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Suri Growers,

It's been quite a while since we sent a newsletter out, but it's not because The North American Suri Company is fading - quite the opposite - it has been a crazy, busy year for Suri fiber! Some of the highlights are as follows:

- Many of you know that we held our first, formal grading event. Nine days, seven graders, and 6,400 lbs of Suri. It was a tremendous success.
- We made great strides on the yarn front. In addition to the yarn box that went to 450 knitters in January of 2017, we followed with an even larger order for another yarn box program in late 2017/early 2018. The result of that program - over 3,000 skeins shipped to 1,000+ knitters.
- From that shipment, one of the recipients who also designs, created a pattern of her own and featured the pattern and our yarn in her blog!
- In 2018, our yarns will be featured in two knitting books - three designs - and we enticed two well known hand knitting designers to develop patterns that will be promoted in Fall of 2018. While we have plenty of patterns for our yarns, getting a design by a "trending" designer is big promotion and difficult to do, so, we're excited!!

- The rugs are really taking off (seen in these photos at a trade show in Germany earlier this year). Given the growing demand from rug buyers and the manufacturer's need to have Suri on hand to turn orders more quickly, we shipped about 5,500 lbs for the year, and then we teamed up with Australia, and they are shipping another 4,000-6,000 lbs to meet the total need.
- The rug manufacturer has been pleased enough with the appetite for the rugs that they are now experimenting with finer grades to make woven scarves and shawls.
- We have shipped close to 2,000 lbs to an industrial felter, and hope to see that program grow. As such, we will now be open to accepting neck fiber from all farms which also send us blanket fiber.
- Lastly, we have been working with a blanket manufacturer in the U.S. and first impressions from them are that it is beautiful and different looking than other blankets they've made! Look for that this summer!

With all of this happening, we need growers to step up to the plate by continuing to breed, and continuing to improve your breeding programs. The demand is out there, and we know you are up to the task!

[Like us on Facebook!](#)

"The demand for Suri is growing, and we need breeders to hone their breeding programs."

If you're a knitter and want inspiration, like our Salt River Mills Facebook page!

[Like Salt River Mills](#)



2017 Grading Event



We held our first grading event at our warehouse in St Louis, MO in October. 56 farms sent in fiber, and with the exception of a few hitches, everything went extremely well. The event was held over nine days with three groups of three graders at all times. A huge thank you to Cheryl Gehly, Mary Lou Clingan, Deb Christner, Alvina Maynard, Stacy Heydt, Beth Sheets, Deb Wellinghoff, Michelle Vahlkamp, and Pam Seboldt-Reilly and her husband for being the guinea pigs in this great experiment! We were able to work through about 5,200 lbs as a team, which left only a handful of farms to finish up after the event. For 2018, it will most certainly be the goal to finish up ALL farms during the event.

We incentivized farms to noodle their fleeces with a higher pay out. About half of the farms took the challenge and sent in rolled fleeces. Now, we need to teach everyone how to noodle properly! (See box on page 3). To put the significance of noodling into perspective, the first team of three got through almost all of the noodled fleeces in three days - nearly

half of what was submitted. The next two sets of graders, working largely with jumbled bags, got through only another 3,000 lbs.

Why does that matter to you? The faster the graders go, the faster you get your check! And over time, the less cost for our company, the more money back to you. Lastly, noodling, when done right, preserves the quality of each grade in the blanket, and makes each bale the best quality it can be - allowing all of us to represent the best of our fiber industry.

We also want to commend the many farms which did a great job cleaning their animals before the animals went to the shearing mat. The amount of waste reduced from an average of 25% historically, to 18% in 2017. While that might not seem like a lot, the median waste per farm was 8% which suggests that while there were a few farms who didn't clean, across their clip, the vast majority really stepped up to the plate, and for that, we thank you many times over!!

Staple Length – What's the Deal?

One troubling trend we have seen over the last few years is a shortening of the average staple length. So much so, that in 2017, we had a few farms with staple lengths as short as 3.5" for annual growth. As the bare minimum length to spin Suri is 3.5", and given that areas such as the shoulder or hip can have shorter staple than the mid-side, this means more fiber in the scrap pile. Not good.

Theories have been offered up as to why this trend is occurring. We know it isn't geographic, as we've seen it from farms across the US. Some have offered the theory that the national herd is growing older, and as such, staple length is shortening. This could be, but when we see a herd with shorter staple, we tend to see it in all animals, regardless of age. Our theory leans towards nutrition. As prices of the animals have come down, our suspicion is that growers are cutting back on grain and quality of hay.

Why is this so important to you?

1. As mentioned, there is a minimum length to spin fiber - shorter than 3.5" and regardless of the AFD, it goes into the scrap bin, which is paid at pennies on the lb.
2. The longer the staple, the more the weight - and as you know, we pay you by the lb.
3. The long term goal - shearing twice a year - with minimum staple at each shearing of 4" - similar to the mohair growers. If you aren't getting at least 4" in the annual clip, you're moving in the wrong direction!

(cont'd on page 3)

PRICES FOR 2018

Grade (all colors) Noodled	Price/lb
1 < 20 microns	\$17.00
2 20-22.9	\$13.00
3 23-25.9	\$ 8.00
4 26-28.9	\$ 6.00
5&6 =>29.0	\$ 1.50
Scrap	\$ 0.50

Non-noodled fleeces, deduct \$3.00/lb for Grades 1-4 and \$0.50/lb for Grades 5&6.

- We accept blankets and neck (NO APRON!),
- All fiber submitted must be free of vegetable matter. Commercial standard is vm less than 1%
- We accept and can use all lengths through Grade 4. Fiber that is Grade 5 or higher which is longer than 6.5 inches is accepted at our discretion.

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Staple Length (cont'd)

We would ask everyone to measure the staple length on several of your animals next time you're in the barn. By this time of year, every animal should have at least 3.0" of growth, (depending on when you sheared, maybe more) with younger animals having at least 4". If your herd, as a whole, is not there, please consider whether there are nutritional elements to your herd management that could be changed.

And The Winners Are...!

Yes, it's time for the "SURIS". Each year, we give out SURI awards to the farm with 1) the highest dollar pay out per LB, 2) the least amount of waste from vegetable matter, coting or tenderness, and 3) the most improved. Each of those farms is sent a check for an extra \$1.00 per lb.

And the winners are:

HIGHEST PRICE/LB PAID

B4 Alpacas with a per lb price of \$8.64! We also commend B4 Alpacas in their transition to full time fiber farm. They've chosen some lovely animals!!

Akuna Matada Alpacas was a close runner up at \$8.40/lb. Great job!

LEAST AMOUNT OF WASTE

We had a total of 11 farms that had no waste, so we looked at which of those farms sent in the most fleece. The winner is **Ledge View Alpaca Farm** which submitted 285 lbs and not one fiber was thrown out!

MOST IMPROVED

Pacesetter Alpacas which did a yeoman's job of getting their animals clean - 100% acceptance this year vs 82% in 2016, AND they noodled their fleeces ☺

Congratulations to our winners, and the checks are in the mail!

Why Noodle?

It's simple:

- You get paid more
- Your clip gets preference in grading
- You get your money faster

If you noodle your fleeces this year, mark on the boxes you ship to us "noodled" and you'll get all the perks.

Noodling is easier for the grader

Noodling gives us a better sort

Noodling allows us to provide you with a better report on your fleece.

Noodling - Just do it!

Noodling Tips

Visit this link to see how to best noodle your fleeces:

[Noodling Tips and Suggestions](#)

If you are unable to open this link, follow these instructions:

- Go to YouTube.com
- Type in Noodling Tips and Suggestions in the search box
- Click Search
- Select the video with this title

Happy shearing season everyone, send us your fleece!!