

WSAG Newsletter

October 2018



The Midlands Championship 10 -Nov-18



This show is fast approaching now and preparations are well underway. Entries were closed early as we had so many people wanting to come - we obviously did something right last year!! With so many entries it is going to be a packed day for our judge Jo Bridge and the team ensuring everything runs on time.

Some of you have already volunteered to help and we are very grateful for your time. If you have not volunteered yet, please don't be shy come and join in. It is a great experience seeing what happens at a show and a great opportunity to see (and feel) prize winning animals and talk to their owners. The more helpers there are the more enjoyable it is for all of us. And don't forget the show is one of the main ways that we raise money that is used to help subsidise events for the group.



Upcoming Events



Your committee are working hard to put together a program of events. These will be updated and publicised on the WSAG website and Facebook as soon as we have the details.

So far we have:

- 10-Nov-18 The Midlands Halter Championships
Three Counties Showground
- 24-Feb-19 AGM 2019, Abberley Village Hall
- TBA Talk: Pasture Management
- TBA Visit: Mill Tour
- TBA Sharing: Basic Husbandry
- TBA Sharing: What to do with your fleece
- TBA Sharing: Basic Handling
- TBA Social: BBQ

We are thinking of holding a series of afternoon meetings over the winter to talk about fibre and how to get the most from it - further details to follow. These will really be knowledge sharing events on areas such as 'obtaining the fleece', 'processing the fleece', what to do with the fleece' etc. We hope that particularly our new members will find this interesting?

If there is anything else you would like to see, please let us know.

Roger Mount

Hi, I'm Roger, I have been Chairman of the West Shires Alpaca Group since it was founded in 2011. I have owned alpacas since 2002 and started with 3 pet boys. Having truly caught the bug, my herd now numbers 300 and I breed both Huacaya and Suri alpacas.

The herd contains all colours from white to true black, approximately 80% are Huacaya and 20% Suri. I am very much involved in showing my alpacas and their fleece at many of the shows held around the country. I help organise both the alpaca show at the Royal Three Counties Show and the Midlands Championship Halter Show.

In addition to the alpaca business I am Chairman of a London firm of Reinsurance brokers and spend most weeks in London or visiting clients abroad.



The Group Website— Coming soon...

We have had some work done on the website to give it a fresh new look, improve its performance over multiple platforms and make it easier for us to update. This will be our new hub for news and events. We have also introduced a 'shop' to enable you to manage your membership and to pay workshop fees directly. We hope this will save us time and give us greater visibility when we are organising events.

The new site is currently under review and as soon as it is 'live' we will let you know so that you can go and take a look.

Feeding for Fibre



A very interesting and educational day was held at Abberley Village Hall. Paul Vallely took us through the analysis of fibre from our alpacas and what the various parameters and graphs told us about that fibre. The equipment was demonstrated taking samples from a shorn fleece, showing how effective skirting will make a difference to the analysis and overall value of the fleece. We even got the chance to see how taking fibre from different parts of the alpaca gave very different

results, courtesy of Cortez and Chino.

Paul also told us about the studies currently underway looking at the effect nutrition has on fibre development, particularly in the cria before and after birth. We hope to see the results of those studies over the coming months.

Our thanks go to Paul who gave up his time in the middle of moving his home from Australia to Ireland!!



Snowhill Farm Open Day



A group of us spent a very pleasant afternoon at Roger Mount's farm. We enjoyed some very tasty nibbles and had a walk around Roger's immaculate fields looking at the stud males, mothers and cria and the youngstock. Roger's encyclopaedic knowledge of the breeding of his herd was in

evidence as he talked about the parentage of some of his best animals. And when Roger needed to attend to some new born cria, his mother—Mrs Mount, carried on with the commentary. We hope that those of you that attended enjoyed the afternoon talking alpacas with like minded people—there is always something to learn!



Anne Cheston

Iain and I entered the world of Alpacas in 2015, some seven or so years after the start of Iain's secret obsession with these animals following a conversation whilst on holiday, in a hotel bar with a family who bred alpacas. From this point Iain decided we needed alpacas and so when we relocated to Worcestershire for Iain's job, the prerequisites for a new home included sufficient land for grazing.





We debated starting with a few boys as pets, but instead we ended up buying four pregnant females and have gradually increased our numbers to 12 (7 girls and 5 boys). Having arranged various 'dates' for our girls this Summer, we hope to expand next year if the matings have been successful and continue to term.

As well as trying to learn as much as possible about alpaca care and husbandry, I have also been learning to use their beautiful fibre. I joined our local guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, and after the first meeting came home with the Guild's spinning wheel on loan and spent the next few months attempting to create some decent yarn from their fleece. I then got a Rigid Heddle Loom for my birthday last year and, after having the fibre processed into yarn at a mill (I am never going to make a dent in our fleece mountain spinning by hand) I am enjoying exploring the creative potential of this simple loom, and have also started hand dyeing the yarn to add colour to the beautiful natural shades.

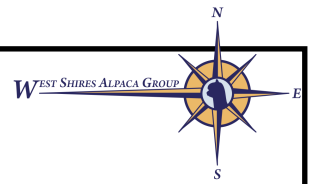
We have learnt and continue to learn so much about alpacas and joining the WSAG has been instrumental in making new contacts and friends and access to a hugely knowledgeable and experienced support network.

Find us on:

 : www.westshiresalpacagroup.org.uk

 : West Shires Alpaca Group

The story of Figaro....



Snowhill Figaro (sire: Caton Tulaco Caliph. Dam: Snowhill Amorella)

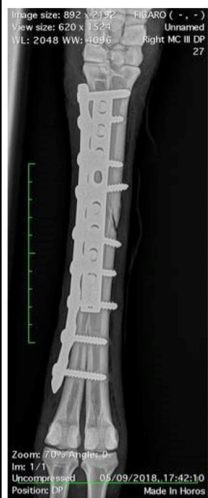
When the boys were called in for their evening feed on 4th September, the staff noticed that Figaro was holding up his right front leg. They felt the leg and heard a crunching sound before Figaro screamed in pain. As it was late, they strapped his leg up with plastic tubing, injected him with 6 mls of metacam and put him in a stable on his own for the night. Next morning, Kit Heawood, from Tyndale Vets, came to look at Figaro and confirmed that he had a major fracture of the canon bone. Next, the discussion was about what to do. Kit phoned me in London and gave the options of trying to find someone to mend it, euthanasia or amputation. Interestingly, Kit said that they could collect semen from him, which would enable us to continue to breed from him using artificial insemination. Apparently, AI is now not so difficult after someone having found that breeding success is much improved by artificially concentrating the sperm into a small amount of fluid. Worth knowing.



I decided that mending his leg was the ideal option provided it didn't cost too much. Figaro doesn't have a particularly fine fleece but, he has a dense fleece (with some varying coloured fibres), good conformation and a very nice head type. We kept him to add density and to improve on head type. Essentially, he is not one of our most valuable studs but, useful and a bit of a favourite with some of the staff. He has four cria to date ranging in colour from white to black!

Kit did some phoning around. The initial quotes from the usual specialists ranged from £4,500 to £7,000. I told Kit that he would have to put him down at that price. Kit said he would make some more calls. Within an hour he

phoned back and said that Bruce Bladon of Donnington Grove Veterinary Surgeons in Newbury might do it for a lot less depending on what the x-rays showed. Kit informed me that Bruce was one of the top equine surgeons in the country and had fixed several race horses legs as well as having done the odd racing camel or two. Figaro was then trailered to Boughton Vale Equine centre at Lower Slaughter and x-rayed. The x-rays were then emailed to Bruce who decided that mending an alpaca's leg would add to his repertoire and quoted a maximum of £2,000 including up to 4 days of post-operative care.



That afternoon Bruce Bladon, along with assistance from Boughton Vale operated on Figaro. Kit was in charge of the anaesthesia. The operation went without a hitch. Figaro came round well and was walking on his leg (in a plaster caste) almost immediately but, not before almost knocking people out whilst regularly flicking his leg up at an angle resembling a well-executed Nazi salute! Figaro had his caste taken off three weeks ago

and now just has cotton padding and vet wrap around

it. He has had regular injections of anti-biotics and he had daily metacam for the first two weeks. He will be allowed out of his stable later this month but, will have to be kept on his own for at least 3 months after that.



Should you be unlucky enough to have an alpaca with a broken leg, it is well worth getting a quote from more than one practice and, if the situation isn't affordable and you have a valued stud male, look into the AI option.