

# IRC Council Focuses on Camelid Welfare

By Sheila Fugina

The National Llama Intervention & Rescue Coordination Council (IRC Council) was formed as a result of discussions at a Camelid Community gathering in Kansas City several years ago. The group's purpose is to provide an efficient system of coordinating llama and alpaca rescue efforts nationwide, help promote camelid welfare through education and open up a larger dialog on camelid welfare within the llama and alpaca community.

In its report to Camelid Community 2006 in Kansas City last August, the IRC Council stressed that most llamas and alpacas are not in need of help and re-homing because of abuse or abandonment. Most cases involve life-altering circumstances that have placed both owners and their animals in precarious situations. Illness, death, divorce or job loss can lead to an inability to properly care for livestock and pets. The council also emphasized in its report that camelids in need include both registered and unregistered animals, those with show ring credentials and animals of every fiber type and country of origin.



Neglectful situations at rescue sites often involve dirty water, lack of feed, hay and adequate shelter.

To be able to respond to immediate situations of camelids in need, the IRC Council maintains a contact list

that currently has more than 100 names of groups and individuals nationwide who have indicated willingness to support camelid welfare efforts in some way. This may include fostering or adopting llamas and alpacas in need of re-homing, providing help with loading and transporting animals, or helping to deworm and shear camelids needing basic maintenance services. It may also include spending time on the telephone to coordinate volunteers in specific rescue or intervention situations or to provide names and contact information for others who may be in a position to help. Updating and adding to the contact list is an ongoing effort.

Current regional coordinators for the IRC Council include:

**Northwest, Charlene Schmidt**

(charlene@prosperitypal.com);

**West, Dianna Jordan**

(dljordan@wildblue.net);

**Rocky Mountain Area,**

**L'illette Vasquez**

(lillette@veevee.com);

**Midwest, Sheila Fugina**

(bsfugina@pressenter.com);

**South Central, Sandra Reynolds**

(lonestarranch@duracom.net);

**Southeast, Susan Ravan**

(sravan@ellijay.com);

and **Northeast, Marc Page**

(sputtermill@crystal-mtn.com).

Though intervention and rescue efforts will of necessity remain primarily local or regional, the council feels there are many areas where networking and sharing can eliminate duplication of efforts and provide valuable information and ideas.

Education is a critical component of a nationwide camelid welfare program and an example of where the IRC Council can play an important role. Because there are a variety of audiences in need of different kinds and



Basic care such as trimming toenails often is neglected in rescue situations.

levels of education regarding llama and alpaca welfare, a subgroup of the IRC Council is developing an overall education plan to identify these audiences and their needs. Part of that plan will include surveying the educational materials and resources that currently exist, determining what additional materials may need to be developed and recommending effective methods of dissemination and distribution. Though much excellent camelid educational material already exists, it isn't getting into the hands of those who need it. The IRC Council is working to change that. We not only need to tailor our camelid welfare information to each specific audience, but we also need to determine the most effective distribution system for each one.

The IRC Council contacted llama and alpaca organizations late last year and again the first part of this year asking them to designate a contact person on camelid welfare issues so that a larger dialog within the llama and alpaca community might be opened up. Many groups responded and the IRC Council now includes representatives from all regions of the country and as many alpaca owners as llama owners. The intent is to facilitate discussions of camelid welfare topics on a nationwide basis with sensitivity to particular local and regional needs. To gather specific information

for these discussions, a second subgroup of the IRC Council is currently developing a short survey to assess camelid welfare needs across the country and determine needs that may be specific to certain regions and those that may be in common nationwide.

Some find it hard, or embarrassing, to talk about camelids in need at the same time they are trying to market llamas or alpacas. Members of the IRC Council find it harder or more embarrassing if we don't. We in the camelid community are way behind owners and breeders of other types of animals who realize a welfare network is a necessary element of their industry, as automatic as a marketing arm, a breed registry or a show association. We need to catch up. It's not a reflection on our animals; it's a reflection on us. Llamas and alpacas would not be in need of intervention or rescue if it weren't for the human element involved. And it is we, the humans in their lives, who can also help them.

The camelid community is a small one compared with other livestock and companion animal indus-

tries. That should make it easier for us to work together to ensure the welfare and viability not only of our industry, but also of our animals. The two are inextricably linked. Our success as an industry depends on the welfare of our llamas and alpacas.

The IRC Council plans to make a progress report at Camelid Community 2007, including updates on a camelid education plan and the survey regarding camelid welfare needs. For more information on Camelid Community 2007, set for August 3-5 in Kansas City, contact Barb Baker (740-397-1736) or Sheila Fugina (715-246-5837 or bsfugina@presenter.com).



Happy Ending!

*About the author:*

*Sheila and her husband Britt have been raising llamas since 1988 when Sheila decided to open a bed and breakfast offering llama hikes. Though she tired of the bed and breakfast, Sheila was hooked on llamas and now cares for a herd of 30 with the Argentine influence a primary focus. She has been active with local, regional and national camelid issues and groups-leading her county's 4-H llama project, coordinating a regional marketing and education event called Llama Magic, participating in the Camelid Working Group on animal ID, and facilitating at Camelid Community. A journalist in her previous life, Sheila continues to write for llama publications and newsletters while waiting for the latest crias to be born. She has been involved with camelid rescue and intervention for almost as long as she has had llamas and considers camelid welfare to be the responsibility of the entire llama and alpaca community. Sheila currently serves as moderator of the IRC Council.*

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## **The CLR** (Collectible Llamas, Inc.) **Registry Database** **TECHNICAL UPDATE**

By Eric C. Tapager

I have spent over 26 years developing software and managing technical systems across the country and around the world. Most of my career has been in designing and developing custom application software for all types of businesses and industries, including very high tech industries like the manufacturing of aircraft parts and ultrasound equipment. After meeting with representatives from the CLR, I was very excited to have opportunity to use my extensive software development skills to design and build the CLR database.

Like most computer people, I

sometimes find myself providing too much technical information when describing systems development, but I hope to be able to give readers practical, understandable information as we continue our development. That is why we have created this **"Technical Update"** report to provide you with updates and to discuss the progress and features of the registry.

### **Topic: PHOTOGRAPHS**

As of the writing of this article, we have begun adding more features to our internal data model. This technical update focuses on adding photographs to the database. A current update is the addition of our "multiple" photo area. While most data model designs provide an area for only one photograph, we will be able to store multiple photos of your registered llamas, including the four

**required** color photos: Left, Right, Front, Rear. In addition, we will be able to store a **"Promotional"** photograph. This could be any acceptable photograph, maybe from a show or other event that you would like to share. In addition, we will have an area for a **"Fiber"** photograph.

Although we are still working on public access to the database, we are excited that we will be able to make these photos viewable by the public when it public access becomes available.

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions. For "Technical" comments please email **eric@The-CLI.org**

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