

Farm World 2019

This year, over the 11-14 of April, I was amongst the 60,000 visitors at Farm World 2019, held at Lardner Park in Warragul Victoria. Naturally we were surrounded by farm machinery, tools, implements and most importantly Alpacas.

As a keen Certificate II Animal Studies student from Donvale Christian College, I had a dual interest in the event. I was there to hone my animal husbandry skills and support the Victorian Alpaca Youth Group.

Rachel Burnett co-ordinated a well organised, military styled operation with the key support from an army of Donvale Christian College students, youth alpaca participants, parents and supporters (including alpaca breeders/industry experts).

Clearly Rachel had taken some notes from our neighbouring Sheep Dog Exhibitor, rounding up volunteers and supporters to man the multitude of stations required – photo booths, alpaca walking stations – including building a wooden alpaca (craft activity). Whilst all this was going on, the Victorian Alpaca Youth Group was conducting the showmanship and stockmanship competitions, drawing in crowds of farm world visitors as spectators and participants for our fund-raising activities.

That's where the Alpaca Youth Group displayed the diversity of skills gained by participating in the event. On the microphone giving a rundown of the events were a number of kids and teens. A particular shout out to Hannah who is clearly going into a career of public speaking/engagement. Animal handling skills come into use by teaching children how to walk an alpaca or positioning an alpaca for a photo opportunity. My risk management skills were tested in our fund-raising activity – building wooden Alpacas. It's amazing how quickly parents will step away when you are assisting their child with a hammer and nails...fortunately this weekend I manage to retain all my fingers (despite several close calls). It was lovely watching young children admire their handy work and stick some 'real alpaca fleece' on their wooden model, followed by their remarks on how soft fleece was to touch. Their thoughtful questioning on 'how it differs from sheep wool' was answered by some 'in the know parents'.

Fund raising activities conducted during these events are used to plough funds back into the group to run skill development workshops, camps and competitions. Men's shed spent many making the alpaca wooden craft kits and they are always a big hit with the kids!

After competing in showmanship (where you display your animal and your knowledge of Alpacas) and stockmanship (where you handle an Alpaca through an obstacle course simulating farm scenarios) the scores were decided.

The winners were:

In open (the more experienced category):

Tamaryn Kimber as Supreme Champion.

Tamaryn Kimber as Master Trainer.

Leah Burnett as senior champion.

Tamaryn Kimber as intermediate champion.

Sophie Veenstra as intermediate reserve champion

In preliminary:

Andra Hosking as Supreme Champion.

Noah Hilliar as Senior Champion.

Amy Vglow as Intermediate Champion.

Abigail Fountas as Intermediate Reserve Champion

Andra Hosking as Junior Champion.

Katie Sonsini as Junior Reserve Champion.

In summing up the Victorian Alpaca Youth Group is a wonderful organisation. Their goal is to encourage youth into the alpaca industry and agriculture in general. In reality, this means city kids get to learn practical information in a hands-on environment. Youth train with an alpaca towards competitions where they learn to handling skills and gain theoretical knowledge. I am reminded on the day of how inclusive this group remains, not all kids want to compete straight away, some just helped out by shadowing an alpaca handler or offering their time at a fundraising station.

Contact the Victorian Alpaca Youth Group if you want to become involved or would like more information on our activities. Key Contact Numbers are: Louise 0431 039 719, Emmaly 0408 533 705 or join us on Facebook, twitter or Instagram...
@vicalpacayouth

By Miranda Plowman (VET Student Donvale Farm).