

# PLTA News

FALL 2014



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## FROM THE EDITOR

This month we have more reports on progress by the Board in planning for the future of the Pack Llama Trail Association. A key element for the success of the initiatives is... YOU! We want the organization to be member-centered, with participation by members on a variety of committees and/or as to be a mentor for different aspects of the PLTA's mission.

This quarter we have reports from pack trials on both sides of the country, an article on rescue of a llama gone seriously astray, and a story about starting a llama for driving. There is also a timely article on hypothermia, always a concern this time of year when weather gets harsh in the mountains or on the farm.

Articles about packing, driving, management of working llamas, favorite camp recipes—all are welcome. Please send them now for the Winter issue, which will appear in early 2015.

And when you see your dues renewal notice, please return it promptly with your payment!

Still humming along...  
Susan Gawarecki, Editor

*Cover photo: Tom Seifert with Wahoo's Merlin negotiating a deadfall obstacle at the Cutsforth Park, Pack Trials near Heppner, Oregon. Photo submitted by Gayle Noga.*



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## **PRESIDENT'S UPDATE**

Greetings from your PLTA President,

In the past few months PLTA has made strong strides toward becoming the vibrant, useful organization we all dream of. The Board of Directors passed a number of measures in August and put them before the membership at the annual membership meeting in September. Membership response was one hundred percent supportive. So, the following changes have been made:

- 1) The interim officers were approved as official.
- 2) The organization's official name has been modified to Pack Llama Trail Association rather than trial association.

This name was already in place in the articles of Incorporation with the State of Idaho based on a typo made when the organization was created. Accepting it will allow a more expansive and inclusive approach to accomplishing our mission.

- 3) A mission statement for the PLTA was adopted. Created by merging the purpose statements in the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws, it reads:

The PLTA is a charitable and educational organization, the purpose of which is to preserve and promote working llamas through education of its members and the public as to the breeding, raising, training, care, and safe and humane uses of working llamas as companions.

The new board has a great deal of work ahead of them to get the organization running smoothly again. Most of it involves behind the scenes organizational efforts such as reviewing and correcting bylaws, revising the database to be more user friendly, and establishing protocols for administrative tasks. To keep the board from becoming overwhelmed, and to train new members, each board member has been asked to look for an understudy to help them with their tasks and grow into a position on the board. Please consider being one of these wonderful people.

To help sort out our financial issues and maintain accurate and appropriate accounts from here on, the board has retained services of an accountant with many years of experience working with nonprofit organizations. Janet Bailey comes highly recommended. She is working closely with our treasurer, Gina Obrien, to prepare for a legally correct audit. Janet has donated her services, an act of generosity which we greatly appreciate.

The board is also identifying tasks that can be done in small chunks of five to ten hours so that no one is overburdened. Currently assistance is especially needed in the realms of technical writing, database construction and management, data entry, website construction, legal assistance and research.

*Continued on page 3*

## President's Update, continued

Progress has been made with our two new programs, the PLTA Challenge and GeoLlama. Member Anne Sheeter has agreed to be the program coordinator for the Challenge. A field test was done at the Cutsforth Park pack trial held near Heppner, Oregon in October. While certain details were demonstrated to need adjustment, the concept was met with great enthusiasm by the participants. This is essentially a pack trial without the trial and accompanying tribulations. Under the scrutiny of a PLTA trained official, groups go out on the trail and accumulate points for the weight their llama carries, the elevation gain it makes, the distance it covers, and the obstacles it successfully completes. The amount of participation in all these categories is left up to the handler, which removes the burden of completion required in a pack trial, and the anxiety that goes with. As a result, a lot of plain old fun is available, with plenty of opportunity for education as well. We are working to design a protocol that will be easy to undertake by any group from 4H kids to oldsters.

The original GeoLlama proposal has been reviewed and has undergone a field testing. It too is being revised to make it easier to administer and more fun to participate in. We have reduced the idea to a single application of the geocaching concept. To

participate, a PLTA member can select coordinates from a database, go to the site, take a picture of their llama that corresponds to the image in the database and send it in to receive points for their accomplishment. There is much background work yet to be done to make this program functional. A program manager and help with data management are greatly needed. Volunteers step right up!

One of the early observations of the new board was that there are aspects of work that working llamas do beyond packing. Driving is an important one of them. In view of this, we have asked a group of active and knowledgeable llama drivers to design protocols for PLTA sanctioned driving activities. If you are interested in joining or assisting this group please contact Susan Gawarecki at [llamaladysg@yahoo.com](mailto:llamaladysg@yahoo.com).

In view of llamas receiving accolades for the work they do, a new proposal is in the works, it deals with giving credit to members for the efforts they make toward trail maintenance. Scott Nogas is heading up an effort to sort out details and write a proposal for this aspect of PLTA activities. Members interested in assisting Scott may contact him at [llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](mailto:llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com).

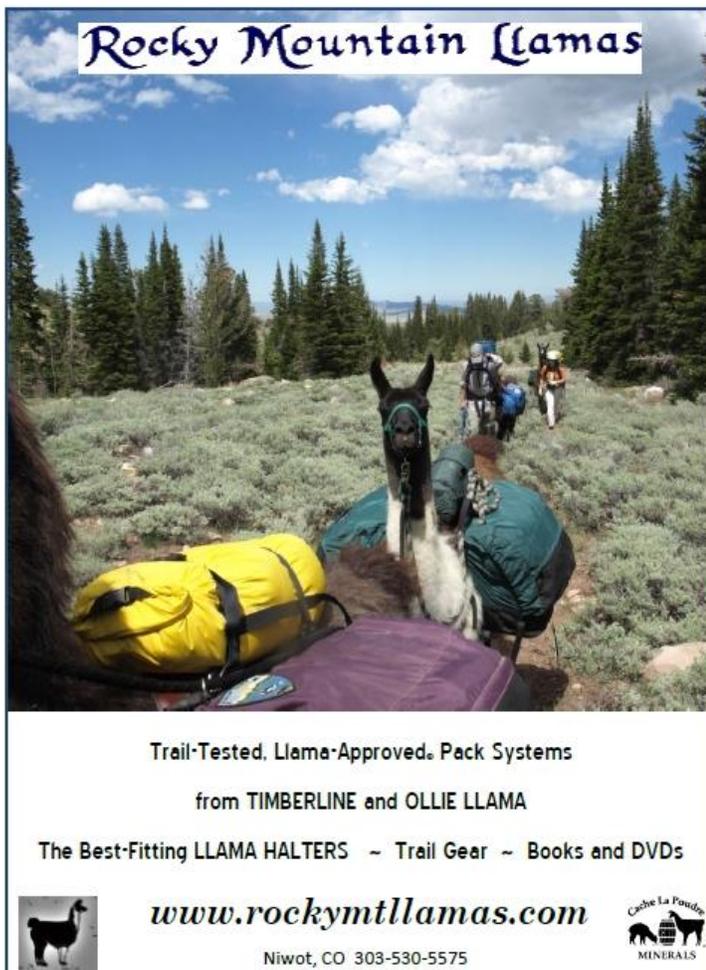
Finally, we note that members have been very active with hosting pack trials this fall. A total of six trials have been held so far this year, with the number of certified llamas increasing accordingly. Congratulations to the llamas, their owners and handlers, and especially to the trial organizers.

And did you know that last year a significant change in pack trial protocol has been made? Unfortunately, because the handbook did not get updated as planned, this information was not well publicized. Last winter the Board agreed to allow llamas to continue participating in trials after completing their certificates. For each successful subsequent trial, recognition of their added accomplishment will be made to their credential. So, there is no need to quit participating in trials once your llama has earned a certificate. I am waiting to see who the first twenty 'star' Advanced packers will be.

The board will soon be considering the Challenge, Geollama, proposals and changes to the elevation/distance requirements for pack trails that would allow substituting miles for elevation. If you have comments on these issues please let the board know soon.

Best wishes to you all, and happy llama-ing!

~Lisa



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# 2014 CUTSFORTH PARK PACK TRIALS

*By Gayle Noga, Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch, Pasco WA*

The weekend of October 18-19, 2014, saw a return to Cutsforth Park near Heppner, Oregon for double pack trials. Friday started off with warm weather, particularly for October. Scott and I arrived in the morning with Lisa Wolf and Ann Sheeter arriving shortly after. After securing campsites Scott, Lisa and Ann left to certify the course. Meanwhile, Carolyn and John Mathews, Tom and Sue Siefert and Sandra and Dan Van Liew arrived.

In total we had nine llamas and ten people in attendance. Neighboring campers came over and asked about the llamas asking lots of questions. Weighing-in took place along with getting sand and water bottles filled for the llama packs. We held two days of pack trials at Advanced and Master Levels.

By Friday night the rains came down, with everyone snug in their beds and hoping for a dry day. By morning the sun was up with a few clouds. It was perfect weather for hiking, not too cold or wet, or too hot. After everyone did the manageability skill test it was time for a brief meeting, then trials. Anne Sheeter was the steward of the Advanced group and Lisa Wolf the Master level. With everyone on the trails I stayed behind and enjoyed a good book and watching over the llamas that were not packing and the dogs. Ellen Pollack for Hermiston arrived and after getting her and her two boys settled we took out her cart and starting training one of her llamas. We hooked up Llego and had him walk the cart while Knight was learning ground driving.



The Advanced group arrived and set out to get the manageability done for the next day's trial. A simple lunch was enjoyed along with snacks, the Master group came back and a celebration for "Peppy" was held because he had completed his Master Level Trial. He now can earn stars for each level that he completes from now on. Dinner was prepared and shared, talk around the campfire was enjoyed with stories from past events, the stars came out in full brilliance with no moon and everyone took the time to relax and unwind.

Sunday was a beautiful cool and clear morning. Without the clouds the temperature had dropped.

Breakfast and last minute instructions were completed and it was off to the trails. Both groups left early and had a successful trial. Three animals earned their pins and certificates. Merlin with handler Tom, and Rowdy with Scott each earned their Advanced level, and Peppy with handler Carolyn earned his Master level. Dan and Sandra Van Liew's boys Cole and Kelby have completed two levels of Advanced, and Carolyn and John's girl Ebony completed two Master levels.

All in all it was a great pack trial, enjoyed by everyone that attended. Good food, friends and fun—what a great combination.



# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*An Appeal from the Board of Directors: November 4th, 2014*

A great deal of work has gone into making Pack Trials the well designed events they are today. All that work has been done by volunteers who by their dedication have built something very special and unique. Yet for some years the Board has been hearing that pack trials are not enough. Members complain that the PLTA needs to have activities beyond the trials. Those complaints have been taken seriously by the new Board of Directors and a number of new programs have been proposed as a result, however, any good idea requires hands-on effort to bring it into reality. In the case of the PLTA that means it's time to put forth your time where your dreams have been, in order to gain the experiences you want. In order for the organization to continue and to thrive, the spirit of volunteerism that created it must continue.

Perhaps the primary reason the previous Board of members burned out was that they were carrying the load by themselves. Their solution was to end the organization. Their complaint that no one cared was borne out by the fact that no one stepped up to help. The analysis of the new Board indicates that a second part of the problem was a lack of communication; the membership was not fully informed. A third problem was that no one wanted to be burdened with a herculean task.

So, the current members of the Board are dedicated to keeping you informed, and we are further dedicated to keeping jobs short and sweet. The truth is, without the support of the membership, the new Board of Directors will end up in the same position as the previous one; exhausted and convinced that the organization has outlived its usefulness. To prevent that we are presenting you with a list of areas in which help is needed.

Understand, we have no interest in roping someone into a never-ending, time consuming job. All volunteer efforts are expected to be short term and address a specific end. Project leaders have been advised to identify tasks that will take less than ten hours. Here is a list of things that need to be done.

- **Writing/Editing**—Volunteers contact **Debra Langley-Boyer** at [ddboyermm@msn.com](mailto:ddboyermm@msn.com)
  - ◇ **Pack Trial Handbook** consists of the procedures and regulations for pack trials. It is out of date. Necessary revisions are minor, but need to be accomplished before a new edition is published. This is the pack trail bible. Keeping it available and up to date is essential to continuing to hold trials.
  - ◇ **Pack Trial Manual** originated as 'Mad's Manual', a set of pointers on how to run a successful pack trial. Viv Fulton took this guide and expanded it to a detailed document that provides step by step instructions for staging a trial that are useful for staging any event. The manual needs tweaking through updates, a bit of re-organization and layout adjustment, and the addition of illustrations to make it more readable and appropriate to our current situation. This is a wonderful opportunity for a graphic designer.
  - ◇ **Protocols**—Every functional non-profit organization is supported by articles of incorporation, bylaws and protocols that let everyone know what is what. When the new board reviewed these regulating documents, they found there were multiple versions of the bylaws, all of which held conflicts with the articles of incorporation, and there were no protocols in place at all. This situation is currently being rectified. It is a big task that is easily broken into small pieces. It is absolutely critical that it be accomplished quickly.
  - ◇ **Board Members Handbook**—Efficient Boards of Directors provide their board members with a handbook containing key documents and information necessary to making sure the organization functions smoothly and legally. The PLTA has no such item and the current board members have keenly felt that lack. Much of the necessary information has already been gathered. More is being created or refined. All of it needs to be gathered and organized into a useful format. This is a small job for someone with great organizational skills.
  - ◇ **Pack Trial in a Box**—The partners and Burns Llama Trailblazers have been working on a project they call 'Pack Trial in a Box' a kind of pack trial first aid kit, in which everything a group needs on the day of a trial is contained in a single box that can travel with a certifier or Trial Chairperson to the trial site. Work on the project is nearly complete. Burns Llama Trailblazers

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## **Volunteers Needed, continued**

is looking for someone to finalize and type their documents so they can provide this information to the rest of the membership. Volunteers contact **Becky Cunningham** at [beckycunningham0840@gmail.com](mailto:beckycunningham0840@gmail.com) or (541) 589-0840.

- **Database Support**—Volunteers contact **Lisa Wolf** at [wolfalisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfalisa55@yahoo.com) or 541-413-0341.
  - ◇ **Obstacle Image Collection**—Certifiers have long lamented the lack of a way to compare notes about what is an appropriate obstacle for pack trial use. A number of them have advocated the development of an archive of photos taken of obstacles used in trials. There are sets of such photos available. They need to be collected, organized, and made available online so that everyone knows what everyone else is using. This will help insure the standardized tests we all aspire to.
  - ◇ **GeoLlama Database**—In order for the proposed GeoLlama Program to work it requires a database. Beyond identification of necessary fields and conceptual notes about how the system should work, the database has yet to be invented. This task is not as technical as it sounds. The perfect volunteer could be you.
  - ◇ **GeoLlama Program Coordinator/Data Entry**—Once the GeoLlama protocol is in place and the bugs worked out of the program through field testing, someone will need to oversee the program, review submissions and enter results in the database. This set of tasks could be parsed among several people, step right up!
  - ◇ **Challenge Database**—The procedures and regulations for the proposed PLTA Challenge are in the final stages of refinement, but the project cannot be finalized without a database to track results. Components of the database have been defined, but structure needs to be built. With guidance, this task can be done by almost anyone who has basic computer skills.
- **Program/Activity Design**—These components of the PLTA program offerings are in their very infancy. If you are interested in the subject, now is the time to get involved.
  - ◇ **Driving Llamas**—Working llamas include more than packers. In keeping with the organization's mission statement, the Board of Directors finds it important to expand the PLTA programs to include more aspects of work. First to be addressed is driving. Noting that outside the show ring there are few if any organized events for driving, we envision the creation of fun and educational events, perhaps like the Challenge but redesigned for driving. Eventually, a certification program for driving llamas could be created. Volunteers contact **Susan Gawarecki** at [llamaladysg@yahoo.com](mailto:llamaladysg@yahoo.com) or (865) 494-0102.
  - ◇ **Trail Maintenance Program**—The first step to any new program is to envision what it will be. Then a proposal must be written that identifies who, what, when, where, why and how of the venture. This proposal goes to the board for review, then to the membership to accept or deny as part of their organization. At the Backcountry Llama Rendezvous in Estacada, Oregon in late June 2014, the idea for giving recognition for volunteer trail work was hatched. A proposal is currently in the works. Help is needed with writing and refining it. Volunteers contact **Scott Noga** at [llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](mailto:llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com) or (509) 545-5930.
  - ◇ **Youth Program**—It is board member Joyce Johnson's dream to have a special section of the PLTA dedicated to youth. At the Backcountry Llama Rendezvous in Estacada, Oregon this summer the youngsters were asked what the PLTA meant to them. In a nutshell, their response was that llamas are great, but the PLTA is for old folks. That is not what our mission statement says and Joyce is anxious to create a lively place in PLTA for the kids. This is critically important work. Please join her efforts to build a broader PLTA, kids included. Volunteers contact **Joyce Johnson** at [denjohn@ckt.net](mailto:denjohn@ckt.net) or (620) 674-1215.
- **Website Assistance**—Volunteers contact **Lisa Wolf** at [wolfalisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfalisa55@yahoo.com) or (541) 413-0341.
  - ◇ **Technical Expertise**—When the bill to maintain hosting for the PLTA website came due at the beginning of June, it was not paid. As a result the host shut it down. Access through them to the html files was lost. A computer crash destroyed the backup files. Consequently, the

*Continued on page 7*

## **Volunteers Needed, continued**

website is being rebuilt from scratch. To facilitate passing the webmaster duties from one person to another Joomla is being used rather than constructing a static site that would require a great deal of expertise to manage. The current webmaster is learning Joomla. To speed up the learning curve, having a person who could answer technical questions and offer occasional advice would be advantageous.

- ◇ **Links**—A links page will be included in the new website. It will have categories for member's llama businesses, camelid organizations, and useful products. A person is needed to research and collect such links and provide them to the webmaster.
- ◇ **Images**—The new website requires new images as well as a file of images to use in the future to change out tired ones. While the webmaster has an extensive file of her own to draw from, they feature her llamas. We feel the fun should be spread around. We are looking for people willing to give their lovely llama's faces worldwide exposure by submitting their images for use on the web.
- **Financial/Legal Support**—Volunteers contact **Gina O'Brien** at [regkobrien@gmail.com](mailto:regkobrien@gmail.com) or (541) 390-5164.

Shortly after the new board members accepted positions and officer duties were assigned, we discovered that the PLTA financial accounts were in disarray. We also learned that IRS documents had not been filed for so many years that the PLTA had lost its federal tax exempt status. The new board has been scrambling to acquire records, account information and other documents necessary for reapplication. We need someone to research and document source information defining the difference between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) status as well as provide legal support and help prepare documents for filing. This need is urgent. We are running up against deadlines.

- **Field Testing**—Before proposed activities can be put in place as official PLTA programs, they need to be field tested. This means going out and running the activity as defined by its rules and procedures. This provides an opportunity to identify and work out any last bugs. It is a fun and exciting task. Both GeoLlama and the Challenge need further field tests.
  - ◇ Volunteers for GeoLlama contact **Lisa Wolf** at [wolfalisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfalisa55@yahoo.com) or (541) 413-0341.
  - ◇ Volunteers for PLTA Challenge contact **Anne Sheeter** at [sheeterg@hotmail.com](mailto:sheeterg@hotmail.com) or (541) 573-268
- **Board Position Understudies**—In order to assure continuation of the PLTA and smooth transitions in the future, each member of the board of directors needs an understudy. This is a person who will work with that member as an apprentice or 'member in training' with the idea that eventually they may choose to apply for a position on the board. This is a critical need. The organization is not sustainable without these dedicated people. It is a tremendous learning experience and opportunity for growth. Volunteers contact the board member holding the position that interests you.

### **WILL YOU BE A MENTOR?**

PLTA will be emphasizing education of llama owners who want information on all aspects of working llamas and PLTA-related events. Usually education involves teachers or mentors. We will be setting up a list on the website of members who are willing to field questions and help people with various llama-related issues. Webmaster **Lisa Wolf** <[wolfalisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfalisa55@yahoo.com)> can easily do this in the new website format as a list of contacts. What she needs is a list of people who have agreed to mentor and a tag or category for which they feel comfortable teaching people about. Some tags would be pack trial, event management, training, No Trace ethics, herd management, and driving. Volunteer mentors will need to provide contact information and the area(s) in which they wish to provide expertise.

## NEWLY CERTIFIED LLAMAS

Since the last PLTA News, the following llamas have earned PLTA certificates. Llamas are listed with their owner(s). If you would like your llama's story featured, please send the newsletter editor a write-up and photo.

### Basic Pack Llamas

BLT Wahoo's Caliope (Burns Llama Trailblazers)  
ALCL Boudreaux (Debbie Andrews)  
ALCL Redwing (Debbie Andrews)

### Advanced Pack Llamas

RR Rowdy (Scott and Gayle Noga)  
Wahoo's Merlin (Tom and Sue Siefert)  
ALCL Spats (Debbie Andrews)

### Master Pack Llamas

Cautley Fair O'Joy "Peppy" (John and Carolyn Mathews)

### *Do You Want to Host a Pack Trial?*

If you'd like to host a trial in your area but aren't sure how to proceed, let us know. We can answer your questions and provide the necessary information and support to help make your event a successful one.

### *Free Publicity for Members' Events*

Please contact us if you are planning an event of interest to PLTA members and would like to post the information in the *PLTA News* and on our website.

## UPCOMING PLTA SANCTIONED PACK TRIAL

April 25 and 26, 2015—Burns Llama Trailblazers, Burns, Oregon; double trial with all levels. Details are at [www.burnsllamatrailblazers.com](http://www.burnsllamatrailblazers.com).

## Advertising in *PLTA News*

**PLTA Members** may place one FREE classified ad per newsletter limited to 30 words plus contact info. Additional words are \$0.10 each. Please limit it to items pertaining to llamas or packing such as pack gear, camping stuff, certified pack llamas, etc.

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for more information

# 2014 SSLA FALL PACK TRIALS CUMBERLAND FURNACE, TN

*By Tori Howk, Furnace Creek Farm*

The Southern States Llama Association Fall Llama Pack Trials, held in Cumberland Furnace, Tennessee, on November 1, were once again great fun for the owners/handlers and successful for the llamas. Three llamas completed the Basic Course, and four llamas completed the Advanced Course. Of course there were a few other "trainees" along for the hike with some new llama handlers, aspiring to take the trail in an official capacity later. We enjoyed gathering together Friday afternoon, and since the weather was cooler than typical, we opted to have our potluck indoors, rather than at the campfire. As always, the food was wonderful and the camaraderie even better. We helped Hunter Snow celebrate her 16th birthday with cake, singing and of course lot so llama stories and laughter.

Saturday morning's chilly temps had us outfitted in ear warmers, hats, scarves, coats, and gloves as we completed the manageability portion, under Kurt Pihera's direction. But after a short time on the hilly Tennessee trails, we were glad the llamas could carry our excess outwear on the rest of the trail. The views were beautiful and the llamas navigated all the obstacles so well. They made it through the rubble, up the hills, through the gates, beautifully crossed two bridges,

waded Furnace Creek several times, and even got to see a couple of Texas longhorns!



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**2014 SSLA Fall Pack Trials, Cumberland Furnace, TN, continued**



After the hike, we did enjoy a nice afternoon fire while the llama stories continued. We are already looking forward to the Fall 2015 Pack Trial, and hope to have everyone return, and also hope for several more llamas and handlers to join us. One special treat this year was to have the National Champion Nonbreeder here, ALCL Spats, owned by Debbie and Olin Andrews of Log Cabin Llamas. Spats is a stunning llama, and he did an excellent job on the trail. So he's not just a pretty guy, he's a packer, too!

I would like to offer a special thank you to Rebecca Wood of Roxywood Farms, for co-hosting the pack trial. Congratulations to the llamas and handlers

completing the 2014 Fall Pack Trial, and we look forward to seeing everyone next year!

**Basic:**

ALCL Red Wing, Debbie Andrews  
ALCL Boudreaux, Vickie Lawson  
Lady's Gunsmoke, Nathan Shaddinger

**Advanced:**

Chelian's Simply Irresistable, Hunter Snow  
ALCL Spats, Debbie Andrews  
ALCL Steeler, Belinda Snow  
Spirit Man, Destiny Lawson

*This article also appears in the Fall 2014 issue of the SSLA Llama Journal.*



# ABANDONED LLAMA RESCUE IN THE GOAT ROCKS WILDERNESS

*By Scott Noga, Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch, Pasco WA*

The Goat Rocks Wilderness in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest is situated roughly midway between the prominent Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams in the southern Washington Cascade mountain range. It has the distinction of being the highest elevation of the popular Pacific Crest Trail that stretches from Canada to Mexico. Strikingly rugged and beautiful, it attracts large numbers of backpackers in addition to the many PCT through-hikers.

By early August of 2014, hikers began to notice a solitary brown llama roaming around the area from Snowgrass Flats in the south, an alpine meadow, and what is commonly referred to as “the knife” 3-4 miles to the north—a rocky, very narrow portion of the PCT with steep glaciated slopes on either side. Hiker blogs and online forums began making mention of a “loose llama.” This did not come to my attention until the afternoon of September 17th when an unfamiliar person E-mailed me directly with a link to a [Portland Hikers](#) forum thread with pictures. The llama had no halter or collar. Later the same day Gary Kauffman of Roads End Llamas forwarded to the llama-info mailing list a similar contact from another person that may have heard about it via a horse group. Over a month had passed and word was suddenly spreading to llama folks.

While a public discussion ensued on llama-info, I made private contact to a couple of llama people I knew in the area. The closest was Noel McRae, founder of *The Backcountry Llama*, who resides just a few miles west of there. None recognized or had heard anything about this llama. Noel contacted several more prominent packers in the northwest and received the same response. A Forest Service contact said there was no report of a lost llama from an owner but they were well aware of the llama’s presence. Rangers had observed the llama on numerous occasions and reported she would come right up to them but would run off as soon as they tried to get hold of her. One ranger attempted to find and capture on horseback—an encounter that reportedly didn’t go well when the horse feared for his/her safety near a potentially predatory llama. The llama’s gender was unknown throughout this ordeal but I will use the female pronoun.

An internet search turned up other more recent references to the loose llama made on hiker forums, including a blog post from a group of PCT

through-hikers that happened not only upon the llama but in the vicinity found a large red collar on the ground off the trail with the name “Denali” printed on it—the llama’s collar? From here on she would be known as Denali, for lack of any other name. I wrote the person that posted the collar message but never received a reply.

Charley Rosenberry, llama packer from Vashon Island (Puget Sound), volunteered on llama-info to help with a rescue. I contacted Charley privately. That same weekend Maureen O’Neil of Tacoma was hiking in the Goat Rocks and happened to see the llama. The following Monday after receiving word from the Forest Service that they didn’t plan to take any action, she contacted Southwest Llama Rescue about the situation, which was posted to their mailing list. Noel McRae later made contact with the Forest Service to express his disappointment in their lack of timely notification of the loose llama and had passed the word to Jeff Fisker, another llama packer in the Portland area, and others soliciting assistance with a rescue.

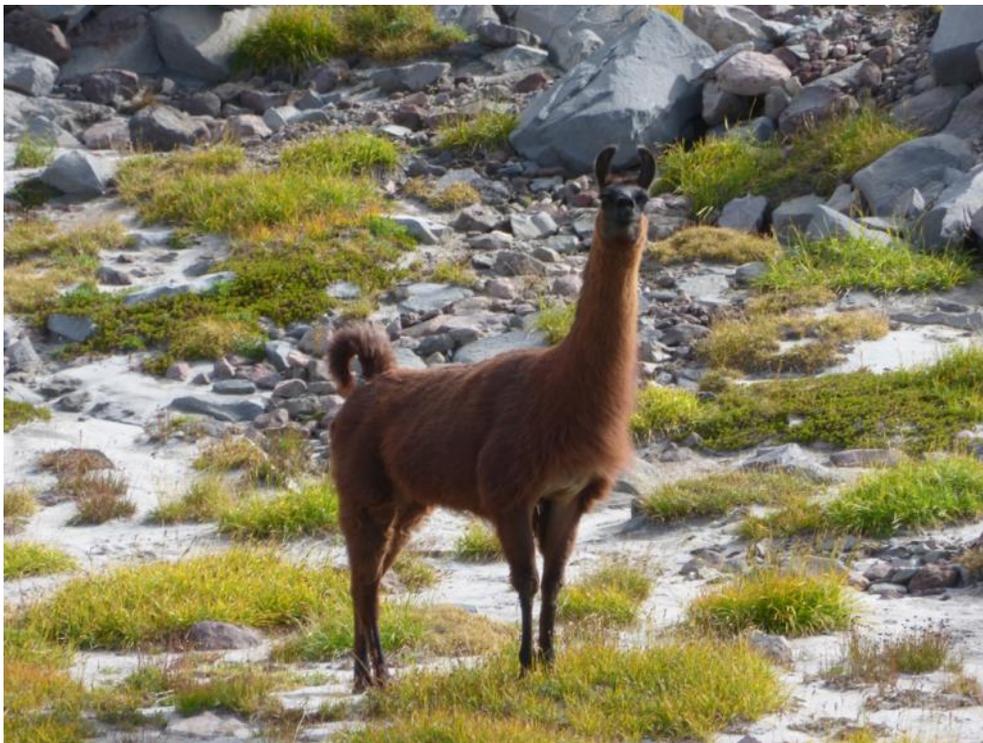
Busy schedules didn’t allow for a coordinated attempt until the first weekend of October. Having camped at the trailhead the night before, Charley Rosenberry hiked in with a pair of female llamas early Friday morning as far as “the knife” (nearly 9 actual trail miles and 3150’ climb one way)—assumed to be a physical barrier—and was already most of the way out as Lisa Wolf (Pack Llama Trail Association President), Gayle Noga and myself hiked in with three of our boys, Rowdy, Marley and Wizard. Charley had not seen the llama but did make contact with a couple of campers in the area who had also not seen anything. The weather was good with above normal temperature for early October and we arrived at the bypass trail camp at dark.

The following morning, equipped with day packs, we each set out in different directions with walkie-talkies, covering the area trails in search of the elusive llama. Lisa took the Goat Lake trail west, I took the east PCT north to the area where Charley had searched, and Gayle was to search the Snowgrass loop interconnecting trails. About three miles away north of where the Snowgrass Flats trail intersects with the PCT, I observed what turned out to be two PCT through-hikers well off the trail to the east but when they saw I had a llama they quickly approached to ask if I was looking

*Continued on page 12*

## ***Abandoned Llama Rescue in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, continued***

for a loose one. They informed me a llama was over a rise to the east. After calling Gayle and Lisa via radio, my plan was to just park it where the llama could see me and see if she would approach, which I fully expected she would do to check out Rowdy, and simply appear non-threatening and possessing treats while awaiting the arrival of the others. I reached the rise and sure enough, there she was cushed about 150 yards beyond. She stood and struck a stunning pose. Telephoto shot below:



Denali postured and Rowdy began clucking. After a brief exchange she started approaching at a fast walk. Then, my two informants walked up from behind and up to the rise, out of curiosity I suppose. At that point Denali inexplicably froze, then turned away and took off up the hillside and out of sight. I waited, hoping she would just check us out from a high point, but that was the last she was seen. I suggested the two should move on, which they did.

With no return of the llama, Lisa, Wizard, Rowdy and I spent the rest of the day scanning with binoculars and scouring the rugged slopes to no avail until nearly nightfall, walking for many miles. She seemingly vanished into thin air. Tracks indicated she kept going higher, far up the slopes to the south. I learned from some nearby campers that prior to my arrival my two "informants" had spent well over an hour (they said two hours) chasing

her, armed with twine. To the campers they spoke of riches thinking they could take this llama into town to sell for big bucks. The llama had been out in the open earlier in the day but had been chased out of view. Needless to say, thanks to that our chances of actually securing this llama were pretty hopeless from the start.

We had to leave the next day since I didn't have any time off from work. The miles of hiking the day before at least provided important information.

Out of view of any trails, I discovered numerous bean piles, a bedding area and many tracks. With this I was armed with a strategy for a return trip to camp with staked out llamas at this out-of-sight spot Denali frequented.

On the way back we posted our contact information for sightings at the Snowgrass and Berry Patch trailheads.

Second hand information had been received, presumably due to an unofficial comment made by a forest ranger to a camper, that the Forest Service planned to shoot this llama rather than let him overwinter, fearing disease transmission to the mountain goats in this area. Hunting season was getting underway. The weather was changing and this rugged area with lots of

deadfall in the lower elevations (treeless in the upper) is known for very heavy snowfall, often with over a foot at a time and tens of feet over winter. Time was running out.

Coordination of another expedition started right away with the first opportunity for multiple people to make the journey three weeks away—the last weekend of October. Noel McRae, Jeff Fisker, Charley Rosenberry, Maureen O'Neil and myself volunteered. I could travel as early as Friday, Jeff and Noel could do early Saturday morning, while Charley and Maureen would arrive Saturday afternoon. Charley had a rope corral. I had portable fencing. I'll spare you the sundry details but each of us had to overcome many complications leading up to this second attempt.

Due to the posted trailhead notice, each weekend I received a report from a hiker that they observed

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## ***Abandoned Llama Rescue in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, continued***

the llama in the same area I had seen her, which was encouraging. Some tried to approach the llama but she would not let anyone get close without moving away. The picture below was sent from a hiker, taken from the PCT. I've added an arrow to point out Denali in case you can't see her.



As our departure time approached the weather report was not looking good for the entire week, with further deterioration forecast through the weekend. Sunday's forecast was 99% chance of precipitation all day and night. My expectation was that Denali would not be an easy catch due to being on her own for so long, being chased repeatedly by people, and judging by her recent observed behavior. I figured we would have only one chance and once spooked she would be gone, at least for the day. This was likely our last weekend to catch her and if unsuccessful there would probably be

nothing more we could do. I planned for a slow and methodical approach, camping in the llamas turf overnight, not jeopardizing the capture with a rushed attempt, and allowing some time to locate her and gain trust while awaiting the arrival of assistance. Friday had the least precipitation in the forecast for a more comfortable establishment of a camp, with Friday and Saturday evenings at 90% precipitation, and would provide more time if I hiked in early to await the arrival of the others.

Hedging my bet due to no third chance, I also packed a blowgun with two tranquilizer darts in event we could get only within a short distance and corralling didn't work out. Darts are problematic in llamas because dense fiber can slide the sleeve off the site-port needle before penetration.

Noel had to bow out due to recent hand surgery but offered his nearby yurt as an overnight camp for those that needed it. I headed out Friday to spend the night in the wet mountains with my hiking buddy Rowdy so I'd have Saturday morning to search, etc. From the Packwood area of White Pass I could see that the higher elevations were already covered in snow. This concerned me as that could drive Denali out of the area I was expecting to find her, in search of food—all the more reason to get in early and pin down her location.

We hit the trail in the early afternoon from the eerily vacant trailhead. All tracks had been swept away by recent rains. It was completely overcast with thick, low clouds and wet with passing occasional light sprinkles, but the forest trees dripped continually. Already at this elevation a cloud would sometimes envelop

us in fog, moving on the slight breeze, then pass. As long as we were hiking it didn't feel cold and it was very quiet, dark and tranquil actually, but the skies threatened continually.

We reached the snowline before the bypass trail intersection and kept moving, with the heavy drips from the trees progressively joined by slushballs. I was thankful for my wide brimmed hat. The wind was slight but very gradually increasing, causing the trees to occasionally sway and release a barrage. The open Snowgrass Flats offered a

*Continued on page 14*

## ***Abandoned Llama Rescue in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, continued***

welcome break from the pelting, but time was running out and we needed to reach camp.

As we continued to climb back into the trees, observing occasional small deer tracks, we came upon a set of llama prints in the snow, crossing perpendicular to the trail. Further on, they crossed again in the opposite direction. This was rather unexpected as the high meadow she had been staying in the past several weeks was still about a mile away. Knowing the trail would soon switch back to cross again in the direction of the tracks, I hoped to pick up the tracks again further up the trail. As we made the bend and climbed towards a rise about fifty yards ahead, still in the trees, with the only sound the crunching of snow underfoot and Rowdy's slight jingle of ID tag, suddenly a llama silently sprang into view coming to a broadside stop on top of the rise, having arrived at a fast pace. She had obviously heard us approach.

I immediately and quickly stepped alongside Rowdy and unzipped his upper pannier compartment where I had staged the treat bag, halter and lead. As I released Rowdy, standing at his rear quarter, Denali ran to us and went nose-to-nose with Rowdy. Following introductions, I offered treats which Rowdy first helped himself to, demonstrating there was good stuff in there. She investigated very tentatively, but then dived in and quickly backed off quite a ways with a mouthful. Not one to pass on treats, Rowdy uncharacteristically moved off a short distance leaving the two of us to do our dance. It seemed he knew just what needed to be done. (After all, I had been telling him all along why we were there.) As the two of us casually conversed in "llama" I provided treats and we both moved apart. This went on and she gradually became bolder as I gradually made it less-easy to get to the treats. Over time she had to reach a bit closer and then actually around me to get to them and I kept slightly moving a bit away from her each time, playing hard to get. Eventually she was reaching

completely around me, whereupon I made my move. She struggled but I hung on, kept a calm tone and also kept the treat bag in front of her nose as best I could. After a bid to get away she relented and dove back into the bag which I lowered to the ground as I exchanged it with the halter in my hand. I slipped it on between mouthfuls while keeping a firm hold on her. In all it took about ten or fifteen minutes as I took my time, not wanting to rush things and blow it, though she concerned me a couple times she appeared as though she was going to take off.



Once I had her lead in hand and retrieved the treat bag, I called Rowdy who promptly returned. I shared some treats with him and pulled the string lead from his pannier and connected Denali to Rowdy, secured his panniers and began to walk to see how she would lead behind him. Thankfully she followed right behind as though she had been doing it all day. It was getting late and I knew that if we headed back at this point it would be dark before we reached the trailhead but if she would lead well that seemed much more appealing than setting up a camp in the wet and deteriorating conditions.

The precipitation and wind continued to increase as we hiked out. Light snow turned to freezing rain, then to a steady light rainfall. In addition to slush

*Continued on page 15*

## ***Abandoned Llama Rescue in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, continued***

balls tree branches occasionally broke off and fell to the ground nearby as we descended, but other than the noise and movement concerning the llamas a bit now and again, stopping them to investigate, the trek out was uneventful. She loaded into the borrowed horse trailer fine, where hay was waiting, but although Rowdy welcomed the meal she oddly seemed uninterested (and still has little interest in hay). It wasn't until this time I determined the llama was a female.

After leaving a crude note at both trailheads that the llama was rescued, we drove out to the highway—a 21 mile slow slog through washboarded and potholed dirt road—and headed east through the pass. By this time it was a very heavy downpour and pitch black. I was thankful I had converted our truck to HID headlights for better illumination but sorry the llamas had to ride in a cold, wet trailer instead of our “llama limo” custom E350 bus, which was still in the shop.

By the time we arrived home about midnight, Denali was cold—shivering and hypothermic with a 98.8F body temperature. Her wet fiber, only about an inch or so long, still has sparse undercoat. With the unseasonably warm weather she was not yet prepared for the late but rapidly approaching winter. In eastern Washington it wasn't raining but a cold wind was blowing from the North. She was placed into a shelter with infrared heater and dried with a Circuiteer hot air blower, though it was so humid that she just wouldn't dry completely.

At daybreak she was up and was greeted over the fence by many llamas, eager to meet the new arrival. Intake assessment revealed external and internal parasite issues, none extreme or particularly concerning, and apparent nutritional deficiency with pronounced facial alopecia. Body score was normal. With the cool weather it took another day before she fully recovered from the chill. After only a week she is already visibly responding to the treatments, with new hair just beginning to grow back on her face. She was seen by a vet who pronounced her in good condition and judging by the minimal teeth wear does not appear to be nearly as old as I thought—quite young actually. Large, loose mammaries probably means she has had an offspring though. While the minor conditions are being addressed, she is revealing herself to be a rather friendly and easy to handle gal.

Our rescue ranch is over capacity so Denali is likely destined for a new home, but rest assured she will go to a good home where her talents are appreciated. Who knows, she may visit the Goat Rocks Wilderness again someday—her home a long way from home.

*Postscript: In mid-November Denali was transported to a new home with lots of hilly space with a caretaker that has an active female pack string and a 4-H group that will be providing plenty of regular stimulation. She is very excited to have Denali become part of the herd!*



## LLAMA NATION KICKSTARTER SUCCESS

On November 1, *Llama Nation* exceeded its \$15,000 Kickstarter fundraising goal by \$1,893, thanks to 110 backers.

From Tanner Shinnick:

Wow! This has been an amazing campaign. We want to sincerely thank you all for such a HUGE amount of support here for the last 30 days. It's been great to see such a large out pouring of support and to meet a lot of you along the way.

Since we exceeded our goal, we'll be able to do some really great things with LN. We're going to be working with a great team of musicians, Deep Love ([www.deeploveopera.com](http://www.deeploveopera.com)) to create a custom score and soundtrack for the film.

We're really excited for the final product and to see where it will go. If you have any questions in the meantime, feel free to e-mail us at [info@llamanationfilm.com](mailto:info@llamanationfilm.com).

If you'd like to continue to follow us as we continue on our adventure you can like us on Facebook ([fb.com/llamanationfilm](https://fb.com/llamanationfilm)) follow us on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/llamanationfilm) (@llamanationfilm) or check out our website [www.llamanationfilm.com](http://www.llamanationfilm.com).

Seriously, thank you all for this! You made it happen. Now we will go into our editing bays and get this film finished. Thank you!



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Published Quarterly

\$20 per year

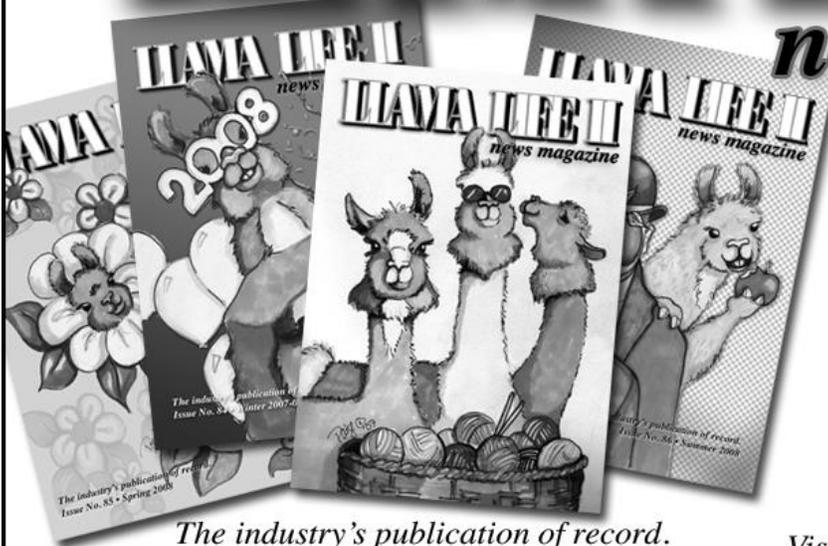
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# HYPOTHERMIA

*By David E Anderson, DVM, MS, DACVS  
Head of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

As we enter the autumn months in North America, my thoughts drift to concerns for care and management of livestock during the often-harsh environmental conditions of winter. In general, llamas and alpacas are well suited to cooler temperatures. After all, winter in the Andes can be trying on the soul if one is not prepared for it. However, camelids are susceptible to extremes of environment, hot (hyperthermia) or cold (hypothermia). The highest risk animals on the farm are very young, very old, very thin, or diseased camelids.

Perhaps the biggest concern we have for hypothermia are newborn crias. Crias are born without the stores of fat needed from which to draw energy to maintain body temperature. Newborns are dependent on the dam's colostrum and milk to provide glucose, fat, and protein. Early and frequent access to these nutrients are critical for the cria to survive the first few days of life. Without the milk fat, crias have a limited ability to maintain body temperature and blood glucose, both of which are necessary to survival. When crias are exposed to extremes of temperature, they must burn energy at a much higher rate to maintain body temperature and the remainder of the body systems may become starved. At some point, the cria is unable to ingest adequate milk to survive and hypothermia begins. These crias are often found down in the pasture in a cushed position with the head and neck extended in front of them on the ground. This posture is designed to close off all areas where heat is lost: around the tail (perineum), between the legs (axilla and groin), the underside of the belly (ventral abdomen), and the base of the neck (sternum and thoracic inlet). At this point and if body heat and energy are not restored quickly, the cria will die from hypothermia and hypoglycemia (low blood glucose) within a few hours.

The veterinary community has spent considerable time and energy evaluating risk factors and developing prevention strategies for heat stress. This is time well spent but we must consider both sides of the coin. Several years ago, a new farm lost several alpacas to heat stress. The farm did not have adequate shade and had not sheared the alpacas. When the peak daytime temperatures rose above 90 F and humidity climbed to 80 %, the alpacas could no longer tolerate the extremes and several

died before intervention could be instituted. The most significant factor seemed to be that the night time temperature did not fall below around 80 F. Thus, the alpacas could not exhaust the heat build up from the day before. This is bad when you are wearing an alpaca sweater! The next year, the farm manager was determined not to succumb to the same problem and the alpacas were shorn in April of the next year. Unfortunately, a bitter cold spell including freezing temperatures and snowfall hit that area late in April. Eight alpacas were hospitalized for hypothermia and, fortunately, all were saved. I enjoyed watching them walk around with Ohio State sweatshirts on!

These lessons are simple: management and husbandry practices greatly influence an animal's ability to thrive. Consider your farm in light of the following tips for prevention of hypothermia:

**Shelter:** Camelids must be provided with a shelter from which they can seek protection from environmental extremes. These facilities should have sufficient width, length, and height to allow protection from wind. If three-sided shelters are used, a portion of the open side may be enclosed to provide a more effective windbreak. The orientation of the shelter should be such that the open side is not presented to prevailing winds (e.g. in Ohio, shelters face southeast to brace against northwesterly winds). Our research has shown that llamas and alpacas will "loaf" (referring to relaxed cushing rather than seeking shelter for protection) in shelters that provide approximately 36 square feet per animal. During environmental extremes (e.g. cold below 20 F, high wind, hard rain, sleet/ice, heavy snow) llamas and alpacas will utilize shelters at a rate of 18 to 24 square feet per animal. Inadequate shelter space will cause animals to be "left out" without protection from the environment. Remember - the single most important toll to prevent hypothermia is to stay DRY. The second most important is to protect against wind. WET + WIND = HYPOTHERMIA. Thin and young and old animals are the most susceptible to these effects.

**Bedding:** Bedding should be sufficient to help camelids close off their natural thermal windows. Remember, in summer we are trying to increase the thermal window. In winter, our goal is to decrease this thermal window. I prefer straw for this

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## ***Hypothermia, continued***

purpose. Straw is inexpensive, clean enough to use for birthing areas, has adequate insulating features, and can be easily cleaned from the floor and fiber coat.

**Water:** Water is a critical nutrient in all seasons. Ingestion of water fluctuates with the temperature of the water. When water is near freezing or frozen, water intake is decreased. Insufficient water intake causes decreased feed intake and the ability to regulate body temperature becomes impaired. In lactating females, milk production suffers and crias will fail to gain weight or will lose weight. If passive waterers are used (e.g. buckets, troughs), the water should be refreshed daily or several times a day as needed. I prefer heated automatic waterers to optimize access and decrease labor.

**Feed:** During extremes of cold, camelids have a vital need for energy. I am often asked to consult on farms during winter months because females are losing weight, crias are not gaining weight, or hypothermia cases have been seen. Many of these problems can be tied to inadequate winter nutrition. Grain feeding may be increased to provide rapidly metabolizable energy sources, but this must be done cautiously. Over feeding of any grain source can cause acidosis in the fermentation chamber (C1) of the stomachs and this will exacerbate the problem. Corn is the "hottest" grain in that it provides the most readily fermentable carbohydrates of the cereal grains, but this also makes corn the most risky for causing acidosis. I prefer to add oats to a winter ration because this feed provides more fiber than corn and is less prone to acidosis. Example: if a herd is feeding a commercial camelid pellet ration at 0.5 lbs per head per day, oats may be added at 0.5 lbs per head per day to increase energy intake. The addition of the oats should occur slowly over two weeks to allow the flora of C1 to adapt to the change in diet. Hay should be analyzed before winter months. I prefer to test each new shipment of hay and make acceptance of the hay contingent upon this analysis. Total digestible nutrient content of the hay should exceed 55% and is most desirable to exceed 60% for winter forage. I recommend that every animal in every herd have a BCS (body condition score) done every month. Loss of body condition score should be addressed quickly unless it can be explained (e.g. females are expected to lose 1 to 1.5 BCS during the first 2 months of lactation).

**Feeding:** Providing adequate quality of feed is only one-half of the story. Providing adequate access

to feed is the other. In regions where heavy snowfall occurs and in areas where ice storms are common, camelids must be able to gain access to feed. In these situations, I prefer to offer feed inside of the shelter so that animals are not required to walk to a different location to get feed. Camelids will opt for protection against environmental extremes rather than eat or may eat for fewer hours each day. For farms that have barns this is rarely an issue. Farms using three-sided shelters may have a more difficult time providing sheltered feed.

**Ventilation:** During summer months, high ventilation is desired. During winter months, ventilation remains important. When shelters are "battened down" for the winter, we must be careful not to over-insulate the interior. Camelids tend to urinate and defecate inside of shelters. Who can blame them - nobody likes a draft in the bathroom! If ventilation is too restricted in winter housing, ammonia and other gases from the dung pile buildup and can contribute to winter pneumonia and poor thriving crias. As always, hygiene is the key to success.

**Shearing:** Talking about shearing for winter seems strange at first, but what I am referring to here is 'when did you shear and how is your fiber growing'. Last year, I worked with a herd that had not been able to shear until late in July. Although nutrition was adequate, there was not much room to spare. The fiber coats had not grown well enough before winter to provide adequate protection from the wind. Examination of the herd revealed a suboptimal herd BCS (average 4 out of 10) and approximately 25% of the herd had subnormal rectal temperatures (average of hypothermic alpacas 98 F). Although this temperature was not acutely critical, the chronic environmental stress decreased immunity, decreased lactation, and caused weight loss. Nutrition and sheltering had to be addressed quickly and within a few weeks the problem had stabilized. Unfortunately, the affected alpacas required over 1 year to fully recover.

**Maternity:** Two important concerns for newborns are cleanliness and warmth. Females have been known to give birth in open fields in the snow when they do not have access to a clean shelter in which to birth. These crias are at high risk for hypothermia if shelter is not provided. In our research, females that had access to a 14 x 16 foot shelter rarely gave birth inside of that shelter in either winter or summer. We assume that the reason for this was the presence of a dung pile in the shelter and a perception by the female that the

*Continued on page 19*

## **Hypothermia, continued**

environmental stress was too great. When females had access to a 25 x 60 foot shelter, the females always gave birth inside of the shelter despite the presence of two dunging areas within the shelter. We assume that the surface area of the shelter was large enough to allow criation and overcome the females concern for the presence of dung piles.

**Stocking densities:** Stocking density refers to the number of animals per unit area. I recommend that farm stocking density be no more than 5 llamas or 7 alpacas per acre of land for grazing to maximize forage utilization and minimize parasite burdens on pastures. In winter, grazing is not an issue for most farms because the animals will voluntarily congregate around hay feeders and shelters. Hygiene becomes a vital concern. Our research has shown that a minimum of 12 inches is required for bunker feeders to allow simultaneous feedings. However, this results in failure to feed by many of the submissive animals. Bunker space of 24 inches per head resulted in fewer submissive animals being excluded. Hay feeder space is equally important. Camelids may spend 8 hours or more feeding on hay each day. If limited feeder space is available, submissive animals will not be able to ingest enough hay to maintain weight and will be more prone to hypothermia.

**Parasites:** Often, winter is thought to provide a "reprieve" from parasites that can not survive the harsh cold and failure of eggs to hatch into infective larvae. This is true for most intestinal parasites. However, winter is fertile ground for transmission of some parasites (e.g. coccidia, whipworms, lice, mange, skin fungus) because of close animal-to-animal contact and diminished hygiene. Heavy parasite burdens cause stress to the animal and may decrease their ability to tolerate environmental extremes.

Treatment of hypothermia involves warmth, nutrition, and correction of underlying problems (e.g. milk supplements for crias whose dam is not lactating). Critical hypothermia occurs when core body temperature drops below 90 F. Consider the following treatments:

**Protection.** Get the animal into a well-insulated, preferably heated area.

**Warmth.** Wrap the animal in heated blankets. Using a heat lamp in a cold stall can be detrimental because the direct heat causes dilation of the surface blood vessels, which can exacerbate heat loss. By incubating the animal in a warm blanket, heat loss is prevented.

**Time.** Avoid too rapid heating. Warming a critically cold animal up too quickly can cause as much harm as the hypothermia because of altered blood flow and liberation of potassium and organic acids that built up during the period of poor blood flow caused by hypothermia. These can cause the heart to stop!

**Energy.** Intravenous administration of electrolytes and glucose are most useful. If an IV line is not available, glucose or other carbohydrate syrups (e.g. honey, fructose, and maple syrup) may be fed orally or may be inserted into the rectum. Yes, that's right! Camelids can absorb glucose from the rectum if there is adequate blood flow. All liquid supplements should be warmed to approximately 95 to 100 F.

**Oxygen.** Always a useful supplement to debilitated animals, but particularly useful to critically hypothermic animals.

**Steroids.** This is controversial because of camelids sensitivity to glucocorticoids. Our research suggests that dexamethasone should not be used in camelids. Prednisone type steroids may be safely used for short periods at modest dosages (e.g. not exceeding 1 mg/kg twice daily for 2 days).

**Ulcers.** I recommend prophylactic use of antiulcer medications for high-risk camelids. I prefer omeprazole (2 to 4 mg/kg, orally, once or twice daily). [Editor's note: omeprazole has been found to be ineffective when given orally; it is now administered intravenously.]

**Nutrition.** Encourage the camelid to eat themselves back to health.

**Stress.** Companion animals are always welcome! Treat any underlying disease, parasites, etc.

**Recovery.** The effects of damage from hypothermia may not be fully realized for a day or two. These animals must be kept under constant vigil for 3 to 5 days to be sure other complications will not be suffered (e.g. diarrhea, depression, etc.).

Although heat stress is of great concern to camelids residing in North America, cold stress is equally important. Forethought and preparation will help you keep your llamas and alpacas from being caught with their fur coat down!

*This article was published in 2006 and distributed by the International Camelid Community.*



# North West Camelid Foundation

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November 5, 2014

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Dear Camelid owner:

What if you discovered your favorite alpaca or llama down in the pasture, unresponsive? You would stand by in panic while the veterinarian examined your beloved animal.

What if the vet couldn't find anything wrong or tells you not much can be done?

**There is something you can do to help improve the options available to alpacas and llamas at the veterinarian's office.**

Research is the way to develop new and better diagnostic and treatment options for camelids and North West Camelid Foundation is leading the way. We want to make more breakthroughs but we depend on the generosity of alpaca or llama owners like you to help us.

**Some long time supporters think what NWCF is doing is so important they will match your contribution dollar-for-dollar, up to a total of \$5,000, through December 31!**

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# HE'S DRIVING ME &?#% ! I MEAN... HE'S DRIVING ME!

By Tom Hudgin, Photos by Mary Lou Hassell

"Giddy up." A few seconds followed with no response.

I said, "Giddy up." Again, I sat there in the driver's seat, hands holding the loose reins in vain while the large hunk of gray matter in front stood there chewing his cud and gazing off towards the Tennessee mountains. The only movement in that hot bod was the chomping jaw full of cud and twitching ears. Great! Maybe this is how they define progress in Tennessee, but it ain't where I came from. I tried again with a lot more determination.

"HEY, YOU UP THERE! MOVE IT!"

At that point, Tevye put his ears back and wham. He kicked the cart." What the ----! I spent months learnin' you how to pull this contraption, and this is what I get?"

At that moment a pickup truck approached us from ahead. The driver, in bib overalls and straw hat, had his left arm hanging down the outside of the door. I assumed the door would have fallen off if he let go. I heard things are different in Tennessee. He slowed to a crawl and stopped.

"Howdy there. How's your donkey doin'?"

"Sir, he ain't no donkey. In fact, he's smarter than your old rusty truck!" I snorted.

The farmer reached around with his left arm and opened his door from the outside.

"What did you say about my truck?!"

"Tom, wake up! You must be having a nightmare. You were mumbling to someone about a donkey," she said as she shook me.

"Yeah, it was weird, something about... oh, never mind."

It all started last spring when I was searching for another llama to train to drive a cart. I knew that 80% of a successful llama cart driver is the overall temperament, attitude, demeanor and intelligence of

the llama... *before* you start the training. The training part is fairly straight forward, for some anyway. So the trick is to find the right llama in the beginning. Only a few llamas have the right combination to become a good driving llama. I had already trained two, one of which was a grand champion. But Matador had gone down on his pasterns and was semi-retired.

I thought I found a llama last winter, but when I started to work with him, I discovered he was afraid of cars, dogs, tractors, and people. This was not the characteristics of a good cart llama. Oh sure, over a period of time I probably could have settled him down and removed those fears, but I did not want to spend months just getting him to the point of cart training.

Mary Lou Hassell suggested one of her older, male llamas might have the right temperament. Never having met Tevye, and in desperation, I headed out to the pasture with a halter and lead in my back pocket. He was busy grazing on the lush, spring grass and did not pay attention to me initially. I stopped 50 feet away and started to talk to him quietly expecting him to look up and walk away. He continued eating. I moved closer to 10 feet. He still ignored me. Slowly, I walked up, extended my hand and touched his back. He looked up for a couple of seconds and continued eating. I moved my hand up to his neck, then to the top of his head. He continued eating. Finally, I reached in my back pocket, removed the halter and lead,



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## ***He's Driving Me &?#% ! I Mean... He's Driving Me!, continued***

and held the halter up to his face. Tevye lifted his head up to my shoulders, looked at the halter and stood still. I slipped the halter and lead on. He remained still. Then we walked around the pasture for awhile with Tevye directly behind. And the best part was that he was NOT afraid of dogs, cars, trucks, tractors and strangers. He was the right llama.

We began the training with daily, 30 minute, simple walks on a lead to build a mutual bond of trust. After a week, I was ready for phase one of ground driving training. When I placed a driving halter and reins on him, Mary Lou hooked up a normal lead line to his halter. She led Tevye along as he had been trained to do, while I followed behind with loose reins in hand. To start the forward motion, I said quietly, "Tevye, walk on." Of course, Tevye had no idea what that meant, so Mary Lou tugged on the lead at the same time and off we went.

"Good boy, Tevye", I said.

When it came time to stop, I ordered, "Tevye, whoa."

I gently pulled back on the reins while Mary Lou stepped in front of him. Tevye stopped.

"Good boy, Tevye" I repeated.

We continued the "walk on" and "whoa" process 15-30 minutes a day for several weeks. Tevye had to get this part down perfectly before we moved further. In fact, the most important command to learn without hesitation or second thoughts on his part is "WHOA." Each day we made progress. Each day I could see subtle signs that Tevye just

might be enjoying this. Eventually, we reached the point where Tevye would "walk on" and "whoa" without the aid of the reins or Mary Lou tugging or blocking his path. He was consistent. We were ready for phase two after a little over a month of training.

The next part involved teaching Tevye to turn right and left. I added the empty driving harness strapped on his back. Again, Mary Lou would lead Tevye with a line while I followed behind with the reins. Shortly, I said, "Tevye, turn left" and pulled the reins slightly and gently to the left. At the same time Mary Lou turned to the left and towed Tevye with the lead rope. We continued this process for a week turning only left. The idea was to teach him the association of the words "turn left" and a slight left tug on the reins. After a week, he caught on. Then we did the right side. All along we continued to reinforce the "walk on" and "whoa." In another month of 30 minute sessions, Tevye had it down pat. He now could start, stop, turn left and turn right... without the cart.

Then came the big challenge – the cart itself. This is a huge transition, because suddenly you are physically restricting his movements forward, sideways and backward and you are adding a lot of weight to pull. I have seen some llamas that passed the test in temperament, attitude, etc., and passed the test of training up to this point with flying colors, then freak out when the cart is attached. In fact, I had a female llama that did beautifully up to the point of attaching an empty cart. She panicked and never was able to go further.

At this stage, we moved our training to an oval, fenced horse ring in case Tevye went wild with the cart hook-up. We tied Tevye to the fence and placed the cart harness on his back while whispering sweet nothings in his ear. Mary Lou stood beside Tevye's head and held onto the lead while I slowly placed the empty cart into position from behind him. Tevye stood perfectly still. We slowly slipped the lower and upper tugs from his harness onto the cart shafts at the same time on both sides so no sideways weight would be felt. Then we let go of the shafts so he could feel the weight. Tevye continued to stand.

"Bravo, Tevye" We gave him a big hug.



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## ***He's Driving Me &?#% ! I Mean... He's Driving Me!, continued***

I took the lead rope, untied it from the fence and slowly led him around the oval with no one in the cart and no reins. In a sense, we were regressing because we were only introducing the weight of the cart and restricted movements and forgetting about the "walk on," "whoa," and "left and right turns" for the moment. During the first half of the loop around the ring, Tevye offered some resistance. He tried to move sideways, then stopped, then jumped forward in an attempt to shake off that cart. He was obviously uncomfortable with the contraption hanging on his back. I expected this reaction, however, and we continued

around the ring not giving in. We did nothing but just walk. No commands, no side movements as practiced in the past, just walk. By the time we returned to the starting point in the oval ring, Tevye had relaxed and was trotting right along with no argument. We went around a second time. Finally, I gave the lead to Mary Lou, and I walked behind him and the cart with the reins. The cart remained empty. For the next several weeks, we practiced the commands I had taught Tevye from the beginning while walking behind the cart.

Then the day of reckoning arrived. Tevye was going to pull me in the cart... maybe. We returned to the oval horse ring. Tevye stood perfectly still while we hooked him up to cart. Mary Lou, again, held Tevye in front with a lead rope. I climbed in, ever so gently, and commanded, "Tevye, walk on." Tevye eased forward. After a quarter trek around the ring, I asked Mary Lou to release the lead rope. It was now or never. I held my breath in anticipation of the worst as we smoothly rode a complete loop around the oval without a flaw.

"WE DID IT! WE DID IT! GOOD BOY, TEYVE!" I shouted, stopped, got out of the cart and gave Tevye a hug and a treat of a handful of feed.

I gave Mary Lou a hug and thanked her for her help. I sang "We did it! We did it!" all around the ring three more times. Every week since that moment, we have taken Tevye out for rides. He has



improved each time. We now have booked him for two Christmas parades, one in Jonesborough, TN and one in Boykin, SC. As you can see, it takes the right pick initially and a lot of patience, but it pays off in the end. The last step is teaching Tevye to back up with the cart. I have a plan. Watch out performance people, we'll see you at the shows.

One final comment, I had a face to face meeting with one of the nearby Tennessee State Parks Superintendents about the possibility of bringing Tevye and other llamas to the park on a one time trial basis. We were granted permission for a one shot test. No horses or other livestock were allowed... except dogs on a leash. I said we could abide by the dog rules. We took Tevye to the park for a test run in the cart. It was a hit, and we have been granted permission to bring llamas to the Davy Crockett State Park anytime without prior notice. The next step will be to visit another state park in Tennessee using the same "trial approach." Knowing our success in North Carolina State Parks,

I anticipate going to the State Parks Division office in Nashville sometime down the road and request the same permission for all of Tennessee State Parks... just like we did in North Carolina. We are on a roll.

*This article also appears in the Fall 2014 issue of the SSLA Llama Journal.*



# 2014 REDNECK MOOSE PERFORMANCE SHOW AND PACK TRIAL

*By Cathie Kindler, Photos by Belinda Snow*

On the last weekend in September, the Redneck Moose Show and Pack Trial happened despite the many obstacles that were thrown in its path. In July, I shattered my tibia plateau and had to have surgery to repair it. Since I was not going to be able to perform many of my superintendent duties, I decided to cancel the event. Thankfully for participants, we are lucky enough to have Kurt and Karen Pihera and Kathy Devaul in our area. They convinced me to have the show and pack trial. Then, to make matters worse, while out marking trails for the pack trial, I snapped my tibia in half. Add that to getting stuck in the mud and almost being washed down the creek when a rainstorm hit, since I couldn't walk back to the house. I was beginning to think someone didn't want us to have these events.



The day of the show dawned warm and overcast. It was perfect weather for an outdoor show. We had over 30 llamas from 5 states attend and everyone had a wonderful time. The hit of the show was the natural pack course. It included a bridge over a creek, a walk in the creek, real dead fall, a fire, and many other real obstacles (photos this page).

I was able to make the show on my orange chariot (above right) and handed out the grand and reserve blankets. I also announced that from now on, the show would be called the White Lightning Performance Show to honor last year's performance champion who crossed over the rainbow bridge this year.

Many thanks to all participants who traveled to this show. Special thanks to clerk, Kathy Devaul and obstacle organizers, Kurt and Karen Pihera. Most of all, thanks to our judge, Terese Evenson, who did a wonderful job.

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## ***2014 Redneck Moose Performance Show and Pack Trial, continued***

Congratulations to these winners:

Performance Champion - Chevy Chase - Lauren Wright  
Advanced Champion - Good Ol' Smiley - Greg Hall  
Novice Champion - Machu Man - Greg Hall  
Senior Champion - Janessa Hall  
Intermediate Champion - Bree Bingham

The Redneck Moose Pack Trial was also a success (photos this page). We had 10 llamas participate in the trial and several others walk along. It is a great trip from our farm out to Rainbow Lake. It is a privately owned, 60-acre lake that is next to our property. It is a challenging course with lots of elevation changes, many natural obstacles, and mileage to spare. All the llamas behaved well and had no problem with the course.

We are really looking forward to 2015 and have reserved the last weekend in September for the show. Please mark that date on your calendar.



*This article also appears in the Fall 2014 issue of the SSLA Llama Journal.*

