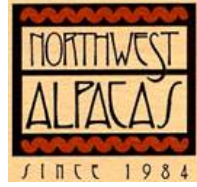




Cheating at Shows: How it Affects the Whole Alpaca Industry

By Jude Anderson



CHEATING AT SHOWS : HOW IT AFFECTS THE WHOLE ALPACA INDUSTRY

By Jude Anderson

A “Culture of Cheating” has now become endemic in AOBA alpaca shows, whether it’s in the trimming and blocking of huacayas or the stripping, shampooing or luster enhancement of suris. AOBA judges now find themselves in the position of being the “Grooming Police” rather than having the satisfaction of being able to judge every animal on its merits and place them accordingly. I’d like to demonstrate how cheating negatively permeates every aspect of the alpaca industry.

First, a true story to illustrate my argument. One of my many ring stewards (I can’t even remember this guy’s name!) told me this story last year and he was astute enough to with hold the names of those involved! (You can substitute huacayas in there very easily, this is not just a suri issue.)

Breeder A illegally stripped and luster enhanced a suri male for the show ring. The alpaca won several championships and gained the attention and admiration of Breeder B, who was in the market for a lustrous, well locked male for his females at home that did not have good locking or luster. Breeder B paid a lot of money for the male, convinced that this male would solve all his problems and he’d have wonderful progeny the following year.

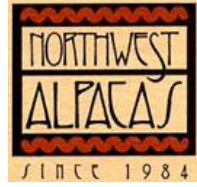
The problem was that a few months after the purchase, the suri male looked like all of the other alpacas in Breeder B’s paddock – matted with no luster! He knew that this male would not improve his herd as he realized that he’d been duped by Breeder A.

Of course, Breeder B will never buy from Breeder A again and guess what, he’s talking about him to other breeders in a very small industry. Cheating will come back to bite you!

Here’s how this cheating is dangerous on so many levels:

Breeder A is not only fooling the judges, the AOBA membership and any would-be alpaca breeders, he’s kidding himself that he has a good suri breeding program. He’s kidding himself that he’s a stud stock breeder of superior alpacas.

Breeder A cheats the whole industry. Not only is he cheating his clients and potential clients, he’s also adding inferior stock to the gene pool and by doing so he’s not promoting the overall improvement of the breed. In fact he’s probably setting the breed back by allowing this male to breed.



Cheating at Shows: How it Affects the Whole Alpaca Industry

Breeder A is totally disrespectful of AOBA, the Show Division and the Judges, and therefore, the alpaca industry as a whole. He has created animosity amongst members (including judges) and this will have a very negative effect on not only the show system, but on all the marketing strategies that AOBA has worked so hard to put into place.

The AOBA Show Division Mission Statement on page 7 of the 2005 handbook, amongst other aims, lists one of its principles as:

E. Wide participation of industry members in showing and judging by adhering to a code of fairness and highest ethics.

The AOBA Show Division, and the judges and exhibitors, have the joint responsibility of ensuring that cheating in the show ring is not only not rewarded but also eradicated. It's important for exhibitors not to blame judges and to take responsibility for ensuring that every alpaca is presented in a natural state. At the moment it's a case of "How can I best fool the judge (and therefore the industry and any newcomers) today?" This is no different to drug cheats in sport, people are out there to undermine the show system rather than compete on equal terms with honesty and integrity.

We all need to take responsibility for the good of the breed, the integrity of the show system and in developing honesty towards new and experienced breeders.