

Love matters at Galston

ASK Sue Maynard why she chose alpacas and the answer comes back quickly – “for the same reason as everybody else; I fell in love”.

“They are so beautiful, low maintenance, environmentally friendly and because the industry has a great future,” she says.

Running about 140 Huacayas on 162 hectares (400 acres) at Running Stream and two hectares (five acres) at Galston, she has the full gamut of colours, including white, fawn, grey and black.

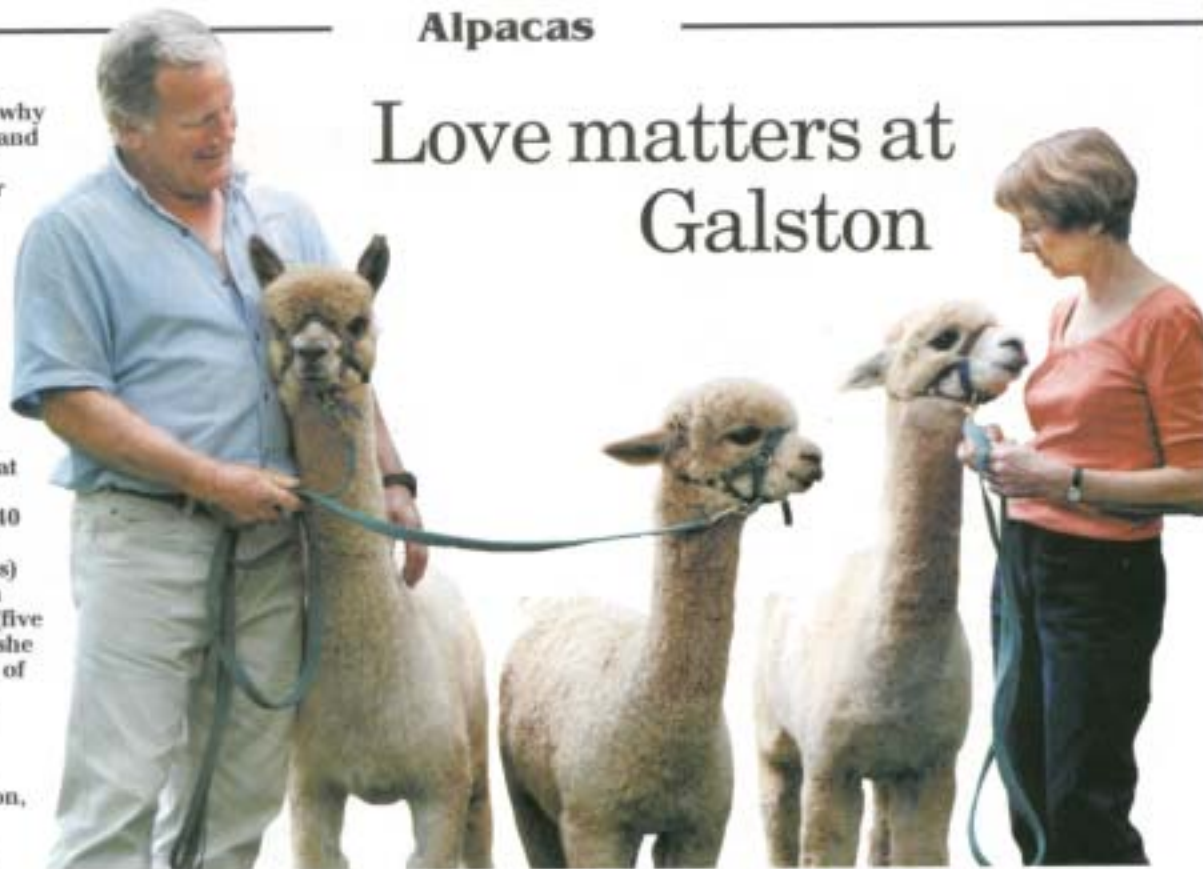
And like many others in her region, the stud –

Gunnamatta, run by herself and John Hay (pictured with Ms Maynard) – will be taking part in alpaca week, which will run from May 2 to 10.

Gunnamatta will have a range of alpacas on display at the Galston property on Saturday and Sunday, May 9 and 10, from 10am to 4pm.

Ms Maynard's love affair started in 1993 with one animal she had agisted.

Soon that one animal was seven and she moved to Galston.



And while she only ever planned on having “20 or 30” of the animals, it kept growing and the property at Running Stream was established, which Mr Hay manages.

They were currently trying to breed greys because spinners liked the grey fleece, Ms Maynard said.

“The fibre industry likes to buy as much white as they can but also likes colours because they don't have to dye it.”

Mr Hay said while alpacas would never “catch” the Merino industry because of numbers, alpacas were still a good option and were becoming more and more affordable.

But, he said the top of the range animals were still attracting a premium price.

“Average price at the national sale last year was almost the same as the first ever auction,” he said.

“It's just today you can buy a high quality animal

for less than 10 years ago.

“Today we castrate males that five or 10 years ago would have been broadribbon winners.”

He said the quality had increased so much that today just to get “brought forward” by the judge at a show was an achievement.

Ms Maynard said Gunnamatta had always managed to take home a ribbon – so they “must be doing something right”.

– KIM CHAPPELL