



Major Sire Influences in Australia

*The October 2005 National Show conducted by the Australian Alpaca Association highlighted the influence of new sires, but, as **Matt Ridley** points out, also reinforced the status of those stud males that have played major roles over many years.*

On a recent trip to the UK, I found a lot of interest in Australian alpaca bloodlines and enjoyed several discussions about which huacaya sire lines in particular might be useful for the UK industry. Immediately upon my return to the Antipodes, I attended the AAA's 2005 National Show and Auction and was struck by the dominance of a small group of sires, a dominance that is repeated time and time again at shows across the country. So I thought it useful to share some thoughts on these influential sires.

Bendigo, host city for the AAA's showpiece, was a sleepy rural outpost in 1851, but the discovery of gold transformed it into the magnet that, over just a few months, attracted over 20,000 hopefuls, eccentrics and runaways.

In 2005, a solid white male alpaca called Jolimont Warrior found that there are still plenty of rich pickings at in the Victorian goldfields. And whilst the crowd measured in the hundreds rather than the thousands, it perhaps shared some of the characteristics of the newcomers of 150 years earlier.

Warrior, a solid white son of Jolimont Conquistador, is the sire of Banksia Park Khan ET, the Supreme Champion of the show that later sold for a record \$170,000 to a Western Australian syndicate and is, without a doubt, currently the most influential alpaca in Australia.

It seemed that Warrior's reputation had reached its zenith when his son Blue Grass Centurion won the national title in 2003. But, twelve months later, Warrior himself took out that title, as well as the Supreme Championships at both the Sydney and Melbourne Royal Shows in a stellar year. His first progeny appeared in 2003, and they have been winning major events ever since.

Warrior's success comes down to a combination of ability and hard labours. He certainly has had plenty of opportunities, for he has 231 registered progeny at the time of writing, and the sheer hard work of owner Chris Williams, in criss-crossing Australia with Warrior and others in tow, means breeders across the country have ready access to this outstanding male.

Warrior was bred by Pat Viceconte's Jolimont Alpacas¹ and, after being named Champion Intermediate Male at the 2000 National Show, was a late wild card entry into the National auction that year, selling for \$125,000 to Blue Grass Alpacas in New South Wales (with some services reserved by the vendor). Fittingly, he arrived at Blue Grass in the back seat of a chauffeur-driven limousine, accompanied by a dinner-suited vendor. In 2002, he was sold again – privately - for a reported \$165,000, to the partnership that currently owns him.

When an impressive field of mature males faced the National judges this year, Warrior was again successful with a blue ribbon, so he remains a force in his own right.

His feats in the show ring are more than matched by those in the mating paddock. At Bendigo, he featured as the sire of Banksia Park Zena ET, winner of the 2005 Reserve Champion Intermediate Female broad ribbon; and his progeny won blue ribbons in the 6-9

months white female (Ambersun Serena), 6-9 months fawn male (Greenvale Giodano) and 6-12 months brown male (Chaparral Mojito) classes.

That Warrior won the Sires Progeny class was little surprise, and is testament to the efforts of both Warrior and Williams. To top off a successful weekend, Warrior's daughter Ambersun Amazing Grace sold for \$22,000 at the final day auction.

Sharing the stud male plaudits at Bendigo was Windsong Valley Iceman (SW). He placed second in the Sires Progeny class to Warrior, and his outstanding performers over the weekend, included:

- Windsong Valley Kenjiro (Champion Fleece 12-18 Months)
- Coricancha Aureliano (Reserve Champion Junior Male)
- Banksia Park Ice Mist ET (sold to NZ for \$34,000)

Iceman is the modern incarnation of an 'old-fashioned' pedigree. He is by the incomparable Purumbete Highlander (SW), and is from the Roger Haldane import Purumbete Ice Star (SW). Ice Star has been the matriarch of a brilliant family that also includes Benleigh Flame (and her son Benleigh Golden Flame), Purumbete Commandor, Purumbete Ledgers Boy, Windsong Valley Ice Lord and Windsong Valley Ice Master (a full brother to Iceman).

Iceman himself holds a unique record: in 2000, and then again in 2001, he took out both the Supreme and Supreme Fleece prizes at the National Show. No other alpaca has approached this feat.

When Haldane imported a group of alpacas from South America in 1993, he (or rather his late brother Clyde) included 28 animals that would turn the industry on its head. Six males and 22 females would become the dominant figures for the next five years – and many would say longer, as their influence extends to today with Iceman the notable example.

It is generally thought that these animals came from Peru rather than Chile and that they probably came from the Accoyo herd. There is no firm evidence to this effect – and there is unlikely to ever be any admissions because of the threat of legal sanctions – but what is incontrovertible is that the Australian show ring quickly became a stage on which they and their progeny strutted their stuff to the extent that few other breeding lines had much of a chance. The impact was so immediate and so emphatic that the owners of many 'established' sires soon found the marketplace a far more difficult environment. Many previously fashionable stud males became obsolete almost overnight.

Stockier, denser-fleeced alpacas, generally with better defined crimp and a heavier fleece cutting weight, started to appear in the show ring. The fine, rangy Chileans had met their match in all but the darker coloured classes where the Peruvians had less impact – a situation that would slowly change over the coming years.

The six males of that Haldane shipment, often called the 'super six', and all with the Purumbete prefix, were Highlander, El Dorado, Ledgers Dream, Inti, Sir Titus Salt and Snowman. All but Snowman, and perhaps to a lesser extent Sir Titus Salt, had outstanding success in the show ring with their progeny. Highlander also became an outstanding sire of sires, his best probably being Purumbete Brigantine (a \$150,000 sale in 2003) until Windsong Valley Iceman's recent emergence. El Dorado has established himself as the outstanding maternal grandsire of champions.

But back to the 2005 National Show, and another look at how the Haldane decisions of 1993 still underpin today's alpaca show scene.

Highlander is now deceased, but his representatives still shine. At Bendigo, son Jingana Lear and daughter Windsong Valley Nimisha both took out fleece broad ribbons.

His medium grey son Brooklea Ridge Callahan has established himself as another sire son of note: he finished third in the prestigious Sires Progeny class and his offspring were prominent the grey classes in 2005 with blue ribbon performers in Greenvale Madonna, Greenvale Medici, Autumn Gold Chiarra and Greenvale Valencia. It is a long time since any sire has matched the dominance shown by Callahan when it comes to a single colour category; and it is a stunning outcome for a sire with just 32 registered progeny on the ground.

El Dorado also maintained his record, being the damsire of Patagonia Celtic Triumph, just pipped by Khan for the Supreme Championship, and blue (and close to a broad) ribbon winner Regal House Mr Darcy. He also appears close up in the distaff of ribbon winners Monteagle Big Al, Forestglen Magnolia, Alternative View Destiny, The Gorge Protégé, Nindethana Phoenix, Shanbrooke Society Class Act ET, Shanbrooke Society Commander ET, Shanbrooke Society Designer Label, Shanbrooke Navaho Gold and Forestglen Queen of Diamonds.

And just a quick glance at the pedigrees of the 2005 ribbon winners will quickly reveal multiple references to the super six.

Another successful sire at the show was Prestige Valentino, who vindicated his recent \$115,000 purchase by starring himself in taking out Reserve Champion Fleece 60+ Months, and gaining further kudos with his sons Illawarra Yucatan (Champion Fleece 18-30 Months) and Illawarra Yangste (Reserve Champion Fleece 18-30 Months). Valentino is yet another 'blueblood', being by Purumbete Sir Titus Salt from Purumbete True Perfection, two of the 28 special alpacas of the 1993 Haldane shipment.

Whilst Jolimont Warrior might best represent the newer male bloodlines that have emerged in Australia since the Haldane period, he is not completely alone. In recent years ILR Pperuvian Auzengate (especially in the period 2000-2003), the now deceased Jolimont Sculptor, and some of the Shanbrooke male imports, have all had their time in the sun. One of the last-named, Shanbrooke Accoyo Tulaco, furthered his growing reputation at Bendigo, being the sire of Patagonia Celtic Triumph as well as Blackgate Lodge Sonnette (most valuable Commercial Fleece) and Shanbrooke Navaho Gold² (Reserve Champion Intermediate Male). His 'stablemates' Rasputin, El-Prado, and Yavari also seem destined to do good work at stud judging by their initial successes.

And EP Cambridge is always competitive with sires like Conquistador, Jolimont Commisario, EP Cambridge Peruvian Spartacus and others.

So, what would a UK breeder look for in the pedigree of a potential Australian stud male?

You've seen the long answer, and the short answer is almost anything that features the 'super six', and the more the better, especially if Highlander is in the top half of the pedigree and El Dorado in the bottom ... and look for IAR numbers 2401 to 2428. The caveats are that the short-lived Jolimont Sculptor may one day match even Highlander as a sire of sires and already has sons standing at stud in the Australia, UK, New Zealand and Canada; Jolimont Warrior is too good to not leave influential sons and daughters behind for posterity; and the AAA's National Show will, each year, provide the contemporary data you need to make informed decisions.

¹ A major watershed of the Australian industry was the importation by Pat Viceconte's Jolimont Alpacas of the first 'official' Peruvians, a shipment of 660 that arrived in January 1997. It didn't take long for the influence of both males and females from this shipment to this to be noticed at the shows. Progeny of the females began winning at show in 1999 and, by 2005, it is rare to see any show winner having emanated from other than a Peruvian distaff - the exception being some specialty coloured lines.

² Navaho Gold accentuates the Haldane influence yet again, being a son of Shanbrooke Rose Perfection (SW), from the family of Purumbete Sun Dial, one of the 22 females in the 1993 importation.