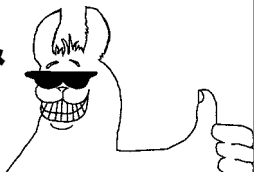
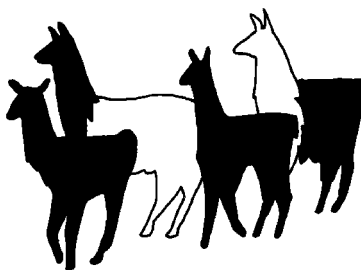


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Interview with **Larry Laux**

by Sue Wilde

The Laux Family has been at the fore front of the llama industry for many years. What was your background before llamas?

I would like to start by thanking LamaLink for the opportunity to tell our story. I was on a repair run for the farm, and on the way home I took a different road and saw llamas. I slowed down and watched a llama giving birth. I came home and told Barb all about it. That weekend Barb, Ryan and I went back to the farm and received our introduction to llamas.

In 1971 Barb & I started farming on our Homestead farm that has been in the family since 1865. We raised corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa hay and registered Holstein Dairy Cattle. We were both very active in Farm Bureau, serving on many County, State, and National Boards. We also served on our local & regional Dairy Coop boards. Our family showed cattle

all the years that we had dairy cattle.

On your website you have a link to map quest which is very useful, where is your farm located? How many llamas do you have in your program now? How many babies do you usually have in a season?

Our farm is located in south eastern Wisconsin, about 40 miles North of Milwaukee. We are located on County Hwy A, 2 miles west of Batavia, which is on State Hwy 28.

We currently have 135 llamas between Barb, Ryan, Lindsey and I. Ryan and Lindsey moved to western Minnesota, 35 minutes from Fargo North Dakota. His new place is close to done so this week we started hauling his llamas to their new home.

This year we had about 40 crias.

Your breeding program has been very successful. On your site you have promoted full Chilean lines, how have you diversified your bloodlines and fiber type?

We purchased our full Chilean foundation females in 1995. Since then we have been involved in several importations. We have strived to produce excellent animals with outcross pedigrees that could be crossed with almost anything in the country. We have emphasized conformation and fiber quality. In 2002 while Ryan was shearing he called us and said he found a male with the most amazing fiber he had ever seen. We felt we were at a point with our full Chileans that we could not improve our fiber any more with the current bloodlines available within the country. This suri male turned out to be Lock Ness. His offspring have put us on top in the show ring. In 2007 he won the Celebrity get of sire. In 2008 he had two offspring win their class and he was second in get of sire at Celebrity. In 2007 we purchased Jamanji, an outcrossed full Chilean suri herd sire. His first cria have been excellent.

Your farm is always involved in shows and sales with great success. What elements do you concentrate on for making these opportunities a part of





guests are at our farm for 2 to 3 hours enjoying our story telling hayride out to the pumpkin patch, kids taking a ride on our Pleasure Valley Choo Choo train, taking a walk thru our 7 acre educational corn maze, petting and feeding goats, sheep, rabbits, pigs, and llamas. Children can play in our giant sand box full of toys, straw bale maze, and a trike track along with a large moonwalk. New this year was pig races at our new pig stadium. People loved the races which are held every hour on the weekends. Also new this year was our apple sling shots. People aim for targets about 100 yards away. We built a new kitchen up stairs in our barn to serve hamburgers, brats, hot dogs, nachos and our new apple dessert to die for.

your success? How can sales and shows be more effective in promoting llamas to new comers? What are your strategies for selling the "less marketable llamas" like non-breeding males?

Our success goes back to having great foundation females and having great males to selectively mate with them. We presently have 8 males that we use. If we have a female with a physical trait that needs improvement in our eyes we will use one of our males with the strongest trait to improve that trait. When showing our animals we prepare and show them to their best. We never use any product in our animals. We feel that is one of the things that helps us in futurities because the judges are able to feel clean fiber. We have done well selling animals at sales because we only put our best on the sales and we take great pictures to advertise them. We use shows to prove our animals and give buyers a comparison between our llamas and others throughout the country. Having llama shows at public places where lots of people attend is important in getting new customers. County and State Fairs are great for selling lower end llamas. This year we had 5 4-H youth showing 5 non breeders and they were all sold by the end of summer. Showing our lower end llamas at smaller shows and winning with them makes it easier to sell to new llama people at a reasonable price.

Your farm is a hub of varied activities from Sept 20 to Oct 31 as a Pumpkin Farm, a very unique venture. What are the fun things to do for a day on a pumpkin farm?

Our whole family helps Barb and me with Pleasure Valley Pumpkins. Most

How are the llamas promoted to the public? Do you see sales as a result of all the people from the pumpkin farm being exposed to llamas?

People see llamas where ever they go on our farm. They love to just stop and watch them. Unfortunately we are all so busy with the pumpkin farm that we see very few sales because of it. I think most of our customers are from the city and they don't think about buying a llama, just coming every year to see them.

How are you marketing and promoting your llama farm? Your pumpkin farm? You went to a major conference on marketing last year, what are some of the main ideas you came away with to use in your business?

We market and promote our llamas at shows and on our website. The pumpkin farm is promoted on our website, newspaper ads, road signs, thru Travelwisconsin.com under corn mazes and pumpkins, and by word of mouth. At the marketing conference they discussed the importance using a catch phrase. At the bottom of all of our ads for the pumpkin farm is our slogan "We specialize in Creating Great Memories. With all of the promoting we do for our llamas & our pumpkin farm we strive to exceed our customer's expectations in both businesses. We try to offer as much or more than our competition

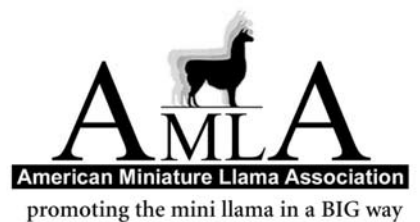
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...Continued from page 29

in both industries. One example is with the llamas is that we often offer to prepare and show our top animals for the new owners. By doing this we have had newly sold animals win their classes at Celebrity, LFA, and ALSA Nationals.

How are your 5 children and grand children involved in the family business?

With our pumpkin farm our daughter Jennifer and Barb are in charge of admissions and pumpkin sales, our son Brad and I are the two hay wagon tractor drivers, and Jenny's husband Dave is our MC for our Pig races. Brad's wife Sara is in charge of the kitchen. Our grandchildren help with the pig races and moving empty wagons back to where we unload pumpkins Dave when not doing pig races drives the Train along with my nephew, brother in law and other friends. My mother puts tattoos

on the children and my Dad is in charge of the corn maze. We have 4 generations working on the pumpkin farm, not many farms can say that. We have other family members that love to help every weekend along with some neighboring youth we hire. The 4-H children that use our llamas come and help keep the animal pens clean and help taking wagons back. Jessica and Kristina took care of the moonwalk and play area. Ryan who lives 10 hours away is in charge of showing all the llamas at LFA, Regionals, and Nationals due to the timing of these shows.

With showing llamas being so important to the industry, how can we keep the idea or reality of politics, out of the equation as much as possible? What would be some ideas you have on promoting the Nationals on a more "national" scale?

The best way is to elect board members that don't have personal agendas on the table when running for office. Board members need to do what's best so all members have a fun and fair chance at shows. Most important of all is we need board members that want to keep ALSA, not get rid of it. We need one national show association. Our industry is not large enough to support 2 national show organizations. As a member of the largest farm organization in the world, 4 million plus, members have to compromise to do what's best for all the members and

not what's best for just some regions.

Up until a couple of years ago I didn't know how nationals could have gotten any better than it was. All we need to do is support ALSA and put politics aside the way Ryan and I do. Just have FUN showing llamas and enjoy being with other great llama producers.

What would be your best three tips to new llama owners to get started on a successful path?

The best tips I can give to a new owner is having a plan. What do you want to do with your llamas? Do you want to take them hiking, just for pets, 4-H shows, make things from their fiber or showing and breeding them to win! If it's showing and breeding them you need to buy great breeding stock from reputable breeders who are willing to help your business grow. Learn how to show and groom llamas so they look their very best.





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