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SURI HERD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - S.H.I.P

The SURI NETWORK has been devoted to the “Preservation of the Suri Phenotype – Fiber and Alpaca” since its inception with the development and implementation of various programs as a service to its membership and for Suri owners worldwide. These programs are encompassed in the **Suri Herd Improvement Program, titled as S.H.I.P.**

Years of discussions across the U.S., trait reviews by owners, processors and producers, and knowledge from other livestock improvement programs have resulted in:

1. Acknowledging Suri alpaca fiber and phenotypic traits.
2. Identifying and providing accurate defining terminology.
3. The Suri Breed Standard (2007).
4. Model trial classifications using trait points and priority.
5. Development of a Classification System for fiber and phenotypic traits for use in the calculations of EPDs. (Expected Progeny Differences.)

S.H.I.P. incorporates a variety of tools for Suri owners to utilize the pedigree, phenotype and fiber records for preserving and advancing the Suri industry while adding value to individual Suris within herds. This document is a summary of some of the questions and answers most frequently asked for education and understanding of S.H.I.P. Soon the Suri Network will compile additional information and a more extensive document will be sent to you. So, Please take time to read this document and send your comments and questions to the Suri Network Office at: Office@SuriNetwork.org

I. PRIMARY GOAL of S.H.I.P.

- A. To provide a variety of tools for herd improvement and management of Suri Phenotype and Fiber qualities for Suri Network members.

II. WHAT ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS of S.H.I.P.

- A. Suri alpaca breed standard.
- B. Suri alpaca and fiber research results.
- A. Suri show ring guidelines.
- B. Suri herd classification system for data collection.
- C. Suri EPD program and calculated results.

III. WHAT IS SURI HERD CLASSIFICATION?

- A. The evaluation of 15 phenotypic traits based on the Suri Breed Standard and research data.
- B. A hands-on herd review by a certified Suri classifier using a point system for evaluating individual alpacas.
- C. The collection of trait data for the Suri database and EPD programs.
- D. Owners receive a herd report that identifies strengths and weaknesses of individual animals for specific traits that can be used in selection, breeding and marketing of their Suris.

Suri Alpaca
Rarest of Breeds – Ultimate Natural Fiber

IV. HOW DO I SCHEDULE A HERD CLASSIFICATION?

- A. The breeder should review the entire document, Procedure and Requirements for SHIP Herd Classification, found on the SN Web site.
- B. After reviewing the above-listed documents, call the Suri Network Office (970-586-5876) to discuss a preliminary review of the process and to determine if shared funding is currently available.

V. HOW DOES HERD CLASSIFICATION WORK?

1. ALL Suris approximately 12 months or older will be classified.
2. Animals must have at least 3 inches of fleece OR be shorn with their fleeces in bags.
3. The breeder must provide covered facilities and available handlers.
4. Certified classifiers will average 7-10 minutes per alpaca with maximum 50 animals per day.
5. Alpacas are scored per trait with 5 (High) 4 - 3 (Average) 2 – 1 (Low).
6. ALL data scores are then reported and filed with the SN Office Suri Database for the EPD program.
7. The breeder will receive a classification report.

VI. WHY ARE ALL SURIS INCLUDED IN THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS?

- A. Data Collection is more accurate and useful if it includes the entire population. Using only selected animals minimizes the accuracy of EPD calculations. This is standard in the livestock industry.
- B. Trait data analysis results will become more valid as we include more data and pedigree links on all animals.
- C. Including all animals in data and all related pedigrees will reflect industry trends.

VII. HOW OFTEN SHOULD MY HERD BE CLASSIFIED?

- A. The suggestion at this time is a minimum of every 3 years for Classification and Fiber Test Data.
- B. Livestock and dairy industries collect data monthly for some and biannually for others.

VIII. WHY DOES SURI NETWORK WANT BREEDERS TO DO FIBER TESTS?

- A. Laboratory Fiber Test Data is an objective measurement with exact values.
- B. Classification provides subjective values for 15 traits as viewed by classifiers. Classifiers will continue to work together for consistency in evaluating those traits.
- C. The compilation of both data sets, fiber tests and classification data, plus the ability of owners to add additional herd data in the future, will provide a more complete picture of the North American Suri population.

IX. HOW OFTEN ARE EPDs RUN ON THE ACCUMULATED DATA?

- A. Data collection will be on-going and maintained in the SN Suri Database.
- B. Collected Classification Data will be transferred to the EPD Program Manager for analysis and results, termed an “EPD RUN”. The frequency of these runs will depend on the amount of new data collected and costs. Ideally runs would be done 1-2 times per year.
- C. Fiber test data from all approved labs will be accepted as received.
- D. EPD calculations will be run initially on the most important traits to fiber production and the preservation of the Suri phenotype.
- E. Classification evaluates 8 fiber and 7 conformation traits for the database and present and future EPD runs.

X. WHAT ARE HERD CLASSIFICATION COSTS FOR SURI NETWORK MEMBERS?

- A. In order to offer Suri Network members the opportunity to test drive the Classification Program and evaluate its value in their breeding program, the Suri Network has budgeted limited funds to share a portion of the farm’s classification fee.
- B. The classification fee is \$250 per day for an estimated 50 alpacas and farms are encouraged to work together to provide this number of alpacas.
- C. The Suri Network will cover a maximum of 50%, (\$125) of the daily fee, but not to exceed \$5.00 per alpaca.
Example 1: 50 alpacas at \$250 less \$125 paid by SN results in a cost to breeders of \$125 or \$2.50 per alpaca.
Example 2: 15 alpacas at \$250 less 15 X \$5.00 = \$75 paid by SN, breeder owes \$175.
- D. The breeder(s) involved will pay all travel, lodging and meal costs for the classifier.

XI. WHAT ARE CLASSIFICATION COSTS FOR NON MEMBERS?

- A. Non Members will be charged an application fee and will not receive any shared costs for the daily classification fee.

XI. WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS of the S.H.I.P.?

- A. Data collection is inclusive of ALL breeder's Suris, not a group of selected alpacas as this would decrease the accuracy of the results.
- B. Herd/Individual ratings in combination with the EPD results will provide breeders with tools to make rapid advancement in positive traits.
- C. Identification of Suris with proven production of certain traits can improve the quality of the breeder's herd.
- D. Breeders may identify and market individual animals ranked high for production of certain traits.
- E. EPD and Classification Data provide recognition in the livestock and camelid industries

XII. HOW IS HERD CLASSIFICATION DIFFERENT FROM RATINGS IN THE SHOW RING?

- A. Classification is an evaluation against the IDEAL based on the Suri Breed Standard.
- B. Show ring judging is comparative only among those in that class on that specific day.
- C. Show ring exhibition provides a subjective opinion and farm name exposure for a few individual alpacas, but is not inclusive of the entire herd.
- D. Classification allows the breeder to categorize alpacas by their most valued use for future production of offspring and fiber.
- E. Classification reports and EPD results provide owners with actual breeding tools for herd improvement.

XIV. WHY SHOULD THE EPD RESULTS BE OPEN FOR VIEWING BY ALL SURI NETWORK MEMBERS?

- A. Open data is the norm in all livestock industries.
- B. The U.S. alpaca breed improvements will be made through use of accurate data available to all owners or potential new owners.
- C. Increases marketing ability for all breeders regardless of their available marketing budget.
- D. Knowledge and education are valued tools for owners to identify Estimated Breeding Values for any alpaca.
- E. Preserving and improving breed quality is based on wide utilization of EPD tools.

Trial classifications have taken place to beta test the classification program. As more experience and data is gathered, we will continue to evaluate and adjust the program details to best meet the needs of Suri breeder's. Please send your questions and comments on the SHIP Classification Program to Ken at the Suri Network office at: Office@SuriNetwork.org or call the office at 970-586-5876.