

On Spit Checks

By Marjory Brady

Personally I love spit checks. I think they're reasonably accurate, especially when used with proven animals. They also definitely have the potential to become a highly amusing event.

The most entertaining spit checks are the ones that aren't planned, also known as the "spontaneous spit check" or the "oh crap, who left that gate open spit check". These are unique opportunities to develop a story for alpaca breeder friends; people that haven't any alpaca experience really can't appreciate the humour.

We have enjoyed several of these little opportunities and let me tell you, they're a lot easier to manage when you only have one herdsire and a couple of enthusiastic young boys. It is amazing how quickly you can assess the situation, sort through your options and start making decisions when you have a bunch of open girls, some babies and some randy boys all milling around in your barnyard.

Our first unplanned spit check happened about six weeks after the arrival of our animals. Someone didn't practice good gate management at dinner time and the boys thought a barnyard conjugal visit sounded like a good idea. The kids were wailing because they knew enough about breeding to know that it was December and we don't breed for winter babies. Gertie shouldn't have been being bred but Gertie wasn't paying any attention to what the kids wanted, she had dropped like a stone at the first O in orgle. Studly

had climbed on and was making the most of his opportunity, paying no attention to the annoying human swinging off his chin. Crias were racing around, everyone was sniffing butts and the pregnant girls were screaming and spitting simply because it added to the entertainment value.

On another occasion, the girl screamed, ran and spit, but got herself wedged in a corner where the boy managed to force her down. The paddock we were using for spit checks is right by the road. It was eight in the morning on a weekday and drizzling rain. I climbed in past the wannabe Romeo, haltered him and dragged him off. All the while don't wannabe Juliet is screaming and spitting and he's orgling and trying to get back on and hold her down. And my neighbors are driving by going to their nice clean office jobs and I'm trying to give the neighborly country wave to them while I'm involved in this slimy, wet ménage a trois. Yes, a slightly different take on the lifestyle presentation.

On a third attempt we decided to try spit checking in the barn. Our barn is old and has a somewhat broken up layout but we felt the aisle way would provide sufficient getaway space – it did. The girl leaped right over the half door and wannabe Romeo followed her out into the barnyard where her herdmates were waiting. All the other girls were bred and unreceptive but not quite as athletic. They all ran from him, screaming and spitting and he couldn't decide which one to chase. He was so whipped by the time we got him back into the barn he couldn't have performed even if we had sedated one of the older girls and placed her on a mattress for him. The girls were fine, I don't think they even had to run that hard and from where I was standing it looked like they were running a relay.

Please note that the last two were spit checks that we initiated and subsequently lost control of. I highly recommend that, if you have a choice, you situate your spit checking and breeding activities out of sight of the neighbors. On the other hand, it may be an opportunity to diversify your alpaca business. You could probably charge admission!

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About the Author

Marjory Brady has been breeding entertaining huacaya alpacas since 2003 and lives with her family on a small farm north of Stirling, Ontario, Canada. She now conducts her spit checks in the barn with all doors closed.

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"Back off, boy."



"No means NO!"



The Grand Spit Off.

