
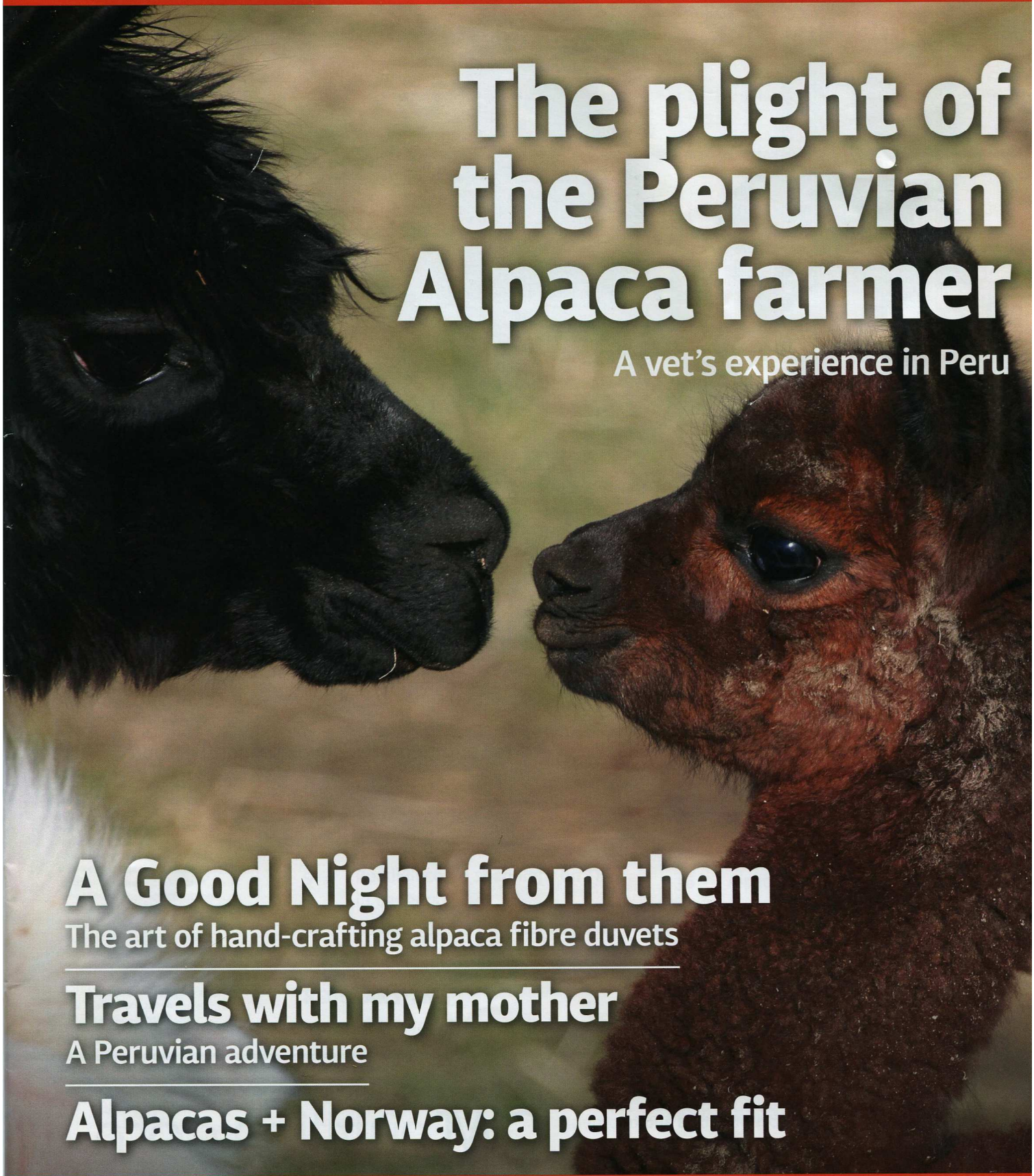


alpaca**world**



Autumn 2016 £7.50 where sold



The plight of the Peruvian Alpaca farmer

A vet's experience in Peru

A Good Night from them

The art of hand-crafting alpaca fibre duvets

Travels with my mother

A Peruvian adventure

Alpacas + Norway: a perfect fit

ALPACAS – NORWAY



A PERFECT FIT

Married couple **Nina and Rolf Barbakken** moved into the countryside of Norway in 2007 after a career as successful IT consultants and project managers in Oslo. Today they are importers and breeders of a herd of quality alpacas in a small place called Vaaler about 150km North East of Oslo, and their farm is called Knapper Alpakka,

with herd prefix NC for Norwegian Creatures. They both consider themselves alpaca enthusiasts, and are eager users of IT in their alpaca business to combine both interests. Their IT knowledge has also led to helping others and the Norwegian Alpaca Association with websites. They have run five imports to Norway to date, and also export alpacas.

Norwegian Winter can be rough,
but the alpacas handles it nicely

OUR HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Nine years ago we moved out to the countryside from Oslo to start a better life. A life with animals, more space, fresh air, our own garden and quiet surroundings. Neither of us were from the city and grew up in the countryside with horses, pigs, chickens, cows and more. Almost three years before that we were talking about such a move and wondered what kind of animals we should have and breed. Sheep, goats, special dog or cat breeds were all discussed, but didn't quite fit the bill. While pondering this we saw a trailer for the Discovery channel where a boy led two alpacas home. We had to find out what this animal was about.

After almost giving up on alpacas after our first hands-on experience, we continued to look further and imported our first alpacas from Sweden, and started "Knapper Alpakka". We loved the alpacas then and we love them now. We still have one in our herd from the original three and her last offspring is of excellent quality. Well done for a fairly low quality Chilean, and well done to our herd sire Corazon that fits her so well. Good pairings are important.

Alpacas are not new to Norway and the first accounts we have found have been circuses and imports back to the 90's. But alpacas haven't been very well known to the public and still are not. It wasn't long ago that someone wondered if they were emus. Llamas have a longer history in our country and quite a few use llamas in their trekking businesses. But the Norwegian market is changing, both for the alpacas and for people's interests in general. This benefits us as we are working on building a new industry in a country with long and strong handicraft traditions. We feel Norway deserves the alpaca, and that the alpaca is perfect for our small and hilly country.

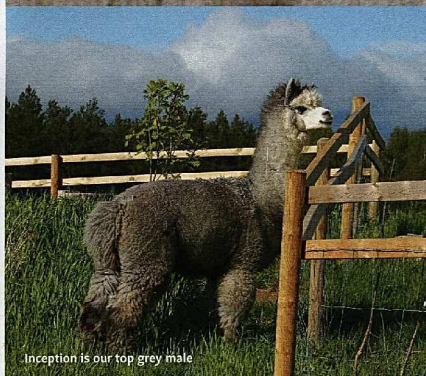
Just a few years back, there was slow progress in the build-up of alpaca breeders in our country. Some enthusiasts stuck with it, though, and continued pushing alpacas to the market. These pioneers are for the most part still in the business and together with a number of new enthusiasts are in it for the long run. At the start of 2009 there were some fifteen alpaca owners in Norway, but there are about 150 now. Nobody had many more than ten to fifteen alpacas in 2009, but now we have several with 40, 50 and more.

We don't have exact numbers, but we think there were between 100 and 150 alpacas in total in 2009, but important imports were under way, and we now have about 1500 alpacas although estimates vary largely because of a lack of a registry. Imports have come from Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Chile, the USA and Sweden. The Norwegian alpaca association have had two shows in Norway this year, one halter and one fleece, but we were unable to attend.

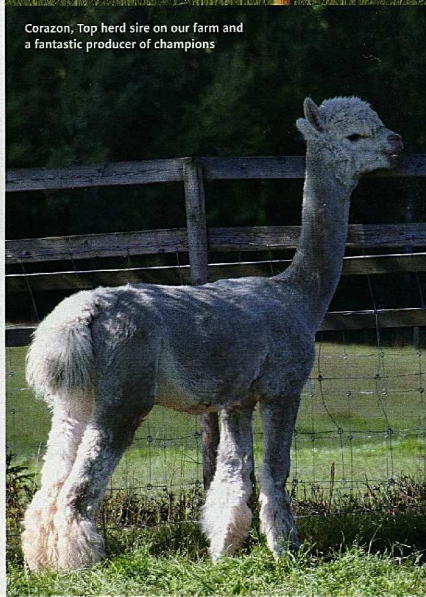
BRAVING THE COLD

Winter in Norway lasts between four and six months, temperatures ranging from +5C to -35C. Our alpacas have free access to the outside all year long, even when it blows hard and snows. While it's common to have other livestock indoors in winter,

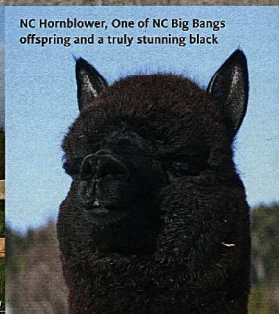
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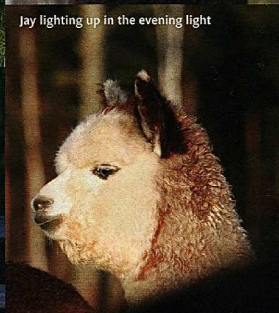
Inception is our top grey male



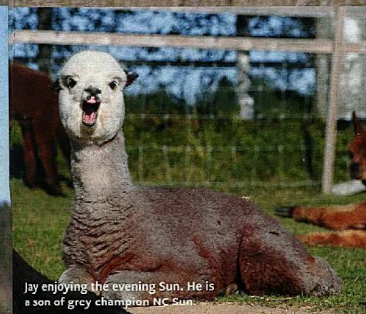
Corazon, Top herd sire on our farm and a fantastic producer of champions



NC Hornblower, One of NC Big Bangs offspring and a truly stunning black



Jay lighting up in the evening light



Jay enjoying the evening Sun. He is a son of grey champion NC Sun



Three amazing greys from three amazing grey US lines

NC Annie Get Your Gun jumping along happily

due to the nature of alpacas we allow ours to come and go as they please. The upside to winter is that all kinds of insects, including mites, spread slower and some disappear completely. Warm, heated floors actually increase the parasite burden.

We make sure the alpacas are prepared for winter, as well as preparing ourselves. We shear them as early as possible in the spring, so that they can grow back enough fleece to handle the cold without trouble. We also make sure that births happen early to let the crias grow as much as possible before the cold sets in. We keep a close eye on every individual in our herd and if we see anyone shivering we have coats for young and old readily available. We very rarely need to use them.

All our alpacas always have housing to go into when they feel like it, both the main barn and also smaller shelters. Food and drink is available in them all. The alpacas handle the cold just fine, but it's important to keep draught out of their housing. Lots of straw in all shelters, of course. The males have smaller houses, but the same bedding, and it can actually get quite cosy in there.

The worst weather for alpacas is wet, windy and cold at the same time. A few degrees below zero and not too much snow is more comfortable for them. Some snow is good, as it insulates and we use it actively as such. The alpacas don't like walking in snow if it reaches up to their bellies, we have had situations where the girls refused to go outside until we removed the snow. Therefore, we clear their immediate outside areas and make paths in the snow in the field. They love to be able to roam around a little, and we've seen them running along the pathways playing and having the greatest of times, which makes the work feel worth it, and they get some exercise instead of just standing next to the hay feeder.

Unfortunately, alpacas can get sick and they don't care which part of the year it is, and therefore, we have a heated room. If an animal gets sick they shouldn't have to cope with the cold on top of their illness. Luckily we have not needed to use our heated room yet. But it's there. Just in case. It makes us feel safer to have options in our management of the alpacas, even if our alpacas rarely need these extra facilities. Water freezes at 0C, as we all know, so frost-free water buckets are a must, as is good feed available at all times.

One last wintry point is suris. Do they have a problem with the cold? Ours have never had any problems with the cold. They run around in the snow just like the huacayas!

CREATING AN INDUSTRY

The focus in the year of the founding association meeting in 2009 was the number of alpacas, and it still is. We need more of them to create an industry. Progress has been slow. Since our first import, we at Knapper Alpakka have worked on getting government regulations to be fair, disease control to be good, animal welfare to be handled and training provided of available veterinarians. We have worked on getting the correct information to governmental bodies, and educating the people on what alpacas are, how they are cared for, handled and treated. And more,

because no sources of information in Norwegian on alpacas existed when we started up, and our own website is bulging with information available through registration. This is helpful for us as well, for looking up things.

You will always find people in the international society of alpaca people that can answer almost any question on alpacas, camellids and veterinary care, and we have asked. A lot. And we are extremely grateful for the patience we have been shown. Our website now has an alpaca registry, a FAQ with short question-and-answer articles, longer articles on various subjects such as genetics and feed, a thesaurus and more, and it is still growing. We have asked for and got permission to publish articles from international experts as well, both in English and translated to Norwegian, and we appreciate the support. People ask questions and need a place to look for answers. Our site has it. In Norwegian. We never planned it to be this big, but you learn and want to share. It's an enthusiasm we brought with us from the IT industry.

This is also why we started the Facebook group Alpaca QI (non-profit and non-marketing) with other enthusiasts. Come join us there! Subjects range from "what is that thing on my female's neck" to colour genetics, fleece statistics and ET.

We have worked on educating people on what alpacas are, how they are cared for, handled and treated

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

There have been quite a few imports in the last few years and they have all focused on bringing good alpacas into Norway as a foundation for organized breeding. So too has been the focus of the last imports of our own farm. At first we thought about just having a few alpacas as one species of animal of many on our small farm, but we changed our mind and started building a quality breeding farm.

We will never be a quality breeder if we don't focus on high-end animals as the core of our herd. This prompted important imports from Australia that arrived in 2009 and 2010, with alpacas of high quality and with good pedigrees. Later we imported more alpacas from Chile to strengthen our focus on colour in particular, and to personally experience how alpacas live in their native habitat, we called it "a pilgrimage". An import from the USA bolstered our grey alpaca efforts, but also our other colours, and the genetics were picked out to fit with our already existing herd. There will probably be more imports, but these imports had alpacas that will be the pioneering mothers and fathers and the core of quality alpacas. They have produced

some excellent offspring so far. We now have alpacas and their offspring with champion titles in Australia, Sweden, the USA and Norway and we have high hopes for them in the future.

This will not only serve our local markets, but also the European market. We are just beginning to export alpacas to Europe and with our successful breeding programme we believe we will see more of it. Exporting alpacas from Norway to the rest of Europe is no different than doing it between Germany and France, for instance, and Norway has an excellent reputation in animal health and welfare. We think our alpacas, with a careful mix of pedigrees, can be interesting for other alpaca owners that seek to breed alpacas with long term quality fleece production. Value over time, and not just for the next show, is what we seek after all.

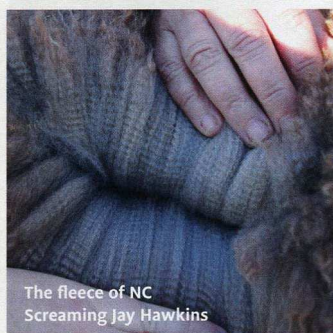
FOCUS ON QUALITY

Although an alpaca industry needs alpaca enthusiasts of all kinds, from top quality breeders to the groups of people who just want to enjoy a life with their alpacas and have a cottage venue, we need a focus on quality at the core of the national herd.

While most requests for alpacas are still from those wanting a couple of pets, we see more requests from people who want to start a breeding farm. This is exciting and bodes well for our industry. There will always be a larger demand for pets, but the pets might as well be high end. The boys have something to prove before being accepted into a breeding programme.

Our base group of males are Ambersun Corazon (white champion from Australia) and his son NC Big Bang (fawn), SPA Alpacas Adirondack (fawn champion from the US) and A Paca Fun's Inception (grey from a successful line of greys in the US). By looking at what we have and what we need, we have picked out these males for our long term goals. We want fairly large, proud and healthy alpacas with fleece that maintains their quality over many years. These males complement our females and give us genetics to build from. Every year we see an improvement in quality, and we get offspring with healthy bodies and confident strides. We love to see it work, and you can see it too on our very active Facebook page!

We are still a small alpaca country but hope to be able to jump ahead by selecting good alpacas



The fleece of NC Screaming Jay Hawkins



Fleece sample from NC Big Bang



Novas fleece

Our home has lots of fleece, ready for those rainy or snowy days when it's better to be inside doing fleece work than go outside

early and not spend twenty years on breeding like the pioneering countries and breeders have done elsewhere, but take advantage of the work already done and start right. We feel we have a good basis for our breeding in our present herd here at Knapper Alpakka, but also realize that we have lots to do still.

OUT THERE

To build an industry we need products and to create a market, and many breeders have already started work on both. Some produce their own products and others have formed co-operatives. Yet others import alpaca products. By getting the products "out there" and marketing alpaca we build a demand for alpaca fleece. Many have come to us and said they like the alpaca and look forward to seeing products made from the national herd. Product development is core to the success of our industry, and seeing how many alpaca products Norway imports from Peru, we think we have a great market to supply.

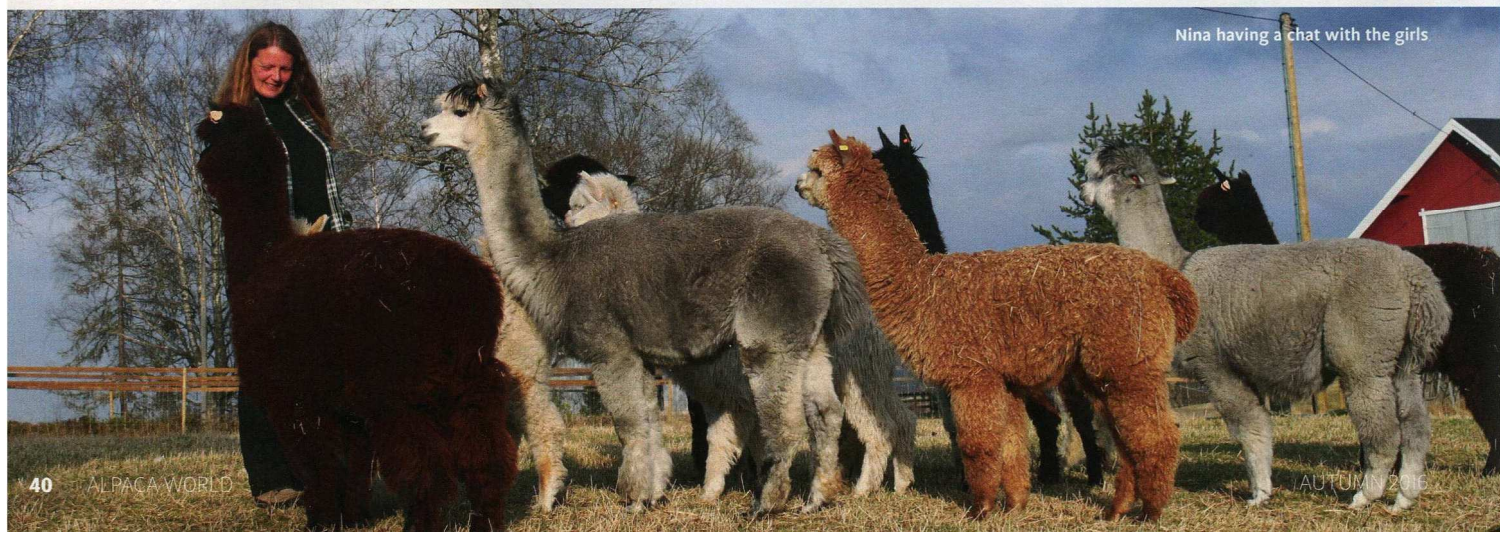
Our home has lots of fleece, both raw and treated, available at all times. Ready for inspiration, so to speak, and ready for those rainy or snowy days when it's better to be inside doing fleece work than go outside. We love all colours of alpacas, and have a variety in our herd that makes it possible to produce colourful products with no artificial colouring. We have staple products, such as insoles, and one-of-a-kind products such as wall hanging art. It's great to be able to vary where we put our efforts, and to be able to do

it all in our home. With a supply of imported products in areas we do not produce ourselves we can maintain a line of products with something for everyone. Hunters and people who work a lot outside love our insoles, which we make ourselves, and socks, imported, for instance.

The worst part of being an alpaca breeder is all the waiting. If you don't have hundreds of females to try your males out on it might take years before you know if your males and their pairings work as well as you want. Corazon have delivered on quality every time, for instance, but we didn't know if his son would. But now we know he delivers the quality of his dad but with addition of more colours from his mom, a grey. It's great to see this working out before your eyes. We look forward to many years of alpaca breeding still and we learn something new all the time. Alpaca genetics are still very new to the world.

We bought the small farm we live at in 2012 and we knew that it needed a lot of fixing. This still takes up a lot of our time, but the most important part, the alpacas' quarters, have been sorted, and the alpacas just love it. This has made it possible for us to get a little quality into our own housing facilities as well, which is nice. This winter we will all be in safe housings and we can rest assured that all creatures, alpacas, cats, dogs and humans, are nice and cosy as the winter blows by.

We believe we have a suitable team to work with, and look forward to seeing the results of this year's breeding next year, but we are in it for the long run. 🐾



Nina having a chat with the girls