

Winter 2023

The Journal of RMLA



RMLA
Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association

Welcome to RMLA!

--- Mission Statement ---

The mission of the Association shall be to educate the members and the public as to the breeding, raising, care and use of llamas and alpacas.

RMLA Board of Directors



President
Sandy Schilling
Chino Valley AZ
602-403-8166
Sschilli9151@gmail.com



Vice President
Lougene Baird
Cottonwood AZ
808-747-5023
lougenebaird@outlook.com



Secretary
Nancy Wilson
Camp Verde AZ
928-220-5553
spinllama@msn.com



Treasurer
Linda Schlenker
Scottsdale, AZ
602-576-3828
lindalouschlenkler@mac.com

Chairpersons, Active Committees

Bookstore

Manager: **OPEN**
Accounting: **Marilyn Arnold**
303-807-2051
rmlaaccounting@yahoo.com
Liaison Lougene Baird

Facebook

Sandy Schilling
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com
Liaison Sandy Schilling

E-Blasts

Nancy Wilson
928-567-6684
RMLAebblast@gmail.com
Liaison Lougene Baird

Education/Events/Marketing

Mary Wickman
719-651-8871
Mwickman1@gmail.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

Fiber

OPEN
rmlafiber@gmail.com
Liaison Nancy Wilson

Finance

Marilyn Arnold
303-841-5126
rmlaaccounting@yahoo.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

The Journal

Kathy Stanko
970-256-7716
rmlaeditor@gmail.com
Liaison Lougene Baird

Library

Sandy Lockwood
303-838-9554
Rmlalibrary3@gmail.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

Membership

Sandy Schilling
602-403-8166
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com
Liaison Sandy Schilling

Nominations & Elections

Christina Abel
620-626-8743
luckyonyx81@gmail.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

Pack

OPEN
Lougenebaird@outlook.com
Liaison Lougene Baird

Research

Ron Baird
808-747-5975
ronbaird1942@outlook.com
Liaison Linda Schlenker

Website

Content: **Kathy Stanko**
970-256-7716
Rmlawebsite@gmail.com
Membership: **Sandy Schilling**
602-403-8166
RMLAmembershipchair@gmail.com
Liaison Lougene Baird

Youth, 4-H, FFA

OPEN
rmlayouthinfo@gmail.com
Liaison Sandy Schilling

About the Journal

The Journal of RMLA[®] is a quarterly publication of the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association (RMLA). The RMLA Journal Committee and the Board of Directors reserve the right to select and edit all articles and advertisements submitted.

The information in The Journal is not intended to be a substitute for qualified professional advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with their own veterinarian, accountant or attorney regarding any questions concerning their animals or business operations.

RMLA is not responsible for any losses resulting from readers' failure to heed this caution. The views expressed by the authors of articles are not necessarily those of the Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association, Inc., its officers, directors or members.

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Cover Photo: Courtesy Niki Kuklenski, cart driving with friends.

From The Editor

Kathy Stanko, Editor, rmlaeditor@gmail.com



Cart driving with a llama? Is anyone doing this activity with their llamas? Ten years ago when we were still showing, I was always delighted to watch the llamas pulling carts as the drivers navigated the whole shebang around the course. Niki Kuklenski's article *What Do You Need To Get Started Driving With Your Llama?* (page 29) may certainly spark your interest to get a group together to drive in the forest or along the beach.

I want to congratulate everyone involved in organizing and attending the inaugural Fallama Fest! (page 7). What a great well-rounded show.

A couple of health articles look at feeding and nutrition for both the young and the mature. And shearing is a big part of our animals' health. Are you prepared for the upcoming shearing season?

Ready for some adventure? In this issue you can travel to Bolivia (page 11) or to the high Andes in Peru (page 38) or to a rescue adventure high in the Rocky Mountains (page 19). Or check out a book from the [RMLA library](#).

I hope Winter is good to you! Thank you to everyone who submitted an article for this Journal and to all of you who read and learn from the many topics included. Please remember, if you have a great photo, send it to me for possible use in a future Journal. And do you have a topic you would like to see in the Journal? Either let me know and I can see what I can find, or write it yourself.

Journal Submission Dates, Ad Rates & Specifications

Issue	Submission Deadline	Publication Date
Spring	February 28	March 31
Summer	May 31	June 30
Fall	August 31	September 30
Winter	November 30	December 31

Ad Type	Width x Height	Member Rate	Non-Member
Business Card	3.5"x2"	\$ 7	\$ 15
¼ page horiz.	7.5"x2"	\$ 12	\$ 24
¼ page vert.	3.5"x4.5"	\$ 12	\$ 24
Half Page	7.5" x 5"	\$ 24	\$ 48
Full Page	7.5"x 10"	\$ 39	\$ 78

Ad rates are quoted per issue. Lock in the current rate by purchasing an ad for four consecutive issues and receive a **5th ad for free**. You may change your ad once during the year.

To submit articles, ads or photo:

- All submissions go to rmlaeditor@gmail.com
- Documents in MS Word format
- Camera ready ads as a pdf or jpg file. **NOTE:** What you send is what we publish.
- Images/photos as .jpeg (.jpg) or .tiff files. Photo from a camera or phone are sufficient. Please check the background and lighting. RMLA will only crop for fit and/or enhance the lighting.

Instructions for advertising payment:

You may pay for your ad at RMLA.com using a credit card. Payment and ad copy must be received prior to submission deadline. See the table above for dates.

Letter from Your Board President

Dear RMLA Members:

I wanted to introduce myself to everyone once again. My name is Sandy Schilling and I have been elected by the RMLA Board to be President. I was introduced to RMLA by “Llama” Linda Hayes when I bought her llama trailer in 2020. I live in northern Arizona and have had llamas since 2017. I know this isn't a very impressive time frame of llama ownership and I'll be the first to tell you that my various mentors have forgotten more about llamas than I know.

I wasn't chosen as President due to my camelid experience. I was chosen to try to help lead RMLA into the future. So much has changed since RMLA was created in 1983. RMLA has changed from a Colorado-based organization to an international organization, from in-person meetings to online meetings, from mailing quarterly Journals to emailing PDF documents and from being an original llama organization to one of many similar organizations.

Before I continue about the future, I would like to thank Lougene Baird for her many, many years of leading RMLA as President and all as a volunteer. Without this woman's efforts, RMLA would not have survived this long. There are other very important long term volunteers that work tirelessly in the background of RMLA that members may be unaware of. They include Nancy Wilson, Kathy Stanko, Marilyn Arnold, Mary Wickman, Ron Baird and Christina Abel. I know there are many more that I have not mentioned to thank.

RMLA membership now needs to determine what the organization will look like in the future. RMLA's Mission is to *educate the members and the public as to the breeding, raising, care and use of llamas and alpacas*. How is this relevant in the llama industry and electronic world now? What direction should RMLA head in?

Any improvements or changes to RMLA will require more volunteers to help with the transformation. The same ten people cannot run an organization this large successfully and forever. Without more volunteers, RMLA's future is dormant.

In January, all RMLA members will receive a letter via USPS mail regarding the future of our organization. Please read this letter and let me or any other Board member know if you have any questions or suggestions.

Please be safe this holiday season. Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays. Happy New Year! Sandy

Upcoming RMLA Events

By Mary Wickman, Events Chair

National Western Stock Show, National Western Stock Show Complex, Denver, CO. The llama and alpaca show is now the last weekend of stock show. Arrival Wednesday, January 17th beginning at noon. Walking fiber and Shorn fleece, Thursday, January 18th beginning at 9 AM. Afternoon with a llama and alpaca, Friday, January 19th at 1 PM. Llama Halter show, Friday, January 19th at 2 pm. Llama Performance Show, Saturday January 20th at 1 PM. Contact Judy Glaser, judy.glaser@yahoo.com for more information.

RMLA EVENT

Inaugural FallamaFest Llama Show & Event

By Julia Hall

FallamaFest Llama Show and Event for 2023 is in the books! What a great show we had for our inaugural year! Over 60 animals and over 20 exhibitors participated in our first show. We are forever grateful for all the exhibitors who took a leap of faith and attended a first year show!

We couldn't have done it without all the great volunteers! Thank you to our first time superintendent, Jessie Kaehn! A special thank you to Heather and Steve Rohlwing, Sonja Boeff, Ali Bandell, Michele Chang and the other participants who jumped in to help with gatekeeping and other needs during the show. Thank you to Kim Surry for bringing her 4H kids to show and help with the show. Thank you to RMLA for providing insurance and helping us to promote the event. Thank you to other volunteers

who helped us hand out awards and helped the public with directions. Also, a shoutout and thank you to the Alpaca Breeders of the Rockies (ABR) for volunteering, supporting our event, helping with setup and tear down, and for bringing a couple of alpacas to show and participate in the public event on Saturday.



Performance Course with Sub-Junior Exhibitor Croy Hamilton with Manolete's Alejandro

Thank you to the judges, Nick Hauptly and Steve Auld. They were patient and helpful with our first show, took the time to explain things, and extra time helping the kids.

A special thank you to all the sponsors we had for this first show! Putting on a show can be expensive, and for a first show, there are additional expenses that are required. We had corporate sponsors and farm sponsors, and each one is sincerely appreciated!

We had great weather for the first show, and we started off on Friday with a Performance clinic by one of the judges, followed by a health check clinic by Dr. Signe Balch, and then a fun pizza party to let everyone mingle and relax and get into the community spirit for the show.

Exhibitors were from Colorado, Washington, Wyoming, Texas and Nebraska, as well as some local 4H kids. The show this year was ILR-sanctioned, and we hope to expand next year to a dual sanctioned ILR and ALSA show.



Fall in love with a llama public event

The show this year had ILR-sanctioned classes for Performance, Double Halter, Showmanship, Fleece, Best in Show Female and Best in Show Male. In addition, we had a couple of fun classes for unregistered llamas or alpacas to complete the obstacle course, and an Argentine Champion class. We also offered a couple of classes for those exhibitors with special needs to complete the Freestyle Obstacle course, and two exhibitors took advantage of that opportunity.

Our vision for this show, when we first began to plan it, was for it to be more than just a llama show. We wanted it to be an event for serious breeders and llama exhibitors, but also for anyone who just wanted to be part of the camelid community, like llama owners who love taking their llamas on a hike, or an alpaca owner who wants to share their love of alpacas. Sharing these animals with the public was also an important aspect of the show. We took every opportunity to promote our “Fall in Love with a Llama” event on Saturday, where we let the public join exhibitors and owners to walk the animals around and visit.

Because sharing these incredible animals is so important to us, we promoted this show at other llama shows during the year, as well as llama/alpaca events. We were also given the incredible opportunity to be on a local television show, “Colorado and Company,” where we took two of our llamas to the television studio and showed them off and promoted our upcoming llama show. The llamas did great and were wonderful ambassadors!

We had a great turnout from the public for our first show and hope to keep those numbers going up every year. We had a great show, and everyone had fun! Enjoy the following photos. We are already planning for next year. Next year’s show will be September 27-29, 2024. More information can be found on the website at www.fallamafest.com.



Senior Showmanship Class



Pizza party and Basic Llama Health Checks and First Aid Clinic with Signe Balch, DVM



Open alpaca freestyle obstacle with Kandi Gunning and Juan Diego Perez.



FallamaFest souvenir booth; behind is face painting and ABR booth.



Performance clinic with ILR Judge, Steve Auld

Memories

By Chris Switzer

As I hand pick alpaca fleece to clean it, I remember that particular alpaca. After 40 years of raising them in Estes Park, Colorado, I recall their personalities, and also their offspring. More than just the COLOR of their fleece, my flip file of names tells their parentage, plus crias born. Wonderful memories!

When hand carding alpaca fleece, have the same length. I pull out thicker hairs from the tip ends. Watch for kemp and take it out. Have you ever done "checkerboard" using hand carders? It will give a variegated effect. (see page 29 in my book). If you've never spun alpaca fiber, send me an email with your name and address and I'll mail you some.

About the author: Phil & Chris Switzer were on the founding committee for the Estes Park Wool Market over 30 years ago. In the forty years they raised alpacas, they had over 600 crias. Chris loves to weave with alpaca yarns.

The Llama and Alpaca in the Andes Altiplano

By Keith Payne, RMLA Member, New Zealand

Numerous million years ago when the original camelid began to venture South from mid-North America, down through what is now Central America, it arrived at a long range of very high mountains which we recognize as the Andes. The Andes has two spines, one running down the West coast and the other further inland to the East with the vast Amazon collection area on its inland slopes. In between these two spines lies a high altitude plateau, called the Andes Altiplano. Here is where you will find the majority of the many millions of llamas and alpacas which reside in South America.



Some of these immigrants ventured down the West coast of South America, and in time developed and evolved into today's guanaco and llama; the others who headed down the altiplano section we now know as vicuña and alpaca. Some two to three million years ago, the genera of the original immigrants from Texas separated into the genetics of the guanaco and vicuña.

Both of these animals have a similar genetic structure, i.e. with 74 chromosomes, a three compartment ruminating digestive system and complimentary reductive systems. They share a similar pacing movement (unique to them) balanced by a long neck. Both have hollow fiber which is lanolin free. The vicuña being a product of higher altitude has finer fiber, however, the guanaco has proven to possess the more effective survival traits; its population at arrival of humans has been estimated to exceed the vicuñas tenfold.

Today a visit to South America would reveal that 80 - 90% of its camelids are resident on the altiplano. The altitude of the altiplano does vary significantly from the North of Peru to the South of Bolivia and into some sections of Argentina and Chile. The variation of altitude is from 3,000 meters to 5,000 meters with the majority being in excess of 4,000 meters.

There is some local variation of climate but generally one would expect to encounter warm summer days (with cold nights), frosty moderate rainfall autumns, wet springs and cold winters. But the principle feature is the daily temperature variation. I visited recently in the month of May and encountered nights of 5-15° C below zero, a peak of 15-20° C at midday and back to subzero by 5 pm.



But the one very significant feature of the altiplano is the vegetation. The millions of llama and alpaca which live there are very reliant upon a single plant; it is known to the locals as *ichu* grass. Its scientific name is *Stipa Ichu* of the family *Poaceae* and sometimes referred to as Java Ichu, or simply “Feather Grass.” It is similar to tussock grasses (mountain grass) which grow at altitude in mountainous regions in various countries around the globe.



The preponderance of ichu in the camelid diet is quite fascinating. It has a rough stem and rough leaves and looks quite undesirable. The llama is considered to be the only animal in the world which can survive on a diet of it.

Even the hardy alpaca diet requires it to be supplemented with the juicy vegetation found in Andes wetlands. A feature of the altiplano is the wetlands, called *bojedale* in Quechua, *mojedale* in Aymara or *vegas* in Spanish; these unique high altitude areas result from snow, glacier melt or release from manmade dams in dry summer periods. A great variety of water-reliant vegetation can be found and is highly favored by alpaca herds.

In these areas it is common to find large herds of female (*hembra*) alpaca and llama, mingling together when grazing (separating into homogenous groups at night) except when it is mating season in which case the two are separated by distance, each with their respective alpaca or llama males (*machos*).

Drier areas where the vegetation is often 90% ichu, one can expect to find large herds of llama with few alpaca numbers. The altiplano is largely unfenced, llamas are identified by special identity “nicks” in their ears, and the herds roam constantly each day often covering several kilometers. The largest herds are the *hembra* with *crias* at foot. In the months of December, January and early February, intact *machos* will be introduced to the *hembra* herds, ratios vary, but usually in the range of 50 - 100 to one.

Herds of male llama and alpaca also roam the altiplano, these normally are transported at age 20 -24 months for the meat market.

Llamas are rarely sheared on the altiplano; female alpaca are usually sheared annually.



Llamas are no longer utilized for carrying cargo or produce. The odd farm may still put them to work if no other form of transportation is available or access by motor vehicle is not realistic, or for the pleasure of visiting tourists, special festivals, etc.



The diet of the llama and alpaca is not supplemented in the Andes. There is very little machinery available to work the soil and seed is expensive. In several progressive farms I did witness an effort to grow small areas of oats and alfalfa (lucerne), about 1/2 acre in total. In all cases the land had been worked and planted by hand—a significant labor given the condition of the rocky, dry soil. The resulting crops would not have impressed a Western farmer. And in each case these supplements were only fed to the machos, who are generally held in high regard by the individual farmers, due largely I expect to the much higher purchase price associated with them.

I spent a considerable amount of time studying the llama herds of the Bolivian altiplano; the fitness and health of the herds is excellent, an impressive achievement given their simple diet and general lack of individual care. After viewing thousands of animals, I can share I did not see a thin or obese animal, a lame or leg deformity, blue eyes, a dropped pastern, a poorly shaped hip, a deformed jaw, etc.

It is indeed a travesty that a working animal like the llama is no longer worked in the Andes. And as each decade passes, the old skills of domesticating, training and outfitting llamas for cargo duty fades further from memory. Several local young men who assisted me in my study of the herds would ply me with questions about training llamas and then outfitting them for a journey. The community elders recount the stories of large caravans of llamas transporting a cargo of goods all over the Andes and the youth of today long for these adventures.

Of one thing I am sure is that the llamas also would also cherish the opportunity to once again ply their trade up and down the rugged Andes with its deserts, altiplano, rivers and salt plains.

NOTE: photos taken by the author on the Titicaca, Turco and Copasa sections of the Bolivian altiplano (2023). All article photos taken at altitude 4,300 meters or higher.



Wait! You Want To Do What?

Marty McGee Bennett

Camelidynamics

Camelids are reluctant to have their mouth handled for the same reason they are afraid to have their legs handled: keeping the mouth free of injury is a very critical part of staying alive. Many handlers assume that this feeling from the animal's point of view is cast in stone. In fact as an industry we have designed halters and invented haltering methods whose purpose is to avoid touching the mouth. Instead of teaching the animals that it is safe to have their mouths touched, we have let the animals convince us that we shouldn't do it. The problem is that we need to administer oral medications, examine the mouth and teeth, and the mouth is going to be touched both on purpose and inadvertently. If necessary, touching of the mouth is always unpleasant and frightening, then the animal begins to invest in avoidance and the whole thing becomes a vicious circle.

I have been fortunate to find a number of amazing teachers. I met Linda Tellington-Jones very early in my camelid career. Linda is an accomplished rider, teacher and I am honored to say friend and mentor. I began studying with her in the early 80's. Her work is transformative using balance and touching to teach an animal to feel safe and accept a human's proximity and touch. This short article exemplifies why the TTouch is so profound. In a few words and with a short lesson you can have a huge impact on the way an animal feels and reacts to your presence. It is so much easier to use the TTouch to systematically desensitize the mouth so that the animal is not afraid. Using the TTouch for desensitization has the added benefit of being pleasurable, making the animal not only cooperative but engaged in the process.

HOW: To work the mouth you must be in a catch pen. I suggest that you use the wand and rope method of catching and invest some time in teaching the animal to override his flight response and allow you to approach. Even if the animal seems ok, I would catch in this way as a gesture of good faith. Once your catch rope is up HIGH AND SNUG you can begin to use clouded leopard circles (see description below) on the neck up behind the ears, on the forehead. To begin the progression to the mouth you will stand on the animal's left, balance the animal with the right hand on the catch rope and begin with your left hand on the underside of the jaw—well back on the jaw almost on the neck. If the animal seems worried you can begin with the left hand partly on the neck and partly on the jaw or completely on the neck and work your way forward from there.

There is no set rhythm to your progression. Once you attain more skill you might be able to work your way up to the mouth in one short session or you might take several sessions. There is no right or wrong EXCEPT if you try to force the animal to accept your touch. You must meet the animal where he is and allow him to lead the process.

IMPORTANT: As you progress with the rest of these instructions, be sure to pay attention to what you are doing with your right hand. If your balancing hand becomes dead weight, the animal will begin tossing the head and you may mistakenly think that the problem is your left hand moving toward the mouth. This won't



Using TTouch, this is where you want to eventually end up! It may takes several practice sessions before your animal is comfortable with this.

be the case—the animal will be objecting to the perception that you are holding him because of the weight in your right hand!

Once your animal stands quietly and accepts the hand on the jaw, you are going to walk your fingers forward. I move my index finger toward the mouth and then follow with the rest of my fingers. Do your best not to slide your hand along the jaw or break contact and remake contact; both of these may be annoying or startling. Walking the fingers forward is the best way to make forward progress without fear.

Take a deep breath and before you walk your fingers forward again make sure that your animal is standing in balance and is not moving his head around in an attempt to avoid you. This work DOES NO good if you just wrestle your way to the mouth. Once your left hand is within an index finger's reach of the lips, move your index finger to rest on the fleshy spot that divides the lips. Do not move your finger; just rest it lightly there and **take a breath**. If your animal is **settled**, you can begin to do some clouded leopard circles using your index and or index and middle fingers all around the mouth area.

Once you work the mouth the job is really done, but most animals quite like it and you can surely work the mouth anytime you have time. I make a practice of working with the mouth and the rest of the head before I put a halter on an animal for the first time and before I administer any oral medication.

The most important thing is to balance your animal and not to wrestle. If you have any hope of changing your animal's mind, it will be with balance and not force. You can try working in a pen with a number of animals in it or working inside a trailer. Remember, if what you are doing isn't working, change some aspect of what you are doing. Even if it is a small shift, doing the same thing over and over only teaches your animal how to thwart your efforts!

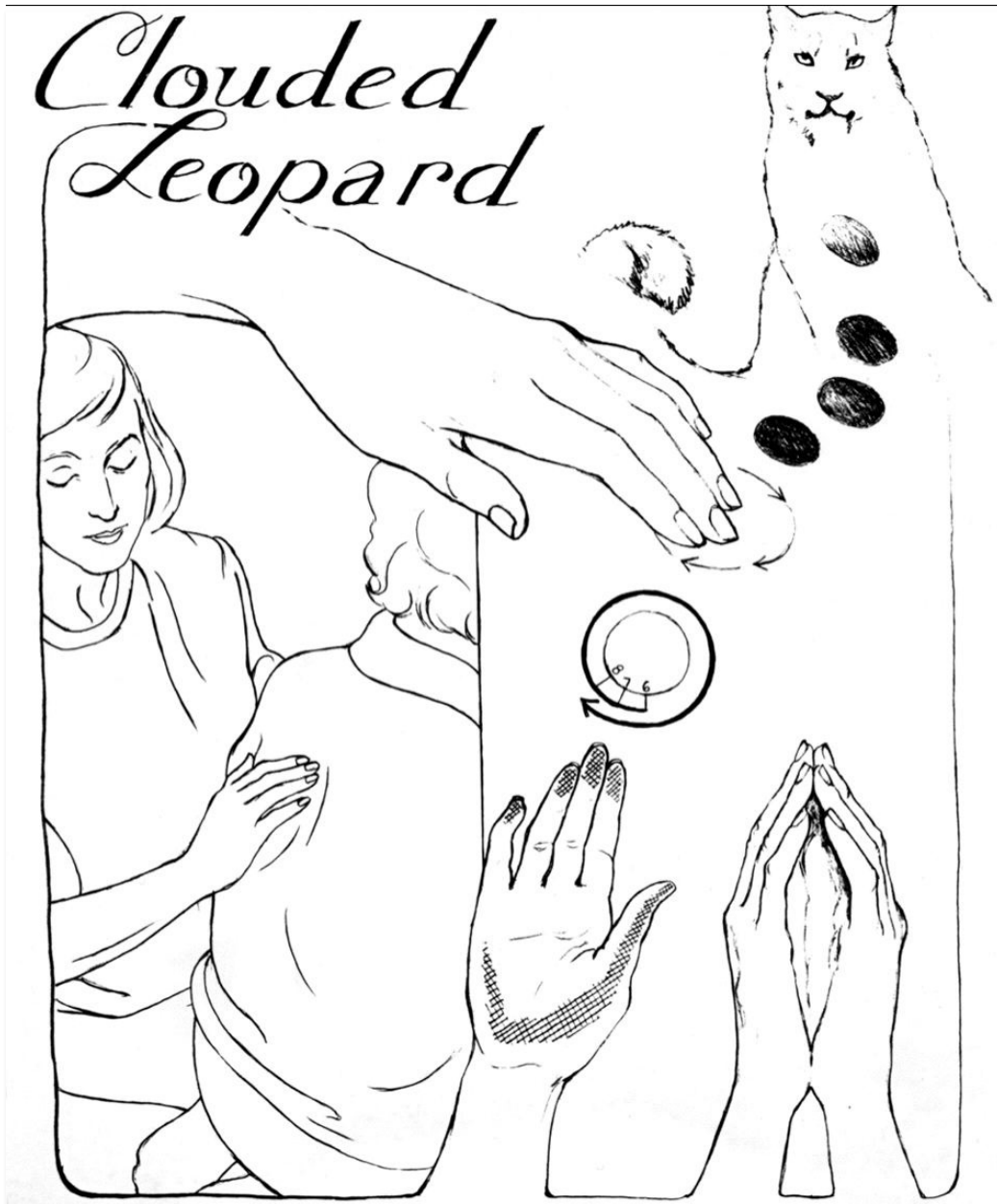
Description: The Clouded Leopard TTouch: This TTouch is done using the fingerprint part of your fingers. Your thumb acts as a placeholder and your little finger mostly goes along for the ride. Rest your hand gently on the animal and use the ring, middle and index finger of your hand to press gently (i.e., think: applying salve to your skin) and move the skin in a small circle one complete revolution and then just a bit more (i.e. total would be about a circle and a quarter). The circle is made clockwise.

Now, move your fingers to a slightly new location. DO NOT make the circles over and over in the same spot. When you begin you might take a second or so to complete one circle if your animal is calm or is getting calmer you can slow down. Release slowly. **Remember to breathe!**

About the Author: Marty McGee Bennett has been teaching her brand of training and handling camelids, CAMELDynamics, worldwide since the mid 80's. Her book, *The Camelid Companion*, covers a wide variety of training and husbandry topics. Marty is a regular contributor to The Journal of RMLA.



Marty using the Clouded Leopard technique on a cheetah.



The Clouded Leopard TTouch: This TTouch is done using the fingerprint part of your fingers. Your thumb acts as a placeholder and your little finger mostly goes along for the ride. Rest your hand gently on the animal and use the ring, middle and index finger of your hand to press gently (i.e., think: applying salve to your skin) and move the skin in a small circle one complete revolution and then just a bit more (i.e. total would be about a circle and a quarter). The circle is made clockwise.

Now, move your fingers to a slightly new location. DO NOT make the circles over and over in the same spot. When you begin you might take a second or so to complete one circle if your animal is calm or is getting calmer you can slow down. Release slowly. Remember to breathe!

Ask The Vet: Llumpy Llamas!

By Char Arendas, DVM

From the September 2023 Topline. Reprinted with permission.

Have you ever felt an unusual bump on your llama or alpaca? Maybe you were shearing in the spring and uncovered something that was hidden all winter under the fiber. Perhaps you were grooming for a show and found something oozing. Possibly you were just saying hello to your barn buddy and noticed a bump on the nose or lip. There are many types of lumps and bumps that we can find on our camelid friends. This article is meant to introduce you to some of the more common lumps you might encounter.

Abscess

Perhaps the easiest bump to recognize is the good old abscess. Abscesses are basically a big sac of pus that occurs under the skin where bacteria were introduced, proliferated, and then a bunch of white blood cells arrived to fight them off. These can occur from an injury/bite, at the site of an injection, on the jaw from an infected tooth, and really just about anywhere else on the body. They tend to pop up quickly, and after several days might ripen and burst open. They typically contain a thick white/yellow/green creamy liquid... aka pus or purulent debris. The best thing that can happen is for an abscess to rupture and drain. If you find an abscess, the best thing to do is to put on gloves and squeeze as much pus out as you can. If you have an antiseptic like betadine or chlorhexidine, you can use this to cleanse the skin over and around the abscess.

Even better yet, using a big syringe to flush sterile saline into the sac of the abscess will help clean it out. Antibiotics are usually given for several days to help the infection clear up. Be sure to use fly spray around the area, because many abscesses are stinky and you don't want to end up with maggots.

Cyst

Another type of debris filled sac that occurs on the surface of the skin is the cyst. A cyst is usually found where oil glands occur. A cyst forms when one of these glands that secrete fluid or oil becomes damaged and stops draining onto the skin's surface. The secretions then build up and cause a bump to form. They tend to feel very firm and usually do not get very large – maybe half-inch or so in size. They are usually almost always located along the topline of the animal, as there are more glands in this area. When poked with a needle or sterile surgical blade and squeezed firmly, they will squirt out a very thick, waxy, dark grayish material. Some animals seem to be more prone to sebaceous (oil gland) cysts than others. I usually find them when I shear in the spring. If you decide to poke and squeeze a cyst, try to cleanse the area first with an antiseptic so that you don't introduce bacteria and end up creating an abscess!



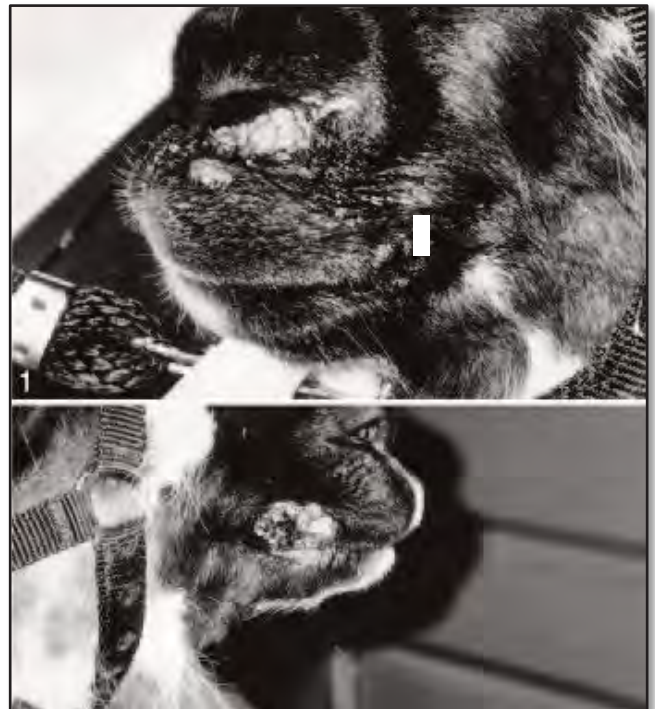
Cyst on a llama.

Warts

Some of you might be familiar with warts in other livestock. Well, camelids get them too! In fact, warts (aka fibropapillomas) many times even arise from contact with a virus known as a papillomavirus.

They are most common on the face – especially the nose and lips. This is probably because llamas are so curious and tend to sniff or touch things with their nose/lips. I personally find that llamas who are well-traveled and attend more shows are more apt to getting warts. Most likely this is because they are exposed to many other animals and environments than llamas who stay at home on the farm. Warts usually sit on top of the skin, are hairless, can vary in pigment from pink to gray, and tend to look bumpy on the surface. Warts that are large or that continue to grow can look disfiguring on a llama.

They can be removed by your vet with light (standing) sedation and a local block. The warts are usually cut or cauterized out and then the skin is stitched back together. Small warts may be responsive to at-home wart removal kits such as freeze kits or Compound-W. However, use caution with Compound-W around the lips as it should not be ingested!



Warts near a llama's nose and mouth.

Injection Site Reaction

Camelids tend to be prone to injection site reactions. Vaccines and meningeal worm preventative injections seem to be the biggest culprits. The area in which the shot was given becomes firmly swollen and the fiber may even fall out. Some camelids seem to be more prone to injection site reactions than others. These firm areas are different than abscesses because they do not contain any fluid or infection. Although the firm lump under the skin will gradually dissipate, it may never totally go away. Sometimes, the fiber in that area may even grow back in a lighter color.

Tumor

Our worst fear as the finder of the lump is that it's cancer. Well, luckily most of the lumps you're going to find are not going to be cancerous. But some may be.

Many of the tumors that I've seen on camelids tend to have pink fleshy tissue protruding from the skin. There may also be infection and pus and an odor. The key to checking these out thoroughly is to cleanse the area and remove any debris. You can even shear around it to get a better look. I've seen these pop up on knees, on the sternal pad between the front legs, on the topline, and even on the fetlock/ankle. Remember to keep flies away and get your vet out to assess the situation!

Although this list is not all-inclusive, it should give you a quick intro to the most common camelid bumps you'll encounter.

Sweety's Rescue

By Fiona Caruthers, Boulder, CO

We had to rescue Sweety, a seven year old pregnant llama lost in the Indian Peaks Wilderness on September 13, 2023.

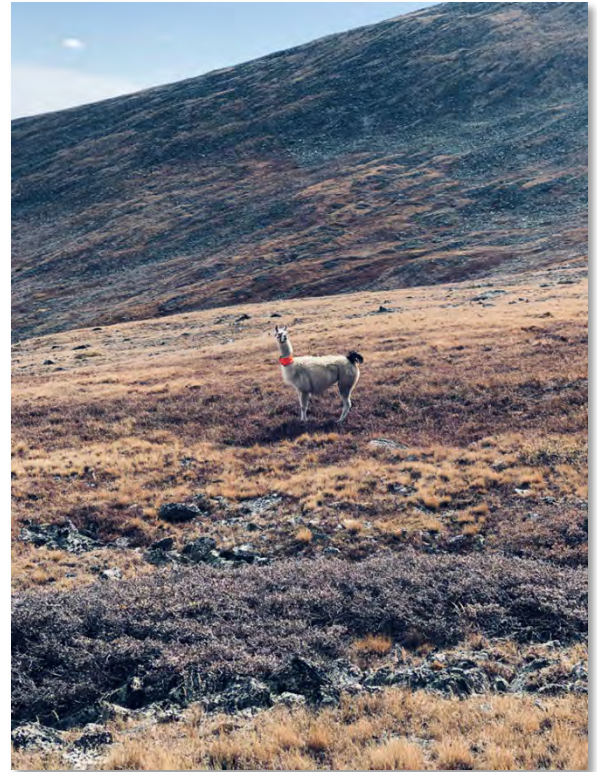
We were in Boston where my husband Marv was receiving a prize for his work, when on September 21st a text reached me from my friend Leigh about a Facebook posting: A llama named Sweety had gotten loose in the Indian Peaks Wilderness. Ever since then, my life has been about nothing else than rescuing Sweety. From the Facebook photo I immediately recognized the area, high up near the Continental Divide; I had camped there myself years ago. Thus, I had to act. Frantically, my friend Leigh and I searched for the identity of the owners. They were as elusive as Sweety turned out to be. After a few days, Leigh was able to track them down in Bend, Oregon; Matt and Cody had come from Oregon to Colorado for a hunting trip, bringing three of their llamas with them. On September 13th, returning to camp from hunting, they noticed Sweety was missing; she had slipped her line. After a few additional days of hunting and searching for Sweety, they had to return to Oregon, but not without first posting flyers about the missing llama on all the surrounding trailheads.

Barely back from Boston, on Sunday September 24th, I recruited my young llama caretakers, the twins Diego and Sebastian, to join me on a day trip into the valley. It brought no results, even though we scanned the trails for prints and llama droppings, and talked to dozens of hikers and backpackers coming down the mountain that Sunday afternoon; nobody had spotted Sweety.

My friend Leigh and I were convinced that we had to go deeper into the valley and set up camp there. Maybe we would find her and would be able to catch her, maybe Sweety would see our llamas and simply walk into our camp. We could not give up. Time was running out, winter was approaching rapidly. Again, I recruited Diego and this time his older brother Rudolfo, and Tuesday September 26th we left for our next adventure, Leigh with her llamas Santana and Tomichi, I with three llamas, Pedro, and young Monica and Lucy. At the trailhead we were met by the Mounted Rescue group who then searched on horseback along the trails of this valley, covering a much larger area than we could on foot. Andy Petrick, an expert in large animal rescue who surfaced through Southwest Llama Rescue, also joined us. Andy quickly realized that my helpers were total novices when it came to Colorado mountains, hiking and backpacking. He took it on himself to share his knowledge about backpacking and proper behavior in the backcountry, and he tried more or less successfully to convince them that they would not get eaten by bears! Camping about six miles into the valley, we searched for any sign of Sweety. We found prints that could have been from a llama, or alternatively from a baby moose, but after three days and two nights we called off the search; Sweety stayed elusive. Our moods were at a low.

Then Monday October 2nd a text came in from Oregon. Sweety had been sighted October 1st at 11,700 feet, high above the valley where we camped. A picture was attached, yes - it was a white llama, it was Sweety!

With no time to waste, we started to put together the next rescue mission. Sebastian and Diego volunteered again, although not convinced about bears yet. Neither Leigh nor I had ever camped at that altitude in October, where the temperatures dip way below freezing, and to top it all, far off any trails! We bought, borrowed, exchanged warm clothes; my helpers Sebastian and Diego had to be outfitted. We needed to carry enough food for this expedition, and



Sweety spotted at 11,700 ft on Sunday October 1st.

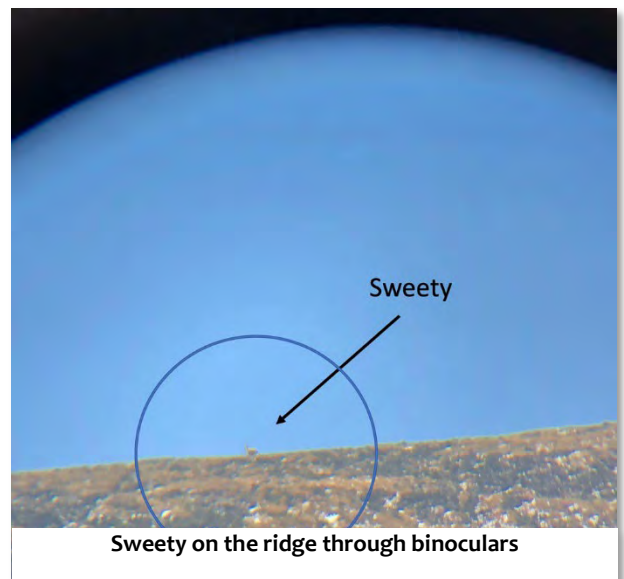
we needed support. Before we left, we had a great team together: the owners Matt and Cody were planning to fly in from Oregon Friday evening after work, and hike to our camp in the dark. On Saturday, Andy Petrick would join us again, coming up with a group of Fly-athletes, people who love to run and fish, who planned to be with us for the day to help capture Sweety. And then there was the home team, our husbands and friends who had our backs. But would anybody find us up there way off the beaten track? Luckily, a couple years ago I had reluctantly gotten a satellite device, only because my husband had been so insistent; I certainly did not believe I would ever need one! Now I depended on it.

We knew we had to leave the trail and bush-whack to tree line, somehow! Our hunter friends from Oregon, Matt and Cody, suggested a camp spot and a route to get there. Friday we were supposed to go up. But thick fog greeted us in the morning. With such low visibility it was too dangerous to leave the trail, and we had to wait until noon before it was safe to go up. The route was way steeper than it appeared on the satellite image. Fallen trees made it impossible to pick a straight line; the stream that we were supposed to follow consisted of three streams, lots of swampy areas, and steep cliffs. Carrying big packs did not help, and the llamas were loaded with panniers that required lots of space. The trees were impenetrable, we tried to follow one of the creeks with more or less success. Leigh had already fallen twice, as the heavy backpack made it difficult to keep her balance in the steep terrain. Santana, her llama had fallen when trying to jump over a large log, then in a steep narrow section next to a cliff, my two llamas Monica and Pedro both fell. We had to take Pedro's panniers off, since he would not get back up. Somehow, we all got through the crux and unloaded the llamas on a rock outcropping, and luckily everybody was okay. Leigh urged me "we have to camp, it's getting dark!" But there was no water, and the area was not exactly flat. Diego and I ventured ahead, and like a miracle a meadow appeared with one of our streams meandering through it. We had a place to camp, and we were close to tree line. As soon as we got everyone up to the camp spot, I needed to let our support team know that we had not reached the agreed location. I pulled out my satellite device and shared our coordinates with everyone down in the lowlands, especially with Matt and Cody who had little cell phone time between landing at DIA and driving into the mountains. Now we could only hope that they would find us! Exhausted, we set up camp. Sebastian and Diego were life-savers, as they filtered all the water we needed. We cooked our dinner, thankful that all were not injured and wondering what the next day would bring. Would our helpers find us; would we find Sweety; and how the hell would we ever get down? Matt and Cody sent a message that they were on their way. That was promising. I decided to send out another message, telling the ground-crew that we did not know how to return, that the path up was too dangerous for a descent with packs and llamas. An encouraging message came through that they were already studying the satellite maps for a way down for us. After hanging a lantern in the meadow to be as visible as possible in the dark, we all collapsed in our tents.

It was 12:30 a.m. when I awoke; I heard voices outside the tent. Matt and Cody had found us! What a relief!

The next morning, as we were cooking our breakfast (meaning adding hot water to freeze-dried food), Matt and Cody exploded in joy - they had spotted Sweety. In fact, I could see her with the naked eye! We quickly ate our meals and came up with a plan. Leigh and I were too tired to climb up another 2000 feet in altitude; Pedro was absolutely exhausted. It was up to the young and strong: Sebastian and Diego followed Matt and Cody up the mountain, with my two young llamas Monica and Lucy, who had just gotten their first taste of camping this summer. The llamas had to go up; having them part of the capture team was crucial, as they had the best chance of attracting Sweety, since llamas are herd animals.

While the group soon disappeared from sight, we cleaned up camp and strategically positioned ourselves with a cup of



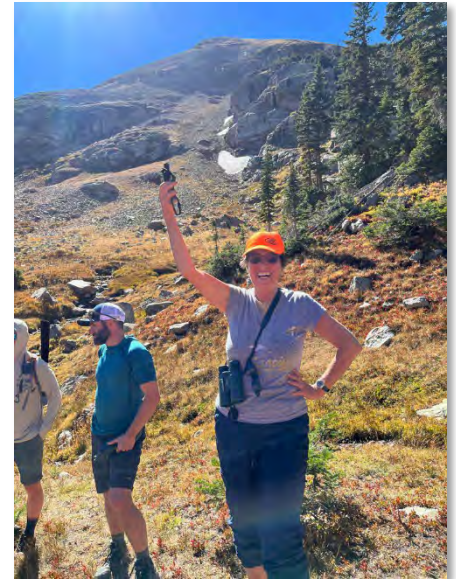
Sweety on the ridge through binoculars

coffee, and scanned the distant mountain with binoculars. Then the radio message came in “no sight of Sweety”. They decided to climb all the way up to the 12,400 foot ridge to get a better view. No luck! Where was this girl? They descended the steep mountain side back down and set up the llamas in a well visible area around 11,000 feet – now it was Sweety's turn to find them.

Around that time, the three llamas that remained in camp with us became restless and stared up the hillside to our south. It's either a moose or our Saturday support team was arriving. It was the latter; happiness is being found!

Two of the runners, Emy (Leigh's daughter) and Kristine Hoffman (a surgeon from Denver) had already continued up towards the 12,700 ft. peak; the rest positioned themselves around us with binoculars. Then Sebastian came in over the radio, they had spotted Sweety on the very top of the ridge, and sure enough there she was, a tiny silhouette against the blue sky. Really, Sweety, could you make this any more difficult!

Now Andy took over the command. From our vantage point, we could see everybody, while Matt and Cody could not even see Sweety. Andy directed the different groups to different areas in order to pressure Sweety to come our way and in the direction of the llamas, and preventing her from descending into the next valley. She was clearly aware of all the commotion, watching all the action without taking a step. Sebastian and Diego needed to bring the llamas back up, first part way to give Sweety a chance to come down to them, then all the way up since she was not budging. Matt and Cody were already back on the ridge. They were within 40 feet of her, but she was not interested in being captured and disappeared behind the ridge, where Emy and Kristine were positioned to block her way. Since the sound of the radio was irritating Sweety, the last command was to not use the radio anymore, move very slowly, and bring the llamas closer to Sweety. We could not see anybody anymore, the radio was silent, we were holding our breath, waiting. After an eternity, a sound came through the radio - they got her!



Sharing the news via satellite



The essential capture team: Sebastian, Diego with llamas Monica and Lucy

Here is what they told us: Sweety started walking, then running full gallop towards the llamas, ignoring her owner Matt as she ran right by him, heading for the llamas Monica and Lucy. At first, she carefully stayed about 8 feet away from the llamas, just a little too far to be caught; it was nerve wracking, but Sebastian and Diego stayed calm until their moment came. Finally, in the middle of snorting and nose touching (with the llamas), Sebastian launched himself at her, engaging in the first rodeo of his life. Little did she know that he works out at the gym every day; he was not letting her get away. Somehow Diego managed to get in there and clip a rope to her halter, and voilà, she was captured. The joy and relief on the mountain and in camp was beyond words. I immediately pulled out my satellite device to relay the news to the distant valley (mainly our husbands).



Walking into camp with "Sweety's Ridge" in the distance

After a long descent they appeared above camp: Cody in the lead with Sweety, who walked behind him as if it were the most natural thing to do. Yes, she was very happy to be part of a little llama herd again, and in the care of people. She was rescued after 24 days in the wilderness!

The next challenge was how to get off the mountain. Down in Boulder the home team had been busy studying maps and satellite images and relayed a possible route for the descent. Those Fly-athletes that had remained at camp with us eagerly swarmed out to explore proposed routes, coming back to report cliffs, downed trees and other obstacles, but one option looked promising. While the runners left camp to return to the trailhead that same day, the rest of the us stayed in our high camp, happy and relieved.



Leigh, Sweety, and Fiona



Searching for a way down

The next day, Sunday morning, Cody, Matt, Andy, Sebastian, Diego, Leigh and I left with our now six llamas. Cody walked slightly ahead, exploring a possible route down. Waiting for moose to pass and climbing around cliffs, we carefully made our way back towards the end of the valley, and after a treacherous final descent, landed on the trail. Time for the satellite device again: we made it down, and our home team needed to be relieved of their worries.



Sweety's Rescue Team:

Front: Emy, Leigh, Diego, Sebastian, Fiona, Cody, Matt

Behind: the group of Fly-athletes, Andy from Animal Rescue is in the back between Fiona and Cody

Missing: Kristine Hoffman, and our Home Team, husbands Kelly & Marv, Friends Jenny & Bob, & animal communicator JoLee



Fiona saying goodbye to Sweety and returning her to Cody in Rock Springs, WY, October 28

A couple days later, a snowstorm was raging in the mountains. Sweety was resting at our place in Boulder with her new llama friends, maybe looking towards the distant mountains, oblivious to the fact that up there is Sweety's ridge, the place she spent 24 days of her life.

On October 28, we drove through snow and ice to Wyoming and handed Sweety to her owner Cody. A day later she arrived back at her home in Bend, Oregon – her 46-day adventure finally came to an end. Sweety is back home!

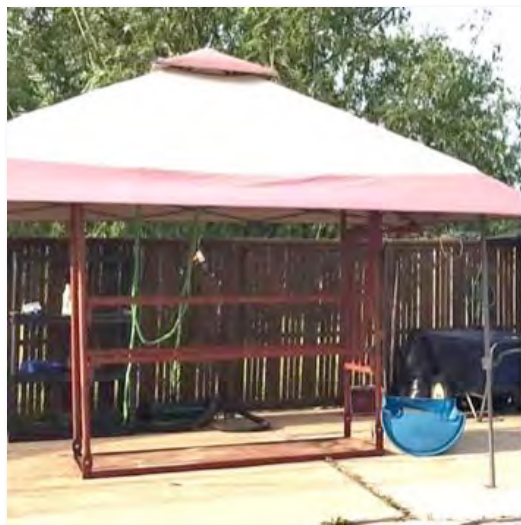
Spring Fiber Harvest Preparation

By Sandy Mubarak

Probably the most discouraging part of teaching Harvesting For End Use and Grading For End Use is getting the owner to see the importance of pre-harvest preparation through the entire growing year. There is a general lack of good pre-shearing preparation which often greatly affects the quality and value of the shorn fleece.

All through the year, and especially as fiber harvest time approaches, we should begin preparations to maximize the quality of the fiber our animals have been producing for us all year. Walk through your herd and take a long look at each of your animals. What kind of genetics is in the background of each animal? Is it fine, coarse, underdown and hair equally as fine or will guard hairs have to be removed?

This will determine whether you brush, strip, hand or electric shear. What do you want to do with that wool? Sweater or hat maybe? What else is growing on that animal? Twigs, moss, dust or sand? Parasites? We can vastly improve what isn't genetically determined by improving environment, nutrition, pasture, contamination prevention, proper bedding, eliminating plastic and foreign material contamination, avoiding seed heads in feed, proper parasite control, keeping stress to a minimum by regular handling and expecting your animal to tolerate you in their personal space. In your pastures, watch for seed and weed contamination and eliminate it from your pasture as soon as you see it, before it gets out of hand. Has your fiber been damaged due to excessive grooming, sun, weather, water damage?



Plan your shearing area



Check your shearing gear

Plan your shearing area well. Arrange now for bright light, good air circulation without wind to carry away your wool, clean and re-cleanable floors, sorting and storage containers and labeling supplies, shearing record forms, etc. Sufficient minimal restraint to safely shear without injury to llama or shearer are also of prime importance. Loose in corral, tied, cross-tied, restraint chute all may be choices for different animals in the same herd or even the same animal in different moods.

Collect and inspect for good repair, all grooming and shearing equipment. Are your shears sharp? Do you have spare blades, clipper lube, clipper oil, etc.? Parts need time to arrive if they need to be ordered.

Try to see the importance of pre-harvest preparation through the entire growing year. There is a general lack of good pre-shearing preparation which often greatly affects the quality and value of the shorn fleece. If you keep your pastures and animals uncontaminated and take the above suggestion seriously, you will be ready to shear and use or market your freshly shorn fleeces for optimum harvest value.

From the LANA Newsletter, Spring 2023. Reprinted with author's permission.

Toys Trains and Candy Canes In Prescott, Arizona

By Sandy Schilling, Prescott, AZ

The 41st Annual Christmas Parade took place on Saturday, December 2nd in beautiful downtown Prescott, Arizona. RMLA proudly marched in the parade represented by two alpacas and five llamas. RMLA members Linda and Brent Schlenker drove up from Scottsdale with their two alpacas, Maurice and Robin, in tow. Sandy Schilling brought her five llamas, Juniper, Rihanna, Jadis, Narnia and Rebekka, along with her human family. Karen Freud was our master llama handler and brought friends with her who helped walk the llamas.

All of the animals and their people were dressed up as Toys, Trains or Candy Canes to reflect this year's parade theme. The alpacas were wrapped as candy canes while the llamas were a Lego brick, a domino, a Rubik's Cube, a Ninja Turtle and a dice. As always, the llamas and alpacas were a huge hit with the parade attendees.

All of the animals did a great job with the wait time before the parade: doing a bit of landscaping clean up by eating the fallen leaves off of the ground. The llamas did great dealing with the crowds of children, marching bands and every other distraction imaginable. Alpacas Maurice and Robin decided together, on the parade route, that they were done! Poor Linda and Brent did all they could to get their friends to move along. We made sure Brent had some ibuprofen waiting for him at the end of the parade route.

Check out the great pictures taken of our event. A great time was had by all.

Sandy would like to thank Linda, Brent, Karen and our families and friends for supporting us with our parade efforts. Thanks again to RMLA for sponsoring our Arizona team in this annual event.



The engine leads



The 'candy canes' are done!



A rubriks cube or a llama?



The whole gang and the caboose

HEALTH/MEDICAL

Colostrum Management In The Cria

Dr. Ben Turchin, Intern & Robert Callan, DVM
Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

Question: What is colostrum and why is it important for the cria? What should a llama owner do if for some reason the cria does not get the colostrum?

Response: The “first milk,” or colostrum, produced by camelids and other livestock species is key to providing temporary passive immunity to protect against many diseases while the cria develops its own active immunity. The structure of the placenta of many of our large animal species, including camelids, prevents the passage of immunoglobulins from the dam to the fetus within the womb. Crias and other livestock neonates are then born without the presence of antibodies. Instead, they rely on absorption of antibodies from colostrum, or “maternal passive transfer”, to provide immunity. Colostrum contains much more than just IgG antibodies. First, it provides needed energy for the cria after they are born. It also contains antimicrobial factors, immune-modulators, and anti-inflammatory substances that all play key roles in ensuring that the cria is well-protected from infectious diseases for the first days to weeks of life.

There are several things you can do to increase the quality of your dam’s colostrum during gestation:

- Vaccinating your llama or alpaca in the last two months of their gestation will stimulate them to produce antibodies that will concentrate in the mammary gland. Clostridial vaccines, usually containing *C. perfringens* types C and D as well as *C. tetani* (CD&T Toxoid Vaccines) are the standard core vaccines for llamas and alpacas. Administering these vaccines prior to birth will improve the transfer of these specific antibodies and hence, increase the protection provided to the cria.

- Providing your dam with adequate nutrition is key to ensuring that her udder develops appropriately. Ensuring that she has sufficient energy and protein intake during gestation will aid in her ability to make adequate, high quality colostrum.
- Increasing the amount of carbohydrate and protein in your dam's feed during the last 3 months of gestation with supplemental grain will support growth of the fetus as well as proper development of the mammary gland and subsequent colostrum production.

The ability of crias to effectively absorb immunoglobulins through their gut begins to decline within hours of birth, with little to no absorptive capability by 24 hours of age. Thus, a newborn cria needs to nurse or be tube fed as early as possible. A good rule of thumb is to ensure colostrum intake of at least 5% of the cria's body weight within the first six hours of life. The earlier they receive this, the better the absorption will be. Watch the newborn cria closely to make sure that it is standing and begins nursing within the first 2 hours of life. Unless your dam is not showing interest in her cria, you do not need to interfere. Confining the pair to a smaller pen is one way to help the dam and cria bond and promote nursing.

If your cria is premature, weak, seemingly ill, or has not stood or attempted to nurse within the first two hours of life, it is time to assist the cria. This may be as simple as standing the cria up and guiding it to the dam's udder. In other situations, you may need to milk the colostrum from the dam and feed it by a bottle or tube. Your veterinarian can aid you in placing a naso-esophageal tube so that colostrum can be administered easily for very compromised crias.

If your llama or alpaca has an underdeveloped udder, if she is not producing adequate colostrum, or if you are just not confident that the cria has been nursing, there are a few options to improve the chances that your cria receives adequate passive transfer. If you run a large operation, you may want to consider having a colostrum bank on hand. Frozen colostrum will maintain its quality for roughly one year. Freezing colostrum in one-pint servings in either zip lock bags or other containers is one way to prepare for the need of extra colostrum. When doing this, collect colostrum from a healthy, mature female after its own cria has nursed well. Generally, you can collect this around 2 hours after birth.

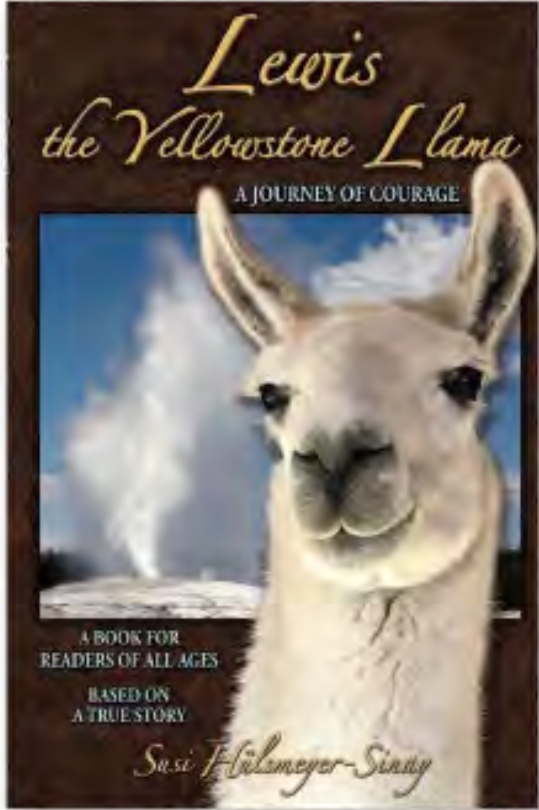
While colostrum from the same species is ideal, other colostrum sources can be used. Colostrum from ruminant species such as goats, sheep, or beef cattle are acceptable alternatives. If using colostrum from these other species, it is best to ensure that the source herd is free of infectious diseases that can be transmitted in colostrum such as Johne's Disease (*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*), Caseous Lymphadenitis (*Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*), and BVDV. Powdered colostrum replacers for ruminants are also available; however, the use of these products has not been well-studied in llamas and alpacas. Make sure that the product says colostrum *replacer* and not colostrum *supplement*. A high-quality colostrum replacer will contain at least 100 g of IgG per two-liter mixed volume (50 mg/ml). Please see the table below for some examples of high-quality colostrum replacers.

If 24 hours have elapsed and your cria has not received adequate colostrum, oral supplementation will no longer be useful. If you are at all concerned about colostrum intake and passive transfer, you should contact your veterinarian. They will be able to test a blood sample to evaluate for successful passive transfer and will be able to make recommendations on how to treat the cria if failure of passive transfer is confirmed. An intravenous or intraperitoneal transfusion of llama or alpaca plasma can provide passive transfer of antibodies when colostrum intake has failed. Hyperimmune llama plasma is available commercially from Triple J Farms – Kent Laboratories (<https://kentlabs.com/jjj/llama-plasma/triple-j-farms-llama-plasma/>). Plasma transfusion in crias with complete or partial failure of passive transfer will help protect them from potentially fatal infections for the first month of life. Following this time, the cria will begin to develop its own antibodies.

If you have more questions regarding colostrum management in your cria or how to best prepare your llama to care for her cria, get in touch with your veterinarian. Together, you can develop a plan to maximize your chances for successful passive transfer in your cria.

Product Name	Immunoglobulin (grams/2L)	Manufacturer
Bovine IgG Colostrum Replacement	100	Land O Lakes Animal Milk Products Co.
Acquire	100	APC, Inc.
Calf's Choice Total Silver	100	ALTA Genetics USA Inc.
Calf's Choice Total HiCal (Bronze)	100	ALTA Genetics USA Inc.
Secure Calf Colostrum Replacer	125	Vita Plus
Colostrx 130	130	Agri Labs
Lifeline Rescue	150	APC, Inc.
Sav-A-Caf Ultra Start 150	150	Milk Products LLC
Secure 175	175	Vita Plus

Editor's Note: this article originally appeared in the Winter 2018 RMLA Journal. Look for a related post, [How to Make an Automatic Milk Feeding Bucket](#), on rmla.com.



IT IS HERE!

This book about the adventures of Lewis the llama on his 3-month quest through Yellowstone National Park tells about courage, hope and survival. It explores Yellowstone's wilds and wonders through the eyes of the lonely yet curious llama trying to find home.

Based on the true story and suitable for readers of all ages.

Author Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay

To order your autographed copy, please call 406-580-5954 or email treks@yellowstonellamas.com

\$19.95 plus s/h

What Do You Need To Get Started Driving With Your Llama?

By Niki Kuklenski

Driving is a passion and an addiction as anyone that has experienced driving will tell you. There is nothing quite like driving on the open road with your llama. You will notice things that you have never seen before, even though you may have driven past them 100 times in your car. Driving is the ultimate natural high and as such, you will want to get good equipment from the start!

Start with your driving halter

Many people experience problems with their driving llamas not turning, stopping or taking cues from the lines. In most instances this can be solved by switching to one of Jim Logan's driving halter designs. I personally like these halters for several reasons. First, there is a support strap starting from the center of the noseband, going up between the ears and attaching to the strap that runs behind the ears. This keeps the noseband in place by keeping it from blocking the llama's breathing by falling forward and it stays centered when pulling on the driving lines. Second, the noseband is a rigid metal band formed around the nose region just below the eyes. It helps keep the llama in control and helps to guide their nose when making requests of the llama. Lastly, this driving halter is very reasonably priced and durable.



Driving lines

Lines come in all different materials and lengths. This can be a matter of taste and your taste is only realized through trying different kinds. Some will be joined together on the ends and some are split. Most important, make sure the lines do not easily slip through your hands. After all, you don't want your llama driving down the road with the lines dragging on the ground and you not in control.

Harnesses

There are many different manufacturers of harnesses out there. Over the years I have seen some pretty confusing and scary equipment. Whenever you are looking at buying a harness, you need to consider the quality, fit and source. Before buying any harness, you should carefully research and consider what kind of cart you will be buying as most harnesses are made to match a particular cart. Remember, llamas are built very different from horses, so extra consideration must be taken into account for these differences. Don't put pony harnesses on your llama to actually drive. As in the past I have driven horses and know how they are put together, I would caution anyone against using collar type set-ups on your llama.

Harness durability and safety is important whether you are going to be driving off road in areas that are not groomed, driving on smooth roads or in arenas. Ease of maintenance of your harness should be considered in order to maintain a

safe harness. I personally like the nylon harness designed by Llama Hardware. It is durable, well made, easy to clean and is designed specifically for llamas. This new version of the Flaming Star pack harness style works well to keep any pressure off the llama's spine. The cordura fabric also protects your harness and is easily cleaned. I have owned three harnesses over the years and have put hundreds of miles on them, so arriving at this information was done through experience! This particular harness was tried and retried for Llama Hardware before arriving at this final design. It is important to find quality equipment that has been designed and used by the maker! There are some other harnesses out there that are good too. But be careful you're not buying a harness designed by a harness maker that's never had any experience with llama driving.



Carts

I cannot tell you the number of times that someone has come up to me to tell me that a family member welds and is going to make them a cart. In thinking through all of the costs of buying upholstery, tires, whip holders, signs and more, it would cost a fortune to build one yourself. More importantly, there is no guarantee that the finished cart will fit the llama and provide a safe and pleasant drive for you and your llama. I do not recommend anyone attempt to build their own cart from scratch.

Quality is important as you don't want a rickety or dangerous cart. When I select a cart, I check the durability and quality of the manufacturer. Does it look like the welding is finished and polished? Does the cart scratch easily? What materials did the manufacturer use to make the cart? If I wanted to show, would this cart look nice? What features does this cart offer? Balance is one of the more important qualities of a cart. When properly balanced, a cart should not put more than five pounds of weight on the llama's back. The llama should primarily be pulling the cart and not holding it up. It should roll freely and be easy for the llama to pull with and without people in it.

Other features can be important depending on your needs. Is it easy to transport (are the shafts and wheels easily removed)? Does the cart have a backrest? Does it come in different colors? Can I quickly and easily exit the cart in an emergency? Do I need a place to keep a whip? Is the upholstered seat durable in wet conditions?

Wheel size

The smaller the wheel, the easier it is for the cart to tip over. Safety should always be a high priority when selecting your equipment. The shafts (aka stems) of the cart should be somewhere about the middle of the llama's body and be parallel or slightly elevated to the ground. Pony carts are a poor choice for use with llamas for several reasons. First, the shafts are too low to the ground and they are difficult at best to properly adjust to be parallel to the ground and at the correct height. This can create a dangerous situation to the person riding in the cart. Second, a horse or pony cart is not recommended for llamas as the design and shape of the shafts do not support the back of the llama in comparison to the back of a horse. A llama must pull and side step at the same time putting a strain on their back. There are few carts designed with this in mind. Ideally, the llama cart should have more maneuvering room for the llama to swing his rear end to lessen the back stress during turns. In other words, the shafts should be much farther apart where they attach to the cart and angle closer together to the width of the llama at their shoulder.



Whips

I'm often asked about the use of whips. Yes, they can be useful in many situations. I find mine quite useful in scaring off dogs that run out when I am driving in the country. Some people use their whips for guiding their llamas. If you plan on driving your llama in the showring, you must carry a whip although, you're not required to use it. In this case, you may want a whip holder, so you don't have to be holding it in your hands.

In Summary

The equipment you buy will depend on your preferences and needs. I recommend that you buy the very best you can afford. Good driving equipment holds its resale value and will make your driving experience safer, and more fun, comfortable, and pleasant for both you and your


llama. Driving llamas takes time and a lot of careful research, but the rewards are endless! Enjoy your Summer!

Contact Rod and Rezina Zeiler at <https://eaglellamacart.com/> for information about a driving cart. For information about the driving halter, lines and harness, contact Kate Otey at kateotey@gmail.com

To learn more about driving and/or see videos, contact me, Niki, through my website, www.jnkllamas.com.

About the author:

Niki Kuklenski and her husband Jeff are very involved with all aspects of owning llamas. She is a 4-H leader and teacher. Niki and Jeff drive, show, pack and educate with their llamas. Niki's passion is llama history and memorabilia. She spends most of her free time tracking down old pictures and llama owners to help preserve our industry's history. Contact Niki at <https://Jnkllamas.com> or Info@jnkllamas.com or 360-592-2603.



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Southwest Llama Rescue, Inc. (SWLR) is a non-profit, all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit animal rescue organization located in states across the southwest from CA to OK. We are funded solely by private donations and adoption fees.

In 2022, our volunteers helped over 150 llamas and alpacas; donated over 10,000 hours of rescue and care; and transported animals over 25,000 miles. Over 110 animals were placed in new homes; volunteers are currently caring for more than 30 llamas at foster farms; and coordinators maintain fluctuating numbers of intakes, often from large herd rescues, as well as smaller numbers from individuals and farms.

First Visit to the GALA Educational Conference – Life with Lamas

By Sandy Schilling, RMLA President

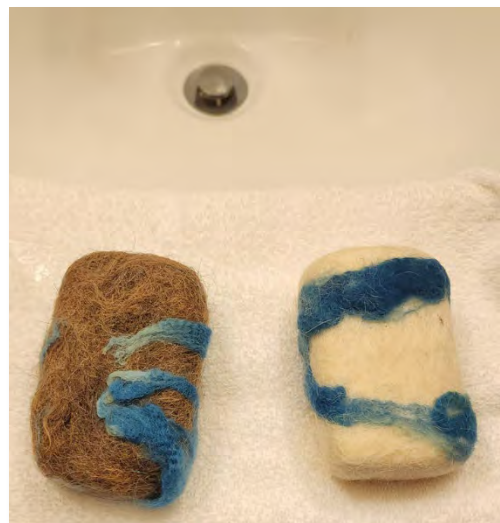
Attending a major llama show or conference was something I really wanted to do this year and after a short discussion with my friend and neighbor, John Mallon, I knew exactly where I was going. My son, Carson, and I were going to the 2023 GALA Educational Conference in Harrisburg, PA!

GALA is the Greater Appalachian Llama and Alpaca Association. GALA has hosted an annual conference around the end of October since 1987 (except for 2020). This three-day conference included an amazing array of classes ranging from Fiber to First Aid and from Packing to Training taught by industry experts. The overlapping classes were held all day long, each day.



Fish fly using llama fiber

The fiber enthusiasts attended classes relating to carding, spinning and dyeing your fiber. Many were advanced classes for members with a lot of fiber experience. Carson and I were beginning fiber students and decided to try our hands at making wet felt llama loofahs and tying fishing flies with llama fiber. We had a great time and got to bring home souvenirs.



Wet felted llama loofas



Live auction



Our very own RMLA Member John Mallon taught training classes most of the time relating to training philosophy, as well as many different round pen training sessions for the GALA attendees. John was a huge hit with the Pioneer members, as well as first time lama owners. John had a following of conference attendees everywhere he went. GALA had many other classes that were held outside relating to creating your own obstacle course, as well as grooming sessions and how to prepare for shearing and shows.

First aid classes were also available for members. Experts talked about dealing with parasites, birthing, injections given by owners, common ailments and prevention of these ailments. The birthing class was especially fascinating with a full size model llama and cria being used for the demonstration. All the information was so valuable especially for us owners who must act as the first level of vet care due to a lack of veterinary expertise in our local communities. Veterinarians also discussed meningeal worm, completed a live demonstration castration, fighting teeth filing and microchipping.



Birthing clinic



Leigh DiNatale (far right) giving a packing clinic

Another well attended class subject was information about packing with llamas. Again, RMLA was represented by a long-standing member, Leigh DiNatale, who taught us how llama saddles should fit and shared her experience about the different components and fit of the saddles. Leigh also gave a classroom presentation on packing in the Rockies and discussed her recent rescue efforts in Colorado. Leigh did an amazing job on her presentations. I was thrilled to finally meet Leigh.

Every night, there was a dinner and an event to attend. Carson and I played in a cornhole tournament and met many, many nice llama lovers on Friday night and WON the Most Original costumes in the Halloween costume contest. Saturday night was a live auction of llama and other merchandise donated to the GALA fundraiser.

This was an amazing conference, very well organized and planned out. What struck me the most was how many volunteers it took for GALA to pull off an event this size. About 50 volunteers, from different states with different passions, came together to make this event a success. It was really an amazing effort.



Most original costume: Carson & Sandy



Leigh and Sandy

HEALTH/WELLNESS

Trouble Shooting Nutrition for Camelids

by David Anderson DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVS College of Veterinary Medicine, Ohio State University

Factors Affecting Nutrition

Too often, nutrition is equaled with feed alone. Little thought may be applied to the following:

- Type of Feed: grain, pellets, hay, grass, water
- How it is Fed: individual feeder, free choice, trough
- How it is stored: molds spoilage
- Animal's Access to Feed: feeding hierarchy
- Utilization of Feed: fine ground versus roughage

Llamas and alpacas are particularly susceptible to these factors because of their social structure and the lack of livestock experience of many owners.

Management Factors

Management, or more specifically, human factors, are important to proper nutrition in camelids. Human factors include obtaining a diet that is useful to the animal, proper storage of the feed, making the feed available to all animals, feeding an appropriate amount, providing proper feeding areas and monitoring quality and consistency of the feed. This includes pasture and water management.

Camelids must have unlimited access to clean, fresh water. Stagnant ponds or water troughs that are seldom cleaned may result in consumption of contaminated water (e.g. blue green algae, high minerals) or decreased water consumption because it is not potable.

Access to pasture, hay and supplemental feed sources must be done in a way that all camelids have equal access to the feed.

Often, a thin animal is unable to compete with dominant members of the herd for feed. Adequate feeding space is important.

An example of poor feeding management is a herd of 40 alpacas offered hay and a pelleted supplement in a 20 foot long single sided feeding trough.

Camelids are competitive feeders and will eat based on a social hierarchy. This competition may result in only one alpaca eating for each four feet of feed trough space. Therefore, this herd may experience three waves of eating. They include

- 1) Dominant animals competing for the highest quality feed,
- 2) Middle hierarchy alpacas eating the remaining high quality feed and,
- 3) Submissive alpacas either not eating from the trough or eating the residual, stem-like particles left over from the rest of the herd.

I have investigated situations and have found that body condition scores (BCS) of the camelids were clustered in three groups: fat (BCS=8), ideal (BCS=5-6), then (BCS=3). The ideal BCS can be reached by either increasing trough space or by separating these animals into groups based on their BCS, the latter being a better option in my opinion.

Animal Factors

Animal factors focus mainly on the social structure of the herd and changes in the social structure as discussed above, but, individual animal problems do occur.

The most frustrating llamas and alpacas are those animals that remain thin (BCS=1) despite adequate access to pasture, hay and supplemental feeds. Often these animals have a history of excessive supplementation of concentrated feeds in an attempt to achieve weight gain.

I have been concerned that this method of feeding may cause a decrease in digestion efficiency, subclinical acidosis of the fore stomach, and aggravate the nutritional problem. Therefore, my recommendation to these owners has been to lessen concentrated feedings, offer free choice high quality hay, and re-establish fore stomach bacterial population by transfaunation or by feeding a commercial bacterial inoculant.

If an individual persistently remains separated from the herd during feedings, separate the animal into a small group of submissive animals and feed them individually.

Feed Factors

Feed factors are interrelated with human and animal factors. The feed must be appropriately processed, stored, and offered in adequate amounts. It must be made available to all members of the herd. I have seen liver problems in llamas and alpacas that may have been related to molds, but we have been unable to document this as a problem.

In fact, we performed a feeding study and found that alpacas could eat up to 15ppm Fumonisin B1 grain supplement for 30 days without complication.

Copper toxicity and copper deficiency have been documented. Camelids are equally susceptible to thiamin deficiency or inhibition compared with other small ruminants. Use caution — extremes of either high or low trace mineral offerings should be avoided.

Assessment of Nutrition Status & Animal Well Being

Assessment of adequacy of nutrition in camelids is complicated by the limited information specific to llamas and alpacas. When performing an initial investigation into nutrition on a camelid farm I prefer to have all sources of nutrient intake analyzed: water, grass, hay, feed supplement and trace mineral mix.

I also have blood mineral analysis performed and give the owner the option of liver mineral analysis. If I suspect there is a problem or have documented a problem in any herd member, then I strongly encourage the owners to have liver mineral analysis done. Liver mineral analysis is easily performed through the skin using a special needle.

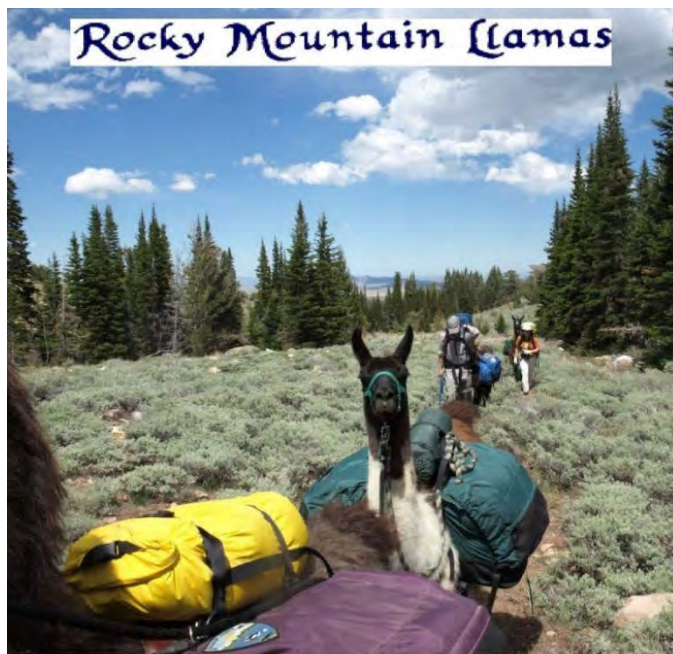
Our nutrition studies at Ohio State have shown that liver analyses are superior to blood in the assessment of trace mineral status. I limit liver biopsies to males, geldings, and non-pregnant females older than six months. At least five animals should be sampled in order to determine the trend. Differences in liver mineral content may be seen between males and females. Larger farms may find annual or semi-annual blood mineral analysis advantageous to monitor consistency of nutrition availability.

I prefer to obtain samples in the late winter or early spring and again in the later summer or autumn. The late winter analysis gives me a better impression of how the animals are doing after a prolonged period of nutrition that has a limited grass base. Conversely the fall analysis sample allows evaluation of the total diet including grass.

Summary

Nutrition programs should be tailored to the local geography. Management practices are tailored to local issues and these influence feeding practices. Camelids in Ohio are highly unlikely to prosper based on nutrition practices tailored to Arizona!

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GALA Returns To The High Andes in 2024

by Jane Hamilton-Merritt

Note from the author: To go on the 2024 trip you must be a paid member of GALA.

The Andean Committee announced its second trip to the Urubamba region of Peru scheduled for April 2–13, 2024. Time will be spent exploring the Sacred Valley of the Incas, trekking with llamas, and living among the indigenous llama farmers of the High Andes.

To catch a glimpse of what you could experience in this rare and unique opportunity, I'm including some of my impressions and thoughts about the first Urubamba trip. This second trip – organized by the Andean Committee, the [Llama Pack Project](#), and the [Llama Breeders Guild](#) – will be somewhat similar.



Author with local musician in the Urubamba Valley. Photo by Jane Hamilton Merritt

We were at the top of the world—well almost the top of the world—at 13,020 feet. As misty fog retreated, the Quishuarani Quechua community rustled with activity. Women in bright red jackets and dark skirts trimmed with bold designs and wearing yellow and red hats shepherded sheep to pasture; men, wearing bowler-like hats headed out single file with pickaxes to work the potato fields; a herd of llamas crisscrossed the mountain opposite our bunk house and camp site.

Only minutes before, the Milky Way seemed almost touchable. The Southern Hemisphere stars, held captive by jagged dark mountain peaks, protected our valley from the horizontal pink lighting flashing across the Southern sky during the night.

Standing in the chill of early morning to watch the magical beauty of the mountains unfold, I thought about the shaman who held a ceremony for us on our first night in Peru's Urubamba Valley. He acknowledged the source of all—

Pachamama (Mother Earth)—and called upon the *Apu* (spirits of the mountains) to protect us during our upcoming venture into the High Andes.

His prayers to the *Apu* to protect us were answered.

We had all made it here in good spirits, enchanted with the beauty of mountains now clad in green from recent rains. This was the end of the rainy season; soon the vegetation would turn brown, the rushing streams would dry up, and lack of water would be a serious problem for all.

Before arriving here, we had to acclimatize ourselves to high altitudes. Acclimatization began in Urubamba, a valley town at 9,500 feet. Here we explored the verdant Sacred Valley of the Incas, the historic archeological Inca sites, Urubamba town, and the famous Pisac market.

With a half-day llama trek and thousands of steps taken to reach various mountaintop ruins, the intent was not only to learn history but to ready ourselves for the even higher altitudes that we would encounter at Quishuarani, a llama herding community where we would stay for several days.

For many of us, it was the story and the life of these llama farm families that had been of foremost importance in planning this adventure. Our group included not only llama owners but fiber and textile artisans and enthusiasts.

Our trip, a long time in planning by Mike Sheridan, GALA's Andean Committee Chair and Alejandra Arias, a founding

Director of Llama Pack and her husband, Jorge Galvez, an acclaimed mountain climber and also a Llama Pack Director, understood this quest.

Early on, Alejandra briefed us on the many problems facing the Quechua speaking minorities in the mountains not far from Machu Picchu, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and a favorite must-see place for most of the world. Tourism has significantly taken over the economies of the valley communities near Machu Picchu.

It has not, however, been a benefit for the high Andean dwellers. These communities live in poverty with limited opportunity for education. Medical services for both people and animals are scarce if available at all. For most, life is one of basic subsistence.

For several years some of us had followed the activities of the Llama Pack Project from a distance. Now we sat with one of the founding and very active directors of the organization. Alejandra explained the goals and projects of Llama Pack intended to address some of these substantial and perplexing problems for those inhabiting the remote and fragile ecosystems of the Andes.



Local Quishuarani boys enjoying the GALA calendar llama photos. Photo by Jane Hamilton Merritt

It was pointed out that Machu Picchu's fame and business potential had attracted local and global tour agencies that also feature hiking and trekking adventures in the Urubamba mountains—in lands belonging to Quechua farmers.

As tourism expanded, travel agencies began using tribal lands for their camping and trekking business. Without permission, tourists camp on the farmers' land, trek across it, take photos of the local people and move on. Tour groups often leave debris and garbage behind for the farmers to take care of.

For centuries, llamas were the traditional pack animals in the Peruvian mountains. During the Inca time, llamas were sacred and venerated. As part of the Spanish subjugation of the local people, llamas were banned. Donkeys and horses were imported to replace llamas.

Llamas, with their padded feet, are gentle on the fragile mountain ecosystem unlike the hooved animals that damage vegetation and soils. In addition, four-wheelers are now being used to ferry tourists and gear. These, of course, can do massive damage to vulnerable lands.

To address some of these injustices, Llama Pack Project, in conjunction with the Guilds of Llama Breeders, works to recover traditional uses and breeding of pack llamas as a tool for sustainable rural development and conservation of Andean mountain ecosystems in the Inca highlands above the Sacred Valley.

The Llama Pack Project helps impoverished families mobilize their camelid resources in innovative ways. These are both ecologically sustainable and currently undervalued. It also seeks to implement a model project of best practices in llama breeding to educate the community.

One aim is to recover the pure breed of llama which is known as an amazingly resistant animal easily adaptable to different altitudes. Interbreeding of alpacas and llamas has resulted in some inferior pack llamas. Another goal is to provide a new family income using llamas that will compete with horses and donkeys, maybe replacing them in time.

Life for the mountain farmers is difficult—often just survivable subsistence. Schools are limited and often far from the farming communities, accessible only by walking for hours. Phone and internet services are non-existent. Electricity might be available in some spots.

Unlike the invasive tour groups, our trekking and camping experience was properly integrated into the local communities' needs, interests, and the natural environment.

After breakfast of bread, fruit, rice, and great coffee at our camp site Community Center, our group prepared for a climb up the nearby glaciated mountain that featured a waterfall, a lake, and where an Andean underground fried lunch of trout and potatoes would be cooked.

Llama trekking here is framed by tradition. Llamas, unhaltered, carrying needed supplies inserted in or attached to woven packs tied to the llamas with ropes, lead the trekkers. Following the trekkers are llama herders to whom these llamas belong. In this trek, the next in line was Cocoa, a gentle and beautiful intact male, led by a woman with a simple rope around his neck.

Cocoa is part of the Llama Pack Project. He is on loan to this community to improve the quality of the llama packing herds. Following Cocoa was another herd of llama geldings. Intermingled with the trekkers were a number of strong Quechua men who offered needed assistance to some of our trekkers who found the altitude and steepness challenging.

Next on the agenda was what all llama owners on this adventure were looking forward to: judging of their pack llamas. From seemingly nowhere, llamas of all colors began descending from the mountains above our valley. They were headed down to the elementary school soccer field where they would be judged by three experienced GALA members as to their fitness to be pack animals.



Members of the Guild of Llama Breeders and hosts of the GALA visitors in Quishuarani. Photo by Jane Hamilton Merritt

Since these llamas are not haltered, the herders simply deploy a llama fiber handmade rope around the herd. The rope is held in place by attaching one end to a rock, and the herders and often their children assist in holding the rope. As we know, llamas are respectful of fences and here we witnessed llamas respecting single strand rope enclosures.

After the judging, came the llama games. Llama owners decorated their llamas' necks and heads with colorful yarns, feathers, and bells. Rules of this event: Husband and wife teams were to bring their herd to a designated soccer goal post along with three traditional llama packs and ropes to tie the packs on. Then a timekeeper gave the word to begin. The contestants grabbed a llama by its fiber to hold it still while the other team member ran to pick up the pack and ropes.

Working as a team, the pack was roped to the llama. Then off the team flew to catch two more llamas and as quickly as possible get the packs tied on. Now the race to the other goal post and back to the starting line goal post. The couple that managed all this in the shortest time won. Since the llamas had not participated in such an event before, some seemed confused about what was expected of them.

The most enterprising team was a woman who ran ahead of her llamas and her husband followed them urging them to run. This woman was so fast, the llamas barely kept up with her. Lots of laughing and clapping from the onlookers. Nearby is a photo of this woman racing ahead of her decorated racing llamas.

Aware that we would need to present gifts to our hosts, I hit on the idea that the Andean llama farmers might like to see our llamas. To that end, I brought along GALA calendars, dating back five years, a bag of "Llove Llama" buttons, and our video *Humming Along with Llamas*.

The majority of our llama farmer hosts (men and women) were Quechua speakers, the language of the Inca civilization. Some men also spoke Spanish. None of these gifts I brought needed language capabilities. Our calendars were a hit. Our hosts eagerly studied the calendar photos to examine our llamas.



Llama owner sprinting ahead of her llamas during the Quishuarani Llama Games! Photo by Jane Hamilton Merritt

Our *Humming Along With Llamas* video was self-evident. Llama Promotion Committee Member and producer of this video, Meghan Cormier, translated into Spanish the information presented in the video.

Mike Sheridan, Chair of the Andean Committee, and Llama Pack Project personnel were superbly organized, professional, and knowledgeable about the goals of most of us on this trip. We were there to listen, to learn, and perhaps to discover ways we llama farmers in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres might work together in our concerns for llama health and llama value to the High Andean communities.

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