

10 Years into our Journey

We received many thanks for posting our Alpaca Journey “Starting an Alpaca Business” on our website. Since posting, it’s been ten-years and there is not a great deal we would change in our journey. Owning an Alpaca farm has been wonderful. It seems like just a short time ago we began looking to purchase a farm and our first Alpacas. Since then, our passion for the Alpaca lifestyle hasn’t dwindled. To sum it up, the Alpaca business has been the right choice for us and we have surpassed our goals. Thinking back, we want to offer the following recommendations:

- Buy Quality Alpacas:
This is important to be successful at shows, future sales and building a respectable breeding program. We have won Judges Choices, have over 40 Championships and many more Blue Ribbons. Without quality Alpacas, this wouldn’t have been possible. We only breed 5 to 6 females a year, so choosing the right dam and sire is essential. The breeding selection will be your future show and sale Alpacas. Our choices have led to over 50+ Alpaca sales.
- Farm Name
Having a farm name people recall is essential and leads to farm visits and sales. A credible reputation for quality Alpacas and a name you can trust will help you make sales.
- Herdsires
When we started, we were told to buy only bred females. The reason being that males would be harder to sell and not all males will be herdsire quality. We pondered this advice before purchasing a Jr. Herdsire (Buckskin) and entered him in many shows with great success. Today our breeding program includes 7 herdsires producing champion quality progeny. It didn’t take long to discover that herdsires generate income from selling & bartering breedings, promoting our farm in herdsire showcases and selling co-ownerships. The 2014 AOA National Black Male Color Champion (ZU Black Crown) was from our breeding program. We repeated the breeding and had a duplicate black male cria (ZU Dark Force) that we feel is exceptional. This allows our clients to have a selection of champion, high caliber herdsires to pick from for future breedings. By owning quality multiple herdsires, it diversifies your breeding options.
- Selling that favorite Alpaca

We have, and will continue to run our farm like a business - *every Alpaca has a price!* You must be willing to sell your good, quality Alpacas to promote your farm and business.

- Today's Market

The purchase price of buying Alpacas is somewhat weaker today, but lower costs of Alpacas has led to additional interest and realistic affordable buying power. With improved breeding over the past ten-years you actually receive better quality Alpacas today for fewer dollars. Marketing is costly especially to place ads in magazines, various websites, etc. We have marketed by these venues and felt we received little return on our money. We primarily use Alpacanation, Open-Herd, our website, word of mouth and especially attending the shows. Shows promote your farm and the quality of your breeding program. You will not get rich quick raising Alpacas; you can make money if you work hard at building a quality herd and reputation. In our case, we wanted the Alpaca lifestyle and the cost of that is priceless. I was asked what my goal was when showing Alpacas by a well-known large farm. I replied that when you see Alpacaholic Acres on the class sheet and you were in our class, you knew you had competition. Their reply was "Well you have achieved your goal"!

- Farm Store and our Fleece

"What do you do with your fleece?" This was, and still is, a question asked at every farm visit.

Everyone has to decide what is best for them and their farm. We chose to have fleece, yarn and products on our farm made from our very own Alpacas. We also carry a wide variety of other items as well, but all of our yarn/roving/fleece are from our very own Alpacas. You can see an Alpaca out in our field, go into our farm store and purchase its fleece/yarn. We are members of AFCNA and The Alpaca Blanket Project to promote our Alpaca fleece. You receive "grades" on the quality (fineness, density, cleanliness, etc) of your submitted fleeces which in turn gives you a measurement of how your Alpacas compare in the industry. We have our fleeces micron tested at Yocom-McColl and the results are listed on our website. Our farm store has done very well and we have repeat clientele.

- Helpful Improvements

To make our lives easier, we have added (6) automatic heated waterers throughout the different pastures. This gives them year-round fresh water and save us from having to carry buckets and buckets! Well worth the \$\$ spent.

We also added a heated LAB. We can bring each Alpaca in to get weighed, trimmed, and other routine maintenance. It also provides the Veterinarian a sheltered, well-lit confined work area. In it, we keep our

Medical books, Alpaca info, Medicines, Needles, etc. We also have a small refrigerator in there to store vaccines. The Lab has turned out to be a major asset.

We purchased our own Ultrasound machine ... this saves us from having to overnight blood samples to a lab for progesterone results. Not to mention, it gives us the convenience of continually confirming their pregnancies.

We are a Small Farm Producing National Champion Results!