

# Q-Alpaca Program 4<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report

March 2009

## Introduction

Four years have passed since the beginning of this voluntary quality assurance program. The successful implementation of the program in 2005 enables AlpacaMAP members to maintain their MAP status without the expense of ongoing faecal testing and in addition provides the industry with further information about herd health. Gross post-mortem examinations are required for any adult over 12 months of age that dies or is euthanased and cria under 12 months of age showing emaciation or diarrhoea and dies or is euthanased.

## Q-Alpaca membership

There are now 285 studs enrolled in Q-Alpaca representing 20,024 alpaca; an increase of 2,494 alpaca since the 3rd Q-Alpaca annual report.

54 studs have joined since the last Q-Alpaca annual report; (NSW 32, Vic 9, SA 13.) Six studs have dropped out of the program in the last year; four reporting that they had sold their alpacas and two non-advice on reason for voluntarily leaving the program.

Current Q-Alpaca membership statistics by state are as follows:

State	No. of studs	No. of alpaca
NSW	177	11,209
Vic	60	4,985
Qld	1	27
Tas	3	524
SA	44	3,279
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>20,024</b>

National registered herd numbers estimated from the AAA Ltd IAR database is 100,000. In excess of 50,000 of the national herd are located in NSW and Victoria. The number of unregistered animals and members of the Australian Alpaca Breeders Association (AABA) is not known.

Since June 2006 Q-Alpaca membership has been open to all alpaca breeders irrespective of association affiliation or non-affiliated. Currently all Q-Alpaca participants are AAA Ltd members.

There are currently 77 APAV Approved Veterinarians overseeing Q-Alpaca participating studs.

## Administration

The Annual Stock Return for 2009 is being further amended to accommodate the nuances of industry and to alleviate previous difficulties experienced by some members in completing the return.

In 2009 the following changes are being instituted to the Annual Stock Return:

1. From 2009 Annual Stock Return, participating studs will be required to have their Annual Stock Return checked and signed by their Veterinarian before submission to AAA Ltd Office. Signature by the Veterinarian will be considered as their consent to continue to oversee the participating stud for the following 12 months.
2. Upon renewal of the participating stud's membership to Q-Alpaca, a copy of the Q-Alpaca Certificate will be forwarded to the overseeing Veterinarian for their records.

In previous years, members who had joined in a particular year were not required to provide an Annual Stock Return at the end of that year. From 2009 Annual Stock Return, all participants of Q-Alpaca will be required to submit an Annual Stock Return regardless of their joining date.

### **Results-Post-Mortem Reports**

273 reports were returned from 116 properties.

Of these 65% were from NSW, 25% from Victoria and the remaining 10% from SA, ACT and Tas.

The causes of death were recorded under 20 headings. There is a wide spread of diagnoses, the majority provisional. In 28 reports, 10%, inconclusive or unknown was given as the cause of death. This included cases where autolysed bodies were presented for examination. In the majority of cases gross post-mortem examination enabled a presumptive diagnosis to be made.

The range of provisional diagnoses is given in the table below:

<b>Provisional Diagnosis</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Provisional Diagnosis</b>	<b>Number</b>
Trauma	35	Pneumonia	14
Unknown	28	Cardiac failure	9
Enteritis/enteropathy/obstruction/ Peritonitis	33	Snake Bite	7
Parasitism (haemonchus, fluke, Other)	22	Spinal lesion	7
Neoplasia	20	Encephalitis/meningitis PEM	6
Hepatic disorder (lipidosis, sporidesmin toxicity)	18	Dermatitis/mange	5
C1 or duodenal ulcer	16	Mandibular osteomyelitis	4
Peri parturient	16	Hyperthermia	2
Aged	15	Toxicity	2
Other	12	Temperament	2

No evidence of Johnes Disease was reported.

Trauma accounted for the largest number of deaths, including four properties that suffered multiple losses from dog attack, animals strangled in fences and fractures. Gastrointestinal diagnoses accounted for the next largest number of deaths and included impaction, enteritis, peritonitis and enterotoxaemia. Death from parasitism was mainly caused by Haemonchus. Liver Fluke and high strongyle counts were also recorded. Ivermectin and Cydectin (in combination with a white drench in some cases) were the drenches of choice on most properties. Regular faecal egg counting occurred on a minority of properties.

Lymphosarcoma was the most prevalent type of neoplasia recorded. The high rate of neoplasia compared with other farmed species is likely to be related to the extended age that alpaca are retained for. Several animals over 20 years of age were recorded. Hepatic lipidosis, hepatic necrosis and sporidesmin toxicity were recorded.

The age spread was from a few months to 20+ years. 35% of deaths recorded were aged 1-3 years.

The post-mortem reports give an excellent insight into the health status of the national herd and the common causes of death and disease, which limit production.

The benefits of membership in associations and biosecurity programs may seem less tangible if demand and price for product drops in the tough economic climate.

## **Market Trends**

The alpaca industry has survived the current drought conditions. The niche fibre market is well established and the meat market has been entered. The global financial situation may affect the size of the national herd, the way that herds are managed and the market for alpaca products.

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27<sup>th</sup> April, 2009