

LlamaBreeder Farm Focus: Four Ladies and Me Farm

(For the year 2021, we thought it would be good to get to know the farmers in our directory a little better, so we are interviewing as many of the directory members that are interested in sharing their llama journey. We will be sharing these interviews throughout the year in the order that they are received. We hope you enjoy hearing these stories. Below is the story in their words with a little editing done by us).

Michael and Patricia West are the owners of Four Ladies and Me Farm in East Bend, NC. We asked them some questions about their life with llamas, and their responses are below. We hope you enjoy learning more about them.



Q: Tell us about you and your farm. Where are you located and how many llamas do you own?

A: East Bend, NC. 85 llamas.

Q:What were you doing before llamas, and what was your introduction to llamas?

A: I'm a practicing architect.

Q:How long have you been raising llamas?

A: 17 years

Q: Is there a particular type of llama that you prefer to raise? Classic, Single coat, heavy wool, suris, Argentines, Peruvian, etc. What bloodline(s) do you like?

A: Silky and medium wool, tall and big-bodied llamas.

Q: What are some activities you do with your llamas? (4H, showing, visiting nursing homes, obstacle courses, etc.).

A: We have llama treks (2 1/2 mile hikes with llama) and we have a winery, **Divine Llama Vineyards**, where we have daily interaction between the llama and the public. We attend llama shows.

Q: What is the one important piece of advice you would give to a new llama owner and why?

A: Get a good mentor.

Q: Where can viewers find out more about your farm? Do you have a website/ Facebook page or other social media?

A: Our website is www.fourladiesandme.com.



Q: Is there anything you wish to include about you or your farm that was not covered? It could be something interesting or unique or something else you just want to convey in the article.

A: Have you ever contemplated on how a seemingly small event or decision evolves into a life changing experience? Becoming llama owners did that for our family. It started with land purchases around our home to preserve scenic views to our lake and to maintain the quiet solitude to which we had become accustomed, all in the city limits of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. We started a vineyard after accumulating all the vacant acreage , and Michael came up with another mid-life crisis idea. The Four Ladies have

all seemed to benefit from the other four or five he had so why not try another. The West family was going to start a farm, build barns, erect fencing (4000 feet, all installed by the family), and buy a couple of llamas. The farm “llamas???”, was the Ladies’ reaction.



“Well if you want llamas, we want miniature horses!” Being a family that works together, off we went in search of the perfect two llamas and two miniature horses. By Christmas of 2003 we had found them and took the first steps in our journey to a life on the farm.

By the end of the first year we had three dogs, three barn cats, four horses, and ten llamas. We now had over 40 llamas and intended to maintain a select group of no more than 50. Mind you that Michael never had a pet as a child, but Patricia had shown horses and grew up around a farm atmosphere. We both wanted the later experience for our three daughters.

We are Michael and Patricia West. Along with the most wonderful children in the world, Megan, Kristin, and Addison, we constitute the Four Ladies and Me. Patricia was a preschool teacher for eighteen years and was in merchandising display and design for the ten years prior. She now owns a unique retail store in a restored historic mill owned by the West's that sells North Carolina made products, crafts, and art. Michael is an architect and was president of one of the largest architectural practices in the Carolinas. In 2006, he sold his architectural business and convinced his family to move to the country. They purchased 55 acres about 15 miles west of Winston-Salem. Michael spent the next two years designing and laying out a new farm, erecting 9000 feet of fence (not installed by the family this time - a condition for going along with the move), building barns and a home, developing projects, restoring the Bethania Mill, planting 5 acres of grapes on the farm, starting a wine business with friends (Divine Llama Vineyards), converting the old farm house on the new farm to a wine tasting facility, and working as a consultant to his former firm. In late 2008 he opened a new architectural practice. Both of us having design engrained in our character, the choice of llama is a natural fit. We were initially drawn to them by their unique beauty and grace. Once we got our first few, we quickly discovered their diverse personalities, gentle spirits, intelligence, curiosity, and pasture antics. Our fascination turned into a passion. We also quickly befriended other llama owners, most of whom share a similar passion for their animals. It is one of the most "caring and sharing" groups ever assembled. We feel fortunate to be part of such a community of fine people.

We spend most of our spare time with our animals, grooming, showing, practicing animal husbandry, sharing them with children and friends, making public appearances, holding farm camps and birthday parties, hiking, taking evening strolls, cart driving in the neighborhood, performing farm chores, and watching our animals from the house or

chairs in the pastures. We are often asked, “Isn’t it a lot of work?” It does occupy a lot of



our time but we rarely think of it as work. You will never appreciate the pleasure derived from these animals until you own them. Because of them our family has experienced more joy individually and as a unit than can be imagined. The Saturday morning birth of our first cria and ensuing day when all Four Ladies and Me were home is an unforgettable memory. A serene scene of grazing llama at sunset interrupted when one,

followed by the entire herd, decide to prunk around the pasture can not be adequately described. The incredible elegance of a proud male or stretchy female running to the top of their dirt mound and presenting their statuesque pose is nature's art in motion. Having a three hundred fifty plus pound (but appears like five hundred pounds with the fiber), six foot, fuzzy creature walk up to you, look you in the eye with their captivating huge black eyes and long eye lashes, lean over, and put their head on your shoulder for a cheek rub is the epitome of a bonding experience.



We suppose it is obvious that the foundational reason for our growing ownership in llama is enrichment of our own lives. At the same time, part of the fun is buying, raising, and selling llamas of the type we enjoy. Our goals are to have a breeding program focused on gentle inquisitive personalities, medium to larger bone, medium and heavy wool, fine, silky, and suri single coats, taller height, an array of colors, and award winning conformation. Bloodlines are mainly South American with some North American. Because we enjoy showing, we strive to buy and breed for animals with presence that stand out in the arena. The irony is just because a llama is a grand champion does not exclude it from being the most huggable pet on the farm. Our own BAL In A Heart Beat and LW Sante Fe are prime examples.

We have surrounded our family with beauty. God has blessed us with these gifts and we are compelled to share them. Call or e-mail us for a visit. We're looking for an excuse to halter one up.

Michael and Patricia West
(plus Megan, Kristin and Addison)

(LlamaBreeder Farm Focus is an added perk for members of the Breeders Directory. Other benefits include being listed on our website at www.llamabreeder.com and possible leads from our other site, www.llamaseeker.com. There are still many states that we need to include in our directory. Please contact us if you are interested in joining. The cost of dues is \$35/yr and help cover maintenance of the website.).