



## ILR-SD Llama Fleece Judging – Rationale for Judging

The ILR-SD Fleece Committee took a good, long look at the textile industry standards for using fine, luxury fibers. The commercial fiber industry includes llama fleece as a luxury fiber along with cashmere, angora, mohair, and silk. The finest quality llama fiber, is considered to be alpaca in the worldwide market. Approximately 4000 tons of llama and alpaca were processed by the worldwide textile industry. Given these facts, the Fleece Committee made the decision to base the scoring system for llama fleece upon commercial standards, rather than those for hand spinners and crafters in the hobby market. Great! But, what does this mean to the exhibitor? It means the scoring system is based upon objective, industry standards.

The textile industry has the following priority needs for purchasing fleece.

- Quality
  - Fineness
  - Hand
  - Luster
  - Uniformity
  - Crimp/elasticity
  - Lock structure
- Quantity
  - Staple length
  - Density/weight

The emphasis in scoring is upon these fleece characteristics which are most desirable for processing. The scoring system for fleece judging therefore awards the most points to fine fleece, with sensuously soft hand (feel), luster, uniformity and production. Uniformity examines consistency of fleece length, lock structure, and fineness. The production of a llama will evaluate the density of the lock and the density of fiber on the llama, as well as weight of shorn fleeces.

Fleeces will be weighed, granting more points to those fleeces which are heavier, based upon an annualized weight. The annualized weight is compared to a weight/point chart based upon production for that age and fleece type. Annualized weight is the most objective evaluation of how much the llama is producing, regardless of geographic area, age, sex, and health of a llama. A dirty or poorly skirted fleece may accrue more points, as it will weigh more. However, the gain in points in annualized weight will be more than lost as the judge evaluates preparation.

The next challenge to the fleece committee came about as it decided to judge fleece type to fleece type – and, llamas produce different types of fleece, which process differently. It was recognized that fleece with crimp/elasticity processes differently than fleece without crimp/elasticity. Both have different overall characteristics; both fleece types produce wonderful luxury products. However, they are not comparable, if trying to award scores/points. Therefore, scoring cards were developed for fleece with crimp and fleece without crimp.

Please notice that while clean fleece is desirable, the fleece does not need to be picked absolutely clean. Scoring for cleanliness and preparation is realistic, practical, and more feasible for the average exhibitor. The reality is that fine debris will be removed during processing. Therefore, scoring does reward those fleeces which present with apparent overall cleanliness – no twigs, beans, toe nails, short, second cuts, or urine, etc.

In recognition of classic llamas having different fiber characteristics which do not lend to commercial processing, but still wanting to compete in overall awards at llama shows, the Coat on division was added. This scoring system is based on the fiber coverage for working llamas. It is very different than those fiber animals which produce fiber for textile usage.

In addition to shorn fleece and Fleece On/Coat On fleece judging, the two ounce sample, also known as “Spinners’ Choice,” was included as an approved ILR-SD class. This sample is judged on ease of carding or combing, spinning quality, and end result (yarn). It requires only two ounces of cleaned and prepared fleece. Guard hair and fine debris may be removed. The judge will card or comb the fleece and then spin a sample of the fleece to make yarn. While this is an evaluation of a small portion of the fleece, it does allow a fleece to continue to be shown after it is too show-worn to be shown as a full fleece.

The fleece committee recognizes that fleece has a limited lifetime, when judging shorn fleece. In addition, fleece coarsens as the llama ages so that not all llamas will have competitive fleece, as they age. Therefore, to assist the exhibitor in gaining Fleece Championships and Certificates of Recognition, points and placings will be accumulated from Fleece On, shorn, and two ounce sample competitions.

Additionally, the fleece committee has approved classes in finished Fleece Products. Scoring systems have been developed for handmade knit, crocheted, machine knit, woven, felted, locker hooking, and handspun yarn items. In this case, the points and placings accrue to the individual craft person, not the llama. Fleece products do need to be made from a minimum of 50% camelid fiber. We hope to encourage even non-llama owners to compete with what we know to be super fiber, making super products. It is hoped that by opening these classes to the general public, more craft people will gain interest in llama fiber. And, of course, we know we have very talented craft folks who also raise these wonderful fiber producers!

If you have further questions regarding the ILR-SD Fleece Judging, please feel free to contact any member of the ILR-SD Llama Fleece committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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ILR-SD Fleece Committee