

Press Releases and Publicity

One of the easiest ways to start raising public awareness and interest in owning camelids is to take advantage of the events your organization or farm already has on the calendar by inviting the public to attend and offering them the opportunity to get “up close and personal” with your llamas and alpacas. You can do that by promoting these activities through your local newspapers and radio and television stations with the use of a press release for each event.

A sample release is provided below to use as a guideline for promoting everything from a llama or alpaca show to a fiber workshop to a farm open house. The first paragraph should include the name of the event and its date, time and location. Use the rest of the release to provide additional details on what the public will be able to see and do, especially emphasizing any hands on opportunities. Include directions to the event and an e-mail address or phone number the public can contact for more information on it. Also include your organization’s name and web site as a source for information on camelids in general. It’s best to keep the release to one page if possible.

Most local media are eager to promote your events if they are open to the general public. You can mail or e-mail the release or drop it off in person at your local newspaper or broadcast station. Many newspapers also are happy to have a photo provided with the release. It can be a shot of something that will be happening at the event (spinning, shearing, cart driving, etc.) or even a generic llama or alpaca photo showing the type of animal the public will be able to see. A photo also helps draw the reader’s eye to the story on your event.

Do some homework on your local media. Does the newspaper have a special section, column or reporter for which your release would be a natural fit? Does the radio or television station have a regular time they highlight happenings in the community? If you want your item to run in a particular edition or at a certain time, what is the deadline to make sure that happens? If you are working with a weekly newspaper, you usually have to work farther ahead than with a daily publication, though dailies often have certain features or calendars that run on specific days of the week. Get to know your local media’s needs in order to make the most of your publicity efforts.

It is a good idea to include a fact sheet on llamas and alpacas along with your press release. It helps educate reporters about camelids, and they will often use that material to expand on your press release or to write a sidebar story that runs alongside the item on your event—thus helping to educate the public about llamas and alpacas and perhaps encouraging them to attend your event and see these interesting animals for themselves. A sample fact sheet is also included below. In addition, you may want to include a copy of the brochure developed by Camelid Community called “The Basics of Alpaca & Llama Care” for more background information.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jane Doe (name of person who can provide more details to the media)

111-222-3333 (phone number of contact person)

Grand Llama & Alpaca Show Set for Father's Day Weekend in Boulder Junction

The Grand Llama & Alpaca Show will be held Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14, at the Pima County Fairgrounds in Boulder Junction. Free and open to the general public, the show will start at 9 a.m. each day and continue until about 6 p.m.

The show includes halter class judging, showmanship, walking fleece classes, obstacle course contests, cart driving competition, public relations and pack trials. Alpacas and llamas will be judged in separate show rings with contests going on at the same time in both rings, and animals from many states will be competing for the championships.

Learn more about llamas and alpacas from the displays and free handouts, and take one of these curious camelids for a walk if you'd like. Owners will be happy to answer any questions you might have. You will also have the opportunity to watch animals being sheared and see spinners use the fiber to make beautiful yarn.

Vendors will offer a variety of llama and alpaca fiber products—from raw fleeces and yarn to finished garments and gift items. Register for free door prizes, and you may be lucky enough to take home a special shawl or blanket made of llama or alpaca fiber.

The Pima County Fairgrounds is located at the intersection of County Highway B and US Highway 19, about four miles east of Boulder Junction. For more information on the Grand Llama & Alpaca Show, e-mail camelids@youbet.net or call 111-222-3333. For more information on camelids in general, visit the web site for the Colorado Camelid Association at camelidsrus@netnet.net.

Llama and Alpaca Fact Sheet:

What's the Difference Between Llamas and Alpacas?

Llamas and alpacas are members of the camelid family and are related to the camels of Asia and the Middle East. Natives of the mountain regions of South America, they originated in North America along with all camelids before migrating off the continent and eventually becoming extinct in North America. There are four species of South American camelids—llamas and alpacas being the two domesticated species and guanacos and vicunas the two wild ones.

Alpacas are about three feet high at the withers and weigh 100 to 175 pounds. Llamas generally are larger than alpacas, standing three and a half to four feet at the withers and weighing 250 to 450 pounds. Both have a lifespan of about 20 years and a gestation period of 11 and a half months. Adaptive animals with a gentle temperament, llamas and alpacas communicate through body language, flicking the tail and ears, foot stomping and the use of vocal calls. Though similar in many ways—including having padded feet with two toes on each foot—alpacas and llamas also differ in some ways. Both, however, are much enjoyed by their owners.

Llamas—Called their “speechless brothers” by South American natives, llamas are highly intelligent, easily trained and incredibly curious. They have been used as pack animals for thousands of years in South America and are highly valued by packers in the U.S. because they are sure footed and can carry loads up to a quarter of their weight. Because they learn quickly, llamas can be taught to negotiate obstacles, pull a cart and compete in performance classes. They are gentle and are “housebroken” by instinct, so many owners train their llamas to ride on elevators, climb stairs and walk on stages for appearances in schools and nursing homes. Their high quality fiber is warmer and lighter weight than sheep’s wool, and it can be spun, woven and knitted into numerous articles such as scarves, hats, coats, sweaters, shawls and rugs. Many llamas have an innate ability to guard other livestock such as sheep, goats and even cattle from coyotes and similar predators. All across the country families on small acreages are discovering the joy of raising llamas as intelligent and trusting companions.

Alpacas—Ancient Incan royalty cherished alpacas for their luxurious fiber. Those traits have been passed down to the present, and alpaca garments are prized for their softness, durability and wrinkle resistance. First imported to the U.S. in 1984, and also into Canada, alpacas are now being successfully raised and enjoyed throughout North America. There are two breeds of alpacas—huacaya and suri—with almost identical body types but very different fleece types and therefore different uses in garments. Like their llama cousins, alpacas eat grasses and chew a cud. They are gentle, inquisitive and easy to handle in temperament and because of their relatively small size. They require minimal fencing and can be pastured on small acreages. Alpacas produce one of the world’s finest and most luxurious natural fibers. Warmer, lighter and stronger than wool, it comes in more colors than any other fiber producing animal (more than 20 basic colors with many variations and blends). The Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America accepts fleece from its members and turns the precious textile into quality alpaca garments and products. Members benefit from a ready outlet for their fiber, while the cooperative works to increase awareness of and demand for this everyday luxury.