Well-planned barns and pastures, and innovative use of high- and low-tech gadgets can make life on the farm much easier. If you have any helpful "husbandry hints," *Alpacas Magazine* would love to hear from you.

■ Alpaca Herd Management Software

Alpaca owners need to keep detailed records on the management of their alpacas. To responsibly care for alpacas, one needs to keep track of individual animal information, routine health care, veterinary procedures, and growth information.

An alpaca rancher can keep track of all this information by pen and paper, but in the computer age, good quality alpaca herd management software can greatly ease data entry, perform data searches, and provide a wide variety of reports.

For someone who owns only two or three alpacas, the pen and paper will do just fine. But once you have more alpacas and begin breeding and raising crias, the computer and software are almost a necessity.

There are several alpaca herd management software programs available commercially, so you do not need to create your own. Just conduct an Internet search on "alpaca herd management software" and you will have a list of most of the commercially available software programs on the market today. Alpaca software is also frequently advertised in *Alpacas Magazine*. [Note: *Alpacas Magazine* policy does not allow writers to endorse specific products].

Most of these programs are available to potential customers on a free trial basis. Download a trial program, input some data in all of the different sections, and see which program you think is easiest to use and provides you with the data and reports that you want. If you like the program, you then contact the software provider and purchase a copy of the software to use on your ranch.

Here are some features of software that we have found useful in managing our alpaca herd:

1. Detailed Animal Information: Most of this information is recorded only once and can be called up on a report for each alpaca. It is handy to have all of this information recorded and available. This section should include data fill areas for the following:
   a. Birth date
   b. Registration name
   c. Common name
   d. Sex
   e. Blood typed case #
   f. Sire
   g. Dam
   h. Fleece type
   i. Purchased from, date, price
   j. Current value
   k. Microchip # and location
   l. Insurer
   m. Color- 1,2,3
   n. Farm location and pen number

2. Medical History: This section is one of the most important features of the program. It is used to record routine and non-routine veterinary procedures, medications, worming, weight entries, etc. By recording this information, you will have a detailed medical history on each of your alpacas. The following fields will help you enter needed data:
   a. Date administered
   b. Weight
   c. Problem or procedure
   d. Medicine given
   e. Results of the treatment
   f. Cost of treatment
   g. Administered by (you, your vet, a farm that was agisting your alpaca)
   h. Method used- Sub Q, IV, Oral, etc.

3. Breeding Information:
   a. Registration number of Dam
   b. Registered name of Dam

Above: For someone who owns two or three alpacas, the pen and paper will do just fine for record keeping. But once you have more alpacas and begin breeding and raising crias, the computer and software is almost a necessity.

Below left: Detailed animal information should include the basics such as birth date, dam, sire, registered name, ARI number, microchip number and location, etc.

Below right: A good software program will allow you to record and track alpaca weights.

```
Weight History
Reg 827734
Godfather's Accoyo
Christina
30-Nov-04

Date            Weight
May 01, 2001    18.38
May 02, 2001    18.06
May 03, 2001    18.44
May 03, 2001    18.63
May 04, 2001    19.00
May 06, 2001    19.63
May 08, 2001    19.69
May 09, 2001    20.06
May 10, 2001    20.32
```
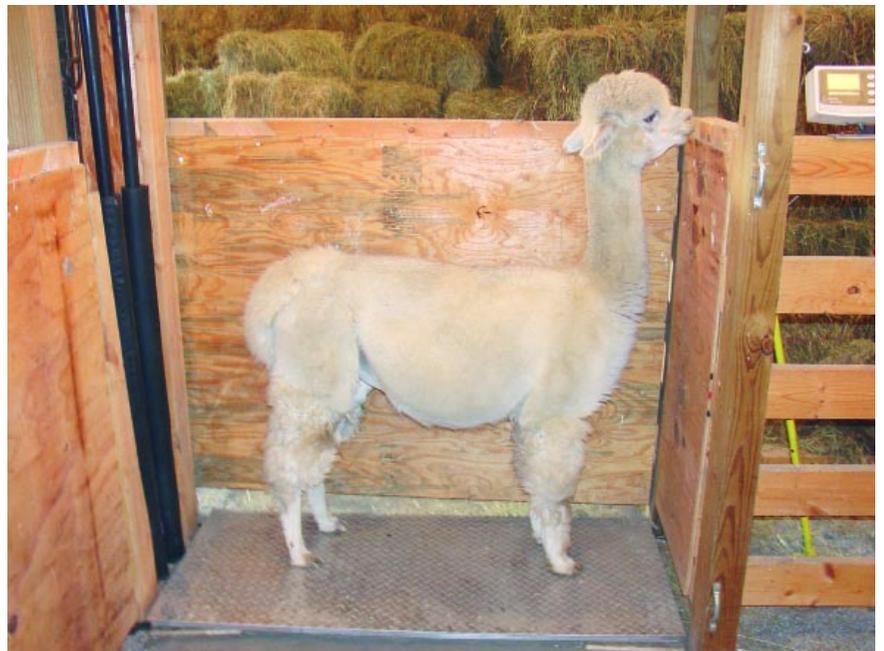
Your program should extract weight information in graphic or table format to allow you to closely monitor your alpaca's weight history.

c. Common name of Dam
d. Farm name
e. Registration number of Sire
f. Registered name of Sire
g. Common name of Sire
h. Farm name
i. Breeding dates
j. Tests performed - e.g., bred, spit off, ultrasound, progesterone test
k. Breeding Fee
l. Post birthing information:
   i. Date of birth
   ii. Cria name
   iii. Birth weight
   iv. Actual gestation days
   v. Comments

4. Shearing Information:
a. Shearing date
b. Micron
c. Standard deviation
d. Coefficient of variation
e. % over 30 micron
f. Time to shear
g. Total weight of fleece, blanket, 2nds, 3rds

The Medical History module should allow recording date, problem, medicine administered, by whom, and cost of medication.

5. Photos: Most software programs allow you to copy photos of your alpacas into the information for each alpaca. Some allow up to four different photos to be entered.

6. Sales Information:
a. Selling price
b. Selling date
c. Sold to
d. Comments about the sale

Herd management software should organize breeding records very well. Information such as breeding date, spit testing, sire information, due date, etc. should be available.

Good programs will have a list feature that will allow you to access drop down menus and greatly speed up data entry.

Some programs allow you to input medical procedure intervals, such as Ivomec treatment every 28 days. The program then creates a list of upcoming needed procedures, reminding you of the schedule for treatment.

The truly great benefit of using alpaca software is the ease of obtaining reports on your herd. Reports available from most software programs include:

a. Detailed alpaca information
b. Breeding due dates
c. Breeding history of a selected dam or sire
d. Medical costs, history, pending procedures
e. Show records
f. Shearing information
g. And others

Yocom-McColl Testing Laboratories, Inc.
540 West Elk Place • Denver, Colorado 00216 1023 USA
PHONE (303) 294 0582 • FAX (303) 295 6944
EMAIL: ymccoll@ymccoll.com

Individual Animal Micron Test Report
Sorted by Fiber Diameter

Southern Iowa Alpacas/Bill and Sherri Duey
2195 637th Trail
Albia, IA 52531 USA

Test No	Animal Name	ID	Sex	Age	Location	AFD	SD	CV	%>30u
243710	SIA Accoyo Marilyn	1002591	Female	11/20/03	Side	18.6	4.7	25.0	2.4
243705	SIA Accoyo Cirrus	841176	Female	10/09/02	Side	18.7	3.2	17.1	0.6
243709	SIA Accoyo Sir William	848409	Male	05/11/03	Side	18.9	4.5	23.6	2.2
243713	SIA Caligula's Accoyo Paladin	826075	Male	07/25/01	Side	19.6	4.9	24.9	2.8
243711	Godfather's Accoyo Christina	827734	Female	05/01/01	Side	20.1	3.9	19.3	2.4
243712	NWA Ltd Accoyo's Astoria	808677	Female	08/19/98	Side	21.4	4.5	20.8	4.0
243706	CPeruvian Accoyo Taryn	806212	Female	01/01/96	Side	21.7	5.0	23.2	6.7

Shearing information should include shearing date, weights of blanket, total shear weight, firsts, seconds, thirds and all fiber sample information such as micron, SD, CV, etc.

We have found that detailed alpaca medical records are very valuable to buyers. Customers like to know the medical history of an alpaca they are interested in buying. When a seller can not produce good medical records for a buyer, a smart buyer may move on to the next ranch and purchase an alpaca that has good medical history records available.

Good detailed alpaca records are also invaluable if you ever have to check one of your alpacas into a Veterinary Hospital. With good records available to the attending Vet, he or she can do the best job possi-ble in treating your alpaca. Without good case history, they may have to perform some unnecessary tests.

We encourage you to check out several software programs and find one that is user friendly and will create reports and data that are helpful to your alpaca breeding program.

Bill and Sherri Duey operate Southern Iowa Alpacas ranch located in the hills of Southern Iowa. They specialize in raising full Accoyo herd sires. They have incorporated innovative features into their alpaca ranch and conduct seminars on business planning, animal selection and ranch setup. They also enjoy helping existing ranchers learn about new products and techniques for fine tuning their operation. You may view their website at www.southerniowaalpacas.com or contact them directly at alpacas@southerniowaalpacas.com.