

## **OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE**

Most, if not all, of those reading this column take special care to assure that the llamas that they sell go to situations where they will receive loving and appropriate care. But how many of us do not have a program in place to achieve the same assurance when we become disabled or die and can no longer oversee the placement of our llamas? I am reminded of this every time I read of a forced dispersal due to age or illness.

We have yet to address this problem. It is human to procrastinate. There are two of us taking care of our herd, so we do not need to address the problem immediately ... or do we? There is always the possibility of an accident that will take us both.

I believe we have an obligation to our llamas, our loved ones and ourselves to maintain our health as best as we can.

### **No Time to be Macho!**

The genesis of this column was two fold. First, rather unexpectedly, I was diagnosed with cancer of the prostate. It was found incredibly early and I am now recovering from a radical prostatectomy. Second, a week ago there was an article in the newspaper to the effect that one reason for the shorter life expectancy of men in comparison to women is that men have a 'macho' attitude towards taking care of their health, i.e., they ignore symptoms in the hope they will go away (only wimps run to the doctor). As an actuary I am quite familiar with the significant difference in longevity between the sexes.

It is my hope that this column will make some feel uncomfortable enough to properly address their health needs, which in turn will benefit them and their llamas.

For the men reading this column. I had no overt symptoms of a prostate problem. My PSA test was normal and under normal circumstances nothing would have been found during my annual physical. Because of a vague sense that all was not right, in my pre-physical conversation with my doctor I mentioned

to her that I felt it was time to rigorously review the condition of my prostate. After a rigorous DRE she thought she felt a very small lesion and the rest is history. Because of my relatively young age (62) and my otherwise excellent health I chose a radical prostatectomy as my treatment. I had briefly toyed with the idea of a less invasive treatment that would have enabled me to return to my share of the work in the pasture within 48 hours instead of the 6 weeks recuperation period following a radical prostatectomy. Fortunately, rationality prevailed and I adopted the treatment that I concluded was best for me. In addition, each of my daughters and my son-in-law spent some time on the farm helping Jeanne with the chores. I am now able to do light chores and, by the time you read this, will be able to do all that I had done before.

I suspect that many of the women reading this column may be nodding their heads in agreement when they read about the macho attitude many men have when it comes to taking care of their health needs. However, it is no time for smugness. Too many women sacrifice their health needs to oversee the health needs of their families. To both men and women I say love yourselves by listening to your bodies. If you have a sense that all may not be well, do something about it!

### **Special Thanks**

I owe much to my wife and life-partner of 41 years, Jeanne. She has stepped in to do both my work and hers.

Nancy Pierce and Tom Jalbert, Emerald Brook Llamas, came down to our farm to finish the toenail clipping that I did not complete prior to my operation.

Heidi West, West Meadows Farm, assisted in the delivery of our latest cria, Greenbriar's Obi-Wan.

Katie Parker and Dick LeDuc, Pondview Llamas, have arranged to be situated next to us at the upcoming Northeast Llama Showcase so that they assist us when needed.