

Winter 2017

The Journal of RMLA



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ALERT: The Future of Pack Llamas on Public Lands - Page 13

LLAMA TRAINING

by Christian Abel –
RMLA Youth

There are many aspects of llamas that can be talked about in one setting. Today, I would like to talk about training llamas. Many people own llamas and I am one of them. Being one of them, I also know how cantankerous llamas can be sometimes. Some llamas are good at doing obstacles. Others can be not so good at obstacles but can be good at other things, like packing. When picking out a llama for training and showing you really need to choose a llama that is good for what you are training it for. Don't get me wrong, any llama can be trained for a certain chore or technique, it just takes time and lots of work.


When I am at shows I get asked the one question most likely every llama owner will get: How do you train your llama? Now there are many ways to answer this question. I like telling people one key to training a llama is not how many times you do one obstacle but how much of a bond you build with your llama. The stronger the bond, the better the llama responds to you. Sometimes a bond can be hard to make with a llama, but I still believe that building a bond with your llama can be better than a good training session because your llama will trust you more. Now this is just my opinion, and others may believe differently and that is perfectly fine.



Llama training can be done anywhere. If you want to show your llama in a show ring, that is the biggest part of training, experience, not only for your llama but for you as a handler as well. Experience, practice, and patience are all very good to have if you

want to train your llama. There are many techniques you can use to train but whatever your techniques for training are, the more consistent you are, the better training will go.



I always like to end my training with something positive, something my llama and I do very well. It will give me and my llama the confidence we need to push through those difficult days of practicing. Some days your llama will work with you and sometimes they have a bad day and just aren't showing their best, but that is okay. You must never give up. It is a continued learning experience for both you and your llama no matter the level you and your llama have reached. 



Jerry Dunn

Bear Track Farm

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Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates and Specifications

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

Ad Type	Width x Height	Member	Non-Member
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I, Kathy, have been a 'member' of Southwest Llama Rescue (SWLR) for about 4 years. As a member, I received the following e-mail in October from F. E. Baxter, Director and Treasurer of SWLR.



"SWLR has a continuing ad in the RMLA journal. It costs about \$86/yr with the art work changing each quarter. If you are not a member of RMLA, consider joining the association. The journal has great articles, there is a lending library, and it is a way to connect to other llama/alpaca enthusiasts."

First, Ron and I sincerely appreciate the continued advertising support from SWLR. Ron gets a kick changing up their ad with every issue to attract readers' interest. And we are overwhelmed with their recommendation to their members to join RMLA. Thank you, SWLR.

Please remember to select SWLR as your non-profit of choice when you shop at Amazon/smile.com.

A huge shout out to Sonja Boeff! Sonja has served as the Journal's Advertising Manager since November 2014. In her position she took a great weight off our shoulders by keeping track of the advertisers, their renewal dates, and any other needs. Sonja is now moving on to other things. Sonja, thank you 1000 times over and we have all enjoyed working with you.

With Sonja's departure, the Journal Volunteers need:

Journal Advertising Manager You can design this position however you want. Bottom line: get ads for the Journal. There are no quotas, no rules. Spend as much time as you want when you want to. Contact Kathy & Ron at rmlaeditor@gmail.com for more information.

Journal Advertising Coordinator Using an Excel spreadsheet, keep track of new ads, renewing ads, and forwarding payment to the RMLA treasurer. This position requires under 10 hours per each issue of the quarterly Journal. Contact Kathy & Ron at rmlaeditor@gmail.com.

Kathy and Ron



Cover Photo by Jeff Sandberg on a pack trip to the Maroon Bells in Colorado with Kelvin Eldridge.

Letter from Your RMLA Board ≡ Did You Know? ≡

Your organization's cash assets are all located at FirstBank of Douglas County, Castle Rock, CO. Some twenty years ago the Board worked to better protect cash, cash reserves and specific savings by converting the then one bank account into several accounts, all designated for specific reasons. Later, the Boards consulted with the RMLA Certified Public Accountant and the Finance Committee to set up additional bank accounts as needed to isolate specific funds to be held away from the General Operations account, which is used to pay bills and receive deposits.

The RMLA Bookstore General Operations account is used to manage all RMLA publications – the RMLA Wall Calendar, Caring for Llamas and Alpacas and the Youth Manual. All sales from and expenses for these educational publications are managed through this account.

Corporate General Ops is where all income (other than Bookstore) is deposited and from which expenses are paid. This account is a high-activity account.

Credit Card/Fiber Reserves is a dedicated account where all fiber sales paid for by credit cards are deposited. The credit card sales are transferred to General Operations to cover the checks to consigners. It also can hold long-term Fiber Committee profit.

Insurance Reserves are created after all expenses from the Fairplay Llama Event are paid, the net Fairplay profit is transferred into this account and held to pay RMLA insurance.

Life Member Reserves are when \$500 is paid for a Life Membership, the money is deposited into General Operations and tracked as income. The \$500 is then moved to this account. On or about April 1 of every year, 10% of this account is transferred back to General Operations to pay operating expenses.

Marketing/Research Reserves are for marketing and advertising our RMLA organization and is used rather than current member dues.

Liquid Asset Savings and Prime Time Savings are the Bookstore profits from way back when Caring for Llamas and Alpacas and the Youth Manual were selling like wild fire. It is RMLA's good fortune to have these monies managed well.

Youth Reserves. We commend our youth for excellently managing their reserves. They have auctions and other fund raisers to cover every award they give. Every dollar in this account represents profits generated by Youth Committee dues and fundraisers.

- Did you know.....

RMLA has only two checking accounts – The Bookstore and Corporate General Operation accounts. The rest are all interest-bearing savings accounts.

- Did you know.....

The Bookstore accounting, because of RMLA publication assets, is on the accrual method. All other accounts are cash accounting. At tax time, the RMLA CPA integrates the two types of accounting, prepares the annual IRS return and we file ON Time every year.

- Did you know.....

RMLA has never been audited by the IRS, nor the section of the IRS which grants non-profit status, nor the State of Colorado Department of Taxation, nor the Colorado Secretary of State Department.

- Did you know.....

Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca, Inc., and you, have been very blessed because we have had knowledgeable Boards to watch over your organization's funds, a wise Certified Public Accountant who is experienced in decades of non-profit management and tax filings, and a bookkeeper who has well over twenty years of non-profit bookkeeping experience.



Alpacas on the Rocks

By Jane Levene & Jerry Dunn - RMLA Life Members



Alpacas on the Rocks (AOR) held an educational and marketing event featuring alpacas and fiber products on October 14-15, 2017. Sixteen farms participated in this, the 21st anniversary, of the event. The event was located at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds Event Center in Golden, Colorado.



AOR has a tremendous public following. It is estimated that 700-800 people attended to get up close to alpacas, attend seminars and take delight in the many alpaca products available.

Vendors are invited to attend and invitees are screened for appropriate sale items and quality. Door prizes, donated by the vendors, are drawn by raffle tickets and are given away every hour of the 2-day event. Our early review of the event is it was, again, a great success. We had a great turnout of both new and returning alpaca enthusiasts and vendors reported good sales levels.

Keep informed at: www.AlpacasOnTheRocks.org

We are already planning for next year. We will include llamas in the event to give attendees a more complete educational opportunity, as well as show people how compatible llamas and alpacas are.

We had a table with information on RMLA and actively promoted membership for the great educational opportunities. Next year we plan to have a complete RMLA information booth on display.

Many thanks to RMLA for providing event insurance and educational materials.



NEW RMLA Members

RMLA IS ALWAYS GROWING

Welcome!

Mary & Tom Mowery Willow Crik Ranch Westcliffe CO

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*

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Lisa Blidar at 2018calendar@rmla.com

Color preview on the website!

ANOTHER YEAR ON HOPE PASS

By John Fant

Another year has passed, and this guy from Arkansas made it again. This is my second year to volunteer for this event as the "water tech". The most important thing is that this was Rosebud and Cher Chee's second year as well. They are my primary packing team right now. Not bad for an old halter show llama (i.e., Cher Chee) that I was told would never pack and was a misfit.

This year was different to me in many ways. I was able to learn more about the other volunteers and meet new ones. I was able to spend more time learning the area and seeing the changes to Leadville. I personally had not been to Leadville in years, it was 1982, honestly. The weather was different as well this year. The last bitter, sweet experience was being able to watch a ceremony to honor Vicky Foster. This was her last year as a volunteer. She has made this event for 30 years.



When we reached the pass, the girls and I went for shelter in the trees. It started sleeting on us; well, a lot better than the rain last year.

And the temperatures we were having at home were a lot hotter. So, we once again had to get used to the environment. The girls remembered the area and wanted to go to their grazing and bedding spot. After my camp was set up, then came the water system setup.

Friday was a busy day this year getting the aid station and water treatment set up. There were more volunteers, so it was faster setup. The water was purified and waiting for the race. I only had a small problem with the system, but was able to fix it with no trouble.



Saturday - race day, was very fast paced. When the runners started coming in, water was needed even more. This year I processed over 600 gallons of water. Not as much as the year before, but still a large quantity. The aid station was very busy with the staff having the food and drinks ready. It went without a hitch.

Sunday was a fast tear down. Different llama strings planned to leave at different times. I must admit,



I was one of the first strings to leave, but made a wrong turn. That put another mile and a half on my journey and the girls were not happy with me. I did get to see some wildlife I had never seen before.

Next year, I will try another PLTA pack trial if anyone is interested. With the conditions and trial, the llama can earn a masters with no problem. If

interested, please contact me at johnfant711@gmail.com.

To finish this up, I want to say "If you want an adventure, here is one for you."





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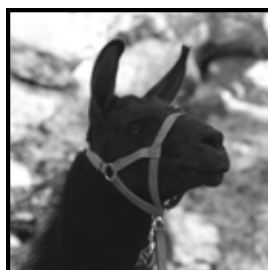
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LLAMAS AND ALPACAS LOVE A HIGHER GROUND

by Gayle M. Woodsum

It occurs to me that I don't know of another Rocky Mountain Fair for which llamas and alpacas are intentionally placed in a central role — not a county fair, state fair or stock show. In fact, I have a memory

Right in the middle of it all are the llamas and alpacas, participating in full RMLA and ALSA sanctioned performance and fleece shows,



educational demonstrations and displays, and vendors. Plus, because in spite of ourselves we were missing those halter classes, we added a couple of super fun and educational halter classes with awards for everything from "best ears" to "most flamboyant personality."

Who showed up this year for this fledgling attempt at finding a new way of bringing people together to learn, promote their work and dreams, and have fun doing it? Yes, many of the core leaders for "everything RMLA" once again pulled out all the stops to be there as workers, instructors, judges, volunteers and exhibitors.

bank full of stories and experiences in which these common rural events have resisted, marginalized and simply excluded llama and alpaca participation. It isn't easy being a camelid in a traditional ranching and livestock world, but that's never stopped us llama enthusiasts from sharing the love before, and there's something pretty delightful about creating a fair that features a llama standing on a mountain top as one of its primary promotional images.

My co-superintendent Rhonda Livengood brought her usual expertise and unflagging enthusiasm, as did judges Karen Kinyon, Cheryl Juntilla and Mary Wickman, with Laurel Snider judging model packer.

On September 23 and 24, the Higher Ground Fair opened for its second year in Laramie, Wyoming, as a celebration of rural Rocky Mountain living. The event is part old-fashioned country fair, part music festival, part food fest, part conference — all celebrating community tradition and innovation in agriculture and ranching, music and dance, arts and crafts, animals, the environment, shelter and energy, gardening and farming, regional and cultural foods, health and wellness, social action. There are contests and competitions, hands-on workshops and demonstrations, three music and dance stages, two speaker stages. It features a Kids' Adventure Zone, youth agricultural exhibits and presentations, and a children's garden parade each day.



Ann Bruhn clerked the impressive fleece show and Sally Rucker brought the action to life for the audience by providing color and commentary on what was

continued on bottom of next page

Hartsel

as reported by Kelvin Eldridge and Mary Wickman

Hartsel is an unincorporated community in a remote area of Park County, CO. A lone llama was reported free ranging in the pasture land along US Highway 24. The local Park County Sheriff kept an eye on this guy for several weeks all the while trying to find the owner. After several weeks the Sheriff declared the llama abandoned and contacted Pat Little at Southwest Llama Rescue.

In November, the word went out to SWLR and RMLA volunteers that help was needed to get this llama to safety. A group of volunteers, headed up by Kelvin Eldridge assembled on Sunday, November 19th to make the rescue attempt. The group included Brittany Eldridge, Travis Sirhal, and Chris Rosenberg. The Sheriff and her husband joined the group to ensure that the volunteers had access to the land as well as safety for all along Highway 24.

The volunteers tried grain as well as another llama to lure Hartsel to the trailer: no interest. So they stretched a long line and slowly pushed him towards a fence where they had panels and trailer set up to create a corner pinch. They swung the panels and into the trailer he went. Success!! Had him loaded and headed back to Kelvin's ranch in about 40 mins.

Two days later Ann Bruhn and Mary Wickman went to pick him up and move Hartsel to Mary's

ranch. The vet came out to check on Hartsel. He needs fighting teeth cut, possible gelding, and is down in his pasterns. Mary reports that he is very gentle, but does



not like to walk – so she will be working on that. His fiber almost touches the ground so he will be sheared. In the meantime, Hartsel is safe and in the good company of Mary's other llamas.

A HUGE Thank You to all of the volunteers who helped in so many ways with this rescue.



Llamas and Alpacas Love a Higher Ground, continued

happening in the ring. Geri Rutledge and Rob and Jill Knuckles dazzled shoppers with their vending booths (and were pretty excited about having some of the lead band members as customers).

Space prevents me from listing every long time and brand new exhibitor and participants at this year's show, and all the RMLA members who came from far and wide just to watch and support, but how I wish I could. How I wish I could really paint with words the power these people and their beloved llamas and alpacas had on the dream and budding reality of the Higher Ground Fair. We added a children's garden parade this year and invited the camelids to join in. It was a fair stopper. The parade covered the

fairgrounds, wove through the exhibits, delighted the concert audiences. It was the llamas and alpacas people couldn't stop talking about.

This year's Higher Ground Fair featured some of the top bands, renowned speakers, creative artists and awe-inspiring agricultural innovators from all six Rocky Mountain states. But it was the llamas and alpacas that wove it all together.

— Gayle Woodsum is a writer and community organizer who lives in North Park, Colorado with a mixed herd of pack, show, fleece and rescued llamas and one alpaca. She is the founder of the Higher Ground Fair. More information on the fair can be found at www.highergroundfair.org.



Letter to the Editors

From Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay, Yellowstone Llamas

In regards to the CSU VET Team article on camelid eyes in the Fall 2017 issue of the RMLA Journal, I was surprised by some of the statements made regarding llama eyes and eyesight.

Eyesight: I have been conducting llama pack trips in Yellowstone National Park for over a decade and have on many occasions had the opportunity to marvel at the eyesight of my camelid hiking companions as they detect faraway wildlife such as bears on distant, high meadows. The llamas first stare, then often comment on these discoveries with insistent alarm calls until my poorly equipped human eyes finally spot the cause for the concern with the help of binoculars. This happens on almost every trip with bears, bison, moose and other critters that we would have missed, had it not been for the excellent eyesight of the llamas.

Tapetum Lucidum: Before I turn into my tent at night in camp, I always make sure all the llamas are accounted for in the meadow. I walk over to the area where they are settled and with the help of my headlamp count them all by the reflection of their eyes.

Response from Dr. Amy Kunkel, CSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital:

In response to the great questions generated from the “Ask the Vets” article on eyes and vision, we should start by stating there is limited information on visual acuity in camelids due to the lack of ways to effectively evaluate it.

Regarding the question about nearsightedness and visual ability, assessing the visual ability of prey animals is very challenging. Slight vision loss is hard to assess in prey animals and often prey animals do not show behavioral signs of blindness until the vision loss is severe. Herd animals with poor vision will often be alerted and respond to signals from other herd members with stronger vision.

One research project examined the accommodation reflex of the eye. This test assesses the changes in the eye, specifically the lens and pupil shape, in response to focusing on a near object then a distant object. This allows for some degree of determination of near and far sightedness. Overall, the study revealed that llamas, especially females, tend to be nearsighted (myopic). The significance of this finding relative to visual acuity in llamas and alpacas is not known.

The tapetum lucidum is a specialized tissue layer behind the retina of the eye that reflects visible light back toward the retina and out the eye. This structure is what makes some animal's eyes very reflective, often a yellow, green, or bluish color when light is shined at the eyes in the dark. While llamas and alpacas lack a tapetum lucidum, they do have an extremely reflective fundus, which creates the glowing red look to the eyes at night.

PROBLEM RECEIVING RMLA EMAILS?

On average RMLA sends out an email blast about four times a month via Constant Contact to all annual, life and occasionally, honorary members. A few members with outlook.com email addresses have reported difficulties getting all the emails, so we are just checking with everyone.

If you have reason to think you have not received the e-blasts, please contact Ron Hinds at web@rmla.com. Ron will check it out and, hopefully, get you connected again. Your Board wants to make sure you are receiving all informational emails.

Pack Llama Ban in Alaska & The Future of Llamas on Public Lands

By Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay,
Yellowstone Llamas

ALERT: According to a report from a concerned llama packer from Alaska, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has successfully imposed (**not proposed!**) the prohibition of pack llamas in Alaska's Fortymile District through their recently signed and approved Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The BLM is the agency within the US Department of the Interior that administers more than 247.3 million acres of public lands which constitutes one-eighth of the landmass of the United States. BLM's decision to ban pack llamas from the Fortymile District, was apparently not based on fact or science and could possibly be motivated by commercial equine outfitter interests. The basis of the decision were two Canadian publications that pose a hypothetical disease risk scenario. No proof, no sick animals. But - no matter!

This stunning, unfair decision by the BLM seems to be the latest installment of recurring nightmares for llama packers over the decades. Trekking recreationists and commercial packing operators alike have been fighting misconception and myths about llamas and their suspected diseases and threats to native wild and plant life pretty much from the start when they began venturing into the backcountry with their new, exciting and environmentally friendly (!) pack animals. Canyonlands and Arches National Parks in Utah imposed a ban in 1995 based on unsubstantiated claims of llamas transmitting Johnes' disease to wild sheep populations. Yet, Capitol Reef National Park, UT has apparently no issues with llamas, even though they have wild sheep.

Almost at the same time that the news about the ban in Alaska surfaced, RMLA Vice President and Idaho llama outfitter Beau Baty received a phone call from a Canadian biologist asking questions about pack llamas and who was "just reviewing possible disease risk transmission between camelids and bighorn sheep and mountain goats." Is Canada next?

The Park Service in Alaska tried to ban llamas from their National Parks and Preserves as recently as 2015, but was successfully rebutted by an avalanche of protest letters from llama packers around the country. World renowned camelid veterinarian and expert Dr. Murray Fowler provided the scientific

arguments and findings to the effect that llamas are not a risk to wildlife by transmitting diseases to all those debates over time. There has not been one proven case of a llama transmitting a disease to a wild animal and yet decisions are made by bureaucrats for 'whatever' reasons. Conversely, in our neck of the woods, pack llamas are welcome in Yellowstone, Glacier and Rocky Mountain National Parks who all have sensitive wild sheep and goat habitat. But nothing is safe! Once an agency latches on to a myth, it all of a sudden becomes truth and the others may fall in line.

RMLA will certainly send out alerts if letters or comments are required for any specific situation or proposed ban. But in the meantime, here is something everybody can do. Let's leave aside the ulterior motives for all the false claims of llamas



harboring vicious diseases that would decimate wildlife. Let's also ignore for now the claims of horse people and outfitters that horses "just plain don't like llamas and freak!" and – as we all know – horses have been used "historically" over 100 years in the backcountry of our public lands and National Parks. What we as wise and responsible llama owners and backcountry packers can do is to be absolutely diligent in making sure that our animals are on a regular veterinary checkup schedule and vaccination routine. We don't want to give anybody any reason to point their finger at our animals as being a threat to wild populations. Also, nobody should ever take llamas that are fatigued or showing other signs of illness or

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DON'T TEACH YOUR LLAMA OR ALPACA TO REAR (BY ACCIDENT)

By Marty McGee Bennett - Camelidynamics

Rearing is one of several behaviors like kicking that is hard to see coming. Unlike kicking it almost always occurs as a result of a hands-on interaction with the animal. First, while certain animals learn to rear during handling more quickly than others it is a learned behavior and unfortunately it is a very successful avoidance strategy. Because it is so difficult to deal with when it happens it is important to avoid teaching it.

When an animal rears I think he or she is saying to you, "You have been too close for too long" OR "You are holding me and I MUST get away." Granted some animals seem to have a hair trigger response to holding or are more fearful of human proximity but that is something we can't really change. It isn't our place to judge their reaction—only to notice it and change what we can. Here are some of my tried and true strategies for both preventing the need for the behavior AND making it possible for the animal to learn it isn't necessary.

Handler Helper: One tool that can really help with this behavior is the handler helper. Using it addresses both likely causes for rearing at the same time. Using the handler helper lightly either all by itself or with very light support with a hand under the jaw is a great way to balance an animal in a way that isn't threatening. The handler helper allows you to have contact with the animal without being so close—which is a big part of why the animals rear. A slight modification to this handler helper technique is to use one hand lightly on the handler helper and to use your forearm to support the jaw. This is similar to using the back of your hand to make contact on the neck, but using your forearm makes it clear to the animal that you

cannot hold the animal's head and provides much needed reassurance to an animal that rears easily.

Offering Breaks: Another strategy that will help with an animal that rears is to offer more frequent breaks. This is one of those elements of handling where it is pretty much safe to say that you can't give breaks too often. Unfortunately, many people do not offer breaks UNTIL the animal acts out and then the break serves to reinforce the acting out behavior. A break a minute is not too often and every 30 seconds is even better if the task is difficult for the animal. Frequent breaks set up a scenario wherein the animal learns to tolerate discomfort because he KNOWS a break is coming. If the breaks are intermittent or long in coming the animal has no



sense that relief is on the way and he is forced to try and stop the proceedings by acting out.

Light contact coupled with lighting fast reaction time: When working with an animal that rears it is crucial that you pay very close

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Pack Llama Ban in Alaska & The Future of Llamas on Public Lands, continued from page 13

suffer from diarrhea into the backcountry. Dr. Fowler writes in his article on "Packer's Responsibility" published in the Backcountry Llama in Spring of 2012: "Certain infections and parasitic diseases are on the radar screens of government officials. You cannot allow a llama with even a hint with these diseases to enter a wilderness area."

Llamas are uniquely suited to the mountains and wild backcountry because of their surefootedness and their low impact on the land. They are an important alternative for many backpackers who don't want to carry a heavy pack and want to camp in the wilds with their kids. It seems unfair to pick on llama packers over horse packers and target that segment of backcountry users using claims that fly in the face of science. It has been proven that llamas are as safe as horses in the backcountry – with less impact on trails and vegetation!

So, after you have taken extra good care of your animals' health program, show off our healthy, great looking, well behaved animals on the trails. The way they politely step off to the side to do their business and how you immediately kick the manure to distribute it so other users don't step into it. Show off your llamas' low impact in camp by applying responsible restraint methods in sensitive areas. Talk about their browsing habits and little bitty toes (versus the grazing destruction and heavy hooves of horses.) Show courtesy to horseback riders by stepping far off the trail when you meet so they and their nervous steeds can pass safely. And finally, let's make friends with horse people and backcountry rangers on horseback. Our good reputation and clean image is of absolute importance to the continued use of llamas on public lands, not to mention the livelihoods of commercial llama operators.



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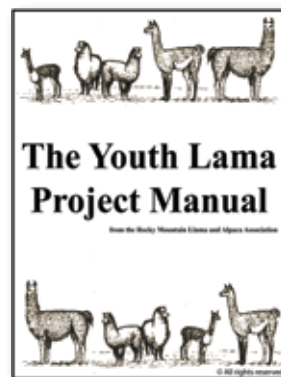
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attention at ALL times and that you use a very light contact either through your hands or with the handler helper. This serves you in two ways. 1) light contact is less likely to provoke a rear and 2) light contact allows you to feel what is going on with the animal and to feel tension building. Although as I mentioned, it is difficult to feel the animal begin to rear up but if you are going to have a chance to feel it coming it will be if you have a light contact with the animal. If you are holding on for dear life you will not feel the subtle signals that the animal is preparing to rear up.

Work inside a trailer: I love to work

inside a trailer for management tasks. If you spot your trailer in a place that allows you to herd a group of animals into the trailer, it can be a great way to get more bang for your buck. Don't let that trailer sit idle 95% of the year; use that baby! The expression "put a lid on it" is completely apropos in this case. Animals are much less likely to rear in a trailer (unless you are using a thoroughbred trailer but even so it helps). Using the other techniques along with packing animals in a trailer for herd management chores is amazingly effective at reducing the tendency to rear.

Things to consider when planning to show.
(can apply to both llamas and alpacas just change the reference)

- Even if an alpaca is drop-dead gorgeous not all alpacas can handle the show ring. The choice between a decorated show winner or a healthy animal is not much of a choice.
- Many (maybe most) of the problems that handlers have with alpacas in the show ring are the result of mishandling and can be corrected by taking responsibility and changing the approach to the problem. Consider that you can't teach an alpaca to do something until you can GET them to do it. Many problematic showing behaviors are learned as a result of handlers asking too much too soon. If your alpaca is not successful at the behavior you want, be content with less and build on that. Doing over

and over what is NOT working only teaches your alpaca to do what you DON'T want. Unfortunately, they get very good at these behaviors very quickly.

- Not all alpacas are temperamentally the same- it will take some alpacas longer to "get it" than others. It will never be useful when it comes to getting ready for the show ring to wait until the last minute. If you don't have time to prepare it would be better to stay home.
- Creating a safe environment at home from the time an animal arrives on your farm or is born on your farm will pay you back in the show ring. Herd your alpacas into a small catch pen every time you need to lay hands on them and you will reap the benefits in the show ring.
- Every time you do anything with your alpaca you are in effect practicing for the show ring. Short cuts can lead to problems that may require a long time to correct.
- When in the show ring it is your job to show the animal and facilitate the inspection. The ring steward is there to assist the judge and is most often going to stand at the opposite shoulder without touching the animal to help steady the animal. Ring stewards are not there to show your animal for you.
- Halter fit is crucial to good show performance. A well-fitting halter fits well up on the thick part of the nose bone and will stay there no matter what. Taking halters off whenever possible (that means anytime your alpaca is not on a lead) allows your alpaca to relax more fully and hence have more tolerance for the show ring.



Marty McGee Bennett can be reached at:
www.Camelidynamics.com



Amadeus: The Story of a Friendship

By Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay – Yellowstone Llamas

As the red-golden glow of the advancing sunrise appears low on the Eastern horizon and fingers of light begin to touch the land, he meets me at the gate. As always, I am excited to see him. His athletic, dark figure stands tall and unmoving in the shadows, watching me approach. I hurry over to him and softly call his name. His dark eyes are on me, expectantly. This is our moment, our greeting each morning a new beginning, yet performed many times before through the years. We stand together in silence watching the sunrise, savoring our special bond for a while before the others arrive.

My early morning date is Amadeus the llama, my friend and companion of over 22 years, my pack llama and hiking buddy. And, of course, so much more.

Amadeus arrived in my life many years ago in the mid-nineties when he joined four other llamas at our new little mountain Bed & Breakfast on 60 acres adjoining the Gallatin National Forest and Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness near Livingston, Montana. The llamas were the finishing touch to a dream that came true for us two Europeans (a German Fräulein and an English gentleman) who settled in the Montana mountains after escaping careers in Europe that were successful financially but left our souls yearning for a more meaningful existence. That yearning was finally satisfied when we arrived in Yellowstone country after a few years of searching. An unfinished log house on a wild piece of land with moose and bear was placed in our path by fate, and so the story began.

When we arrived on the scene, the llama industry was in steep decline after their bubble had burst and prices for males were affordable to end-users such as us, meaning people wanting to pack with llamas. Our new hospitality endeavor needed an outdoor activity for the guests who came bumping up the rough 7-mile road to our little paradise. There were enough horseback riding opportunities in the



area, I thought, and besides, since we were considered exotics by our far-flung yet curious neighbors, so should the animals be that would be our partners in our recreational program.

I visited a few llama breeders in the area and soon four llamas frolicked behind our new wooden fences. A fifth, Amadeus, was added a year later. He and his four buddies underwent extensive hiking and packing training by this enthusiastic novice llama handler and seemed to enjoy our forays into the wild backcountry that beckoned just beyond our gate. The five males were what some people nowadays call ccaras or, more correctly in my view,

classic llamas. Tall, long-legged and light to medium-wooled, they seemed the perfect animals for us and our plans.

A summer was spent for llamas and human handlers to figure each other out and to learn from each other as well as to study the rich animal and



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Ask The CSU VET Team **It's All About the Ears**

By Katie Simpson, DVM, MS, DACVIM - Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

The external portion of the ear (the 'pinna') is quite elongated in most camelids, and is very mobile. Llamas and alpacas use this portion of the ear to convey emotional state, but ear position can also be an indicator of particular types of illnesses in camelids.

The soft tissue portion of the ear canal starts toward the base of the outside part of the ear, and extends into the temporal bone; the entire ear canal is somewhat narrow and narrows more the further it extends into the bone. It is also S-shaped, which can make it very difficult to see down to the end of the ear canal where the tympanic membrane (sometimes referred to as the ear drum) is located.

On the other side of the tympanic membrane is the middle ear. This part of the ear contains three tiny bones known as the malleus, the incus, and the stapes, which form a chain and conduct sound vibrations from the tympanic membrane to the inner ear. The middle ear also communicates with the nasopharynx (back part of the throat) through a small tube called the auditory or Eustachian tube. This tube allows ventilation for the middle part of the ear (tympanic bulla) so that it remains at the same air pressure as the external environment, and also permits some drainage of infection or debris from the middle ear.

Immediately adjacent to the middle ear is the inner ear, which consists of the bony labyrinth that contains two functional parts: the cochlea that converts sound vibrations to nerve impulses that travel to the brain, allowing the animal to hear; and the semicircular

canals, which essentially act as motion sensors and are dedicated to maintaining balance.

Lacerations & Other Traumas

Lacerations of the pinna can occur, particularly as a result of fighting between males

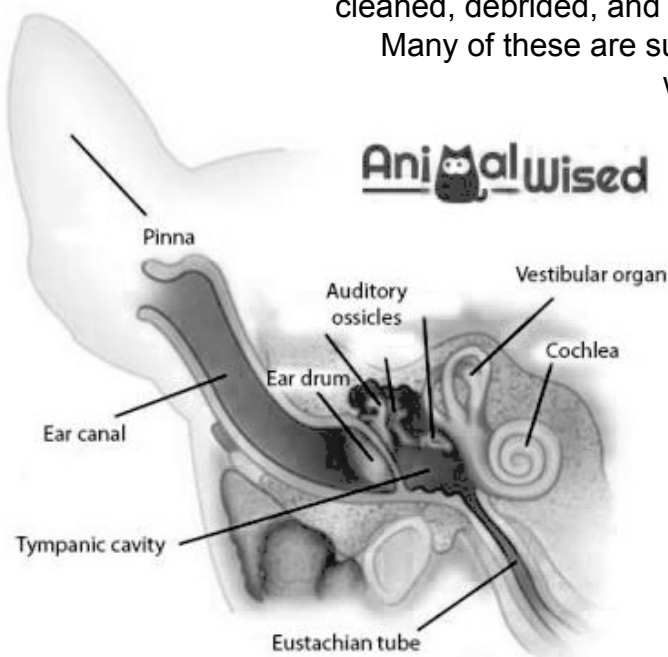


Laceration of an ear in a llama that occurred while fighting in the herd. If these are caught early, usually within 6 hours of the injury occurring, they can be cleaned, debrided, and sutured back together.

Many of these are successfully repaired when treated promptly.

Lacerations that occur closer to the base of the ear and result in muscle and/or nerve injury can result in inability of the animal to hold the ear erect and subsequent ear droop.

Although not technically a trauma, frostbite can occur in llamas and alpacas and result in necrosis (dying back) of the tips of the ears.



Ear Anatomy, from <https://www.animalwised.com/perforated-eardrum-in-dogs-symptoms-and-treatment-2392.html>

continued on next page

Ectoparasites and Dermatophytes

Ear ticks, in particular *Otobius megnini*, can be especially problematic in the Western US. These ticks often live in crevices present in structures like barns and sheds, and also in fences and trees. Scratching at the ear, shaking the head, and otic discharge are signs of tick infestation. Occasionally, camelids may shake their head hard enough to create hematomas, or large blood clots, in the pinnae. If tick infestations are left untreated, signs can progress to tilting of the head toward one side, circling, and weight loss.

Systemic treatment with injectable avermectins can be used, but will not work against ticks that are not actively feeding as these drugs work when they are ingested by the tick during blood feeding. Ivermectin, fipronil, or permethrin (Catron IV fly spray) can be applied directly into the ear (topically) and are usually very effective at controlling ear ticks.

Mites, including *Psoroptes* and *Chorioptes bovis*, can also affect the pinnae and cause crusting, loss of fiber, and sometimes may cause itching. There may be skin lesions on other parts of the body as well, including under the tail, extending down the inside of both hind limbs, and between the toes.

Diagnosis of mites involves superficial and deep skin scrapes of affected areas, with confirmation of the type of mites being made by looking at these samples under a microscope. Mite infestations in the US may be reportable to regulatory authorities, depending upon the type of mite involved and the state the animals reside in.

If mange (mite infestation) is suspected, consultation with your veterinarian is recommended. Psoroptic and chorioptic mange usually respond well to insecticide dusts, sprays, and dips. Injections of ivermectin under the skin once per week, along with a single topical application of fipronil, have been effective in treating *Chorioptes* mange in camelids.

Ivermectin applied topically into the ear has been useful in treating *Psoroptes* mange.

Ringworm is caused by a fungal infection of the skin, also known as dermatophytosis. These fungal infections can affect the pinnae but are not very common in camelids. *Trichophyton* and *Microsporum* are two types of fungi that can affect llamas and alpacas. Ringworm is considered to be zoonotic and capable of infecting both people and animals.

Signs of dermatophyte infection include loss of fiber on the head and neck, and this occasionally extends over the body and limbs. Often, the skin lesions are raised, crusty, and circular. Diagnosis involves looking at a skin scrape under a microscope, and/or culture of the fungus using Sabouraud dextrose agar.

Treatment usually involves topical application of iodine as a tincture or else as a povidone-iodine preparation. Alternatively, topical antifungal drugs like miconazole can be used. Gloves should always be worn when handling an animal with suspected dermatophytosis, and similar care should be taken when handling halters, bedding, or other items that may have come into contact with the affected camelid.

Otitis Externa (Inflammation of the External Ear Canal)

This is a relatively common problem in camelids, but the cause can be hard to determine. Ear ticks or foreign bodies, like grass awns, can result in inflammation of the external ear canal. Signs of this include shaking the head, scratching the ear, holding the pinna in an unusual position, discharge from the ear, and head tilt. Diagnosis requires a thorough exam of the outer ear canal, which typically necessitates use of an otoscope (device made specifically for looking deeply into the external ear canal) and may also require sedation of the camelid as they generally do not like to have their ears touched. Additionally, cleansing of the area may be required in order to see deeply into the ear canal.

Treatment requires finding and removing the cause of the inflammation, if possible. In

continued on next page

addition, cleansing and irrigation of the region with antiseptics and topical broad-spectrum antibiotic ointment may be required. Otitis externa can lead to very serious and deeper infections if not identified and effectively treated early in the course of the disease.

Otitis Media and Interna (Inflammation of the Middle and Inner Ear)

Inflammation and infection of the middle and inner ear are most often a result of untreated or incompletely treated otitis externa that extends into the deeper regions of the ear. Foreign bodies like grass awns can also migrate into

the middle ear and cause infection. Signs of otitis media/interna include paralysis of one side of the face, drooping of one ear and/or eyelid, protrusion of the third eyelid, lack of pupil dilation, disorientation, stumbling gait, head tilt, and circling. Corneal ulcers may develop in the eye if the camelid is unable to blink normally.

If any of these signs are noticed, it is recommended that you contact your veterinarian immediately to pursue additional diagnostics and treatment. Advanced diagnostics including radiographs and computed tomography (CT, sometimes referred to as 'Cat' scan) may be warranted. Treatment of otitis media and/or interna is intensive and requires antimicrobials, anti-inflammatories,

and may also involve surgery depending on the severity of the infection. Intravenous fluids are often necessary as these animals may become dehydrated and develop electrolyte imbalances if they are not drinking or eating.

Hereditary Conditions of the Ears

Ear shape is a hereditary trait. Some congenital anomalies (abnormalities an animal is born with) of the ears include agenesis of the pinna, referred to as 'gopher ear'; curled ears or 'tented' ears; and sometimes bent ears. Premature or dysmature crias may have floppy ears initially that self-correct as the cartilage strengthens over time.

Blue eyes, indicating lack of pigment in the iris of the eye, have been linked with deafness in some white-colored llamas and alpacas. Deafness is not present, however, in every white-colored, blue-eyed camelid. The deafness noted in these cases is believed to be from degeneration within the inner ear.



Alpaca with a head tilt and ear droop suggesting infection of the middle or inner ear.



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Bob Riley, RMLA Member - Stillwater Minerals

The issue with blocks according Dr. LaRue Johnson, DVM's research vet at Colorado State University was that camelids (llamas & alpacas) lack the ability to lick as compared to other livestock. I have witnessed camelids trying to bite or chew off a corner of a block in the quest to satisfy their desire for salt.

This leads us to consider chews, crumbles and pellets which are all palatable and easily consumed. The feeding instructions will say to feed X amount of their product per head per day. So, let's take a field of llamas (alpacas and llamas) and do the math according to the instructions.... then what? If you dump the total amount calculated for that field into a trough, the dominant members of the herd will begin to feed without constraints and spit off the less dominant. The result is some will get too much and others not enough. Keeping in mind some ingredients are toxic if over-fed and other ingredients are necessary for a healthy animal.

Case Study: I was part of a lawsuit alleging our formula caused the death of several of their llamas due to copper toxicity. This ranch had been using our Lama-Min for nine years without any problems. They decided to contact a local livestock feed processor to make their own "crumbles" supplement based on our analysis. They had quit using our Lama-Min 18 months earlier. There were several errors made by the livestock feed processor.

First, they got the amount of copper we were providing wrong and appeared to have placed the decimal in the wrong place resulting in a much higher level of copper normal for cattle or horses. Lama-Min 104 has 200 parts per million (ppm) but on average an alpaca eats 0.3oz and a llama 0.8oz per day. This adds only 2.34 ppm of copper to the total feed (grass, hay, alfalfa, grain etc.) According to Dr. Johnson it is recommended that camelids have 10ppm in their total feed so we are assuming the balance of feed has copper.

Secondly, they were providing more copper than their label was indicating.

Thirdly, the owner fed all the animals in a field together allowing the dominant animals to spit off the others until it had its fill. Fearing the less dominant didn't get their fair share, he fed even more than what was recommended.

The judge dismissed us after hearing testimony from Dr. Johnson on the faulty math that led to the death of the animals. The owner of the llamas was guilty of loving his animals to death. He enjoyed seeing them eat the feed and supplement. I, too, enjoy the interaction of watching them eat and get no joy from this experience. I only share this unfortunate event with you in hopes of avoiding a similar event.

The case for Free-Choice - Colorado State University had their own herd of llamas as did Dr. LaRue Johnson, DVM and in their experience with other camelids owners they concluded that Free-Choice was the safest and most effective way to feed the supplement.

We recommend placing the supplement in a bucket such as the green ones available at most feed stores and meant to be hung on a fence or in a loafing shed or barn. I have used a metal dog feeder nailed to the inside of their loafing shed.

Llamas consumed 0.8oz per head per day and Alpaca breeders report 0.3oz on average. This corresponds with estimates by CSU based on their weight and their own experience with their herd. There can be variations from time to time. When you first introduce them to the supplement, 90% of the time they eat more as they catch up or they may turn up their noses to the different smell. You must remove all other forms of salt from them. The only reason they eat the minerals is for the salt. The salt is the attractor and the limiter. We have noted greater consumption when there is a change in the weather, either hotter or colder. Lactating moms tend to eat more. Crias in most cases will eat less or none while nursing, mother's milk is salty.

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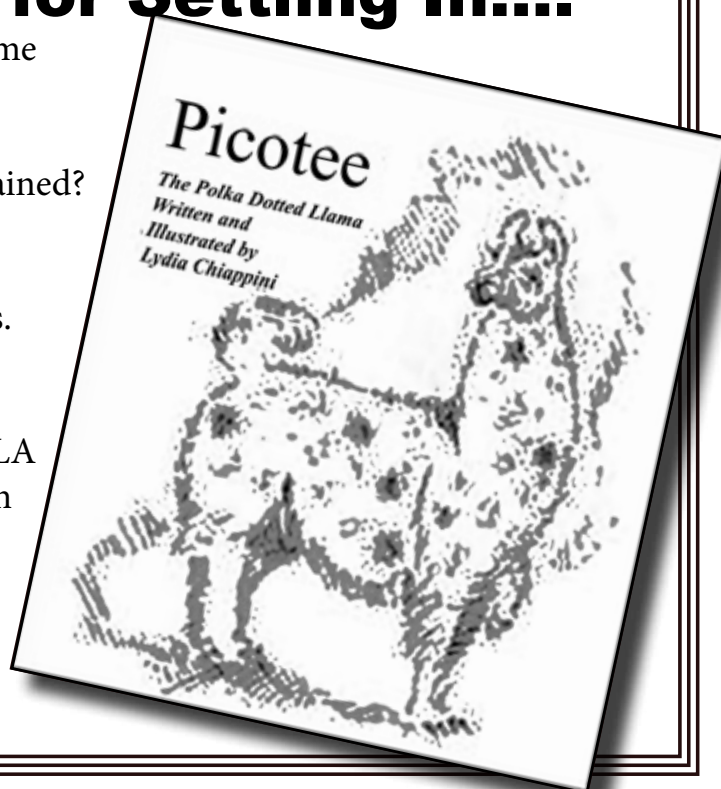
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plant life around us. Soon the arriving vacationers were greeted by a group of perky llamas at the fence announcing that they were part of the B&B experience. The intrigued visitors enjoyed many hikes into the surrounds with their charming beasts of burden who carried cheese, baguettes, wine, tablecloths and other picnic items to mountain meadows with gorgeous views. The llamas were the stars! Between cleaning and baking, and arriving and departing guests, I discovered the joy of hikes and treks into the wilderness with my banana-eared buddies, while my Englishman enjoyed the views from the deck. For me, it was the beginning of a long and rewarding friendship with the species *lama glama*. Life was good!

The Bed & Breakfast in the mountains as well as my Englishman are gone now, and so are the initial four llamas, though we had many good years together. At the beginning of the new millennium, I built a new house and barn with direct view of the mountains that were my first home in Montana and where five llamas introduced me to a life that has been my passion ever since. Over the following years, more llamas came and went. But one, tall, dark and handsome, remained through it all. Amadeus.

Amadeus was barely a year old when he joined our small llama group. Despite his name, he was not the best-behaved llama. Lanky and rambunctious, he had the annoying habit to push me around when it came time to feed. He just could not wait his turn to eat and often made me drop a heavy armload of hay short of its destination in the feeder. Teaching him to be more respectful took a while. In that respect, he was just like a human male teenager.

Amadeus' grandfather was the legendary "Fiduciary" of Taylor Llamas, who was also the father

of Cooper, my faithful packer who walked out of Yellowstone with a broken leg (see RMLA story Fall & Winter 2016). I hoped Amadeus' good genes would come through eventually. As he grew up and more deeply into his role of a pack llama, he seemed to become more confident and capable, which made him more reliable and dependable.

Learning to pack is a great character building tool for llamas. It transforms their behavior by giving them something to focus on and occupies their minds to think about something other than feeding and



standing around in a pasture, looking pretty. They quickly understand the team work that is required and their important role in the operation. They now have a job, direction and purpose! Amadeus found his purpose together with his buddies who all learned from each other and me from them. I immersed

myself in the llama world and in addition to pack trips with friends, the llamas and I participated in Pack Llama Trials and other events.

Finally, when in 2007 I started guiding llama pack trips in Yellowstone National Park after purchasing *Yellowstone Llamas* from Renee and Will Gavin, Amadeus was at my side as lead pack llama at 13 years old. He had grown into the perfect llama and made his name proud, at least in my mind. Amadeus means "Loved by God", but I just call him "Deus", hoping none of my neighbors know Latin or they would consider me sacrilegious by loudly calling out "God!" on many occasions, meaning my llama.

My memories of our adventures together do not include any dangerous experiences such as near-falls off cliffs or other close-call life-threatening stories. On the contrary. The fact that Amadeus always operated with a calm confidence and competent nature helped make our treks safe. He was a leader and a team-

continued on next page

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Amadeus: The Story of a Friendship, continued

player in one. Amadeus once saved the trek that I almost jeopardized by asking too much of the llamas on a very steep ascent where we were caught in a thunderstorm to top it off. DotCom started shaking, he could go no further. After leading Amadeus to the top, I unloaded him and brought him back down to where the rest of the string waited. We loaded DotCom's packs on Amadeus and started up the mountain again. We resumed our trek and arrived at our destination unscathed if tired.

Amadeus saved the day and the trek. He taught me to be better prepared. That was our relationship. Learning from each other and enjoying the rewards together. He and I lead together through the years and I am sure that the novice llamas learned from him. In Yellowstone's backcountry, he made the acquaintance of moose, bears, elk, wolves, deer and bison. He listened to owls at night and the cries of cranes flying over camp in the mornings. We camped in the woods and next to the mighty Yellowstone River. Kids liked Amadeus because he was gentle and easy to lead and eventually he was led by our guests on treks while other llamas took their turn in the front of the string. He didn't mind.

I retired Amadeus at 18. His last trek was a poignant trip, I thought, because we took a group of "Wounded Warriors" to Yellowstone on a day hike free-of-charge (RMLA article Spring 2014). The men had all suffered in war, lost limbs and parts of their souls. The trek was a path to healing and the llamas knew it. They actively participated in making this day a success. Amadeus was in the lead. As we immersed ourselves in Yellowstone, it didn't take

long for the warriors to relax and take to the llamas, posing with them for photos, smiling and hugging their new friends. It was a good day and a good ending of Amadeus' career as a pack llama.



It occurs to me that telling Amadeus' story is telling mine. At least in part. The part that involves my life with llamas. Amadeus' life threads through mine and the decades of my Montana life. Today is hooked to the very beginning by him reminding me every morning how it all began. He is the last of the first. My life with llamas spans his age. That time, though rewarding, has not always been happy. It included sorrow and grief as well. The llama world and so-called "industry" is not without its darkness. Witnessing the abuse and neglect inflicted on

many llamas in my adopted home state of Montana was unfortunately part of my story as well. Helping to relieve and end the suffering of these beloved, dignified animals at the hands of their heartless abusers at the Montana Large Animal Sanctuary was a very painful experience. On the bright side, I took four of these unfortunate creatures home with me. In addition, the deaths of some of my own animals as a result of illness or in one case a rattlesnake bite have certainly put me to the test again and again. Cooper broke his leg and was saved. And Amadeus himself almost died in our home pasture twice. Life throws up these road blocks at us once in a while. I guess when you love, you have to accept pain.

When I retired Amadeus, I was, of course, not certain how long he would live and so I wanted to grant him a few more years hanging out and relaxing.

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He did not show any signs of aging but three of his four initial buddies had died within a year or two after his retirement age of 18. One never made it that far.

Amadeus' senior life brought new moments and new experiences for him and for me. Because of my total trust in him and his slowing down and being wise and reasonable, he now enjoys the freedom of roaming around outside the house untethered and unfenced-in. He keeps the grass around the porch and in between the stone steps cut and though he likes to be naughty once in a while and walk right over the juniper shrubs to scratch his belly with their branches and breaking some in the process; he is a good groundskeeper.

Amadeus has become an observant and wise llama. We have known each other for so long that we know what the other wants and needs and how to communicate it. He loves to have his rump scratched and reminds me with insistent grunts when I forget. I think that friendship that ages grows richer, deeper. Not necessarily because of earth-shattering events and great epiphanies but because it solidifies with the steady hum of contentment, mutual enjoyment and silent understanding of the other.

Amadeus turned 23 this summer. He has arthritis in his neck which was the reason he almost died twice a few years ago. If he lies down in the typical sunning pose of llamas, he cannot swing back up using his neck for that powerful movement to right himself. In addition, our pasture is on a slope. As he lay there alone one day, not able to get up, the gases building up in his digestive tracts had no release. He was bloated and helpless and totally lethargic when I arrived, pushing and prodding him and pleading with him to help me getting him upright. He decided to try and he lived. After another similar episode that same summer, he learned. He now knows not to lie down on his side, especially not on a slope. He settles down during the day on even surfaces only and sleeps leaning against the side of the barn in his stall at night, his neck arched, leaning forward and resting on his nose.

Amadeus is now entering his 24th winter. After some initial hesitation, I sheared him again this summer because it was quite hot. I am happy to report that he is again growing his wool. What a guy! When it gets cold at night, he wears a coat, but not without argument!

Every day now is gravy for Amadeus and me. I can't believe how fast time went by while we were having so much fun! I am immensely grateful. Amadeus is the "grey eminence" of our little llama world of 17 animals. He towers over all of them and has only recently begun to grey. He is a remarkable being and just sitting next to him sometimes and looking out at the same old mountains makes me feel whole and connected to everything alive. Yes, his



good genes did come through. He learned his lessons well and as a bonus, taught me some!

As snowfall gently covers the darkening landscape, I bundle up and rush through the evening over to the barn for a last check and to turn down the lights. Amadeus has snuggled into his bed of wood shavings and straw in his room. I shine my lantern through the window. He looks up at me and something sweet and familiar passes between us. Something that needs no words and that I imagine to translate into "I am good. Nice to see you at the end of my day. Good night."

Good night, Amadeus. Loved by God. And me.



Ruminations...from John Mallon

"Llamas are easy to train!" How often have you heard that one? It's been one of the most commonly used phrases in marketing llamas for as long as I can remember, but is very misleading. Llamas do learn quickly, but there is a big difference between that and "easy to train". (I refer to this difference as "job security...")

Llamas learn "wrong" behaviors every bit as quickly as they learn "right" behaviors, and the fact is that they are learning something every time we interact with them, although it is usually not what we want them to learn. Whether we are aware of the teaching that is going on, the llama is aware of the learning; there is no such thing as just "hanging out" with your llama - there is always learning taking place on his end. We have to become aware of this fact and be conscious of what we are doing around the llama at all times, so that he learns the "appropriate" behaviors.

The llama does not have a concept of "right" or "wrong" behavior when it comes to interacting with humans; he's just a llama, doing what his instincts tell him to do - "right" and "wrong" are our concepts applied to his life. "Stand still", "don't move", "back up", "hand me that foot", "get into this halter", "carry this pack", "pull this cart", "don't spit", "don't kick", "get in this van/trailer, pickup", "square up and don't fidget while the judge examines your testicles", etc., etc. Left to his own choices, it would never appear on a llama's agenda to do any of these things. We run into problems when our two worlds collide, with his extremely well-developed sense of self-protection at odds with our need to handle him and put him in situations that he perceives as very threatening, and he instinctively responds in ways that we have deemed "inappropriate" or "bad".

The llama does not dwell on his future, beyond the immediate, but lives pretty much in the present, based upon his past experiences. The things which will stand out in a llama's memory are his first experience with a particular set of circumstances, those things that were particularly traumatic, and, most vividly, the most recent. Let's look at this, and how it pertains to "teaching replacement behaviors" (we are not in the business of "breaking bad habits", but of making good ones - as in all phases of my training methods, the llama will be allowed to make the choices we want him to make).

Let's take a look at the way most llamas are haltered for the first time: he is run into a square catch pen, squeezed into a corner, grabbed around the neck with arms or ropes, yanked around into a position from which a halter can be slammed onto him, undoubtedly hitting him in the nostrils and/or eyes, then buckled down tightly, and immediately grabbed up close to his chin by the lead rope. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Let's say that this scenario was played only one time; that's all it takes to make a "hard to halter" llama. It was not only his first encounter with haltering, but it was also very traumatic for him - it represents 100% of his experience with haltering; it's all he knows, or even suspects, about it. He has learned quickly that haltering is not a good thing, and will do everything in his power to avoid it in the future. Does this make him a bad llama with bad habits? Heck, no, he learned what he was taught, and learned it well, and will call upon his memory of this experience the next time the halter gets anywhere near him.

The fact that llamas do not attack us when they see a halter coming is testament to their gentle, peace-loving nature. I'm not so sure that I could be that complacent about it if the same thing happened to me... Somehow, we expect the next time to be better because the llama "knows what it's all about now". Sorry, but it just doesn't work that way. The second time he sees the halter coming his way, he's likely to raise his head up in the air to avoid it, and having done so successfully, if even for a moment, a new "bad" habit is born... He was afraid, that's all, not being "bad", but we treat the situation as if he were trying to "give us a hard time", as if he were actually enjoying this avoidance behavior, and the training becomes confrontational rather than cooperative. Llamas do not like confrontation or intimidation, but are gregarious animals to whom social skills are important. I know that I've talked about this sort of thing before, and it is your comments and letters which cause me to keep coming back to it. Their understanding of social order and their innate cooperative nature as a herd-living prey animal is the very thing that makes llamas so willing to work with us, so "easy to train". It is their hard-wired willingness to accept leadership and obey authority, not out of fear, but because it is best for the herd,

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THE CROOKED WOOD STORY

By Jeff Sandberg

If you would have told me two years ago that I would be the co chairman for a llama race, I would have thought you should be committed to a looney bin. Well, here we are and my best friend has dragged me into another wild adventure. My name is Jeff Sandberg and that "so-called" friend is a guy named Kelvin Eldridge. I'd like to introduce the two of us and give some history on the events that have led us to where we are today.

I met Kelvin just before I graduated from high school. Kelvin rode bulls and it was something I had always been interested in. I went to watch him ride one evening at Bob West Arena and two weeks later I was strapped on to my first bull. From then on, we were inseparable. We would travel to rodeos together and help each other train and prepare for the next rodeo. In June of 2008, Kelvin enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. During his time with the 2nd Battalion 4th Marines, he was on two deployments. By the time Kelvin was honorably discharged, he had been meritoriously promoted to Corporal, and left the Marines a decorated soldier. There are several medals on Corporal Eldridge's uniform, the most notable is the Navy achievement medal with valor for heroic action in combat.

When Kelvin got home we were back to our old tricks. Rodeo was not an option for either one of us any longer. I had continued to rodeo while he was away and we had both suffered severe back injuries. Our focus was turned to our other shared passion, hunting. In the beginning, it was waterfowl, but quickly that was not enough to fill the adrenaline void rodeo and military life had left deep inside us. As I was beginning to start a family, Kelvin stayed steady on a path that would

lead him away from a normal 9 to 5 life. About the time my first daughter was born, Kelvin was traveling throughout North America, from Canada to Texas and back, following the Canadian goose migration, guiding hunters at every stop along the way. He attended Colorado Outdoor Adventure Guide School (COAGS) in the summer of 2015.

At COAGS Kelvin learned to set drop camps and pack with mules.

Although mules are sure footed and can carry quite a load, they require a level of care that is hard to maintain far from the trail where we wanted to be for hunting. That is what started the search for a better pack animal and ultimately led us to the llama.

I'll never forget the phone call I received in May of 2016. It would change my life forever. Kelvin had found some llamas in Nebraska and wanted my help to haul them home. I thought he had lost

his mind, but I was assured that I was the irrational one for having my doubts. So, I loaded up the truck and headed east with my buddy leading the way. When we arrived, we quickly realized this was more than a simple trip to buy a few stock animals. What we had in front of us were some of the worst conditions imaginable. There was a mix of llamas and alpacas, males and females, adults and crias, all together in a two-acre pasture, 17 animals in all. They were malnourished, having been fed only straw for the past eight months. The entire pasture was so full of manure there was not a patch of grass. One, we named Tripod, had lost a leg from an improperly treated snake bite. We had made the journey with the intention of choosing a select few packers. Nobody said a word but we all understood that we needed to bring all these



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animals home. With proper care and a lot of love, the llamas took to Kelvin like their guardian Angel.

It took no time at all to get a few halter broke and saddle trained. That led Kelvin to reach out to Gary Carlton. Over the last year, Gary has been passing on the traditions and teachings of his mentor, Bobra Goldsmith. When my friend

followed by Crazy Eye, Grumpy and Gunsmoke. I was bringing up the rear and really starting to love llamas. We were only a mile into our ten-mile hike and I knew my life had changed forever. We had a successful hunt and were able to pack in and out with all of our supplies and harvested meat and we didn't have to strain our backs to do so. That meant Kelvin and I were finally able to push our broken bodies far into the backcountry.



sets his mind on something, his passion becomes apparent to everybody. Gary saw his eagerness and offered to help as much as he could. I was reluctantly beginning to see how great these llamas can be. The animals really took to the training and within a few weeks Crooked Wood's first string was ready for the hills.

I met Kelvin off the highway late one Friday night, and we drove the last few miles to our spot. We tried to sleep a little, anxiously awaiting the hunt the next day. In the early morning, we loaded up and headed out. Kelvin took the lead

We have met so many great people within both the llama, and the hunting community. These two great sub-cultures hit a crossroad with Beau Baty at Wilderness Trail Ridge Lamas. Kelvin and I were invited to Idaho to see Beau's operation. There we learned more about the mechanics of the perfect pack llama and the ins and outs of an industry leading breeding program. It was there that I realized that I was not just a bystander watching from the outside. I too was completely consumed with learning more about pack llamas. I cannot imagine ever hitting a trail head again without a string behind me. Beau, Gary and others I have talked to like to reminisce about the "good old days" of

pack. Well, for me those days are now and I am committed to bring that to everybody I meet.

Kelvin and I were very excited to be offered the opportunity of chairing the Fairplay Llama Race and are very honored to be allowed to continue the traditions this event has brought to both the South Park community and the RMLA. We hope to continue growing this race and educating people about the llamas we have all come to love and admire. We hope to see everybody there and look forward to meeting you all in person.



which makes them the cooperative, willing work partners that they are, with proper training.

Let's get back to haltering difficulties: the more times we repeat the traumatic haltering "technique" described above, the more firmly entrenched the avoidance behavior becomes, and the more difficult it will be to replace that behavior with a more peaceful method in the future. We cannot possibly expect the llama's behavior to change if we do not change ours; until we can show him that things can be done differently, he only knows what he knows, no more, no less. It is up to us to go back to square one, to teach him a better way, to help him to overcome his fear of the haltering process, so that he may then choose to quietly get into the halter. Llamas are not afraid of halters, they are afraid of the process, but, once taught a quieter way of doing business, I've never known one to revert to the old ways - given the chance, the llama will always choose the quieter way of doing things.

So much of this "training" is attitude, isn't it? Are we going to "halter this #!** llama!" or help this frightened animal? Are we going to "get this halter on him" or help him into it? My feeling about haltering is that, if the llama had fingers, he wouldn't need me at all, so I'll let him put it on, and I'll snap it for him. Now he's a partner, not a victim, and we're working together on a mutual problem.

Llamas don't "take chances". They don't go back to something that's frightened them to try to overcome their fear of it - they simply stay away from it in the future, if at all possible. There are no second chances for prey animals; if they do not immediately follow their instincts to run from perceived danger, they're dead. Sure, domestication and suburban living has tempered this a bit, but the instinct hasn't changed much, if at all. This is why it is so important to try to do things "right" the first time, so that we don't have to go back and try to change "bad" habits. The llama is fairly open-minded about initial experiences, but once he has had an unpleasant experience with something, it will stay with him and make subsequent situations difficult for him (and us) to deal with. Not impossible, understand, just more difficult and time-consuming than had the first time been pleasant.

Speaking of time-consuming, let's be realistic about commitment in training. Telling folks how "easy to train" llamas are sets them up for disappointment and disillusionment when the reality finally hits home. I'm always amazed when people tell me that training llamas "takes too long". How long is "too long" anyway? Dogs are known for being quick learners and remarkably easy to train, yet it takes anywhere from 20 - 100 hrs of proper lessons to get a dog to the "civilized" stage. Nothing fancy, mind you, just "sit", "stay", "come", "heel", "down", things like that, very basic education. And this from an animal who wants to please us in the first place!

Take the time. Tame them, then train them. Start them young if you really want to save a lot of time. Waiting until they are weaning age to start schooling is the very worst thing we can do - get to them while they are most impressionable. Their critical learning periods are very early in life, and every hour spent training at three weeks will save you five hours at six months. Make good habits early on and you won't have to worry about changing them later. Be kind, quiet, considerate, polite and understanding, and you'll see how much easier they are to train...

Happy Trails...



The biggest pleasure your Board and Committees receive are the smiles we get back from the membership. *Thank You!*



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FRESH ENERGY NEEDED

We know that each and every one of you is over-the-top busy with life. Your RMLA Board of Directors can say the same. But, we still remain on the Board as it gives us great pleasure to serve such a wonderful organization. The only pleasure your Board and Committees receive are the smiles we get back from the membership.

Can you find a spot in your busy life to fill one of the volunteer vacancies listed below? We would like some fresh energy, even from 'old' volunteers.

Calendar Committee Co-Chair The chair is responsible for nagging the membership for photos and advertisements. Ron Hinds will again put all the photos and ads together into the layout he created for the 2018 RMLA Calendar. Solicitation for ads and photos can begin at any time. All materials need to be received by Ron Hinds by July 1st. For more information, contact Geri Rutledge at buckshollow@wildblue.net.

Journal Advertising Manager You can design this position however you want. Bottom line: get new ads for the Journal. There are no quotas, no rules. Spend as much time as you want when you want to. Contact Kathy & Ron at rmlaeditor@gmail.com for more information.

Journal Advertising Coordinator Using an Excel spreadsheet, keep track of new ads, renewing ads, and forwarding payment to the RMLA Treasurer. This position requires under 10 hours per each issue of the quarterly Journal. Contact Kathy & Ron at rmlaeditor@gmail.com.



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Postscript from the Journal Volunteers

"Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." --Victor Hugo

Warilyn, YOU, Kathy, Ron



Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association
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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.

- **January 5 - 7, 2018, Llama Show at the National Western Stock Show**, Denver, CO. ALSA sanctioned halter, performance, walking fiber & fleece shows. Contact Judy Glaser, judy.glaser@yahoo.com or 303-646-6311 or 303-618-5951.
- **January 6, 2018, Camelidkids Winterfest**, Waco, NE. Public event to educate people on the many uses of llamas and alpacas. Contact Geri Rutledge, buckshollow@wildblue.net or 402-366-9304.
- **February 3, 2018, Great Plains Llama & Alpaca Conference**, McPherson, KS. Community event to educate people on the many uses of llamas and alpacas. Contact Geri Rutledge, buckshollow@wildblue.net or 402-366-9304.
- **May 5, 2018, Stars N Stripes Llama & Alpaca Show**, York, NE, Contact Geri Rutledge, buckshollow@wildblue.net or My number is 402-366-9304. ALSA sanctioned show, halter & performance.
- **June 22 and 23, 2018, Camelidkids Llama & Alpaca Camp**, Waco, NE Llama Camp for all ages. Learn safety, handling, training and ways to use the fiber. Contact Geri Rutledge, buckshollow@wildblue.net or 402-366-9304.

Save the Dates!

Mark your calendars for 2018. Applications for review and approval have not been submitted yet, but the organizers & superintendents have indicated they will again organize the events and have provided the dates. More information will be provided as it is received.

- **June 9 & 10, 2018, Estes Park Wool Market**, Estes Park, CO
- **June 30 & July 1 Because of the Economy Black & Blue Show**, Florissant, CO, Performance and Youth Judging & Halter
- **July 28, 2018, Fairplay Llama Event**, Fairplay, CO

Do you have an event you are planning for 2018 but don't have all the 'paper work' completed? Send us the dates, name of the event, and location. We will add it to the list.