

## The Proverbial “Pile Policy” by Sue Wilde

Here at Wilde Country Rancho a “pile policy” was put in place as soon as more than 5 llamas graced the farm. This pile policy has been, over the years, extended to include a fluctuating but mostly constant population of around 90 llamas.

Within a few days of birth, new crias are expected to be adhering to the farm’s pile policy and for the most part they are pretty adept at getting the idea. They seem to stick to the “policy” until they reach the rebellious teenage phase where they can get a little sloppy and then as they get older and they start following their mother’s example the pile policy at times just gets thrown right out the: “proverbial window”! The barn is a big place full of many girls and babies and although the pile is not a clearly defined area it is still, after a cleaning, definitely a designated area that we would like all llamas to use as the desired spot.

I have considered the following options as possibilities for informing the herd of the pile policy:

1. Post large signs at each entrance to the barn.
2. Deliver each llama a personal copy of the policy on farm letterhead.
3. Send out a blanket email to the herd outlining the policy and asking for feedback. (Dropped the feedback idea, who needs input on such an important policy!)
4. Send out a personal email to each llama, then no one will be missed.
5. Shout out the policy while trying to enforce it: “Hey, you girls, there is a pile policy here in this organization and in order for things to go smoothly here, you need to adhere to it!”
6. Tell others about the pile policy and maybe it will get back to the girls that they could be doing a lot better job of following the objectives.

When the weather is fair and the pastures are beckoning the pile policy it is easy to follow but let’s have just one snow storm, one blip in the fair weather, and everyone piles on the pile and a “close enough” attitude

sets in and soon it's "who needs this policy anyway" attitude get pretty pervasive.

And how about those males? Some guys can keep a shelter nice and tidy and adhere to the outside pile policy all their lives. These guys can tow the party line! But other guys, one slip up, one bad rain storm or blizzard and the policy is just plain pooped on and it's bring on the shovel and rakes and wheel barrows!

Now if we weren't talking about llamas, but say cows, horses, pigs, or chickens, our expectations of a pile policy would not even be a remote consideration! Those lesser species are not the least capable of understanding a pile policy let alone adhering to all it's rules and the reaping the reward of the policy: a clean area to eat, walk and sleep in where no one poops on each other or their space. Really llamas are so smart, aren't they!

I get pretty tired of sticking to all the pile policies myself from time to time. The ones that get posted on big signs, the ones that come to me on some kind of letterhead, the ones in blanket emails, and the personalized ones telling me of a new pile policy that I must be adhering to that, for heck sakes, I just don't agreed with and don't want running my life! This is a dumb policy and just a great big messy pile!! Well, sometimes I just plain miss the pile and let others build up the pile until clean up eventually comes. Some pile policies I just throw out the "proverbial window" and I feel just fine about ignoring the policy. I learned this technique from about 90 pretty clever llamas.

Really, llamas are so smart, aren't they!