

Opening eyes to alpacas

ALPACA studs across Australia will open their farm gates to the public as part of National Alpaca Week from May 2 to 10.

This week of activity, organised by the Australian Alpaca Association (AAA), will celebrate 21 years of alpaca breeding in Australia.

It is also an ideal opportunity to celebrate the International Year of Natural Fibres, in which the United Nations is seeking a

worldwide promotion of the use of natural rather than synthetic fibres.

Secretary of the AAA Hawkesbury/Blue Mountains Region, Sue Maynard, said a range of exciting events had been planned in her area of the Hills and Hawkesbury, on the outskirts of Sydney.

"Some of the finest alpacas will be competing in the prestigious Hawkesbury Show on Saturday, May 2, at the Hawkesbury Showground, Clarendon," she said.

"This is a great way to see just how much the industry has progressed in the past two decades.

"After the show and also on Sunday, May 3, visitors will be able to meet

with some of the exhibitors and get to know more about this fascinating industry.

"Additionally a number of local breeders will be conducting open days in the week following the show."

Secretary of the AAA Southern Region, Jim Styles, said aside from 40 or so alpaca studs in the region which would be opening their doors to the public during the week, the highlight would be the EPIC Alpaca weekend.

About 300 or 400 alpacas were expected to be on display or for sale on May 9 and 10 at Exhibition Park in Canberra.

Mr Styles said the event had been held for the past couple of years with much success – "basically encouraging people to come out and get hands on with alpacas".

The Central Coast and Hunter Region would have a

range of displays at Tocal Field Days on May 2 and 3, as well as at Sherwood Estate Winery, Kempsey, and Ghinni Ghinni Winery, Taree, both on May 2, and at the Wool Expo in Armidale on May 9 and 10.

The region's secretary, Sandra Vella, said the displays would include alpacas for people to look at, alpaca merchandise and spinning demonstrations.

But mostly breeders would be on-hand "armed with information" to share.

During National Alpaca Week every State in which alpacas were farmed (NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) would be hosting open days, educational events and opportunities for potential breeders to learn more.

■ **For a full list of the studs open across the country visit www.alpaca.asn.au**

