

The Suri Breed Standard

The ideal Suri alpaca is the epitome of true alpaca type with a distinctive elegant profile, perfect head, and outstanding conformation. Suri Network members strongly believe that it is important to preserve the purity of the Suri genotype by breeding Suri males to Suri females. The Suri fleece exhibits highly aligned, draping locks of high luster, fine, slick and cool handling fiber. As Suri alpacas approach the ideal state, they express more positive fleece characteristics than less improved types. The concept of the ideal alpaca is not a static model. It is the process of the pursuit of excellence that will fuel genetic improvement for decades. Highly heritable traits are selected for genotypic gain in the individual offspring's expression of positive breed characteristics, which exist along a continuum.

Photo representations of the ideal Suri alpaca:



	IDEAL TRAITS	ACCEPTABLE BUT LESS DESIRABLE TRAITS	UNACCEPTABLE/ UNDESIRABLE TRAITS
A. CONFORMATION			
1. Phenotype	Elegant profile showing balanced proportions of neck, body and legs with a true to type head, level topline and strong substance of bone fit for efficient function.	Often phenotypically true to type, yet express subtle differences in frame and overall appearance.	Lacks overall balance, proportion and substance bone.
2. Balance and Topline	Proper proportions demonstrated in a squared-off appearance of one-third legs, one-third body, one-third neck and head. Length is the same as height, with a level topline from withers to the hip, rounding at the croup.	Slightly off in balance with the squared profile being elongated in any direction.	Obvious lack of balance and proportion and/or topline deviated in a humpback or swayback condition.
3. Head	Dense top knot falling forward in well-defined locks over a strong, wedge-shaped muzzle. Ears erect, spear-shaped and of appropriate length. Eyes clear and bright, free from congenital anomalies. Nasal passages symmetrical. Incisors meet the forward edge of the upper dental pad and the mandible and maxilla are vertically aligned.	Wedge shaped muzzle and head shape but lacking well defined fiber coverage. May exhibit slight deviations in jaw alignment. Incisors may extend beyond or slightly behind the forward edge of the upper dental pad. Mandible is slightly wider than maxilla.	Topknot often fluffy and open over a long muzzle. Ears out of proportion with the head, banana-shaped or fused. Jaw alignment incorrect with lower teeth extending well beyond or behind the upper dental pad. Asymmetry of nasal passages and crooked tooth alignment.

	IDEAL TRAITS	ACCEPTABLE BUT LESS DESIRABLE TRAITS	UNACCEPTABLE/ UNDESIRABLE TRAITS
A. CONFORMATION (cont.)			
4. Movement and Tracking	Movement demonstrates a fluid gait and balanced stride, with both toes pointed forward and tracking evenly in a straight line on upright pasterns.	Deviations exist in foot placement and leg angulation when viewed from both the front and the side indicating improper joint structure. Gait not smooth.	Extreme deviations in angulation of the shoulder or hocks or collapsed pasterns. Resultant movements are short, choppy, winging out, toeing in or rope walking.
5. Front Legs	Show excellent substance of bone, with correct angulation when viewed from the front and side with toes pointed forward, also demonstrating adequate chest width.	May be slightly fine boned, have a moderate deviation in angulation from either front or side view, leg rotated slightly in or out as evidenced in foot position.	Very light boned, front or side view deviation in angulation is extreme, position of feet very close or too far apart, extreme outward or inward leg rotation.
6. Hind Legs	Hindquarters are broad, with strong, well-muscled thighs. Legs show excellent substance of bone with correct angulation of the hock joint when viewed from the side and rear.	May be slightly fine boned or narrow in hindquarters. Hock angulation may be slightly deviated when viewed from the rear (cow hocked) or the side (sickle hocked).	Hindquarters are light boned and very narrow. Hocks touch during standing and movement. Extreme deviation appears from the side when the hock joint is either extremely angled (sickle-hocked) or too straight (post legged).
7. Body Capacity	Shows breadth and depth of body, chest and abdomen. Excellent size for age with broad, well-sprung ribs.	May demonstrate a slightly smaller frame for age or be slower to develop.	Very narrow through the chest and lacks spring of rib, resulting in a flat, slab-sided look. Small in overall size and stature for age.

	IDEAL TRAITS	ACCEPTABLE BUT LESS DESIRABLE TRAITS	UNACCEPTABLE/ UNDESIRABLE TRAITS
A. CONFORMATION (cont.)			
8. Tail	Tail set centers off the rounded croup and is palpated just off the pelvis as a natural extension of the spine. Tail is straight and easy to flex with a length sufficient to cover the genitalia.	Tail set may be slightly high and length may be less than ideal.	Tail set high on the croup, kinked or bent and unable to be straightened, too short to cover genitalia.
9. Genitalia	External genitalia are anatomically correct in size, shape and position. Four teats are uniformly positioned. Males have two evenly sized, firm testicles that are descended into the scrotal sacs.	Four teats exist in close proximity to each other. Small vulva opening. Testicles small, but descended into scrotal sac.	Vulva that is too small, incorrectly positioned or angled, closed at birth requiring surgical intervention. Males with only one testicle, very small testicles, or very soft testicles. Other than four teats.

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B. FLEECE			
1. Phenotype	Clearly demonstrates the ultimate function of being a fiber producing species. The fleece exhibits highly aligned, draping locks of high luster, fine, slick and cool handling fiber.	Exhibits some degree of lock organization of average density and luster throughout.	Exhibits little evidence of Suri lock organization and density resulting in a very open, lofty appearance. Fiber groups that express crimp.
2. Luster	An essential characteristic of Suri fleece is the natural expression of glistening, high-gloss luster throughout.	Average levels of luster are present throughout the fleece expressed as a velvety, satin sheen.	Poor level of luster evident. The overall fleece is very dull, flat and chalky.
3. Fineness*	This most valued trait is exemplified as low micron fiber, relative to age, expressed across the blanket of the alpaca and extending to the extremities, making fleece ideal for processing into garments which may be worn next to the skin. The rate of change in micron over time is minimal.	Higher micron fibers relative to age exist and vary in their expression within the lock and across the blanket.	Coarse, high micron fibers exhibited throughout the blanket and produced at a young age and throughout the lifetime of the alpaca. These high micron fibers are not able to be processed for high end garments worn next to the skin.
4. Uniformity of Micron	This additional critical component for processing is evident within organized locks and across the blanket. Little difference can be seen between the size of primary and secondary follicle fibers.	Variation in the size of primary and secondary follicle fibers is distinctive and easily recognized.	Extreme micron variation exists within the lock and throughout the entire fleece.

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B. FLEECE (cont.)			
5. Density	Fleece exhibits highly aligned fine fibers growing in highly organized locks, demonstrating firmness and solidity throughout.	Fleece is comprised of locks that are less solid and firm, more open, demonstrating less highly aligned fibers.	Fleece is open, lacks clear lock definition, and exhibits loft rather than firmness.
6. Lock Structure	Individual locks are highly aligned from skin to tip, comprised of clearly defined smaller locks, and fall in layers throughout the entire fleece. The lock groups exhibit firmness and solidity.	Clear lock expression is evident in at least half of the lock length but is less firm and more open at the skin.	Very open, unorganized fibers exist, characterized by volume rather than solidity of lock. Expression of crimp might also be evidenced.
7. Handle	Soft, silky, cool, slick feel throughout the fleece that also exhibits a high degree of uniformity of micron.	Less smooth and soft, the fleece will have a slightly cool feel and demonstrate some variation in micron.	The fleece is not soft, feels warm, harsh and dry, and has excessive variation and/or high micron fibers throughout.
8. Color Uniformity	The fleece is solid colored and void of any variant colored fibers, thus making it well suited for commercial processing.	Some color variation present, especially in fawn and grey color groups that make it better suited for cottage processing.	Variant color exists throughout an otherwise solid colored fleece. Cottage processing required.

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C. MATERNAL TRAITS			
1. General	Dam exhibits longevity in her ability to produce healthy offspring throughout an extended lifetime.	Dam has difficulty in achieving pregnancy, has delayed milk production, or remains open for an extended time after delivery.	Dam is repeatedly unable to deliver full term cria, is unable to achieve pregnancy, or is unable to produce milk.
2. Birthing Ease	Female possesses the appropriate pelvic conformation and has the ability to give birth with ease and without assistance.	Occasional minor dystocia requiring minimal assistance without damage to the dam or cria.	Repeated major veterinary intervention.
3. Mothering Skills and Maintenance Efficiency	Dam bonds well with her cria, and has the udder capacity to consistently produce quantities of good quality milk in order to rear and wean a healthy cria, while maintaining her own health.	Female does not bond with cria and needs human intervention to develop bond. Dam produces minimal milk and cria is slow growing or needs supplementation.	Dam rejects cria, offspring development indicates failure to thrive and requires medical intervention and supplementation.
4. Fertility	Healthy, well grown female achieves pregnancy with a minimum of breedings.	Female requires multiple breedings, or suffers early embryonic loss.	Female requires hormonal intervention regularly to achieve or maintain pregnancy.

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D. TEMPERAMENT			
1. General	Alpacas demonstrate a calm, docile nature as a herd species. Expression of dominance is expected as they form herd groups, but overt aggression is not acceptable.	Female is overly protective of her cria and asserts dominance in the form of spitting and kicking when approached. An alpaca that is overly interactive with humans.	An alpaca that aggressively challenges and attacks humans.
2. Breeding Vigor	Males have good libido and breed females with high impregnation success on minimal matings.	Male that is timid and reluctant to breed. Male with low sperm viability that requires multiple matings to achieve pregnancy.	Male or female lacks interest in breeding.
3. Handling	Alpacas should be easy to handle and train.	An alpaca that is more difficult to handle, resists restraint, or consistently spits, kicks or runs away.	An alpaca that is dangerous to handle, and aggressively challenges and attacks humans.

*** FINENESS**

Points	1st birthday – 2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	10+ years
5	<18 microns	<20 microns	<23 microns	<25 microns
4	18-20	20-22	23-25	25-27
3	21-23	23-25	26-28	28-30
2	24-26	26-29	29-31	31-33
1	27+	30+	32+	34+

Suri Network SHIP (Suri Herd Improvement Program), Classifier Fiber Evaluation Form

References:

Suri Network Breed Standard, The Suri Network (2006)

Suri Herd Improvement Program (S.H.I.P.), The Suri Network (2014) www.suriship.org

The Art and Science of Alpaca Judging, AOBA (2011)

Show System Handbook, AOA (2016).

This document and supplemental documents can be found on the Suri Network website:

<http://surinetwork.org/Breed-Standard>