

A DAY AT THE FAIR

by

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Ever been to a fair? Up to a short while ago I would have had to answer No. Now I can tell you about my day at a fair and all the wonderful things I saw and learnt.

But let's start at the beginning. It all began when my boss intensified my halter training and that of some of my friends (well, in some cases maybe I better refer to them as colleagues). I am three years old and live with a group of other one to three year olds in one of my boss's stables at Poggio Piero (see where the first part of my name comes from? The second part I'm told is the name of a famous Italian driver of racing cars, whatever this means). Anyhow, he took me on continuously longer walks away from the stables and pastures, until we finally made it to the other side of the big stable, where he himself lives (together with that dog, that is a pain in the neck). His wife then came outside and took some pictures.



As you can see I am quite wellbehaved. It's not my fault that I am spotted and therefore not really appreciated as an „improver“ of my race. Oh well! I'll tell you later on more about this.

I did my best to please my boss. I don't know how all the others fared. Only Enzo, my white colleague, told me one evening that he had jumped straight into the ditch beside the road because a car racing by had frightened him so much. Then one day I heard the boss say to Esther: „Let's' do a trial run“. Shortly afterwards he drove his car and what he referred to as a horsebox into the field near our stable, and four of us had to get into the horsebox. I didn't really like this at all, and I felt claustrophobic when the tailgate closed behind us. Then we were taken for a drive. I don't know how long this lasted and where we were taken. When the tailgate opened again we, to our great relief, were back near our stable. „This went quite well“, my boss said. „Now we are ready!“. Ready for what?, I wondered.

Soon after, the boss brought us breakfast earlier than usual. It was actually still dark. Then he put on the halters, and led us to, and into the horsebox. This appeared to develop into something altogether more serious than the „trial run“. Where the hell were we going?

After what felt like hours, although I heard my boss saying half an hour, we came to a halt, and shortly afterwards the tailgate opened. A short glance was enough! I was in shock! What in god's name was this supposed to be? The place was full of cows, bulls with long horns, bloody goats and sheep, horses, pigs and something that somebody referred to as a wild boar. What were we to do here? No other alpaca to be seen anywhere! Was this the Ghirlanda Fair my boss had mentioned? Thank you very much! Let's close this tailgate again and go home! But the boss obviously had other ideas. Half we were dragged, half we jumped out of the trailer and were lead into an enclosure, next to, would you believe it, two mighty big cows. The first time I had ever seen a cow in my life, and thentwo of them and that close. The others in our small group couldn't believe what they saw either. Fortunately they were not the ones with the long horns. Man, was I glad! On the other hand, I quite liked the men riding the horses, at least as long as they didn't come too close.



And then there were all these people. Millions. Fat, thin, tall, and small ones. All wanting to know what we were and where we came from. Good thinking on the part of my boss to put up some pictures and written information about us. Like this he did not have to answer all the questions personally.



„Does the meat taste OK?“ Was I glad when the boss told them that we were not born to be eaten! That we were here mainly to give pleasure. Right he is! And all these women with their kids! „Watch out!“, „They are dangerous!“, „They spit!“, „They are Llamas!“. Me a Llama? Me spitting? Are you kidding? Ah well, I do have to agree with my boss: we do sometimes spit a bit, but only amongst ourselves, or when somebody really annoys us. So, mums, better keep the bloody kids away from us! So the day went on, we finally all got a bit tired, and I sympathised with the boss when he declared that now he needed a beer (his wife even needed a bottle of wine). I took another sip of water.



There were only two more moments when I got really, or at least a bit, frightened. One was when somebody asked how much I cost. Man! Was I glad when I heard my boss say that I wasn't for sale, that I was his favourite, despite of not being a good fibre animal because of my big white spots. Right he is! The other was when one of the horses fell out of the truck, and I thought it had broken it's neck. Fortunately this wasn't the case, it was reloaded and the truck drove off.

Then came the best bit: The boss's wife won a cup. Strange. She still wonders whether it was for her or for our good behaviour. What a question!

Then it was time to go home. The four of us were so tired that we entered the trailer without the normal fuss, and the boss said that he was really glad, and that he was as tired as we were. And his wife agreed. I was really glad when the tailgate opened again and our stable was still there, complete with all the friends and colleagues that had stayed behind. We really had to tell them some stories. Now I know what boy scouts mean, when they say after returning from camping in their tents: „Tired, but enriched by many valuable experiences, we finally reached home“.

After dinner I immediately fell asleep, dreaming of cattle, horses, all the other animals, and millions of people asking billions of questions. And to top it all, everybody considering me the cutest thing at the fair. I quite liked the experience of a day at the Ghirlanda Fair, and the frightening or shocking bits are not that bad anylonger, seen from a distance. I can recommend such a trip to any Italian alpaca. My boss seems to think the same. There was great interest shown by the, rather poorly informed public, and it would be great if other breeders around the country would make the effort and attend local fairs, in order to make alpacas better known around the country. And to tell everybody that we are not just fibre animals, but that we make great companion animals, whether or not we are spotted. And to also tell people that we do not like to be alone, that we definitely prefer to live in a group, even if small, with others of our kind.

For the moment I'm content with my life at Poggio Piero. Maybe I'll tell you about another exciting trip some other time. Who knows?

Yours,

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