

Huacaya Fleece Characteristics – AAA Breed Standard

A guide for both breeders and Judges that will evolve with time. Huacayas are distinguishable from suris in that they carry sheep like fleece, which stands at right angles to the body. The fleece should exhibit a strong wave or crimp across each fibre and have strong staple definition. The alpaca should be well covered with a rounded appearance. Coverage should extend down the legs and up to a bonnet on the head with a clean muzzle and ears.

The most important characteristics of huacaya fleece are:-

1. **Density** - this is perhaps the most important as it determines the commerciality of the fleece ie. the quantity of saleable fleece to be sold. It also prevents dirt and moisture penetration.
2. **Fineness & Handle** - fineness sets the value of a fleece per unit weight. The finer the fleece the more per kilo it will make. Soft handle goes with fineness. The softer the handle the finer the micron.
3. **Character** - is closely related to density, as strong crimp definition and staple formation is necessary to achieve heavy fleece weights.
4. **Lack of Medullation** - fleece should not contain broad microned straight medullated fibres, especially throughout the main blanket. The aim being to eliminate it completely.
5. **Lustre** - this is the amount of light reflected from the fibre, which enhances its appearance when processed into a garment.

Other determining factors are:-

1. Uniformity of micron - processors require fleece with minimum variation in fibre diameter. This also helps to eliminate fleece tenderness (fleece breakage).
2. Uniformity of colour - an even colour is preferred by processors, but allowances need to be made for greys and fawns which can have colour variation.
3. Uniformity of length - the fleece should be of the same length for 12 months growth. The ultimate aim is to have the neck fibre match the main blanket in length, thus increasing the weight of the prime fleece.

Colour

Alpaca fleece comes in varying shades of colour from white to black. In between there are shades of fawn, brown, and grey as well as rose grey. Animals may be solid in colour or be any combination of the above.

FAULTS

- Open fleece with no density
- Chalkiness
- Harsh handle
- Short staple length
- Medullated fibre
- Lack of overall coverage
- Tenderness