

Spring 2024

The Journal of RMLA



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.

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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.

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Cover Photo: Courtesy Fiona Caruthers.

From The Editor

Kathy Stanko, Editor, rmlaeditor@gmail.com

The joyful song of the Western Meadowlarks is my sign that spring is here! With that, it is time to gear up for the busy spring and summer season on a farm. Welcome to the Spring issue of the RMLA Journal.

On pages 10, 11 and 18 you will find articles related to your animals' health and nutrition. Beginning on page 22 there is a comprehensive article on tethering llamas on hiking and packing trips. Three of our members collaborated on this information to bring you their combined 81 years of experience!



Throughout the Journal you will find additional articles submitted by members who are sharing their fantastic adventures such as teaching children to weave, exploring Bolivia, and enjoying the National Western Stock Show.

The U.N. has designated 2024 as the International Year of Camelids (page 39). How do you plan to celebrate?

Have a wonderful Spring. 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 perhaps you would like to write it?

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 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.

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

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.

President's Message

Hello Members. Hopefully everyone made it through winter safely. I sure am ready for spring. I'm sure everyone is as busy as I am so I'll keep my message short and sweet.

I wanted to thank all of the members that responded to the RMLA Board's request for volunteers. I truly appreciated the letters, emails and texts. I promise that we have not forgotten about you. The Board is prioritizing duties that need attention first and we will reach out as soon as possible to get you started.

RMLA has many exciting opportunities for change and growth but as I have stated before, RMLA needs YOU.

Please email me at sschillig151@gmail.com or call or text me at 602-403-8166.

Many hands make light work, Sandy

New Members

RMLA continues to grow. We welcome our new members!

Matthew Kinsey, Victor MT
Tina Graven, Greene IA
Youth, Westcliffe CO
Debbie and Matt Bolinger, Beaver OK
Naticia Logan and Rachel New, Ohio City CO
Douglas Bearmar, Ramona CA

Upcoming Events

May 25, 2024, Prescott Valley, AZ. John Mallon is presenting a llama and alpaca training clinic at the Ranch of the Oaks, 10055 Dusty Rd., Prescott Valley, AZ. Join us for a great learning day. For more information, contact Sandra Schilling at 602-403-8166 or sschillig151@gmail.com.

September 27 - 29, 2024, Castle Rock, CO. A joint ILR and ALSA show plus educational clinics on llama health and care. September 27 thru September 29th, 2024. Location: Douglas County Fairgrounds, 500 Fairgrounds Drive, Castle Rock, CO. Contact Julie Hall for more information: jmhbluehorse@yahoo.com or 303-910-2134.

Planning an event? Go to <https://rmla.com/event-planning-and-application/> to complete the application for RMLA sponsorship.

Weaving with West Sedona Third-Graders

By Joseph K Giddens, [Sedona Red Rock News](#), February 1, 2024

All photos by David Jolkovski/Larson Newspapers

Reprinted with permission from Kyle Larson, Business Manager, Larson Newspapers.

Camp Verde-based textile artist Nancy Wilson visited Michelle Johnson's third-grade classroom at West Sedona School on the morning of Wednesday, Jan. 17, to complete a series of lessons on Navajo rug weaving as part of the city of Sedona's Artist in the Classroom program.

"This is the third time I've been here," Wilson said. "Last Wednesday I brought in a few Navajo rugs so I could show them to the kids, and I brought in some raw wool so that I could show them the process, because I also spin. Then I showed them how to card it with hand carders and then I brought in my Navajo hip spindle and I spun, and so we had talked about the culture and how important weaving is. Then last Thursday, we dyed yarn and started on our weaving. I had the looms already warped up and ready to go."

The Artist in the Classroom program is sponsored by the city of Sedona to facilitate arts instruction at city schools in collaboration with local artists. "[Wilson's] education background is in textiles and clothing," her Artist in the Classroom biography stated. "She got involved in spinning and other fiber arts after acquiring llamas for back country pack use. She has received her Master Spinner certification from Olds College in Canada. Nancy has been an instructor at the Arizona Fiber Arts Retreat, Flag Wool and Fiber Festival and local yarn shops. She is a member of the Mountain Spinners and Weavers Guild in Prescott and the Verde Valley Weavers and Spinners Guild."

Wilson explained each step of the weaving process, including how she shears her 13 llamas and lone alpaca and dyes the wool with either plant-based dyes or substances commonly found in the kitchen. "This yarn was dyed with avocado," student Anthony Araziza Hernandez pointed out, then proceeded to take a quick sniff of the fabric. "It also still kind of smells like avocado."

Several of the students selected the colors for the projects to help tell a story. "I'm choosing the colors because I'm in karate, and I'm [weaving] the belt order," George Luntraru said. "Right now I have an orange [belt]; this is yellow. This is a white. This is tan. Now this is yellow. And next is orange and the next belt I get is green. I've been in karate for five years."

"[With] weaving, you can demonstrate ... and you don't have to speak the same language [because] art is its own language," Wilson said. "I try and be encouraging to all the students and they're all beautiful things in their own way. Some of them are saying, 'I don't know if my mom will like this,' and [I replied] 'Your mom will love it, because you made it.' Just trying to be encouraging to the kids crosses language borders."

Wilson said one of her goals for the students is to have them walk out of the classroom with an appreciation of what's involved in making objects with their own hands and efforts, and hoped the experience will stimulate them to try new things, regardless of whether that might be fiber art or something else.



Artist Nancy Wilson helps Anthony Araiza Hernandez weave during an Artist in the Classroom demonstration of Navajo rug weaving as part of Michelle Johnson's third-grade class on Wednesday, Jan. 17.



Mason Baird weaves on his loom.

“I always enjoy working with the students,” Wilson said. “I go to West Sedona School and as soon as I get there, I’ve got a smile on my face ... I think they enjoy having me there. I enjoy being there. It’s a great way to [help] across generations. I’m a baby boomer so I’m just hitting my retirement now and they’re young kids, so I could be like their grandmother. So it’s good to have those intergenerational experiences for them.”



Erick Alcazar Martinez watches Eliel Ronces Gama weave.



George Luntraru weaves on his loom.



Wylenn Segle weaves on her loom during an Artist in the Classroom demonstration of Navajo rug weaving.



Wylenn Segle, front left, Bridget Garcia Arizmendi, middle, and Melody Palacios weave on their looms.



Erick Alcazar Martinez focuses on his weaving.



Bridget Garcia Arizmendi & Melody Palacios work on a weaving.



Artist Nancy Wilson helps Isaac Joyeno Jimenez weave during an Artist in the Classroom demonstration.

The Importance of a Good Dental Float & What Is Floating?

By Nikki Kukulenski

In the horse world, routine dental care is a part of ownership. Horses frequently have their teeth floated in order to keep them healthy and eating properly. Floating a horse's teeth means to file or rasp their teeth to make the chewing surfaces relatively flat or smooth (www.cowboyway.com/What/TeethFloating.htm).

Editor's Note: As camelid owners, routine floating is not necessary. Your veterinarian may recommend floating after a dental exam.

In more recent years, more veterinarians are becoming comfortable and adept at dental work on camelids. I receive calls all the time from owners who aren't sure why all of a sudden their llama or alpaca is not eating much, losing weight or leaving wads of chewed up hay around. With the advent of better dental care techniques, camelids are living longer and requiring more routine care on items like teeth floating.

As llama (or alpaca) owners it has always been an old wives' tale that if you touch a camelid's jaw or teeth, you will break their jaw. Because of this, many owners have left their animals to live with rotten or uneven teeth that should have been addressed. The results of this can be seen when animals have chewing issues and start to lose weight. Over the years, I have seen a lot of good animals eventually die because of the inability of antibiotics to resolve the dental infection or the animals not being able to process food properly to maintain their weight.

So how can you tell your animal has an issue? Most people frequently notice this when the animal begins to quid their hay (<https://horsesandfoals.com/quidding-in-horses/>) which results in slimy chewed up wads of hay around the feeding area. What they do is chew on a mouthful of hay until it gets wadded up. Once it's wadded, they don't want to chew on it anymore and they roll it out of the side of their mouth. An unusual or sudden loss of weight can be a result of dental challenges. Foul smelling breath can indicate a rotten tooth as well. Usually, the uneven wave of the teeth causes the animal not to be able to properly chew and process their food. The animal starts to compensate by chewing differently or packing cud in the sore spot. Properly performed teeth floating levels the teeth and allows the animal to process their feed again. I have seen llamas as young as eight-years old need this procedure. Most seem to need it during 13-16 years of age. I have also had animals that never needed it through their lifetime.



You can see the large swelling on the side of this alpacas face. The lump feels surprisingly hard- there is a lot of food packed into the cheek cavity.



This is the wad of food that I removed from the cheek cavity of this alpaca

Dental extractions frequently are difficult for many veterinarians. Most have heard the rumors of broken jaws and are too intimidated to remove teeth. Things have improved in recent years and there are more veterinarians that are competent enough to perform this type of work. My veterinarian is adept at giving a mild sedative and using a speculum to pry the mouth open safely. They then use a specialized light to view the back of the mouth where the teeth are located. At this point they can see/smell any rotten teeth and view/feel if there are uneven spots that need to be addressed.

If there are teeth to extract, the vet will remove them. Almost always, the animal is eating normally after an hour or so. If there are waves, sharp points or other dental issues they will file those down to make it more even. Good dental care is a humane prevention to having bigger issues down the road.

If you are unsure of how to find a veterinarian who can address your dental needs for your animal, you might consider networking with other camelid owners to find one or pair your veterinarian up with a currently experienced veterinarian out of your area. You can also contact the closest veterinary teaching college near you and inquire if they have experience in this area. A good competent veterinarian with dental experience is invaluable to your routine care of your animals.

Happy chewing!

About the author:

Niki Kuklenski and her husband Jeff are very involved with all aspects of owning llamas: driving, showing, packing and educating. Contact Niki at <https://Jnkllamas.com> or Info@jnkllamas.com or 360-592-2603.

Do You Know What's In Your Llama's Mouth?

A Look at Camelid Dentistry

By Rachael Lyons, DVM, Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

Reprinted from the Journal of RMLA, Summer 2021

Dental disease is common in both male and female camelids of all ages and management conditions. Dental problems include tooth root abscesses, infection of the bone of the jaw (mandibular osteomyelitis), uneven wear, tooth overgrowth, and tooth fractures to name a few.

The dentition of llamas and alpacas is designed for grinding forages similar to other herbivores. They have incomplete sets of teeth at the front of their mouth near their muzzle with three lower incisors on each side, but only one upper incisor per side.

In male camelids, the permanent upper incisor and the upper and lower canines are referred to as fighting teeth and are used as weapons during fighting other males. Females and castrated males may or may not have permanent canines.

Looking farther back in the mouth, llamas and alpacas have premolars and molars which are referred to as cheek teeth. There are no first and second premolars in camelids, and the third premolar is frequently absent in many individuals. The fourth premolar is always present but may be smaller than the molars. Llamas and alpacas typically have three molars. The dental formula for these animals is provided in Table 1.



TABLE 1: DENTAL FORMULA

		Incisors	Canine	Premolars	Molars	Total Teeth
Deciduous	Maxillary (Top)	1	1	2-3	----	x 2 = 8-10
Deciduous	Mandibular (Bottom)	3	1	1-2	----	x 2 = 10-12
Permanent	Maxillary (Top)	1	1	1-2	3	x 2 = 12-14
Permanent	Mandibular (Bottom)	3	1	1-2	3	x 2 = 16-18

The eruption dates of the teeth are variable in camelids. The deciduous incisors and premolars are erupted at birth in full term crias, and unerupted incisors are a sign of prematurity. Please refer to Table 2 below for permanent eruption dates of llama and alpaca teeth.

TABLE 2: PERMANENT ERUPTION DATES

Incisor 1	2-2.5 years
Incisor 2	3-3.25 years
Incisor 3	3.1-6 years
Canines	2-7 years (most by 3.5 years)
Premolar 3	3.5-5 years
Premolar 4	3.5-5 years
Molar 1	6-9 months
Molar 2	1.5-2 years
Molar 3	2.75-3.75 years

The mandibular (lower) and maxillary (upper) cheek teeth do not completely align and contact each other. The mandibular teeth are located closer to the tongue, while the maxillary teeth are positioned closer to the cheek. Therefore, over time wear on the cheek teeth is uneven with enamel points forming on the cheek side (outside) edge of the maxillary cheek teeth and the tongue side (inside) edge of the mandibular cheek teeth. However, this type of wear is often mild and does not require routine floating of the teeth to a more level conformation as in horses. Regular reduction of these enamel points is not recommended; however, the incisors and canines may require routine trimming by your regular veterinarian if they become overgrown and/or sharp as described later in this article.

Signs of dental disease may include focal swelling along the jaw or sides of the face (this swelling can be soft and fluctuant or hard and boney depending upon the timeline and progression of the disease), discharge from a draining tract, pain while eating and grazing, an abnormal chewing pattern, pain on external palpation, malodorous nasal

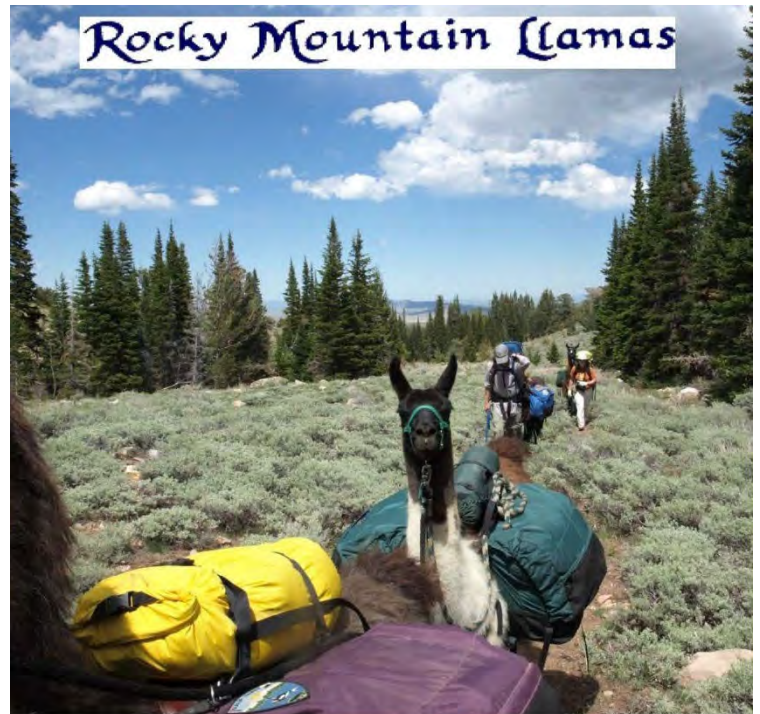
discharge, and potentially even anorexia and weight loss. A thorough physical examination including a sedated oral examination and dental radiographs (X-rays) are often sufficient to diagnose dental disease in camelids.

Depending on the underlying cause, medical treatment with long-term use of an appropriate antibiotic, surgical treatment such as tooth extraction and debridement, or a combination of these treatment modalities may be necessary to fix the problem. Most chronic dental conditions such as tooth root abscesses require surgery, so consulting with a veterinarian soon after any of the aforementioned signs of dental disease are recognized is important in a successful outcome. Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital is honored to have board certified large animal veterinary dentist, Dr. Jennifer Rawlinson, on staff to address these specialty cases. Dr. Rawlinson's appointment and surgery schedule can be booked up to months in advance, so we recommend coordinating with your regular veterinarian and our Dentistry Service as soon as possible after a dental issue has been identified so that we can address your camelid's needs in an efficient manner.

Multiple radiographs (X-rays) are necessary to definitively diagnose and localize dental disease in llamas and alpacas. Sedation is often required to obtain good quality films that can be used for diagnosis and interpretation, as even minor motion can obscure subtle abnormalities. The mouth will need to be held open in certain views to allow for evaluation of all of the teeth, tooth roots, and surrounding bone. In order to minimize anesthetic risks, such as bloat, regurgitation, hypersalivation, and aspiration (inhaling feed material into the airway) it is very important that camelids be adequately fasted from feed and water prior to sedation or anesthesia. At CSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital, we recommend holding llamas and alpacas off feed for 24-36 hours and from water for 12 hours prior to your scheduled appointment time. If you are unable to fast your llama or alpacas appropriately before coming in, we can provide that service for the cost of hospitalization.

Tooth root abscesses are the most common dental condition affecting camelids. Any tooth can be involved, but mandibular cheek teeth are more commonly affected than maxillary teeth, incisors, or canines. Most animals with tooth root abscesses are five years of age or older, but this form of dental disease can be seen at any age.

Overgrown mandibular incisors are another common problem in camelids, and they can protrude beyond the lips which may result in difficulty prehending food. Incisors should normally contact the front of the dental pad and not extend much beyond this level if they are of appropriate position and length. Mandibular incisors and fighting teeth should be routinely evaluated by your regular veterinarian and trimmed as needed for the comfort and safety of the animal, herd mates, and human caretakers. There are many proposed causes in the development of dental disease in camelids, including but not limited to genetic predisposition, diet, and other management factors. Good prognosis for dental disease depends on early diagnosis and treatment, so if you have any questions or concerns about your llama or alpaca's mouth don't delay and have your veterinarian involved right away!



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Pastoral Farming In The High Andes

by Keith Payne, New Zealand

Note: all photos taken by the author, Bolivia May 2023

The altiplano of the Andes is where the great majority of alpaca and llama are farmed, and almost all of that is found at an altitude in excess of 4,000 meters (13,120 feet). The techniques to achieve this require a thorough knowledge of the animals, their habits, their instincts, their digestive systems, predators, disease and the vegetation which the altiplano can offer.



Alpaca grazing a bofadale (this is on the Titicaca altiplano at about 4,700 meters).

Alpacas and llamas have both evolved in the Andes, but generally at different altitudes. Accordingly both breeds have differing vegetation preferences. When grazed collectively they will not compete for the same food and are considered to be compatible.

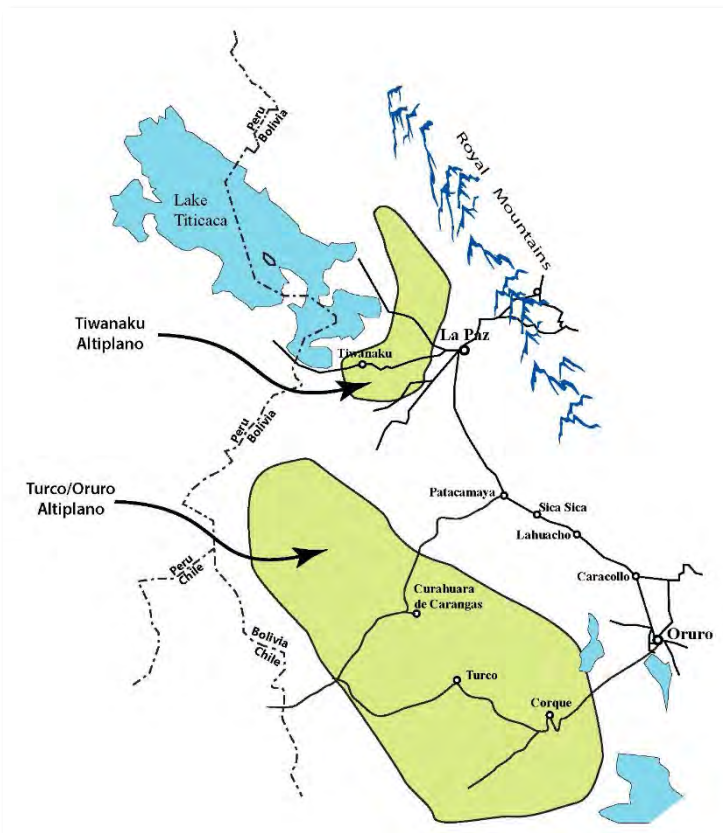
Wetlands (bofadale) and flat pampa are preferred for alpaca farming. Llamas can also graze these flat, damp or wet areas, whereas alpacas will usually avoid the steeper slopes or abrupt topography areas which become the domain reserved for llamas.

Bofadales (wetlands) are quite unique. There are natural wetland areas from rain, snow melt, glacier melt, etc., but the Andean farmers have perfected construction of a complex series of dams, channels, and water control which feed the bofadale throughout the seasons. Many of these date back to time periods before Inca arrived on the scene.

In this photo we see a large llama herd on a steeper section; alpacas are less comfortable here. That tall yellow grass is ichu, protein content will vary from 9-11% in summer to 5-6% in winter. Away from the succulent plants of the Bofadale, the predominant food source available to camelids is ichu; studies have shown the llama to be the only animal on the planet which can live entirely on an ichu diet. This alone tells us something very important about the llama's amazingly efficient digestive system. There are a number of different types of ichu and their availability will vary from the flat pampa to the rugged stony steep sections called orzo.



Llamas with their human guardian (top left).



General location of the Bolivian altiplanos.

There is private land in the altiplano but the greater part is community owned and managed. Camelid farmers apply each year for allotments. Smaller herds will be watched over by family members each day and returned to stone corrals each evening. Larger farms will be staffed by llamereros and herds will roam over a larger area. There are few separation fences on the altiplano, herds are distinguished through clips on the animal's ear; it is very rare for a dispute to arise should the herds happen to mingle.

Camelid farmers have changed little over the centuries. They wear clothing spun from their animals, eat two simple meals a day, little meat and no dairy products. I met these two Aymara ladies on the altiplano; the lady with the drop spindle farms over 200 alpacas and 300 llamas by herself. She said the two greatest problems were pumas and poachers. They are amazing people.

I have viewed thousands of alpaca and llama on the Andean altiplano and endeavored to inspect their health and conditioning. With regard to their diet of mainly low protein plants, the harsh environment they live in, the absence of veterinary care that we are accustomed to in the West, I am constantly amazed at their fine health. On a recent visit to Bolivia, I observed that all llamas would correspond to a body score of 3.0 - 3.5 (on a 0-5 scale), which I consider to be excellent. Moreover, they are all well-conditioned, meaning by this they maintained excellent muscle tone and fluid movement. And they need to avoid the claws of the puma. There is no camelid obesity on the altiplano.

About the author: Keith is an expat Canadian happily settled in New Zealand where he farms his llamas. A keen student of llamas and their history, he is a regular visitor to the Andes and a devoted breeder of original type llamas.



Taking It To The Next Performance Level

By Wally Baker, Rancho Mirage, California

Reprinted with permission from the author.

Editor's note: I have included photos with this article with the intent that they illustrate some of Mr. Baker's points. The photos were not in the original article. All of the photos are from the 2024 LANA Classic Hobo Show held in California on a very stormy weekend (think Pineapple Express).

Welcome to the challenge of llama performance competition. You have invested a lot of time to this point to ready your llama and yourself for performance shows. The very first thing that you must think about is that you and your llama are a team. I will readily admit that I have probably lost more points as an exhibitor during competition, than my llama has at any given show. There are many considerations a judge takes into account when you and your llama step into the performance ring. The following information will help prepare you for the challenge of performance competition by examining what the judge is evaluating.

- Rapport and mutual confidence and trust between llama and handler
i.e. Llama is listening to handler and trying to accomplish obstacle
- Llama following exhibitor on loose lead
i.e. Llama is responding freely to handler's direction
- Llama should be allowed the freedom to pause momentarily before attempting an obstacle
i.e. Allow your llama the opportunity to solve a situation before rushing him through an obstacle



Point reductions result from handler errors, minor faults, major faults, incompletions and being off course.

Handler errors:

- Tight lead
- Short lead
- Dangling free end of lead rope
- Inattentiveness to animal
- In pack class, halter too tight for trail work
- Lack of handler rapport
- Lack of flow

Minor Faults, including but not limited to:

- Touching of obstacles
- Too wide or too tight turns
- Slow response to handler's request
- Inattentiveness of the llama
- Bad disposition or unwillingness
- Nervousness, agitation, fearfulness
- Poor jumping form

- In pack class, improper placement of pack or fitting out of panniers, improper cinching, dangling straps that reach below the knee of the animal
- In pack class, spooking during saddling or unsaddling
- Too slow pace through course
- Moderate safety hazard (i.e. reaching under llama to pick up rear foot)

Major Faults:

- Knocking down of poles, jumps or other obstacle parts
- Stepping out of obstacle confinements
- Extreme irritation, spooking or nervousness
- Not accepting a pack or other cover requirement
- In pack class, excessive shifting or bouncing of pack
- Rushing out ahead of handler on exiting or entering an obstacle
- Failure to execute a complete stop
- Improper or unsafe knots when tying a lead rope
- Major safety hazard (i.e. standing in the space where the llama would jump as it is coming out of the trailer or wrapping lead rope hand)
- In pack class, loosening front cinch before the back cinch
- In pack class, fastening any strap before the front cinch
- Taking an obstacle backwards
- Taking multiple jumps in the wrong order
- Going in or out of the wrong door of the trailer



Incompletion:

- Not closing a gate
- Missing an upright pole in a weaving obstacle
- Not completing one of a series of jumps
- Not backing all the way
- No response to request for change of pace
- Losing pack or added items
- Off side of bridge or ramp without another successful attempt to complete the obstacle (enter at same location animal stepped off)
- Entering, but not successfully completing or exiting any obstacle or activity (Entering an obstacle is defined as all four of the llama's feet being inside or on the obstacle, except such obstacle as the sidestep where only two feet are required to enter)



Off Course:

- Forgetting an obstacle
- Taking an additional obstacle
- Taking an obstacle out of sequence or specific requirement

Summary:

We are all competitive in nature or otherwise we would not go through all the effort to prepare for shows along with all the other considerations needed for just being at a show. There is much to take into account when preparing and competing in performance classes.



When practicing with your llama, keep the small details in mind so when you enter the performance ring many of the minor faults that could cost you point deductions, such as refusals are easy to single out, but on a grander scale is the overall exhibitor and llama team effort to successfully negotiate each obstacle over the entire course. Evaluation input is valuable in working towards improvement. At the ranch or practice area, be innovative with obstacle order and giving different looks to obstacles to create challenge and to stimulate enthusiasm.

Always take something positive with you from each show. A great class placing goes a long way towards accomplishment, but there are often times other upbeat events that happen during a show that can be used to build

on. At the end of the day, the special bond shared between you and your llama working together is the true accomplishment.

About the Author: Wally, along with his wife, Maryan, raised llamas from 1992, until retiring from ranch life in 2015. Since 1993 until 2015, Wally has exhibited llamas in llama halter and performance shows throughout United States as well as regional shows and the Grand National Show. Wally was an ALSA llama and alpaca judge from 2006 until 2022.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Ask The Vet: Feeding Older Animals

By Sarah Raabis, DVM, PhD, DACVIM (LAIM), Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital

An expanding proportion of the llama and alpaca population is aging into a geriatric category (>12 years of age). This is largely due to an increase in successful management programs and husbandry skills as well as improved access to veterinary care. There are few reports on nutritional requirements of camelids at different life stages and even less are focused on the geriatric stage. A crucial concern encountered when managing older adult camelids is low body condition. In a study evaluating geriatric alpacas, approximately 50% of the animals evaluated were classified as emaciated or thin, based on their body condition score. Reduced body condition in geriatric animals can be associated with teeth problems, esophageal motility disorders, metabolic or digestive issues and decreased mobility from chronic arthritis or poor leg conformation. Low body condition and reduced mobility increase the susceptibility of animals to disease during changes in temperature and weather.

Diseases that can impact body condition in geriatric camelids

The upper and lower cheek teeth (premolars and molars) in camelids do not completely oppose one another, so there is a degree of uneven wear in normal animals. Older llamas and alpacas with excessive molar wear, sharp points,

overgrown incisors, large steps between teeth, or other occlusal surface abnormalities may have difficulty prehending and chewing feed, especially if the abnormalities lead to oral mucosal trauma. The reasons behind abnormal occlusions are multifactorial and not completely understood. It is likely that genetics, forage quality, and environment play roles in how teeth wear over time. For example, animals that are fed on dry lots are often exposed to more grit in their feed. This will likely increase the grinding and wear of cheek teeth enamel at a microscopic level. Additionally, animals with a previous tooth root infection may have abnormal wear following antibiotic therapy or following dental extractions.

Clinical signs that can be observed in animals with abnormal dentition, in addition to low body condition, include dropping wads of hay or forage (quidding), excessive drooling, and retaining large amounts of feed within the oral cavity (cud retention). The inability to chew and grind feed appropriately will impact how well the animal can absorb nutrients and will also impact the microbial population within their forestomach compartments. An unhealthy microbial population may have further downstream impacts on digestion, gastrointestinal motility, and nutrient absorption.



Learn to use body scoring or a scale to manage your animal's weight.

Another issue that can be seen in adult llamas and alpacas is choke or esophageal motility disorders (e.g. megaesophagus). In addition to clinical signs seen with dental problems, camelids with esophageal issues have episodes of regurgitation and may present with feed stains on their neck fleece. Because camelids are fairly selective eaters, esophageal disorders in older animals are often due to weakness from neuromuscular disorders or secondary to a mass effect rather than an obstructive food bolus.

Finally, older alpacas and llamas may have damage to their gastrointestinal mucosa from chronic parasitism, which can limit their ability to absorb nutrients and maintain body condition. Additionally, the cells that line the intestinal tract (enterocytes) are metabolically active and are continuously being turned over daily. It is plausible that some geriatric camelids may have difficulty regenerating new cells efficiently. These animals may also have chronic diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration and electrolyte loss. Animals that cannot absorb enough nutrients to maintain weight from diets formulated for adult maintenance require caloric supplementation.

Health and nutrition management

For optimal wellness, health and nutritional management requires frequent body condition assessments, seeking veterinary care for health concerns and providing high quality, easily digestible, palatable feed. Prior to instituting a nutrition management program, it is crucial to have a veterinarian evaluate any animal that is failing to maintain body condition, is quidding, retaining cud, or is showing signs of esophageal disease (regurgitation, neck fleece staining). Your veterinarian will be able to perform an oral exam to evaluate molar occlusion and may recommend additional diagnostics, such as blood work, fecal floats, and x-rays to look for systemic disease, parasitism, and esophageal disorders.

Nutritional support for older llamas and alpacas can include providing increased dietary levels of protein (approximately 1-3% higher than recommendations for younger adults), increasing the energy content, increasing water content, and providing more fermentable, shorter-length fiber (short-stem hay) as well as reducing particle size and minimizing the level of coarse forages in the diet. An important factor in determining a nutrition plan for geriatric animals is obtaining a hay analysis. The results of this analysis provide nutrient information, such as crude protein, moisture, energy, and fiber content. This data will assist your veterinarian in designing a nutrition plan for different life stages within your herd.

One way to increase dietary protein and energy content is to offer a commercially available pelleted feed. Examples of pelleted feeds that are formulated with a higher crude protein (14%) include Mazuri® Alpaca Complete Life and Nutrena® Country Feeds Llama and Alpaca Feed. These are nutrient-dense pellets that are highly palatable and can be fed as a mash to increase water content and to make chewing and swallowing easier in animals with dental disease or esophageal disorders. These pelleted feeds are meant to be fed with additional high-quality forage or pasture available.

Equine pelleted diets, such as Purina® Equine Senior® also have a higher crude protein (14%), are palatable and are sometimes fed dry or as a mash to camelids. A concern with feeding Equine Senior® is that the feed is formulated with copper levels appropriate for horses. Llamas and alpacas are very sensitive to copper compared to horses. If camelids are getting copper from other sources or they are only eating the equine pellets without any forage or pasture supplementation, they are at risk for developing copper toxicity. If equine pelleted diets are being used, it is important to consult with your veterinarian to ensure animals are not receiving levels of copper that are too high. Manna Pro® Calf-Manna pellets also contain high levels of protein (25%) and can be palatable to camelids. There are concerns of higher levels of copper in Calf-Manna compared to camelid-formulated pellets; however, the levels are less than what is formulated in Equine Senior®. It is recommended that you consult your veterinarian before feeding any commercial pellets that are not specifically formulated for camelids.

Older llamas and alpacas should have access to fiber in the form of short-stem, high quality hay or pasture. Additional supplementation with alfalfa and grass hay pellets can be beneficial to older animals with problems chewing and/or swallowing. Soaking pellets will increase the water content, improve hydration, and reduce the likelihood of choke/regurgitation in camelids with esophageal disease. Hay can also be soaked to improve water content and facilitate chewing in animals with dental disease; however, soaking hay over 15 minutes may cause water-soluble carbohydrates to leech out of the forage and reduce the caloric content. This needs to be considered in animals that have difficulty maintaining body condition.

The most efficient method for evaluating a herd nutritional program in older animals is frequent assessment of body condition scores (BCS). For animals at higher risk for being underconditioned, it is recommended to evaluate BCS at least 4 times a year. This requires physical palpation through the fiber coat to feel subcutaneous fat deposits over the ribs, shoulders, and the pelvis. Whether you use a 1-5 or 1-10 scoring system, it should be consistent. Ideal BCS is between 2.5-3/5 or 4-6/10; if an older camelid begins to drop condition by 0.5-1 point, you should seek veterinary advice before attempting to increase or change the feeding regimen. Changes to the diet should be made gradually over the course of a few weeks. This will ensure diet supplementation facilitates healthy digestion and gastrointestinal motility in your older animals.

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Tethering Llamas on a Pack Trip

A discussion about safely tethering llamas

By Fiona Caruthers, Leigh DiNatale and Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay

Editor's note: the authors of this article are three RMLA members each with about 27 years of packing experience for a total of 81 years.

This article was inspired by Sweetie, a 7 year-old pregnant llama who spent 24 days lost in the Colorado wilderness recently as well as Lewis the llama who spent 3 months in Yellowstone National Park and experienced a few adventures, and Joaquin, who was driven from his camp by bison and spent 17 days on Yellowstone's Northern Range among wild predators. Stories about all these brave llamas can be found in RMLA's journals as well as in *Lewis the Yellowstone Llama*, a book based on Lewis' true story. We hope sharing our thoughts on this topic will give you some ideas of what to do and what not to do, and will help prevent another pack llama from getting lost.

Fiona's Perspective

By Fiona Caruthers, Boulder, CO

We all start somewhere. I thought I had it all figured out. I was new to llamas and my young llamas were new to the backcountry, a perfect combination! Dutifully I carried screw stakes on every hike we took, but the Rocky Mountains deserve their name because they are rocky, and rarely could I get a stake into the ground.



Hence, I developed the habit of tying the llamas to the panniers during our lunch break. It seemed to work perfectly. The llamas knew where the panniers were and how long their stake lines were. The panniers did not even move an inch while they were grazing - that is until my llama, Pepe, believed there was a bear or something even more dangerous in the woods. He took off as fast as he could, across the stream, up the valley, with the pannier bouncing behind him like a real predator. It was springtime, the stream was running high. I grabbed my other llama, Pino and luckily he was not shorn yet so I had plenty of wool to grab on to. He dragged me across the stream, as I could not keep my footing in the swift current; yes - it was way too dangerous, and not recommended! But we made it across.

First, I found my first-aid kit that had fallen out of Pepe's pannier, then my raincoat, and slowly but surely the entire contents of the pannier led me up the valley, one piece at a time. We were lucky - eventually a jogger appeared with Pepe in tow. Lesson learned: a pannier is not an anchor!

Fast forward almost 30 years with a brand new crew of llamas: two somewhat wild and inexperienced girls and a 16-year old gelding. When packing, I look for a strong anchor, either a tree or a suitable boulder. And for my own comfort, the more anchors the better, especially if we stay more than one night at the same spot.

Tethering a llama is a full package; the llama has to be trained to stake out at home. This often reveals weak points in your setup and gear. Here is what I have learned:

Halter: A trail halter has to be sturdy, with a secure clip or buckle that does not open when the llama scratches its head in the bushes or on the ground. It also has to fit well and give plenty of space for comfortable grazing and chewing.

Stake Line: A 25-foot stake line with a sturdy clip that attaches securely to the halter. While it is important to be able to release your animal quickly in case of an emergency or entanglement, I never use a quick-release clip for tethering. They come loose too easily.

Attachment to Anchor: I use 12 feet of 1-inch tubular webbing (rock climbing strength), that I tie into a loop or circle with a water knot or ring bend. Wrapped around a tree trunk or boulder it creates a strong anchor. The stake line is then attached to the circular webbing using a strong carabiner (rock climbing strength).

Anchor: a sturdy tree trunk is a good anchor. A boulder can also serve as an anchor. When choosing a boulder, the shape is very important so that the

webbing cannot be pulled over the rock. The added friction from the webbing is an important aspect of making this a safe anchor. The webbing is wrapped around the anchor and pulled through the other loop of the webbing. I prefer two independent anchors when tying to a rock or boulder. Most importantly, I do not trust stakes, even if I do get one into the ground, I will back it up with additional anchors.

Tethering multiple llamas: Finding good anchors where there is good grazing is not always easy. Two anchors can be connected by a tight ground rope (stretched out, so they don't get entangled). The llamas are then attached via carabiners to the ground rope. I tie an overhand knot into the ground rope, either to attach the llama directly to it via a carabiner, or to provide a stopper for a sliding carabiner. Make sure the llamas can't get entangled amongst themselves!

Extra safety: At night, my llamas wear bells attached to a dog collar around their lower neck. This allows me to detect unusual movement, and because the bells are attached far from their ears,

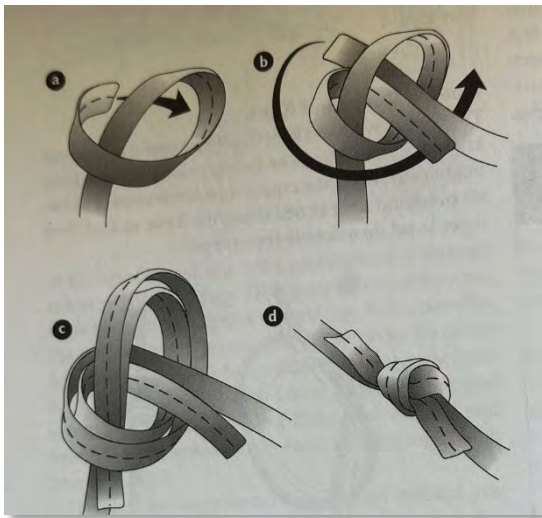
they don't interfere with listening for predators. It gives me peace of mind at night, knowing that all is well outside the tent.

No tethering technique is totally foolproof. Depending on the predators in the area, it may be safest if an anchor can give if challenged. An experienced llama might either return to camp where his/her buddies are, or return to the trailhead. It's the young and inexperienced llamas that we have to worry most about.

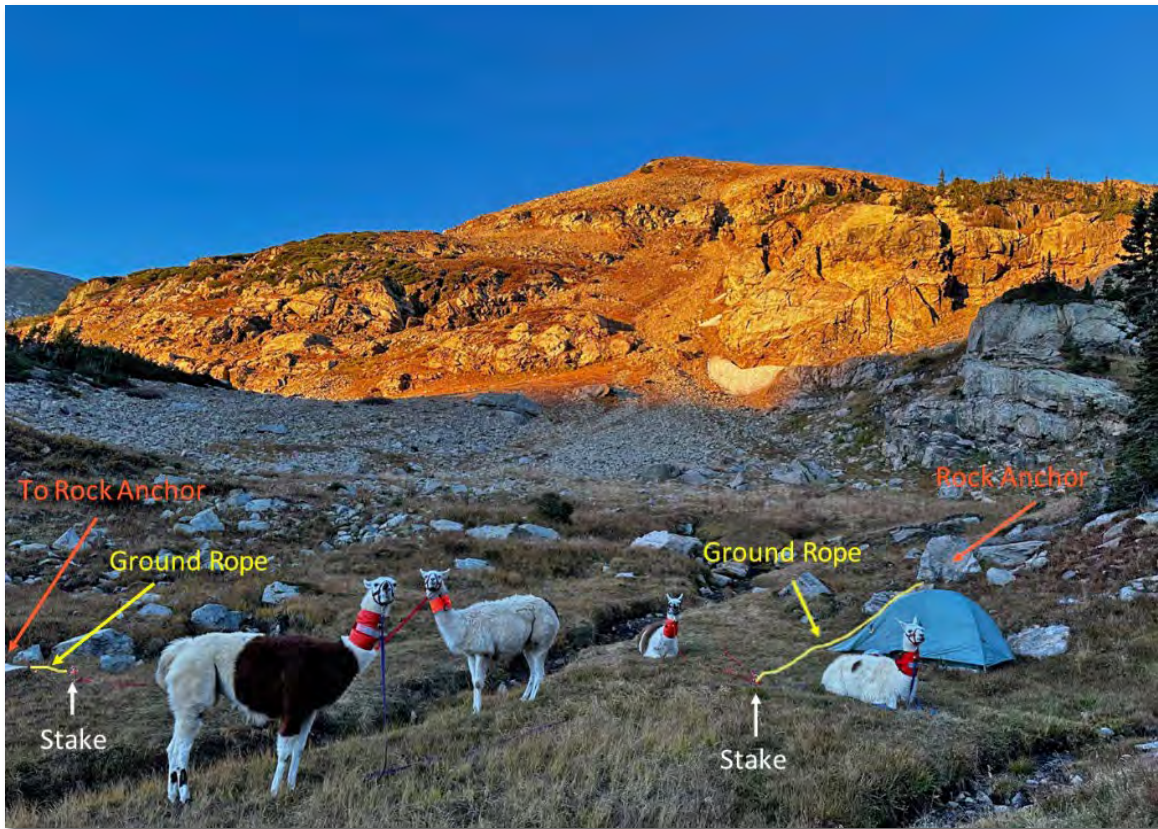
Using these guidelines has brought me many memorable backcountry adventures. I like my llamas right in front of the tent, they protect me, I protect them, and it's all about the experience. They come with me wherever I go, I don't leave them alone at camp ever. After all, they are my companions, that's why I have llamas!



Anchor Attachment



Water Knot



Multiple llamas - Multiple anchors

Leigh's Perspective

By Leigh DiNatale, Boulder, CO

Last fall a friend and I spearheaded the rescue of a llama (Sweety) that had become loose from her stake line and had been missing for 24 days in the back country at 11,800 ft. One of my first questions upon learning of the missing llama was "How did she get loose?"

In my 27 years packing with llamas I've had two of my own llamas get loose from camp and heard of several more. It happens. If it hasn't happened to you already, odds are it probably will. Why? Because every llama is different. I knew a llama that would get out of any halter or line. His owners solved the problem by duct taping all the buckles and clasps. I borrowed this llama and he did get loose despite the duct tape, but stayed nearby and was easy to catch. Sweety, the lost llama, rubbed the clasp holding the stake line on her halter until it opened and then walked away while her owners were out of the camp.

I have always used a stake out system that my mentor, Bobra Goldsmith, taught me. A flat strap, hooked to the halter with a sturdy standard clasp. I connect the line to a tree saver (see photos) with a carabiner which is wrapped around a tree or very heavy sturdy limb if the tree is too thick to get to the trunk. I always have the screw-in-ground-stakes with me but rarely use them. I find it extremely difficult to insert them firmly into the ground. After all this is the Rocky Mountains.



Tree savers. The purpose of tree saver is to protect the tree from a line rubbing and causing a tree wound. They are required on some public lands. I like that I don't have to tie knots!

My personal experiences with my own llamas occurred when they broke loose out of fright of a perceived predator in the area. One pulled the stake line loose from where it was tied; the other broke the line and sturdy limb to which it was tied.

The first time, the llama was tied to a bush, no tree saver. He simply pulled the line loose from the bush in fright around midnight. This was an error of mine in not securely tying the stake line to something more sturdy. There was no moon to see. This llama is the original coloring (like a deer) and impossible to find with headlamps on a dark night. We waited until first light of morning and started looking. It had rained and we were able to track him up the trail as he was dragging his stake line. We found him tangled three miles up the trail. Had he not stayed on the trail, I don't know how we would have found him. That said, a trained and experienced llama will be much easier to find and catch than one who has not been worked with much. This experienced llama was headed to a trailhead we had used on past trips.

The second time, the llama (a different one) broke the tree hugger. The tree hugger strap just tore in half. This strap is webbing like a car seat belt but wider. It would have taken considerable force to tear it in half. Never underestimate the strength of a llama, even a small llama. He was frightened by elk and moose coming through our camp in the night. He ran, back down the trail, dragging the stake line. Again we had to wait for daylight. I found him standing in the cold stream where the trail crossed. He was stunned and just stood there, glad to let me approach. Had he just realized that he was alone without his herd?

Some people use low lines. You run a line along the ground and firmly secure each end to a tree or stake. Then tie your llamas with shorter lines at intervals along this line. I have been entertaining using a low line as I think it will potentially give more access to grazing areas and placement and won't be limited by the location of trees.

Here are photos of some clips that can be used.



Another method for tying to a stake line. Notice how the line loops through the clip and then is securely stitched back on itself.



This is a bull nose clip. I personally do not like these as you pull the tongue of the clip OUT to open. You might think a llama could not do this, but Sweetie, the rescued llama from last fall, had a similar one on and she managed to rub it open. Also, pulling these open can be difficult if you have arthritis in your hands.



Santana sporting a large sturdy clip on his stake line. No knobs sticking out to catch on things and open. This clip is opened by pressing the tab IN. Yes, a clever llama could manage that, but it has not been an issue with my llamas. Santana is also wearing a reflective halter.

I don't leave my llamas alone in camp. It is just too much anxiety for me. All I can think about is tangles, predators, or some human wandering in and letting them loose. That said, I was right there both times they got loose.

I worry about tying them so well that they can't get loose if a predator really does come into camp. Thus I don't want to duct tape the clasp because it would be difficult to get them off a line if they get tangled or I need to turn them loose because of a predator or other emergency, or even just take them for a hike from camp. Some people use opposing carabiners to connect stake line to halter. But again, I'm concerned with getting that undone quickly. What if a llama gets tangled in the stake line? Once, I had a llama tangle so badly that he cut off his breathing with the strap across his nose. My daughter was able to get him loose and ease the pressure while untangling him, but in the process she broke her finger.

There is no completely failsafe way to stake out a llama. I've decided to focus on how to find them quickly if they do get loose. This winter I've been researching tracking collars. Garmin makes one for hunting dogs. I've had a conversation with the Garmin people. The range on these collars is 9 miles. Garmin has a 30 day trial period and will take the collar back, even if it is dirty and shows wear. So, we are going to get one to try this spring. They are expensive. But I can't put a price on peace of mind while I'm packing.



Llamas love to roll, especially when the bugs are bad and it is hot. From this photo you can see how easily they can get the stake line around their necks.

My takeaways:

- Train your llamas. Trained llamas don't get tangled as easily and if they get loose they are easier to catch. Have them practice staking out at home under your watchful eye. They have to learn to untangle the line from their legs and to manage it from getting tangled in bushes, trees, deadfall, etc. But, even trained for staking out, llamas still get tangled and need to be supervised. Trained llamas are less flighty and don't spook as easily for starters.
- Use sturdy clasps and lines. Check your equipment for wear and weak spots. Use clasps that don't have ridges or knobs that could be rubbed against a rock, tree or ground to open it.
- Choose the spots you stake them out with care. Don't stake them where all there is for them to graze are poisonous plants. Look for an area with minimal tangle hazards.
- Bring them close to your tent at night, so you can hear if something is awry. Bells also help with this. But note that bells on the halter can drive you nuts when your llama chews their cud all night long. Yes, I speak from experience. Instead put the bell on a collar around the neck. Also, a reflective halter allows you to easily see them after dark with a headlamp or flashlight.
- Know your llama. Some are escapists. Others are herd bound and unlikely to leave the others. Some are camp guards and alarm to alert all of a predator in the area. Some are more nervous than others. Consider all this when staking out. Put the more nervous or green llama more to the center of the group.

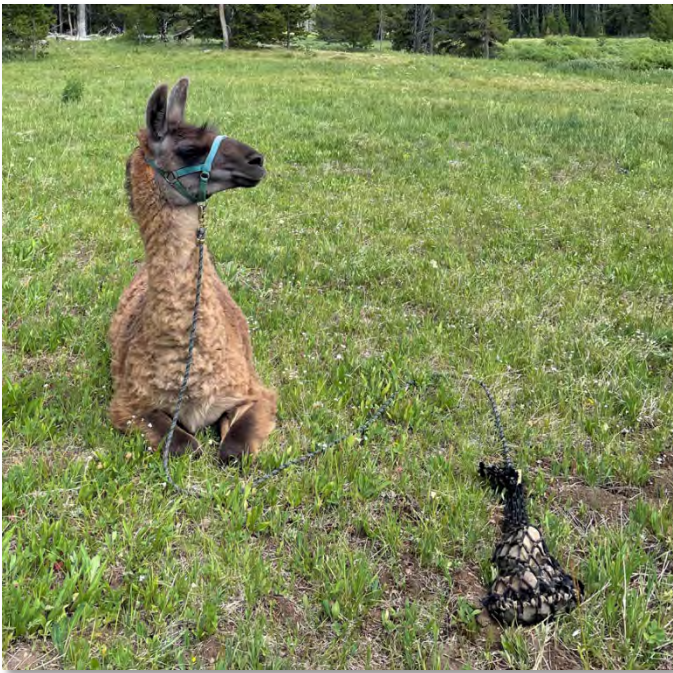
I love packing into the back country with my llamas! They are great companions. We enjoy working together to get down the trail and share the view. I have morning tea and they enjoy nature's salad bar. There is nothing better than a safe fun trip into the backcountry!

Susi's Perspective

Susi Hülsmeier-Sinay, Livingston, MT

Llamas, like all living beings I have met in my life, are individuals with differing responses to similar situations. Yes, they are all llamas and their reactions, behaviors, and responses are all very typical. However, through my years of packing and camping in Yellowstone National Park with llamas, I have applied a few different techniques regarding restraining llamas overnight in camp. None of them are really satisfactory to me; I worry too much, get up in the night to check, and listen for anything that sounds off. The reason for this is that first, not all llamas are the same in their response to the restraint and second, in the backcountry there can always be danger that is unexpected.

I started with metal stakes that are driven into the ground and attach the line to a swivel head. In the beginning, I practiced in my home pasture and once I actually watched one llama moving backwards to the very end of the line until it was tight, then he jumped up, again and again, until the stake came loose. One year one of my llamas wrapped his leg in the line and circled around a sage brush, responding to the steady tug from the anchored pin causing the line to become shorter and shorter, his chin closer and closer to his foot until he finally fell down in the night and broke his leg (see Fall and Winter 2016 RMLA Journals). I definitely did not see that one coming, and it was a horrible experience seeing the llama suffer. We did get him out of the backcountry and multiple surgeries saved his leg. I do still use stakes sometimes for specific llamas and I make sure there is no sagebrush nearby.



Nahani with drag bag on commercial trek.

I try not to tie my llamas to trees and shrubs, at least not for longer periods of time. Llamas damage trees, peel bark, trample shrubs and saplings, strip needles. As a permit holder in Yellowstone National Park, I have an obligation to protect the vegetation. When tied to trees and other vegetation, llamas often get their lines tangled in undergrowth and low, sharp branches can poke them. Therefore, I only tie them to shrubs or trees very briefly, in situations like putting boots back on after a creek crossing, for a quick picnic lunch near the trail, or for unloading right after arrival in camp. Then they get moved to the meadow.

My latest restraint method in camp is the drag bag. This is a very durable net bag that I fill with rocks in camp. I empty the bags after use and leave the rock pile hidden when I leave camp, so I can find the same rocks conveniently piled

when I return the next year or the next month. I like the drag bag because the llama can drag it around, can still graze in various locations, doesn't walk in a circle around an anchor, but can't really run off either. Right? Wrong. As I said, we are dealing with individuals. Intelligent individuals! I have llamas who remain rooted to the bag, meaning they treat it like a stake, something that cannot be moved. I put down the bag with the rocks and the llama rotates around it on the long line. Then I have llamas who immediately drag it around at a quick clip and are quite happy to go to the far end of the meadow to graze. I also had llamas run back to the trailhead with the — heavy! — drag bags when bears came through camp. This certainly was not very healthy for their necks!

Then I have a llama — Lewis, who spent 3 months in Yellowstone on his own after running away from his previous owner's camp — whom I actually watched one evening scraping the halter part behind his ears with a toenail of his hind foot, bending down his head. It looked like he wanted to strip the halter off. He never did, but maybe that is how he got loose from his previous owner's camp.

I have camped many nights in Yellowstone with my llamas, probably about 200 nights. It is my conclusion that camping with llamas in the backcountry while restraining them can be dangerous for them due to vegetation that is in the way or because of other factors like wild animals that might spook them and cause them to get into trouble trying to get away. I was recently involved in a rescue where a herd of rutting bison came through camp (not my camp), the llamas freaked, and one of them pulled out the metal stake and ran with the line and stake dragging. He was lost in the wilds for 17 days. We finally found him unharmed, still dragging the line and pin! Amazing that he did not get caught on vegetation and become immobilized with no water in reach and a sitting duck for predators.

The drag bag is still my favorite for overnight treks in Yellowstone, but I will still wake up at night worrying and checking. Corrals with electrical fencing for livestock would be best, in my opinion, but are not permitted in Yellowstone. That could be something to try on public land.

Bottom line, you can be lucky with any of these methods for a long time until you get unlucky. None of them are completely safe and they only work as long as they do because of the intelligence of the animals and the particular circumstances on that day or night. I also keep my llamas close to my tent. I also use bells on two of them and I don't mind listening to the jingle-jingle as they graze near the tents in the early morning. I make my rounds in the dark after they've all kushed for the night. And still, I know, nothing is completely foolproof.



You can see lines and drag bags on all these guys. They have just spotted one of the wolf packs in Yellowstone.

Your Perspective

We have thoroughly enjoyed working together to share our collective 81 years of experience with you in this article. We certainly do not have all the answers; it is kind of a trial and error thing. We learn by doing and by sharing with others.

You are invited to join this discussion. Please email your ideas, experiences, questions to rmlaeditor@gmail.com. Send documents as PDFs or Word docs. Send photos as .jpg or .png.

Thank you, Fiona, Leigh, and Susi.

RMLA EVENT

National Western Stock Show Llama Show 2024

By Judy Glaser, NWSS Llama Show Superintendent

The last weekend of Stock Show 2024 belonged to the llamas and alpacas. Showmanship and halter classes led the show on Friday, followed by performance classes on Saturday. Adult showmanship was memorable for me in that two of the exhibitors were also competitors as youth. Now their children are carrying the torch. Halter classes showed the conformation and style of llamas in classes of suri, non-breeder, light wool, medium wool and heavy wool, male and female.



Sub-Junior Champion Performance Kailynne Evert and Reserve Champion Croy Hamilton.

The amount of people in the stands is exciting to see when the performance classes begin. The youth (ages 7-19) confidently walking their llamas through the courses of obstacles is great for families to see. It is an astounding thing to see two sub-junior exhibitors, ages three and five years old, do the same thing with animals bigger than they are. Of course, their parents were close by, walking with them negotiating the obstacles. I was very proud of them. The adults in the Novice, Advanced and Masters classes moved through their courses. All were hoping they would do what they had practiced.

One of the highlights was an exhibition with Jon Barba and Edson, as well as Kacey Etl and Ranger work a few obstacles in reverse. The llama went first and moved backwards! Wow!

There were lots of people walking through the stalls and asking questions. This gave all the exhibitors a chance to talk about their life with llamas.

I am humbled by my llama family. This event could not happen without volunteers! I heartily thank each of you, many who come back year after year. And a huge thank you to RMLA for their generous support!

More photos from the llama event at the National Western Stock Show.



Hearing from Our Members: Russ & Marisa Felton

Editor's Note: I frequently invite any member to send in photos with captions. Russ Felton took me up on this last September to share the success of his llamas at a show. Well, technology always shows us a thing or two, but we finally got the bugs worked out that were preventing his photos from getting to me! Below are Russ's photos from September plus more recent ones. Thank you, Russ.

From Russ: Marisa and I have had llamas since the early/mid 90's. Those first boys were all from local breeders. The first of our replacements of those 90's llamas was in the early 2000's from Al and Sondra Ellis, Highline Trail Llamas in Boulder, Wyoming. We have been extremely fortunate in having access to one of the premier breeding ccara males, Hi Trl Vaughn. He has given us seven daughters and this year a son; just what we have been waiting for! Currently we have six bred females, but we will have final ultrasounds in March to double check. All of our breeders including females, except for one male, are screened ccara. The lone male is my toughest packer and also my smallest boy, and is outcrossed to all the girls.

One of my faults: I enjoy looking at nice looking llamas, especially the classic ccara llamas. To my eye, and maybe to yours, these are all nice looking llamas. We are located West of Seattle, mid-way from Seattle and the edge of the earth. If you are looking for breeding females, give us a call; we might be able to help. Our contact information is on the RMLA website. Thank you, Russ Felton, Mount Angeles High Valley Llamas.



18-month-old MAHVL Violet getting in some early spring road work.



Rose is meeting her sisters for the first time. Violet in the middle of all the noses. The dark colored girl is Rose's full sister Laurel.



MaryGold (25 mo.) at the Happy Camper Llama Show in Oregon where she received Grand Champion in her class. MaryGold & Petunia are full sisters.



Petunia (13 mo.) at the Happy Camper Llama Show in Oregon where she received a Grand Champion in her class.

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Southwest Llama Rescue, Inc. (SWLR) is a all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit camelid 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.

Shearing for Comfort and Show

By Cyndy Corey Rodriguez and Esthersue Sykes

Reprinted with permission from LANA Spring 2023 newsletter

Health

The number one reason to shear all llamas is to keep your animals comfortable and healthy. Shearing is a must for any llama in a climate which can have several hot and humid days. It is important to shear the body starting at the arm pits and ending with the flank area. Shearing too close can result in sunburn. A daily slathering of sunscreen is recommended until the fiber grows out a bit. This is especially true of white or pink skinned llamas.

Measure Twice, Cut Once

Start out slowly. A basic barrel cut is your first choice. This is the prime fiber for use as well as the most important area to shear for keeping the llama cool. If you are going to use this fiber try not to have second cuts to the length. Stand back and evaluate.

Evaluate Your Llama

Put your hands on, have another person lead and stand your animal. Watch them in the field. Look at the top line, length of neck, tail set and leg conformation. All of these factors will have a play in the type of cut you give your llama.

Different Cuts

Make adjustments for length of neck, not so straight top line or low tail set. Use thinning shears for minor adjustments to fiber thickness and blending. Think of your llama's comfort and possibly add a neck strip. You can lengthen the neck by shearing up close to the base of the neck. You don't want to shear clear to the tail if the animal has a low tail set. You can shorten the back by not shearing too far forward or back.

Tools

When getting ready to shear, be sure your shears are sharp and that you have extra blades and Blade Wash. There are several kinds of shears including scissors, cordless shears, large animal clippers, and smaller electric clippers.



Go slowly. Stand back and evaluate.

It helps to blow your llama out before you begin clipping. This will help keep your shears from getting dull too quickly and will open the fiber so that it is easier to get to the base of the coat. Some people like to leave quite a bit of fiber length. This is best achieved by using scissors and smoothing with electric shears. Starting at the arm pit area where there is very little fiber, shear a strip up to the top line of the back. Follow the line of the shoulder. You can feel the bone. Next, following the line of the hip, shear a strip from the flank to the top of the hip bone. Now you can take out everything else in the middle without fear of cutting too deeply into the fiber on the haunch or neck. With electric shears, it is easiest to cut at the skin line. This makes a nice clean look and you don't have to worry about getting it even.

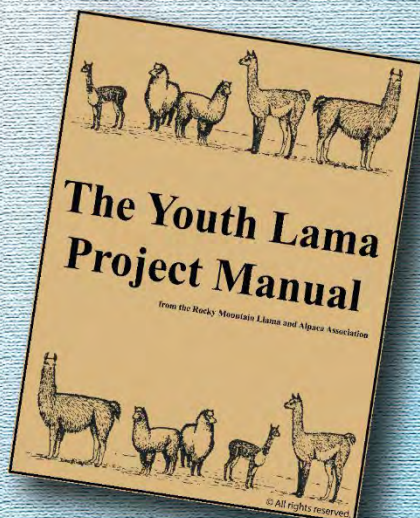
Dirty and hot blades are your worst enemy. Hot shears can burn your llama leaving scarring and do not cut well, neither do dirty shears. Regularly dip the running blades in to a plastic cup of blade wash. You can get this at most feed stores or tack shops. After running your blades in the blade wash, be sure to wipe them dry with a terry towel. Do not try to dry them while they are running if you are using sheep shear blades. These will cut you. Any other blades can be dried while they are running.



Blow out the dust, dirt, and debris from the winter

Rocky Mountain Llama & Alpaca Association

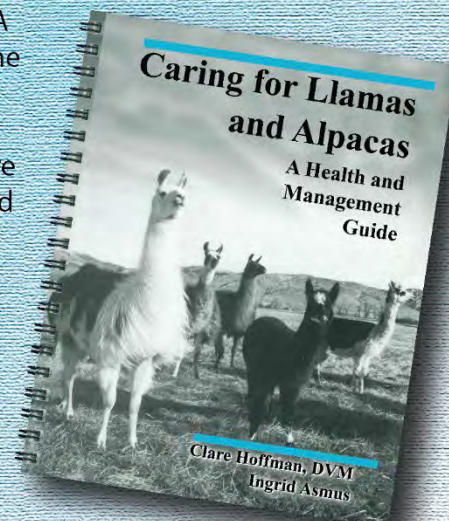
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Mission Statement

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

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Mallon Magic: Human Behaviors

By John Mallon, Prescott Valley, AZ



Let's talk this time about some of the most common “mistakes” made by novice handlers/trainers. I put quotation marks around “mistakes” because I feel that doing something “incorrectly” is not a “mistake” if you didn’t know what it was that you should be doing, but more like a simple error in judgment, and something that is less likely to be repeated with experience. Of course, if you realize something is not working, and you repeat that action, then it starts to become a mistake without quotation marks. Remember that old saying about the definition of insanity – “doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results”; don’t you just love that one?

One of the most common and difficult to change human behaviors is that of excessive eye contact during a training lesson. I’ve seen this for years; no matter how much we may “know” not to be looking at the animal’s eyes, it is very tough for us to actually do. We may

“know” that we are causing stress, that we are missing our cues, that our timing of rewards will be off, but still this one is really difficult for novices to overcome. Be aware of this, don’t beat yourself up about it, and try to work on it; you’ll see a big difference.

Another very common problem is being too slow to release pressure, either psychological or physical. Coincidentally, this is often a by-product of eye contact. Let’s say that we are asking for a llama to take a step forward, at which time we plan to release the pressure of the halter, but rather than watching his feet, we watch his eyes. Oh, sure, we’ll catch on eventually to the fact that he moved his feet, but it will usually be too late for us to take advantage of the learning opportunity, even if it is only two seconds after the fact.

If the llama takes a step, then gets released of pressure two or three seconds later, he will view these two things as two separate, unrelated events, rather than cause and effect. In order for the llama to learn quickly and easily, the reward must be given either *while* the action is taking place or *immediately* (within one second) afterward. I guarantee that this will not be possible unless your eyes are where they need to be. We can call this problem a failure to reward appropriate behavior. On the flip side of this would be: rewarding inappropriate behavior. A basic tenet of training, or teaching and learning, is this: you will ultimately only get the behaviors (actions) that you reward, so be sure to only reward the behaviors you want. By being overly generous with our rewards, we inadvertently teach the wrong things to our hapless students. When we ask, for instance, for him to step onto a tarp and he stops just short of actually putting a foot on it, we cannot give him slack in the rope or he will learn that to stop is what gets a release; we will have taught him to not step onto the tarp.

We talked about being too slow to release pressure, but how about being too quick to apply it? This is another of those “pilot errors” that I see hundreds of times every clinic season, and I think that maybe it comes from the phrase “tug and release” that we’ve all heard so many times. Contrary to this popular misconception, pressure must be applied very *slowly and gradually*; we do not ever want to “tug” or “jerk” on the lead rope unless we are very deliberately sending a correction to the llama. Imagine the poor llama standing there, minding his own business, when, suddenly, out of the blue - **WHAMMO!** a whack on the back of the head for no reason at all. This is not the way to ask a llama to take a step forward, but a punishment for a crime he did not commit.

It is interesting to know that we all make the same common mistakes; it must have something to do with human nature, do you think? We'll talk about some others in the future, but for now, try to work on these and you'll see some dramatic changes in your effectiveness as a teacher/trainer.

Keep being good to your llama, and until next time - Happy Trails!

About the author: John Mallon has over 40 years' experience training camelids, horses, dogs and birds. Since 1981 he has devoted himself exclusively to all aspects of the llama industry.

YOUTH

2023 RMLA Outstanding Youth Award

The RMLA Youth Committee is excited to give the 2023 Outstanding Youth Award Congratulations to Emma Hunt! Emma is a member of the Wunsapana Farm 4H club and was involved with training llamas and crias including desensitization, trail work, and obstacle course navigation. She mentored junior members of her 4H club and shared her llama knowledge at public events. This amazing young lady showed llamas at the fair this year and shared her love of llamas by creating llama Valentines for community caregivers to brighten their day. She also started to learn about processing llama wool. Emma assisted with many herd health duties including the daily care of llamas, shearing, and breeding. Congratulations Emma!



Lars Garrison (1932-2024)

By Nancy Wilson

The llama industry lost one of its giants with the passing of Lars Garrison. I mean that both literally and figuratively. Lars reminded me of what Abraham Lincoln would have looked like had he gotten the chance to grow old. Figuratively, Lars was a well-known llama breeder from the late 1980s to 2010.

Looking over Lars and Gayle's backstory, I see we both got into the llama business at about the same time (1988). Lars and Gayle in a big way in Vermont; my husband and I in a small way in Arizona. Over the years Lars and Gayle raised 800 llamas and had 600 customers buying llamas for a variety of purposes. My husband and I sold one of our first llamas to Gayle for friends of hers in New Mexico. Gayle, who was from Prescott originally, traveled from Vermont and met us and the llamas at the El Rancho in Gallup, NM. She delivered them the rest of the way to her friends. That was a big deal for us, selling llamas to the Garrisons.

I had the pleasure of hearing Lars speak at least once, at an ILA conference back in the day. In that talk, Lars spoke about the need to have a strong bottom price for male llamas. By having a strong bottom price, people interested in

llamas would come to expect a certain price and be prepared to care for the animal. It would also benefit the industry as a whole.



Cover photo from the Summer 2020 Journal

I also remember talking to Lars about his protocol for training guard llamas. I am hoping to get a full version of the information and having it published in the RMLA Journal. My memory is that it involved selecting the guard llama in training, the lead ewe, and a few of the higher-ranking ewes and keeping them in a smallish pen with water in one corner of the pen and hay in the opposing corner. For a few days, you would see the ewes in one corner and the llama in the other corner. Eventually, you would see them all together and then the ewes would be close to the llama. They had bonded and then the process continued from there.

After Gayle's passing in 2010, Lars sold their farm and traveled around looking for a place to live. He ended up in Prescott, close to one of his three daughters (Lars and Gayle also had three sons) and joined the Mountain Spinners and Weavers Guild, which is where I met him. The guild has a special interest group that meets weekly at the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott, and Lars became a regular participant in that group. We enjoyed his presence, and he

enjoyed being there. Lars had an electric spinner and spun the fiber from his own animals. Later on, he spun with a Navajo hip spindle. When he could no longer drive to the group, I would swing by the retirement home where he lived and pick him up. A funny side story is that some of the spinners would walk over to a nearby sub shop to get lunch. Lars would go along and ordered his own take on one of the subs. Thereafter, we could go to the shop and pick up what became known as a Lars Special. When he was unable to come for a while, the shop had a sub delivered to him at his residence.

Fittingly, it was at one of the spinning group's get-togethers that we learned of Lars's passing. We are left with many fond memories, including one time when the group went to his retirement home and demonstrated spinning there.

Spin on, Lars!



Lars using a Navajo spindle at a spinning group.



International Year of Camelids

The UN has designated 2024 as the International Year of Camelids. Camels, llamas, alpacas, vicuñas and guanacos are an important source of livelihood for millions of families - most of them pastoralists - in dryland and mountainous rangeland ecosystems around the world. The Year is meant to raise the public's and policymakers' awareness of the significant role of camelids in protecting ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, assuring food security and adapting to climate change. The resolution for the International Year of Camelids, proposed by the Government of Bolivia and presented by Ecuador as Country Chair of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), was approved by the UN General Assembly on 17 October 2017 upon recommendation by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN).

Visit [International Year of Camelids](#) for more information and resources you can use to plan public activities. The videos are awesome.