



MELFORD GREEN

NEWSLETTER: Spring 2008

On the move again.....

Soon after our last Newsletter, life became dominated by our concerns about Blue Tongue and for a while it gave us a few sleepless nights. However as time and knowledge progressed we became more comfortable. Firstly, we learnt that whilst alpacas can contract Blue Tongue, it is rarely fatal. Secondly we gradually heard of more and more livestock in our region being diagnosed and successfully treated; primarily with a course of anti-inflammatory drugs. So although the movement restrictions created some problems with rotating animals to fresh pasture, stud male availability, and our customers taking delivery of their new animals: our herd health remains fine.

We are currently in a vector free period, which means that while the temperatures remain low we can move animals to areas outside the protection zone as long as they are tested Blue Tongue negative. This period will end once the weather warms up, so we're unsure if we will be at the National British Alpaca Show in May, but can currently deliver any orders you may have.

Our cria put on huge amounts of weight this year due to the continuous supply of fresh grass (one positive outcome of the wet summer) and weaning is now all but complete. A few cria were trough shy for a while, but the addition of chopped alfalfa (*Alpha A* from Dengie) soon encouraged them to dive back in again.

Easter Opening

Following our series of successful open days in the run up to Christmas, we have decided to host further farm walks over the spring and summer months starting Easter Weekend. Check the press or www.melfordgreenalpacas.co.uk for details of opening times and special events. Bespoke group tours can also be arranged, just call 01787 374142 and discuss your requirements.

“Adoptive parents” will receive invitations for their personal tours within the next couple of weeks.

Meet Aspel

After spending a thoroughly enjoyable day at the filming of *The Antiques Roadshow* at Kentwell Hall in Long Melford, we arrived home just in time to witness the delivery of our final cria of the season. What else could we call him but Aspel? We were rather surprised at the level of interest in his appearance though!



Queues form to meet Aspel

'Aspel the Alpaca' photograph courtesy of Suffolk Free Press

Hens, Foxes & Alpacas

Many of us have heard of the way alpacas will protect cria and lambs from foxes. Last year for instance I was told of a shepherd that regularly lost around 9% of his lambs to Bill Oddie's chums. After putting a couple of alpacas in the field, losses dropped to under 1%. Keen to test this, we decided to introduce some free range hens to a paddock containing gelded males. Given the high number of foxes in the woods behind the farm, we figured this would be a real test and sure enough, the alpacas seemed to keep the foxes at bay. The need to rest the paddock meant moving the boys out for a while. That very night a fox attacked the hen houses with the usual resultant carnage. However, in order to get back to the woods with her spoils, foxy had to pass through the paddock that now contained the boys. They got their own back.



You put your left leg in....

Shearing

Our Australian & New Zealand friends are due back at the end of April / beginning of May. Once again we will be offering our 'shearing package', where we collect animals from our clients then deliver them home along with a full MOT (toe nails & teeth trimmed, vaccinations or worming as required) along with a rather fetching "back to school" haircut. Fleeces can either be returned or set against the costs of shearing. Call 01787 374142 to book your slot.



Someone's having a Bad Hair Day....

New Retail Outlet

Becky Poynter owns and runs the highly successful web-based wool & yarn shop, Yarnsmith. In addition to the wide range of wool, patterns and accessories; 2008 sees the business developing a new section which promotes and sells the very best in UK produced yarns. Becky was keen to stock alpaca yarn and approached Melford Green to see if we could help. We're pleased to announce that from Easter, Yarnsmith will be retailing our Suffolk spun yarns. We're really very excited about the deal as it ensures our customers old and new will now benefit from the 24-7 opening times and swift direct delivery service of www.yarnsmith.co.uk along with the added advantage of being able to discuss any questions with Becky on 01787 881620 (though not in the middle of the night please!)



Futurity 2008

The British Alpaca Futurity show was held at Newbury on 16 & 17th February. Only UK bred animals are allowed to enter the show and so it's a real showcase for the best of what this country has to offer. Indeed, show Judge Mike Saffley from Oregon, widely considered to be one the very best judges in the world, commented that the standard was so high that the champion male white huacaya (*Bozedown Ulysses*) would have been awarded a similar position in the top shows in Peru. High praise indeed.

The Futurity differs from other shows in that each winning entry is awarded points that are then are allotted against that entry's sire. This means that over the course of the show a clear picture emerges of which stud males are truly the very best in the country. The overall Futurity Champion (for the second year running) and so the stud that had sired the highest number of winning progeny was *Bozedown Galaxy*.

It was a result that vindicated Melford Green's 2007 breeding decisions. Following *Galaxy's* success in the previous Futurity, we decided to use him to cover over a third of our core elite Peruvian herd. We supplemented this by using *Bozedown Ulysses* (a *Galaxy* progeny) over another 3 elite females. All in all, this means that we are expecting some really stunning cria in 2008, and believe that there will be more *Galaxy* cria at Melford Green than anywhere else outside of his home herd in Berkshire.



The Supremes embark on UK Tour

For those that can't wait for these cria to come to market, or would like to give their herd a show winning boost, we have decided to make a couple of *Galaxy* covered females and one *Ulysses* covered female available now on a strictly first come, first served basis. Details of these highly sought after alpacas can be found on the website.

'The Spinners' come to Melford

Alpaca fleece is highly valued by home-spinners. Its combination of fineness and long staple length means it is a rewarding fleece to spin, whilst the lack of lanolin means that it's a relatively straight forward fleece to prepare. In September, the Mid Essex Guild of Spinners, Weavers, & Dyers joined us for one of our bespoke open days. We spent the morning walking around the farm before adjourning to the cart-lodge to discuss the finer points of alpaca fleece over a cup of coffee. The ladies left laden with a range of suri and huacaya fleeces; eager to begin spinning, or was that to get to the pub for lunch? The Guild welcomes new members and details of this as well as their trip to Melford Green can be found at www.spinandweave.org.uk