

## Planning a “Spring” Open House by Sue Wilde

1. Tidy your yard, barns, corals and the area where you will host the public. Keep the areas where the public will be safe. Have insurance!
2. Pick a date that works in your community and create an attractive notice to post in places that the people you want to target will frequent. Place an ad in the community events calendar of local papers. Send emails or personal invitations to past clients and contacts. Tell, tell, tell and sell, sell, sell.
3. Have a sales list available with photos of animals and prices. Brochures that educate new people and attractive photos of your animals will help them appreciate what you have for sale.
4. If you have related merchandise for sale, ie: raw fiber, spun fiber, crafts, llama manure bagged for fertilizer, photo cards or any other interesting items- have them displayed and priced to attract interest. Just as a cautionary note, one year I did a pretty big garage sale with my open house, thinking that it could attract more people. It did but they were more interested in the garage sale than the llamas which is what I was really promoting.
5. Refreshments such as wrapped cookies and candies and drinks plus perhaps baking you have made always appeal to visitors.
6. Have your llamas well trained so that people can walk amongst them or lead them with pleasure and without incident.
7. Have a guest book for people to sign and keep it as a contact list. A draw for something is also another way to generate a contact list. Attach your contact information to everything you hand out. If you are like me you have hundreds of photos of your llamas that didn't turn out, instead of tossing them, put labels on the back and use them as “take home” items or business cards.
8. Have enough help available so that some one is manning the “reception area” and someone is available to show animals. This ensures safety for man and beast and stuff! Gates are shut and the cash box is secure. You and your guests and animals will have a pleasant day.

9. Have signs to your farm. These can be attractive with your logo on them, have balloons attached to them or just be simple but direct. I live in a very windy area of Southern Alberta and one year I sent the young man working for me to town for helium balloons. On the way back to the farm he was to attach them to all the signs. When he opened the back of the car which was stuffed with balloons, to get a couple, they all exploded out and blew, I am sure to the next province!!
10. Llamas are so pretty, cute and inquisitive you would think they could sell themselves but they need you to close the sale and make it all happen. Hopefully your open house will result in new homes for some or your llamas and new contacts and friends for you. Don't be discouraged if sales don't occur that day. Often people need time to assess an acquisition as large as a llama and all that it entails. The phone could ring anytime. Be memorable! One spring, the day of my open house was so windy that hardly anyone attended. Late in the afternoon a couple and their two young sons arrived. They had seen my poster at the local farm store and on a whim decided to come out. The Thiessens, Ed, Ann Marie, James and Evan are now wonderful friends and integral members of our llama club. They bought 2 llamas a few days after the open house and a few llamas since then and have done breedings to my males. The wind blew them in and the llamas got them to stay!

Plan for the day and plan for the future. Good luck with your "llama invitational"!