

# Alpaca rancher says animals shear joy

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When rancher Carol Davis exhibits her animals at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo this weekend, she will be on an educational mission.

Her entry at the show won't be the usual livestock with the familiar faces and names.

She'll be bringing 17 of her alpacas. And if you aren't familiar with alpacas, you are not alone.

"Very few people know about alpacas. We consider them to be alternative livestock," said Davis who operates a court-reporting service in Houston when she is not tending to life on the ranch.

"People know what llamas are and I have to explain they are related to the llamas."

She hopes by exhibiting the alpacas at the Livestock Show and Rodeo others will get to know more about the animals.

Alpacas are smaller than llamas. A llama's ears are banana-shaped and the alpacas ears are shorter and more pointed. The noses are generally shorter on the alpaca.

These unusual, furry animals make a humming sound that almost sounds human.

But their toilet habits — well, let's just say they have a community

spirit.

"They use a community commode. They will go to that pile. They will seek it out," Davis said.

And as disgusting or off-putting as that might sound, Davis loves their personality.

"They'll walk up and kiss you," she said.

Since Davis grew up on a cattle ranch and saw hundreds of animals end up as dinner, she wanted to raise something that she didn't have to take to market or the slaughterhouse.

In her search she looked at the emu and ostrich but settled on the alpaca.

"I fell in love with them when I saw them. I was looking for alternative things to do on a ranch," Davis said.

"I decided to break away from tradition. I wanted something I felt like I could relate to and you didn't have to kill."

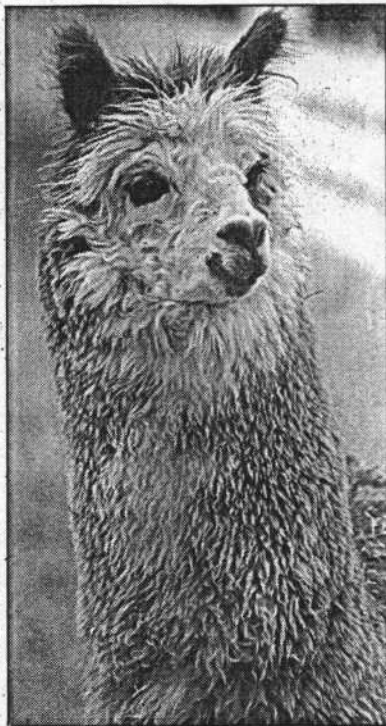
She owns 87 alpacas. The animals are sheared once a year and their woolly hair called fiber can be woven or spun to make garments.

There are two kinds of alpacas — the Huacaya and the Suri. The Huacaya's fleece has a crimp or wavy quality.

Houston Livestock Show officials say the alpacas will be on exhibited in the Astrohall West Arena on at 3 p.m. Saturday. On Sunday, alpaca owners may have their animals participate in the performance classes with the llamas.

Livestock manager John Sykes said that the animals add variety to the show.

"There's no question they are very unique animals. We're proud to



Betty Tichich / Chronicle

The unusual looking and not very well known Alpaca, shown here, is related to the better known llama. Rancher Carol Davis will be showing the animals at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo this weekend.

have them involved. It adds diversity," Sykes said.

In addition to the alpacas, the rodeo will have its first show of boer goats, with more than 170 entries in the show.