

AO Ask the Expert in Fibre

June 30, 2020

- 1) How do you determine the price for fibre for wholesale?
At AlpacaNaturally we start with the retail price for a skein of yarn and work back taking out the costs and ending up with a fibre value that is paid to the producer.
Averages are difficult to determine without a lot of digging. AN pays \$13, \$11, \$9, and \$7 per pound.
- 2) What is the demand for having the classing certification?
 - a. As a classer, most producers have no idea what it is that I do over there and why I take up so much space, until the end of shearing when all of their fleece is bagged and labeled. The demand is low but builds when people see the results, not just on shearing day but in the finished product.
 - b. Are the classes being offered soon? The part 1 has been offered several times in the past few years and there have not been the 10 people minimum required by Haliburton College to hold the class. There are various reasons for this.
Let's make a list, set a date and hope the covid 19 doesn't cancel it.
- 3) What is the most profitable form of fibre? Depending on the fibre and your market, value increases as you progress through the steps to finished garments. Profit can be greatest selling raw fibre to a handspinner market.
- 4) With Yokum McColl out, where to next? The Art of Fibre- Paul Vallely in UK, Alpaca Consulting Service - Ian Watt in California
- 5) What is the market for raw(unskirted) fibre? Not much. Should the fibre always be skirted for the spinners and weavers? The fibre should always be skirted at shearing before bagging, regardless of the intended use.
- 6) What is the best storage method for your fleece? Reference SABN research project
 - a. Depends on the environment. It can be stored successfully for years. It must be dry when stored.
- 7) How do I determine whether the price per pound for processing is fair?
 - a. Most mills have websites that list their processing prices. There are variations, but most are within a similar range. Mini-mills and small lots are going to be more expensive than larger equipment that can run large lots.
 - b. Most mills offer a price breakdown for each service, so the customer can choose how far they want their fibre to go at that mill. Rovings vs yarn
- 8) How do I determine what to make out of my fibre? Is the decision mine or in consultation with the mill? Guidelines are available on the website, but you need to know what grade of fibre you have to make the determination. Most mills are experienced with alpaca and can help you.
Addition from Henry: the fineness of the fibre determines the type of yarn or product or blend. The length of the fibre determines the process.
- 9) Yarn cheat sheet weight, ypp? A work in progress at the fibre committee

- 10) Shearer – you hire the shearer which makes you the boss, but for the most part, no one can tell a shearer what to do. It is a matter of finding the right shearer for you. There are a number of good ones. Trudy McCall is a shearing instructor that shears to maximize the fibre harvest. It might be time to have her back in Ontario.
- 11) DIY fleece skirting table. There are several options. A sorting table must have a frame, a mesh screen with squares 1” or smaller and a stand to bring it to the right height for the user. There is a circular rotating one on a centre stand with adjustable height available commercially out of the US.
- 12) Storage for fleece – SABN website
- 13) <10 head, what options are available for processing? Big Question. Spin it yourself. Pool with neighbours. Sell it to Alpaca Naturally or another business that purchases alpaca fibre. Join the Alpaca Fibre Co-op of Ontario.
- 14) How do you prepare and store a fleece for a show? Use a lock from the centre of the fleece and remove anything that is not the same. Detailed instruction are available on AO website.
- 15) Can you explain how a fibre co-operative works and where to find one? Alpaca Fibre Co-op of Ontario exists.

Reference Websites

Alpaca Ontario /membership/resources/Fibre101

Alpaca Ontario/membership/resources/Harvest Code of Practice Best Practices manual

www.alpacanaturally.ca

www.sabn.net/fibre

www.artoffibre.com

www.alpacaconsultingusa.com

alpaca fibre co-op of Ontario

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