

# Alpaca Terminology



Since alpacas are relatively new to North America, it is helpful to review some common terminology used surrounding this camelid breed.

**ALTIPLANO** - The high plateau in southern Peru and northwestern Bolivia located around Lake Titicaca.

**BLANKET** - The highest quality fleece which begins at the shoulder, runs the full length of the back and down each side until it meets the more medulated fiber on the belly. Excludes neck, leg, chest, belly, and britch. The term originated from the image of a horse's saddle blanket.

**BLOODLINE** - Breeder's term that alludes to pedigree.

**BUNDLED STAPLES** - A grouping of microstaples that together form a larger staple. The formation of the microstaples is determined by the arrangement and density of the follicles in the skin. Bundling is said to be an indicator of a dense fleece, due to the evenness of follicle size and consistency of shape in the skin. (Cameron Holt, Private Correspondence.)

**OPEN FEMALE** - A female that could be bred, but is not yet bred

**CARDING** - The final cleaning process, accomplished by either hand or machine, through which alpaca fiber goes before spinning.

**CHARACTERISTIC** - A specific phenotypic trait, such as crimp or fineness.

**CORRECTIVE MATING** - The mating of alpacas that is intended to correct faults. For example; mating a dam with a bad bite to a stud with a good bite.

**CRIA** - A camelid less than one year old.

**CRIMP** - The regular undulation along the length of an individual fiber or lock of fiber. A higher number of crimps per inch can indicate a finer fiber.

**CULLING** - The process that determines which animals in a herd will not be bred.

**DAM** - An alpacas mother.

**DNA** - Deoxyribonucleic acid, the molecule that forms the genetic code.

DYSTOCIA - Difficulty in giving birth or being born.

FIBER - The fleece of an alpaca.

HUACAYA - (wa-kai-a) A type of alpaca with fine fiber and a woolly appearance.

FERTILITY - The ability of a female to conceive or of a male to impregnate.

FIBER-QUALITY MALE - A male alpaca whose genetic characteristics are not worthy of breeding.

FINENESS - A measure, in microns, of the diameter of individual fibers. Most often expressed as an average for a representative sample of fiber.

GUANACO - A wild member of the New World camelidae family, *Lama guanaimicoe*.

GUARD HAIR - : Also kemp. Coarse medulated fiber. A second coat of fiber found in llamas, vicuna, guanacos, and, to a lesser degree, alpacas.

HEMBRA - Female alpaca or animal.

HERITABILITY - A measure of the strength of the relationship between performance (phenotypic values) and breeding values for a trait in a population. Heritability in the broad sense.

HISTOGRAM - (1) The most common graphical presentation of quantitative data. The variable of interest, such as fiber diameter measured in microns, is placed on the horizontal axis and the frequency values, such as the percentage of fibers per micron, are placed on the vertical axis. (2) A micron test report that includes administrative information provided by the identification sent in with the individual sample. The histogram on such a report depicts the measurement of 2000 fibers in scale.

HUACAYA - A breed of alpaca characterized by a well-crimped fleece that grows perpendicular to the skin.

HUARIZO - A crossbred animal. A term most often used to describe a llama-alpaca cross. Characterized by weak, medulated fiber and poor breed type.

JUEVINILE - An alpaca between the age of 6 months and one year.

LAMA - Scientific name for the genus containing llamas, alpacas, guanacos, and vicunas; vicunas are sometimes separated into their own genus.

LINE BREEDING - The mating of individuals within a particular line. A mating system designed to maintain a substantial degree of relationship to a highly regarded ancestor or group of ancestors without causing high levels of inbreeding.

PACO VICUNA - A crossbred or hybrid vicuna and alpaca.

PHENOTYPE - An observed category or measured level of performance for a trait in an individual.

STANDARD DEVIATION - A mathematical measure of variation that can be thought of as an average deviation from the mean. The square root of the variance.

STAPLE LENGTH - The length of a lock or length of shorn alpaca fleece.

STAPLE - An organized independent group or cluster of individual fibers. A large number of staples constitute a fleece.

SURI - A breed of alpaca characterized by lustrous locks of fleece that lay close to the body, twisting vertically toward the ground.

PUNA - The high barren tundra zone of the Andes mountains.

QUECHUA - A group of Indian peoples of Central Peru. Original founders of the Incan civilization. Today, the Quechuan people are the primary shepherds of alpaca in the Altiplano.

PINTO - A two-colored animal characterized by large patches of color.

MICRON - the fiber diameter of the hair follicle. Used industry wide to measure the Service sire - The male that is used to breed to the female alpaca

SIRE/HERD SIRE - An alpacas father, or a male alpaca with the genetic characteristics desirable for breeding.

SURI - (sur-ry) A type of alpaca with tightly-wound fiber that looks like dreadlocks.

TUI FLEECE - The first fleece shorn from an alpaca, always the finest fleece

WEANLING - A weaned alpaca, younger than 1 year.

YEARLING - An alpaca between 1 and 2 years old.