



TILLMAN LLAMA TIPS

1. TLC

TLC is an essential part of a Tillman Llama's upbringing. It's the main reason our llamas have such a mild deposition. Remember, you can never give a llama too much of the stuff.

2. VETERINARY CARE

Veterinary care for llamas is somewhat minimal, yet having an experienced vet on call is important. Luckily, I have Cheryl. Llamas require quarterly worming and annual vaccinations for their protection. Handling your llamas and watching their daily routines is your best aid to determining if your llama is feeling ill or uncomfortable. Insurance is available for full mortality and theft, for named perils, or for special events.

3. BREEDING

Breeding our male llamas begins between the ages of 18-24 months. We always wrap the tail prior to breeding with an elastic bandage called "Vet Wrap." This protects the male's penis from fiber entrapment, and helps reduce bacterial contamination of the vagina and uterus. We start breeding our females between 18 and 20 months. Because the llama is an induced ovulator, breeding can occur almost any time, as opposed to monitoring a heat cycle. The llamas' gestation is approximately 50 weeks and most llamas birth during the day, an evolutionary attribute developed in South America due to rain which then freezes in these higher elevations 300 nights a year, killing babies. Most births occur without human intervention and are simply a joy to behold, as the mama and her new baby get acquainted and are comforted by the others in the herd.

4. IMPRINTING

Imprinting is a practice we use at Tillman's Ranch with all our llama newborns. Early human contact with each cria helps them get use to us. This way, we are seen not as threat but rather as a two-legged friend. Imprinting is done with females only. You don't want male llamas too familiar with people because they may start seeing them as potential mating partners.

5. DIET

A typical diet for our llamas consists of grassy hay along with grain and mineral supplements. Fresh, clean water is always available as well. Poor diet and unsafe drinking water can lead to serious health problems. We test our hay for protein content and energy (TDN). We've also found Dr. L.W. Johnson's article, "Feeding Camelids" a helpful source of dietary information. (This can be found in the Articles section of this website.) We feed: 2% of body weight a day for lactating females, 1_% for non-lactating females, and _% for males.

Linear Feed Bunks are inexpensive feed troughs that can be mounted along the back wall of your barn or three sided loafing sheds. Alpacas co-operate very well at a feed trough. They will stand shoulder to shoulder and eat together. You will need about two feet in width for each alpaca, or three feet for a llama. The 2 x 6 inch "lip" along the outside of the feed bunk keeps the alpacas from pulling hay out of the trough. This helps keep your show string cleaner, and prevents the hay from falling onto the ground where it might pick up fecal contamination.

Materials needed:

- 1" thick exterior grade plywood
- 2 x 6 boards (treated or untreated)
- Wood screws

Directions:

1. Rip 4' x 8' plywood into 2' widths.
2. Mount boards 24 to 26 inches high. (Or as high as the backboard of your metal loafing sheds 2 x 6 braces. You know, the boards you screw the metal siding into between your 4 x 4 posts.
3. Add 45-degree angle braces every 48 inches and attach to bottom back brace. Cut these at a 45-degree angle and they will fit the back of the back brace and bottom of the plywood feed bunk. These are 33 inches long with 45-degree angle cut on my height of feed bunk.
4. Cross brace feed bunk every 48 inches with 2 x 6 and use a 2 x 6 lip so alpacas cant pull grass hay out onto ground. This feature is very important and very effective.

Remember, you will have to make a square cut out on the plywood to wrap around the loafing sheds 4 x 4 post.

6. LLAMA LOGIC

Llama Logic is a system we use at Tillman to keep stats on our entire herd, track their health and keep records on file. With the aid a special computer program, designed by Canadian programmer, Simon VanDerHeigden, we are able to keep an updated, active file on each animal. Cheryl served as a consultant on the project. Her medical background and overall knowledge of the species was instrumental. The computer program, the first of its kind, is still widely used within the industry today.

7. SHELTERING

Sheltering your llamas protects them from hot sun in summer and the cold winds in winter. Fencing requirements will vary based on location and should be designed to keep llamas in and keep predators out. A simple 4-5-foot woven wire fence can accomplish this economically and with minimal effort and expense.

8. HERD SEGREGATION

Segregation of the herd is a common practice we use at Tillman. It ensures each animal lives in a safe, secure environment. Primarily, segregation is based on nutritional needs among these four different groups: Young females, nursing mothers, adult females not nursing and males. Males are usually segregated again by age.

9. CATCH PENS

Catch Pens are used to catch animals without running them around. We have a catch pen in every barn and pasture. Frequently, we will have a pasture lead to a runway that leads to a small pen that leads to a catch pen. The gradual progression from a large field to a smaller one helps create a kind of passive training that teaches the alpacas and llamas to stand when you ask them to. We also use catch pens between a runway and a stud run. This allows us to bring a female to a male, or catch a male without difficulty. These catch pens may be nothing more than three portable steel panels with an additional panel-gate. A variation on the catch pen is a slightly larger area that we use to “tease” females. A 30 foot by 30 foot area is really too big for a catch pen but it is about the smallest pen you can use to tease a female. If it is any smaller, she will feel trapped and may not give you an accurate indication if she has ovulated or not. In these larger pens, we may have three or four portable panels set up in the corner to act as a catch pen.

10. RUNWAYS

Runways make life on the ranch much easier. All of our pastures have access to a runway that leads to our main barn. This allows one person to round up an entire herd of alpacas or llamas. It is important to have the runway wide enough that you can drive a cart or tractor down it, and to have room to plow snow out of the way. But if you make it too wide, the alpacas or llamas can run past you. Sixteen feet is the longest standard gate that will not sag or need a guy wire to support it. This width has worked out very well for us.

11. HALTERING

Haltering is easy when done right. The halter strap latches on the left, so you should always try and approach your llama from the left in order to catch them with their right side up against a fence or side of the barn. It's a good habit to get into, especially when haltering larger animals.

12. ORGANIZING HALTERS

Organize Your Halters into two groups: work halters and show halters. Inexpensive pegboard mounted on the wall of the barn is an easy and attractive way to display and organize your halters. Once you mount your pegboard, insert the metal hangers into the holes in the pegboard. Now, you will no longer have to sort through all those large work halters while looking for your braided 6 month old show halter. It's also useful for hanging ribbons after you come home from a show. We also organize our lead ropes into ones we use every day and for shows. Plastic coat racks can be used for organizing your show leads and halters when you are at a show. Just zip-tie them to your stall and you will look tidy and professional until your alpacas start mouthing your halters and lead ropes.

13. WEIGHING

Weighing is a great way to monitor a llama's growth rate and overall health. It also determines how much medication to administer when an animal is sick. We weigh all of our llamas on a regular basis and keep a detailed record each time their hoofs touch our scales. FYI: Pregnant mothers should always be gaining weight while new mothers should be gradually losing weight shortly after delivery.

14. SHEARING

Shearing is done in the spring at Tillman. Our animals look forward to being shorn. A llama carrying a heavy fleece typically will have a higher body temperature. Higher body temperatures, especially in hot summer months, can cause severe health problems including birth defects, premature births, low sperm counts among males, dehydration, stunted growth and malnutrition.

15. FIBER

Fiber is one of the most prized byproducts of llamas. Hand spinners, knitters, weavers and crafters all appreciate the luster and hueness of a single-coat llama fleece. The variety of natural colors and the absence of lanolin are other qualities found in llama hair. Llamas can be shorn annually. Commercial processors and wool guilds are located in various parts of the United States and Canada; they clean, card, spin and ply the fiber, turning raw fiber into rovings, yarn, and felt.

16. SHOWING

Showing builds friendly competition among breeders, trainers and handlers. Llamas are judged in separate classes for conformation, balance, structure, and fiber characteristics. There are children who have worked with their 4-H programs, children with special needs, individuals who have never had hands on other large animals, farmers, dentists, lawyers, homemakers, school teachers; they all share in the fun and excitement of llama shows. Halter class shows are held all across America and Canada.

17. 4-H GROUPS

4-H groups across the country are becoming involved with llama projects. Since many 4-H members are already owners or are very interested in these domesticated animals, it is important that they become aware of this rapidly growing industry. Llama projects are designed to acquaint members with the care, management and marketing of llamas.

18. PACKING

Packing is a common use for llamas. Like their South American ancestors, we find that there are certain llamas that are bred and built with an incredible ability and instinct to pack, to forage through areas that may otherwise never be enjoyed by man. Because of the llama's easy-going nature, and its kindness to the environment, you can comfortably enjoy wilderness treks without bearing too much of the load. You may also receive some comfort knowing that the inquisitive stare of a llama will ward off most predators.

19. TRAVELING

Traveling with llamas or alpacas often requires some quick thinking. I was recently caught in the central valley of California while it was 100 degrees in the shade. I was hauling a \$250,000 black alpaca male, named King Kong. I had leased King Kong from our friends and customer Craig and Daphne Aurness and was returning him to Cindy Harris farm in Moorpark, California. While the world's most expensive black male alpaca had been shorn, was an easy keeper, and I had an insulated trailer and plenty of insulation, I decided to stop at a truck stop, which I knew had air and water hoses for RV's. I proceeded to hose King Kong Down right there in my trailer. He loved it. I also bought several bags of crushed ice, spread it over his bedding and off we went. When we arrived in Moorpark, he had a normal body temperature and was breeding the next day.

20. PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographing your herd provides you with both beautiful images and important documentation. The great portrait photographer, Edward S. Curtis photographed his subjects about 6 inches below eye level. We take this perspective one step further and actually get down at a cria-view perspective of the world. This helps eliminate background clutter in the photograph and often gives you clear sky above or behind the subject. Keep the animal on a halter and lead like you would in a show ring. I prefer to use a vertical grip when shooting, a device that's available on most professional quality 35mm cameras. I shoot almost exclusively in the Portrait (vertical) rather than Landscape (horizontal) format, so having a shutter button on the vertical grip allows me to keep my subject perfectly upright rather than canted to the left or right. A daylight flash will help bring out the luster in a suri alpaca, but you will be limited to about 100mm focal length. A high luster suri can fool even the most expensive light meter. When not using a daylight flash, I zoom in on the blanket of the suri, check my meter reading for F stop and shutter speed, then re-compose the photo and shoot at this exposure. While I do rely on the automatic exposure of my camera, especially when I am using it as a spot meter as I described above, I seldom use the automatic focus. Instead, I manually focus on the animals nose. We like to take at least one quality photograph of each alpaca and llama prior to its first shearing