

Obstacle Practice at Shangrila Farm by Laurie Mollin

We received a call from Mona Sams, an occupational therapist for persons with special needs, asking if Harry could give one of her clients a showmanship class before he participated in his first llama show, the Virginia Classic 2008. She wanted to bring him out to the farm for Harry to work with him. No problem. We figured she would bring him out and we would let him work with one of our llamas. But then surprise, surprise. Mona drives up with her trailer and an entire caravan of other vehicles.



Now prior to Mona showing up we did have three friends, Louise, Helen and Jessica who had just purchased three boys from us for their new farm arrive. This was fine because they had been coming out to work with their new boys, but unexpected because they usually call first. Well they said they were told to meet Mona to at our farm to work on obstacles. Again no problem because Harry had set up a group of our obstacles like the jumps and ladder, some tires and hula hoops. The staircase/ramp obstacle is in the field with the new herd sires so we couldn't use that one or the tunnel.



Mona pulled out a few more obstacles like a tarp and backup rails. And then she started bringing out more llamas. (As if there were not plenty already here.) So Harry took Mona's client behind the house where they could work on the showmanship for halter class without the distractions of the other clients working on obstacles. We gave him Shangrila's Here Comes the Night to work with. You can see him in the second picture practicing "Standing still with him." which was also good practice for Night.



Harry even got some practice in with Shangrila's Rudy taking over the jump obstacle. His three pasture mates were being worked with by their new owners and friends so Harry didn't want to leave Rudy alone. I also got exercise whenever Louise, Helen and Jessica came to see their boys for the same reason. It was really good for Rudy and me to go on walks with them. Our friend and trainer, Deirdre Martin who you see helping out in a lot of these pictures gets me out with the llamas on the weekends when she comes out to see her llama Shangrila's Matador who she boards here. Luckily she was here to help out when the troops arrived. She is wonderful with young people and the llamas.



Even if you don't intend to show in performance classes in shows, you should consider setting up some obstacles in a field. It is great training for the llamas. And if you combine this with click and reward training I guarantee you they will enjoy it.

Deirdre has also taught me that you don't have to have pack llamas to go on a llama trek with your llama. When we take llamas for a walk up our 1/2 mile of a gravel driveway, she often makes us go off road. So we end up in the woods which is again great training for the llamas and they do seem to enjoy it. This is what it should be all about. Enjoy your llamas and they will enjoy you!!!

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