

The history of VER at Farm World Did you know???

From humble beginnings with the VER Marketing plan developed in 1995, in February of 1998 it was put to the test with the formation of the Alpaca Promotion Group to have a exhibition at Farm World in 1998 with Brian Worcester as the mentor and Nick Veltjens as the co-coordinator.

For seven years prior to this alpacas had already been displayed at Farm World with Calpalba Park- Nancy and Geoff Halpin and Merungle - Jenny and Peter McDavitt being visible and proactive.

The first year included shearing demonstrations three times per day with the new Park roto-shears: a guest speaker from Stephens Pasture seeds promoting the new alpaca specific pasture seed: displays with computer and video presentations: spinning demonstrations and of course alpacas. Sixteen breeders from the VER and outside regions took this opportunity to show case alpacas. A 40 x 20 marquee was hired and was situated on the flat opposite the lake was home from 1998 – 2005, not a good locations when it rained as we found out one year to arrive and find the aisles flooded, Nick's suitcase floating down the aisle and when picked up, water poured out from all sides: the aisles became mud tracks until Farm World laid down sawdust and gravel.

To avoid further flooding VER moved to the side of the hill in 2006 only to be literally blown away so they only stayed there for 2 years.

Fashion Parades were run from 2002 until 2009 showcasing garments and accessories from Touch of Alpaca, AAFL, Glenda Turner, Alpakita, Santa Fe, Jenny Worcester and Truleen Downs to name a few. A full catwalk was centre stage and compares included Robert Gane, Angela Betharus, Adrian Corkoran and Jenny Worcester.

Models for these included Richard Bowden (the then President) Allan Fraser (the then President) Helen McLeod, Brian Worcester, Sandra Kop (2005) Gayle Herring (2005) Jenny Miles, Jenny Worcester, Nick Veltjens and numerous VER members.

Guest speakers have included Cameron Holt, Matthew Benge of Tasman Yarn, Robert Gane and Jenny Worcester to name a few covering topics from broad acre farming to fleece characteristics, the uses of alpaca fleece, herd maintenance and a vision of the future for the alpaca industry.

In 2007 VER was offered Lakeside Pavilion for the 2008 exhibit, a much better all weather option that was readily accepted. The shearing platform at the front of the shed provided a stage, change rooms behind and cat walk for the fashion parades to continue for several more years.

This venue enables VER to have a solid presence with people coming back year after year to ask questions and "talk alpaca" as they know exactly where we are from year to year. Now the display is a mixture of animals both huacaya and suri, spinning demonstrations, hand made knitted products and garments, imported products and garments, felted hats, Australian made products and garments and home wares with alpaca themes. In 2019 we even had wax hands in the form of alpaca heads much to the delight of the kids. We have a lucky ticket draw of donated alpaca products from the exhibitors which has seen prizes mailed both locally and around Australia. Over the four days, all exhibitors "talk alpaca" non stop, promoting the industry as a whole and offer advice and encouragement to anyone wishing to venture into farming these beautiful animals. If an individual breeder does not have what they want we all happily refer them on to other breeders both within the region or outside. We distribute hundreds of VER pamphlets and AAA magazines and offer children a place to sit and "colour in alpacas" while the parents talk to breeders.

The VER region welcomes and encourages all members to participate in the promotion of all things alpaca at Farm World.

Taken from the Winter edition of VER magazine.



Shearing demonstration March 1998 with Bob McLeod assisting.



Nick Veltjens at Farm World, commentating on the alpaca shearing - making sure his audience learned a lot about alpacas.



Winning Farm World 2018 Best General Interest Award.



Vale Bob McLeod who was an integral part of the VER Farm World exhibit from its inception in 1998 until he retired in 2016.