

## ALPACA CARE ON THE HIGHVELD

### **Feeding:**

Veld or pasture grazing.

Otherwise good quality hay (no mould) – fine leafy hay is best, they won't eat coarse stalks.

In winter or for females in mid to late pregnancy or feeding a cria you can give up to about 400g horse ration divided into 2 feeds. Too much horse concentrates means that the alpacas may be getting too much copper in their feed. Many people also feed game rations.

It's probably better to feed a mixture of milled lucerne, oat hay and grass hay rather than concentrates (milling it encourages them to eat the stalks as well which means they take in a better balance of minerals).

They need a mineral salt lick. There is a round one available commercially at feed shops – it's the pink mineral lick for horses, costs about R20.

Clean water.

Alpacas are sensitive to toxins so feeds need to be clean, fresh well mixed and without too many additives and sugars. Too much molasses and starch e.g. mealies makes them vulnerable to pulpy kidney and similar diseases.

Don't feed them cattle or sheep feed as these may contain urea.

Change to new feeds slowly e.g. mix half half for a few days.

### **Foot Care:**

If the nails grow too long they can be clipped with special shears or sharp garden secateurs (pruners) work fine too. First clip the front of the toenail so you can see how much you are taking off and then clip the sides to match.

### **Teeth:**

Ask a breeder near you to demonstrate or ask your vet or an equine dentist to trim teeth if necessary. Male fighting teeth need to be trimmed to prevent fighting injuries after they erupt at around 2 years old. Protruding front teeth may need to be filed down in older animals.

### Shearing:

Once a year in spring. Use no. 3 or winter or camelid combs so you leave a layer of fleece on. This minimises cutting and also protects them from sunburn or cold.

### Vaccinations:

Whatever neighbouring farmers give their sheep.

### NB.NB.NB. DO PULPY KIDNEY TWICE A YEAR;

I don't do bluetongue, haven't found it to be necessary and it is a harsh vaccine given in 3 doses but it can be done in Spring at 3 weekly intervals if you have an Autumn breeding program or for young animals. Then you can do Rift Valley Fever if you need to and Anthrax and Botulism.

NB>NB>NB> Please do Covexin 10 or some other vaccine e.g. Multivax, Coglavax which cover pulpy kidney and other clostridial diseases. You need to do pulpy kidney vacs before any change in feeding or major stress events e.g. going on to green grazing in spring or moving farms etc. Also do a booster for pregnant females a couple of months before they give birth so the cria also develops maximum immunity. This one is very important.

Young crias can die of pulpy kidney so vac them at about 1 week old, then 3 weeks later then at 6 months, then slot them into the main vac schedule. Vacc for crias is 1ml Covexin subcutaneously. Adults get 1,5ml subcutaneously behind the shoulder or in the inner thigh where you can see if they develop an abscess from it (I've never seen an abscess but it happens)

I do a Multivax vac in autumn too. This also covers the various pulpy kidney type diseases and includes a Pasteurella vac. If there's no Pasteurella in your area just use Covexin again.

You can buy the vaccines from your local co-op or feed shop or order them from your vet or a pharmacy. Keep them cold even on the way home and inject the bluetongue vac as soon as it is mixed. It becomes ineffective about 2 hrs after mixing.

Use no 21 or 23 short needles for vaccines and no. 18 longer ones for the thicker antibiotics and Multiminerals and vitamins which are usually injected intramuscularly. You can buy these at feed shops or country pharmacies.

**Deworming:**

Deworm in autumn and in spring before sending onto clean pasture. Also in between, about every 3 months. Use a variety of dewormers to prevent resistant strains arising. You can get your vet to do faecal flotation to check for worms. It costs about R70.

CHECK INGREDIENTS: Albendazole products e.g. Valbazen aren't good for alpacas and can cause birth defects.

If you have any questions or I've forgotten to write something down please phone me on **082 833 8274**.

Useful websites are those of the Sa Alpaca Breeders Soc, that's

<http://www.alpacasociety.co.za/> , <http://www.alpacasnz.co.nz/articles.htm>, Australian Alpaca Association

Regards,

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