

Cold Feet?

By Daryl W. Goodrich, JD

This winter's cold sure challenges our feet to stay warm. That is also a big challenge for Kim Darst who is headed to Alaska.

She and her 26 Alaskan Husky team are the first New Jersey team to make it to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Alaska. It is scheduled to start March 7, 2009 in downtown Anchorage. Visit Kim's website at www.huskyhavenraceteam.com for more details.

The official Iditarod race website at www.iditarod.com states it is "a race over 1,150 miles of the most extreme and beautiful terrain known to man - across mountain ranges, frozen rivers, dense forests, desolate tundra and windswept coastline".

Alpaca socks are sure needed to rescue cold feet in this race! So, our alpaca farm is supporting Kim with a donated big bag of the Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America, Inc. ("AFCNA") Extreme Alpaca Socks.



I know these boot socks are up to the challenge. When I was President of AFCNA, I introduced them to a sled dog racing team in upper Michigan. The owner wore them at -20 degrees Fahrenheit and loved them.

AFCNA established an Alpaca Sock Brigade to warm the feet of our soldiers. This past Christmas, a Brigade participating AFCNA member sent a huge box of Extreme Alpaca Socks to a medical team in the Western region of Afghanistan. It is a high elevation area with snow and cold temperatures.

The soldier, sailor and airmen medics using the socks loved them. Medical Mentor Team Leader, Captain Ken Laube, wrote in his thank you letter: "Honestly, I have shared with my wife that these are the most comfortable socks I have ever worn - ever."

In fact, these socks are the biggest selling

AFCNA product. And, they are made in the U.S. from member alpaca fiber.

There is no slowing in the alpaca fiber industry! AFCNA reported its alpaca product sales for 12/08 increased 40% over 12/07. And, 2008 alpaca fiber submitted for product manufacture increased 3.5 times over 2007.

AFCNA's over 1,800 members are no doubt cheering. AFCNA reported a 2008 fiscal year profit as a follow up to its 2007 profitable year.

This is a milestone for AFCNA. It demonstrates a large volume fiber industry is viable for the U.S. alpaca industry.

I feel a large volume fiber industry compliments the beneficial craft and custom processing arena. This large volume

arena focuses on generating income for farmers from all grades of their fiber. It also focuses on handling the expected large tonnage of alpaca fiber from the growing North American herd.

AFCNA's viable U.S. manufacturing pipeline extends from fiber sorting by grade & color, scouring and spinning to weaving and knitting products. AFCNA has also adopted a North American Alpaca trademark telling the buyer the alpaca content of a product is 100% North American alpaca.

A large volume fiber industry enables alpaca farmers to maximize their fiber income. Strong demand for fiber does increase income from fiber. But, the structure of that industry is very important to the farmer.

Alpaca fiber, like most agricultural commodities, is worth more in the manufactured state than raw. The farmer must keep his eye on this value added through manufacture ("consumer value"), though.

When the farmer sells his commodity to an entrepreneur manufacturer, that entre-

preneur gets the consumer value. When the farmer deals with a cooperative manufacturer, however, he gets the consumer value.

Cooperatives are extensively used in U.S. agriculture to market agricultural commodities for this very reason. They are based upon the demonstrated fact that people working together for their mutual benefit can reduce costs, generate greater income from their products, and secure services unattainable on an individual basis.

AFCNA is a cooperative that is owned by over 1,800 alpaca farmers. The consumer value is captured by the cooperative members through AFCNA net income distributions based on the amount of fiber each member submits.

AFCNA means income from alpaca fiber is no longer limited to selling raw fiber at the world fiber price. Income is now determined by the higher consumer market sales price of, for example, alpaca scarves.

Let's applaud AFCNA! It is helping the alpaca fiber venture grow. This growth will not happen by itself, however!



Join AFCNA if you are not a member at <http://www.afcna.com/content/view/15/83/>. Support AFCNA if you are a member. Together we can make this alpaca fiber venture a success for all alpaca farmers.

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