

Alpacafest ^{10 Years of Show}

It takes a real “old-timer” in the Ohio alpaca industry to remember the very beginnings of OABA’s Alpacafest. The first event of its kind to be held in Ohio was organized by the late Linda Cook of Auburn Alpacas and Donna Christley of Moonlight Meadow Farm. Held at Punderson State Park in Newbury, OH, Alpacafest 1998 was a one-day event designed to introduce the public to alpacas. Although an alpaca show wasn’t part of the venue, there were over thirty breeders that brought animals and set up stall displays under several tents. The park supplied the tents and also gave access to a chalet, which was used, for several seminars including the ever popular “Ask a Breeder” and “Ask a Vet”. There was a fashion show and the public was invited to “walk an alpaca”. The weather didn’t cooperate however, and a thunderstorm brought a soggy end to an otherwise successful day.



Determined not to let weather become an issue again, the OABA Board set out to find an indoor facility to house the following year’s event. Plans were made to

move to the Portage County Fairgrounds in Randolph, Ohio and expand to an ALSA (this was before the AOBA Show Division) sanctioned halter and fleece show. Dawn Fox of Chardon Alpaca Ranch agreed to be the show superintendent and Donna Christley lead the organizing efforts for the Board.



Alpacafest 1999 was a two-day event attended by sixty-three Ohio farms with 100 entries in the halter show and 120 in the fleece show. It was one of the first shows to enlist the support of a team to verify color and fleece length at check-in. It was a fun filled two days with a number of informational seminars, fashion show, live Andean musicians, and benefit raffle. The high level of volunteerism, cooperation, camaraderie and enthusiasm made the first Alpacafest show one to be proud of!

The Board decided to move to a larger facility located in the center of the state. Rolling Acres Farm in Delaware, Ohio was selected for AlpacaFest 2000. The large arena provided space for two show rings. The attached barns included horse stalls and panel stalls. The fleece show was held in the side barn. There were 172 halter show entries and 83 fleece entries. Ed Firt of Hubbard Valley Alpacas was the show coordinator taking on the challenge of almost doubling the show size. Ed proved that Ohio was ready to move forward with a top notched show.

Jim Soulsby of Hum-A-Lot Alpacas and Signs, designed the “Fall In Love With Alpacas” logo for the 2000 show. Over the years Jim has made a few modifications to the logo. In 2002 he added a suri to the logo.



More than 175 farms participated with over 600 alpacas on exhibit. The fleece show grew to 125 entries. A third ring and a third judge were added.

This was the first year AlpacaFest was advertised on radio and television.

The show coordinator was Nancy Medland of Paradise Suri Alpaca Farm and barn manager was Mary Reed of Chagrin Valley Alpacas. The show had grown so large that approximately 60 volunteers were needed.



The Education Committee had seminars provided by Dr. David Anderson, Karen Dewhirst, Tom Baab, Anthony Stachowski and Hank Kauffman. The Malabar Spinning Guild held spinning demonstrations. The Fiber Committee completed a beautiful OABA quilt project.

The 2001 AlpacaFest returned to Rolling Acres Farm along with torrential rains and winds. Due to the hard work of the show coordinators, Rich and Rosemarie Grondalski of Alpaca Panache Farm, and the many dedicated committee chairs, the show was bigger and better. There were over 425 animals on display with over 380 entries and over 139 fleece entries. The show committee added a complimentary Friday night meal. The meal was such a success it has returned every year. There was a Herdsire Row Silent Auction of donated breedings and a 50/50 drawing. The judges were Susan Tellez and Kristen Buhrmann.

Darlene Baab took on the show coordinator role for the 2003 and 2004 AlpacaFest shows. The show had

In 2002 the show moved to the Bricker Building at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus, Ohio. A 5-acre, climate controlled building. The exhibitors enjoyed being protected from the rain and wind. The alpacas enjoyed having stalls with sod and not dirt or mud.



over 950 alpacas making it necessary to add a 4th show ring. There were over 240 fleece entries. There were 4 halter judges, 3 fleece judges, 4 spin-off judges and 1 skein judge. The show was a big success.

AlpacaFest 2004 was the first year for using both the Bricker and Celeste buildings. The Celeste building held the overflow of exhibitors and vendors. During the 2004 show the OABA Board decided the lighting in the Celeste would be better for the show rings.

The OABA Board moved the show rings and grand sponsors from the Bricker to the Celeste in 2005. Nancy Medland came back as the Show Coordinator. All changes create challenges and moving the show rings to the Celeste was no different. During the laying of the sod, it was discovered that the layout planners made a huge mistake on the layout for the Celeste building. The building was actually 1,200 square feet smaller than the layout plans.



Shannon Green Landscape Company worked a few miracles on the drawing to keep all the grand sponsors in the building.

The show photographer and several of the vendors were moved to the Bricker building and the show rings were reduced.

2005 was another year as a Level V halter show with over 1,000 entries. The fleece show increased to a Level IV. A show this size would never be able to operate without the volunteers who give of their time and talent. There were almost 100 volunteers who worked to put on the show. The Education Committee had excellent seminars on neonatology, disease control in



the herd, genetics, alpaca behaviors and the always-popular "Ask The Vet".

AlpacaFest 2006 continued as a Level V halter show. Dawn Centorbi stepped up to be the show coordinator. The fleece show was a Level III. There was a new on-line registration process to help the exhibitors. Once again there were exceptional seminars covering fleece to teeth.

AlpacaFest would not be the elite show it is without the dedicated volunteers. The 80-100 people who love their alpacas and love the industry so much they are willing to give of their time to make their AlpacaFest be the best. To all the volunteers we say, THANK YOU. To all the exhibitors who come to the show, we say THANK YOU and see you again this year.

www.alpaca-farms-breeders.com

