

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



For the week of  
August 12, 2001

By Kurt Knebusch  
(330) 263-3776  
knebusch.1@osu.edu

### Hey Editor!

Bill Shulaw, D.V.M., M.S., Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, Ohio State University, reviewed this column. Ohio State is proposing an International Camelid Institute, an education and service facility to be based at the university. Details are at <http://www.internationalcamelidinstitute.org/> (no space after "international"; just one long word). A wav file of alpacas humming is at the web site of Magical Farms Alpacas, Litchfield, Ohio, <http://www.alpacafarm.com/>.

### Section of Communications and Technology News and Media Relations

2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1044  
(614) 292-2011

203 Research Services Building  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
(330) 263-3775

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.  
TDD# 1 (800) 589-8292 (Ohio only) or (614) 292-1868

Dear Twig: There's a farm near my home that must have a hundred alpacas. What can you tell me about them?

Lucky you, to have so many alpacas so close. They're beautiful animals. Here's what I can tell you: Alpacas are related to llamas. They're smaller than llamas — about half the size or less. And they're sheared like sheep for their valuable "fiber," or fleece. The fiber is luxurious. It's used to make sweaters, blankets, mittens, gloves, scarves, hats and more. Ahhh.

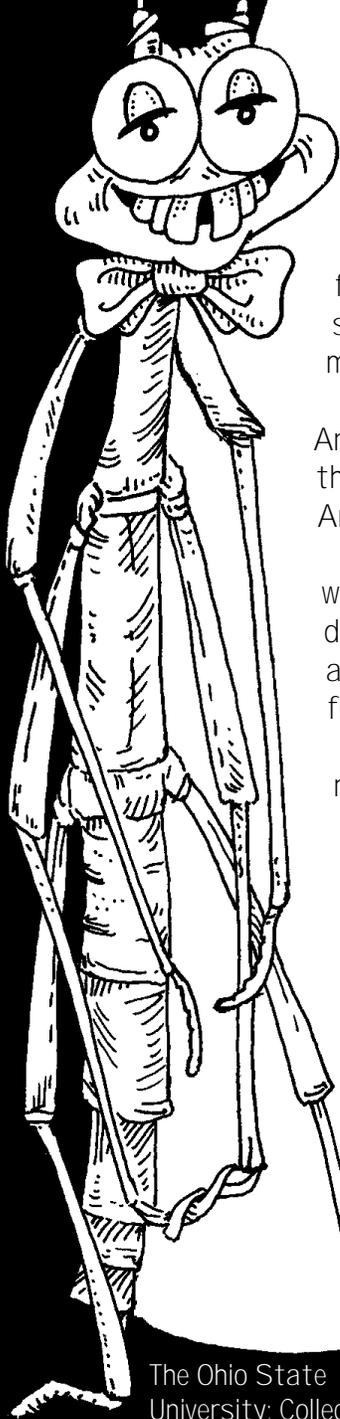
Alpacas come from high in the mountains — the Andes of South America. They were domesticated from the vicuna, an endangered species that lives in the Andes. The first U.S. imports were in 1984.

There are two general types of alpacas: the Suri, which has long, silky fiber and looks like it has dreadlocks; and the Huacaya (pronounced "wah-kie-ah"), which looks like a puffball with legs. Its fiber is fine and colorful.

Did you know alpacas, llamas and vicunas are all related to camels? They're part of the group known as "camelids."

And did you know alpacas can hum? To me it sounds like the song of a whale — soft and mellow and haunting — and folks who hear it find it gentle and calming. Hmmm.

Twig



The Ohio State University; College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences