

ALPACA INFORMATION FOR NEW OWNERS

1. When your alpaca first arrives at your property, drench it with a product that has a macrocyclic lactone as its active ingredient (for example ivermectin or milbemyacin). Drench at the sheep dose rate for the product. If alpacas are mixing with other ruminant species (cattle, sheep and goats) they can catch internal parasites from pasture contaminated by these animals. Alpacas don't tend to get parasites from other alpacas as they will pick a specific area of the paddock to toilet in.
2. Alpacas have a high vitamin D requirement in comparison to other animals, and in winter here in the South East vitamin D should be supplemented as part of their routine husbandry. Give alpacas (especially females and cria) a vitamin D injection at the start of winter to ensure they don't develop rickets (a bone condition associated with vitamin D deficiency).
3. Clostridial diseases frequently cause issues in alpacas. As such they should be vaccinated at least every 6 months to protect them. If they are in lush green feed you should consider vaccinating them every 3 months to ensure they are protected against pulpy kidney.
4. Male alpacas (machos) should be castrated at around 18 months of age to ensure their musculoskeletal system is fully developed before the influence of testosterone is removed. Castration should be performed by a veterinarian.
5. Alpacas should be shorn annually. Seek advice from your breeder as to who you can get to shear your alpaca and where to sell the wool.
6. Shearing is a convenient time to perform other husbandry procedures, such as foot paring. Trimming of feet is crucial for alpaca locomotion and may need to be performed more frequently when alpacas are kept on soft ground or as they age and become less mobile.
7. Alpacas are susceptible to both Phalaris toxicity and Phalaris staggers. Foliar spraying of cobalt on Phalaris pastures can help prevent this, otherwise it is advisable to keep alpacas in a smaller yard and feed hay/straw during at risk times (mornings during the autumn break or the morning following a frost).
8. Alpacas should not be herded with dogs. They are best mustered on foot, sometimes with a long white rope held between those mustering acting as a moving fence.
9. Alpacas are not true ruminants. They have a 3 chambered stomach and are very efficient feed converters. As such they require high fibre diets that are low in protein. Lucerne hay is too protein-rich for alpaca diets.