

**Close to Home...**

Mary Ann Cerullo

**Llamas**

(continued from last week.)

Something tells me that somewhere out there, there just may be one or two folks who just can't be bothered with sunburnt shoulders, padded belts, and top-heavy packs that accompany many backpacking trips these days.

Well, I've got just the ticket for you:

Llamas.

That's right, those funny, four-legged creatures with pointed-fingernailed feet, a camel face, and rabbit ears. They may not be your first choice for a house pet, but they sure are handy on the trail.

I'm not joking. One mustn't make light of an animal who manages to carry 60 to 80 pounds of camping gear and still is light on his feet.

One of the positive aspects about the llama is that with their deft two-toed feet they keep an easy prancing pace of two or three miles per hour without damaging the fragile terrain which other pack animals are known to do.

They don't kick or spook and are easily controlled. What's also handy is their low intake of food and water. Plus, llama fur is thick, providing protection from both heat and cold and, at the same time a perfect pad for its back.

Llamas make "going back to nature" an easy, comfortable experience for those who would rather not be their own pack animal. They also make it a pleasurable trip for families with children.

One thing about them that would be disconcerting for me though, is the heart failure I would have rounding a bend and coming nose to nose with the face of a woolly llama.

Have you ever met a llama by surprise while hiking in the Cascade Mountains? I wonder what our Northwest deer and elk must be thinking.

For those who are interested in "llama trips" in Oregon, here are two places I know of to contact: Llama Treks, Camp Polk Road, Sisters, OR 97759; and Inca Roads Trail Service, 800 Tyler Creek Road, Ashland, OR 97520.

**Farming high stress occupation, says OSU Extension specialist**

City dwellers who think life on the farm is free of stress need to take a closer look at their country brethren, points out Marcelle Straatman, Oregon State University Extension human development specialist.

Concern about weather, prices, equipment failure and "plain hard work" add to irritation and fatigue that may be masked from casual visitors or bank loan officers.

Today's farmers are managing large sums of money, being affected by events in other countries and trying to keep up with the latest advances in scientific and technological developments. Farming remains a dangerous occupation with a high risk of accidents.

Stress has its good points, the specialist points out, because the body's reaction to threats provides greater strength and faster reactions which are important to human safety and survival. After the threat is over, the body returns to normal.

However, in cases of mental threats or prolonged stress, "stress energy" is not used for physical exertion. The strain on the body continues and fatigue or serious illness can result.

Among farmers, it's reasonable to suspect that the most stress comes not from the daily possibility of physical harm, but because of concern about unresolved issues and worry about whether or not they made the right choices.

Like others, farmers carry many problems with them, rather than finishing them off, Mrs. Straatman notes.

A check of behavior and attitudes likely would show that concerns or "stressors" fall into categories seldom recognized or dealt with such as anger, fear and resentment. Like many, farmers go along without taking action to resolve fears, over-load and under-load, technological and life changes, and other uncertainties.

Some scientists investigating the problems of stress point out that it can prompt creative thinking that finds inventive ways to handle troubling situations. But when many things go wrong at once or over a long time, body defenses weaken.

Not every farmer reacts to stress in the same way. Each judges stress according to how serious the problems seem to them. Some people seem to be "stress seekers" who function best when time and pressure are most intense. Others just don't get as worked up.

The individual's belief system will determine how stressful a situation is. If a farmer thinks farming is boring and unrewarding, then each new stressor adds fresh insult to an already troublesome burden, Mrs. Straatman explains.

If the farmer finds his work challenging and rewarding, problems are more quickly resolved. They are just part of the job.

No one has "magic coping skills," the specialist emphasizes. Most people have not learned how to use or control stress to keep life on a steady course.

The mis-use of stress energy is evident in the drug industry that supplies billions of drugs to keep people in low gear and in vitamins to pep them up, even though no drug or vitamin has ever solved a stressful problem, she points out.

As stress multiplies, accidents are more likely to happen. When the stress cycle gets rolling, it's important to resolve as many issues as possible, control what's possible to control and forget what's not important now, the specialist advises.

A 1979 survey of Iowa farmers revealed that stress was not intense enough for most to impair their health. However, the unpredictables in their work exaggerated tendencies toward insomnia, habitual smoking, heavy drinking, irritability and restlessness, all of which interfered with judgement, job performance and family relations.

Because each farmer has a different tolerance level, effects of stress are hard to measure. However, each person seems to have a point at which excessive stress takes its toll in lower job performance and vigor.

The farmers said that the amount of stress depends on how important an incident is to them, how many things are happening at once and how long the unwanted situation continues.

They know they are stressed when they feel vague physical discomfort, have emotional outbursts, are unable to relax, experience mental confusion or have periods of anxiety and depression. Some feel tired and apathetic.

The top stressors reported by the Iowa farmers were death of a spouse or near relative, days when nothing goes right, machinery breakdown, disease outbreak, death of a valuable animal, loss of help or no help when needed, high debt load, production loss to disease or insects, poor cash flow, weather-caused delays, government regulations, uncertain crop yields and balancing work with family responsibilities.

More than 50 percent of the men and women in the study reported using a combination of strategies to combat stress. They leave a problem, change their attitude, resort to a hobby or recreational activity, or sleep and relax. Leaving a problem means that the situation has little significance in relation to survival.

Underlying most mental stress is a resistance to change, Mrs. Straatman believes. Change is constant and adaptation is a stressful process.

Farmers can never be totally prepared for change because each day calls for new creative action. Farmers develop a high level of useful sensitivity to threatening situations, but this sensitivity can cause them to exaggerate a danger or lose sight of the fact that a real threat may not exist, that they can choose to avoid it, or counter-balance it with alternative actions.

"Choosing a way to handle today's stressors will not take care of tomorrow's, but the blueprint for stress management can be called upon daily to meet new and different situations," Mrs. Straatman pointed out.

**Mary Bryant feted upon retirement**



Mary Bryant (center), Bill Kuhn (left), Bob Abrams, Debbie Young and Shirley Connor

Upon her retirement Mary Bryant, Heppner, was honored with a party by friends and co-workers last Thursday.

Cake and punch were served to over 32 guests at the law offices of Abrams and Kuhn, where Mrs. Bryant has worked for the past 13 years.

Asked what she would do now that she is retired, Mrs. Bryant said, "Relax and enjoy life."

In addition to her employment at Abrams and Kuhn, she also worked nine years at the Morrow County Courthouse, and three years for the Morrow County School district.

**46 participants enjoy reading program**

Forty six participants of the lone summer library program received a certificate of participation at the closing party held Friday at 2 p.m. The Rev. Cathy Barker entertained with group music.

McDonalds of Pendleton gave hamburger, French fry and shake passes in cooperation with summer library programs. Special awards of passes

were given to the following outstanding participants: Pre-school - Dan Beck; Grade 1 - Danielle Stefani; Grade 2 - Nancy Morter; Grade 3 - Terry Clough; Grade 4 - Rollin Bradfield; Grade 5 - Jill Nelson; Grades 6 - 9 - Ashley Conklin.

Jerry Anderson won the search for the lost planet, by locating the planet.

Besides all 46 children receiving a certificate of participation, 20 other individual passes were given in special areas, such as reading the most fiction or nonfiction books, or writing the most book reviews, attendance, etc., in each grade. In all, 202 non-fiction books and 125 fiction books were read and 114 book reviews were written during the program.

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