

# USYAKS: A Science-Based Registry

## Feature Photo!



Aragon  
Smiling Buddha Yaks

## What's in this issue?

- A note from the president
- NWSS Results and Photos!
- **Deafness Testing Report!**
- Thank you for your help!
- Announcements & Updates
  - **EHD Reminder!!!**



## Newsletter Special NWSS 2022 Edition

Una Taylor, Editor

### A note from the president

Welcome to the special National Western Stock Show special edition of the USYAKS Newsletter. Members of USYAKS gathered in Denver, January 19-23 for a variety of yak events. Here's an outline of some of what happened.

On the science front, Dr. George Strain, Professor of Neuroscience from LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine joined us to perform hearing testing on some of our royal yaks. Members of IYAK also provided some yaks for this clinical study. Dr. Strain was able to confirm that deafness is present in some royal yaks, something that has been known to some yak breeders, but has never been documented. Dr. Strain has written a short article on his findings, which is included later in this Newsletter.

Thanks to the generosity of Star Yak Ranch, who donated a 20-foot diameter yurt to the Association, we had a fabulous venue in which to house the Fiber Arts Contest and display yak fiber products. The yurt was a big success attracting many visitors coming in to see what yak fiber was like and to purchase some yak products.

Additionally, there were a variety of educational seminars available to attendees. Terri Bowen Lindley gave a halter training session. Jeremiah Walker offered instruction and demonstration on the topic of trekking. Kat Tylee spoke on the fiber testing study. Dr. Tim Holt coordinated a valuable veterinary medicine presentation.

There were competitions in yak conformation, "on-the-animal" fiber evaluation as well as fiber arts.

Members had some fun leading (or attempting to lead) yaks on the obstacle course and participated in the masquerade parade, which followed a path nearly a half-mile long! The masquerade parade was clearly a big hit, with many people taking photos and enjoying the spectacle of yaks festooned in a myriad of costumes along with their owners.

Many of us who attended the stock show don't get to see each other except once each year at this event; in spite of the hectic nature of this experience, it was gratifying to visit with fellow yak owners and great fun to swap yak stories with fellow yak lovers!



# National Western Stock Show 2022

## Masquerade Parade!

Sunshine wins First Place!





Grooming! 😊



Hearing Testing... 😬



Fiber Stuff! 😊



# Obstacle Course!



# Packing!



Halter



Training with Terri!



Around the Stock Yards...



## 2022 NWSS RESULTS

### CHAMPIONS:

#### Pen Evaluation

Grand Champion Yak Female:  
 CCY John Deere, Casper Creek Yaks  
 Reserve Grand Champion Yak Female:  
 SBY Laila, Smiling Buddha Yaks  
 Grand Champion Hybrid Female:  
 AWY Silver  
 Reserve Grand Champion Hybrid Female:  
 AWY Snow Princess  
 Grand Champion Hybrid Male:  
 AWY Jack, American White Yaks  
 Grand Champion Yak Male:  
 SBY Ralph, Smiling Buddha Yaks  
 Reserve Grand Champion Yak Male:  
 CCY Bo-Jangles, Casper Creek Yaks

#### Cow/(Nursing Calf) Pair

1<sup>st</sup>: AWY Silver/AWY Platinum,  
 American White Yaks

#### Halter Show

Grand Champion Male:  
 HSY Finn, Corinna and Pat Schade  
 Reserve Grand Champion Male:  
 HSY Alistair, Hay Springs Yaks  
 Grand Champion Female:  
 HSY Freden, Hay Springs Yaks  
 Reserve Grand Champion Female:  
 PWY Timber, Prairie Wind Yaks

#### Fiber Show

Grand Champion:  
 HSY Dobson, Hay Springs Yaks  
 Reserve Grand Champion:  
 FCY Charlie, Hay Springs Yaks

#### High Point

High Point Champion:  
 HSY Dobson, Hay Springs Yaks

### HALTER SHOW RIBBONS

#### Spring Heifer Calf

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY The Duchess,  
 Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: HSY Matilda, Hay Springs Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: BCR Jamie, Bow Creek Ranch

#### Summer Heifer Calf

1<sup>st</sup>: PWY Queen Bee, Prairie Wind Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: CCY Wrenlea, Casper Creek Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: WILY Sassy Lady, Pettee Ranch

#### Yearling Hybrid

1<sup>st</sup>: AWY Snow Princess,  
 American White Yaks

#### Spring Bull Calf

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Finn, Pat and Corinna Schade  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: HSY Dobson, Hay Springs Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: PWY Everest, Prairie Winds Yaks

#### Summer Bull Calf

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Bruno, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: BCR Brandon, Bow Creek Ranch  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: FRYC Atlas, Front Range Yakco

#### Fall Bull Calf

1<sup>st</sup>: CCY Lake, Casper Creek Yaks

#### Spring Yearling Heifer

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Miranda, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: WBF Taylor, One Lucky Bee  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: WBF Miley, One Lucky Bee

#### Fall Yearling Heifer

1<sup>st</sup>: AWY Faith, American White Yaks

#### Spring Yearling Bull

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Alistair, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: HSY Virgil, Hay Springs Yaks

#### Two-Year-Old Steer

1<sup>st</sup>: PWY Moose, Prairie Wind Yaks

#### Adult Steer

1<sup>st</sup>: CCY Bo-Jangles,  
 Casper Creek Yaks

#### Two-Year-Old Female

1<sup>st</sup>: PWY Timber, Prairie Wind Yaks

#### Adult Female

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Freden, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: CCY John Deere,  
 Casper Creek Yaks

3<sup>rd</sup>: PWY Tinley, Prairie Wind Yaks

#### Intermediate Showmanship

1<sup>st</sup>: Jessica Jacobs, Casper Creek Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: Nate Schultz, Prairie Wind Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: Dom Mandatta, Silver Cuff Farm

#### Advanced Showmanship

1<sup>st</sup>: Carlice Cutright,  
 Casper Creek Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mac Cutright, Casper Creek Yaks

### FIBER SHOW RIBBONS:

#### Fiber-on-the-Animal:

##### Yaks Under One Year of Age:

1<sup>st</sup>: HSY Dobson, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: WBY Ricky Martin, One Lucky  
 Bee  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: HSY Bruno, Hay Springs Yaks  
 4<sup>th</sup>: SBY Aragon, Smiling Buddha  
 Yaks  
 5<sup>th</sup>: HSY Sadie, Hay Springs Yaks

#### Fiber-on-the-Animal

##### Yaks One Year of Age and Older:

1<sup>st</sup>: FCY Charlie, Hay Springs Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: HSY Alistair, Hay Springs Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: WBY Taylor, One Lucky Bee  
 4<sup>th</sup>: AWY Faith, American White Yaks  
 5<sup>th</sup>: WBY Miley, One Lucky Bee

#### Fiber Arts

1<sup>st</sup>: Lee Ann Sours,  
 American White Yaks  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: Lou Ann Corda,  
 American White Yaks  
 3<sup>rd</sup>: Una Taylor, Hay Springs Yaks

## Deafness Testing of Yaks at the NWSS

George M. Strain, PhD

Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine

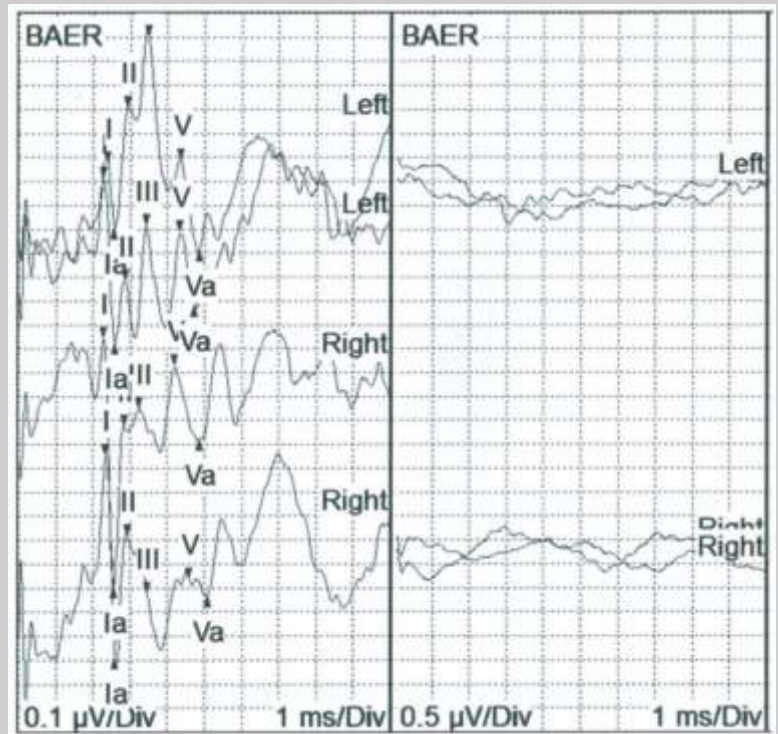
Domesticated North American yaks have pigmentation phenotypes (observable traits) that vary in the amount of white in the coat: Royals, Trims, and solid colored (Black Trim or Imperial Trim). The Royals are homozygous for the white recessive piebald gene locus, the Trim are heterozygous for piebald, and the solids do not carry the recessive gene. It is recognized in numerous species that white pigmentation can be associated with deafness, affecting one or both ears but causing total deafness in each affected ear.

Breeders have recognized deafness in North American yaks based on animal behavior, but the existence of the condition has not been previously verified by clinical electrodiagnostic testing. The goal of our study was to document the presence of deafness in North American yaks using the clinical animal hearing test known as the brainstem auditory evoked response (BAER).

The BAER utilizes four tiny needle electrodes in the skin: a ground on neck or snout, one on the center top of the head, and one in front of each ear canal. A click sound is directed into the ear canal and the electrodes detect the evoked electrical activity in the auditory pathway. After the responses to numerous stimuli are averaged, the result for a hearing ear is a pattern of peaks generated in the brainstem at expected latencies, the BAER; the result for a deaf ear is an essentially flat line.

Twelve yaks, ranging in age from 4 months to 8 years, consisting of 5 males and 8 females, and 11 Royal and one Trim phenotype, were tested at the January 2022 National Western Stock Show in Denver, CO. The Trim and five of the Royals heard in both ears. Three Royals were deaf in one ear and three were deaf in both ears. The figure shows duplicated BAER recordings from both ears of a bilaterally hearing 6-month-old female Royal yak (left) and a bilaterally deaf 19-month-old female Royal yak (right). Participants were encouraged to bring animals suspected of deafness, so these numbers are not a reliable estimate of deafness in North American Yaks. Likewise, it is not possible at this time to say whether deafness may occur in Trims.

The implication for breeders is essentially the need for cautious watchfulness. Unilaterally (deaf in one ear) deaf animals may exhibit difficulty localizing sound sources but their deficit will otherwise be undetected except by BAER testing. Bilaterally (deaf in both ears) deaf cows may exhibit inappropriate neglect of newborn calves that they do not hear. Similarly, bilaterally deaf calves may lose track of their mothers. Any bilaterally deaf yak would potentially be subject to undetected dangers such as predators or motor vehicles. However, ranches have few if any predators, the possibility of motor vehicle interactions is limited, and herd behavior would likely provide some safety for affected animals. Breeders would be advised to be alert to increased numbers of affected animals, as that would likely not be beneficial for the overall population. Inheritance of deafness in other species with pigment-associated deafness does not usually follow simple Mendelian genetics, so breeding advice is currently not possible, although deafness in a yak might be a negative factor in breeding decisions, all other things being equal. Pedigree analysis of affected animals and/or development of a DNA marker for carriers of a causative gene variant would be useful.



We hope to continue study of this condition in yaks to better understand it, and to ultimately be able to provide advice to breeders.



## Thank you for your help!

Because of your generous donations, **USYAKS** was able to do the following:

- Produce a beautiful 32-page color magazine that included informative articles, lots of great photos, full-page ads for participating ranches. This was distributed to the public at NWSS and will go a long way towards helping to market yaks.
- House the fiber show in a beautiful yurt. What could be better for displaying yak fiber products than in a Mongolian yurt!
- Offer great sessions at NWSS that served to inform attendees, expand knowledge about yaks, and pursue scientific study on a number of fronts, such as:
  - Hearing testing on royal color patterned yaks conducted by George Strain
  - Fiber Talk presented by Katrina Tylee
  - Fiber Collection for the ongoing yak fiber study
  - Halter training by Terri Bowen Lindley
  - Instruction on packing/trekking by Jeremiah Walker
  - Milking Demonstration by the Mandatta family
  - Presentations from veterinarians on the overall health and care of yaks as well as an in-depth look at EHD in yaks.



**WE THANK YOU!**



## Updates and Reminders!



### EHD Reminder!

The last two newsletters have included articles about EHD, a very serious disease for yaks. The experimental vaccine is only available in limited supply. The winter newsletter includes information about signing up for the vaccine. *You need to do this now, or it may be too late.*

The vaccine is available through Medgenelabs. Write to Ashley Petersen: [Ashley@Medgenelabs.com](mailto:Ashley@Medgenelabs.com) Alternatively, you may contact Ashley Petersen at (605) 692-1268.

Yaks are highly susceptible to EHD and can die relatively quickly from this disease. In the long term, it can also significantly reduce fertility in your herd, cause loss of fiber, and the sloughing of toenails. I've attached a couple of photos of EHD toenails, four months after infection.



Fiber Study continues...send your fiber samples to:  
Kat Tylee, 1409 SE Hamilton St., Roseburg, OR, 97470  
Questions? Email Kat: [littlehawk yarns@gmail.com](mailto:littlehawk yarns@gmail.com)



Show off your yaks! Send your photo submissions for inclusion in the newsletter to:  
[unadtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:unadtaylor@gmail.com)



Do you have yaks or yak products to sell? Post them on the **USYAKS** website!



Do your part! Join a committee! Contact information below.

Fiber: Una at: [unadtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:unadtaylor@gmail.com)  
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Meat: Vance at [vance@hkyakranch.com](mailto:vance@hkyakranch.com)  
Science: Peter at [hackett@hypoxia.net](mailto:hackett@hypoxia.net)  
Exhibitions and Shows: Brad at [tci@juno.com](mailto:tci@juno.com)

<https://www.usyaks.org/tracking-of-birth>

The association is still collecting information to track the birth of abnormal calves. Please continue to report any incidences of abnormalities to **USYAKS** via this link: [Tracking Abnormal Calves \(usyaks.org\)](https://www.usyaks.org/tracking-of-birth)



The Board of Directors meets *via Zoom* the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm Mountain time.

All Association members are welcome to attend these video conference meetings.

The membership elects the Board of Directors, each of whom serve for a term of three years.

The Board of Directors selects its own officers annually.

You can view the list and bios of the Board of Directors here: <https://www.usyaks.org/board>