

Alpacas and llamas finally get livestock status, funding opportunity in Ohio

Posted By [Andrea Zippay](#) On May 15, 2008 @ 12:07 am In [Top Stories](#), [News](#) | [No Comments](#)

SALEM, Ohio — Ohio truly is 'the heart of it all,' especially if you're an alpaca breeder.

The Buckeye State is home to 17,000 alpacas — the biggest state herd in the nation. And nationally, breeders and backyard enthusiasts own 93,000 of the fuzzy animals, according to one Ohio legislator's research.

Now, at least in Ohio, alpacas and their camelid cousins, llamas, have taken a step up by being recognized under the state's definition of 'livestock.'

The change in status is a result of [1] [legislation](#) proposed by Strongsville Rep. Tom Patton and signed into law May 7.

Right here. Aside from an impressive state herd size, Ohio is also home to two major alpaca shows, including the Buckeye Alpaca Show in early May and Alpaca-Fest in the fall, according to Patton legislative aide Nathanael Jonhenry.

"When you hear the numbers and see how popular they are here, it kind of makes sense and is a selling point to get the legislation through," Jonhenry said.

A little help. The legislation, aimed at giving llamas and alpacas "equal footing" with other types of animals already recognized by the state as livestock — beef and dairy cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry and rabbits — was proposed by a Cleveland-area constituent, according to Jonhenry.

"He was having difficulty with the state and asked if we could possibly help get [llamas and alpacas] recognized under state code," Jonhenry said. "It's not our forte, but we told him we'd do our best."

Involved. The animals' change in status to 'livestock' now qualifies breeders and enthusiasts for financial assistance for exhibitions at the state fairgrounds; requires them to follow state livestock requirements at exhibitions; governs their numbers in concentrated animal feeding facilities; and oversees licensure of dealers and registration of livestock brands.

Llamas and "alpacas are a growing, profitable farming venture in Ohio. Now they're finally being recognized for it," said department of agriculture spokesperson Cindy Brown. "It's a good thing for all of agriculture."

Article printed from Farm and Dairy - The Auction Guide and Rural Marketplace:
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[1] legislation: http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=127_HB_352