

# VICTORIAN EASTERN REGION

VER e-Newsletter

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## Welcome to the VER e-Newsletter

I hope members and friends enjoy reading the July issue as much as I have enjoyed putting it together.

I'd like to encourage others to share a story or experience from your paddock.

## 2019/2020 Alpaca of the Year Awards



**Suri VER Alpaca of the Year**

**Chakana Blue Chemistry**  
Solid Medium Brown,  
DOB 15/3/2019

Supreme Champion Suri Sale  
Show 2019

Champion Brown Suri Berwick  
Show 2020

Reserve Champion Junior Suri  
male  
Red Hill Show 2020

**Chakana Blue Chemistry**

On behalf of the Victorian Eastern Region Committee, we are pleased to announce the Victorian Eastern Region Suri Alpaca of the Year 2019/20 award:-

**Suri Alpaca of the Year and winner of the Keith Turner Memorial Trophy is Chakana Blue Chemistry – owned by Julie Blake of Chakana Blue Alpacas**

**This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row that Chakana Blue has been awarded VER Suri Alpaca of the Year.** I am sure you will all agree this is an impressive result and our congratulations go to Julie Blake on her successful Suri breeding program.

2013/14 – Chakana Blue Momentum

2014/15 – Chakana Blue Hot Tamale

2015/16 – Chakana Blue Zenos' Paradox

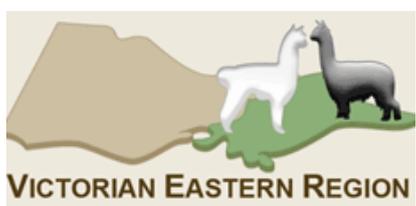
2016/17 – Chakana Blue Muchacho

2017/18 – Chakana Blue Muchacho

2018/19 – Chakana Blue Time Machine

**Congratulations Julie Blake from Chakana Blue.**

July, 2020



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## 2019/2020 Alpaca of the Year Awards



**Huacaya VER Alpaca of the Year**

**Goldleaf Lyrical Song**  
**Solid White**  
**DOB 14/12/2017**

Reserve Champion Inter. Female  
Berwick Show 2019

Champion Adult Female  
Alexandra Show 2019  
Lardner Show 2019  
National Show 2019  
Red Hill Show 2020

**Goldleaf Lyrical Song**

On behalf of the Victorian Eastern Region Committee, we are pleased to announce the Victorian Eastern Region Huacaya Alpaca of the Year 2019/20 award:-

**Huacaya Alpaca of the Year and winner of the Lyla Fisher Memorial Trophy is Goldleaf Lyrical Song**

**– owned jointly by Lynda and Nic Holdsworth of Auravale Alpacas and Brett Fallon of Goldleaf Alpacas**

**This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row Auravale has been awarded VER Huacaya Alpaca of the Year.**

2017/18 – Goldleaf Vintage Burlesque

2018/19 – Auravale Lucian (Joint winner with Grand Flowerdale Ivy League)

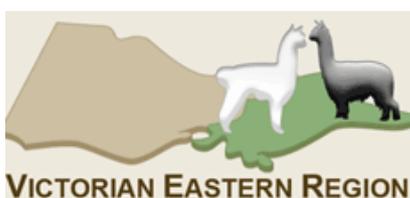
***Congratulations Lynda and Nic Holdsworth and Brett Fallon***

## **Best New Breeder Award**

# **Dianne Condon Memorial Trophy**

## **to be announced next month.**

**For rules and application form go to [VER Website](#)**



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## AAA News

Cathi Mc Mullen has taken over the reigns of the VER Regional Liaison board member. Cathi joined the board recently and the VER welcome her support and guidance. We also wish to acknowledge the support of our outgoing Regional Liaison Prue Walduck.

We encourage all members to read the new [AAA Member and Exhibitor Code of Conduct](#)

### Membership renewals are now due

The Board directors, regional committees, volunteers and the professional office team act on behalf of all members to advocate, inform and promote the Australian alpaca industry as a contributor to the broader agricultural sector.

## VER Local Sub Groups

There are three active local subgroups, established to provide support and involvement within our geographically diverse area

- DRAG**—Dandenong Ranges Alpaca Group
- MPAB**—Morning Peninsula Alpaca Breeders
- NAG**—Nillumbik Alpaca Group

Read on to learn more and go to [VER Website local sub groups](#) for contact details.

### DRAG — Dandenong Ranges Alpaca Group

**DRAG** has an unfortunate set of initials. However, we have risen above this problem, happily meeting once a month (pre Covid-19) to discuss things about alpacas and life in general over a drink and delicious cake.

It is great to be able to get help about alpaca issues amongst a group of people who have had many years' experience in dealing with alpacas. The environment is always helpful and non-judgemental.

Alpaca problems aren't the only thing discussed. Members are always looking at new ways of doing things and ideas for what can enhance their herd or business. Sharing of all sorts is an important aspect of what goes on in our meetings.

New members always welcome. Below is a picture of our 2019 Christmas get together.



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## VER Local Sub Groups cont'd

### NAG – Nillumbik Alpaca Group

We are a support group which meets for breakfast in a local café every third Wednesday throughout the year with a break over the Christmas holiday and an annual NAGS celebration with partners. However, we are much more than that. At first, we met in each other's houses for lunch, which had the advantage of seeing each other's animals but this became difficult for people to fit in and extra work in preparation when other aspects of lives demanded attention.

We also assist each other between meetings when help is needed, whether it is with shearing, or with moving animals, helping to take animals to the vet, or arranging workshops for practical fleece preparation, marketing of animals, business design, veterinary advice, and processing of the fibre.

The beauty as well as practicality of alpaca fleece and how those who are expert in the various crafts and design can make beautiful art from this fibre is a huge interest. Some members have their fibre processed and then sell the resulting product online or in their own very popular outlets. This can be combined with farm tours and alpaca feeding and walking, and even yoga with the calming presence of alpacas. Weddings on farm are also very popular.

Some enthusiastic members have even arranged for large truckloads of hay to be brought in to be shared and sold to alpaca and horse owners in the shire.

One member has published a series of books on alpaca genetics and husbandry with illustrations and examples from some of our own experiences.

Above all, we share a love of these wonderful, beautiful animals, which have given us opportunities to travel interstate and even to Peru to its flamboyant Alpaca Fiesta in Arequipa. Our local shows for fleece and animals, including the two breeds of alpaca, huacaya and suri, are also popular. Most of all, the pleasure they provide every day is why we have them.

As a final comment, alpacas are friendship, new and established.



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## VER Local Sub Groups cont'd

### MPAB — Mornington Peninsula Alpaca Breeders

Located within the geographic boundaries of the Mornington Peninsula Shire, the MPAB was established in 1998 and in the following year registered as an Incorporated Association.

Supported by a committed and active membership, the Group very quickly gained a presence in the community and tourist life of the Peninsula. Members were rostered to run promotions at local Craft Markets, Wine Weekends and other Community events. Within the first twelve months, the Group had held a highly successful Alpaca Expo at the Red Hill Showgrounds and won a prestigious Mornington Business Council award for “excellence in Enterprise and Innovation”.

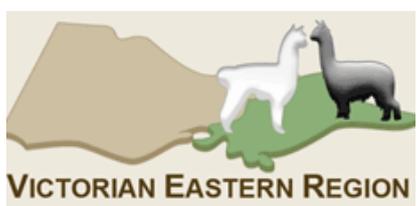
Many years on, although no longer registered as an Incorporated Association, MPAB is still going strong - has its own website and continues its involvement in the promotion of alpacas at a number of community events - working alongside other Peninsula businesses.

While many of our original members have retired or moved on to larger properties, we have been fortunate to grow and maintain a stable and enthusiastic membership over the years. We continue to welcome new alpaca owners, young and old - anyone with an interest in alpacas.

MPAB members comprise the “Hospitality Team” that assists the Alpaca Section at the Red Hill Show each year. We also conduct an annual fleece collection, inviting anyone with alpacas to bring their fleeces for sorting, baling and subsequent delivery to the pre-selected buyer which to date, has been Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd (AAFL). Our Annual Christmas get-together has always been a must. Invariably held at a local restaurant, we go somewhere different each year, and take turns to organise the event.







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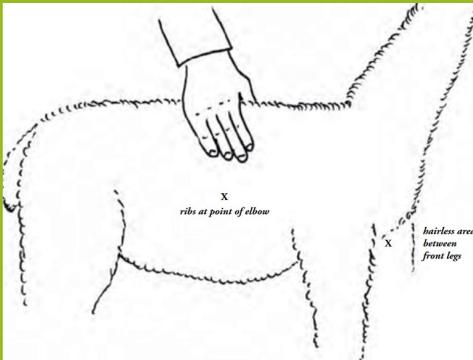
## Body Condition Score

As the time since your alpacas were last shorn moves on it becomes impossible to determine their overall condition by just looking at them. The Body Condition Score is an easy tool to determine an accurate picture of the alpacas condition, allowing you to optimise nutritional management. Body Condition Score is based on a scale of 1 to 5, with alpacas in very poor condition scoring 1 and obese alpacas scoring 5.

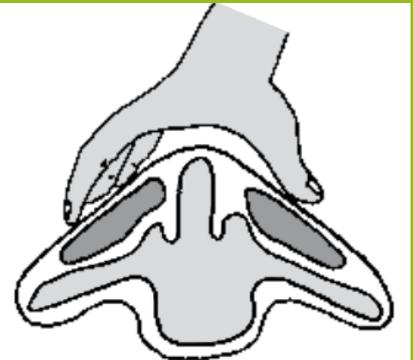
### How to make a BCS assessment

The most commonly used area is over the backbone near the last rib. Body scoring involves placing your fingers on the centre of the back, either side of the vertebrae and feeling for muscle coverage. By palpating the area with your fingers and thumb you can make an appraisal of the muscle mass. It should reveal a firm, slightly convex body shape. Bulging would indicate an overweight animal whereas concave tone indicates underweight condition. To confirm your estimate you can also palpate the area over the ribs at the point of the elbow (in an animal with BCS 2.5 you will just feel the ribs; an animal with impalpable ribs is very fat) and finally, observe and or palpate the hairless area between the front legs. Practising the technique whenever you handle alpacas will help make your assessments more consistent. Each assessment should not take any longer than about 5 seconds.

#### **Position for BCS assessment**

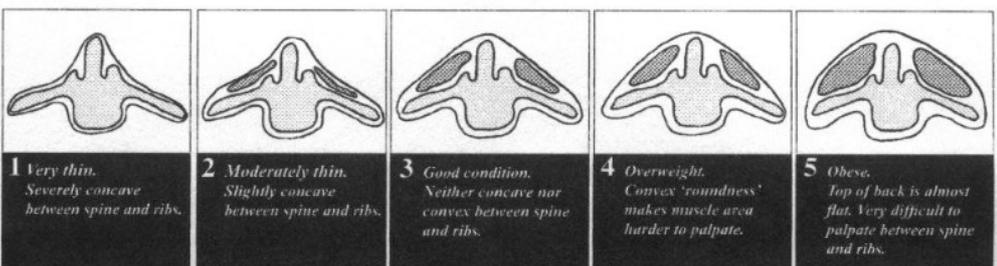


#### **Palpating muscle between spine and ribs**



Alpaca	Body Condition Score
Wether	2.5 - 3.5
Non-pregnant mature female	2.5 - 3.5
Mature male	2.5 - 3.5
Pregnant female	3 - 3.5
Working male	2.5 - 3.5
Growing (<15 months)	3 - 3.5

If a low BCS is only due to a shortage of feed (and is not due to other factors such as ill health) alpacas with unlimited access to good quality pasture can take 3-6 weeks to gain one score.



To find out more about Body Condition Scoring and alpaca nutrition go to the [VER Website Alpaca Resources](#)

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## National Weeds Management

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions has launched a beta (test) version of Weeds Australia, a new nationally focused weeds' website providing best practice information on weeds management within Australia.

Weeds Australia is designed to connect you with knowledge to make informed decisions about managing invasive weeds within Australia.

It is an interactive website with loads of really useful information. Including case studies, weed identification, management tools, monitoring and reporting.

The link for [Weeds Australia](#)

Just one of the many weeds you may be interested in!!

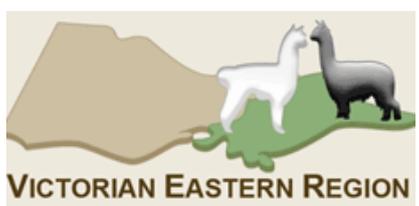
Blackberry the weed (*Rubus fruticosus aggregate*) was first introduced to Australia by European settlers in the mid-1800s as a fruit. It was recognised as a weed by mid-1880s. Blackberry is a serious issue across Australia. It is estimated that blackberry infests approximately 8.8 million hectares of land at an estimated cost of \$103 million in annual control and production losses.

Blackberry can severely decrease the productive capacity of land, alter water flow, lead to erosion problems and provide harbour for pest animals. In addition it can out-compete and displace native plant species and lead to a loss of biodiversity.

In [Victoria](#), the [Victorian Blackberry Taskforce \(VBT\)](#) was established to work with Victorian communities and government agencies to provide a collaborative effort to control blackberry.



July, 2020



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## Pacca Product Promotion Nickelby Designs

**Nickelby Designs**, my own label, rules my world, day and night interspersed with working with my alpaca herd of 60 plus. I have breed alpacas now for 16 years. I live a blessed life.

After running a farm gate shop & licenced café on my farm in Darnum for 12 years I decided to move my retail business to nearby Yarragon.

I had been involved in a shop in Yarragon with three other artists however they all left and we still had a lease so I decided to take the plunge and move the business to the busy tourism hub in October 2019. This has proven to be a very good decision. "Nickelbys – the Little Shop Around the Corner" is travelling well and the public's love for all things alpaca never dissipates however answering the question "what's the difference between an alpaca and a llama" with more customers is doing my head in and often I wish I was just wholesale!

I no longer stock commercial alpaca garments, I only stock my own label; Nickelby Designs and other clothing and lifestyle products from other designers, all based around sustainability.



Nickelby Designs has grown considerably over the last four years. I studied SAORI weaving in Japan and bought back with me a weaving loom. 12 months ago I was given a state government grant to purchase a larger SAORI loom. The smaller one comes with me to the shop so I have "open studio" every day and the larger one stays in my studio which was my shop.

Over the years I have participated in International Fashion Shows and got to know some great designers from around the world as well as shows closer to home such as the parade at the National Alpaca Show last year.

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## Pacca Product Promotion Nickelby Designs cont'd

I decided long ago with my work, whether it was felted, knitted, crocheted and now weaving, that I was going to do more than just scarves and hats even though I studied millinery at Melbourne School of Fashion. Coming from a fashion retail background I wanted to be a designer for womenswear where I was dressing every aspect of a woman's life. Therefore I love it when people fall in love with my jackets, pants, skirts and dresses I have woven and designed and sat at my sewing machine and make. I am totally paddock to rack. Of course I do sell many scarves and hats, they are my bread and butter.



I use my own yarn, yarn I purchase here in Australia and I also spin art yarns to use in my weaving. So I spin to weave rather than to knit. Spinning is another passion again not following the rules and testing all the boundaries. I only work in natural fibres. Of course 80% of any garment is alpaca but I add wool, calico, banana fibre, silks or any other natural fibres I come across. That is part of the fun.

As I tell all my customers, the nature of SAORI means that each piece is unique. I can make the style again but I can never repeat the weave as to me it is like a painter and their canvas. The weave and the colours come to me in my mind's eye and then I have make them come to life on my loom.

There is not a great deal of structure to my work as I often free draw my patterns and depending on how the weave reacts in the wash prior to sewing can often determine what the end garment will look like or indeed if it still says to me that it wants to be the pants. The pants might become a dress, it just all depends on what I lay out on my table and what it says to me.

The type of weaving that is SAORI is not for everyone. If you like structure, like rules, like "next steps" then I believe you would find it totally frustrating. It is an art and I don't believe it can be taught.

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## Pacca Product Promotion Nickelby Designs cont'd



Techniques you can use can be taught but what ends up coming off my loom comes from within me, it represents where I am at that day and some days I just can't weave as I am not "feeling" the story. I love working with colours and putting together a colour palette that is unique for each garment.

I am waiting to hear about another exciting opportunity for Winter 2021 which will help in the next step of opening another "Nickelby's" in another tourist town as this is where my work sells the best. When people have time to ponder and explore.

So if you are ever in Yarragon pop in and say hi, would love to see you.

Cheers

**Angela Betheras,  
Nickelby Designs  
Made in Gippsland  
Sold to the World**



For further information  
on these products and  
more,  
visit the

**[VER Regional Website](#)**





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## Thanks Lalirra Alpacas.

### Alpaca Find a Word



BOTTLE  
BREED  
CAMELID  
CRIA  
CRIMP  
CUD  
DAM  
FLEECE  
FLOAT  
GRASS

HALTER  
HAY  
HEMBRA  
HUACAYA  
IAR  
KNIT  
MACHO  
MICRON  
MILK  
PRONKING

RIBBONS  
SELENIUM  
SHEARING  
SIRE  
SOUTH AMERICA  
SURI  
TEETH  
THREE  
TOENAILS  
WETHER

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I would love to hear from you!*