

The Journal of RMLA



RMLA
Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association

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See article on page 15

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Issue	Submission Deadline	Mailing Date
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Summer	May 20	June 20
Fall	August 20	September 20
Winter	November 20	December 26

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Another 36-page jam-packed issue!




Training a lama? We have great articles from both John Mallon (page 29) and Marty McGee Bennett (page 11); two well-known trainers with different approaches. We can learn from both of them.

So you are a packer? The Pack Committee Chair, Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay has shared another great packing experience with us (page 26). Perhaps you are looking for your own packing experience? Check out the article by Gary Carlton on this year's plans for the Leadville 100 Hope Pass Aid Station (page 14). And RMLA member John Fant is organizing a Pack Trial in conjunction with the Hope Pass Aid Station (page 32).

Oh, but lama fiber is what gets your engines going? Read the article from one of our newest members, Nancy Wilson, about her Master Spinner Program and then send her a bit of fiber for her 'senior' project (page 9). Then learn how to make felted soap from your own fiber (page 34).

And this is just the beginning. Inside you will find articles from our friends at the Colorado State University Veterinarian Teaching Hospital; items for your lama medical kit; information on events that our incredible members are organizing. Information to educate and inspire you can be found on just about every page.

Thank you to our contributors and advertisers (see page 28). We could not do it without you. 

Cover Photo:

Llamas tied out on a feeding pasture.
 From Hope Pass aid station support crew.

Terrific Background too!!

Submitted by Gary Carlton.

Correction:

Spring issue. Page 7. The photos of Jeff Sandberg and Kelvin Edlridge are reversed.

Letter from Your RMLA Board

We celebrate you, our members and our volunteers. Many of you in your own way, either individually or as a team are working together to fulfill the RMLA mission statement to EDUCATE others about llama and alpacas.

Many of you are working very hard to put on events and gatherings, all to the end goal of supporting the entire llama community. The rest of us can support these leaders by volunteering for the event or just by attending the event. Whatever your style, find a way to participate. Let's all work together.



- Educate - Mentor - Inspire -



Cooper's motto: When you come to a fork in the trail, take it.



Biff: Spring hike at Heil Valley Ranch Open Space

Photos courtesy Mary Vavrina - Rocky Mountain Llamas

NEW RMLA Members

RMLA IS ALWAYS GROWING

Welcome!

Kyce, Elliot, Ethan & Kale Morgan (Youth), Arkansas City, KS

Phillip & Velda Brown, Elbert, CO

Nancy & Christopher Wilson, Camp Verde, AZ

Deirdre & James Blackshear, Florence, CO

George Condit, Boise, ID

Additional information, farm/business name, phone, address, etc. can be found on the website under **MEMBERS**.

NOTE: Before youth members under the age of 18 are listed, a signed release is required from a parent or legal guardian. You can find a link for further instructions and that form at the top of the **MEMBERS** page on the website. *Thank you*

Fairplay Llama Event - A New Perspective



By Kelvin Eldridge - Co-Chair, Fairplay Llama Event

“We can choose to just stand in one place our entire lives never going anywhere while deciding which trail is best or we can simply pick one that looks inviting and begin moving forward.” (Gary Carlton)

This is exactly what I did one year after purchasing my first llama. I chose to partner up with my good friend Jeff Sandberg and coordinate the 35th Fairplay Llama Event, going head strong at fulfilling my mentor’s (Gary Carlton) shoes. Gary spoke with a heartfelt emotion when he described the event. He went into detail on who the contestants were, how many years they had been there and even which llama they ran with.

The first day I met Gary he had a persona about him that spoke volumes and I understood he knew how to interact with llamas as well as share his passion for packing with others. When I discovered the work he was doing and heard the stories he shared on the impact the event made in people’s lives, I knew my path had been chosen for me and I was moving forward!

Quickly learning how therapeutic these animals were to work with I too wanted to carry on a legacy much like Gary. My time in military service has taken its toll on my life in some areas and the llamas have filled a void. Understanding this, I want to share with others my passion for working with pack llamas. Jeff Sandberg, my business partner, Travis Sirhal and I

graciously thank Gary Carlton, Beau Baty and the RMLA community for this opportunity.

This event has grown every year since it started and over the entire weekend of Burro Days, of which this event is a part, it brings in more than 10,000 attendees to the normally quiet town of Fairplay. It not only hosts a memorable race but provides a chance for children to interact with llamas. The event is also used to raise



awareness for organ tissue donors. This is a remarkable chance to promote llamas and the mission statement of RMLA. The community of Fairplay is thrilled to hear the race will continue this year and the guidon is being carried on by young and motivated individuals.

With an increasing number of contestants and attendees, there is a huge demand for us to pull together and host the most exciting, action packed, and family orientated llama event in the nation. This is our golden opportunity to show a small mountain town what we can do as an association, educate the community on llamas, and inspire the youth of tomorrow!

Gary said in 2015 “Can we rise above the impossible? Have we reached the summit? Have we just begun?” Well I can say this....and as strong as I have heard the llama community works and pulls together, nothing is impossible. I have met some outstanding individuals who speak very highly of llamas and they themselves have done work to ensure

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Questions? Contact?:
OR { Jeff Sandberg. - 303-829-8144
Likearock87@msn.com
Kelvin Eldridge - 720-556-6197
Kelvin.j.Eldridge@gmail.com
To sign up for the race or volunteer to help (or both) go to www.RMLA.com all the links are on the Home Page.

it continues to grow. Sadly, I also hear the stories from what I will call the “OLD Timers” about how events like these were huge and filled with multiple llama ranches and when rendezvous were held it was an unbreakable bond of camaraderie, but they have slowly faded. Are we getting old and losing faith in what we love or do we still have the drive and want to see a community grow and see to it that nothing is impossible?

I laugh when I hear, “have we reached the summit?” As a backcountry enthusiast, I’m always looking to go further and explore more so I can learn more. Jeff and I have made some great connections in the short time we have taken on this event and we are always looking to further grow and challenge ourselves. We are prepared and perfectly capable of taking this race up a level striving for a higher summit every year. I feel



we have just begun! Compared to many of you I am an infant amongst this community and have a lot to learn, but I know when the “getting is getting good, it’s time to get getting”. I have seen motivation in the way many of the old timers talk. I feel we are starting to see a change in the growing desire for llamas.

I am currently still trying to grasp all the tasks at hand involved with coordinating this event while trying to grow my own pack business. So, this may be a little unorthodox compared to the last 15 years with Gary Carlton. I have read through Gary’s previous years’ articles and have seen that he gives a short introduction and then goes into details of the race and needed volunteers. I will be relying on Gary’s guidance on the details of this race and previous years’

volunteers. Heck, I may even turn to some of the participants for guidance, as some of them have been running in the race for years.

Jeff, Travis, and I greatly look forward to this event and meeting more of you and hearing from you on how we could improve and bring more attention to the llama community. Please check the volunteer status as we still need volunteers as well as LLAMAS, LLAMAS, LLAMAS! I feel it is a huge issue when there are more contestants than available llamas. This has been an ongoing issue and with this event growing we must grow together. I would like to leave you with a short story on one of the many reasons this race means so much to me and why I would like to see the event grow.

Jeff and I sat at the desk in the Fairplay Town office discussing details of the race. We heard about how many people return year after year, some even with their children and how smiles are radiating from contestants and spectators alike. This weekend-long event holds untold stories that ties all events and everyone together. Personal bonds and heartfelt relations are built during the event and we as RMLA can have a lasting impression on all the participants.

The Town official stepped away from her desk as she finished her story. I looked at Jeff with swollen tear-filled eyes. Jeff and I had the same emotion and feelings about what we had heard and strongly felt part of something much bigger than we had anticipated. I struggled with suicide once in my life. I have now found peace and owe a lot to my circle of friends who aspire to hike the backcountry and love llamas.

Sadly, 22 veterans a day take their lives, so suicide is a subject that hits home hard with me. We had just heard the story of how 3 brothers had run the burro race and the brother who won took his life the next day. This race is mentally and physically demanding and I can only imagine the overwhelming excitement and joy one experiences after completing such a rigorous race. We will never know why this man took his life shortly after what can be considered a pinnacle accomplishment amongst many, but his family carries his spirit on. This event every year has turned into a

continued on next page

time of happiness and remembrance of this gentleman. This event has now become a family tradition and now the younger children prepare by doing the llama lunacy, pack llama race, and finally taking on the burro race such as their family member had done.

I hear this and wonder why other people are participating? I no longer see an event raising money or providing income for a small community nor do I

see a race. Instead I see a tradition that must grow and continue. If we don't do it, who will? Let's not make 2017 forgettable. Let us ensure the next 35 years are unforgettable and that many llama events are handed down so that customs and traditions live on.

The Fairplay Llama Event is Saturday, July 29th. Please join us as a volunteer, a llama provider, or a participant. Sign up on the RMLA website, www.RMLA.com. If you have questions, please contact Jeff or myself at fairplay@rmla.com.

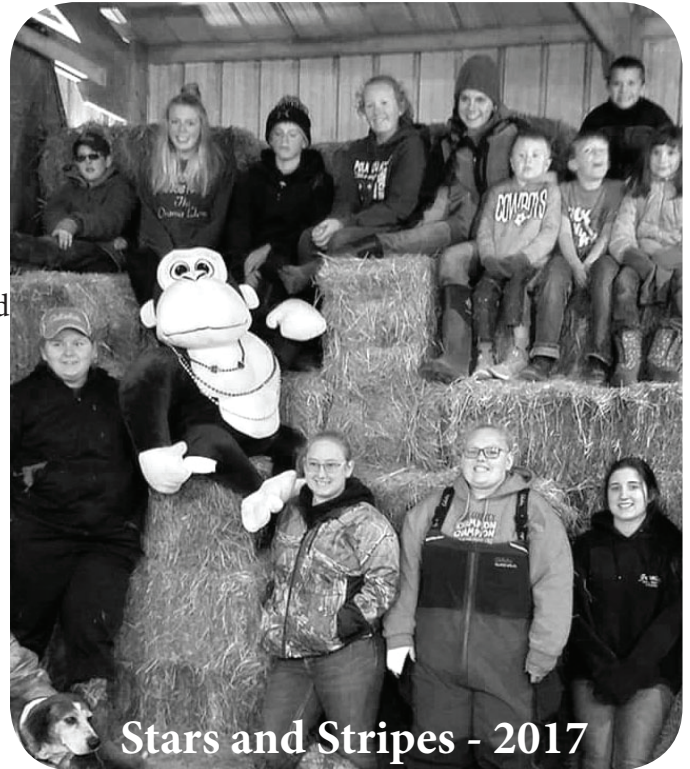


RMLA Youth on the move

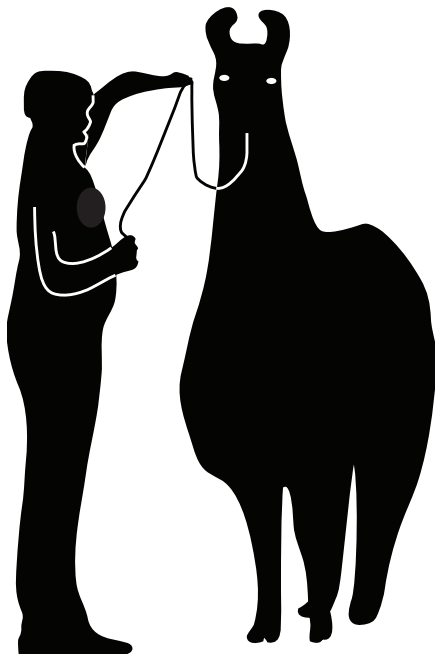
By Marshal Rutledge Chair, Youth Committee

The RMLA Youth are off to a great start this year. They are busy with essays and already have many shows and activities listed in the YAP database. We have offered triple for Estes Park Wool Market donations. And we are offering a HUGE BONUS for the Fairplay event: 100 Points if you attend and volunteer with the event for 6 hours. This is a big day and we need our experienced llama handlers on hand for the race and walk and at the end to get animals back to owners.

All the County Fairs and State Fairs are coming up. Get those new critters out alongside the trained animals, and get them all ready for public relations. Keep sending the pictures, you never know when yours will appear in the Journal.



Stars and Stripes - 2017



GPLA Conference - 2017

Olds College Master Spinner Program

By Nancy Wilson - Camp Verde Llamas - Camp Verde, AZ

Olds College, located in Olds, Alberta, Canada was founded in 1913 as a school for field, farm, and domestic sciences. Today, it still focuses on these areas along with some new ones. Among these is the Master Spinner Program. Oh, and by the way, the school also has a beer brewing program. The brewery is housed in the Pomeroy Inn which is located directly next door to the school and has a restaurant that serves the beer (just sayin' in case you consider a trip that way).

The Master Spinner Program consists of six levels. While the program is not designed as a beginning spinning program, new spinners comfortable with basic wheel spinning will find the instruction at a level they can follow. Each level consists of a week of classroom instruction. After the week of class, students have a year to complete the homework. Homework consists of topics covered in class such as specific fiber blends, preparation methods, or spinning technique. It's best to have the homework finished prior to taking the next class level; however, students may request an extension for the homework. Sounds like plenty of time until you factor in life, full-time work, and llamas to feed. Levels I-IV can be taken off-site. I took my classes in Tucson, and have developed strong friendships along the way. Level V and VI are taken in Canada. A large portion of the homework materials for all levels are included in the materials fee. You will need to purchase additional fiber. There is enough of the expensive and hard-to-find materials provided, such as bison, silk, flax, etc. Dyeing for homework is done in class; if you choose to dye for a final project that is on your own.

Level I covers many basics. Some of the highlights are spinning yarn from each section of a sheep fleece, spinning yarn from ten different sheep breeds (of your choice), natural dyeing on wool, and learning different washing methods. A small project is part of the homework. My project was creating a möbius hat from Shetland wool.

In Level II we learned how to enhance the qualities of different fibers, such as adding luster, drape, or elasticity. We also had to create a color wheel starting from the three primary colors. Most importantly, we also added llama and alpaca fiber to the assignments. We had to create

Shearing? Don't Throw That Fiber Away!

I need samples of llama fiber to use in my MASTER SPINNER IN-DEPTH STUDY. All types of fiber, including guard hair needed. A well stuffed quart size ziplock bag will hold about an ounce of fiber and give me an adequate sample size.

Go to: www.RMLA.com/wilson to print out a data sheet and mail with fiber to:

**Nancy Wilson - Camp Verde Llamas
P.O. Box 853 - Camp Verde, AZ 86322**

Questions? email me at spinllama@msn.com
Thank you for your interest and support of this project.



various blends using these fibers. Homework requirements had us starting to think more about designing a yarn with the end use in mind. We learned about determining the TPI (twists per inch), WPI (wraps per inch) and angle of twist. The final project was 25 hours, and I made a short poncho using a blend of llama, Cotswold wool, and silk that was dyed with natural dyes.

Level III added cotton and silk to the mix of fibers. We learned how to take a silk cocoon and make it into a hankie and how to spin it. This is where we added algebra and how to spin yarn to a specific TPI. Yes, the spinning involves math! I made a tool to help me keep a consistent draft

continued on next page

length and started counting treadles. We also had to replicate a millspun yarn. We used one natural dye (cochineal for my class) and created 25 different colors using a combination of different mordants and modifiers (such as iron). The final project is 50 hours. I made a shawl and small triangle woven piece using cochineal dyed yarn.

Level IV added camel and linen to the fiber mix. We learned to dress a distaff and spin on a takli. We did more color blending and dyed wool with fiber reactive dyes. The Level IV project is 75 hours. I made a block knit vest using a variegated wool fleece.

Level V meant a trip to Canada during the hottest part of the Arizona summer (darn!). We spun more specific TPI yarns, continued adding some art yarns as well as man-made fibers. We did more with cellulose fibers (cotton and hemp) and did fiber-reactive dyes on cotton. The final project is 50 hours, and I made a poncho with a blend of hemp and carbonized bamboo that I dyed with fiber-reactive dyes.

Level VI will be in Canada this coming June (traditionally the hottest month in Arizona). We will spend the week being tested on our spinning abilities covering all the class levels. There's also a written test that is open book, so I've combined all my classroom notebooks into one binder that I will be bringing with me. We also get to do indigo dyeing, which I'm looking forward to. Indigo is a magic process to me: you put your yarn into this liquid that looks like radiator fluid (that fluorescent green/yellow). When you take it out

of the dye bath and the air hits the yarn it turns into that gorgeous blue.

But wait! There's more! In order to complete the Master Spinner Program each student must complete the equivalent of a thesis. Since llamas are the reason I got into spinning, I have decided to do my in-depth study on llama fiber. I plan to bring in some of the archeological work on llama fiber found in South America and use samples from llamas in North America. I'll be creating a variety of blends with the fibers and determining best uses for different types of llama fiber: from those with very heavy guard hair to those that are single-coated. I'll be doing comparisons across this spectrum to compare the end result from different fleece types in both knitted and woven fabrics. My exact proposal is still a work in progress; it's been percolating on my brain's back burner since Level I.

And this is where you all come in: I need llama fiber samples. As many 1 ounce samples of "right off the animal" fiber as I can get. Please see my ad on the previous page for instructions.

I'm happy to talk with anyone about the Master Spinner Program, and I very sincerely appreciate your donations to my in-depth study. I will include a list of all the contributors in my final paper and also a copy of the finished paper to RMLA. For questions, contact me at 928-220-5553 or via email at spinllama@msn.com. Thank you all again.

Olds College link: www.oldscollege.ca/
With branches everywhere, including Arizona!

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Retraining the Older Llama, and Possibly the Handler!

By Marty McGee Bennett

Camelids are all individuals. They don't all act the same way and it is not useful to treat them all the same as we work with them. One technique might offer the perfect solution for one animal and be totally ineffective on another. The best of all possible worlds is to have lots of tools and techniques available to you. But when retraining an older animal, I believe that desensitizing an animal to a human's approach is crucial.

I do find it helpful to categorize animals so that I can help their owners cope with them. There are distinct classes of difficulties and one of the most common is older animals who are difficult to halter. Animals that are difficult to halter are often difficult in general and because they are difficult they bring a lot of grief into their lives since they can't figure out that submitting to whatever procedure is being forced on them will be far easier than fighting the process.

In my experience difficult animals are usually born difficult. Difficult animals are usually very bright or very "not so bright." They may have trouble figuring out what is wanted or they may use their extra intelligence to subvert what they know is expected. Camelids are proud, dramatic and oppositional and like their kindred spirit—cats—they hate to be restrained. They don't like to be controlled and don't feel safe unless they can get away. These very bright animals develop coping mechanisms to help with their situation: screaming, spitting, kushing, or all of the above.

Often these difficult animals appear so distressed by any handling that owners will decide that the best course of action is to leave them alone. But can we leave an animal in our care alone? Camelids must be wormed and vaccinated. Toenails must be trimmed and we must help them if they are wounded or in the case of pregnant females if they have a difficult birth. We simply cannot leave them alone. Camelids do not distinguish between halter training sessions and a rectal exam or shots. Every time we are with our animals our behavior informs their attitude about us.

Well-intentioned owners feel they are giving their older difficult animals a big break by leaving them alone as much as possible, only handling them when it is necessary for herd management chores. From our point of view they are getting a 360 day vacation and they should be grateful and like us for that big break! The animal doesn't see it that way. From your camelids' point of view "The only time a human has anything to do with me it is unpleasant and stressful." In their experience humans never just take you for a walk or rub your neck or scratch your back, they always do annoying, unpleasant things.

First, changing the way you CATCH an animal is the best way to avoid all the unpleasant buttons.

In my opinion it is even more important to spend time with difficult animals doing things that ease the fear and create a different kind of expectation. It is

also very important to do your very best to accomplish herd management tasks in the easiest, least invasive way possible and to minimize restraint whenever you can. My whole training and handling program is designed to meet these needs.

Imagine as you look at your camelid that he or she has a control panel just like the dashboard of your car. There are certain buttons you can choose to push or NOT. When you push these buttons you will get very predictable results, just as you do when you turn your windshield wipers on or toot your horn. Difficult animals come equipped with a scream button, a kush button and a spit button. Most people want to avoid these behaviors, but do not understand what they are doing to push the buttons. If you push buttons the behaviors happen just as surely as if you had tooted the horn.

First, changing the way you CATCH an animal is the best way to avoid all the unpleasant buttons. Your problem child is expecting to be cornered, grabbed, held and perhaps dragged. So he or she responds by screaming, spitting or kushing. By catching your llama or alpaca differently, you avoid pushing these buttons as well as the unwanted behaviors. Here is what I recommend.

continued on next page



In this photo, the llama has moved into the escape route & the handler is preparing to move the wand over the head & use the wand to bring the rope back to her hands.

Herd your difficult llama and another calm animal friend into a catch pen (10 x10 or 9 X 9 feet square is ideal). Get yourself a wand, or pole, or light weight herding tool (about 4 feet long) and tie a lightweight rope (about 10 feet long) to it. You are going fishing for camelids. Maintain your body position behind the eye of the animal and position yourself so that you are always out of arms length. Hold on to the free end of the rope and use the wand to guide the rope over the animal's head beginning from behind the neck and end up in front of the animal. Use the wand to bring the rope back to you and remain outside of arms length the entire time. Once you have both ends of the rope in your hands, unclip or unclip the rope and put the wand on the ground. You have just caught your camelid! I know this might seem cumbersome but so is taking a shower every time you catch your animal.

NOTE: It may take several attempts to get your personal coordination down, but stay calm and patient. Do the best you can to catch smoothly, but don't repeat using the wand over and over in one session with the same animal. If you need to practice, then use other animals or even a fence post to get smoother at using the wand.

It has been my experience that if you use this technique for catching difficult animals, they will very quickly begin to stand quietly and allow you to simply walk up to them from behind the eye and hand yourself the rope around their neck. With this method you need not corner them (very scary) and you can simply help them stand still with the rope as you walk up to them.

How you respond with the rope once you have it around the neck is your next opportunity to avoid the dreaded buttons. Use your rope to help keep your animal student in balance over all four legs, particularly the front legs. An animal standing in balance feels more in control and safer, particularly the difficult animal. Make a series of measured approaches and back up if your animal exhibits ANY small sign of being uncomfortable with your approach. Usually the first indication is a shift in balance.

All of this takes 'what it takes' and it might be a week or it might be a month. The animal is really in charge of deciding when he or she trusts you enough to allow an approach and put aside the idea that running away is the better option. It is not a

linear process. It isn't step by step where you have to have total success before going to the next step, particularly in the case of adult animals that you are rehabilitating. That is, you don't have to have an animal that accepts catching without the wand BEFORE you can proceed to haltering. The wand makes the start of the process, i.e., THE CATCHING, much less scary so that everything that happens after goes better.

My suggestion is that you use the wand each time you need to catch your llama or alpaca. Then do what you intended to do whether it is to put on a halter, go for a walk or give an injection.

When it comes to putting the halter on, give your animal more room than you would normally. Most people are in the habit of pulling their camelids up close as they put the halter on. Try giving your llama or alpaca almost the full length of your arms instead. In this way you will be able to see your animal student's feet and can tell if he is standing in balance.

Using a corner to catch animals has been the industry standard and has done more to limit the relationship

continued on next page

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Retraining the Older Lama,.... continued

we can have with these animals than any other single practice. You will be amazed at how making a commitment to changing how you approach your llama will change your entire relationship. Your animals will be more settled when you are around and handling will be easier whether or not it is shearing, putting a pack on or trimming toenails.

SPITTING: To be sure it is unpleasant to be spat on. On the other hand the difficult animal has developed the spitting habit probably for good reason. Yelling, hitting, spraying with water, or spitting back may temporarily suppress the behavior but is probably not the best way to change your woolly buddy's mind about people over the long haul. The catching method outlined above in my experience eliminates most of the problem as spitting is usually a response to being cornered. This method will also allow you to control the head early on in the catching and haltering process and turn the head away from you if the spitting persists. I think turning the animal's head is all that is appropriate in terms of a direct response to the behavior. If you engage in very intermittent eye contact and remember to breathe, it will help greatly. Let go of thoughts like "Don't you dare!" Thoughts like this will be reflected in your body language and your animal will

react negatively.

MAKE ABSOLUTELY sure that the halter you are using fits correctly. Most camelid halters (particularly alpaca halters) are prone to slip down the nose bone. Loosen the nose band as much as you can and tighten the crown piece of the halter more than you would normally even at the risk of feeling it might be a bit too snug. The halter should fit right up by the eye. This is the safest place and your camelid knows it.

As you work with your difficult camelid, remember that TRUE INSANITY IS DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AND EXPECTING TO GET DIFFERENT RESULTS. If you keep pushing those buttons you will keep getting the behaviors that go with them. Time spent with these animals doing things that are easy and fun like going for a walk is not a waste of time and will benefit both you and your animal. Working this way with your difficult animal will make you a better handler and trainer and your effort will change the mind of a troubled animal.

Watch for future articles in The Journal from Marty McGee Bennett. Or contact her at www.CAMELIDYNAMICS.COM.



● REACH FOR THE SKY ● THE HOPE PASS AID STATION

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 2017



BY GARY
CARLTON

It dawned on me this Spring as I began to think about the planning process for the Hope Pass aid station that the word 'crazy' can be delivered in several different flavors. Every year we have runners tell us that we are crazy to haul that much gear all the way up that pass. But as we look back down the mountain and across the valley some fifty miles to where they left the starting line in the town of Leadville, we feel like they might just be a little bit insane. The fact is: Once you have reached the elevation where pine trees can no longer breathe, you have gained enough altitude to actually stand on Hope Pass.

While some may wonder what drives us to put in the kind of work it will take to plan, build, and run this aid station, I think most of our volunteers would all agree the payoff is found in the endless appreciation and gratitude that the runners show us for being on the mountain to assist them at the highest and most remote section of their 100-mile journey.

Most of our 30 or more pack llamas will carry between 50 and 90 pounds of gear including, tents, food, first aid supplies, batteries and solar equipment for the water purification system and much more. We are also assisted by Half Moon Outfitters who haul up supplies with five mules. Around 3000 pounds of gear will reach the aid station by race day. Once at the traditional camp site just at tree line, we will set up and run this aid station for 800 runners and their pacers. These extreme athletes will pass through the aid station twice (up to the pass and then back down) on Saturday, August 19th.



You can volunteer for the entire 4-day adventure. Or depending on your schedule, you can come up on Friday, August 18th or early Saturday morning on race day. Bringing a llama is not a requirement to become a member of our team. Let us know how you would like to participate.

Enjoy a great experience with forty or more volunteers and 30 pack llamas while finding out how hard work and helping someone else achieve their goal can leave you feeling so good about yourself.

Join us in August for the 2017 Hope Pass aid station in Leadville, CO. For more information contact Gary Carlton, 303-503-1324 or llama@jmhfarm.com

For a glimpse of the 100 Mi event, point your browser to: WWW.LEADVILLERACESERIES.COM/RUN/LEADVILLETRAIL100RUN/



Together, Lamas and a Fair Might Just Change the World

by Gayle M. Woodsum



Have lamas for more than five minutes, and you'll be confronted by the question "but what do you do with them?" For the

smitten, the love-at-first-sight lama lover, the answer is irrelevant. Still, we learn and confidently offer up the stock answers: fiber, packing, family fun, companionship, therapy work, livestock guarding, etc.

The truth is, there's even more. Lamas save lives. Since 2002, lama dung

has been used as a key component in water filtration in Bolivia that turns mine-polluted water into clean, drinkable water. In 2015, researchers at Virginia Military Institute used that discovery and took it one step further. What they learned is that by heating lama dung until it becomes charred, it has the same filtration properties as charcoal – the same kind of material used in most water purification systems. Burned and ground lama poop placed in samples of contaminated water removes more than 90 percent of iron, copper and lead from the water. In a world increasingly challenged by lack of potable water, lamas' contribution in helping to address the problem is impressive.

On another plane, scientists have been developing devices called biosensors for use in early detection of biological warfare. It turns out that lamas, camels and sharks all produce an especially tough yet tiny

antibody, far more sensitive than anything produced by humans, which make lamas excellent early detectors of biochemical warfare attacks.

Personally, I get happier thinking about lamas providing drinkable water where it's desperately needed than I do contemplating biological warfare, but the point is – lamas have been an essential part of a healthy ecosystem, in great partnership with humans, for thousands of years. There's no need to feel defensive about explaining their presence in our lives.

I feel the same way about the Higher Ground Fair. (This leap of



(See ad on Pg 2)



topic might seem like a non-sequitur, but bear with me – almost everything I do and think about in life relates to lamas). This is a really, really big project I've been

continued on next page

Together, Lamas and a Fair Might...., continued
carrying around in my head for decades. The Higher Ground Fair had its debut outside of my brain and in the real world last fall in Laramie, Wyoming, and we're in the thick of planning for its second go-round. It's a regional fair designed to celebrate the best of tradition and innovation in the rural Rocky Mountains. By that we mean the best of everything from music and the arts to agriculture, gardening, animals, shelter

make an unexpected discovery of something really important; I keep thinking there's more than variety rising up with the Higher Ground Fair.

It turns out that when you create one venue designed to showcase a few dozen or more types of exhibits, you get an equal mix in the audiences they attract. Different people buy a ten-dollar ticket to listen to a Nobel Prize winner play award-winning music he says is in the "catawampus American" genre, then fork out the same amount of money to take a hay ride in a wagon behind work horses Pistol and Pete after competing in the corn hole toss competition meant to help fund a Foster Grandparents Program.



and energy, outdoor living and a Kids' Adventure Zone.

This is a new event, very unique, and subject to the same kind of questions we get about our interest in llamas and other camelids. What are you doing with the Higher Ground Fair and why? Mostly, we're trying to offer a very fun learning and entertainment environment, and to do it with the biggest, most diverse audience in mind. In other words, you might come to the fair for great food and foot-stompin' music in mind, but as you roam around to look at that tiny house display, draft horse demonstration, or handmade jewelry vendor, something you've never seen before might just stop you in your tracks. Like a llama and alpaca performance show. Or a yarn spinning demonstration.

There's even more than that. Just like the way if you look closely at something strange, exotic, perplexing (such as a love for lamas), you might

Nor is it the same kind of people who typically go out of their way to listen to a young ranchers' panel describe their day-to-day lives, as those who can't wait to see what puppies are up for adoption at the Black Dog Rescue booth. Eager to become a proficient llama and alpaca fiber artist? When was the last time you talked about that with someone whose passion in life is trying to save the Harlequin duck, or who spends her time advocating for quality care for U.S. military veterans with the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

I'm a writer, community organizer and llama fanatic who lives in the rural – very rural - Rocky Mountains of North Park, Colorado. There are about 1000 other people who live year-round in this 2400-square-mile basin surrounded by 12,000-foot peaks. The scariest thing about me to most of them is that I'm a vegetarian. And the strangest thing is that I leave my truck and ranching equipment out in the weather in order to let the llamas, horses, donkeys and chickens use the barns and sheds for shelter. But in the 27 years since I first moved here, we've grown rather fond of each other. It's the differences between us that keep life interesting.

Which, once again, brings me back around to the lama thing. The core of my social life revolves
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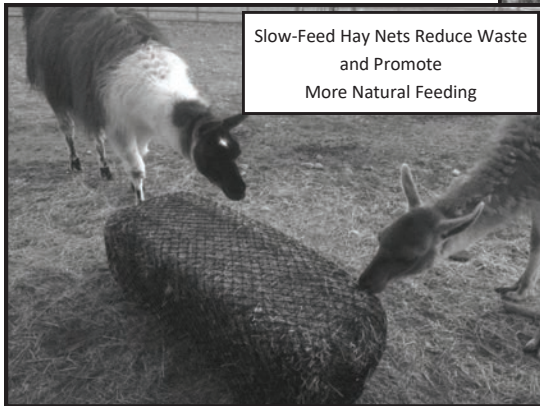
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Together, Llamas and a Fair Might.... , continued

around lama events, shared with people I call my llama friends, most of whom don't live anywhere near me and whose personal lives away from llamas I know little to nothing about. There's something bigger, more important that binds us together.

I've never felt those bonds more than I did last year at the Higher Ground Fair's llama and alpaca shows that took off in a September snowstorm (thank the heavens for an indoor show barn!). There I was, trying to bring to life a dream and a concept people were eager to support me on but not entirely sure of the end goal. Leave it to my llama family (animals and humans alike) not to care about anything like a goal.

They laughed their way through the makeshift obstacles, gobbled up the Bear Bait Grill lunch and other surprise foods being sold, sat

riveted to the performance of the Wind River Indian Reservation Dancers, and toughed out an icy rain to cheer on and dance to own-son Andy Hackbarth's amazing band.



I like rubbing elbows with people and species who have a different outlook on life than I do. It's fun. It makes me think. And sometimes, it makes me think there's hope for change in the world that will do all of us some real good. Which is to say, if llamas can do double and triple duty with their existence, like make us smile and save lives, I'm guessing that the combination of llamas and a new kind of fair ought to be able to accomplish at least as much.

See you at the Higher Ground Fair on September 23 & 24, 2017 - Laramie, WY!

***** WWW.HIGHERGROUNDFAIR.ORG ***** 

Utilizing Cranial Nerves to Evaluate the Function of the Camelid Brain and Brain Stem

The camelid cranial nervous system is complex. The cranial nerves (CN) are a set of 12 nerves that arise from the bottom or ventral aspect of the brain and brain stem that regulate a variety of body functions. By evaluating these nerves and knowing the location and function of each we can often assess the normal or abnormal function of the brain. Identifying those nerves not functioning normally through a series of tests can help in accessing brain function and isolation of the area of the brain affected by trauma or disease giving us a means of accessing prognosis. Below is a list of each nerve and how your veterinarian may use this information in evaluating your camelid in regards to neurological disease.

For our purposes, cranial is defined as; relating to the cranium (head) or cranial cavity. A nerve is defined as an enclosed, cable-like bundle of axons (nerve fibers) that provides a common pathway for the electrochemical nerve impulses to be transmitted to peripheral organs or the central nervous system (brain and brain stem).

The picture of the brain to the right illustrates the cranial nerves as they exit the ventral aspect of the brain and brain stem. (This picture is compliments of google image)

Cranial Nerve: I---Olfactory

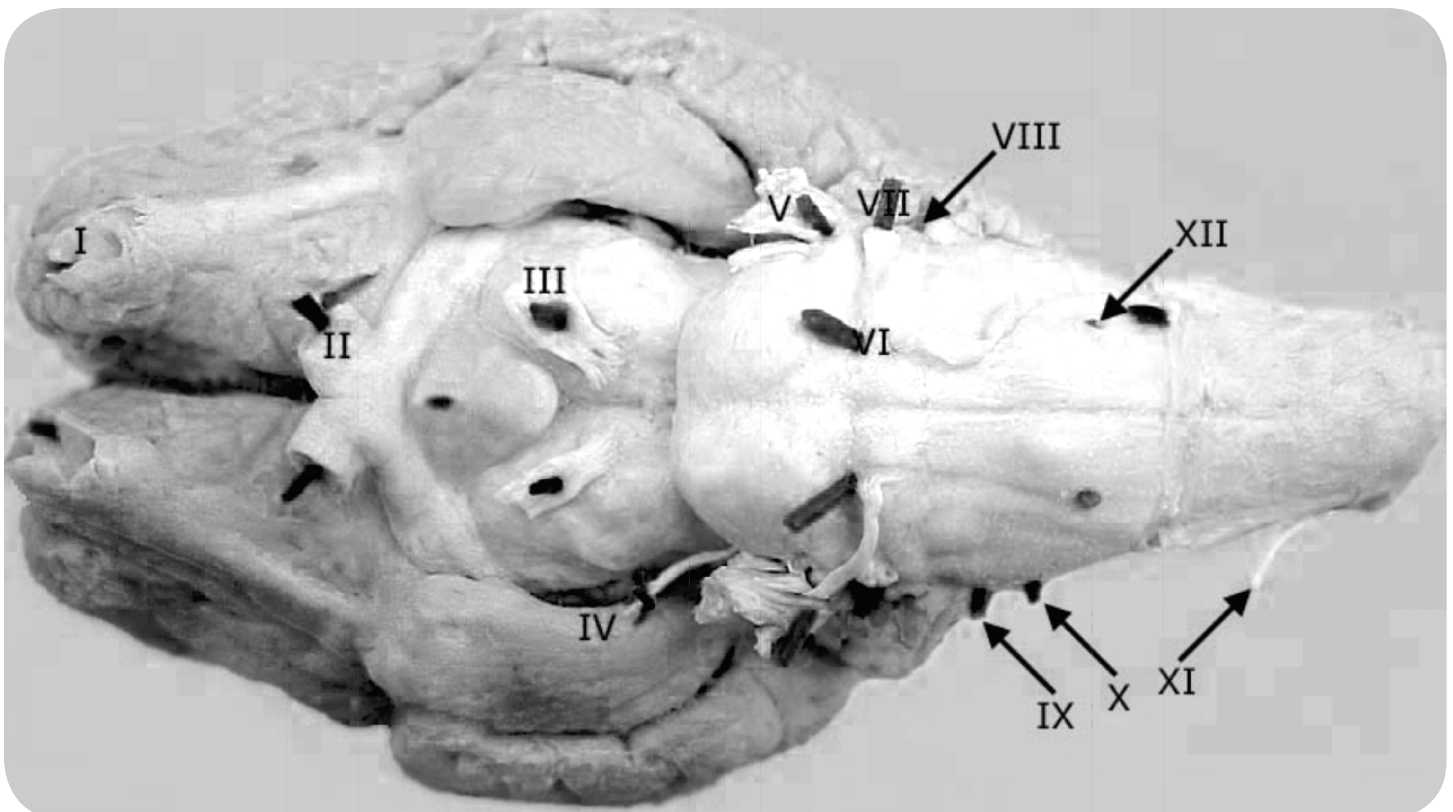
Function: Sensory for smell

Tests for normal function: Observe for the ability to smell; try grains, treats, cookies or anything they may be used to. Recognition of smell may be difficult to evaluate in the camelid because the loss of smell may be solely due to a problem in the nasal cavity. Nasal cavity dysfunction is often seen with other abnormalities such as swelling and or nasal discharge.

Abnormal Findings: Anosmia (lack of smell)

Possible Causes for lack of function: Neoplasia, trauma to front of brain, infection, over all head trauma

continued on next page



Cranial Nerve: II---Optic Nerve:

Function: Sensory input for vision, transmits vision from the retina of eye to brain

Tests for normal function: Visual tests, menace response (measures the integrity of the entire visual complex, discussed below), dazzle response, throwing cotton balls or other objects and watching for visual recognition, walking through an obstacle course.

Always evaluate the absence of the menace response in such cases as polio and listeriosis. The Pupillary Light Reflex (PLR, discussed below) is the best method for evaluation of the Optic Nerve. A normal PLR indicates that the CN II, III and VII are functioning normally.

Abnormal Findings: Loss of vision. Damage to the optic nerve can cause permanent and potentially severe loss of vision, as well as an abnormal pupillary light reflex (PLR). Loss of the PLR may indicate loss of function of CN II but may also represent loss of function of CN VII, the facial nerve lacking the blink response. This is why the dazzle response along with the menace response are good tests to use together.

Possible causes for lack of function: Injury to the optic nerve can be the result of congenital or inheritable problems, glaucoma, trauma, toxicity, inflammation, ischemia, compression from tumors, chronic uveitis. In humans one of the most common reasons for optic nerve damage is carotid artery emboli or occlusion. I have not seen this in the animal world at this time.

Cranial nerves: III---Oculomotor, IV---Trochlear and VI--- Abducens:

These cranial nerves are often evaluated together since they work in unison controlling the movement of the eyelids and globe within the orbit.

Function: Eyeball and eyelid movement, raise eyelids, move eyes up and down and rotate medially (towards the nose), also involved in focusing of the lens.

Tests for normal function: Observe for eye movement in response to stimulation,

The Oculomotor nerve works with CN II controlling constriction of the pupils (PLR exam).

Abnormal Findings: Loss of eye movement, lack of PLR, eye position abnormalities, eye not centered.

Possible causes for lack of function: Vascular problems, emboli, inflammation or bleeding, trauma, diabetes.

Cranial Nerve: V---Trigeminal:

Function: Sensory perception to the face and motor (movement) to the muscles for chewing. Sensory perception of the teeth, gums and lips.

Tests for normal function: Sensory aspect of the nerve can be tested by light touch on the face, around the ears and lips and gums with your finger or straw. Normal response is movement of the facial skin and moving away. Touching near the eye is called the palpebral reflex. By touching near the eye a brisk closure of the eyelids should take place testing CN V as well as CN VII (blink, complete closure of eye).

To evaluate the motor function of the trigeminal nerve the jaw should be opened and the strength of closure evaluated. Severe trigeminal involvement can cause the mouth to be open at all times, "dropped jaw". Often the tongue may hang out but when touched it can be withdrawn back into the mouth testing CN XII.

Abnormal Findings: No response to touch or facial stimulation. Lack of eyelid closure with touch around the eye (lack of Palpebral Reflex), dropped jaw or inability to chew. Excessive drooling and food falling from mouth during the attempt to chew.

Possible Causes for lack of function: By far the most common cause the I see is trauma. Ear ticks may affect CN VII as well as CN V with infection and destruction of the nerve. CN V is most often treated with CN VII using anti-inflammatory medications along with acupuncture and laser. Other causes of abnormal CN V function would be idiopathic (cause unknown) immune disease, toxic plants and other toxins.

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Cranial Nerve: VII---Facial:

Function: Responsible for muscles of facial expression (movement of face), tear production, ocular film and salivary gland function.

Tests for normal function: Evaluate facial expression by observation. Touching of the face will stimulate the trigeminal and facial nerve; this should move the muscle of the face in response to the touch. Measure tear production (dry eye evaluation), palpate the ears, lip, and muzzle for muscle tone and movement.

Abnormal Findings: Clinical appearance of facial nerve dysfunction is classical and in most cases easy to spot. Clinical signs of CN VII dysfunction are: drooped ear and lips, drooling, retention of food while chewing, food balls up in one or both of the cheeks, inability to blink completely and deviated lips and muzzle, and dry eye.

Dry eye can become significantly important and may require rapid and aggressive therapy. When the camelid is unable to blink and has decreased tear production due to CN VII dysfunction the eye is very prone to permanent damage. Corneal ulceration can become severe and result in globe rupture.

Possible Causes for lack of function: These are very similar to the trigeminal. By far the most common cause of loss of function of CN VII is a trauma, ear tick destruction, snake bite and trauma to the side of the face. Other conditions affecting CN VII would be neoplasia and inner ear infections.

Cranial Nerve: VIII---Vestibulocochlear

Function: Vestibular System: Inner ear function, equilibrium and hearing, regulates gait movement, head position, and posture as well as eye movements

Tests for normal function: Evaluate from a distance, gait and stance as well as foot placement. Evaluate by moving the head and observing reaction and positioning of body as you move the head.

Abnormal Findings: Abnormal findings associated with CN VIII are associated with

abnormal vestibular function including: staggering, odd gait and posturing, circling, falling, rolling, head tilt, nystagmus (rapid movement of the eye), and inability to get up.

Possible Causes for lack of function: CN VIII is very much like CN V and VII being affected by trauma, inflammation and inner ear infections (bacterial and / or viral).

Cranial Nerves IX---Glossopharyngeal, X---Vagus, XI---Spinal Accessory:

Function: Motor, movement to the muscles of the neck, pharynx and palate. The Vagus nerve controls secretions of glands of the respiratory track and controls movement of C-1, 2 and 3 of the camelid stomach. The Glossopharyngeal and Accessory nerve innervates the mucosa of the tongue, larynx, and pharynx.

Tests for normal function: Auscultation or listening near the larynx for increased snoring or roaring, passing of a stomach tube, evaluation of swallowing, endoscopic exam of the larynx to evaluate function.

Abnormal Findings: Dysfunction of this group of nerves results in chronic bloat, poor appetite, weight loss, roaring, snoring, and oral and nasal regurgitation.

Abnormalities of the Accessory nerve are very rare and may be seen as unexplainable atrophy of the muscles of the neck. Rare as this sounds I have seen several cases of this in male alpacas.

Possible Causes for lack of function: Chronic or acute respiratory disease, i.e. pneumonia, neoplasia, trauma, infection.

Cranial Nerve XII---Hypoglossal

Function: Movement of the muscles of the tongue

Tests for normal function: This nerve is tested by gently pulling the tongue from the mouth. A normal animal should be able to pull and move the tongue back into the mouth quickly and with strength.

Abnormal Findings: Flaccidity of the tongue, inability to eat and drink as well as prehending food.

Possible causes for lack of function: Infection, neoplasia, Botulism, trauma

continued on next page

Michelle Dally, DVM



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Ask The CSU Vet Team continued

NowWhat?

Cranial Nerve evaluation should be done as part of a complete physical exam. Owners should be aware of the nerves and their function taking note of abnormalities and seeking medical attention rapidly. It is important to be gentle and use a consistent approach in evaluating each nerve. Below is a short evaluation format to help you develop your own approach to cranial nerve evaluation of your camelid.

Evaluate the ability to smell (CN-I); evaluate the ability to see and maneuver through an obstacle course (CN-II); evaluate the position of the eye and eye movement (CN-III, IV, VI); Evaluate the menace response, pupillary light reflex, palpebral reflex, and eye position (CN-VIII); look at symmetry of face and fascial muscle movement (CN-V, VII); look for the ability to swallow (CN-IX, X, XII); and lastly evaluate the strength and movement of the tongue (CN-XII).

It is important to understand the tests that you are using to evaluate the nerves and their

function. Below is a brief description of some of the tests and how they are done and evaluated.



Menace Response: As a review, the menace response evaluates CN II and VII. It is characterized as a normal blink and head aversion to a finger being thrust in the direction of the eye but not touching the eye or surrounding tissue. It is important to use only one finger. Using your hand can create a gust of air and interfere with your ability to interpret the response. It is important to remember that this is a response and not a reflex in that the menace response is a learned behavior to avoid eye trauma

and therefore may not be valid in young cria. The menace response will be missing in camelids that are blind or have advanced cerebellar disease.

Pupillary Light Reflex (PLR): The PLR tests the function of CN II, III. This is a reflex that takes place in response to shining a bright light into one eye. The normal reflex is constriction of the pupil in both eyes. The light must be shined directly into one eye and the other eye observed

continued on next page

by another person. It is difficult to evaluate both eyes at the same time without help. Both pupils should constrict with the light shining into just one.

Palpebral Reflex: This reflex evaluates CN V and VII. The test is done by touching a finger on the skin around the eye in an area in which the camelid cannot see your finger. The normal response in the camelid is closure of the eye and movement of the head away from the touch. This test is difficult to evaluate in a depressed camelid.

Dazzle Response: This is done by acutely flashing a light into one eye. I like to use the flash on a camera. The normal response is a rapid avoidance, movement away from the light and pupil constriction. Loss of this reaction most often indicates a malfunction of CN II.

Now for the fun; you have all the CN listed and their function. This case will hopefully help put things together and help you better understand the importance of CN evaluation on any neurological camelid.

You are now a veterinarian and suspect this camelid to have undergone some severe head trauma. Here is what you are seeing. With your knowledge from above, cranial nerves V- XII all seem to be affected. You are suspicious you have lost the Trigeminal nerve (V) since there is a dropped jaw, poor jaw tone, has lost the ability to eat and has no feeling in the face. You have tried to stimulate the face with a piece of straw and even touched the inside of the nose and gums, there is no response. On closer exam of the eyes you notice that the eyes are positioned toward the nose and not moving (medial strabismus). This appears to be a problem with the abducens, CN VI. You are also concerned about CV VII since your camelid has no menace response, drooped ears and no lip tone. There also appears to be a lip deviated to one side. The eye appears infected and dry and the blink response is poor. This camelid now seems to be developing CV VIII problems displaying a nystagmus which is variable and seems to come and go. There is also a head tilt to the affected side confirming that CV VIII is affected. Mentation is poor and prognosis at this time is not good.

This is an illustration of a camelid that had *Listeria* and not trauma but many times it is difficult to know the exact cause but not difficult in evaluating the extent of brain involvement.

In summary; cranial nerve evaluations allow the evaluation of the function of the brain. These nerves all arise from the brain and brain stem allowing for evaluation of the severity of disease or trauma to the central nervous system. Function of these nerves is important to help isolate what portion of the brain may be affected and also gives an understanding of the prognosis. The most common abnormalities I see are malfunction of the facial and trigeminal nerve secondary to infection and/or trauma. Often the vestibular system will be associated with the loss of these nerve functions.

In conclusion, it is our hope that this short article has given you a better understanding of the complexity of the cranial nerve complex and their function in life. In the diseased or traumatized camelid, trying to isolate the loss of function of the CN's can be very difficult. Rarely is there a malfunction of one single nerve but many times multiple nerves may be involved with different extents of function loss. This makes it very difficult to isolate the degree of disease and or trauma. The long story short in this entire CN picture is; a loss of CN function is concerning and treatment can be difficult and unrewarding. Treatment may be supportive using anti-inflammatories to help reduce swelling and inflammation and antimicrobials to help treat or to minimize possible infectious disease. Even with the most complex medical approaches to treatment, most CN injuries are severe enough to limit the success.

On a positive note, integrative therapies such as acupuncture, laser and manual therapy can be successfully utilized in reducing inflammation and aid in the healing or loss of neurological function. In the past those camelids experiencing loss of function of CN-V, and VII, secondary to inner ear infections have responded well to combined therapies of medications, acupuncture and laser. When using a multi-modality approach to therapy many of these camelids recovered from their CN function loss. In future articles we will be looking into integrative therapies and their use in camelids as well as how these treatment modalities work with the nervous system and aid in the healing process.



TOP 5 THINGS YOU NEED IN A MEDICAL KIT

Dr. Charlene Arendas, Town & Country Veterinary Hospital, Howland, Ohio.

Reprinted from *Topline*, May 2016, ORVAL

As camelid owners, we know we need to have a camelid-savvy vet we can turn to for help with our animals. However, sometimes we become accustomed to certain medical issues or minor injuries that occur at the farm or that we notice at shearing time. There are definitely some things we ought to talk to our veterinarian about having on hand at home, to use in such instances when the vet might not be able to come out for several days. Then, at least we can put a call in to them and they can advise us what to do in the meantime. If we have some of the following items at home, it may help our animals sooner.

1. Flunixin meglumine (Banamine)

Flunixin is a prescription-only, anti-inflammatory and pain medication. It can be used for a variety of painful conditions, colic symptoms, wounds, lameness/limping, swellings, and irritations. Multiple doses



or high doses of this medication can possibly induce or worsen stomach ulcers. It should NEVER be combined with steroids such as Dexamethasone or Prednisone, or with other “anti-inflammatory” such as “Bute”/phenylbutazone or aspirin. Typical dose is 1cc per 100 pounds, given SQ, every 12-24 hours.

**Note – although flunixin/Banamine does come in an oral paste, how well it is absorbed in camelids is unknown. You should only use the injectable form.

2. Vitamin B-Complex

This is available over the counter, and is a combination of all the B vitamins: B1 (Thiamine), B2 (Riboflavin), B6 (Pyridoxine), and B12 (Cyanocobalamin). They all are water-soluble, which means they are safe to give at high doses – any extra

is excreted in the animal’s urine (and the urine can become a darker yellow or almost orange color).

Each of the specific B vitamins are responsible for many bodily processes, help with absorption of nutrients from food, support neurologic function, and can help stimulate appetite. I think any “sick” camelid – one with an illness lasting more than a day or two – can possibly benefit from a few injections of a vitamin B complex. I usually give about 5cc of B-complex SQ once a day to a sick adult camelid for about 3 days. There are also over-the-counter Vitamin B pastes/gels available for cattle/sheep, and these should be given according to label instructions.

3. Thiamine (Vitamin B1)

Although you can find a small amount of thiamine in your injectable B-complex, there are a few instances in which it is vitally important to have prescription strength, injectable Thiamine at a high dosage! ANYTIME I have a neurologic camelid (wobbly walking/ataxia, walking in circles, blindness/walking into things, tremors/shaking, mentally dull/”dumb”, staring/”zoned out”) I am sure to include at least one injection of Thiamine into my protocol, even if I’m convinced it’s meningeal worm.

The disease known as Polio encephalomalacia is a type of thiamine deficiency that causes a sudden-onset blindness, and can occur after a change in feed, an animal going off feed, or even from giving medications such as Corid/amprolium for coccidia. There is a wide range of dosing for Thiamine, and it’s ideal that your vet give the first dose of it IV. However, the sooner it’s given, the better chance you have at saving a neurologic camelid.

4. Sterile saline solution (0.9% sodium chloride/NaCl)

Saline can be purchased over the counter or from your vet, in a variety of forms – sterile bags, bottles, pre-filled syringes, eye drops/flushes/contacts solutions, and even squeeze bottles with flip tops. Saline can be used for a variety of things around the farm! It can be drawn into a large syringe, and squirted

continued on next page

out under pressure to clean out a wound. It will help loosen blood, pus, and debris from the wound and cause less trauma than you picking at it with your fingers.

For eye infections, injuries, or pieces of matter stuck in the eye: use in a syringe under pressure to flush the mucus and debris out safely instead of touching the eyeball. This will also help lubricate the eye somewhat until your vet prescribes a medicated ointment or drop (if needed).

It is much better to use saline instead of water, because the salt content in it closely mimics the salt content of the body's tissues. If you use plain water (no salt) or a high salt content solution (called hypertonic saline), they can cause tissue to either dehydrate or swell (think of your fingers pruned when you're in the pool too long...in saltwater you would start to swell up and take on water).



The golden rule of using sterile saline is, keep it sterile! Use a clean needle to draw saline from a bag. If you have a saline eye flush in a bottle, be sure not to touch the tip of the bottle with your finger or touch it to the animal's eye. Make sure you have a large 60cc syringe and some large gauge needles (16- 18 gauge) to be able to draw it out of the bag quickly. Sometimes, if I know I will be using an entire bag or bottle of saline to flush a wound for several days, I will add about 5-10cc of Betadine solution or povidone iodine to the

bag. This can ONLY be done for wounds! Never flush Betadine or povidone iodine into an eye!

5. Penicillin-G

Penicillin is a thick, refrigerated, injectable antibiotic that can be purchased over the counter at your local farm store or from your veterinarian. When an animal gets an open wound or abscess, starting penicillin can potentially help the infection from worsening. Although it may not be the antibiotic that your veterinarian ends up recommending for the issue, it is better to have this on board than nothing at all until your vet can come out. You MUST shake penicillin well before using and you MUST refrigerate it.

You will need to use an 18-gauge needle, because it is so thick. It is very important that you give this medication SQ or IM, and NOT IV! Be sure that when you inject the needle into the animal, that you pull back on the plunger a little bit to make sure you don't see any blood. If you do, move to another spot to give the shot. Most forms of penicillin are 300,000 units per mL/cc (sometimes it is 150,000 of procaine penicillin and 150,000 of benzathine penicillin, but the total = 300,000). I usually dose penicillin at 1cc per 20-25 pounds SQ once a day for 5-7 days.

This is just a short list of some of the important medications you might want to include in your medical kit. Remember, it is better to be prepared than to scramble at the last minute for these items. Try to keep everything in a tote or bag that you can grab easily, and make sure you have enough needles and syringes on hand as well! Keep a watchful eye on the expiration dates of the medications you have in your medical kit also. These things do expire, especially "biologic" medications like antibiotics!

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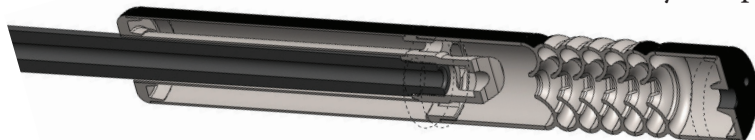
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#SHOOTSUPPRESSED

Let's go, Llamas!

By Susi
Hülsmeier -Sinay



Well, summer is finally here! Yellowstone National Park beckons with over 1300 miles of trails to be explored and charming campsites along creeks and rivers, in canyons and on the shores of high country lakes to be called home for a few nights. Time to venture into the backcountry with the llamas and camp under the stars, sit by the campfire, listen to wolves howl in the night, wake to calls of cranes at sunrise. Let's go!

carry loads of about a quarter of their body weight, meaning 50 to 80 pounds.

The trail feels good under our happy feet as we walk unburdened, our eyes taking in the gorgeous landscapes around us, while our faithful pack animals bend their long necks to look over our shoulders. An absolutely charming sight! Before long, llamas and people have bonded and are getting along just fine. Hawks soar above us. Ground squirrels whistle in alarm as our many feet approach.

Suddenly, all llamas stop and stare in unison at something in the distance. We quickly grab our binoculars, and sure enough: a grizzly bear is foraging unconcerned along the far tree line. Domingo lets loose a shrill alarm call and instantly the other llamas join in emphatically. A predator or



Our four-legged backcountry sherpas are rearing to go. This winter was way too long! Let's hit the trail! Aloof yet cooperative, the llama is the hiker's choice of pack animal carrying the load entrusted to them with nonchalant dignity. Their charming banana-shaped ears swivel as they scan the sounds of the wild and alert their human companions to wildlife nearby that otherwise might have gone unnoticed.

Today, on a warm July day, we trek down the trail to Cache Creek in the Northeast corner of Yellowstone National Park. Gorgeous Lamar Valley stretches to the West of us. Open meadows, green slopes and rocky ridges grace our views ahead. Herds of bison graze and grunt not far from our group. We walk the trail in a line, each of us leading a freshly-shorn camelid companion. The llamas carry saddles and panniers filled with our creature comforts: kitchen equipment, food coolers, tents, sleeping bags, chairs, tables, and yes – two bottles of wine! Llamas with packs walk about as fast as an unburdened person and are able



continued on next page



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Let's go, Llamas!, continued

any animal that raises a llama's suspicion, no matter how far away, will cause it to sound a loud warning nobody is able to ignore. Our llamas have developed a dislike of moose and bison in addition to predators and treat us often to serenades of excited announcements of these particular intruders. Despite Domingo's obvious worry and repeated load exclamations ("hey, did you see that bear???"), we smile and enjoy watching the grizzly at a safe distance. We then continue our hike and before long arrive on the banks of Cache Creek. The



campsite is nestled in trees close to the creek bank and has a nice open meadow for the llamas. The Park Service has designated this site as "Backpackers and Llamas only". The llamas are quickly unloaded and unsaddled and turned out to graze, while we set up tables, chairs and tents. We are ready before long for our deserved relaxation with cheese, crackers and wine, followed by that yummy bison chili, simmering soon on the Coleman stove.

After dinner, as the stars twinkle in the huge sky we enjoy our time by the campfire. The llamas have bedded down after their meal of good, tasty backcountry grass and forbes. Tastes so much better than at home! Their long lead lines are attached to durable net bags filled with rocks. This allows them to graze at their leisure but not wander too far. Before we get too sleepy, we hang our food bags on the high horizontal pole fastened by the Park Service between two tall trees, out of reach of hungry bears. As we snuggle into our sleeping bags, we know that we can rely on our banana-eared companions to warn of any

danger. Whoever passes through the dark camp will have to get by their alarm system. Cache Creek mumbles and gurgles soothingly. An owl hoots at the moon. The night passes without incident. A fresh morning dawns in Yellowstone. Then it happens over breakfast! Excited, high-pitched urgent calls from the llama meadow make us jump and leave our steaming coffee mugs as we scramble through the sagebrush. A bear? We arrive in time to behold a stately moose passing right through the worried llama group and heading into the willows. We exhale with

relief while the llamas throw additional insults at the uninvited visitor until he disappears with measured



steps. Upon our return the coffee is cold but who needs caffeine with all the action! Now we are ready to pack up camp and head on out. As our signature call - "Let's go llamas! - sounds across Cache Creek,

continued on next page

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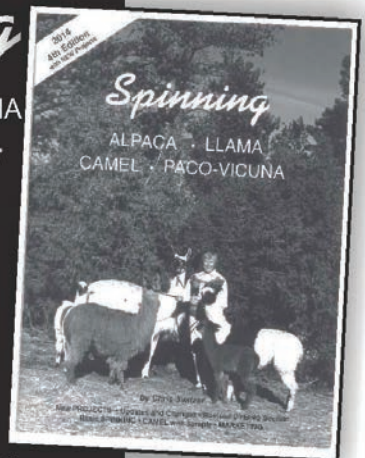
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Let's go, Llamas!, continued

our long-necked companions fall into step behind us and we march into another day of great backcountry adventure.

Two days and many miles later, we arrive safely back at the trailhead, where the llamas jump into their trailer and we say good-bye to new friends. As we drive off, and Yellowstone gets smaller and smaller in our rear view mirror, we are already making plans for our next trek, this time down the trail of Pebble Creek!

So, what are YOU waiting for? Answer that call of the wild. Join a llama outfitter on a trek or get your own guys trained and ready. Explore the backcountry, a park, a trail. Immerse yourself in the wild for a number of days or go on day hike. Bring your stuff – and put it on a llama. And don't forget the extra blanket and the bottle of wine! The llamas will be ready to hit the trail when they hear your call:

“Let's go llamas!”



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Thank You!

How to Train Your Llama in 10 Minutes

By John Mallon

Pretty catchy title, hey? Of course, we know it can't be done ... but now that I have your attention, I'd like to say that I don't believe a llama can be "trained" in 10 minutes, 10 days or 10 weeks without some basic understanding of how he learns. As the original working title for this piece was to have been "Performance Training for the Herd Sire", I trust that llamas (and readers) of the female persuasion will take no offense at my use of male pronouns throughout the text.

What are llamas? Why do they do the things they do? It's tempting to interpret llama behavior in terms of human characteristics, but until you have put aside the notion that llamas are really just another form of humanity, you cannot start to make sense of their "nonsensical" behavior. It is a human tendency to believe that all animals more or less think and feel the way that we do, but the plain fact is that they don't: our idea of how a llama should react to a particular situation is not necessarily the same as his. As with human interactions, it is necessary to recognize that another soul's perception of any given situation can be, and very often is, quite different from our own. In the case of llamas, we are talking a whole different reality.

Dog trainers like to say that every handler gets exactly the dog he/she deserves. The unhappiest llama/human relationships we see are those in which the owner refuses to accept the llama as the creature of instinct he is, and insists upon assigning him human characteristics which he does not and never will, possess. (This is known as anthropomorphism, a widespread practice). You've seen these teams... the fidgety llama spitting, ears constantly laid back, tail wagging furiously; the owner exasperated over "Poopsie's" behavior, saying (and believing!) that "Poops" is just trying to embarrass me because I forgot to grain him last Tuesday. I just knew he'd get even with me for that!"

Love is a great motive for embarking on a teaching adventure, probably the best there is; it will however be necessary to bring your head along on these exercises as well. We cannot expect the animal to learn our language, and he'll certainly never speak it, so we, with our big, reasoning brains, must learn to

speak and understand his, and by doing so we are able to communicate our wishes clearly and succinctly, because we now know "where he is coming from".

Notice I use the word "teach" rather than "train". If we think of training, then we must focus on training



systems and techniques, but if we think in terms of "teaching", then we should look at the llama's learning system, and the llama itself, from the inside out.

First, let's consider what his needs and instincts are: as a wandering, grazing, prey animal, the llama is very attuned to any movement within the range of his vision and any sign of movement is cause for instant suspicion, if not alarm. The llama as a prey animal, is born with a "genetic memory" which tells him that anything new is dangerous, and should be perceived as life-threatening until proven otherwise. Trust is not an asset in nature, and this is the single biggest obstacle we'll have to overcome (but once the llama truly believes that nothing can make you treat him harshly, that he is always safe around you, results will come fast). Although centuries of domestic breeding have instilled a willing disposition in these animals, their basic instincts prevail, and are the "rationale" for their behavior.

For the sake of this article, let's define behavior as what llamas do when not under our influence, then we may better understand how to influence their behavior to fit our needs (behavior modification). His needs, or survival instincts, are driven by the needs for: escape from danger (comfort/safety), nutrition (food),

continued on next page

reproduction (sex), and nurture/play (companionship).

As an animal will neither eat nor breed unless it is feeling very safe and secure, it is reasonable to assume that a feeling of safety and security is of the utmost importance to the llama and the major motivator in his day to day living (behavior). This may help to explain why llamas are reluctant to have their legs and feet



handled; their perception of this has nothing to do with concern over the length of their toenails. Without his 'wheels', he sees himself as totally defenseless, being asked to give up his primary source of comfort/safety, his ability to escape danger by running away from it. He is not "ticklish". His brain is being bombarded by signals that scream "Don't give up your legs!", "Stay mobile or you'll be someone's lunch!" Think for a moment how llamas "handle" each other's legs. The male bites at the legs of another in order to "lay him down" in a submissive, defenseless position, or, in the case of a female, he bites at her knees to force her to assume a breeding position when she is not receptive, so there is really no good reason to expect that your llama is able to see anything good in having his legs handled. We see a "difficult" llama, while the llama sees either a mugger or rapist! Ah, perception; stay aware of it.

Okay, we've touched upon his needs, now let's define ours. Let's say that we want a well-trained, well-behaved llama, one with "manners" (especially important for studs!), who responds "correctly" to any situation we put him in, who totally fulfills the purpose we intend for him, whatever that purpose may be. If

we insist upon a llama who does everything absolutely "right", absolutely all of the time while "in training", we may be setting ourselves up for disappointment. Therefore, let's say that a llama who does everything right 90% of the time will fit our criteria for "trained" for the time being. Now that we know what we want, let's look at how to get there by making the llama want the same thing, if for a slightly different reason, i.e. to suit his needs.

For example, in teaching a llama to lead, we exert light pressure on his head via the lead rope, until he yields to the pressure and steps forward and the pressure is relieved. As much as we may like to think he did this because he loves us and wants to be close to us, and because he just knows how we'll brag about his progress to our friends, the simple truth is that he stepped forward to make that pulling stop! (his comfort). If he pleases you as a byproduct of pleasing himself, that's convenient for all concerned, but if a certain behavior does not suit his needs at the moment, he has little motivation to act in accordance with our wishes. For example: if he turns away from me and sticks his head in a corner, puts his butt to me as I approach him with a halter, I'll extend a hat or something out away from the side of his head. If he, in turning away from the object, winds up facing me, then he has chosen to face me as the lesser of the two evils, no great personal compliment or ego-booster for me, but here we are, right where we wanted to be.



I like a llama to stand and face me as I approach him. Meanwhile, a few important terms:

Conditioning is the process whereby a stimulus of some kind becomes associated with a certain response with which it was not previously associated. The tug on the lead (stimulus) results in forward movement

continued on next page

(response), and we say that learning has taken place, or that the llama has been “conditioned” to move away from the pressure on his head. (And all this time you thought he was moving toward you, and in his point of view, you were right. As you can see, however, his point of view and motivation are very different from yours, yet the desired results are achieved, a meeting of the minds has transpired.) He was rewarded (reinforced) by the alleviation of pressure. Reinforcement, both positive (reward) and negative (something unpleasant or the avoidance of something unpleasant) plays a major part in conditioning. One very important point must be made here; negative reinforcement is not punishment or vice-versa. It is more a matter of timing and semantics. Negative reinforcement comes before a response, and punishment, after. You cue him to move forward by gently tugging the lead (negative reinforcement), but he stands firm and refuses to budge, you jerk the lead (punishment). I’m not saying this is how to do it, only defining punishment as it fits this text. You could say that negative reinforcement is used to encourage a desired response, while punishment is used to correct for not having performed the response. Even though the action (the tug) is the same in both cases, the timing is what differentiates the two.

An example of positive reinforcement: your soothing voice coinciding with the desired or “correct” response. When an animal is learning a new behavior, it is important to reward him every time he responds correctly, but once he has learned it (90%), rewards should be used sparingly and randomly for best results. For example, in teaching our llamas to come in from the fields when called, we started out by offering their favorite treat in a bucket they recognized. In addition to the treat, they were also rewarded by our soothing voices. Within a week or so, we withheld the treat altogether and used the verbal reward alone about every third time we called them in. Not knowing whether they were going to get a treat or not seemed reason enough for them to come in, if only to find out what lay in store. The llamas all come bounding in when called now, and are rarely (10% of the time) given anything more than a verbal reward. It is not necessary to “fool” them by showing them a bucket, because they have been “conditioned” to respond to our call, and the primary reinforcement (food) used in the initial conditioning was eventually replaced by

the secondary reinforcement (praise). For this to work, of course, your voice must be a source of comfort; if your llama is afraid of you and your voice, he will take no comfort from your reassurance that all is well. By using your voice in conjunction with a primary reinforcement (such as releasing pressure on his halter when he moves forward), he will become conditioned to your soft voice and kind words as a reward.

An example of negative reinforcement is the pressure he feels when he pulls back against the lead. It is uncomfortable, and the more he pulls, the more uncomfortable it becomes. We can say that he is “motivated” to move away from the pressure. When he has learned to stand with slack in the lead, he will have done so because of the combination of positive reinforcement, or the reward of having no pressure on his head when he is in the proper position, and negative reinforcement, the avoidance of something unpleasant (that “bump” at the end of the slack).

When giving reinforcement, either positive or negative, it should be used immediately following the desired response. Be careful with this, as timing is crucial. Action must be corrected or rewarded while that action is taking place. If more than one or two seconds have passed, ignore it for this time and try to be quicker the next. After two seconds, he will not be able to make the connection. Do not get emotional about negative reinforcement; just do it quickly, efficiently and humanely. There is no room for getting even in training. Also, be sure that you are rewarding the correct response. For example, I often see people who, in trying to stop their llama from dancing around, “correct” at exactly the wrong time. He’s jumping around, they reach for the lead, and the moment he stops, he gets jerked. He thinks he is being jerked for stopping. He has been taught that stopping and standing still are ‘punishable’ acts to be avoided and the dance goes on.

We will utilize several “Paddock Pointers” in a future article. This will assure that the timing is correct and the signals the llama gets are clear and consistent as we apply the principles here to teaching the behavior we want.

This has been a general and limited look at behavior. Hopefully, it has provided a basic understanding of a fascinating subject.

Happy Trails

John may be reached at WWW.JOHNMALLONCLINICS.NET or at LLAMATRNR@AOL.COM



PACK TRIAL UPDATE FOR THE LEADVILLE 100

By John Fant - Pack Llama Trail Association

I am getting excited about the Leadville 100 Race; the event will be here in no time. I just wanted to update everyone about a few changes that have been made to the accompanying PLTA llama pack trials.

First, instead of the two-day event we have added additional days. The trials will be Tuesday, August 15

the Rocky Mountains. The runners run 100 miles in 30 hours, fifty miles one way and turn and come back. The runners are not only US citizens, but Spanish, French, Italian citizens as well. This is a world event. There has been a llama-supplied aid station for 30 plus years at mile marker 45 and mile marker 55 on the return. This station is called Mount Hope aid station. The volunteers provide first aid, meals, safe drinking water, and shelter if needed. The hard work is worth it. To see a runner come through hungry or need just a drink and the thanks they give afterwards makes it worth it. Plus, the views from the mountain are wonderful.

To volunteer for the 2017 Hope Pass aid station on Saturday, August, 19th, please contact Gary Carlton 303-503-1324 or llama@jmhfarm.com.

To participate in the pack trials, you need to be a PLTA



through Friday, August 18. Sunday had to be cancelled due to lack of staff, sorry. Also, if there is adequate interest, Monday, August 14 can be added as well.

Second, the Masters level will be added. This gives you the option to participate in trials at the Basic, Advance and Masters levels. There are only a few places that can offer this and now you have the opportunity right in your backyard!!

There are pack trials held on the East coast, West coast, and one currently in Kansas, but none in Colorado which has the best all-around terrain for the trials. Yes, I live in the Ouachita mountain range area of Arkansas. Of course, Arkansas does have mountains! They are rough and wooded all the way to the top. It is also a great place to hold trials, but does not have Leadville 100 or the Mt. Hope aid station. The RMLA sponsored Mt. Hope aid station is a tremendous event. I volunteer for it, and hopefully you will too!

A little history lesson now. The Leadville 100 race is held annually in Leadville, CO. It is in the heart of



member and your llamas need to be registered with PLTA. (Note: the llama does not have to have papers from the ILR.) Registration can be done at the PLTA website at <http://www.packllama.org>, or in a pinch at the trial as well.

continued on next page

Pack Trial Update for the Leadville 100, continued

The PLTA Pack Trail handbook has been recently updated and is also available on the website. The handbook details the levels of the trials, ages of the llamas, and rules. Please read it!

I will be charging a fee of \$5 a day. This fee is not for the PLTA but to help cover some of my costs to run the trials. PLTA fee for membership is \$30 a year. The Association fee for handlers (non-llama owners, like kids helping out) is \$10 a year. The reason for the Association fees is to help cover the cost of the insurance.

There is a one-time registration fee for your llama of \$10. This is a permanent registration that will transfer with ownership of the llama. (Hurry and get it done this year, as of January 1, it goes up.)

The PLTA is trying hard to bring the working llama back into the spot light. The board this year has changed some of the requirements for the different pack levels. This is to help with applying the standards to the different terrains around the world, yes, world. FACT: Did you know the PLTA is active Down Under? Another spoiler alert: ILR and PLTA are in the process of putting the certifications your llama has achieved on the ILR pedigrees. SO, when you sell that llama, it will show to the buyer it is a proven packer.

The real thing the PLTA is missing is YOU. If you love packing with your llama or llamas, please visit the website. Become a member and help us show the world our kind of fun!

If you are interested in the pack trials and want to attend, please contact me, John Fant, for more details at 479-597-0173.



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MAKE YOUR OWN FELTED SOAP!

by Emaly Leak

Reprinted from the GALA Newsletter, November, 2015

This is a wet felting project, so you'll want to set up in an area that can get a little wet. If you're careful, you can keep it from getting too messy, but a towel or two comes in handy. (If you're doing this with kids, it is helpful to work outside.)

All you need is a bowl of hot water (just cool enough that you can stick your hands in it without being uncomfortable), a bar of soap, and some carded fiber. You can use batts or roving.



To start, wrap your fiber around the bar of soap. Make sure to cover the entire bar, even the corners. Wrap lengthwise and widthwise, overlapping a few times. Don't be alarmed if the fiber is very thick, it will compress during felting.

Now it is time to wet the fiber. Dunk it in the bowl of hot water and squeeze until all of the fiber is soaked. Then start rubbing. Remember that wet felting works because the hot water opens barbs on the fibers, and agitation locks those barbs together. Rub every bit of your fiber bar, occasionally dunking it back in the hot water to keep it warm. If you have a textured wash board (or something similar that you don't mind getting wet), that can speed up the process. Rub and rub until the fiber sticks together and is hard to pull apart.



When you are satisfied with the texture of your soap bar, rinse it in cold water. Obviously you can't rinse out all the soap like you would with a traditional wet-felted project, but rinse until all the hot water is gone.

Lay it somewhere to dry, and then you can start using your felted soap bar! The soap will slowly wear away, just like it would without the fiber. When the soap has been used up, cut a slit in the fiber and use it as a bowl or pouch!

Emaly Leak has been raising and breeding llamas for show and fiber since 1999. Her farm, Autumn Hill Llamas & Fiber, is located in Norwich, NY. She blogs about the llamas and fiber-related topics (www.autumnhillllamas.blogspot.com).

hw



Lothlorien Llamas

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Packing & Raising Llamas
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WHEN YOU SHEAR THAT FIBER...

By Ron Hinds & Kathy Stanko

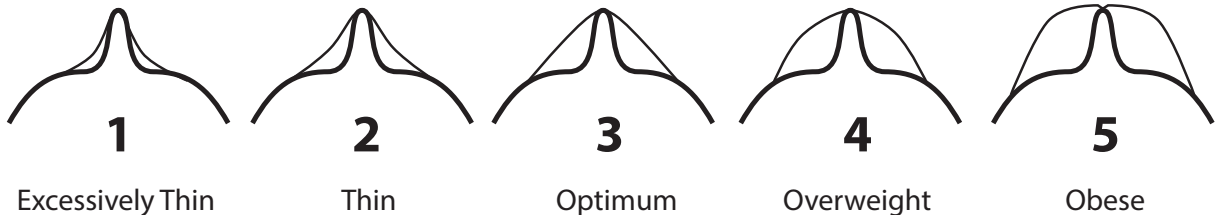
...it's a great time to check the weight of your animal. Too skinny? Too heavy? Either one of these conditions can give you important information about the health of your llama or alpaca.

Reading various chapters in *Caring for Llamas and Alpacas* by Clare Hoffman, DVM, and Ingrid Asmus is a good place to start if you are concerned. For example, Chapter 4 discusses nutrition and provides feeding guidelines. Or, could the issue be teeth, digestion, age. If you don't have a copy of this book, you can order it on the RMLA website. We will get it mailed out to you ASAP.

In the meantime, you can place your hand on the llama or alpaca's back, about 6 inches behind the withers. Your thumb should be on one side of the spine and the rest of your fingers on the opposite side. When you pull your hand back what shape, made by your thumb and first finger do you see? The chart below gives you some guidelines.

If you are at all concerned, please contact your veterinarian.

Camelid Body Scoring

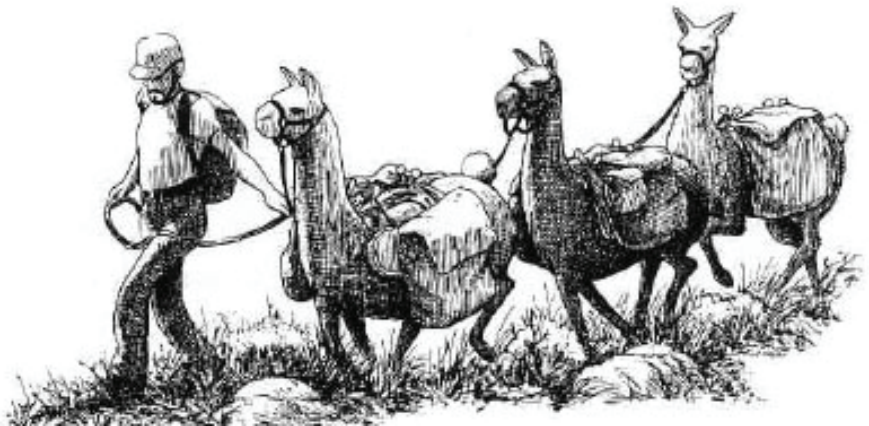


Body scoring is the quickest way to assess general body condition. Females entering the last trimester of pregnancy should be at a body score of 3. Animals who are emaciated (due to poor diet, a stressful lactation period, or health problems) should not be bred until and they obtain a body score of 2 to 4. Body scoring is done by palpating the spine about six inches behind the withers.

CLASSIFIED ADS

BLADE SHARPENING SERVICES

We sharpen clipper blades, hand shears, scissors, & toenail nippers. For details, e-mail or call Paul or Karen Schwartz, ChanTar Llamas at chantar@fiberpipe.net or 307-752-2386. We appreciate your business.



hw

Ron, Marilyn, Sonja,
Kathy

Postscript from the Journal Volunteers

Thank you for your articles, your advertisements and your enthusiasm for all 'things' RMLA!

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination. *—Jimmy Dean*



Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association
P O Box 1070
Plains, MT 59859-1070



EVENTS CALENDAR BY MARY WICKMAN (EVENTS CHAIR)

For more details and live links, go to WWW.RMLA.COM, select EVENTS, and hover on the boxes.

- **June 23 & 24, 2017, Camelid Kids Llama & Alpaca Camp, Bucks Hollow Farm, Waco, NE.**
Contact Geri Rutledge at BUCKSHOLLOW@WILDBLUE.NET or 402-366-9304. Llama camp for all ages, safety training, and making crafts.
- **July 8, 2017, Because of the Economy Black & Blue Pasture Show, 2Bit2 Ranch, Florissant, CO.** Non-grooming double halter & performance show. Contact Bob Burton 719-355-9355 or 2BIT2RANCH@GMAIL.COM. Deadline for entry is June 24.
- **July 22, 2017, Colorado Mid-Summer Performance Show, Fox Hill Equestrian Center, 6000 Main St., Louviers, CO.** ALSA sanctioned performance show only, youth and adult plus 2 non-ALSA fun classes. Contact Michele Chang, 720-480-5328 or MJCHANG888@COMCAST.NET. WWW.FOXHILLEQUESTRIAN.COM/LLAMAS
- **July 29, 2017 Fairplay Llama Event, Fairplay, CO** - Three great events: Pack Llama Race, Llama Rama & the Public Walk. And of course, the Llama Lunacy Course for children. General public can borrow a llama for the race. Llamas available on a first come, first served basis. Start time is approximately 9 AM. Sign up on WWW.RMLA.COM to volunteer to help the team put this event together. For questions, contact event co-chairs Jeff Sandberg, 303-829-8144 or Kelvin Eldridge, or 720-556-6197 or email both at FAIRPLAY@RMLA.COM . WWW.RMLA.COM
- **August 19, 2017 Leadville Trail 100** - Hope Pass Aid Station Support Crew, Leadville, CO - Contact Gary Carlton at 303-503-1324 or LLAMA@JMHFARM.COM to volunteer. For information visit: WWW.LEADVILLERACESERIES.COM/RUN/LEADVILLETRAIL100RUN/ .
- **September 23 & 24, 2017, Higher Ground Fair, Laramie, WY.** Celebrating rural living in the Rocky Mountain Region. Llama and Alpaca Performance and Fleece Shows. Llama & Alpaca Demonstrations. Contact Gayle Woodsum at GAYLE@HIGHERGOUNDFAIR.ORG or 307-399-3815. WWW.HIGHERGOUNDFAIR.ORG