

News Release

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ALPACAS COME TO TOWN

On Sunday 2 May the Southern Highlands Visitor Information Centre at Mittagong will welcome some very unusual visitors. Alpacas from four local farms, along with their owners, will be taking up residence in the Information Centre's gardens from 10.00am until 3.00pm as a part of the Australian Alpaca Association's National Alpaca Week.

"During last year's inaugural National Alpaca Week we organised a trail where visitors could come to our farms in Canyonleigh, Paddy's River and Wingello to find out about alpacas" says Fiona Vanderbeek of Birrongo Suri Alpacas in Canyonleigh. "This year we thought we would make it even easier for people to meet the alpacas – by bringing them to one central location."

Australia has one of the largest national alpaca herds in the world, and the Southern Highlands of NSW is an area particularly well suited to the needs of these endearing fleece production members of the camelid family. The four stud farms who will be taking part are Alpacapena (Paddy's River); Birrongo Suri Alpacas (Canyonleigh); Elysion Alpacas (Canyonleigh); and Pacofino (Wingello). With herds ranging between 30 and 300 animals on properties sized between 30 and 300 acres, and breeding both huacaya and suri alpacas in the full range of colours from white to black, this group of local breeders and friends have a wealth of alpaca knowledge – and all are equally passionate about their preferred type and colour!

In addition to the attraction of the alpacas themselves, this is a great opportunity to learn all about alpacas and the possibilities of owning them – whether for breeding and fleece production, as guards to protect sheep or chooks from foxes, or simply as one of the most environmentally sound, attractive and low maintenance lawnmowers available to the owner of a couple of acres.

Tourism Southern Highlands Executive Manager, Steve Rosa said "this is a great initiative to make Agritourism products of the Southern Highlands more accessible to locals and visitors. Tourism Southern Highlands is currently working to develop a unique 'meet the maker' or introduce the owners of such experiences".

Along with the alpacas will be fleece displays, alpaca information and things to do for the kids, plus alpaca yarns and products for sale in the Visitor Information Centre (plenty of inspiration for that Mother's Day gift!). Entry is free and parking plentiful, so come along and meet the alpacas!

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