



SHOWING

The Alpaca Perspective

by **Maree Churchill** - *El dos Cadena Alpacas*

Mum said I had to go along to an alpaca show on Saturday to be judged. Recently at my first ever show I was a bit naughty in the ring.

“Don’t worry” said Mum, “this show is only for one day and it is a special show celebrating each colour”.

“But I am not a coloured alpaca” I thought, but Mum told me I was,

“You’re a white colour and you only get judged with other alpacas in your colour at this show”.

So the evening before, I trotted happily into the float, and away we went. I was sleepy by the time we got to the covered pavilion pens at the Canterbury Park so settled in quickly with my buddies, into a nice soft bed of straw with yummy lucerne to eat for tea.

Next morning, was chilly and foggy outside, but I was warm in my bed. When Mum came early to feed us, we were all told to behave ourselves today as it is going to be a busy, hectic day. Then with our entries all checked and the fog lifting, it was time to start.

A group of Black and a couple of Grey Suri, trotted quickly past our pen,

“Where you off too so early?” I queried,

“Not sure” they sniffed, looking down at me, “We always have time to eat our breakfast first, I think the humans made a mistake”

“Oh no” I hummed back, “You blacks have to go first today”. I don’t think they believed me cause after all I am only a weanling.

Shortly Mum returned, and put our leads on. I remembered from the last show that she gets a bit cross if we roll in the bedding, so I was good and my fleece was clean.

“You have to wait your turn now as your colour is last today for the suri’s” she said to me. “Your friends are in the ring before you”. She lead us out down a little short patch to a nice patch of green grass, which I really really wanted to roll around in but was told I couldn’t. I will remember that patch for later on.

Mum gave my lead to a very nice lady who stroked my neck and told me how cute I was. I had stand for a while to watch my buddies get judged. I was very proud when my older brown friend was brought forward and, got a lovely blue ribbon, but the judges must have forgotten they had already given her one as they gave her another big silver one as well.

A telephone call one evening, asking if I would like to write an article about a recent Colourbration show, and soon I found myself at the computer typing down the same old refrain. Then I stopped myself and thought, perhaps the readers would like a completely different angle as most AANZ members as we know are a well educated and intelligent bunch and know all about shows. So here is a light hearted account from an alpaca’s point of view for a change.

My golden half sister also got a ribbon, but she was only given one. Mum told me she was pleased, as the competition in that colour was very good, and the judges do not have to give out the nice red and blue ones if they think the fleeces are not quite up to their standard.

The show is progressing smoothly and everyone is on time. I am getting very nervous now as it is almost my turn.

I say goodbye to the nice lady, as Mum quickly leads me away to a holding area, near the show ring. I think I shall be good today as lots of people are watching. Then a number is called.

“That’s you” said Mum as she led me to stand behind a much bigger white Suri. I thought that was strange as I have a name, perhaps she forgot it today. Then before I knew it, my number was called again, and I had to walk slowly around the white picket fence ring, I wanted to trot and play but this time I behaved myself, and just did one little skip for fun. There were two judges staring at me muttering to themselves.

Then they approached the bigger suri beside me, and weirdly decided to do a dental exam on the spot, and then pulled some fleece out. Ouch. I sneaked a peek. Her fleece is very lustrous and looks like she has got much more than me. Then it’s my turn.

“Oh she is a very little dot” the judge lady says to Mum.

“Yes she is just 6 months old”. The lady pulls my fleece out so expertly I do not feel it, and strangely puts it on her arm, perhaps she is cold and needs my fleece to help warm her up. These humans seem to like covering themselves up in alpaca.

The judge man opens up my fleece, and strokes my neck. I like this and talk back to him for more patting, but I do not think he understands me as he stops. Then he lifts up my tail, so embarrassing. “Yep a girl” he says. Well I could have told him that! Then I had to wait and wait, the man puts a red ribbon on someone else, but I get a blue and Mum is happy. I like blue, it matches my halter. Good, it is all over I think, time to eat and roll, but no, I had to go around and around and around while the judge lady says some words. I think she is talking about me, cause she mentions I need to grow a bit taller, and grow my fleece out more but says I that am very fine. Mum thinks this is good, and she gives me a little kiss on my nose.

We go out of the ring, and past some Black Huacaya, “Good luck” I call to them, “Oh we are always last we will not be judged until much later” they reply. Well I have news for them, but I keep this to myself, won’t they get a surprise soon.

Out of the show area, there are some big pens filled with alpacas of all colours and types. The sun is out and the air is fresh. Mum takes me to a big pen marked Girls, “That’s you” she tells me and puts me and my friends in the pen. It is nice to have fresh air and green grass to nibble, I like being outside and make new friends. One even looks like my other mother who weirdly I have not seen for a while, so I try to have a drink. She definitely is NOT my other mother.

I spend the few hours in the pen, which is nice cause I can roll and play, but later it gets crowded with Huacaya, and I start to get sleepy and want my soft bedding in the pen. Where is my Mum?

She returns at lunch break. We girls all return into the big pens inside the pavilion. Tied to the pen is my ribbon, which I

decide to nibble on but I only have one, so I chew on my big brother’s next door, he has two ribbons, so he can have the silver one, I’ll chew on the other. I don’t think my Mum was too pleased when she found this later.

Finally I can eat my alpaca nuts and go to sleep. Gee it is tiring at shows. “Get used to it” the others say, “this is only the start of the show season”.

For the rest of the afternoon, us Suri’s watch from the pens as line after line of Huacaya are marched past, with their handlers, getting ready for the ring. There seems to be an awful lot of them, especially in my colour. I like the brown ones, because they remind me of my friends. Some return shortly after, with no ribbons, but a selected few proudly walk past, heads high with bright coloured red, blue, yellow and green and the really good ones, have the big maroon or silver ribbons. “Congratulations” I call out to them, but they don’t talk back to me as I am only a baby. Then one lovely roan grey girl walks by. She stops and we chat for a while, rubbing our noses together. The big ribbon matches the roan grey’s fleece, and her Mum is holding a shiny cup. A bit too small for alpacas to drink from I think.

Just as I am starting to miss my other friends at home, its time to go. I really want to go home quickly so jump right up and over the ramp. Before I know it, we were off, over bumpy roads for the long drive back. South Island Colourbration was fun and I liked it, but I am ever so pleased to be in my paddock running around and stretching my legs, being what I do best, just being an alpaca.

Alpaca name withheld to protect its identity!



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