

Perspectives

by Ken Dunn

Llamas... what wonderful beings they are! When asked what first attracted me to llamas, I say, "Just look at one and you will have your answer." As far as I'm concerned, there's no other creature as regal or as beautiful as a llama.

For me, I feel I have known llamas most all my life. During my learning years of elementary and high school and right on through college I was always reading about llamas, many times when I was supposed to be studying! My desire was to someday have one. Well, that day was a long time coming, but the point is it came; and I found that to have only one was impossible, for having just one is akin to being allowed to select only one chocolate from a sampler box! To have one brings on the desire for another and another, etc., etc.

Well, as I became the proud owner of my first llama nine years ago, I had thoughts of raising these beauties on a small scale to sell. Wrong! I found I could not part with one for any reason, so that has brought us to purchase and raise a beautiful group of "woolies" to love and enjoy as much today as the first. So much for my original thought of selling one! The good news is that, with three herd sires and a junior coming along, we do select and limited outside breedings, which gives great pleasure in having visiting lady llamas to entertain and spoil during their visits with us. While they are here, they are subject to our daily light grooming and weekly full grooming regimen. I have never seen a llama I did not like. Each one truly is special in its own way. Going to production sales takes great willpower on my part for I want everyone I see!

We derive much pleasure and gratification from participating in public events such as fairs and school outings. People always ask, "What do you do with a llama?" My reply is, "You just love them or simply enjoy their quiet elegance or show them at llama events." Most people do not know there is such a thing as a llama show. So, that needs to be corrected within the industry. I tell people what fun it is to be with llamas and, for the most part, fun people.

Now, that brings us full circle to my biggest frustration with owning llamas. Well, the frustration is not with llamas, but with people. What we often don't mention is that it has become less and less fun to go to shows, whether local or out of state, because of a few people who have their own agendas as to how shows are judged and run. I am sure these same people at one time were having pleasure with llamas, on a one on one basis. Apparently, somewhere along the way winning and controlling

became of the utmost importance, and to do whatever it takes to win and be in charge became top priority!

The main purposes of llama shows should be to have fun, enjoy the company of others and the friendly competition that's equally fair for all. Having fun at llama events is the best way I know to spread the message to onlookers who are curious about llamas, but may not yet own any. When onlookers see nothing but frowns and bickering, it totally turns them off. We simply must find ways to put the fun back into attending llama events.

Personally, I am not an organizational type, nor am I one to join up with any one particular group. Competition is a good thing. In my opinion several organizations will keep all on their toes in all aspects and none will have total power in the industry, thus making one great and influential industry for those who show, sell, or like me just like to have fun with our friends, both four legged and two legged! We all need to support our llama organizations, ALSA, CLI, ILR, SLA, and TLC as well as our local llama associations. I am especially excited about the new ideas and fresh approaches that CLI has to offer. The organization supports showing of all types of llamas from Traditional to Silky to Suri, with each group competing separately and being judged for its special characteristics.

This brings me to one other point that I feel is very important. In my opinion people are not being true to themselves in not acknowledging that suri llamas arrive via alpacas and crosses with them! Why so many are in a total twist about this is beyond me. We would be without many beautiful breeds of dogs, cattle, sheep and even goats had not someone done some crossbreeding. There's room for every type of llama from minis to suris and it disgusts me when I hear others touting their suris as "real llamas." The point is it doesn't make a hill of beans difference (sorry for the pun). As far as I'm concerned, they are llamas who have been stamped as "LL," perhaps through some creative breeding and paperwork. Just be upfront with it, call a spade a spade and love each one for the special being it is, and this industry will flourish beyond all expectations.

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*Home of Silky/Suri Herdsires, Beauregard
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