

Feature Bio – “Ruby & Friends” By Char Hakes

PART I: TRAUMATIC ENCOUNTERS

In early 2005, someone moved into the area with their horses and a few llamas. I would always look for the llamas whenever I drove by the place. After several months, I noticed that the llamas were no longer there.

About six months later in November 2005, I received a phone call from some people I knew who had acquired the llamas “for free” from the people who moved in. They no longer wanted their llamas.



One of the two females was “Ruby” (who was bred) and another (name unknown and already nursing a three-month old cria, “Haley”), had been rebred. The other adult llama was a stud, “Buck”.

Ruby and her companions were all placed in a large pen next to a barn – which was good. They were not, however, allowed to seek shelter inside the barn – which was bad.

One afternoon the new owner’s neighbor heard a terrible commotion and discovered two boxers (two of the many kenneled dogs kept on the premises) chasing and attacking the defenseless llamas. I arrived right after the vet had just left and was horrified to find that Haley’s mother’s nose and face had been ripped off, Haley had suffered multiple bites on her front legs, and Ruby and Buck were completely traumatized. Needless to say, the vet euthanized Haley’s pregnant mother. Only one boxer was captured and euthanized.

I was upset and particularly worried about Haley since she was still so young. I instantly thought of “Emma”, a *Safe Haven* llama who lived for being a mom and even allowed other crias to dry nurse her. I took Emma (with her weanling daughter, “Karmelita”) up to be with Haley and to serve as her surrogate mother. This arrangement went quite well for two weeks.

It happened again. The other boxer escaped its kennel, bolted straight into the llama pen and attacked Buck this time. He was lucky and survived the viscous bites to his front legs, but the dog had to be put down. Everyone agreed that all of the llamas needed to be surrendered to *Safe Haven* so they would not be endangered by any more dog attacks.

PART II: RUBY'S PERSONAL TRAUMA

Understandably, even in her new, safe digs at the Sanctuary, Ruby remained stand-offish and it was nearly impossible to approach her. But, on a chilly, windy February afternoon after completing my dog grooming appointments for the day, I went out to the barn and found Ruby humming anxiously near her dead baby. She allowed me to approach her, as if asking for my help. I cried with her, agonizing over how the earlier dog traumas most likely resulted in her losing this precious cria.

I moved the dead cria's body into a stall overnight to allow Ruby and Haley to mourn over it together, as little Haley also knew what was going on. The next morning I consoled Ruby and talked to her constantly as I first allowed her to inspect a garbage bag, then as she watched me place her baby in the bag, and finally as I carried the bag away. Ruby followed me as far as the gate. It was heartbreaking. I stored the little body in a freezer in my garage and when the ground thawed in the spring I gave it a proper burial.

Whenever I learn of llamas or alpacas being attacked and/or killed by dogs, I am beside myself with anger and grief. While dogs can be one of their worst predators, careless dog owners may be even worse.

PART III: EPILOGUE

Emma, Karmelita, and Emma's new baby girl, "Brandy", were all adopted out to a wonderful, caring family in June 2006. Haley was also adopted out to another family, along with other llamas. When Brandy was ready to wean, Emma came back to *Safe Haven*, where she remained for the rest of the year. Sadly, Emma was battling a jawbone infection, which she succumbed to in December 2006. We sure miss Emma – our "Queen of all Moms".

Today, Ruby is doing quite well, though she is still rather timid around people. She enjoys the company of the other female llamas and the occasional cria born to females who were bred before being surrendered to *Safe Haven*. She is a sweet llama who we just love to pamper!