

# ALPACA F. A. Q.

## What are alpacas raised for?

These animals are often raised for pleasure instead of profit. Those without good enough fleece or conformation to be breeding stock are often sold as pets. "Alpacas are very docile," say John and Paige Previte, who raise alpacas at Guardian Angel Alpacas in Brooksville, Florida.



## Do alpacas spit on people?

Alpacas do spit, but unlike their llama cousins they will rarely spit at you. You can get caught in the crossfire if two animals have their eye on the same feed bucket but you really need to aggravate an animal to draw direct fire. There are always exceptions. The spitting is normally used as a pecking order mechanism with other alpacas.

## What is an alpaca used for?

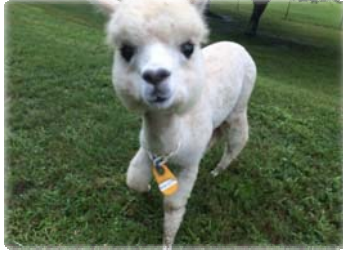
An Alpaca is a member of the Camelid family, descendants of camels, and most closely related to llamas. Alpacas are small, gentle animals raised primarily for their soft, luxurious fiber. Their valuable fleece is harvested annually by shearing them similar to sheep.

## How much room does an alpaca need?

This depends on your specific conditions. An acre of good pasture can support approximately 15 to 20 alpacas.

## How long does an alpaca live?

In the US the lifespan is expected to be between 15 to 20 years. Some of the original imports are in this age range. However, some Alpacas can live well past 20 years of age, and will breed for most of those! Most females can produce 10 - 12 cria in a lifetime, repaying your investment over and over again.



### How many babies does an alpaca have?

Alpacas almost always deliver one baby called a cria. Twins are extremely rare and many times don't survive.

### What is the gestation period for an alpaca?

Gestation is approximately 11-1/2 months. This can vary by a month or more. Since alpacas are induced ovulations, the breedings are timed for delivery to occur when the weather is most favorable.

### How big does an alpaca get?

Crias are usually between 10 and 22 pounds. Full grown animals can range from 130 to 170 pounds with large males at the high end.

### Are alpacas difficult to handle?

Alpacas are generally easy to handle. It is not unusual to see a small child putting a full grown male through the paces of an obstacle course. Pregnant females are a little more difficult to handle but can be easily managed by adults. There are those animals that just don't like to be handled which require an experienced handler.

### What colors do alpacas come in?

Alpacas come in over 130 distinct colors ranging from black to white, dark brown to cream, and several shades of silver. The ability to produce an almost limitless color palette with no dye is a primary advantage of alpaca fiber. Still, the ability to dye the fiber is important and is why white is the predominant color in both South and North America.

### Do alpacas bite?

Alpacas only have teeth in the bottom jaw with a hard pallet on the top so they can't really bite you and probably would not try.

### Are there tax advantages to owning alpacas?

There are numerous potential tax advantages to owning alpacas depending on how you choose to be involved and your specific situation. You should consult a tax accountant who is knowledgeable in the farm tax code to determine how you would be affected.



### What is the difference between a fiber animal and a pet?

A Fiber Animal produces high quality fiber in sufficient quantity to make a profit. It may have a conformational defect or some other minor issue that keeps it from doing well in the show ring. A pet does not produce high quality fiber and may also have a slight conformational issue.

### What is a Suri alpaca?

The suri (pronounced "sir' ee") is distinguished from the huacaya alpaca by its unique fiber characteristics. The fiber grows parallel to the body while hanging in long, separate, non-crimped locks. Suri fiber locks are made up of high-luster fibers and drapes down the sides of the body in a twisted or flat form of various size. Suri fiber has excellent luster, a slick hand, and extreme softness. Suris are adaptable to both hot and cold climates and have extraordinary intelligence, vigor, ease of pregnancy, delivery, breeding, and care.

The fashion industry, spinner, and weavers covet suri fiber for its cashmere-like softness, silky luster, warmth, lightness, and durability, which far exceeds sheep's wool. Its fiber comes in many different colors and can be dyed. Suri fiber can blend with wool, silk, and other high-quality fibers and can be knitted, crocheted, or woven.



Suri alpacas are extremely rare. They represent only a very small percentage of the world's alpaca population. In North America, their present population is approximately ten percent of all North American alpacas and will never increase beyond this percentage. We believe that the suri alpaca is a safe investment because of its rarity and inherent beauty.

The suri is a rare phenotype of alpaca which had been declining in South America. They appear to be making an extraordinary comeback in the "newer" countries which are breeding them, such as the USA. Though often white, increasing colors are being bred. One of their charms is their extremely silky, soft fleece. There is no crimp in their fiber, but their hair falls in pencil locks, making these animals look like they have dreadlocks or a wet perm.



### What is a Huacaya alpaca?



The huacaya alpaca is characterized by a fiber that is dense, crimped, and woolly in appearance. This abundant coverage gives the huacaya a soft and huggable look and explains the overwhelming popularity the huacaya enjoys worldwide. Ninety percent of the North American alpaca herd consists of huacayas, and this plurality will remain virtually unchanged in the decades that lie ahead.

Like the suri, the huacaya is a hardy and healthy animal that produces a fine and highly-prized fiber. The new and burgeoning alpaca fiber movement will be literally built on the backs of these plush and puffy little "teddy bears."

