

The embarrassing tale of a first time alpaca breeder or the incredibly graphic details of alpaca breeding that everyone is too embarrassed to tell you about.

By Ann Merriwether



This is the tale of the first ever breeding done here at Nyala Farm Alpacas and what we learned and then how we started our mobile breeding program. This is not a how-to-do a breeding. It's more a tale of humility and I must warn you is quite graphic. First off one does hear stories of male alpacas who jump fences, charge through locked gates (leap tall

building in a single bound look up in the sky it's a bird, it's a plane, it's a horny alpaca) and manage to impregnate each other. Certainly they somehow seem to do this in their semi-wild conditions they exist in, in South America. Here in the US, for many breeders, breedings are hands-on. We just had no idea how hands-on it can be.

It all began when we were shopping for our first herdsire. We contacted breeders who had bloodlines we liked. One of the first sent us pictures of this boy's bite, fiber, a side shot, front shot and (a surprise to us) a testicle shot. My husband Andy actually e-mailed this picture to all his friends and family thinking it quite amusing. After getting lots of pictures of boys and their important male parts we started going on road trips to look at some of these guys. We finally had our boy, a lovely medium fawn named Superstition! We picked him out as an almost 2 year old and his owner took the time to show us Super's testicles. He cupped them carefully in his hand and asked if we wanted to feel their development. "No no!" We said, "That's fine, they look ...er...great!" (we could see he had two big even sized ones and that was, at that point good enough for us). Later that breeder shock hands goodbye and briefly I flashed back on the fact that minutes earlier those same hands were cupping alpaca testicles. I sort of stared down at my own hand in dismay (What a newbie I was, hee hee).

Super did several breedings at another farm before he came to us. That fall one of our girls, Georgie, was ready to breed. I read everything (I strongly recommend Llama/Alpaca Neonatal Care by Smith Timm and Long) and there were certainly different approaches: field breeding, hand breeding, wrapping tails, not wrapping tails. Somehow some of the more graphic points were not quite disclosed. Georgie is a totally mellow girl, although she did resent my tail wrapping. As male alpacas sing to their partners, Super began his orgle song and she dropped like a box of rocks (female alpacas who are receptive kush or lay down to breed usually within 30 seconds of introducing the male, this means they likely have a ripe follicle). Super mounted and I made sure her tail was out of the way. Then the argument commenced between my husband Andy and myself.

Me, "The book says we need to check if he's in?"

Andy self assured, "That's your job."

Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"

Me indignantly, "Why is that my job?"

Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"

Andy grasping at straws, "I'm not confident enough in my masculinity."

Me, blood pressure rising, "Very Funny!"
 Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"
 Me using a certain tone, "Really why is this my job?"
 Andy playing his ace, "I do the shots."
 Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"
 Me resigned and snippy, "Fine!"

I very tentatively reach under Super and snake my hand past the testicles. Now you have to picture this, I'm actually holding a book which says check and see if the male has penetrated the female with his prehensile penis, I'm thinking to myself what does "prehensile penis" mean as I'm checking. The only prehensile thing I've ever heard about before is the tail of a monkey and I'm thinking that can't be the same idea. I'm also thinking what does dribble ejaculator mean?

Me with amazement shock and horror, "Aaaaahhhhhh! It's alive! Aaaaahhhh!"
 Andy somehow thinking I'd been injured, "What?! What!?"
 Me with amazement shock and horror, "Aaaaahhhhhh! It's alive! Aaaaahhhh! It's well moving all around and spraying stuff like a dropped fireman's hose!"
 Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"
 Andy in a that's so cool admiring guy voice, "Get out!? Really?!"
 Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle!"
 Me in I've had enough of this voice, "You feel under there, I have to go wash my hands! That thing would have given Mae West a start!"
 Super happily, "Orgle orgle orgle orgle orgle orgle orgle orgle !"

After a short time Georgie does this snake-her-neck-kind-of-thing I remember that this is good and important. (According to a video I've watched on the subject this means Super had penetrated the cervix.) Forty-five minutes of orgling later Super and Georgie are done! Despite the inexperience of all the involved parties, next fall Nyala's Peruvian Apparition is born. Appy has her father's medium fawn fiber and her mother's pretty fuzzy face. So what have we learned? Alpaca are induced ovulators meaning the action of having sex releases a ripe follicle. The movement of the penis, the orgle everything supposedly stimulates ovulation. They are dribble ejaculators, which means they do indeed spray semen the entire time.

We didn't have to conduct our own breedings for a while. Most of our girls came with breedings, or we bought breedings for them. Our friend Stan had this idea of doing mobile breedings, taking the boy to the girl. As we had gotten a beautiful cria from his guy that summer we bought another breeding to the amazing Accoyo Express. Stan brought him to the Empire Extravaganza Alpaca show in a trailer, and we brought our Princessa there along with her new son Fawn Connery in our Ford Windstar Mini-van of course. (I don't think Ford knows about this niche and the market they are missing out on alpaca transport). Cessa dropped for Express and breeding commenced right there in Stan's trailer in the parking lot. We commenced the first breeding, Fawn who was just about 2 weeks old immediately began to make a little tiny high pitch orgle of his own. He mounted Express and tried to breed him. We said, "Aaaawwwhhh that so cute, sort of perverse, but sooo darn cute." Andy actually took pictures. That next week Fawn vigorously mounted his mother on and off each day and again we said, "Awwhhh look at

him, not as big as a minute and already trying to breed!" (Alpaca people are a little strange when it comes to their alpacas). Cessa did catch (to Express not to her minute little son) and had a beautiful girl the next year that I called Empress Carlotta (Get it since she was conceived in a parking lot?). After all what can you expect from people who would name an alpaca Fawn Connery.

We decided to start a mobile breeding program for our boys. So if a farm wants us to bring a boy to their girl off we go...in (you guessed it) our Ford Windstar. I go to the gate, "Super!" I yell, "Want to go see a girl?" Super practically halts himself and he hops in the back of the Windstar. He lays down before we are out of the driveway although he does have tendency to pop up at every red light with an Are-we-there-yet-look on his face. On the radio ZZ-Top's "Just looking for some Tush" is playing and I find this deeply amusing. We arrive, Super hops out with a glint in his eye and off to business he goes. I've stopped wrapping tails and just hold the tail out of the way (unless a client would like the tail wrapped). I've had clients who wanted to see a male's testicles, and I've cupped them myself and then later shook hands (ooops).

Okay so before doing your own breedings read everything you can and decide what strategy will work for you. I've suggested some resources below. It would be a good idea to visit a farm that is doing a breeding to check it out. Our kids have seen more than a few breedings, and that it takes an alpaca 15 minutes to 45 minutes to breed caused my daughters to have a terrible misconception. They let one of our male and female angora bunnies play together for like 5 seconds and this resulted in a virtual explosion of baby bunnies all over our kitchen one day, but that's another story. Apparently bunnies really can do it in 5 seconds. So come visit our farm sometime and we'd be happy to let you watch a breeding or two. I'll even make sure to wash my hands before shaking yours!

Recommended Resources:

"Llama and Alpaca Neonatal" Care by Smith Timm and Long (No alpaca breeding farm should be without this book)

"Alpaca Field Manual" C. Norm Evans has some good practical consideration for breeding issues

"Llamas: A guide to Breeding Birthing and Newborn" care a birthing video presented by Taylor/Gavin Communications a video of llama birth (I'd lend this to you but my dog ate it.) It was pretty good with breeding sequences shown and all kinds of birth stuff.

"Llama babies up dry and nursing"