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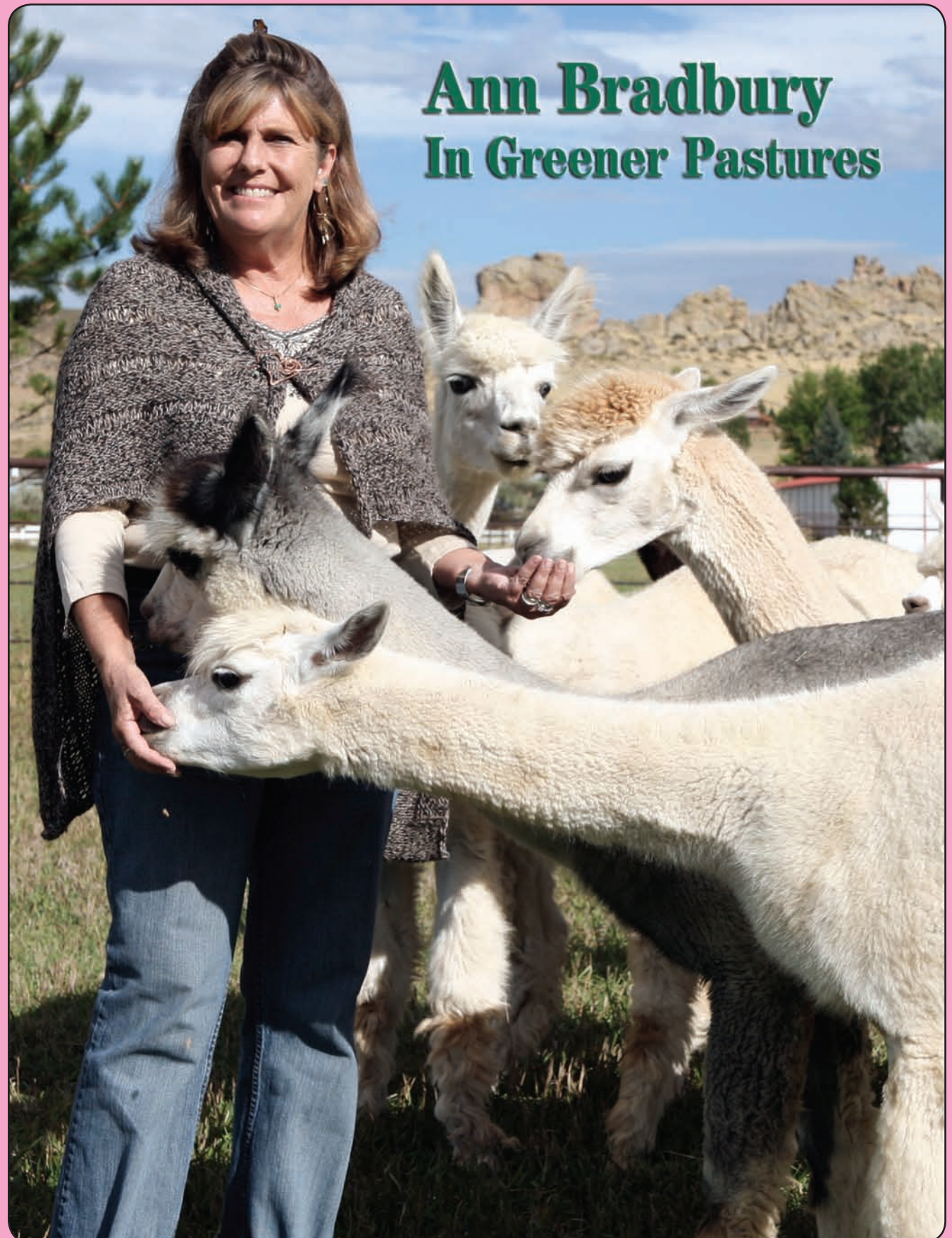
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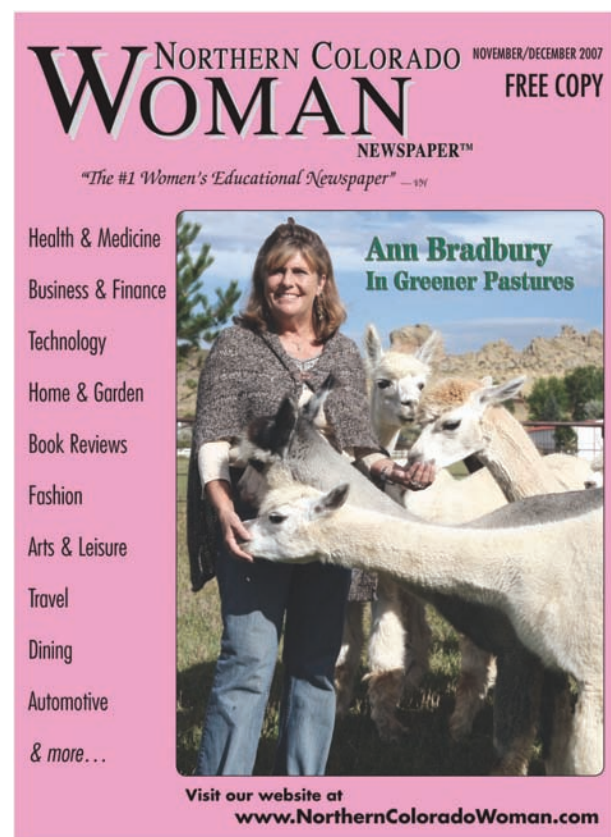
Ann Bradbury
In Greener Pastures

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The Bradburys: Swapping Business for Lifestyle

By Sarah Gray

Just west of Loveland, the Devil's Backbone provides a dramatic backdrop as Ann Bradbury cozies up to several cuddly alpacas. Her husband Carl is frantically waving handfuls of hay behind the photographer, hoping to get the alpacas' attention. It's clear: animals are unlikely to do as you ask—or even hope—on a photo shoot, so don't go with any expectations. Instead of marching to orders, these bundles of fluff-on-legs—recent acquisitions of the Bradburys, who formerly published *Colorado Business*



and *Lifestyle Magazine*—are letting their typical curiosity get the better of them. They're more interested in the photographer's shoes; Ann's hair; and the children waiting nearby, ready to herd the animals back into the frame.

While a "perfect" cover photo had been planned by the human half of the photo shoot, these quirky critters have other ideas—a bit like the Bradburys did when they decided to step out of publishing.

Ann and Carl published the *Colorado Business and Lifestyle Magazine* for just over eight years, coming to a halt in June last year. It was their first foray together into the media sector, and Ann, says Carl, was well recognized in the local community. As such, they decided they could make a go of providing a new magazine for the northern Colorado area—"We just looked for a niche," he says, "and where several others before hadn't been successful with a new publication, we were."

Rather than sell *Colorado Business and Lifestyle Magazine* when the time came to move on, Ann and Carl decided to "just let it go." They felt that they'd fulfilled a purpose by contributing to the community, and were happy to let the magazine come to a natural end without waiting around for a suitable buyer.

"We didn't make tons of money," Carl adds, "but we were very fortunate that we had a magazine that made us money from the start.

"Look at that one!" he interjects, pointing to a petite black alpaca whose ears are tipped with

white. This is "Titi"—Queen Nefertiti, in full—who yields a generous 10lbs of fiber (not wool, fur, fluff or anything else) when it comes to her annual shearing. When the average is about three to eight pounds (and that's for an alpaca larger than Titi), this is quite a feat.

Ann says she and Carl were "antsy" after retiring from the publishing scene, and then opportunity knocked: in the form of these curious South American relatives of the camel family. The Bradburys had neighbors who were selling their alpacas; they decided to buy them, and the Ridge Valley Alpaca Ranch was born.

These days, Ann and Carl have a less hectic start to the day than their publishing schedule would often demand. Now it's a rather leisurely routine.

"We come out here," says Ann, "and let the horse out in the pasture. The alpacas are a little lazy in the morning, so we sit out and have coffee. I love being out here, enjoying the atmosphere. It's totally different from publishing!"

Alpacas have a herd mentality, meaning they prefer the company of their own kind (in the wild there would be about 10-15 animals per herd, keeping them safer); although they appear to get on well with Ann and Carl's horse, and are often happy to share pasture with other animals such as llamas, too.

Alpacas have only bottom teeth, so they "snip" the grass, and rather than having hooves as one might expect, alpacas have two-toed padded feet instead—both these characteristics result in a type of livestock much kinder on pasture than sheep or cattle. And then there's their highly versatile fleece, which due to the absence of oil (lanolin in sheep's wool) is actually hypo-allergenic—and has many uses.

The Bradburys have recently brought a fiber artist and designer onboard: she works with the animals' fleeces as well as creating her own jewelry and accessories. The products are then sold



at the farm's store and through consignments.

"There are 22 colors," Carl explains, referring not to the artist's dyes but to the natural shades of the alpacas' fleeces. It's little surprise, then, that alpaca fiber is often not dyed at all. Many of the Ridge Valley alpacas display interesting and unusual colors—one sports multi-colored spots while another appears to have just had a new cut, color and blow-dry.

Despite the many uses for alpaca fiber, and the fact that it is fast becoming a highly sought-after and fashionable product, this is not where the money is. Indeed, the Bradburys explain, the fiber produced from a single alpaca is only enough to pay for food and upkeep of that animal for a year. Nice to have an animal that pays for its own bed and breakfast, but the potential to make profit lies in the breeding: a good bloodline is highly desirable. A pregnant alpaca is worth more; and herd sires can be studded out to other farms for a price.

“I’m a city girl,” Ann laughs, recalling that recently she had to “help things along” between a couple of alpacas during a breeding encounter... “This is nothing like advertising!”

Ann and Carl speculate that more and more professionals from other fields seem to be investing in alpacas—“and it is an investment,”

adds Carl. Part of the reason may be that they are an easy animal to care for. They tend to be remarkably healthy, only needing shots once a year. Because of their padded feet, they don’t suffer with foot problems as sheep do, and neither do they require a great deal of land. Another alpaca bonus is that their toileting

habits are clean and tidy, as they prefer to use only one or two spots in the pasture to “go” in. While the photographer is clicking away, an almost all-black alpaca is nudging Ann’s shoulder—as if admiring her soft gray shawl; crafted from alpaca fiber, of course. “What’s up, girl?” Ann calls to the animal.



More about Alpacas:

- In 1998, it was ruled that alpacas could no longer be imported to the US, rendering the stock already in the nation all the more valuable
- Owning alpacas may provide tax breaks such as capital gains advantages
- Unlike sheep, there is no oil in an alpaca’s fleece, making it hypo-allergenic
- Alpacas communicate by humming
- Crimp, density and luster are qualities of alpaca fiber
- A baby alpaca is called a cria
- The gestation period of an alpaca is 11 months; they have one cria each year
- There are two breeds: the huacaya (as pictured) and the suri (long-haired)
- Alpacas can be trained to be led on a halter—making a great first-time 4-H project

For more information, visit Ann and Carl’s website at www.alpacarancher.net and the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association (AOBA) website, www.alpacainfo.com

These are not shy creatures, although they aren’t lap pets either, despite how they look. They’re extremely inquisitive, gentle, and possess a certain kind of haughtiness. Their up-turned mouths make them appear almost smug, but that might be because they know who’s in charge on this photo shoot—and although Ann and Carl might have run a tight ship on the magazine, their “babies” are calling the shots right now.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Bon Nadau! ARANÉS

Bones Navidaes & Gayoleru anu nuevu! ASTURIAN

Shuvo Baro Din — Shuvo Nabo Barsho BENGALI

Danistayohihv & Aliheli’sdi Itse Udetiyvsadisv CHEROKEE

Hoesenestotse & Aa’e Emona’e CHEYENNE

Sretan Bozic CROATIAN

Glædelig Jul og godt nytår DANISH

Vrolijk Kersfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar! DUTCH

Colo sana wintom tiebeen EGYPTIAN

Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année! FRENCH

Gilotsavt Krist’es Shobas & Gilosavt akhal ts’els GEORGIAN

Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein glückliches Neues Jahr! GERMAN

Kala Christougenna Ki’effihismenos O Kenourios Chronos GREEK

Mele Kalikimaka & Hauoli Makahiki Hou HAWAIIAN

Mo’adim Lesimkha. Shanah Tova HEBREW

Nollaig Shona Dhuit IRISH

Shinnen omedeto. Kurisumasu Omedeto JAPANESE

Kung His Hsin Nien bing Chu Shen Tan MANDARIN

Craciun fericit si un An Nou fericit! ROMANIAN

Pozdrevlyayu s prazdnikom Rozhdestva i s Novim Godom RUSSIAN

Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo SPANISH