

## Alpacas on Show

I remember the first Alpaca show I went to. We had been pressured into entering our alpacas to make up numbers and had no idea what we were in for. An alpaca show involves several different classes by breed, colour, and age. The alpacas are led around a ring where they are considered for conformation and size, then they must stand still while the judge examines their fleece.

To show your alpaca it must be trained to lead on a halter. Our alpacas were fresh out of quarantine from Australia and had come from a large farm where they hadn't been handled to make them friendly. We had 1 week to tame and halter train them before their show debut.

I don't know what I was really expecting at that first show but it was really quite exciting. Most other exhibitors were also new to the game and nervous and excited. We had managed to get our three suri girls vaguely halter trained so we were all set. The show day starts early with convincing the alpacas to get on to the float, but once on they sit down. The show stewards start by checking out the animals, making sure the paper work is in order and they are in top condition.

Then each class is led out one by one, it took a fair bit of persuasion to get ours on stage, we had to ring in more family members to help out and support. We came away very happy with handful of ribbons to keep up our interest and we were hooked..

Things have progressed from then, showing has become popular amongst breeders keen to show off their best alpacas and promote the industry. The North Is now boasts 6 judged alpaca shows this year with judges from Australia and Christchurch raising the profile of alpacas.

On Sat 24<sup>th</sup> Jan, alpacas will be judged at the Rotorua A&P Show for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, with record entries and there will be the largest number of Suri alpaca ever exhibited at a show in NZ. Alpaca judging will also be featured at the Kumeu Show in March and the Royal Easter Show in Auckland on Good Friday.

For anyone interested in finding out more about alpacas, they will be present at many A&P shows around the country. Check them out at Tauranga A&P Sat 17<sup>th</sup> Jan, Rotorua Sat&Sun 24-25<sup>th</sup> Jan, Te Puke A&P Sat 21<sup>st</sup> Feb.