

A detailed illustration of a yak's head, shown in profile facing left. The yak has a large, thick, curved horn that tapers to a point. Its fur is rendered with intricate, textured strokes, showing a mix of grey, brown, and white tones. The yak's eye is dark and prominent. The background is a plain, light beige color.

the North  
American  
Yak

**VISION & VALUES** 01

**WELCOME MESSAGE** 02

**ARTICLES**

- 04 yak lifestyle
- 05 haltering yak
- 09 yak fiber
- 13 trekking
- 17 best practices
- 21 DNA sampling
- 25 yak meat

**MEMBER BENEFITS** 07

**REGISTERING YOUR YAK** 20

**FEATURED FARMS/RANCHES (A-Z)**

- 03 American White Yaks
- 07 Casper Creek Yaks
- 08 Yaks of Coalbank Creek
- 11 Firebird Farms
- 12 Granite Peaks Ranch
- 15 Heritage Yaks
- 16 Silver Cuff Farm
- 19 Smiling Buddha Yaks
- 23 Zhi-ba Shing-ga

**YAK SCHEDULE** for NWSS 2023 28



**USYAKS**  
A SCIENCE-BASED REGISTRY

 **Contributing Yak Producers Location**  
for this publication



The USYAKS Association is a community of yak owners committed to

**Raising awareness about the merits of yak to the public**

**Preserving the diversity and purity of yak through science**

**Providing resources for ensuring the well-being of all yak**

## vision

USYAKS is an organization that is focused on working to address the needs of yak breeders as defined by yak breeders. It was founded in 2018 on the premise of fostering a community of yak owners whose fundamental core values are underpinned by a member-centric philosophy characterized by a high level of organizational transparency and a strong commitment to building positive working relationships among yak owners on a national, regional and local basis.

## values

USYAKS is committed to fostering camaraderie and good will among yak owners and strive to provide:

**Developing relationships between yak owners in order to facilitate potential business opportunities, idea sharing, or providing assistance where needed**

**Working to attract new members and increasing diversity regarding farm/ranch sizes, geographic location & years of experience among others**

**Organizing events such as yak shows and member get-togethers**

**Providing a forum through which yak owners may network regarding the marketing of yaks and yak products**

**USYAKS**  
A SCIENCE-BASED REGISTRY

*Greetings,*

Welcome to the North American Yak Show being held at the National Western Stock Show. While the show may look quite familiar with yaks in pens and under halter in the arena, in reality what you see is only a small part of this show.

Over the past several months yaks from the US and Canada have entered into the first ever virtual yak show which is part of the North American Yak Show. The virtual yak show judges yaks according to the same conformation criteria as the live show being held in Denver. Both shows have the same judge. The introduction of a virtual component in which digital videos providing specific views of each animal as specified by the judge opens the show up to all yak breeders. Distance to the show and associated expenses are no longer a barrier.

The fiber show has also been radically transformed. In the past the only fiber evaluated had to be collected from the yaks at the show. This year fiber has been sent in by yak breeders across North America for evaluation. Both fiber from individual yaks and herd blends will be judged. In addition, those with yaks at the Denver portion of the show can have individual consultations with the fiber judge about their yaks' fiber density and coverage.

Please take time to look at some of the entries in the virtual yak show and fiber from around North America. You could find these in the yurt.

While viewing the yaks you may see people walking around with yak feet in their hands. This is not a strange yak rancher ritual. Ms. Carlice Cutright, who raises yaks in Wyoming, is going to teach interested yak breeders how to properly trim a yak's foot. You may also see yaks being weighed, their girth measured and other measurements taken specific to bulls. This is part of research being done by Dr. Jeffrey Lehmkuhler of the University of Kentucky who has been doing research on yaks for the past four years. If you are a yak breeder, make sure you speak with him as he is a wealth of information. He also has developed a pocket Calving and Weaning Record Books for breeders who desire one. You may see meat being collected: this is part of a meat study which will compare yak, bison and grass-fed beef.

Dr. Jessica Peterson who has been working to identify specific genes with particular color and fiber traits will also be present at the show as will Dr. Ted Kalbfleisch who does all of the DNA evaluation in the registry process and is working to develop new ways to process yak DNA which will provide significantly more genetic data: this a key step to be able to link genes with traits in yaks. If you are a yak owner, be sure to talk to these three researchers. It is a great opportunity for all of us to have them together at this event.

If you are interested in possibly becoming a yak owner, make sure that you talk to the ranchers present. Learn about infrastructure needs and basic yak husbandry. One of the major reasons they bring their yaks to this event is to be able to engage and teach people who are truly interested in yaks. See yaks, learn from breeders and researchers, learn about fiber (Katrina Tylee is a fiber judge and fiber specialist who will be at the show, also we have an area set up for an attending fiber mill owner who is involved in the processing of fiber who can answer questions about yak fiber). And, have fun. WE wish the best of adventures for you here at the yak show. May you discover the treasure of yaks.

**Brad Peterson & Greg Dike**  
Co-Chairs of USYAKS

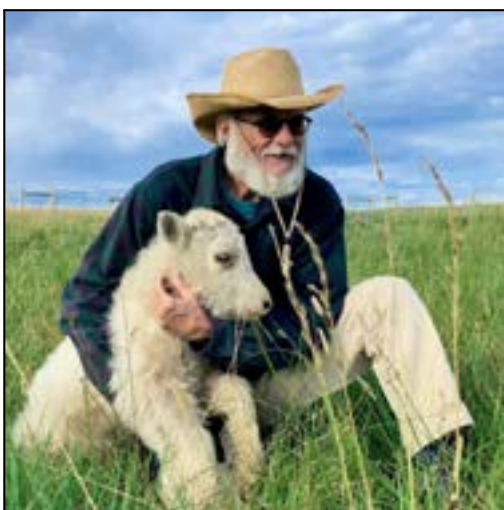


## TAME.....WHITE.....HUGGABLE.....PERSONALITY?

If you want a tame, people loving, huggable yak, I recommend that you not purchase a yak without visiting both the ranch operation and the yak you intend to purchase. If you want a yak you can hug, then come hug your yak before you buy it. I purchase breeding yaks based on their DNA. I cull yaks based on their temperament. Come hug a yak in Crawford, Colorado.

Robert Stuplich (970) 209-1356 [bobs405@gmail.com](mailto:bobs405@gmail.com)

### AMERICAN WHITE YAK RANCH



# yakstyle it's a lifestyle...

By Tony DeRochie  
Storm Cloud Ranch



Let us just say that we have never been around livestock at all. My wife, Caryn, had always dreamed of having a small farm or ranch and all I've wanted is to make her dreams come true. What type of animal do you get for a small ranch? We looked around--sheep were not considered due to bad experiences with them. My wife heard about yaks and did a deep dive on them for over six months. She did all the research and contacted ranchers in New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. To my delight, the people that had yaks were very nice and took the time to allow us to visit. I was truly amazed at some of the operations where the ranchers would just walk out there and talk to their herd, pet them, scratch them and of course gave them treats (so that they were on their best behavior). Personal note: a word of caution for the beginners out there--don't walk into a field of yaks with Tic-Tacs in your pockets because they are very curious creatures and will investigate! Within moments of me having said Tic-Tacs in my own pocket, in a field of yaks, horns were in alarming places you don't usually want horns near (use your imagination).

I fell in love with our first three yaks that came from Colorado. All three were yearling cows and adorable, (for the record, you didn't hear that from me though, since my wife picked them out, ahem.) We were told all the do's and don'ts about the animals and "SHAZAM" we had three yaks to put on our five acres--oops. At first neither us nor the yaks really knew what to do with each other but as time went by we started understanding each other and trusting each other. I eventually would spend quite a bit of time outside with them just talking (they are great listeners), then eventually they got used to me and I was able to pet and scratch them.

We got so used to each other that I would just walk outside and do my work and they would just watch. Another note: Yak cows are like every woman I have ever known--if there are shiny objects around they will find a way to make them theirs. Case in point: I was working on a trailer that had the wires removed from it and the yak cows decided that the shiny tools were just too shiny to be left on the ground while I was working underneath the trailer and walked off with them, not once, not twice but three times. A simple 1-hour job turned into a 2-day job (they never were aggressive or walked on me and were very careful not to hurt me in any way). These yak cows were being playful!

In 2019 we finally got the ranch my wife had always dreamed of. Once the house was built my wife found an entire herd in Colorado was for sale and within a month we had 13 yaks on the property and I hadn't even had a chance to move my original three yaks from the old house over yet or even build a barn! Since we didn't have a barn or corral yet I used some old fencing to keep them in a 50 x 50 foot area. That night we had a black bear that tried to have a "picnic" with the calves from the new herd. The yaks didn't get the memo that night and in the morning I found the queen yak from the new herd wearing a black bear carcass like a hat and none of the yaks were harmed.

In the morning we learned of the "party in the pen" as we called it because the yaks were all standing on the back porch and looking through the windows and glass doors (licking and rubbing their noses on the glass). After that, for the next two months, the yaks had rein over the property and lived on our back porch too, while we got the barn built and corral up. Now the yaks have 95 acres to roam. Now, years later, the cows have all grown up, the calf bulls are 1,000 pound + each and the gentlest animals in the world. These days I spend a lot of time outside talking to my bulls especially. I pet them, scratch them and rub their bellies until they fall down and go to sleep (then it's the girls' turn). It takes time for these animals to trust you, but when they do it's extremely rewarding. They are truly our therapy animals. Their eyes are gentle and you can see what they're thinking. You know when they've had a bad day and they know when you've had one as well. We are up to 19 yaks now. I think I like them more now than wife ever did (don't tell her that though).

My top ten tips toward winning over your yaks: 1) talk softly almost like a whisper to them, 2) be consistent, 3) don't yell or make loud or sudden sounds, 4) move slowly around them, approach them slowly, the slower you move the faster they will trust you, 5) don't be afraid of them they can sense it, 6) put out your hand and let them come to you, let them smell your hand, 7) when petting and or scratching, use one hand for petting and scratching and the other hand lightly touch the top of one horn so that you can get out of the way, if for some reason they do get spooked, 8) spend time with them if you want them to respond to you, 9) don't stand in an open field and pet just one animal for long. This builds up static electricity and shocks them and destroys any bond you may have built up. (trust me I know about this one), 10) even if you have a bond with your yaks, they may not take to other people so you have to be very careful when others are around.



# haltering yak

the taming process



By Jamie Sorum  
OHYaks



Yak breeders are often asked if yak can be tamed and/or halter trained? Yes! Yak can be tamed and even halter trained, the earlier in life they are started the better. There are many useful techniques and methods when training any animal and the same applies to yak. Every individual yak responds differently to each technique and method so the trainer needs to be flexible enough to try a new method if something isn't working. There isn't one secret method or technique that works with every yak; therefore--patience, consistency, and trust go a very long way when working with them.

Why tame or halter train a yak? Is it necessary? While it isn't necessary to have a trained or tame yak, it sure makes life easier when emergencies arise or even when just working yak through a chute system. When yak are tame and handled regularly they are much easier to move, treat, and to harvest fiber from. Often times a tame yak craves attention and will willingly stand in the pasture for fiber collection. Having tame yak during calving season is a big plus, especially in the event that assistance is needed either during birth or after the calf is on the ground. It's been the experience of many breeders that when a trusting relationship is formed with their female yak, they are less likely to be aggressive when they have a calf at their side, making handling a new calf possible. It is wise though to always take caution when a mother yak has a new calf at her side, whether they are tame or not.

When should taming and halter training begin? Taming can be started the minute a calf is born, provided the mother will allow humans near her calf. Many times yak calves are started on a halter after weaning, some breeders start earlier if their mothers (yak) are already tame. It's easier to start with calves that have had good, positive, human interaction early in life; however, calves with limited human contact can also be trained--it may just take a little extra time and patience to win them over. Working with older yak proves to be a bit more challenging, especially if they have had no or limited human interactions.

What tools are needed when taming or halter training? Nothing fancy is needed. A bucket with some sort of treat, like sweet feed, cattle cubes, alfalfa cubes, or even horse treats work well. (Note: always use caution when using cubes as treats to avoid a choking hazard especially if the yak is not used to taking them... try breaking them or crushing cubes up to start) This tool can be used in the taming process to entice a yak to get close to start trust building, it works later on during halter training as an award for a behavior done well. For halter training you will need some type of halter and a sturdy rope. There are many types of halters that work, basic cattle rope halter/lead combo, nylon calf turnout halters that buckle, there are tied rope halters that are commonly used for horses, llama and alpaca halters, there are horse and foal halters that can be modified to fit a yak, and lastly there are leather show cattle halters that have a chain under the chin. There are a few considerations when choosing the right halter; the fit, how and where pressure and release is delivered, and cost. Each one of the halters listed above has pros and cons depending on the purpose for that halter. Three other tools that are handy are a long stick to use as an extension of you, a sturdy place to tie the yak and gloves to prevent rope burn.

While having tame and halter trained yak makes some parts of raising yak a little more convenient it definitely isn't necessary to be a successful yak breeder or owner. Training yak doesn't require fancy equipment, or a great deal of experience. The most useful tools when training yak are patience, consistency and time. Yak have great memories so making each training session positive will go a long way in getting a yak to want to learn.



# USYAKS membership

## Farm/Ranch Member \$80 per year

Right to vote regarding governance and policies in USYAKS (1 vote per ranch)

Multiple members per ranch may be included

Right to serve on the board of directors

Opportunity to serve on committees

Opportunity to advertise (for a fee) on the website

## Friends of the Yak \$25 per year

Opportunity to advertise (for a fee) on the website

Opportunity to serve on committees

Non-voting membership

## First Time Purchaser of yak registered with usyaks ONE YEAR FREE

Right to vote regarding governance and policies in USYAKS

Right to serve on the board of directors

Opportunity to serve on committees

Opportunity to advertise (for a fee) on the website

## Student \$10 per year

Student members may be in grades 1-12

Membership included if a parent is a member

Non-voting membership

### College Student (\$15/year)

College and university students are eligible for this membership

Opportunity to serve on committees

Non-voting membership

## Professional Member Free

Awarded by Board of Directors

Non-voting membership

## Honorary Lifetime Member Free

Awarded by Board of Directors

Non-voting membership

visit our website [www.usyaks.org](http://www.usyaks.org) or send a check to :

USYAKS  
c/o Ruth Higdon  
5897 County Road 23  
Ridgway, CO 81432

your membership will be active as soon as payment is received



## We get asked all the time, why yaks?

For us it boiled down to eating healthier. We had about 40 acres and thought we'd raise our own cattle. However, when researching what are the best meats to eat for high cholesterol we found the benefits of yak meat. This began our journey into the wonderful world of yaks. That was 7 years ago and we haven't looked back.



## What do we do?

We raise yaks for herd development, fiber and meat. We are committed to raising our animals all natural. They are grass fed with no hormones or antibiotics. All of the animals that are harvested are done so humanely and as stress free as possible. Call 970-302-0889 for a price list or for meat availability.



## What are yaks like?

Yaks make very little noise and are very personable and friendly. We touch each one of our animals everyday so they are not aggressive. Yaks eat less than cattle, are disease resistant and calving is typically very easy.

*Once you go yak you never go back.*

**If you want to yak about yaks call us or email us at [coalbankcreek@gmail.com](mailto:coalbankcreek@gmail.com)**

**We are located in northern Colorado at 47169 CR 23 Nunn, CO 80648**

Brad Peterson  
970-302-0889

Mary Jo Brockshus  
970-590-0955



We are located in Casper Wyoming. We pride ourselves in raising gentle yaks. We enjoy showing at local, state and national shows. Our offspring are all halter trains to be pets and show animals before they leave our place.



**Caspercreekyaks.com**  
**Carlice, Sonja, Mac Cutright**





## show competition preparing your fiber

**T**hey are at stock shows and fiber festivals – fleece and fiber arts competitions. You own (or want to own) yak and enter your fiber to compete. What does it take to put an entry in the show and see where your yak fiber stacks up? First, it takes planning. Roughly up to a year in advance, a fiber festival will put out dates and deadlines for entries. Why? Organizers need time to take applications for entries, create show classes, find venues, teachers, vendors, insurance, and get advertising, but fiber producers and makers, the people competing, need the time to process fiber and make finished goods. With exceptions depending upon where in the world you are and what the climate and culture, “seasons” for fairs look something like this:

Fiber fairs/festivals or stock shows are typically held in either the SPRING or FALL, Craft fairs are mostly scheduled in the SUMMER or at indoor venues around the WINTER holiday months.

One WINTERTIME show in particular, The Denver Stock Show or the NWSS (National Western Stock Show) is held for sixteen days in January in Denver, Colorado. There are fiber competition events going on within the YAK associations. Here is a sample timeline to use if get ready to show that fiber. This timeline reflects the FIBER preparation OFF the animal, not the preparation to show the YAK itself in a pen or halter show.

### entering a knitted item

If the year of the show is 2023, the best fiber, which is what you want to enter in a competition, should be combed in the SPRING of 2022, 8-10 months before the knitted item will be shown at the 2023 show. In this scenario, harvesting the yak fiber 8-10 months prior not only collects the fiber at the optimal time for the yak, but gives the knitter time to hand process the fiber (washing, dehairing, carding, spinning) into yarn for a knitted product to be completed after. If hand processing is not “in the cards” (get it?), and the yak fiber will have to go to a fiber mill for processing into yarn, check with the mill for their turnaround time because most mills’ lead times are an average of 6-8 months from when they receive your fiber for you to get yarn back.

How long would you take to knit a hat or a scarf? Crochet? Weave? Felt? Timing can vary widely depending on technique, the artisan producing the final product, and intricacy of the work.

The point? Planning. Time. Up to a year or more sometimes in advance when you are a fiber producer or fiber artisan. The process of getting a product to the finished stage from the raw material can take quite some time and calls for advance planning.

to grow the fiber, process the fiber, and then produce a product from the fiber.

The yak takes a year to produce the fiber THEN we take up to another year to get the raw fiber or a finished product. This example is not used just for show competition, the same resources and timing would apply if you wanted to market your fiber products from your yak herd.

VARIABLES that influence the timeline: weather, animal/herd health, economy, demand on mills, availability of mills, health of mill owner, health of rancher, price of goods, scheduling of shows, demand for fiber, trucking/shipping availability and stability, availability of someone to comb animals.

Planning for a fiber show and a fiber project is really about a TWO-YEAR PROCESS because of the time it takes.

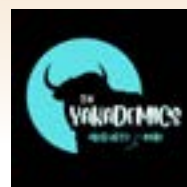
### showing raw fiber

The timeframe is still there but in the case of yak, if the NWSS in January is where you wish to compete against other yak producers, the harvest of that best fiber still happens 8-10 months prior to the January show.

Although a lot of time and work goes into an accessory that is deceptively simple in appearance, the fulfillment of being rewarded with feedback from other yak producers, fiber experts, and the public on what was able to be produced from your raw fiber can be priceless. While it can be a time-consuming process to enter a fair or show it can be well worth the feedback and ultimately the marketing exposure. Whether you are marketing your animal or your skills, the exposure of fairs and competitions spreads your name among potential customers and your peer groups.



By Katrina Tylee  
Little Hawk Yarns



Podcast  
“The Yakademics”  
Fiber Arts & More  
Available on Spotify

### April/May 2023

Comb fiber from the yak, skirt the fiber (pick out any hay pieces or clumps of dirt) so you are left with cleanest fiber for the next step. Think about if you want to have your fiber (raw herd blend) or specific animal sample used in next year’s fiber competition.

### May/June 2023

Start hand processing or contact and send raw fiber to mill to process...communication with, shipping to and from the mill factor into this timeline. Now is the time to also put any fiber to the side to store to enter into a fiber competition or fiber study.

### November/December 2023 (for mill processing choice)

Yarn comes back from the mill (hopefully as there is no real guarantee for timing) and there is only about a month left to knit up an item to enter into the 2024 NWSS fiber show. Entry process will include sending in application with payment to enter show, then getting instructions, rules and labeling required from the show organizers to show your entry.

### December 2023/January 2024

Entries for a knitted item are usually due to the show organizers a couple weeks before the actual show happens. All shows vary with deadlines, so make sure you are checking registration dates for all the types of entries.



SOUTHERN



OREGON

Breeding Stock • Meat • Artisan Goods



@FirebirdFarms



@FirebirdFarms



## A YAK FOR ALL REASONS

Our Breeding Program

We emphasize genetic diversity, calm & docile temperaments, resilience, quality fiber production, productivity & beauty



## YAK MERCANTILE

Artisan Yak Provisions & Meat

Dry aged yak meat & Artisan goods available on our website  
[www.firebirdfarms.com](http://www.firebirdfarms.com)

FIREBIRD FARMS



[YaksWoolColorado.com](http://YaksWoolColorado.com)

Mountain Yaks For  
Mountain Living



# yaks were born to trek



Yaks are “beasts of burden” in their homeland of the Himalaya. In remote mountain villages with no roads, all goods arrive on the back of yaks or humans. Yaks were domesticated thousands of years ago for this very purpose. The Sherpa value their yaks as we in western society value our cars. The Sherpa even live with their animals. The yaks classically occupy the downstairs ground-level of the homes and their body heat and dung help heat the family that lives upstairs.

I have been lucky to visit the Khumbu area of Nepal many times and it’s where I developed my love for yaks. While I lived in Alaska, I helped develop a yak-supported trek for Alpine Ascents International in the wilds of the Talkeetna mountains. The trip involved hiking over beautiful mountain passes, fording streams and camping in lovely tundra covered with wild blueberries. We hiked 30-50 miles each trip carrying only a light day pack. The yaks carried everything.

Walking in this wild and majestic wilderness with our yak friends, their bells ringing with every step, was a magical experience; it was even voted the trip of the year by Outside Magazine.

Yaks can carry about 120 lbs. They can climb extremely steep slopes and they naturally follow in an orderly line. We did not carry extra food because they were able to browse at night while we slept. At some point in the weeklong trek, the yaks looked better than when we started, and the humans looked worse. We did not tether them at night, but sometimes it would take about an hour to find them in the morning.

We were able to bring some yak saddles from Nepal, but we made new ones based on that ancient design. It’s important to keep the loads balanced and be aware of “hot spots” if the under blanket rubs in a wrong way. I have included a photo of our saddles. Starting saddle training early with smaller loads is quite helpful.

Yaks are a multiuse animal. They are bred for meat, milk, fiber and trekking. Trekking is a fun and useful way to bond with your animals. USYAKS is working on a video that instructs saddling and loading. I encourage you to get out in nature with your animals.



By Ruth Higdon  
Smiling Buddha Yaks





# HERITAGE YAKS™

EST 2015 RED WING, MN



[www.heritageyaksmn.com](http://www.heritageyaksmn.com)

 @heritageyaks

 Heritage Yaks

follow me!

 @rubytheminiyak

 Ruby the Mini Yak



please connect with us  
online if you'd like  
to reserve upcoming calves

✓ quality

✓ friendly

✓ registered

✓ beautiful




# SILVER CUFF FARM

*in the bucolic Delaware River Valley*

**family raised & nurtured**  
creating a lovingly raised & well-socialized herd

**excellent bloodlines**  
breeding registered yaks on the east coast

**yak milk & fiber products**  
hand made artisan soaps, luxury rovings & yarns

 The Yakademics *Fiber Arts & More*  
Podcast Co-Host (available on spotify)



Eric & Susan Mandatta  
609-218-8714  
[www.silvercufffarm.com](http://www.silvercufffarm.com)

 @silver.cuff.farm  Silver Cuff Farm



# yakkity yak

**if you do it right, they won't talk back**

By Dr. Jeffrey  
Lehmkuhler



Heritage Yaks  
Red Wing, MN

HERITAGE YAKS™  
EST. 2018 RED WING, MN

Yaks are magnificent, highly trainable animals and majestic to watch in the pasture with their beautiful long coats reaching towards the grasses and horsehair like tails. Yaks are multipurpose from use as loved pets, showing, their soft fiber, delicious healthy meat, packing, riding & even driving.

## why yaks are right for you

Yaks are officially in the *Bos grunniens* family, are fairly easy to raise, highly intelligent and can be quite sociable when handled correctly while raising them. The female is smaller than traditional cattle averaging 500-800 lb range. The bulls can mature over 1,000 -1,500 lbs. range. Both genders have horns. They also do not moo or bawl, thankfully. Yaks give a more sophisticated short low tone grunt that is often only heard if they are stressed, hungry, trying to find their calf, herd friends or during weaning and why they are often referred to as the grunting ox.

Yaks are extremely cold hardy with their thick dense double coat and vary in coat type from shorter coats to super woolly. Their luxurious undercoat, which is combed out not sheared, once processed makes for beautiful high quality fiber products such as warm socks, mittens, sweaters, hats and scarves to name a few. Note that a super woolly does not necessarily mean better fiber. It means you will need to prepare for a lot more grooming time to keep them looking great as well as healthy. Yaks' outercoat, known as the guard hair, as well as their skirt hair, if sheared or cut off has been used historically for sturdy ropes and rugs. In the U.S. their guard hair, outer coat is usually left intact and not removed.

Yak originated from high altitude climates of 14,000+ feet and generally do best in higher altitudes areas of the U.S. However, they can be adapted to most regions of the U.S. If you are in a colder, higher altitude region, super woolly yaks may live happily. Lower altitudes, and regions which are hotter and more humid, a shorter fiber coat are better suited. It is generally best to obtain yaks from the same region as you plan to raise them as they are adapted to the altitude and climate. Yaks do best with dry cold, dry heat vs wet cold or humid zones. Shelters from sun or high winds, cool water pools, fans (in shelters), keeping them groomed to prevent heat trapping matted fiber, all can help your yak's comfort.

## Things to have in place before you bring your first yak home

Plan to have a secure fence paddock of wood, continuous pipe fence, or gate panels secured to the ground for their arrival. They can go through, jump over, crawl under hot wire and barbed wire if stressed on arrival so have a secure receiving pen for them. You likely will want to keep them safely contained for a few days to a few weeks to get them used to you and their new surroundings.

Plan to have a manual head gate chute. Yes, there are really tame yaks, but most veterinarians will not come out to treat a sick or injured horned animal unless you have a chute to safely contain them. As well an injured, sick or scared yak, even if tame, will not usually willingly stand for vet exam, necessary shots, treatments. Pre-owned chutes, if you are starting out, can sometimes be found online as well as farm auction sites. At a minimum, have a manual headgate secured to 2 solid wood posts along with gates to funnel the yak into the head gate. Chute time can also be great bonding time with your new yaks. Most yaks enjoy being groomed, having them contained in the chute helps ensure a complete grooming as well as holding them more safely for exams, hoof trimming, vaccinations, holding a newborn calf up to the mom, if a first-time mom has rejected a calf at first or allowing you to milk that mom for its lifesaving colostrum if needed. Encourage positive chute time with your yaks by bringing them in, giving them hay or their favorite treats while they are in the chute for a short time, talking with them, petting or grooming them, letting them back out shortly after so they don't only associate chute time with a vet visit. Yaks are very intelligent and remember things, make positive experiences happen.

Plan to have a large animal veterinarian on your call list. Talk with them first, find one that either knows yaks or is interested in learning about them, willing to reach out to other vets with yak experience if some clarification is needed on treatments. Have a good conversation with that vet so that they are aware of your yaks and can start their knowledge on yaks before they are needed. Since most products are not labeled for yaks, you will need the veterinarian to prescribe the use of vaccines, antibiotics and other products for your yaks.

Plan to buy your yaks, they are herd animals and should always have a same species companion, from a reputable breeder. Visit a few yak farms, if in your area, to understand the differences in not only yak quality, temperament and pricing but also the after-purchase support a reputable breeder can provide you. Avoid transporting yaks in extreme heat as they can overheat with their thick coats in a trailer on a hot day. If you have to transport in the high heat of summer, try to transport overnight instead to help them as much as possible to avoid a heat stroke situation.

Plan to test and know what minerals are in your forages to develop a supplement program. Mineral requirements for yaks are poorly defined. Beef cattle references are often used and adjusted down slightly. Copper and selenium supplementation should be considered as these often appear to be low in blood samples from yaks. However, be sure to discuss your mineral program with a nutritionist. In certain regions of the United States selenium levels can be toxic while in other regions selenium is severely deficient. The common trend seems to be to give injectable trace mineral such as Multi-min, along with copper oxide boluses and providing molasses-based tubs to supplement. Be cautious of over supplementing as you can induce toxicities. In regions of the US, sodium, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus may be marginally deficient in the forages as well. Grass tetany, milk fever, poor reproduction, retained placentas, increase incidence to disease, pinkeye and reduced performance can be signs or symptoms of poor mineral nutrition. Yaks are very hardy in general, with proper nutrition.

Educate yourself on cattle diseases and disorders as yaks are in the Bovidae family and will be susceptible to most of the same disorders. Discuss with your veterinarian a preventative health program based on the diseases and exposure risk in your area. Many of the same vaccines used in beef cattle are used to prevent diseases in yaks. Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) is a known disease that affects yaks and can lead to death of animals. Recently, the Asian long horned tick was found to carry bovine theileriosis. The tick was first discovered in New Jersey in 2017 and is spreading across the United States. It is small, easily missed and there is no known cure to date. Inspect animals where skin is accessible such as the tail fold, udder, ears and other areas not covered heavily by hair.

Be prepared to trim hooves on your yaks. The hoof can grow quickly as the animals evolved to cover large areas of land, walking many miles and wearing down the hoof. As in sheep, the white hooves seem to grow more quickly. Improper hoof maintenance will lead to sore feet and poor mobility.

Match the number to pasture carrying capacity and plan for winter hay needs. Yaks will eat about 2.5-3% of their body weight of hay daily in the winter. Don't put too many animals on a pasture just because they are smaller than a beef cow. If the normal carrying capacity of your land is 10 acres per cow, then you might plan for 6 acres per yak. Talk with your National Resource Conservation Service folks for carrying capacity of the soils in your area or talk to other experienced livestock grazers. Overgrazing will lead to lowered forage production and persistency of plants, reduced performance of your yaks and increased risk of internal parasites.

All of us in the yak community are here to help answer questions, point you in the right direction if needed and we welcome you to join in the unforgettable experience of owning, loving yaks as we all do.





smiling buddha  
RIDGWAY, COLORADO YAKS



QUALITY REGISTERED YAKS BRED IN THE MOUNTAINS OF COLORADO

SMILINGBUDDHAYAKS.COM  
(970) 623-3216



# how to register your yak

## why register?

Our registry relies on DNA testing provided by Neogen Genomics. The genetic profile provided by this test can help guide your purchasing and breeding decisions. This test has proven to be reliable and accurate because it:

- establishes parentage,
- shows the degree of inbreeding,
- measures the degree of cattle gene introgression, and reports on Mitochondrial DNA origin,
- provides a complete DNA report,
- tests for BVD

## why is this important?

Yaks are unique and we want to keep them that way. USYAKS registers hybrids that are recorded in a separate registry. It is important to build a diverse and genetically healthy herd and registration of your animals is a great tool to help breeders make good choices, promote their animals, and to be good stewards of your herd.

## how to register

Complete the registry form located at [www.usyaks.org](http://www.usyaks.org) and collect your DNA sample.

## prices

You will be asked to pay with PayPal online or to send a check at the time of registration.

**\$55/yak registration**  
**11-25 registrations – \$50/yak**  
**26 or more registrations – \$45/yak**  
**New Members – \$45/yak for first year**  
**(the year starts on the day you register your first yak)**

Once your yak is registered, you will be sent a Registration Record and a personalized USYAKS ear tag.

# USYAKS

If there are any questions or problems, please call Ruth Higdon (970) 623-3216.





GeneSeek, the company doing the initial DNA analysis for USYAKS will accept properly collected yak DNA via the following methods. The choice is yours. Ordering materials and equipment to take the samples depending on which method is selected and their associated costs are the responsibility of the yak owner. The following provides the basic information needed for each form of collection.

### method one HAIR SENT IN AN ENVELOPE

This method provides usable DNA providing the individual collecting the DNA is careful to follow the directions. Contamination and insufficient amounts of DNA are the reasons for failure. The following directions should help you to successfully collect a hair sample.

1. Wash your hands.
2. Clean the area removing any loose hair, dirt or manure.
3. Pull (DO NOT CUT) 60 or more hair strands at the base (root) of the tail. Pliers can be used.
4. Examine the hair for the presence of root bulbs. This is where the DNA used in the test is located. If most of the pulled hair lack root bulbs, discard the hair sample and try again. Your goal is to have 60 hairs with root bulbs present.
5. Do not trim the hair. Keep root bulbs aligned. You may tape the sample to an index card if you are careful to not touch the root bulbs or tape them. Do not touch the root ends of the hair sample; you will contaminate it with your own DNA.
6. Hair samples must be placed in a paper envelope. Do not use a plastic bag as the sample must be able to breathe.
7. Before placing your hair sample in the envelope, write the following on the outside of an envelope:

farm name & prefix  
 owner name, phone number & email  
 name of yak with USYAKS ear tag #  
 gender & birthdate  
 IYAK ear-tag if applicable  
 date of DNA collection

8. Repeat for each additional animal being sampled. When sampling several animals in the same session, be very careful that your hands are clean and there is no hair or contamination from the previous sample.

9. Send sample envelopes to USYAKS (address listed on next page)

### method two BLOOD

This method requires the owner to obtain several drops of blood using a syringe which are placed on a special blood card for DNA analysis. Since only several drops are needed collection of the blood is quite easy. However, you will first need to order the blood cards. To do this log in to [www.neogen.com](http://www.neogen.com). You can purchase syringes and needles online or at your local feed/livestock supply store. Never reuse a syringe or needle on different yaks as they will be contaminated with the DNA of other yak and result in invalid DNA results.

1. Be sure to wash your hands and brush clean the area where you are collecting the blood in order to prevent material/DNA contamination)
2. Follow the directions provided with the DNA collection blood cards and then again place the blood card for each yak in an envelope with the same data on it as method one. This data is important to prevent any tracking problems and to link the DNA sample to the USYAKS Registration Number which is assigned before the sample is sent to GeneSeek for analysis.

### method three TISSUE SAMPLE

To do this you will need to purchase an Allflex Tissue Sampling Applicator (TSU) ear punch and tissue sampling units to collect the tissue in. The TSU may be purchased at most veterinary supplies and the tissue sampling units can be purchased by going to [www.neogen.com](http://www.neogen.com). There you will need to register and place your order. You will also need to be able to secure your yaks head (squeeze chute, headgate or tied very tightly) so you can collect the sample from the yak's ear. The directions are in the sample kit.

1. The tissue sampling units come in boxes of ten and have bar codes to stick on each sample unit. Look for the bar codes on the folded down side of the cardboard sample unit holder in the box.
2. Whether you are sending a few samples in a padded envelope or an entire box BE SURE TO INCLUDE a copy of the USYAKS registration form found on the USYAKS website ([www.usyaks.org](http://www.usyaks.org)) which links the sample to the correct yak.

Once collected, the USYAKS registration form and DNA sample(s), with associated fees noted on website, should be mailed to

**USYAKS**  
**Ruth Higdon**  
**5897 County Road 23**  
**Ridgway, CO 81432**



# Zhi-ba Shing-ga

yaks & research

159 Cub Run Road  
Wellington, KY 40387  
606-359-5154

~ Facebook ~  
Zhi-ba Shing-ga Yaks



As part of this, studies on the impact of ambient heat on yak bull fertility and the impact of repetitive semen collection on yak bull fertility [Morehead State University]



Three forage – weight gain nutrition studies. [University of Kentucky]



First Artificial Insemination Conception  
Outrageous Dream pregnant 140 days

Semen collection as part of Yak Artificial Insemination development by Morehead State University & University of Kentucky.



[University of Kentucky] Study on pregnant and lactating yak cow nutrition to start January 2023.



# yak meat

new traditions for the farm & table



By Sophia Weiss  
Firebird Farms

Yak meat is lean, juicy and delicate, with a flavor profile that lies between elk and bison, yet with a characteristic subtlety. Lending itself well to a wide range of cooking applications and cuisines, yak meat is versatile as it is enjoyable.

Ranchers and chefs alike are finding the attributes and benefits of raising yak and their incredible meat. Lighter on the land than cattle, yak offer both an environmentally conscious alternative and a unique, delicious experience at the table.

## A Better World with Yak

As a primitive bovine species, yak offers customers a primal meat option that is both nutrient-dense and ethically produced. Our customers speak to how it feels clean, energizes athletes and digests better than beef. Not only is it an exceptional lean protein, but yak are also more efficient grazers, smaller than cattle and have many other uses including fiber production, packing and dairy. Yak provide an excellent opportunity to improve our health and our environments through preserving and promoting this incredible species in North America.



## Yak in the Kitchen

Yak meat is fascinating to work with in the kitchen. Similar to beef and bison in the options for butchering, yak surpasses its counterparts with the delicacy and versatility it offers. Providing a less overpowering flavor profile and refined structure, yak can be applied to a vast number of dishes and cuisines. Classic beef dishes made with yak are reimagined, resulting in a more subtle yet surprisingly luscious preparation.

## From Survival to Incredible

Yak developed as a species in the Himalayas over thousands of years in a harsh climate and sparse landscape. These conditions made yak a hardy survivor and a superior meat animal. The cell structure of the muscle tissue retains more moisture than beef, and the muscle bundles are made of finer fibers. This creates a juicy and refined steak that doesn't dry out like game meat. The beautiful darker red muscle is due to higher myoglobin, yak meat is also higher in iron than beef. These unique qualities combine the best of the bovine and game meat worlds.

## The Terroir of Yak

Like fine wine, there is a terroir to yak meat raised in different geographic regions. The final butcher process, amount of time the carcass hangs, temperature and processing techniques strongly affect the final products. We like to finish our yak on organic alfalfa and grass, a nutrient-dense forage for their health and muscle development. The meat becomes both exceptionally rich and delicate.

Each yak rancher has their own experience and knowledge base for raising meat animals. If you are new to raising yak, talk to breeders in your area for what works best. Our favorite meat is dry aged, but this can be challenging to accomplish in some butcher shops and good results can be had with different methods.

From nutrition to final hang times and cut design, there are many decisions to achieve optimal results. And when purchasing yak meat, talk to the ranchers about what goes into making these incredible products. It is often done with a great deal of care, passion, persistence and dedication to bring customers something truly wonderful.







# yak schedule for nwss 2023

## nutritional analysis of yak meat

<b>Calories</b>	<b>231/100 grams</b>
<b>Carbohydrate</b>	<b>2.86%</b>
<b>Total Protein</b>	<b>19.24%</b>
<b>Cholesterol</b>	<b>0.053%</b>
<b>Oleic Fatty Acid</b>	<b>4.92%</b>
<b>Linoleic Fatty Acid</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>Linolenic Fatty Acid</b>	<b>0.11%</b>
<b>Total Saturated Fats</b>	<b>8.89%</b>
<b>Total Monounstaurated Fats</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Total Trans Fats</b>	<b>0.96%</b>
<b>Omega 3: Alpha-Linoleic (ALA), Total Omega-3</b>	<b>0.1%</b>

The following is from an analysis performed by Certified Laboratories of the Midwest (Report #168765) of the meat of a yak which was grass fed at Zhi-ba Shing-ga Yaks in eastern Kentucky.

	thursday 1/19	friday 1/20	saturday 1/21
	Fiber Judging [in the yurt] throughout the day	Yak Hoof Trimming Demos throughout the day	Fiber Evaluations [on the animal] scheduled throughout the day
1:00	Yak Pen Show Evaluations	Yak Halter Show In the Show Arena	
2:00			Yak Masquerade & Parade
3:00			
4:00			
5:00	Social Hour In Auction Barn	Social Hour In Auction Barn	
6:00		Member Banquet award presentation	

**on-going events**

**Yak Fiber Artisan Display** in yurt

**Virtual Yak Show** projected in yurt

**Fiber Mill Booth** set up for consultations & info

**Science, Research & Yak Information** in yurt

**JANUARY**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



# USYAKS

Cover design by @solacebytinaanne  
Book design by Jenna-Lynne

