

## What Does "Suri" Mean?

by Andy Tillman

In the winter of 1995 while screening our Bolivian suri alpacas, Dr. Murray Fowler asked me if I knew where the word "suri" came from.

The origin of the word was unknown to any of us in quarantine. I decided to find out by asking our Bolivian herdsman.

After interviewing half a dozen Aymara and Quechua speaking herdsman, a consensus was reached that "suri" was an Aymara rather than a Quechua word.

The Aymara people are predominantly found in Bolivia and Chile. The Aymara were known as weavers in the Inca Empire.

Many of you will remember our herdsman, Waldo. Waldo grew up in an Aymara speaking household. According to Waldo, "suri" is an adjective which can be applied to anything that is straight. Rain that fell straight down was suri. So were the feathers of the South American Rhea. And the Pan Pipes of the Andean reed flute. All three of these analogies were used to describe what it meant to be "suri."

The likeness of the Pan Pipes to the locks of a suri alpaca is particularly convincing.

This is hardly an exhaustive study of the origin of the word suri, but so far, is the only answer to Dr. Fowler's question I have ever encountered. Until proven otherwise, it appears that suri comes from the Aymara language, and means "straight."