



TWIN PINES ALPACAS FARM REPORT

2019

Did you know?

Our logo tells the story of our farm beginnings. To the right, you will see our farm logo. Established in 2010, the logo depicts two large pine trees and two alpacas. The pine trees represent the two tall Norweigan Pine trees located in our north field and symbolically represent Joe & Barb as farm owners and operators. The two alpacas images represent two of the original alpacas who helped get us started. The black alpaca named JoJo is our first herd sire; and the brown alpaca represents Tinker – a natural leader of the female crew.

Did you know?

Alpacas are social animals and prefer to be in groups. They watch out for each other, and can protect themselves from predators. Alpacas also ‘hum’ when they are happy and content. Sometimes in the winter over the holidays, Joe and I sing christmas carols to them in the barn ~ once in a while, they hum along too!



this issue

The Adventure Begins **P.1**

Farming for a Fibre Harvest **P.2**

Fresh from the Farm Daily **P.3**

Alpaca Farming in Northumberland County



*Welcome to our first edition
Twin Pines Alpacas Farm Report!*

Thanks for taking the time to pick up a copy of our farm report to learn more about who we are, what we do and why we do it!

Twin Pines Alpacas Farm & Fibre Mill is owned and operated by Dr Joe Muise and Barb Bunker. Our farm is located in the beautiful rolling hills of Northumberland County on County Road 10 just south of Millbrook, Ontario. We purchased the property in 2010, after many years of riding our motorcycles in the area we often said “Boy, if that farm ever comes we for sale – we should buy it!” So we did!

As new owners we wanted to continue active farming of the land. Previous owners bred and raised Charolais Cattle. The property was perfectly set up for farming, but what did we want to do? Joe, a local Peterborough veterinarian, worked on a family dairy farm growing up. Barb, a healthcare administrator, grew up in a small town, growing fruit & vegetables – but had little farming experience.

As a couple, we are always up for new adventures. In deciding what to farm, Joe wanted something different from dairy farming; and, Barb wanted to have a great view from the front porch! Finally, a decision was made with the help of Joe’s mum, to farm Huacaya (pronounced Wuh-kai-ya) Alpaca. As they say - ~ the adventure begins!



From Womb to Tomb

Our farming philosophy is we care for our herd “from womb to tomb”. We raise breed and raise alpaca for their fibre however, when their fibre is not longer desired as they age ~ we do not stop caring for them. They continue live the rest of their natural life on our farm.

We call these members of our herd our ‘elders’ and they play an important role in overall herd socialization and health. You can often see older ‘nannies’ carrying for new babies while their mum takes a break; and, the old males are ‘protectors’ watching over the herd, and teach young males how to wrestle.

Did you know?

At Twin Pines Alpacas we sort, grade and classify our alpaca fibre prior to processing. All fibre is not created equal. Each alpaca’s fibre properties are assessed for colour, luster, crimp, staple length and micron size in the process. The benefit ~ quite simply ~ is a consistent high quality end product.



What do first time alpaca farmers need to know?

Alpacas are a member of the camelid family; however, the rumour they spit at people is not entirely true. You can get caught in the cross-fire; but, it is usually because they are trying to spit at one another – not you! 😊

Farming for a Fibre Harvest

Over the past 8 years, our herd has grown and expanded from 3 Huacaya Alpacas to over 60 today. We are hopeful to be able to welcome a few more baby alpaca (Cria) this season to join our ‘Crew’.

Huacaya Alpaca are one of two breeds which make up the *Vicugna pacos* (alpaca) species. The other breed of alpaca is called Suri.

Huacaya & Suri alpaca are bred and raised for fibre production, although some farms may choose to raise them for meat as well. At Twin Pines Alpacas – we only raise alpaca as fibre producers.

As with sheep ~ each alpaca breed offers different fibre characteristics. Huacaya Alpaca fibre grows perpendicular to their body and gives them their ‘fluffy’ appearance. Suri alpaca fibre grows parallel to the ground as long locks of fibre.

“Farming for me, has brought me full circle from the days of dairy farming in The County (Picton). It keeps you young and there is never something that doesn’t need to be fixed.” Joe

Four Seasons of Farming

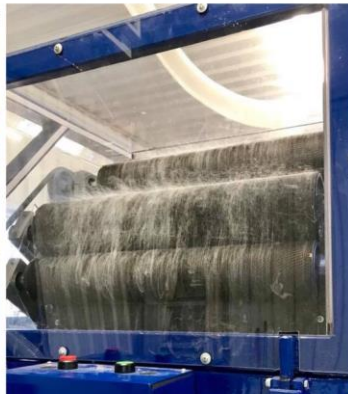
Farming is a 24/7 adventure. There is an annual rhythmic cadence to farming in order to prepare the pastures (early spring), harvest fibre and hay crops (late spring/summer), process fibre; and, maintain and repair machines/fences (late summer/fall) before for the long winter ahead.

Spring is a busy time after a long winter. As the snow begins to melt – it’s time to fertilize the pastures. We use alpaca manure as it is low in nitrogen, & a good source of phosphorus and potassium; with an added benefit in helping water retention and soil drainage.

Late spring we prepare for the annual fibre harvest. Specially trained alpaca shearers help us with our harvest. Shearing alpaca fibre is like getting your hair cut and does not hurt the animal. Family and friends volunteer to help us on this day ~ as the pace is fast. We will shear about 60 alpaca in just over 9 hours. Each alpaca fibre is labelled and packaged separately; and will be skirted, sorted and graded prior to processing. The evening is ours to celebrate with a farm feast and a well earned rest.

Summer we watch the weather reports daily. Why? Grass hay is the main food source for our alpaca. Our annual hay harvest provides the feed we need for the winter months ahead. Two cuts of hay are needed with the first cut in June and a second cut in August.

Fall is about repairs, maintenance and getting ready for winter. And so, the cycle begins again.



Made in Canada ~ Fresh from the Farm

“Becoming an alpaca farmer, has revived my creative roots and made me an ‘all things’ fibre enthusiast.” Barb

A Fibre Enthusiast is Born

Alpaca farming gave me not only the great view from the front porch ~ but also a new lease on life to return to my creative roots after spending the majority of my adult life in healthcare. The ability to understand different fibre characteristics and transform them into a final product, like yarn, felt or rovings, is very rewarding.



The early years in farming focused on expanding our herd,

and learning about breeding, herd health, fibre classification and fibre production. However with each years fibre harvest, the challenge was always trying to find a local mill which was able to accommodate our needs to produce fibre into high quality products.

In the fall of 2017, we travelled to Prince Edward Island on a much needed road trip and vacation. We were interested in what is called cottage industry textile milling equipment which could manufacture a variety of fibre products. We did our research in advance and scheduled a meeting with Doug & Linda, the owners of a Canadian company Belfast Mini Mills Ltd. A planned two hour meeting, easily extended to a full day where we experienced how fibre is transformed from raw material into finished goods. As they say, the rest is history ~ we installed a complete textile mill on the farm in the winter of 2018.

Focus on Natural Fibre

Our focus in textile milling is on natural fibres ~ whether that be alpaca, sheep, goat or plant fibres. We do not use synthetic materials in our products. We make locally grown fresh from the farm – many days of the week.

We manufacture on site a number of products (yarn, felt, rug yarn, rovings) made from our own farm alpaca fibre, as well as high quality merino, mohair, bamboo, silk and soy. We love the range of natural colours, softness and versatility of alpaca fibre. In addition to the range of natural fibre products, we also make hand dyed yarns and produce large quantities of pre-dyed fibre for spinning and felting purposes.

Whether you spin, weave, knit, crochet, craft or shop we have products for you. Our on site farm store, opening this spring, will also offer a unique selection

Come Experience the Difference

We truly enjoy what we do and learn every day. It keeps us young and life long learners.

During the summer season we host farm and mill tours. All dates/events will be published on the events page of our website. Consider attending an event to visit and learn more about what we say to the question – Why Alpaca?

Find Us on Social Media

Check us out – our website offers details on our farming adventures, farm and mill tour dates, farm store hours (once open) and upcoming events!

www.twinpinesalpacas.ca

Follow and Like Us on Facebook to see products in production and our Alpaca Farm Report feature.

Our facebook page is: Twin Pines Alpacas Farm & Fibre Mill

For more info email us at: info@twinpinesalpacas.ca

Twin Pines Alpacas Farm & Fibre Mill 10374 County Road 10, Millbrook, Ontario