the dung is being broken up. Some piles very quickly get crumbly and the pellets are broken apart. I am still not sure if I am seeing the European dung beetle, *Aphodius fimetarius, or O. binodis*.

Also, I have not done any proper monitoring, e.g., before and after measurements of dung volumes. That would be more effort than I am prepared to put in! And there are pastures that I only seldom visit; not sure what is happening there.

Still, as the Dung Beetle Innovations website notes: "It could take several years before a species is encountered again once released, and several more years before its impact becomes noticeable."

Nevertheless, I am happy that I introduced the beetles and will try to keep a closer eye on their progress.

The Mystery of Missing Mickey – by Lynn Barrett

It was early evening and I popped outside to check the meat cooking in the wood fired pizza oven. The herd of female llamas were grazing nearby. Half a dozen of them were due to birth that week so I did a quick head count to see if anyone was off on their own. 19, ummm, one missing. Count again 20, count again 19. "Will you lot stand still". After four more counts I was getting 19. Yes, definitely one missing.

I set off down to the bottom two terraces, searched around for about an hour. We have a lot of dense bush in their grazing area, so it takes a while to check through it all. No sign of any llamas. Thinking I must have miss counted I headed back up to the

cabin and did another count – still 19. I went and got Pete and asked him to do a head count, he got 19 as well. Half the herd are guanaco, and all look the same from a distance. After a bit of studying, I worked out who the missing one was. It was Mickey, a 2yr old dark guanaco girl.

The sun was setting fast. With flashlights and head torches we set off again for another search, we covered the whole area until it was too dark to see any more. The only thing I could think off was that she had jumped the fence and was exploring the valley. Earlier in the day, the neighbours were mustering their sheep and the dogs were pretty noisy and at one point close to the boundary fence. They might have spooked her, but I would have thought she'd be by the fence somewhere wanting to come back to her herd.

Just a little explanation of where we are... we are up a valley in the Kaikoura mountains. One block of land, about 100 acres sits on a broken spur 600mtrs high at the highest point and 300mtrs high at the cabin and paddocks. There is a river on each side of the spur which meet at the end of the block of land, so we are an arrowhead between two rives. Over the river on one side is the neighbours that were mustering the sheep. Cross over the other river and you are on the valley shingle road. Travel down the road for 1km and we have another very steep 80-acre bush block with grassy tops, the four stud boys are on this block.

I got up at dawn the next morning, did another search in the same places as the night before -- nothing. I took the quad bike for a spin up the road. With binoculars I glassed the hills and riverbed, it was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Where could she be? What if poachers had shot her? All sorts of horrible scenarios were going through my head. Whilst I was on the road I went down and checked on the boys. Because of the size of the block and the dense bush I very often don't see them for days on end, but I have cameras set up that I check daily and can do a head count, otherwise it's an hours hike to the grassy tops and along to the furthest point (which is where they usually are if I go looking for them). On checking the camera I am shocked and relieved to see Mickey. The first few photos of her on her own then 15 mins later two of the boys had joined her. None of them were around whilst I was there.

I was already running late for work and with my boss being away, I was the holding the fort so had to go. I'd get Mickey later this afternoon when I got home.

At about 4.30pm I got back to the boys block, no one around, I called them and waited a while, then decided to go and get the quad bike to drive up as far as I could, then walk the rest of the way.
Pete was watering the veggies, the girls were all up around the cabin, 20 of them, hang on, what?, 20? I counted again and then I spotted her, Mickey was back!

I assumed Pete had gone and got her, "You got her back OK then?" I asked. "Got who back?" "Mickey, she's there" .... he hadn't even noticed she was back.

What a little tart. She decided to go for a night out on the town, she'd heard on the Llama grape vine that there were some pretty handsome boys down the road and she snuck off to check them out. Being just 2 years old and never been on a date before, she probably got a lot more attention than she anticipated and thought "bugger this, I'm going home" Thankfully none of the boys followed her back

Hybrid vigour and Breeding Llamas – by Keith Payne

The term HYBRID VIGOUR can be a bit misleading as by definition a hybrid is the offspring of different breeds or genera, for example a llama and a camel or a llama and an alpaca. Of interest to llama breeders is termed topcross hybrid vigour, the result from crossing a superior quality male (ideally purebred) to a lesser quality female to improve the quality of offspring. And HYBRID VIGOUR which is more correctly known to camelid breeders as heterosis, can have very positive or very negative results depending upon how it is managed.

Let's take a hypothetical llama breeder to illustrate this. A breeder is seeking to increase the overall quality of his/her herd and to produce strong well conformed animals. The breeder has invested in several quality males. Each male has 5 or more progeny available for viewing, the quality of which clearly suggest the sires to be dominant gened. Such a male could be termed homozygous dominant. Now to the best of my knowledge there is currently no clinical test available to determine if a llama is homozygous dominant (possessing all dominant genes) or heterozygous (possessing both dominant and recessive genes) and therefore the only reliable test available is to view and assess the quality of progeny.

Now the females in this breeder's herd are your typical llama, having a mixture of positive and negative traits (heterozygous). For sure there can be some females which are also homozygous dominant, but this article does not concern them immediately, they will enter the equation a bit further down the track.

The plan is to put the homozygous males over the heterozygous females. The resulting progeny will express hybrid vigour. Of course, the male will contribute his 50% of the genes, in this case all dominant, and the female will contribute her 50% say 25% dominant and 25% recessive. These recessives result in a deviation of the male's dominance and the heterozygate achieves the same value as the dominant homozgygate.

The results of this will be a superb cria, all the perfect phenotype expression of the sire without any of the conformational faults which may be expressed in the dam. In other words, we have produced a heterozygous llama which has the phenotype of a homozygous llama! This cria will grow and become taller than either parent (frequently will have long ears) and just simply be an excellent llama period! WOW!

BUT, let's remember that these offspring carry recessive genes (25%) which have not expressed themselves in the llama's

phenotype. But they most certainly can express themselves in the next line of offspring. If for example a male progeny from this exercise were to be mated to a heterozygous female, then the resulting increase in recessive genes will result in a sharp falloff in offspring quality. To maintain quality this progeny must be mated to a homozygous dominant gened partner. This will further reduce the percentage of recessive genes thereby further strengthening the genetic health of the herd, and also be expressed in the phenotype. A female progeny showing hybrid vigour, must also be mated to homozygous dominant males just as the males must only mate with homozygous dominant females.

Hopefully the above is an understandable explanation of a risk which can be encountered by a potential llama buyer. It underlines why a buyer should always insist upon viewing both parents (and grandparents if possible) as well as progeny from each. A llama offered for sale should express traits similar to those already on the ground. If the llama is taller, has longer ears and is phenotypically superior to both parents, then hybrid vigour should be suspected. If you happen to have homozygous dominant llamas in your herd then you could be on to a very good thing, if not then take care and be prepared for quality reduction. If you are not intending to breed the llama in question, then this will not concern you.

DOLORES and WINNIFRED (below) are both progeny from a mating between a purebred male and a heterozygous female. Both are 2" taller than their mothers and 1" taller than their fathers, at the withers. Now three years old, they have been mated to unrelated purebred males. Both have longer than average ears. Both are considered to express hybrid vigour (heterosis). Photos by Jo Millar

Author's Comment – genetics is a fascinating yet extremely complex subject. It gives me a head spin. I have tried my best to take a topic, the explanation of which could make most llama folk dizzy as well and present it in a way to be as accurate as possible and hopefully informative so llama breeders can make more knowledgeable decisions for their herds. I apologize to all students of genetics who feel my approach is too simple, in which case I will have achieved my objective.

NZLA Committee contacts

Please feel free to contact members of the committee with any questions or suggestions.

- President -- Judy Webby, president@llamas.org.nz, 027 271 7192
- Vice President and Editor - Kevin Collins, info@llamas.org.nz, 021 341 749
- Secretary -- Davina Keen secretary@llamas.org.nz, 021 148 3998

- Treasurer -- John Davison, jad793@gmail.com 0221 306 508
- Lynn Barrett -- llyndyllama@yahoo.co.uk, 021 142 7619
- Julie Insley -- Insleyjulie@gmail.com, 09 407 7107
- Corey Regnerus-Kell, regnerusc@gmail.com 021 795 888

Llama registry reminder

The register will always be a valuable asset that needs maintaining so we have a record of the lineage of llamas in NZ. Please keep us up to date with births, deaths and ownership transfers. Here is the link to the Registry page https://llamas.org.nz/registry/. If you have any questions about the register email registry@llamas.org.nz

Find us on Facebook

Members are encouraged to use the NZLA Facebook page. Tell us what's happening with the llamas in your life, post interesting articles you've seen elsewhere or ask questions of the NZ llama community.