

Turning Tide Ranch

*Stew and Barbara Lang
Duncan, British Columbia, Canada*

A newswire story out of New York in 1994 was the beginning of it all. Although the article on the joys of raising alpacas never made it to the pages of the Victoria newspaper where Stew works as an editor, it did find fertile ground in the hearts and minds of Stew and Barbara Lang.

Their original plan was typical of many couples getting into the alpaca business it would provide a rural lifestyle for the kids and an extra source of income for education and retirement.

A year of searching for that perfect property led the family to Duncan, B.C. about an hour north of Victoria on Vancouver Island. Ten years later, the Langs have 63 alpacas and three alpaca-related businesses.

Only 12 of the alpacas belong to Stew and Barbara's Turning Tide Ranch. Most of the herd is boarded with some owned by long-time friends and the remainder by new friends in the U.S. and B.C.

"Managing someone else's herd has challenges and rewards," says full-time farmer Barbara. "You get to work with and learn from more animals than you could afford to own yourself but you are also keenly aware of your responsibilities to the owners."

Early in the development of their alpaca business, Stew and Barbara discovered large farms made 90 per cent of all alpaca sales. This was a very disturbing trend and did not bode

well. If small breeders couldn't sell their stock there would be no industry.

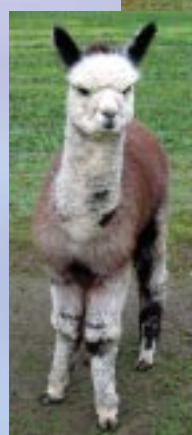
With this in mind, Fibre Finders Alpaca Marketing was born. By bringing together many small breeders, Fibre Finders can offer a variety of bloodlines, colours and quality that can compete with the selection found at any of the big farms.

Fibre Finders works with many people in Canada and the U.S. who are starting out. Because of their experience Stew and Barbara are able to help newcomers make informed decisions and set goals in the alpaca industry. They also try to be there for clients when it comes time for them to start selling.

Stew's background in the newspaper business and Barbara's history as a small business lobbyist have helped many small breeders who love raising alpacas but have neither the resources nor desire to plunge into marketing.

Alpaca Threads Apparel and Decorative Items is the third alpaca-related business owned by Stew and Barbara. Alpaca Threads began by marketing product made in Peru along with raw fleece and yarn from local alpacas. As the alpaca industry grew, their online emphasis has moved toward an artisan's mall where talented alpaca enthusiasts can display and sell their products. Also included is a section offering raw fleece, yarn and even fly-tying materials.

Stew and Barbara's alpaca adventure has been a roller-coaster ride with many ups and downs.



Renovations on the house remain unfinished but there have been three extensions on the barn and miles of fence posts pounded into the ground.

One university degree has been paid for but retirement remains elusive.



When asked about their goals, Barbara and Stew didn't hesitate, "We are

really hoping to take a trip throughout Canada and the U.S. to meet, in person, all the friends we have made through our alpaca business.

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