



Wallaby Ridge Suris: *Black, grey and the unusual*

by CATHY PROCTOR

*I*T'S a special moment when you watch suris in full flight flying across the paddock almost as if they are performing an elegant vibrant dance, it's a moment when you just stop everything and enjoy the spectacle. When those suris have fleeces of rare colours such as grey, rose grey and black it's a colour treat as well.

Have you ever wondered about the meaning of the word 'suri'?

As we are suri breeders, I was very interested in the origin of the word and in my





research remembered reading an article indicating the word was derived from the Aymaran people and was a descriptive word meaning 'straight'. I was interested by that description and further research revealed that the Aymarans were noted for weaving in Andean Society and performed a dance called 'Suri Sicuri'.

The dance was performed as part of the Harvest ceremonies and depicted the hunting of the Rhea (South American Ostrich). The dancers wore great headdresses made of Rhea feathers. The dance dates back to 800BC and is still performed today, in fact it is performed in the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival by Bolivian youth.

In Andean communities the Rhea was called either Suri or Nandu. So if the Rhea with straight feathers was called Suri and the alpaca with straight locks was called Suri then

perhaps the meaning of Suri is indeed the same in essence to our word 'straight'?

Aptly in the 'Suri Sicuri' dance traditionally the men dancing wear beautiful alpaca ponchos with coloured tassels!

Farmlife at 'Lumeah', home of Wallaby Ridge Suris, although hard work at times can be rewarding. Late in the day is the best time when the crias play, zigzagging across the paddocks and spronking in a continual game of tag. It's a great time to enjoy the suri and marvel at their visual appeal.

What appeals most to me is the black and grey suri. Wallaby Ridge breeds for good quality suris in black and grey. We run a large stable of Black Suri studs to cover our core herd of black suri females, our aim is to continually improve our black suris.

And grey suris are so attractive and no two are completely the same.

Some shimmer like light silver, some are rose tinted and some are deepest charcoal.

Greys also produce some surprises and that's where the unusual comes in!

The patterns of the fleece and markings can produce some extraordinary alpacas, appaloosas with spots, two tones and even one little guy called 'Graffiti' who has every colour imaginable – black, grey, rose grey, brown, fawn and white.

The only question is what class do I enter Graffiti in at the upcoming shows?

My husband, Ian, had the perfect answer to my question ... all other colours of course!

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