



# AAI Newsletter

*Winter 2023*

Welcome to the AAI Winter 2023 newsletter!

We have a very special issue with an introduction to Fibreshed Ireland. Thank you to all of our contributors and to members who responded to the Autumn Survey (results in this issue).

## *Calling all KIDS!*

Do you know a young person with an alpaca story to share? Please email me, Jessica Leonard, at [learn@teacupfarm.ie](mailto:learn@teacupfarm.ie) for more information. I look forward to hearing from you!

## Contents

*Message from the Committee - Michael McLaughlin, President and Chair*

*Fibreshed Ireland - An introduction*

*Fibreshed Symposium Presentation - Sustainable Luxury by Trish Kerr*

*Manure Matters - Survey Update*

*Husbandry Tasks - Winter Checklist*

*Regional Group News - Sunny South East Alpaca Group and Alpacas of Connacht*

# Message from the Committee

Michael McLaughlin, President and Chair

At our AGM at the end of November I had the honour of taking on the role of President and Chair of the AAI. Thank you all for your support. I am very happy to accept the role and I look forward to serving the association in the months ahead.

I would like to once again thank Paul Mc Donnell for his years of service as President and Chair of the AAI and for his time and work in leading the association. Paul is a pleasure to work with and we will miss his contributions on the committee.

We had a very busy AGM this year, with a packed agenda. We welcomed some new members on to the committee and some members changed roles. View the 2023 Committee here: [AAI 2023 Committee](#)

In addition to the usual annual reports, we also presented our 3-year plan, the Pedigree Assessment programme, proposals to look at a new system to support the AAI shows and registry, and new show rules which will be presented for formal approval in the coming months. Please see the AGM minutes and documents circulated by Fiona in recent weeks for full details.

We have very exciting plans for the coming year. We are setting up some new working groups to cover Welfare and Rescue, Fibre and Crafts, and Shows. Thanks to all of the members who have volunteered so far to help us with the new groups. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to get involved with any of the working groups.

The Alpacas of Connacht Regional group are kindly organising two training days on Alpaca Husbandry on 4 March 2023 and Alpaca Fleece and Skirting on 5 March 2023. These will be run on behalf of the AAI and will be our first Regional event for 2023. Contact Niall at Alpacas of Connacht for further information: [alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com](mailto:alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com)

We are planning a Spring Webinar (date to be set) which may be a hybrid event (you can attend in person or on-line). We will discuss our 3-year plan, including our Pedigree programme, and provide some time for your feedback. In the meantime, we are busy planning for our National show—currently assessing venues and we will share the date with you as soon as we have it finalised. We will be in contact again soon with a further update.

# Fibreshed Ireland

Kit Christina Keawwantha and Malú Colorín

***"The soil that feeds us is also the soil that clothes us." –Rebecca Burgess, founder & director of Fibreshed***

As we know, people are becoming ever more aware about the kind of food they consume, where it comes from and how it is produced. In a similar way, our clothing choices are also becoming challenged, especially by the new generations: who made my clothes? How were they made? What are the ecological and social implications of my wardrobe? This brings forth a lot of transparency and value chain questions that global fashion brands have yet to answer. But it has also led to the emergence of smaller brands, focused on slow fashion and committed to transparency along the value circle.

It was these same questions that led educator and author Rebecca Burgess to embark on the Wardrobe Challenge in 2009: a year-long experiment in which she would only wear clothes that had been grown, produced, and dyed within 150 miles of her home in North California. Inspired by this experiment, Burgess and some of the collaborators who had helped produce her clothes during the challenge started the [Fibreshed](#) nonprofit in 2012. Their mission is to "develop equity-focused regional and land regenerating natural fibre and dye systems. Our work expands opportunities to implement climate beneficial agriculture, rebuild regional manufacturing, and connect end-users to the source of our fibre through direct educational offerings. We are transforming the economic and ecologic systems that clothe us to generate equitable and climate change ameliorating textile cultures." In short, Fibreshed is a movement that aims to build healthy soils through local fibre-production systems.

One of the most exciting things about Fibershed is that –even though it focuses on local and community-based textile productions– the model has started spreading all over the world like wildfire. There are now Fibreshed affiliates in 57 different bioregions including the United States, Puerto Rico, Brasil, the UK, Europe, Canada, India... **and, since 2022, Ireland!**



Photo: Dr. Aoife Long

Although less than a year old, [Fibreshed Ireland](#) has been received with very open arms by the local fibre community, who for a long time have struggled with a few of the common problems that most of the global [Fibreshed affiliates](#) also face. Some of these issues include a fragmentation in the local fibre value circle, resulting in lack of communication between farmers and growers, spinners, weavers, dyers, designers, and brands. A big concern in Ireland is that sheep and alpaca farmers are not making any profit from their fleeces and, in fact, shearing actually tends to cost them money. On the other hand, Irish designers and crafters are avid to include more local materials in their creations but struggle to find them.

At Fibreshed Ireland, we're working to establish a supportive network to facilitate a regenerative fibre system based on local fibre, local dyes, and local labour. We believe we can utilise our own resources to create jobs and better livelihoods for the production of textiles, while also retaining the cultural importance of our own fibres and making a positive impact on climate and biodiversity.

Our first project, which is ongoing, consisted of setting up [an interactive map](#) to help us understand what kind of textile networks are already in place in the island. We believe that one of the biggest hurdles keeping us from producing and wearing more local clothes is the big disconnect between those who grow, process, design and produce our textiles. This map is intended to be a resource for anyone looking to collaborate with fellow Irish growers, processors, producers, and designers. If you'd like to join the map, please [fill in this form](#).

Another of our projects to help generate awareness about the kind of clothes we wear is the weekly [#fridayfashionshift](#) campaign on Instagram. Every Friday, we encourage people to have a rummage through their wardrobe and choose to wear an item of clothing which fits at least one of these categories:



Photo: Dr. Aoife Long

- is made from natural fibres
- is made locally – or by you!
- has been passed down through the family
- has been repaired
- anything else that represents your individual ethos surrounding fashion and clothing

Anyone can join in the fun by sharing a photo with the hashtag [#fridayfashionshift](#) and telling us why you chose that outfit and how it represents your personal fashion ethos! Our clothes are not only an opportunity for us to express our style and individuality; they are also an opportunity for us to wear our ethos. Every time we choose what to wear, we're making a statement about what we want to experience in the world.

Last year we organised our [first symposium](#), as part of the DCCI's [Design Week](#), in the Fumbally Stables, Dublin. The event consisted of five very interesting panels on the topics of natural dyes, Irish-grown linen, Irish wool, Irish alpaca, and slow fashion in Ireland. The symposium was also a lovely opportunity for networking and meeting like-minded farmers, growers, processors, designers, and crafters who are looking to uplift Irish-grown and made textiles. The recording of the symposium is available to Fibreshed Ireland members and can be [watched here](#).



Photo: Dr. Aoife Long

Our latest project, which we are very excited about, is our knowledge transfer group of regenerative fibre growers. With this group of farmers interested in [regenerative agriculture practices](#), we aim to collectively come up with a framework to verify Irish-grown fibres that have a positive impact on climate, our community, and the local economy. This project is inspired by the [Climate Beneficial™](#) programme in the United States and is at the very core of why we started Fibreshed Ireland in the first place. We believe that with the appropriate land management techniques and an equitable approach to the processing and marketing of textiles, our fibres and dyes can actually help sequester carbon, increase biodiversity, and strengthen our local communities. Farmers and growers interested in joining this knowledge transfer group can express their interest via email to [fibreshed.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:fibreshed.ireland@gmail.com).

The potential to bring together fibre farmers and designers in this island is huge, and with the right farming practices, processing methods, facilities, and supports there is no doubt in our minds that the Irish textile ecosystem can once again bloom and flourish, helping improve soil health along the way. If you'd like to become an active member of Fibreshed Ireland and support our work, consider [joining one of our membership tiers](#) through a small annual subscription. Let's create a regional and truly regenerative fibre system in Ireland!

***"Your clothes are an agricultural act – by purchasing and wearing you are voting for the agriculture you do or don't want to see in the world, and depending on how your clothes break down, you're either feeding microbes, or you're leaving a world of plastic pollution". – Rebecca Burgess, Fibreshed founder & director***



Photo: Dr. Aoife Long



# Fibreshed Symposium Presentation

## Alpacas - Sustainable Luxury

Trish Kerr

Happy New Year, Alpaca People. We have been living in a country with millions of sheep whose fleeces have not been valued for far too long and a population who have happily bought into the fast fashion industry for decades.

The luxury of Alpacas might seem a little extravagant in today's climate conscious world. But we know a different story, as Alpaca owners and lovers we know just how vastly different "the fleece of the Gods" really is. It is truly sustainable with amazing longevity and beauty which is as yet almost untapped.

As a lifelong crafter who has a passion for Alpacas, I have made it my mission to spread the word and encourage other crafters, who are going to spend their precious time on their projects, to use the very best materials available – alpaca. Alpaca Fleece that is Irish,

low mileage, readily available and is truly the best quality fleece a crafter can use. All of these wonderful fleece qualities and all the while these beautiful creatures bring happiness, fun, inspiration, well-being, therapy, calmness, and lots of other life enhancing qualities to all those that encounter them.

Through my workshops I try to bring together Irish Alpaca owners and breeders with the crafters of Ireland. Spreading the word and increasing awareness of the quality of the fleece, products and garments made from the beautiful luxurious fleeces of these charming animals. These workshops aim to make the best use of this beautiful fibre. They also help to keep the ancient crafts alive and rejuvenated. To do this my work includes sourcing equipment like Spinning wheels and Looms for clients and bringing new life to some old heirlooms too.



As a member of the Alpaca Association of Ireland and a committee member of the Irish Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers, I work with a number of processing mills and I am always keen to see the development of new and innovative processes. Therefore, I am well placed to cater for and advise you on all your Alpaca Fibre crafting requirements and goals.

I live in Naul in North County Dublin and run regular fibre craft Workshops at home and around the country on Alpaca farms like Hushabye Alpaca Farm in Killeigh Co. Offaly. If I can help you get the most from your Alpaca fleeces, please make contact I would be happy to hear from you.

Irish Alpaca Yarns on Facebook and Instagram  
email [irishalpacayarns@gmail.com](mailto:irishalpacayarns@gmail.com) or call 0872131320

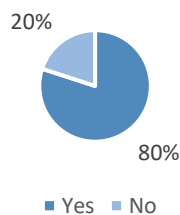
---

## Survey Results

### Manure Matters

*Thank you to everyone who participated in the manure survey!*

#### Faecal testing for parasites



When it comes to parasite testing, 80% of us test our herds' manure. There were excellent questions on parasite management that we'll explore in the next issue.

#### Composting

80% of respondents use their alpaca manure in the garden and

60% compost it. Respondents had questions about how to heat it to remove parasites and how best to use it as fertiliser in your garden.

- What alpaca manure composting methods have you found to be useful in an Irish climate?
- Do you have any resources you would like to share about composting manure?



*Please email Jessica with any tips to share at [learn@teacupfarm.ie](mailto:learn@teacupfarm.ie)*



# Winter Husbandry Tasks

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar
Feed hay ad lib, along with a daily portion of alpaca nuts. Keep water troughs filled and clean.			
Body score, look for evidence of mites and treat if necessary, check for jaw abscesses, trim topknots and toenails.			
For nursing dams and thin alpacas, supplement daily hard feed with Speedi-Beet (beet pulp <u>without</u> added molasses).			
Administer vitamins AD <sup>3</sup> E (oral paste or injection) every 6 weeks beginning Sept and ending March. Take care to get the dosage correct.			
Continue to check FAMACHA (eye membranes) for signs of anaemia, and get poo samples checked regularly for evidence of worms (Faecal Egg Counts).			
Wean cria who are over 6 months of age and over 25kg in weight, and dose with anti-coccidial wormer (Baycox or equivalent) 7 days after weaning.			
Microchip weanlings and register with AAI.			
Begin halter training weanlings.			
Weigh pregnant females and weanlings regularly to monitor weight gain, record details.			
It is advised to castrate pet males (over 18 months old) during the winter months to avoid possibility of fly strike.			
Plan paddock/field rotation for the coming year.			
Check and repair field shelters to ensure alpacas have good protection from the elements.			
Have some alpaca coats in stock, in both adult and weanling sizes, for poorly or shivering animals.			

# Regional Group News

## Sunny South East Alpaca Group

### Catriona and Alan at Hilltop Farm

#### How Time Flies

It's funny how time seems to fly when you're having fun; we've all heard the saying, but we never really put much thought into it until today. Today we realized that on this day three years ago – 26<sup>th</sup> January 2000, the Sunny South East Alpaca Group held its very first meeting. It is almost impossible to believe that it has been three years since the originally small group of people met at Moonhall Alpacas to talk about alpacas and how to best care for these wonderful animals.

Since that first meeting, the group has grown remarkably quickly but naturally. As the name suggests, this group caters for alpaca owners in the south east region of the country with a few outliers also members. This set of people learn together about caring for and treating

their alpacas and contact with each other is maintained through a wonderful WhatsApp group where members can ask the general group questions about anything, and no question is considered insignificant.



#### December AD3E

On the week between Christmas and the New Year we had the 2<sup>nd</sup> run of Vitamin ADE3 for the winter. It is very important to supplement AD3E over the winter months to all Alpacas, especially young Cria to prevent Rickets or other bone disease. Reminders are sent out through WhatsApp a few weeks advance of the run and this also reminds those who are getting it elsewhere to administer it.

#### Husbandry Course

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of December a Husbandry Course was run by Roger Clarke from the Alpaca Education Centre of Ireland, and it was hosted by Moonhall Alpacas. The course was very well attended,

new and experienced alpaca owners all learned something from it. These courses are invaluable when it comes to learning how to care of our alpacas.

### January 2023



The group also organised talks on topics such as nail trimming and dealing with mites. In fact, on the 21<sup>st</sup> January a get-together happened where these very topics were considered and was very well attended, with a prospective alpaca owner from the region attending. It was very informal with tea and coffee and lovely treats available first before a nail trimming demonstration began. A few owners even took part in beautifying some of the animals on show

It is amazing to see how much everyone in the Sunny South East Alpaca Group is learning from the time they join the cooperative and the interest in their animal's welfare becomes more important to them. As we know, every animal needs to be cared for, alpacas have certain requirements that you might not be sure of when setting out on your camelid adventure, but the SSEAG is a band of like-minded people looking to learn and pass on their knowledge to others in the group.

There have been all sorts of courses organised within the group – from uses of fleece, examination and grading of fleece, and general alpaca healthcare in the last twelve months and the interest in the courses has been astonishing. It just proves that people who are now acquiring alpacas are doing so with homework done on the needs of these fabulous animals.

With that in mind, reminders are sent to the members on a regular basis on what to look out for at certain times of the year. For instance, in the cooler wet months, alpaca owners are asked to be vigilant about worm counts and we have a farm in the group that can test poo samples and let the owner know quickly if there is/or isn't a worm or parasite count to be worried about.



Let's hope time continues to fly because that invariably indicates that fun is still being had.

### Upcoming Events

- February AD3E run. Date to be confirmed
- March Birthing Course – run by The Alpaca Education Centre
- April/ May Fiber Course - run by The Alpaca Education Centre



# Alpacas of Connacht

Ruth Newton

Alpacas of Connacht continues to grow and support members within the region. We now have 30 farms/homes within the group currently caring for a wonderful 176 alpacas. There is certainly a growing interest for alpacas in the west of Ireland and regional groups in association with the AAI have definitely proven to be helpful in enabling appropriate guidance, support and mentoring.

Since the last newsletter, some of our members enjoyed a wet felting course run by Sandra Marschall from Irish Fibre Crafters in Galway. We had the opportunity to meet Sandra at one of our Alpaca Chat and Cuppa Meet Ups earlier in the year. Wet felting was great fun and we managed to make some beautiful Christmas houses.



It's always great to find ways to use alpaca fibres rather than them sitting in bags in a shed! The group have highlighted that learning home crafts to utilise this ready to go material as one of the most important aspects for group members. With this in mind, some of our group members are currently arranging more craft workshops in different areas across Connacht. Very exciting! We will share details once we have more information.



However, The Alpacas of Connacht Group have already planned a few events for 2023:

We are hosting the popular **Beginners/Refresher Husbandry Course** on **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March** at Curraghduff Farm in Co. Galway. This practical training covers modules 1-5 of the BAS affiliated program. It considers valuable information for those starting out with alpacas but has proven to be a great refresher day for those with a little more experience. The day covers basic care needs, housing, feeding, vaccinations, and parasite control along with safe handling and harness training. Roger and Elaine Clarke from Amberly Alpacas will be facilitating the day. Limited spaces are available. Contact Niall to get further information and/or book a place at [alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com](mailto:alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com)

We are also hosting a **Fibre Course** on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March** at Curraghduff Farm in Co. Galway. This has been extremely popular this year. The half day covers aspects of preparation and handling fleece at and after shearing, preparation of fleece for a fibre show or to send to a mill and how to recognise desirable fleece traits. Roger and Elaine Clarke from Amberly Alpacas will be facilitating the course. Contact Niall to get further information and/or book a place at [alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com](mailto:alpacasofconnacht@gmail.com)

Alpacas of Connacht and the Sunny South East Alpaca Group are joining forces to host an All-Ireland Fleece Show on the 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> September 2023. We are thrilled to be able to confirm that Mary Jo Smith from the UK will be our judge for that weekend. This is a great opportunity to have your beloved alpaca fleeces assessed. If like some of our members, you have never entered a fleece show, don't worry, we will help you with the process. Maybe book onto the Fibre Course. I know I will be picking up lots of tips on the day. We will be posting more details of the Fleece Show over the coming months.

