

SHIRLEY BETTINSON

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In 1997 my husband and I established Toft Alpacas by investing our money and dreams in four pregnant females. Since then we have selected and imported alpacas from Peru, Australia and the USA to improve and maintain the quality of our herd, evaluating and developing our breeding programme at every stage to now farm over 100 alpacas.

I have always been a dedicated supporter of the show ring believing that it provides a wonderful showcase for exhibiting the progress of the UK National Herd. Over the last 25 years I have been very active in regional and national alpaca events and was delighted to chair the committee at the BAS 2012 World Alpaca Conference. I have thoroughly enjoyed every opportunity to take various roles in alpaca shows including chief steward, commentating and the organising of the 2012 World Fleece Show.

My husband Rob Bettinson has been a judge for over fifteen years and in our travels I have had the privilege of being his "companion animal" in observing and supporting him at many shows across the country and in Europe. My education in alpacas has been coloured by countless seminars, courses and lectures including those by Marty McGee, Cameron Holt and Brett Kaysen and my own personal highlight was the Peruvian Alpaca Fiesta in Arequipa.

Having nurtured a large creative family, alongside running a very busy farm, it is only now they have finally flown the nest that I have the time to dedicate myself to more of a public alpaca role and in 2012 qualified as a BAS judge.

I have loved the opportunity to see both Suri and Huacaya alpacas in the show ring. I have judged both halter and fleece shows in numerous counties from North to South throughout the UK. I have also enjoyed enormously my International invitations to judge shows in Eire, Erfurt and Dresden in Germany, Santander in Spain, Oslo in Norway and Macon in France.