

FASHION

A sweater named Antero



TANNIS TOOHEY/TORONTO STAR

Ontario alpaca farmers are leading the slow-fashion movement by telling knitters whose fleece they're buying

LEANNE DELAP
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

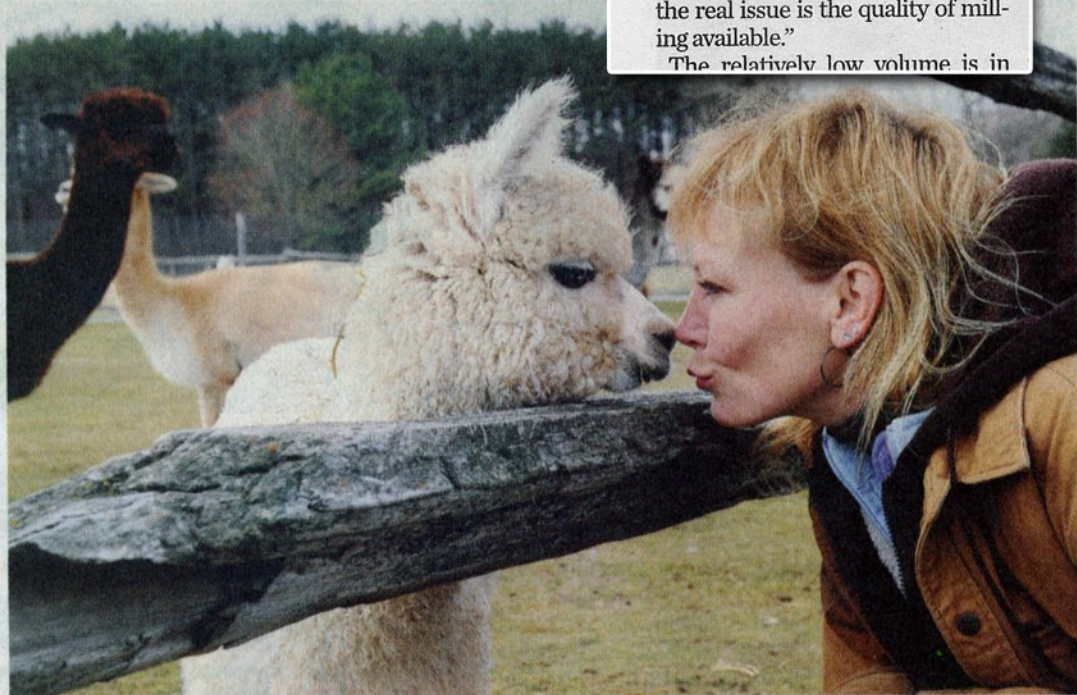
Antero is a handsome white alpaca, the son of Antoinette and Wildheart, born just four months ago on the Uxbridge farm of Lori Jones and Tom Vanhanen.

He is just one young alpaca among 100 — half members of the Arriba Linea herd, the rest agisted (the alpaca farming term for boarding).

There's Athena, a tall grey four year old. And an affectionate little white guy named Presley, just five months. BB is a tall brown lady of seven, and on this day she's hanging with Lazaro, another alpaca toddler.

Most, though, are blondes like Cortez, a big three year old, though there are a few blacks and browns and Appaloosas thrown in the mix.

A couple of animals in the herd



on this day.

Alpaca has grown very popular among knitters, says Nicole Sibonney, the owner of Americo Originals, a luxury yarn and fabric importer with a flagship shop on Queen Street West. "It is very warm and lightweight," she says. Think of how these animals keep warm skittering over the Peruvian mountains. "I still source and manufac-



Alpacas have proved to be great travellers, adapting to wherever they've been shipped

ture my alpaca from Peru," Sibonney says. "The fibre produced here is very good and becoming consistent, but the volume is not huge and the real issue is the quality of milling available."

The relatively low volume is in

have nutty splotches like Holsteins. They produce a beautiful grey fleece.

They are engaging creatures, no doubt. And their owners hope that in addition to being an exotic choice of Southern Ontario herd animal they will one day be a lucrative one as well.

The Arriba Linea herd is at the forefront of the emerging slow fashion movement. Jones and

Vanhanen, and Lori's sister, Janet Jones, have hit upon the novel idea of packaging their alpaca yarn according to specific members of the herd.

Thus, clients can knit a sweater entirely from Cortez's fleece, perhaps make a cap made out of Athena yarn or fashion gloves from Lazaro.

Above: Janet Jones of Arriba Linea shares a moment with Presley, a five-month-old male. Top: Antero, four months old, chews on a piece of straw at the Arriba Linea farm in Uxbridge.

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