

Alpacas on Tour

It's a 6 am start even though we are only doing the BOP run today. We have to make our lunch and load up the boys and be on the road by 7 to make our first stop for the day on time. The boys are stud male alpacas and the run is mobile mating.

You can't AI alpacas and embryo transfer is only in the development stages so the best way we can improve the quality of the alpaca herd is use the best stud male alpacas available. Since most people don't own their own alpaca stud they buy services from the larger breeders who have invested to bring the best alpaca genetics in from Peru and Australia. At up to \$100,000 for a top stud it is not something you rush out and buy for yourself.

The options for getting access to the alpaca studs are pretty much limited to bringing the female to the stud or with much more convenience bring the stud to the female alpacas. This is where we come in with Mobile Mating.

We can carry up to four male alpacas at a time in the Ford Transit van. They are only too keen, we open the doors and they jump right in.

Today we have on board two suris; a fawn and a black, and a white huacaya, all imports from Peru. First stop is a "spitoff" with a young huacaya female. Two weeks ago she was mated and now we are testing her to see if she is still receptive to the male in a sit or spit. If ovulation and pregnancy has occurred then the female alpaca will spit at the male telling him she isn't interested, however if the last mating didn't take she will sit down to be mated again. Today all goes well as she spits at our boy.

At the next alpaca farm we have a maiden female alpaca, we know she isn't pregnant but this is all new to her so it might not go smoothly. You can tell the female is nervous as she doesn't sit for the male straightaway, he is orgling away, which is a sound made to make female alpacas go weak at the knees and sit, but it isn't having the desired effect. Eventually she sits and once we are sure everything is ok we leave them to it and have a cup of tea. The mating can take up to an hour!

Only half an hour behind schedule we get to our next stop. Here we have one spit and one sit. Looks like we'll be back here in a fortnight! The rest of the trip goes pretty much to plan and at 6pm that night and as we drive in we notice a new white bundle in the paddock, and it's a girl! Its product of nearly 12 months wait and great end to a long day.