



STAFF REPORT

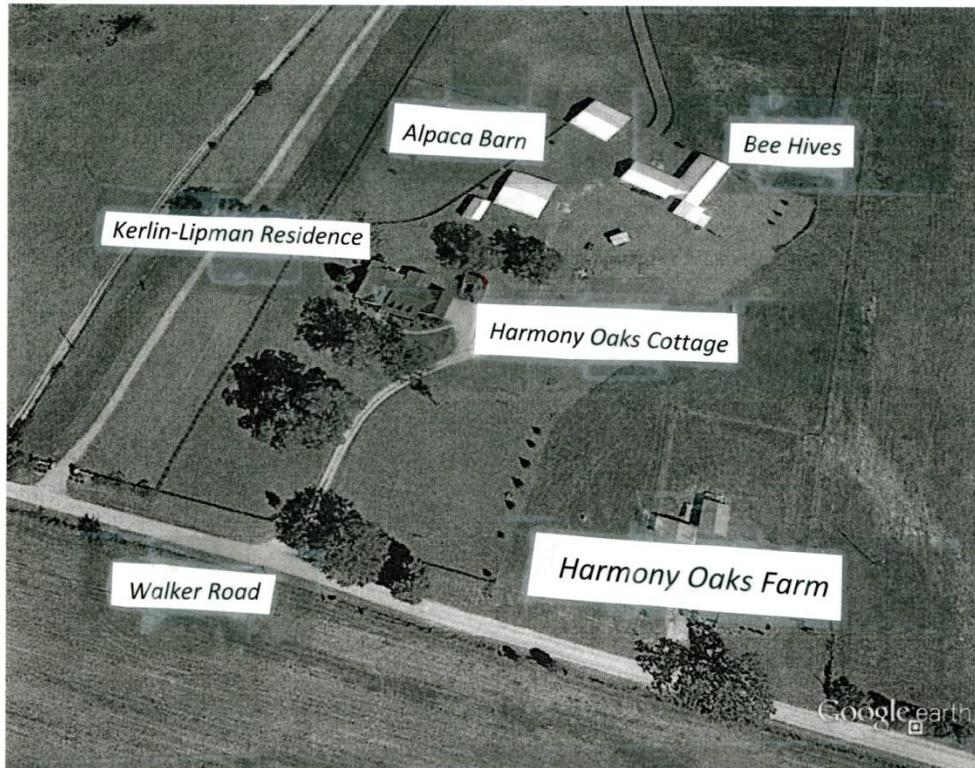
MORGAN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

PETITION FOR: CONDITIONAL USE

Property location:	1230 Walker Road, Madison
Property tax parcel:	048-014B
Acreage:	10.83 acres
Applicant:	Karen Kerlin
Applicant's Agent:	N/A
Property Owner:	Karen Kerlin, 1230 Walker Road, Madison
Existing Use:	Alpaca farm and personal residence
Proposed Use:	Alpaca farm, personal residence and Farmstay

Summary

Karen Kerlin is requesting conditional use approval to locate a Farmstay on 10.83 acres located at 1230 Walker Road, off of Highway 83 South.



The applicant provided an aerial of the proposed Farmstay, showing where each amenity is located in relation to the residence. The cottage is the only structure proposed to be used as guest lodging for the Farmstay.

Requirements for a Farmstay

The definition and regulations for a Farmstay were added to the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance in February 2012. Only one application has been submitted for a Farmstay: Sunflower Farm was approved in April 2015.

A Farmstay is similar to a bed and breakfast in that it allows lodging in a private residence, but it adds an educational component that is not required for a bed and breakfast. In addition to identifying a minimum acreage, maximum guest rooms and number of guests, a Farmstay application must provide an educational program outline that identifies the learning opportunities available to guests. See the attached copy of *Chapter 7.33 Farmstays*. The applicant's support documents also address each point of the ordinance's requirements.

Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map

From Chapter 3 of the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan:

Goal 1.0: Permanently preserve open space and green space throughout Morgan County in order to maintain a sense of rural character, provide passive recreational opportunities, preserve environmental quality, and encourage farming, livestock raising, dairying, forestry, and other agricultural activities that are environmentally compatible.

Objective 4.0: Support the continued existence of a viable agricultural and forestry sector in the county.

Objective 5.0: Support efforts and adopt regulations that help to retain and attract low intensity, land extensive activities, e.g., commercial hunting operations, horseback-riding resorts, and other agri-tourism, heritage tourism, and ecotourism.



The Future Land Use Map shows the parcel as Agricultural/Forestry/Estate Residential, and surrounded by the same classification.

Farmstays are considered an agri-tourism use, as they encourage visitation to, and education regarding, farms and sustainable farming practices.



An aerial showing the subject lot's location relative to Highway 83. The property across Walker Road faces Highway 83. The house on that property is over 2,500' away from the proposed rental cottage. There are three houses on adjacent or nearby properties:

House #1: The closest house is adjacent on a lot that runs along the side and around the back of the subject property. The house is 155' from the property line and 331' from the rental cottage.

House #2: The house behind the subject property is 512' from the property line and 1,268' from the rental cottage.

House #3: The nearby dairy was the Walker Dairy and is now part of Williams Dairy. The house on the dairy is 990' from the property line and 1,174' from the rental cottage.



A permit to repair and remodel the cottage was issued on November 2, 2015. The permit was to replace windows and doors, repair or replace exterior trim, install HVAC, update electrical and plumbing, and add or replace interior finishes. The Certificate of Occupancy was issued on February 19, 2016.

Criteria for Consideration

Section 21.3.1 Required Findings from Conditional Use Approval from the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance:

1. Adequate provision is made by the applicant to reduce any adverse environmental impacts of the proposed use to an acceptable level;
2. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent streets will not be substantially hindered or endangered;
3. Off-street parking and loading, and the entrance to and exit from such parking and loading, will be adequate in terms of location, amount and design to service the use;
4. Public facilities and utilities are capable of adequately serving the proposed use;
5. Granting the request would not be an illogical extension of a use which would introduce damaging volumes of (1) agricultural, (2) commercial, (3) industrial, or (4) high density apartment use into a stable neighborhood of well-maintained single family homes, and likely lead to decreasing surrounding property values, neighborhood deterioration, spreading of blight, and additional requests of a similar nature which would expand the problem;
6. Granting the request would not lead to congestion, noise and traffic hazards or overload public facilities, current or planned;
7. Granting the request would conform to the general expectation for the area population growth and distribution according to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan;
8. Granting the request would not lead to a major negative change in existing (1) levels of public service, (2) government employees or (3) fiscal stability;
9. Granting the request would not have a "domino effect," in that it becomes the opening wedge for further rapid growth, urbanization or other land-use change beyond what is indicated in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Staff Comments

Similar to the previous application, the limited accommodations are unlikely to result in a noticeable increase in noise or traffic. Parking at the cottage is adequate for the low guest number allowed. The proposed use is supported by the Comprehensive Plan as an agri-tourism use.

Despite the recent Certificate of Occupancy, if approved the cottage would require a health and safety inspection prior to the issuance of an Occupational Tax Certificate (business license), which should be made a condition for approval. The code requirements for a personal residence differ slightly from those necessary for a rental accommodation.

Harmony Oaks Farm

706-343-1188

March 10, 2016

kskerlin@att.net

Morgan County Planning & Development

150 E. Washington Street

Madison, GA 30650

1230 Walker Road

Madison, GA 30650

Dear Morgan County Board of Commissioners,

In 2012 my husband and I decided it was time to make a life-changing move. I had been retired from a thirty-year career in education and was anxious to find a new endeavor that would match my skills in the field of teaching with my passion to work with animals. We were looking for a peaceful place in the country to have a garden and raise the alpacas we had been agisting for three years in Jasper, Georgia. When we found the 1230 Walker Road property here in Morgan County, we knew we had found our new home and the perfect place to relocate from Atlanta suburbs. We brought with us seven alpacas. Since then we have increased our herd, all "fiber boys," to twelve.

Over the last four years, we have upgraded pastures, barns, and fencing, added raised beds for gardening, installed bee hives, and turned the former dairy farm into a home for "our boys" whom we have raised for the purpose of producing fiber. Known for its luxurious softness, alpaca fiber is highly regarded among fiber artists, spinners, knitters, and weavers. Our fiber is processed into yarn and roving, primarily at a mill in Tennessee, and is now available for purchase at Farmview Market.

Last month we completed the renovation of an outbuilding into a guest cottage, complete with one bedroom and a bath and a kitchen with appliances. We believe it would make an excellent destination for anyone interested in exploring agrarian life on a working alpaca farm. Our Harmony Oaks Farmstay will be compatible with and complimentary to our neighborhood and bring business to Madison. For these reason, we respectfully request your approval for a Conditional Use.

Harmony Oaks Farm

Sincerely,

Karen S. Kerlin and Stanley Lipman

Harmony Oaks Farmstay: Tours and Activities

Let's Meet the Alpacas: 1-1.5 Hour Tour (Appropriate for all ages.)

Guests will learn about the introduction of domesticated alpacas into the United States from South America in the mid 1980's along with interesting facts about camelids in general. They will see the specific requirements needed for raising these lovely creatures including the handling techniques used by the internationally known CAMELIDynamics trainer, Marty McGee Bennett. Participants will see up close and personal how alpacas differ from other common farm animals and how they have adapted well to Georgia from their native Peruvian heritage.

The Farm is A-Buzz: 1 Hour Activity (Ages 10 and older. Only for those who are not allergic to bee stings,)

This tour will show the equipment required to raise and maintain a honey bee hive. It will also include a discussion of the harvesting process. Participants will learn about the life cycle of our magnificent pollinators and the disastrous effects of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Given eight components of a Langstroth bee hive, they will have a chance to try their hand at correctly assembling the parts.

Gardening in a Box: 45 Minute Activity (Ages 12 and older.)

Raised bed gardens provide an opportunity for growing vegetables and flowers efficiently no matter how limited one's space might be. Young gardeners will be especially interested in soil preparation, use of organic (alpaca) compost, and planning for year-round harvests.

Shearing Day: All-Day Activity (Ages 10 and older.)

Shearing day occurs one time each year in the spring, typically April or May. Participants can watch as a professional shearer prepares each alpaca for shearing using pulleys and ropes. With expert precision the fiber is removed and sorted into first quality (from the blanket or back), second quality (neck), and third quality (legs and tail). This is also the time when nails are trimmed, teeth and eyes are checked, and vaccinations given. Before and after pictures are encouraged!

Fiber Fun: 1-1.5 Hour Activity (All ages)

Participants will be given the opportunity to try their hand at hand spinning using a drop spindle and alpaca roving. They will see many samples of natural, dyed, and core spun yarns. They will also see how alpaca yarn can be used in weaving with a demonstration of a rigid heddle loom that is used for weaving placemats and scarves.

Chapter 7.33 Farmstays

The property proposed for a Farmstay is at least 5 acres or greater in size.

The Harmony Oaks Farmstay will be on 11.83 acres.

No more than five (5) guest rooms shall be allowed.

There will be one guest cottage including one bedroom, one bathroom, kitchen, and living room area.

Accommodations for no more than fifteen total guests shall be allowed.

The cottage contains one king size bed in the bedroom and one queen size sleeper sofa. No more than four guests may register for this cottage.

Food shall be served only to registered guests, and the price of meals shall be included in the price of the overnight accommodations.

Harmony Oaks Farmstay will not include any prepared food. Guests have the option of preparing their own food in the kitchen which contains a full size refrigerator and oven. Coffee and a coffee pot will be provided. Guests will be encouraged to use local farm markets and restaurants.

Lodging and meals shall be incidental and not the primary function of the Farmstay establishment.

Farmstay will provide an additional source of retirement income for my husband and myself. Our alpaca business will continue as it has in the past.

Must provide an educational program outline which includes the following, at a minimum:

- Why the particular location suited to be used for agricultural education and how the establishment will promote agricultural education;
Harmony Oaks is surrounded by large dairy farms and equestrian farms. The setting is ideal for guests to learn about our curious alpacas and the fiber products they produce. In addition, they will see pollinators at work in the garden.
- A description of each activity, including proposed equipment to be used, any possible risks and how such risks will be minimized;
See Tours and Activities listing.
- A description of any possible adverse impacts to neighboring properties and how such impacts will be minimized;
Harmony Oaks Farm does not see any adverse impacts to the neighboring properties.
- A minimum of five educational activities that will be available to guest as soon as the facility opens;
See list of Tours and Activities.
- A map or drawing of the farm, identifying structures and land features that will be used during educational activities.
Please see map attached.

No motorized off road vehicles shall be used for recreational purposes, but may be used as part of normal farming functions.

Guests will not have access to motorized off-road vehicles.

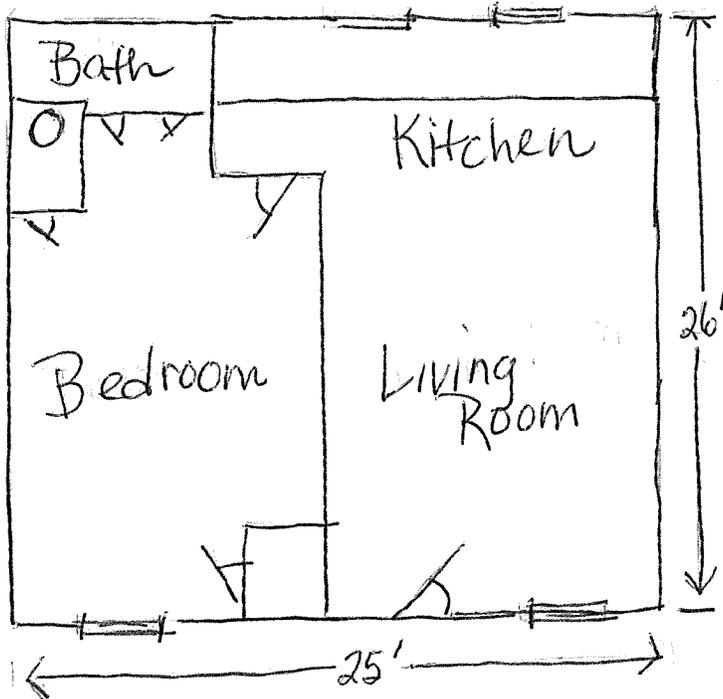
Parking or Farmstay establishments must be contained on the property and cannot be on the street.

More than adequate parking is available next to the cottage which is well off Walker Road.

Farmstays must obtain a yearly Occupational Tax certificate, which will require a safety code compliance inspection prior to issuance.

Attached.

Harmony Oaks Cottage



Chapter 7.33 Farmstays

The property proposed for a Farmstay is at least 5 acres or greater in size.

No more than five guest rooms shall be allowed.

Accommodations for no more than fifteen total guests shall be allowed.

Food shall be served only to registered guests, and the price of meals shall be included in the price of the overnight accommodations.

Lodging and meals shall be incidental and not the primary function of the Farmstay establishment.

Must meet the requirements of the Morgan County Health Department, if applicable.

Must provide an educational program outline which includes the following, at a minimum:

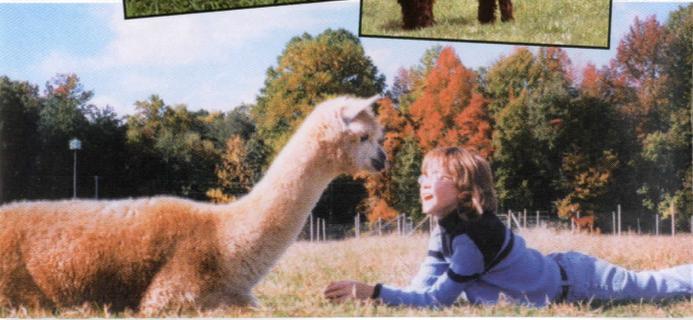
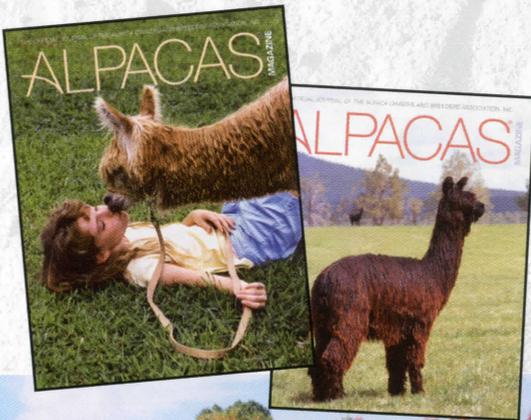
- Why the particular location is suited to be used for agricultural education and how the establishment will promote agricultural education;
- A description of each activity, including proposed equipment to be used, any possible risks and how such risks will be minimized;
- A description of any possible adverse impacts to neighboring properties and how such impacts will be minimized;
- A minimum of five educational activities that will be available to guests as soon as the facility opens;
- A map or drawing of the farm, identifying structures and land features that will be used during educational activities.

No motorized off road vehicles shall be used for recreational purposes, but may be used as a part of normal farming functions.

Parking for Farmstay establishments must be contained on the property and cannot be on the street.

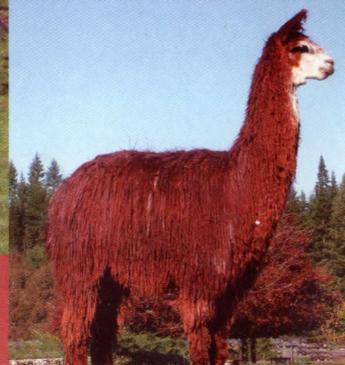
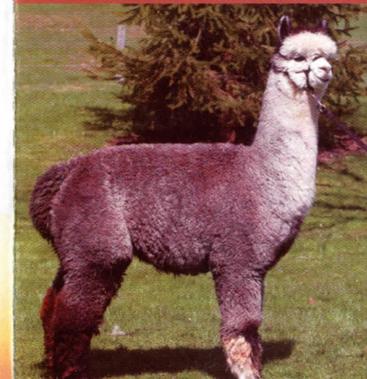
Farmstays must obtain a yearly Occupational Tax Certificate, which will require a safety code compliance inspection prior to issuance.

WELCOME TO THE DELIGHTFUL world of alpaca ownership. Alpacas are gentle by nature, easy to care for, and are a great way to enhance your life, no matter where you live – urban, suburban, or rural. This brochure is designed to answer some of the most commonly-asked questions about this form of livestock. If you would like more detailed information about alpacas or the lifestyle associated with these animals, we invite you to visit the Alpaca Owners & Breeders Association (AOBA) website at www.AlpacaInfo.com, where you can locate existing alpaca operations in your local area; subscribe to *Alpacas Magazine*; or join AOBA (which will give you immediate access to a wealth of reference books in the AOBA library, as well as many other terrific benefits).

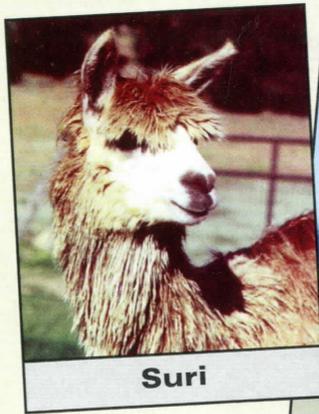


For further information about alpacas, please log on to www.AlpacaInfo.com, or call 1-800-213-9522.

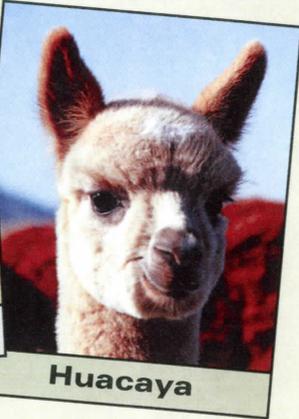
Meet the ALPACA



March 2007



Suri



Huacaya

A Few Basic Facts

- Alpacas are members of the camelid (or camel) family. They are mild-tempered, gregarious animals with an inquisitive nature and a penchant for bringing great delight to their owners.
- There are two different breed-types: the huacaya (wah-KI'-ya) and suri ("surrey"). Although both types of alpacas are physiologically nearly identical, one main physical difference is clearly identifiable: the fleece. Huacaya fleece has a degree of "waviness," or "crimp," thus giving huacayas a fluffy, "Teddy Bear-like" appearance. Suris, on the other hand, have no crimp in their fleeces, so their fiber clings to itself, forming beautiful "pencil locks" that hang down from the body in gentle, silky cascades.
- Indigenous to South America, the alpaca is raised for its soft fleece. This fleece is sheared once a year, yielding roughly five to ten pounds (= 2¼ to 4½ kilos). After only minimal preparation, it is ready to be spun into yarn (for knitting, crocheting, and weaving) or used to make felt (for creating hats, cloth, or moccasins).
- Alpacas stand approximately 36 inches (=1 metre) tall at the withers (the area where the neck and spine come together) and weigh between 100 and 200 pounds (= 45 to 90 kilos).
- They require only modest amounts of food (approximately 1½ to 2% of their body weight in hay per day), plus free access to fresh water and free-choice minerals. Some owners also supplement their animals' diets with additional grains and crumbles, based on specific nutritional needs and preferences.

Commonly-Asked Questions

Are alpacas easy to work with?

Yes, alpacas are very intelligent animals that respond to a variety of training and handling techniques. They learn to halter and lead in just a few training sessions, and even children find most alpacas to be safe and easy to handle.

Are there organized exhibitions and competitions for alpacas?

Yes, there are many alpaca shows (both showing and fleece-judging competitions) held throughout North America where owners can showcase their animals and fleeces.

Is it OK to have just one alpaca?

As a general rule, the answer is no. Alpacas have very strong herding instincts and need the companionship of other alpacas to thrive. Gender-appropriate (or neutered) llamas sometimes will successfully bond with an alpaca. Otherwise, it is best to provide each alpaca with a companion alpaca of the same gender.

Do I need a lot of land to raise alpacas?

No. The specific answer is quite variable, and is contingent on such factors as: type of terrain, amount of annual precipitation, seasonal factors, availability of pasture and/or hay, etc. For arid climates animals are usually fed on "dry lot," with little or no pasture feeding. In this instance, the number of animals that can be raised is generally

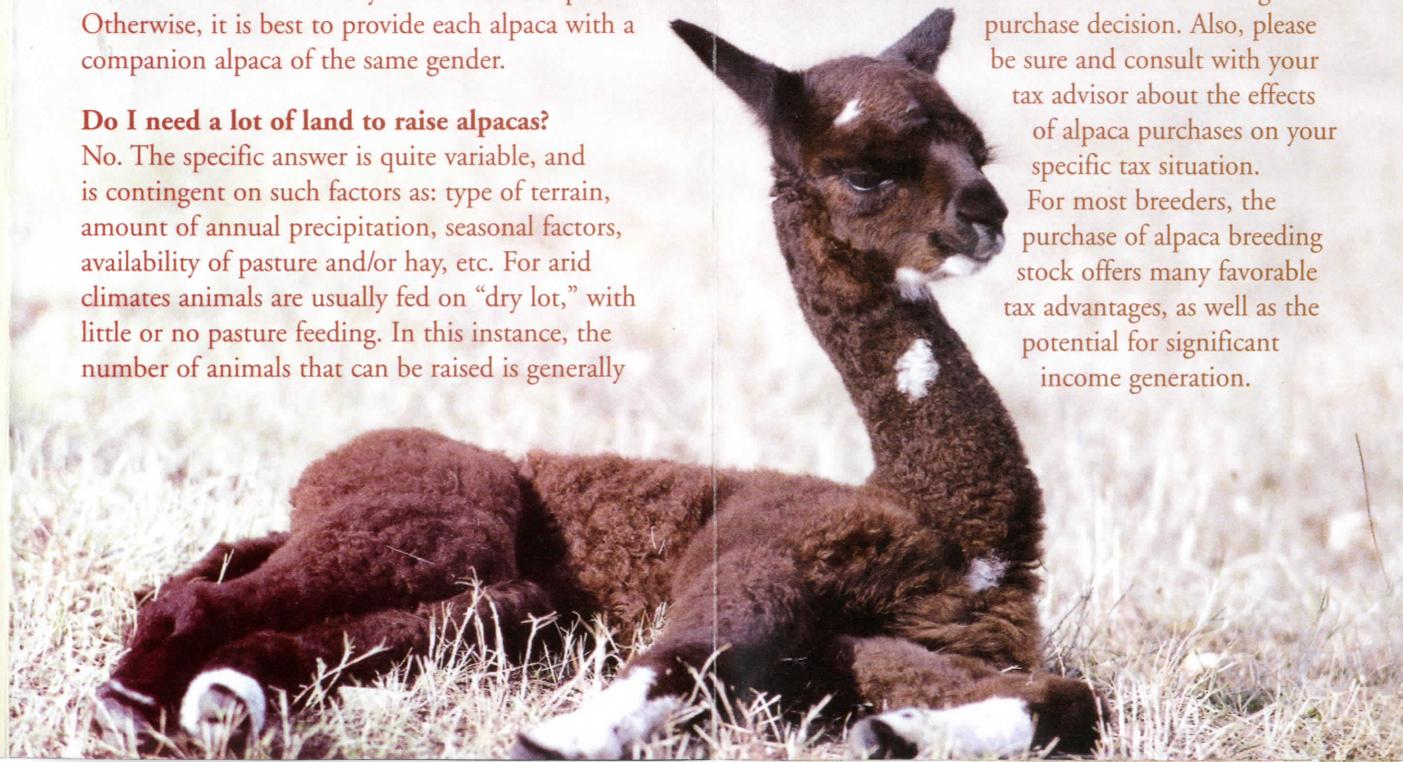
between two to six per acre. In milder, wetter climates with abundant fresh pasture available, however, ten or more alpacas per acre might be the norm.

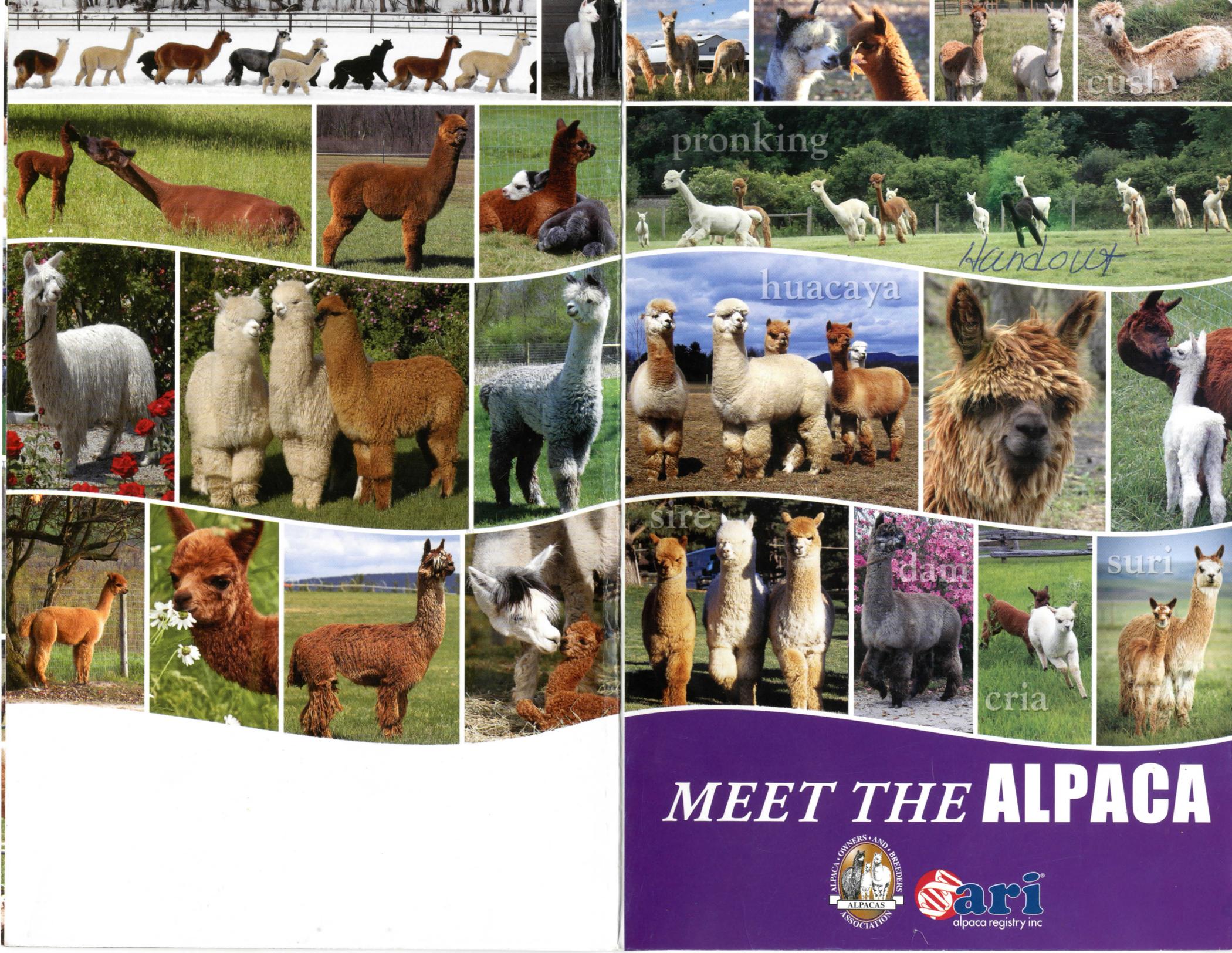
I live in the city; would it be possible for me to own alpacas?

Absolutely. Urban dwellers can board (or "agist") their alpacas at nearby farms/ranches so that they can enjoy the benefits of ownership while living in a large city or suburb.

How much do alpacas cost?

The price of an alpaca will depend on its quality (especially conformation and fleece qualities); its bloodlines; positive traits proven to be heritable in its offspring; whether it is a male or female; age; breeding history; and a host of other traits and factors. We recommend talking to a variety of breeders before making a purchase decision. Also, please be sure and consult with your tax advisor about the effects of alpaca purchases on your specific tax situation. For most breeders, the purchase of alpaca breeding stock offers many favorable tax advantages, as well as the potential for significant income generation.





cushi

pronking

Handout

huacaya

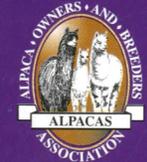
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MEET THE ALPACA





What is an Alpaca?

Alpacas are members of the camelid family. The camels that most people are familiar with are the ones with humps; the dromedary of Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Asia, and the Bactrian camel of China and Tibet. However, there are four other camelids (without humps) that are indigenous to South America: two of them, llamas and alpacas, have been domesticated for thousands of years; whereas the other two varieties, guanacos and vicunas, continue to roam in wild herds today.

The alpaca comes in two breed-types: huacaya (pronounced wah-KI-ah) and suri (SOO-ree). Huacayas, the more common type, account for about 90% of all alpacas, and have fluffy, crimped fleece that gives the animals a teddy bear-like appearance. Suris, on the other hand, grow silky, lustrous fleece that drapes gracefully in beautiful pencil-locks.

How long do alpacas live?

Generally, around 15 to 20 years. The longest documented lifespan of an alpaca is 27 years.

Is it OK to have just one alpaca?

As a general rule, the answer is no. Alpacas have very strong herding instincts and need the companionship of other alpacas to thrive. Gender-appropriate (or neutered) llamas sometimes will successfully bond with an alpaca. Otherwise, it is best to provide each alpaca with a companion alpaca of the same gender.

How are alpacas different from llamas?

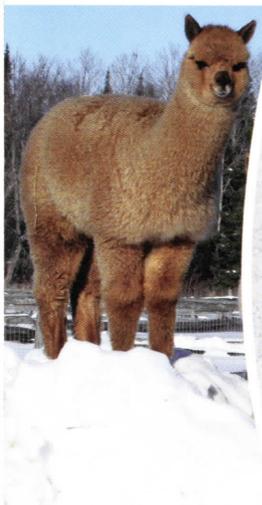
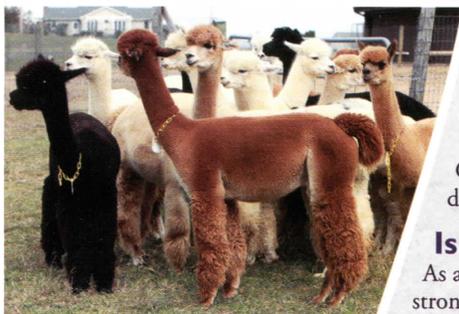
People often confuse alpacas with llamas. While closely related, llamas and alpacas are distinctly different animals. First, llamas are much larger, about twice the size of an alpaca, with an average weight of about 250 to 450 pounds, compared to an alpaca whose weight averages 100 to 200 pounds. Llamas are primarily used for packing or for guarding herds of sheep or alpacas, whereas alpacas are primarily raised for their soft and luxurious fiber.

Are alpacas an “exotic species,” or are they considered simply “livestock”?

Since alpacas have been raised as domestic livestock for thousands of years and since the end product of alpacas is their fleece, like sheep, they are classified as livestock by both the U.S. and Canadian federal governments.

Are alpacas dangerous?

No—they are safe and pleasant to be around. They do not bite or butt and do not have sharp teeth, horns, hooves, or claws as do some other types of livestock. They move gracefully and adroitly about the field and are therefore unlikely to run into or over anyone, even small children. Occasionally, an alpaca will reflexively kick with its hind legs, especially if touched from the rear, but the soft padded feet usually do little more than just “get your attention.”



Are alpacas easy to care for?

They are a small and relatively easy livestock to maintain. They stand about 36” high at the withers (where the neck and spine come together); weigh between 100 to 200 pounds; and establish easy-to-manage, communal dung piles. The alpacas need basic shelter and protection from heat and foul weather, just like other types of livestock, and they also require certain vaccinations and anti-parasitic medicines. Their fleece is sheared once a year to keep them cool in summer. Additionally, their toenails need to be trimmed on an as-needed basis to ensure proper foot alignment and comfort. Interestingly, alpacas do not have hooves—instead, they have two toes, with hard toenails on top and a soft pad on the bottom of their feet, which minimizes their effect on pastures and makes them an “environmentally friendly” animal.

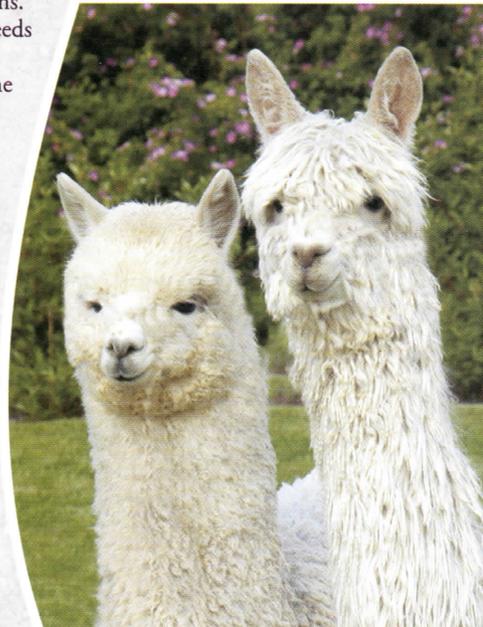
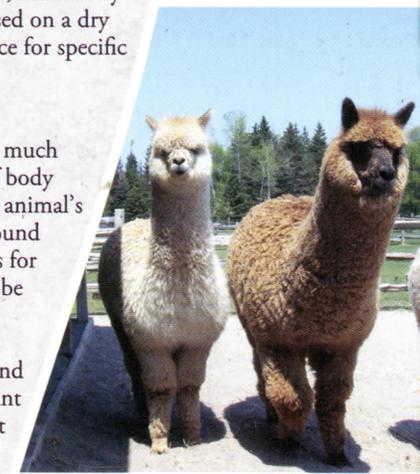
How much space does it take to raise an alpaca?

Because these animals are environmentally friendly and require so little pasture and food, you can usually raise from two to eight alpacas on an acre of land, depending on terrain, rain/snowfall amounts, availability of pasture, access to fresh water, etc. They can also be raised on a dry lot and fed grass hay. Consult with your local USDA office for specific local recommendations.

What do alpacas eat?

The main things alpacas eat are just grass or hay, and not much of them—approximately two pounds per 125 pounds of body weight per day. The general rule of thumb is 1.5% of the animal’s body weight daily in hay or fresh pasture. A single, 60-pound bale of hay can generally feed a group of about 20 alpacas for one day. Grass hay is recommended, while alfalfa should be fed only sparingly, due to its overly rich protein content. Alpacas are pseudo-ruminants, with a single stomach divided into three compartments. They produce rumen and chew cud, thus they are able to process this modest amount of food very efficiently. Many alpacas (especially pregnant and lactating females) will benefit from nutritional and mineral supplements, depending on local conditions. There are several manufactured alpaca and llama feeds and mineral mixes readily available; consult with your local veterinarian to ensure you are feeding the appropriate diet for your area. Alpacas also require access to plenty of fresh water to drink.

Alpacas have two sets of teeth for processing food. They have molars in the back of the jaw for chewing cud. But in the front, the alpaca has teeth only on the bottom and a hard gum (known as a dental pad) on the top for crushing grain, grass, or hay. Unlike goats and sheep that have long tongues which they sometimes use to rip plants out of the ground, alpacas have short tongues and nibble only the tops of grasses and other plants, resulting in far less disturbance of the vegetation. However, they are also browsers and will often eat shrubs and the leaves from trees if given an opportunity, which requires monitoring to ensure they do not consume harmful products.



What do I need by way of shelter and fencing?

While the shelter requirements vary depending on weather and predators, as a general rule alpacas do need at least a three sided, open shelter where they can escape from the heat of the sun in summer and from icy wind and snow in winter. If predators (dogs, coyotes, bears, etc.) are present in your neighborhood, then a minimum of five-foot-high, 2" x 4" no-climb fencing is strongly recommended. Traditional horse fencing with 6" x 6" openings is not recommended, as curious alpacas have been harmed by putting their heads or legs through the openings.

Are alpacas clean animals?

Yes, they are much cleaner than most livestock. Alpacas have minimal aroma and don't tend to attract as many flies in the summertime as other forms of livestock. Furthermore, alpacas defecate in communal dung piles. There may be three or four of these areas in a pasture, spread throughout about 10%–20% of the pasture. This makes for easy clean-up, reduced opportunity for parasites, and better overall hygiene in the herd.

Can alpacas thrive in locations with very hot or very cold climates?

Generally, yes. Alpacas are amazingly resilient animals and have adapted successfully to the extremes of both very hot climates and very cold climates. In hot, humid climates, alpaca owners need to take extra precautions to make sure that the alpacas do not suffer from heat stress. These include: shearing fleeces early in the year, providing fans and ventilation in the barn, offering cool fresh water for drinking, and hosing off their bellies (where heat is dissipated) on very hot days.

Are alpacas easy to train?

Alpacas are very smart animals and are fairly easy to train. It is best to start training them when they are young so they will accept a halter and will learn to follow you on a lead. Many owners also enjoy training them to walk through obstacles; some even compete with their animals in shows where they walk over, through, and around objects and jump over small hurdles. Since they often need to be transported to shows and other farms, it is helpful to train them to ride in a trailer or a van. Alpacas are easy to transport, as they normally cush (lay down with their legs folded under them) when traveling.

Do alpacas make noise?

Alpacas are very quiet, docile animals that generally make a minimal amount of sound. They generally make only a pleasant humming sound as a means of communication or to express concern or stress. Occasionally you will hear a shrill sound, called an "alarm call," which usually means they are frightened or angry with another alpaca. Male alpacas also "serenade" females during breeding with a guttural, throaty sound called "orgling."

Do alpacas spit?

All members of the camel family use spitting as a means of negative communication. They do get possessive around food, and thus may express annoyance by spitting at other alpacas that they perceive are encroaching on "their" food. Also, they often spit at one another during squabbles within the herd (usually involving two or more males). From time to time alpacas do spit at people on purpose, but it is more common that humans get caught in the cross-fire between alpacas, so it's best to study their behavior and learn to avoid the most vulnerable situations.

Does the birthing require human assistance?

In most cases, cria are born without intervention, and usually during daylight hours. A cria normally weighs between 15 and 19 pounds and is usually standing and nursing within 90 minutes of birth. The cria continues to nurse for about six months until it is weaned.

So what do you DO with these animals?

Alpacas are fiber-producing animals raised for their soft and luxurious fiber. Each shearing produces roughly five to ten pounds of fiber per animal, per year. This fleece, often compared to cashmere, can be turned into a wide array of products from yarn and apparel to tapestries and blankets. The fleece itself is recognized globally for its fineness, softness, light weight, durability, excellent thermal qualities, and luster.

In addition to selling the fleece and the animals, many breeders of alpacas operate an end products retail store on or off their farms. They sell alpaca apparel, yarn, fleece, teddy bears, and household goods directly to consumers who visit their farm or over the Internet. Many also sell the products through craft fairs, farmers markets, and retail sites. Sales of these end products can provide considerable supplemental income to the farm or ranch.

What about the fiber?

Let's start by comparing alpaca fiber with wool from most breeds of sheep. In general, alpaca fiber is stronger, lighter, warmer, and more resilient. Finer grades of alpaca fiber (known commercially as "Baby Alpaca") are believed to be hypo-allergenic, meaning they do not irritate your skin as sheep's wool sometimes does. Unlike sheep's wool, alpaca fiber contains no lanolin and is therefore ready to spin after only nominal cleaning of the fleece. Prized for its unique, silky feel, and superb "handle," alpaca fiber is highly sought-after by both cottage-industry artists (hand spinners, knitters, weavers, etc.) as well as the commercial fashion industry.

One facet of alpaca fiber that makes it so much in vogue is its great variety of natural colors: pure white, several shades of fawn and brown, several shades of gray, and true black — some 16 official colors with many other subtle shades and hues. White, light fawn, and light gray can be readily dyed, thus offering a rainbow of colors for the fiber artist. Alpaca fiber can also be readily combined with other fine fibers like merino wool, cashmere, mohair, silk, and angora to attain incredibly interesting blends



Are there organized exhibitions and competitions for alpacas?

Yes, there are many alpaca shows (both show ring and fleece-judging competitions) held throughout North America where owners can showcase their animals and fleeces. In addition to fairs and other local shows, the Alpaca Owners & Breeders Association (AOBA) certifies larger regional shows all over the United States. AOBA provides the rules, trains the judges, and offers other assistance to these regional shows, while also hosting the National Alpaca Show each year. To find more information about AOBA shows near you, visit www.AlpacaShows.com.

What is AOBA—Alpaca Owners & Breeders Association?

Started by a handful of alpaca owners in 1988, the organization had an initial cadre of just 87 members, representing an alpaca population of just 392 animals. AOBA now has thousands of members, representing over 100,000 alpacas in the United States, Canada, and several foreign countries.

Providing a plethora of marketing, educational, and support functions to the North American alpaca industry, AOBA is structured with an elected Board of Directors and a national office located in Nashville, Tennessee, overseeing all support functions. Reporting to the Board are major committees and divisions, such as the Education Committee, Show Division, Marketing Committee, Fiber Committee, Communication Committee, and Government & Industry Relations Committee. Regional Affiliate organizations also contribute to the overall support network for alpaca owners. Through these major committees and affiliates, the business of promoting alpacas and alpaca end products, as well as the education of members and the general public, all comes together.

AOBA hosts several online properties to support its many functions. These include:

www.AlpacaInfo.com— Everything you need to know about alpacas—how to get started, visit a farm or ranch near you, request information, and subscribe to Alpacas Magazine.

www.AlpacaOwners.com— AOBA membership offers an unparalleled value and investment in the future of the industry. Belonging to a national association lends credibility to members of any organization. AOBA is no different. Visit www.alpacaowners.com to learn about the many benefits AOBA members receive.

www.AobaAlpacas.com— The perfect solution for displaying your farm, services, products, and alpacas on the Internet!

www.AlpacaShows.com— Search the official AOBA show winnings page. Visit the calendar of events for all AOBA certified shows and find a show near you!

Do I need to purchase a registered alpaca?

Simple answer—**yes**. Anytime you are investing money, you need to take all the necessary steps to help assure that your investment maintains its value and registered alpacas do just that.

Alpaca Registry, Inc. (ARI) is the largest alpaca pedigree registry in the world. While ARI provides services to alpaca owners all over the world, they primarily provide pedigree registration and member services to the United States and Canada. ARI is one of the few livestock registries of any kind that requires that every animal be DNA tested back to its parents before being registered. As a result, ARI registered alpacas are highly desired.

What is ARI—Alpaca Registry, Inc.?

Alpaca Registry, Inc. (ARI) is the largest alpaca pedigree registry in the world and the only organization of its kind in the US. Since its inception in 1988, ARI has maintained and administered a database housing the scientifically-qualified genealogy and blood typing/DNA records of more than 200,000 alpacas across North America and other countries.

Appropriately enough, the people that make up ARI are those who benefit most from its existence. ARI is an independent organization created by and for alpaca farmers and ranchers. ARI was created specifically to protect the alpaca gene pool in North America, and helps ensure each breeder's investment is protected from cross-breeding with other camelids.

In 1998, members of ARI closed the registry to new alpacas; currently only alpacas born to ARI registered sires and dams qualify for registration. Purchasing registered alpacas is very important as is registering all new cria from registered parents. This protects your investment by tracking the pedigree of your alpaca and maintains the genealogical integrity of the breed as a whole.

ARI hosts three online properties to help alpaca owners and potential alpaca owners navigate the industry. These include:

www.AlpacaRegistry.com— This site houses ARI's scientifically based, searchable alpaca pedigree and Expected Progeny Differences (EPD) database where members manage their herds and memberships with ARI. New registrations, registration transfers, and all updates can be completed on this site in addition to research about pedigreed alpacas.

www.ariACADEMY.com— This site houses a wealth of information for current owners of alpacas as well as those considering joining this great industry. Educational topics on the site range from care of alpacas and farm to in-depth articles on genetics and Expected Progeny Differences (EPD).

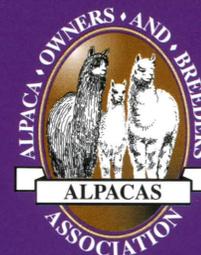
www.ariLIST.com— Interested in purchasing an alpaca or a breeding, but don't know where to start? ariLIST.com is a listing site which provides searchable information linked directly to ARI's validated pedigree database on alpacas that are currently for sale or stud. It is a great place to find a farm and research your alpaca options, while assisting you in your breeding or buying decision.



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