

Rumplestiltskin

Spinning suri fibre into gold

Newsletter December 2012

Seasons Greetings to you all.

Firstly thank you to all the people who participated in the recent Suri Baling Weekends. The weekends proved very successful for all involved and we hope to repeat them next year with some improvements and maybe a couple more collection points.

As many breeders had stored fleece from several years we sorted and classed a huge number of fleeces, gaining a lot of knowledge along the way. From approx 100 suri breeders nationwide we had 26 participate so there is probably a lot fleece out there still.

The numbers attending were ideal for the time we allowed and gave us enough time to sort the fleece.

We collected over 2 ton of fleece, much of this was sorted during the week *as it belonged* to Surico and Thistledown. All the Seconds and Overlong White and have been dispatched and we have to wait to be paid to pay out to suppliers. We investigated several buyers for the Seconds and Overlong, there were 4 who receive alpaca fleece, some were more clear about their requirements and we went with those. Lindsay Riddle in the South Is, Wadsworth for the *White Overlong* and Phil Collins for all other Seconds in the North Is.

The fleece was sorted into 67 different lots, 6 different micron bands and 10 colour bands. We also sorted the Overlong and Seconds into colours as some buyers wanted that, we could always amalgamate afterwards.

We now have stored in the South Is quantities ranging from a few hundred grams to just over 50kg of classed suri fibre. For the Rumplestiltskin Project we were seeking 22-23.9 micron white suri between



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80mm-140mm long. We were fortunate to collect 53 kg for that and plus the 15 kg that people chose to take home we had a total of 68 kg classed. This class was the largest collected.

One problem we have encountered has been length, much of the fleece was too long, it was a shame to have to downgrade some of the fleeces because of this. This is the length [80mm to 140mm] that was stipulated by processors for carding and spinning. A lot of fleeces were from storage over years and most people now shear their suri every year, apart from the few they show, so that should take care of that problem. Also, many have changed the time of birthing to autumn so the first shear is younger and not too long for that premium fleece. The baling weekends highlighted these points to the breeders and reinforced the message.

We are also investigating carding and spinning longer length fleeces with another mill and will do some trials later in 2013, with a possibility of being able to increase the maximum length in future.

Another highlighted aspect was breeding and this was evident in our own suri where we had several years fleece from the same animals to sort, some family lines were yielding bigger areas of useable lustrous fleece than others for up to 9 years. There were some beautiful fleeces from older and now higher micron animals which has encouraged us to find uses for these classes. It has reinforced our knowledge about breeding for the qualities that make an excellent fleece. We need to breed for uniformity of micron, even for the higher micron animals, most important in this is lack of hair. We came across some animals with low average micron fleece but great variations and exhibiting coarse hair. This has no place in processing for any product and needs to be bred out.

Colour contamination is another aspect that needs to be recognized. Dark fibres in light coloured fleeces need to be classed to a darker shade, they can be problematic eg making smudges in woven fabric, light fibres in dark fleeces mean the fleece will need to be blended or dyed to cover.



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Breeding decisions can eliminate most of these problems so we learnt it is important to be aware of your suri fleece characteristics. The best fleeces have a consistent micron, have a well nourished lustrous appearance, have no hair or colour contamination, these qualities can all be bred into your fleeces.

We also noticed some downgrading due to bad shearing practices. Some fleeces were contaminated from other fleece at shearing – reiterating the need to organize the order of shearing to ensure the best fleece are shorn first and the lightest colours. The choice of shearer can also effect the number of second cuts and some fleeces we downgraded due to the staple being partially cut through. In this phase of industry we are still developing the protocols necessary and there is still a lot of work to be carried out in this area.

We are very excited about the next stage for developing a commercial suri fibre industry, and we saw some beautiful suri fleeces. We'll be writing a more in-depth report on the baling and classing weekends that will hopefully be published in the next issue of the Alpaca magazine. In the meantime don't hesitate to contact us if you want to discuss anything in more detail or if you are interested in purchasing any of the suri fibre we have amalgamated.

We hope that you will be able to take part next year.

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Fibre available

Colour	Micron Band	Code	Kg
Black	26.0-29.0	Blk26	15.2
Brown	<19.0	Br18	1.4
Brown	19.0-21.9	br19	8.4
Brown	22.0-23.9	Br22	8.8
Brown	24.0-25.9	Br24	3.6
Brown	26.0-29.0	Br26	9.1
Dark Fawn	19.0-21.9	DF19	0.1
Dark Fawn	22.0-23.9	DF22	2.0
Dark Fawn	24.0-25.9	DF24	0.9
Dark Fawn	26.0-29.0	DF26	4.7
Light Fawn	24.0-25.9	LF24	0.7
Light Fawn	26.0-29.0	LF26	4.2
Medium Fawn	<19.0	MF18	0.7
Medium Fawn	19.0-21.9	MF19	4.8
Medium Fawn	22.0-23.9	MF22	4.3
Medium Fawn	24.0-25.9	MF24	8.4
Medium Fawn	26.0-29.0	MF26	4.1
White	<19.0	W18	1.8
White	24.0-25.9	W24	18.2
White	26.0-29.0	W26	27.3
Contaminated Brown	19.0-21.9	Xbr19	1.5
Contaminated Brown	22.0-23.9	Xbr22	0.6
Contaminated Brown	24.0-25.9	Xbr24	0.6
Contaminated Brown	26.0-29.0	XBr26	1.1
Contaminated White/Light Fawn	24.0-25.9	XW24	2.2
Contaminated White/Light Fawn	26.0-29.0	XW26	0.4
Grand Total			135.2

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