



The United Nations has designated 2024 as the year of the camelid, a year to appreciate the llama and guanaco, alpaca and vicuna, as well as their asian cousins the dromedary and bactrian. The intention has been to allow greater appreciation for the role these animals have played in the lives, livelihood and advancement of indigenous peoples in the Andes and throughout Asia.

It is therefore worth taking a moment to review the llama in New Zealand.

It was the 1980's when llamas began to make their mark here. In the 70's a large number of guanaco and llama from Australian zoos found their way to Auckland Zoo who subsequently in the late 80's decided to make them available to the private sector. This coincided with several shipments of guanaco and llama from Europe, mainly coordinated by PGG which was followed shortly afterwards by about 180 llamas in a larger private shipment of alpaca from Chile. This rather sudden supply of llamas was more or less initially divided between the Nelson and Geraldine areas of the South Island from where they gradually were distributed throughout the country.

It was very fashionable at the time for the llama to be crossed with alpaca with the intention of producing a larger animal with greater fibre volume. This was also being done at the time in Peru and Chile in addition to Europe and North America. Unfortunately it turned out to be unsuccessful in a business sense as the fibre was of poor quality, a market never established. In the meantime many of the fine guanaco and llama imported into New Zealand lost their genetic strengths as these originals breed type llamas proved to be difficult to handle, many were crossed with alpaca or turned out forgotten in back paddocks or even more sadly suffered unfortunate endings.

But the alpaca faired much better, alpaca breeders worked diligently to improve the fibre genetics of their herds, today New Zealand is internationally recognised as a source of quality alpaca.

Not so the llama unfortunately, As a work animal (rather than fibre) it became invaluable to those who trekked the high country, to those who are drawn to the superb intelligence and companionship that comes with llamas, and to those interested to keep them for their amazing features (an example being their digestives systems).

Nonetheless a hard core of llama enthusiasts have maintained their herds and genetics, this is beginning to be appreciated and current signs are for an increasing number of llama owners and breeders. The individual strengths and features of the original breed types are sought after, their dominant genetics and fine fibre a solid base on which to grow a New Zealand national herd of note.



The New Zealand Rare Breed Society does list the llama as a “rare breed”, but we all know it is not, neither is the alpaca. On the other hand, the original llama, guanaco and the original alpaca, vicuna are definitely “ Rare” breeds, both protected by international charter and while rated currently as not in immediate danger, they are accorded a “protected” status.

So take a moment to review some features of the llama, especially as they relate to current interest to protect the environment . Actually, the llama is considered to be one of the most environmentally friendly large animals on the planet. Here are a couple of reasons why:

- it’s soft leather foot pads do not damage plant growth as they move about, even in very wet seasons;
- it is one of the lowest methane producing animals, pound for pound. An example, cattle produce 78kg of CH₄ (methane) per head per year, sheep produce 46kg of CH₄, camelids (llama and alpaca) produce 5kg. Two main reasons for this result is the camelids eat far less per kg than ruminants. They can do so because their digestive system is far more efficient benefitting from far greater nutrient gain. A further benefit, not yet fully appreciated, is their dung is of greater and sooner benefit to the soil due to it being of almost full fibre constitution. It has been shown to speed the establishment of stable soils and ecosystem formation, accelerating soil fertility and plant succession, mitigating some harmful effects of climate change.
- They nip their food off evenly, above the soil. They do not grip and pull the plants. Accordingly they are much more beneficial to their environment.
- pound for pound they drink far less water than other large animals.

There are a number of academic studies completed the past 10 years which clearly show the camelids to be at the forefront of environmental acceptance. Please drop a line should you wish references to them.

But the bottom line is that llamas have a lot going for them in this crazy world at present and we should expect them to be in greater demand once this become better known.

In this, my first issue of Como Se Llama, we highlight New Zealand’s most successful llama trekking/hiking business, that of Kevin Cole in Kaikoura. Kevin combines this with his unique accommodation business and has developed the llama activities to become the second most favoured attraction in Kaikoura. Quite an achievement to train, farm and manage a dozen llamas for a busy schedule.

And we take a look at Lynn and Pete’s superb off the grid farm of native forest and mountainous terrain, a perfect location to house an impressive herd of original breed llamas.

Our plan will be to feature an NZLA member’s farm in each issue and for the next quarter we will showcase a guanaco/llama farm in the North Island.

We love to talk llamas. Any aspect of llamdom will attract our attention. Breeding, nutrition, training, packing, carting - you name it. Please feel free to let us know about victories with your llamas, your adventures, your mishaps, your likes and dislikes.

Also please let me know if you are interested for us to highlight your farm in upcoming issues.

My contacts are:

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All going well we hope to have the 2nd quarter Como se Llama out in time for the AGM on June 8th.

REMINDER: winter is about to arrive so be sure to schedule in those toe nail trims soon and don't delay filling the shed with winter hay. If you are breeding and expect some little ones in the spring be sure to have some delicious lucerne ready to treat Mom for her hard work. (and send us photos!)

Next issue will include a write up about the different types of llamas to be found on NZ farms. Woolly, silky, suri, ccara, k'ara, double coat, single coat, medium/short/long wool, shedding, non shedding, hybrid, tampulli, huarizo - it can be confusing. And the difference between guanaco and llama.



Llyndy Llamas Puhi Puhi Valley

Nestled within New Zealand's breathtaking landscape lies Puhi Puhi Valley, Kaikoura, a place where nature's wonders flourish in abundance. Amidst this picturesque haven, unique and enchanting creatures find their home: Llamas and Guanaco.

This is the home of Llyndy Llamas.

Lynn and Pete own 200 Acres of paradise comprising largely of native bush with some grazing paddocks, serving as an

ideal setting for llama breeding, offering ample space and resources for these magnificent creatures to thrive. With its favourable climate and rich vegetation, the valley provides a nurturing environment for raising healthy and robust llamas and Guanaco. Llyndy Llamas takes great pride in their work, meticulously selecting breeding pairs to ensure the preservation of desirable traits and characteristics.

Llama breeding is both a science and an art, requiring careful consideration of various factors such as conformation, temperament, and genetic diversity. Lynn employs selective breeding techniques to enhance desirable traits in the llamas/Guanacos, including a luxurious soft undercoat, strong bone structure and great conformation all wrapped in a gentle disposition.

Moreover, the breeding program aims to maintain genetic diversity within llama populations, safeguarding against the risks of inbreeding and promoting overall health and vitality. Through strategic mating strategies, Llyndy Llamas strives to produce llamas of exceptional quality and vigor, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the herd.

The llamas wild ancestors, the guanacos, continue to roam the rugged terrain of South America and It is now illegal to export them out of South America. Here in New Zealand we are fortunate that some guanaco's made it into the country in the early Zoo shipments of the 70's and 80's.



During the 80's and 90's when it was no longer a requirement to have a zoo licence to own llamas, a mad frenzy of buying and breeding llamas took off. Fibre was the desired product and as the classic (Ccara) Llama and the Guanaco were not particularly woolly, and had a lot of undesirable guard hair, they were being bred with woollier types and Alpacas to get an abundance of fibre. This practice took place in most western countries and resulted in a dwindling population of true (Ccara) Llamas. Thanks to a few dedicated breeders that liked the Ccara type and the Guanaco's, they stuck to their principles by not cross breeding them, New Zealand has one of the largest population of Guanaco's outside of South America.

Lynn has been working with llamas since the year 2000

This is our 3rd year of breeding Keith's herd and the numbers stand at 15 females, two male cria (already reserved to go to new home when 2 yrs old) and 1 female cria. These are all running on one side of the Valley in 30 acres of grazing paddocks and bush. On the other side of the valley there 4 Guanaco Stud boys – Estefano, Barney, Premo and Oscar. They all run together on a very steep 60 acre bush block.”

Kaikoura Llama Trekking

We all know Kaikoura to be a very popular holiday destination. Whale watching, in various forms, is most popular, and then there is seal swimming, ocean kayaking, the spectacular mountains, etc. But, how many know that Llama Trekking is the highest-scored activity, by tourists and Kiwi's on vacation in Kaikoura?



Kevin Cole owns and operates a unique accommodation business, and in conjunction with that a llama trekking product which is very popular and growing. Short to half day treks, everyone gets to lead a llama to see some of Kaikoura's sights as well as get up-close and in synch with one of Kevin's well trained and superbly maintained adult llamas. And a special feature is to learn about llama's individual character, attributes, habits and reaction to the environment around them.



Six days out of seven we'll find either Kevin or one of his knowledgeable staff leading a group of visitors with their llamas in tow in the Kaikoura area. What a great unique product and how natural it is for llamas, a traditional working animal, to be contributing to the experience of a visit to Kaikoura.