

# PACUÑA™:

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FIBER

"...First let me say that it (Pacuña™ fiber) is some of the finest fiber I have ever processed. It was not only a pleasure to work with, but also exhilarating!" says Kathy Haneke of Haneke Enterprises, Inc., and an expert in fiber processing.

"Oh, my land!" says Mary Lou Clingan, camelid fiber expert every time she handles the incredible product.

Comments such as this are typical from those who know fiber and comments such as "Geez, this is sure soft," or "What kind of animal did this come from?" are heard from the fiber neophytes. "I do not feel a thing," is another comment heard when a ball of raw fiber was put into the hand of a blindfolded person.

One thing is for certain, when anyone talks about or hears about the Pacuña™, they can be sure the topic is about one of the finest fibers in the world. The term Pacuña™ is still new to some folks, so this article will discuss just what a Pacuña™ is, along with its history and characteristics.

Most camelid enthusiasts know of the different South American Camelids: the Guanaco, Llama, Alpaca and Vicuña. It is also common knowledge that the llama and alpaca are domesticated and the guanaco and the vicuña are considered non-

domesticated. We will concentrate on the alpaca and the vicuña for this article. The wild vicuña has an ancient history and has been known for its very fine fiber. In fact, during Inca times, it was punishable by death to wear vicuña fiber if not a member of the royal family. Today, we know why this fiber was considered more valuable than gold. At micron levels of 11-13 it is superior to most other natural fibers of the world. That fact, combined with the slaughter of most of these animals in the 1800 to mid 1900's, made the fiber extremely rare. Another natural attribute of the vicuña that adds to the rareness is each animal produces only 12-16 ounces of fleece per year. Further, the animals are wild and must be rounded up in large groups, risking injury and death each time.

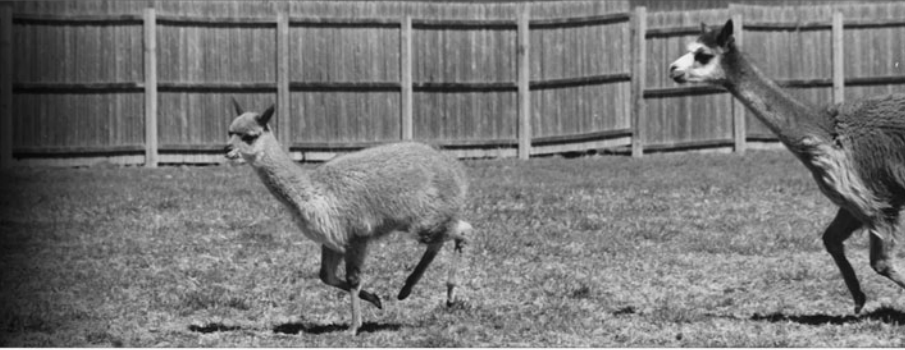
Enter the alpaca, the evolutionary offspring of the vicuña (at least this is the current thinking). The alpaca produces much higher volumes of fiber each year and they are relatively docile and easy to handle (at least most of them). This animal seems perfect except, as one can imagine, the quality and characteristics of the alpaca fiber, although very desirable, are not as fine as the vicuña.

It was not long before the natives of Peru both intentionally and unintentionally decided they wanted the best of both animals. Because of

their close genetics, all South American camelids and probably all camelids can interbreed. By crossing the alpaca and the vicuña the prospects of producing a superior fiber in larger quantities on an animal that is easily handled can be achieved, at least in theory, as of a few years ago.

Now we have the Pacuña™, a fertile cross of the alpaca and vicuña. Nearly six years ago a partnership was formed between Jack and Miriam Donaldson and Toni and Gary Cotton, DVM's to import a group of Pacuñas™ and start a United States herd along with the pure vicuña, Victor, that was already here. This partnership became known as CADVARS-Cotton and Donaldson Vicuña Alpaca Research Sanctuary. CADVARS was undertaken to help preserve the vicuña heritage in the form of fine fiber production. In addition, the group has researched the husbandry, medical and reproduction needs of the Pacuña™ to evaluate its continued viability by carefully caring for and breeding their original herd, which has now grown to over thirty animals. After almost six years in this country, the herd remains healthy with nearly 100% fertility, healthy cria, and normal growth and maturity patterns. The group is pasture bred, as handling is a bit more difficult than with alpacas. But, when handled and caught, the Pacuña™ becomes more docile and easier to handle.

[www.pacuna.com](http://www.pacuna.com)



The fiber theory has been proven correct. When breeding a Pacuña™ male with a micron count of around 13 to an average micron alpaca (around 24), the resulting Pacuña™ offspring have been showing microns in the 14-16 range. Second generation offspring bred back to high percent Pacuñas™ will drop that down to the 13-14 range. The annual yield per animal is 2 pounds, which is twice the yield from a pure vicuña.

As with any research, record keeping is paramount, so The Pacuña™ Registry, also known as the Vicuña Alpaca Registry, was started. Every animal in the program with at least one quarter vicuna heritage is a member of the registry. Through DNA blood testing the registry is kept pure.

CADVARS also realized the future economic importance of the Pacuña™ and decided that this project should be all encompassing. Thus, they started the Pacuña™ Cooperative. Any person who owns a registered Pacuña™ is automatically a member of the cooperative and all of the harvested fiber is pooled for processing and assemblage into fiber products for sale and display. Bear in mind that a vicuña scarf may fetch \$800 and a fine vicuña suit may set one back upwards of \$20,000. It is expected that the Pacuña™ labeled garments will certainly be elite, fitting for royalty, as in the ancient times. The trademarked 'Pacuña™' may become a household word along with the likes of Gucci, Faberge, Rolex, Mercedes or Ralph Lauren.

For further information on the Pacuña™ project contact CADVARS at 419-348-3471 or 419-423-3890. The web address is [www.pacuna.com](http://www.pacuna.com). The animals are housed at 16259 S.R. 224, Findlay, Ohio. They would be happy to arrange a farm visit if anyone would like to see one of the most majestic of all of the noble fiber bearers.

  
**PACUÑA™**  
THE ROYAL FIBER

