

# Getting Started

The Getting Started column is designed to spotlight new AOBA members by telling how they got into the alpaca business and of some of their experiences in the initial phases of alpaca ownership. If you have owned alpacas for one year or less, send a brief story (maximum 450 words) via e-mail or floppy disk, along with a couple of crisp photographs (digital or hard copy) to A.M. Headquarters.

## Kentucky Home Alpacas

In the lush green fields of Shelby County near Louisville, is an old Kentucky home and a new herd of alpacas. Hello from Kentucky! We are three generations of Hagans – Sara, Terry, and Peggy; Ruth, Jess, and John. Two years ago, we moved to the country so that our children could grow up on a farm, and we quickly decided that alpacas were to be our most serious farming effort. After months of research and preparation, we bought two pregnant females from Tom and Christy Flamm at Brightside Bend here in Kentucky. From them, we have also received the best support and encouragement.

Then the year 2000 AOBA conference occurred in Louisville. After soaking up as much education as possible at that event, we decided to dedicate our investment account to something better than the stock market. So one month later, we traveled to the Pacific Northwest, where we visited Pacific Crest Alpacas and Crescent Moon Alpacas and purchased additional alpacas. Kentucky Home Alpacas now consists of a herd of 28 alpacas. We have a nice variety of top quality Peruvian and Chilean females, and offspring of Legacy, Victor, Heming-



Three generations of the Hagan family are involved in raising alpacas. Right, their herd sire, Camelot.



way, Camilio, Vengador, Microsoft, Felix, and Bolivian Camelot.

Camelot is our proven herd sire, with approximately forty crias so far. He was the senior herd sire of Crescent Moon Ranch prior to their purchase of Legacy, and we feel honored and privileged to have him. He has perfect conformation, incredible fleece and coverage, and consistently reproduces

these qualities in his crias, 60% of which have been females to date.

Our junior herd sire is Victor's Mr. Gold. At two years of age, his light fawn, full Accoyo fleece has been successful in the show ring. He will make a major contribution to our effort to breed the finest in fawn fleece.

Although the list of alpaca breeders in Kentucky is short, we believe that the list of potential alpaca breeders in Kentucky is long. Horses are Kentucky's number one industry, so we know there are plenty of green pastures here, and with a livestock focus – we hope people will realize, as did we, that

alpacas are "The World's Finest Livestock Investment."

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## Forever Precious Alpacas

As I strained to reach the top of a hill on my bicycle, my breathing heavy in my ears and my eyes focused on the road ahead, never in my wildest imaginings did I anticipate the life-altering experience awaiting me at the crest of the hill. For it was there that I spied a herd of alpacas. Alpacas? What were alpacas doing here in our little town?

The journalist in me kicked in and I pedaled home to put on some conventional clothing and return for a closer look at these amazing creatures. The owners were thrilled at the prospect of my writing a story about their alpacas, and took me on a trip to the field for a close encounter with the cutest little baby animal I had ever seen.

Of course my questions needed to be followed up by a second trip, and then

a THIRD trip to the alpaca farm! I walked past the herd in one pasture to take some pictures. As my camera was clicking away, I became increasingly aware that there was a "presence" behind me. I slowly turned to find the entire group of females and babies surveying my activities. As I looked into their big wide eyes, I felt the openness in their eyes inviting me into their world. I stepped through at



Breanne exchanges a traditional alpaca greeting with Scruffy.



Topaz and Rosette make a fine addition to the fall colors.

that moment and there I HAVE REMAINED.

My husband and kids needed to come see these captivating creatures! Fred's immediate response was, "We have to figure out where to get the money so we can buy one of these animals." My twelve-year-old, Breanne, said, "Let's call our farm: 'Forever Precious Alpacas.'" We found the money and bought a weanling female that we named Precious Topaz.

We soon realized that we couldn't keep alpacas on our 80-foot by 100-foot lot, so it was off to the real estate

office to find out the possibilities for selling our house and buying one with more land. It took over nine months, but just when we thought things wouldn't work out, we found a place in our price range that definitely fit the idea we had of what an alpaca farm should look like. The place hadn't been farmed in thirty years, had no barn or fencing, but in our minds' eyes, it was perfect!

Over that first summer, we cleared land for two pastures. We then purchased three more alpacas... soon the barn and fencing went in. Before long,

we were finally able to bring our alpacas home and become full-fledged breeders! We are thrilled that these animals opened their lives to us. And as we start on our journey as alpaca shepherds, we look forward to the happy returns that will come our way through sharing our lives with alpacas.

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## ***Southern Iowa Alpacas***

Buying that first alpaca can be the most challenging step in owning alpacas. For their wedding anniversary, Bill and Sherri Duey of Southern Iowa Alpacas bought their first alpaca while attending the AOBA National Conference.

A number of steps led up to purchasing Amber, their first alpaca. Purchasing a 105-acre farm near Albia, Iowa, and then designing and building their dream home positioned the Dueys to begin a small livestock operation. Sherri had always raised animals in 4-H growing up in Kansas. Bill grew up raising cattle and horses in Nebraska.

Reading articles in *Small Farm Today* magazine, visiting Knoblock's Prairie Ranch, attending the National Small Farm Show, attending a MOPACA

affiliate meeting, and joining AOBA were some steps in researching alpacas.

Scheduling a trip to attend the National AOBA Conference was a top priority. "We were thoroughly impressed with the friendly, professional people, organization of the show, and the quality of alpacas at AOBA's National Conference. We enjoyed every minute."

After looking at over 1,000 animals at the show, Sherri and Bill decided to purchase a yearling female from Highland Alpaca. [Editor's note: *Highland Alpaca* was, itself, the subject of a *Getting Started* feature in the Spring 2000 issue of *Alpacas Magazine*.]

Upon returning home, they refined their business plan. That plan identified barn and pasture design, selecting



Bill and Sherri Duey found it very rewarding to design and install many of the facilities on their Southern Iowa Alpacas farm.

top quality foundation herd animals, and charting a course to build the size of the herd.

Bill and Sherri traveled over 2,500 miles to select four top-quality, bred females to make up their foundation herd.

The Dueys bring diverse experience to their alpaca business. Bill manages



34,000-acre Rathbun Lake Project for the Corps of Engineers, while Sherri is assistant manager at 50,000-acre Lake Red Rock Project, also for the Corps.

The Dueys designed and constructed their alpaca ranch after researching the industry and incorporating the best ideas into their operation. "The most difficult part of getting started

was buying that first alpaca. We knew it was the right thing for us to do, so we 'jumped off the fence' and made the commitment. But we did that with a wealth of information first. We are totally satisfied with that decision. Every day, we spend quality time tending to our alpacas and smile... remembering our wedding anniversary."

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## Ridgeview Alpacas

Our adventure into the world of alpacas started almost six years ago. I broke a knee, and it never recovered. Therefore, it was time to move out of our hillside house in town to a flatter home somewhere. We found the country property of our dreams with a beautiful sunset view over the coastal range, a lake, and 15 acres of pasture. Since the property included a nice horse barn along with the pasture, we decided to investigate some type of animal to help maintain the pasture and utilize the barn.

Both Jackie and I had been around small farms before, so we had more ideas about what we didn't want than what we did. Meat animals were definitely out. We both love animals and didn't want to deal with getting attached to an animal we planned to eat. We also decided against any of the larger animals, like horses, especially in view of my bad knee. We wanted smaller animals that either of us could handle alone.

It was then that we first heard of alpacas. I found an ad in the local paper for the Black Sheep Gathering in Eugene, Oregon, and the advertisement also referred to an Emerald Valley Alpaca Association. We went and spent hours going from booth to booth, learning about alpacas. That night, we pretty much set our course. We started visiting alpaca farms, and subscribed to *Alpacas Magazine*. Over the next two years, we gathered all the information we could on fencing, barn requirements, husbandry, and of course, fiber.

Then came the big day. It turned out that we purchased our first two huacaya females and a stud-quality, hua-

caya male, some two and a half years after that initial visit to the exhibition. Over the course of the next several months, we added many more animals to our herd, including additional huacayas and eventually some suris, as well. Along the way, had to construct three temporary pastures around our outbuildings and on some lawn areas around the house.



Above, temporary pastures close to the house have allowed closer interaction with the alpacas. Left, Athena enjoys the view from the back seat on her way to her new home.

It's certainly been a lot of work, but having the alpacas around makes it all worth it. It's amazing how each animal has such a distinctive personality. The temporary pastures have actually worked out to be a great learning experience, since it has kept us so much closer to the animals.

All in all, we are delighted by our experiences in the alpaca industry so far. Our learning curve is still spiraling, that's for sure!

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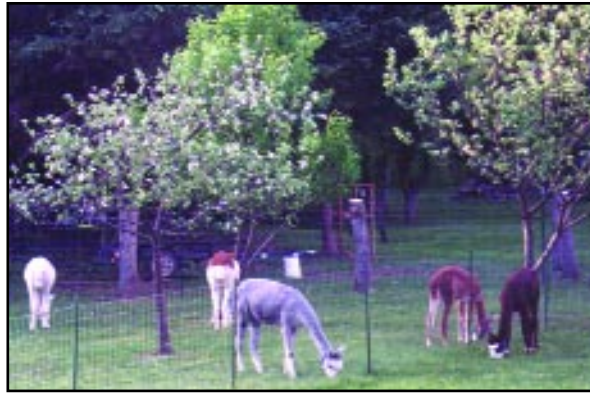
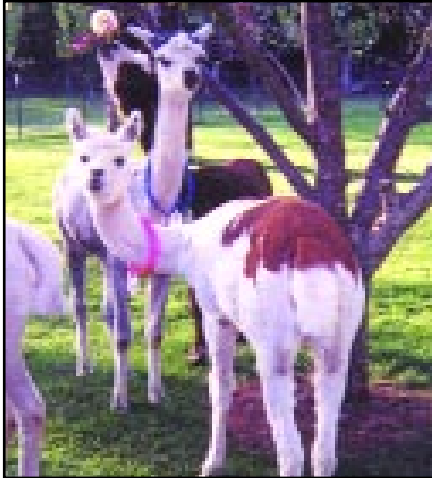
## Errata

In our "Getting Started" feature on *Jubilee Alpacas in the Summer 2001* issue of A.M., we mistakenly identified the animals appearing in the photo. The caption should have read: "Allan and Sheryl Kirkendall, with Anitra, and their very first cria."



## *Alpaca Country Paddocks*

Alpaca Country Paddocks is a three-acre ranch in Canastota, New York, owned and operated by us: Mark Paddock and Pam Keville. It is a place where you'll find cars stopped out front, admiring our fluffy alpacas romping and grazing in our backyard pasture. Curiosity is not only of the onlookers. Alpacas are extremely curious as well. As we sit among the humming herd, they check us over, sniff



*Above and left, animals at Alpaca Country Paddocks enjoy lush pastures under flowering trees.*

our clothing, and tickle our cheeks with their soft noses. We are positive that we found the right business to be in as we are greeted at our backdoor every morning by our alpacas awaiting their morning feed.

So how did we first get interested in alpacas? We started out searching for miniature animals to raise, which brought us to the web site of Dewey Meadows Farm, where miniature donkeys are raised, and which is only 30 minutes away from us. We also

discovered that they raise alpacas – an animal that we did not even know existed. Once we saw them, we were sold. In February 2001, we purchased from A.L.Paca's Farm, two bred females and acquired three males, one of which is gelded.

On July 15th, 2001, we delivered our first cria ! How exciting!

We have read everything about alpacas that we can find, and most of the information was borrowed from the AOBA library in the form of articles, videos, and books. A lot of our education has been acquired through hands-on learning.

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