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The Fabulous Suri

INFORMATION BROCHURE

WHAT IS A SURI?

Suris are a type of alpaca, which is a domesticated member of the camelid family. Along with llamas, guanacos and vicunas, alpacas are native to South America. Today, there are about 3.0 million alpacas in the Andean highlands, mostly in Peru, but also in Chile and Bolivia. Alpaca are renown for their luxury fibre which has superior handle, softness and lustre.

Of the two types of alpaca—the huacaya and the suri—the huacaya is the more common of the two and has a fleece not unlike that of the merino, with a soft, fluffy appearance and defined crimp. The suri, however, comprising approximately 5% of the world's alpacas, has a fleece that hangs down from its body in pencils, or locks. The



suri fibre is prized for its lustre and softness of handle. It is used primarily for producing women's coats and because of its rarity is highly sought after by fashion houses, bringing a premium price in the fibre market.

Since the first major import into Australia in 1989, the number of alpacas here has increased to more than 40,000. Of these, the Australian suri herd comprises 2150 animals. While some of these are pure suri, there has been much interest in crossing huacayas and suris to increase the number of coloured suri. Alpacas come in a range of natural colours, including white, various shades of fawn and brown, grey and black.

DID YOU KNOW...

- There are approximately 3.0 million alpaca worldwide and 45,000 in Australia
- Of all alpacas, only 120,000 are suris, 2,500 of which are in Australia
- Prices for female pure suris generally range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 with suri crosses at lower prices
- Suri fleece sells for between \$25 and \$90 a kg (The average suri produces 2.5-3.5 kgs of usable fleece a year)

THE INCA STORY

the history of alpacas in south america

Alpaca are believed to have been created through selective breeding of the wild vicuna about 6000 years ago, by the Andean people in South America. They live in the high altitudes of the treeless altiplano, about 14,000 feet or 4200 m above sea level. The Incas prized the cloth made from alpaca so highly that it was used as a form of currency and only royalty were permitted to wear cloth made from suri fibre. The alpaca and llama were also important as a source of food and as pack animals.

The Incas developed a superior animal which had a finer and

more even fleece than that seen in alpacas today. These genetics were largely lost as a result of the Spanish invasion in the 1500s, when up to 90% of alpaca were killed to make way for European livestock, which the Spanish valued more highly.

The suri alpaca, although dominant over the huacaya type, is very rare in South America. It is thought that as the alpacas and their herders were forced higher into the Andean mountains by the conquistadors, the

openness of their fleece along the backline made them more susceptible to the extreme conditions found at such high altitudes. The number of suri in Peru continues to decline, hence the importance of new alpaca breeding nations like Australia.



LIFESTYLE AND SMART INVESTMENT

The desire to own the wonderful, rare and beautiful suri alpaca can lead to a great lifestyle and a very rewarding business. With less than 5% of the world population of alpacas being suri and numbers declining yearly in Peru, the potential is unlimited for the relatively small number of dedi-

The desire to be part of the wonderful, rare and beautiful world of the suri alpaca can lead to a great lifestyle and a very rewarding business.

cated suri breeders in Australia. While they are a fleece animal, the industry in Australia is still too small to support commercial fleece

herds. Their current value is as stud animals to breed up the numbers required for commercial production. Although there has been some suspicion of the al-

paca, with some skeptics waiting for them to go the way of ostriches and emus, the industry is strong and continues to grow. Good quality alpacas continue to hold their value and suris command premium prices. There are thought to be no more than 120,000 suris worldwide and only 1-2 % of these are coloured.

The Australian industry has made great inroads into improving the quality of animals over successive generations and is becoming a significant market for other countries seeking elite breeding stock. There has never been a better time to be part of this exciting industry.



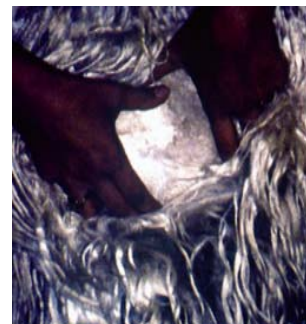
WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SURI

Although a suri looks very different from the more common huacaya, the conformational traits to look out for are generally the same. The animal should be well proportioned, have straight legs and back, a rounded rump and correct bite. The ears may be slightly longer and the muzzle shorter than a huacaya.

The characteristics of the fleece, however are what distinguishes the suri. When assessing a suri, you should look for:

Lustre: perhaps the single most important characteristic of suri fibre, lustre is the shine inherent to the most

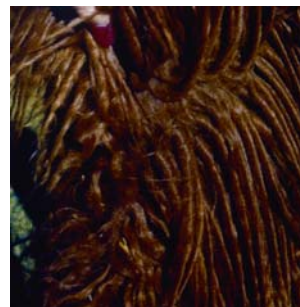
exquisite fleeces—open up a fleece to assess the lustre next to the skin;



Fineness: the finer the fleece, the softer and more lustrous it is and the higher its price;

Lock 'architecture': well-defined pencil locks which persist throughout the

fleece (not just on the surface) and are evident right to the skin. These can be curled, twisted or waves, but must hang down in individual locks.



Density: is important in regard to return for fleeces and it also helps keep out dust and vegetable matter:

Uniformity: the locking and fineness should be uniform over the body of the animal from the neck through the body to the rump and even extending down on the legs:

Coverage: the suri should be well covered, with a long forelock, and fleece on cheeks and from chin, the front and rear legs should be well covered with consistent locking to the toes.

Colour: colour is personal choice; the whites and light fawns are more common (about 90% of Peruvian clip), but are generally of higher quality than the rarer coloured suris.

EASY CARE SURI ALPACAS

Alpacas are hardy and generally disease and parasite resistant. They require basic care of 6-monthly vaccinations, occasional toe & teeth trimming and annual shearing. They are very easy to herd and handle.

Suris also:

- Don't get footrot or flystrike
- Don't need crutching or mulesing
- Have soft padded feet

which are easy on the environment

- Are inquisitive and gentle
- Don't require special fencing
- Are easy to halter train and transport
- Are effective guards against dingos and foxes
- Are more effective at utilizing unimproved pastures than sheep.

Suris are ideal for:

- People with small acreages

- Investors wishing to agist their animals
- Professionals looking for tax advantages they can actually enjoy
- Families looking for lifestyle that is healthy and appealing
- Farmers wishing to diversify
- Retirees unwilling to sit and grow old



FIBRE OF THE GODS

Suri has a superior handle than other fibres because the scales along the shaft of the fibre have a longer and tighter profile, providing a very smooth surface. Suri also has very little medullation (coarse, hollow fibres which cause prickling and do not process or dye as well as normal fibres).

On the world market, the fibre of suri alpacas is coveted for its lustre and softness by the high fashion textile industry and today commands a price double that for huacaya. Suri has the softness of cashmere, lustre of silk, warmth and featherweight of goose down and durability of wool. Suri fibre blends well with wool and other fine fibre, including silk, and yarn can be knit, crocheted or woven.

Suri fibre is used for:

- High fashion fabric for men's and women's designer clothing

- Luxury apparel, coats, sweaters and unique decorator items
- Specialty interior fabrics and textiles.

Worldwide, suri is most commonly made up into overcoats which are brushed to bring out its natural lustre.



In Australia, some enterprising and highly skilled breeders in Queensland are hand-spinning suri fleece to produce gossamer-thin thread for lacework shawls and even wedding dresses.

When the fashion trade demands suri, the orders are hard to fill and the price increases rapidly. The majority is sold to Italy, with smaller markets being US, Europe and Japan.

Research data has shown that suri fleece may have a higher density and yield than that of huacaya. In processing, the yield of suri fibre is 90% compared to 43-76% for sheep's wool.

ALPACA FACTS

- Peru produces 90% of the world's alpaca fibre
- Textile fibres (mohair, cashmere, angora, camel, yak and alpaca) account for 2.6% of world wool production
- 'Wool' represents 4% of the world textile market (in 1992 alpaca output was 4000 ton compared with 1,851,000 ton for sheep's wool)