

# Leisure Acres Llamas

*Sonja and Chuck Leach  
New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA*

**A**s often happens, the creation of Leisure Acres Llamas was a case of owners Sonja and Chuck Leach being in the right place at a most opportune time. For them it was a casual conversation with a hunting outfitter who was switching from horses to llamas after having to put down yet another of his pack animals. The Outfitter chose llamas because they are more agile than horses and can easily navigate steep, twisting trails. As well their padded feet are less harmful in environmentally fragile areas.

Nestled in the scenic woodlands of northwestern Pennsylvania, Leisure Acres Llamas has been in operation since 1989. The farm encompassing 106 acres of rolling hills and lush valley has grown from the original 1 llama to a herd of over 80. They have 6 main herd sires: 2 full Chilean, 1 full Peruvian and 3 North American that have some South American in their bloodline.

Both Sonja and Chuck are totally committed to the llama industry and have become very active in it. Sonja and Chuck were instrumental in founding the Pennsylvania Llama & Alpaca Association and Chuck served as its first President.

Sonja is currently serving on the Board of the PLAA and Chuck serves as the Industry Liaison for the Greater Appalachian Llama and Alpaca Association.

One of their main goals has always been to increase public knowledge of llamas. To that end they participate in and sponsor special events. They also host visits by school classes, girl scouts, groups of seniors and the general public. When they take their animals on an outing, whether in a parade or visiting a local seniors centre, the llamas handle all the attention with the quiet air of dignity for which they are so famous. As long as either Chuck or Sonja are with them even a ride in an elevator causes no stress.

Chuck and Sonja do a limited amount of showing. In 2003, the last year they did much showing, five of their llamas qualified for the Grand National Championship. Two of their animals finished in the Top Ten at Nationals, including 8th place in the heavy Wool Adult Breeding Male category.

Their web site is very extensive and well worth a visit. As well as a brief history of Leisure Acres and its origins the site also includes a Llama History, Good Things About Llamas, Llamas at Work as well as the listing of Upcoming Events. If you are not yet certain about entering the llama business a visit to 'Is a Llama Right for You', 'How to Select the Right Llama' and 'Ten Tips for New Owners' may help you decide.

When asked their favourite tale as llama breeders they were quick to relate the story of the arrival of the first cria born at Leisure Acres. September 30th, 1989 – their daughter's wedding day. Sonja was busy



preparing brunch for out of town guests when word was received the cria, while ready to be born, was encountering difficulty. Without a second thought Sonja, Chuck, the bride and a cousin headed for the barn leaving Sonja's Mom to greet the guests and encourage them to help themselves to brunch. Brendy, named after Brent and Cyndy the wedding couple, is still a member of their llama family and has been promised a comfortable retirement.

**CQ**



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