

ARI Evaluates EPD Software Addition

In August 2007 at the face-to-face board meeting in Lincoln, the ARI Board of Directors began discussing the possibility of developing an online application to be integrated with ARI's software to help breeders determine Estimated Progeny Difference (EPD).

What Are EPDs? Simply put, EPDs are a statistical estimate of how a particular alpaca's cria will perform in certain traits compared to other alpacas' crias, before a mating even occurs.

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compared to other alpacas' crias, before a mating even occurs. A software application uses all of the data about alpaca and its relatives over all the years of data collection and weights these data appropriately to determine the breeding value of alpaca A for each tracked trait. This is a more accurate way of determining alpaca A's genetic value as a parent and predicting what A's crias will be like than the current methods employed by alpaca breeders. Breeders could use EPDs to select alpacas they wish to breed to based on a statistical prediction about what the outcome will be in regard to the particular traits of interest. This technology has been used to speed up the genetic gain

in most livestock breeds.

ARI began evaluating the development of this application in our Alpaca Information Management (AIMS) system shortly after that August meeting. Since that time, we have been investigating the technological resources necessary to implement it. If implemented, the EPD system will not affect registration requirements and will be housed in a separate area of the web site.

Much work still needs to be done before the system can be developed and implemented. The organization will be working with members to determine the traits that you feel are important for tracking in the EPD system.

In the coming months, you will be hearing a lot about EPDs. We have added links in the "Education & Training" section of the web site and will continue to add more as we develop them, so be sure to check back their frequently to learn more about EPDs. As we move forward with determining the feasibility of implementing this new service, we will keep you informed of our progress through future communications.