

The 2014 Backcountry Llama Association Pacific Northwest Rendezvous was for the first time hosted outside of Estacada, Oregon at the beautiful Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch the last weekend of June. Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch is a 50 acre estate with on-site camping facilities, hiking trails, creek, and lots of llamas. Weather was nice – mostly cloudy and mild – though did display decreasing rain showers leading into it Wednesday through Friday.

Moving the venue each year does provide varied opportunity for new experiences and travel, but does require considerable information gathering and preparation that doesn't carry forward from one year to the next. It is made possible by the many helping hands that prepare for the annual event. Sincere thanks go out to the people willing to contribute the time and effort to help promote the working llama and, as it turned out, to quickly adapt to changing conditions.

With the event officially scheduled to begin on Friday, over thirty people and forty llamas began gathering as early as Wednesday, coming from as far as central California and Montana. With last minute packing our departure was planned for Wednesday morning, but circumstances arose to delay those plans. One of our resident llamas was due to give birth and kept hinting for days beforehand that it was imminent. She waited until early Wednesday morning. Instead of dropping the cria in the pasture as is typical, she decided to do so inside a shelter. Scott found the baby girl crumpled in the corner of the shelter behind a fan, unable to move.



Extricating her, she appeared normal except for a limp right rear leg – apparently injured.

A vet was summoned as we cared for her. The diagnosis was nerve impingement, possibly accompanied by the effects of temporary circulatory restriction. The cria had considerable difficulty nursing with only three functional legs and required light support of the knee to provide sufficient stability to dock with the teats. She otherwise appeared healthy and full of vitality and the dam had milk. This would require around-the-clock feeding assistance, which we had to quickly organize among a number of people working in shifts while we were away. With those arrangements made and a follow-up vet check scheduled, we were able to depart Wednesday afternoon.

With two vehicles, a trailer and five llamas, the trip was relatively uneventful. Thursday morning, the plan was for Gayle to spend the day shopping for supplies and setting up while Scott spent the day at Milo McIver Park laying out the courses for the scheduled Pack Llama Trial Association (PLTA) pack trials. These plans were thwarted by a small bee. Gayle, allergic to bee stings, was stung on a finger. After self-medication appeared to be insufficient, her shopping trip, with Sherri Tallman at the helm, diverted to the urgent care clinic.

Administered epinephrine, she then had an adverse reaction to the drug, which was later determined to be an overdose for her. Due to the side effects of the treatment, she was transferred to the hospital, transported by Joyce O'Halloran, admitted for the day and overnight. Meanwhile Sherri took the shopping list and tended to the supplies while others, including the youth, assisted in preparing for the influx of attendees. Lisa Wolf arrived Thursday to assist in obstacle creation and course certification.

Friday was pack trial manageability and llama + gear weigh-ins, leading into the rendezvous kick-off early evening. With 15 llamas registered for trials, this took some time. Reporters from the [Estacada News](#) and the Oregonian showed up during the day to gather information, as well as the film crew for the [Llama Nation documentary](#) currently in production. As is normally the case at rendezvous, there was plenty of good food available with potatoes baked in the wood-fired oven and a variety of toppings and side dishes.

Portable panels were available to contain llamas so they didn't have to be tied out, which a few people took advantage of, as well as a nearby barn. But what's a llama gathering without a little llama excitement? Our four boys included Rowdy the Jailbreaker. In the middle of the night he dislodged a panel and our one intact male Mr. T made it as far as the nearby neighboring pen to serenade the girls within. The three geldings wandered off to find some lush grass to help themselves to. All were easily caught and led back to their pen, now with the interlocking panels also tied together.

Saturday morning, following a hearty breakfast and build-your-own sack lunch, the assemblage relocated itself to the nearby Milo McIver park, which went smoothly. Situated adjacent to the Clackamas River, this 952 acre park includes equestrian trails, amenities and the big "bat barn". Based at the south gazebos, the pack trials got underway which went without incident and provided the film crew with more footage. The llamas did great. The weather was nice, partly cloudy, no rain and not too hot or cold. Afterwards, there were llamas driving the grounds, a leave-no-trace seminar by Debby Langley-Boyer, PLTA mileage program discussion by Carolyn Mathews, and the introduction and participation in a proposed new PLTA program dubbed the PLTA Challenge, led by Anne Sheeter. It works similarly to a PLTA pack trial except that instead of pass/fail on a fixed length certified course the llama gets points for obstacles (based on difficulty and safe completion) and distance completed on a certified course. It's a less structured trial, sort of a hybridization of the pack trial and the mileage club. Feedback was solicited on how the program should work. There was also discussion of a proposed GeoLlama program – a geocaching program with a twist. You find the hidden geocache treasure or obstacle and can take a picture there with your llama for credit in the program.

Upon return to Hidden Oaks, people eagerly fed the wood fired oven with their self-made personal pizzas, with choice of four doughs, two sauces and many toppings, and just about finished off the homemade root beer. Show-and-tell followed with creative creations and new backcountry products. Scott also shared information regarding the risk of hemorrhagic diseases in llamas. Time was spent around a large campfire and the youth had fun with the glow sticks and other "toys".

Sunday was a relatively unstructured day that included clean-up and packing for the post-rendezvous pack trip in the nearby Mt. Hood Wilderness area. The post-rendezvous trip is intended to be a relatively easy overnight or multi-day pack experience suitable for less experienced or investigative handlers.

Llamas are provided for those without. Eleven people and eleven llamas spent 2-3 days at Twin Lakes. Two new inflatable rafts were packed in so considerable time was spent on the lake. A rope swing is located in a deep section of a lake not far from the camp area which provided more time in the water. Daytime weather was mostly sunny and in the upper 70's F – just about perfect, though the nights cooled down. The water was remarkably warm on the surface, at least near the shoreline.

We would have liked to stay longer but our new cria and work demands required a return



home. The trip home was uneventful.

Thanks go out to all the many participants whose continued support makes rendezvous possible. Stay tuned for next year. Also, PLTA pack trials this fall at Cutsforth Park, Oregon is a possibility if enough interest is expressed. Let us know.

Oh, and the cria with the injured leg? Rose Bud is doing just fine now.