



Health Information

Feeding

Alpacas eat grass, hay, haylage, silage. In fact they eat the same as sheep. Be careful not to give high protein and high carbohydrate supplements as the norm. Boys kept as pets do not need these. Breeding females which are pregnant and with crias at foot may need extra. Zarza will advise you.

Ensure all alpacas have access to good quality hay all year round as they need the roughage.

At Zarza we give them alfalfa with 2% vegetable oil and organic seaweed supplement such as Seaquim to ensure they get the right balance of minerals and vitamins.

We also give apple cider vinegar with garlic for two weeks in every four to prevent worms.

Fleece

Alpacas are shorn between May and August. Contact your breeder who will advise on a suitable shearer. People used to shearing sheep can easily be trained to shear an alpaca. The handling is very different so please be sure you are trained to undertake this task as the alpacas may be very frightened.

The top knot and tail are only lightly trimmed in order to give protection.

The shearer will usually also trim the alpaca's toenails, their teeth and give any vaccinations that may be due.

Handling

Alpacas need handling to gain confidence in their owner. They can be trained to accept a halter and lead rein. Always train and walk them in pairs or trios and they will quickly learn. This will ensure that when you perform routine tasks, such as toenail clipping, they will not be frightened of you.

Teeth

At the front of their mouths alpacas have teeth only on the lower jaw. These continually grow and may need levelling to ensure they meet the upper jaw which has a pad. This enables them to eat grass effectively. Your shearer will check them at shearing time. At other times you may need a specialist dentist to level them for you.

About every three months check their teeth are level.

Alpacas may get tooth root abscesses. This is usually first noticed by a lump on their jaw or if severe then there may be unexpected weight loss as they cannot eat properly.

Contact your vet immediately as the alpaca may need a course of antibiotics or an extraction.

As a precaution ensure you run your fingers along the jawline monthly to identify any lumps.

Toenail clipping

Alpacas toenails grow quite fast. Check, and if necessary clip, every 3-4 months.

Training

Zarza will advise on training alpacas and runs regular training courses in breeding, husbandry and assessing alpacas.

Vaccinations

Alpacas are vaccinated against clostridial diseases that are common to sheep.

Be guided by your own vet who is familiar with diseases that are common in your area.

Usually we vaccinate alpacas annually or every six months against clostridial diseases.

Vitamins

Breeding females and youngsters may require extra vitamin D.

We usually give Vitamin ADE subcutaneously or orally every two months from October until end March.

The dose will be as for sheep or lambs.

Weight

Alpacas need to be lean but healthy. Overweight alpacas may have difficulty mating and giving birth. High protein food will make the individual fibres in their fleece too thick and hence devalue the fleece.

Zarza will show you how to check their condition if you do not have any weighing scales.

Worming

Alpacas have the same worms as sheep and different worms from cattle. If you keep your alpacas with other livestock they may need worming every three months. Be guided by your vet.

Sheep wormers are usually effective eg Panacur 2.5%, Dectomax, Eprinex.

At Zarza we practice holistic health care. We do not worm our alpacas unless their faeces show a worm count. Instead we take samples of droppings to our vet every 3-4 months and ask for worm and liver fluke tests. If there is a low or nil reading we do not give a wormer.