



Before Searching for an Alpaca



1. Decide what you will be using your alpacas for. Some ideas are:

- ✓ Breeding
- ✓ Fiber (sales of raw or skirted fleeces)
- ✓ Therapy
- ✓ Education (including 4H for kids)
- ✓ Supplying top quality fertilizer to Greenhouses
- ✓ The creation and sale of End Use Products (scarves, mittens, blankets, pillows, in-soles, yarns, rugs, weed-block, fiber arts)

2. If you plan on breeding, decide whether you want to breed right away or wait until you are a bit more established and comfortable with alpacas.



- ✓ If you want to get a head start, purchase females that are pregnant.
- ✓ If you plan on establishing a breeding farm, purchase young females and a herd sire (stud male alpaca), and perhaps a gelding (castrated male) to keep the stud company and later to babysit the weaning cria (alpaca offspring). You could also wait to buy a herd sire until you are ready for breeding.

3. Make sure you have enough fenced-in land for your alpaca.

- ✓ You need at least one acre for every five to ten alpacas. The fence needs to be strong, at least four and a half to five feet tall, and the openings should be no more than four inches apart, otherwise the alpacas could possibly break the



fence, jump over it, hurt their necks, get their head stuck or squeeze through to the other side. An even bigger reason to make sure your fences is secure and of proper materials is because wandering dogs and coyotes can be a danger to alpacas. Alpacas don't generally want to escape from the security of their herd and farm, however stray dogs form packs and have been known to get into alpaca yards and attack, even kill entire herds of alpacas not adequately fenced and guarded.



4. Sow the land with hay, grass, etc. or buy your hay pre-cut.

Additionally, to keep them healthy, you will also need to add to your alpaca's diet:

- ✓ Vitamin supplements
- ✓ Grain



5. Figure out how your alpacas are going to get water:

- ✓ A natural source is ideal, but harder to find. Opt for streams and small rivers, rather than ponds as the water can get stagnant quickly. Better still, five gallon buckets refreshed with clean water daily is the best way to assure your animals are getting enough of good, clean water and will be a reminder to regularly scrub and clean the buckets. Large tubs are easy to ignore, leading to algae, slime build up, and a growth of parasites that can make your alpaca sick.



- ✓ Man-made streams. These cost more, but are worth it in the end.

- ✓ A "self-watered" trough. Though these do not cost as much as a man-made stream, they are still a little costly. They can be hooked up to a hose and set on a timer to fill the trough or bowls at specific times of the day, and are convenient too.



- ✓ A regular water trough. This is the least expensive, but you will have to fill it up at least twice a day with a hose or bucket depending on how many alpacas are drinking from it.



6. Set up some form of shelter for your alpaca.

- ✓ It must have adequate protection from the wind, sun, snow and rain, and be capable of keeping your alpaca warm and dry in the winter and cool in the summer. A three-sided shelter facing east or south works well or a barn where the alpacas have a choice to go in or stay out in adjoining paddocks.



Purchase the Equipment



1. Unless you plan on fighting your alpaca every time you need to take it someplace, like the vet, you need to purchase a good halter and know how to properly fit it on your alpaca. If your alpaca is not broken into a halter, you will either have to train it yourself or hire a trainer to do it for you. An alpaca halter should fit snugly, with the nose band high on the bridge near the alpaca's eyes, not low or loose, as is the case with horses or cows in halter.

2. Get a sturdy feeding trough/container. Alpacas require about 3' of space of area to eat within in order to keep them from feeling over-crowded and as if their food supply is threatened by the presence of the other alpacas in its group. Further, alpacas are smart, and can tip a regular feeding trough/container over easily. Another idea that works well is the installation of 8' or 10' vinyl gutters affixed to the fences, gates and/or sides of your buildings such that you can grain them with only one layer of grain or pellets, reducing the chance for the animals to gobble up too much food too quickly and choke. Shallow, sturdy rubber feeding bowls work well, too.



3. You will need a farm utility vehicle and/or small to mid-sized, reliable farm tractor with a loader.

4. Get a garden tractor and/or brush hog for mowing around the farm but also in your alpacas' grazing fields.



5.

You will need a set of "paca-poop-pick-up" tools, such as rakes, shovels and scoopers, along with a cart or wheelbarrow or two to haul the muck away to the compost heap.



6.

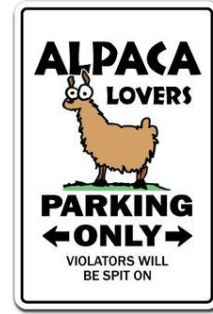
An alpaca First Aid Kit is a must for routine care but also in case of emergencies. Ask your vet what you should keep on hand, however, here are a few suggestions:



- Large bandages
- Splints
- Aspirator Bulb
- Bottle of Saline Solution
- Natural Tears
- Tube of Terramycin ointment (for the eyes)
- Alcohol for sterilization
- Safeguard liquid or paste (or Panacur, some brand of Fenbendazole)
- Vitamin B Complex
- First-Aid Gauze and Tape, Pads and Cotton
- A chute, tie-down system or other alpaca-specific device designed for restraining your alpaca, if necessary
- A thermometer
- A stethoscope
- Vaseline or other lubricant
- Sterile gloves (latex or other synthetic)
- Probiotics or all natural, plain yogurt
- A llama tape or scale to track the animals' weights and body condition
- Novalsan or Betadine
- Corid (for treatment of coccidia when it arises)
- Ivomec, Ivermectin or other similar worming treatment/medication
- L.A. 200 broad spectrum antibiotic (found in most farm supply stores)



Locate Your Alpaca



1. Be ready to spend a little money. A quality alpaca is rarely cheap, but you don't have to buy a million dollar show breeder.



2. Here are some places that you can look:

- ✓ Alpaca breeders or farms
- ✓ Online sites and ads
- ✓ Newspaper ads
- ✓ Llama breeders or farms. Often times they will know places where you can purchase alpacas.



- ✓ A reputable Alpaca Agent or Broker. There are only a couple of true, full-time professionals specializing in this service in the alpaca industry, and they are real advocates for buyers while providing a valuable service to the seller/owners. The best brokers are experienced alpaca farmers that are also well connected to breeders all over the United States. They can help you find the animals with the genes that will get you closer to your goals a whole lot faster than you might otherwise. Working with one will save you a lot of time and money in the long run because they are usually selling other people's animals and want to see you get what's best for you.

5 other great things to do before you buy an alpaca

1. Visit an alpaca farm or ranch in your area and learn as much as you can about them from other alpaca farmers.
2. Join the National Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association.
3. Subscribe to a free online alpaca magazine like Alpacas Magazine on eBay, Alpaca World Magazine or Alpaca Culture Magazine. You will find plenty of valuable information about buying, selling and support services.
4. Attend shows, exhibitions and events like open farm days. Regularly visit the AOBA website to get the latest updates on the national conference, other regional educational events and to create your network.
5. Make sure that you have your farm ready for alpacas before you buy them. There are online resources where you can find information on buying, selling and current alpaca prices. You can also find stud services for breeding.

Hope These Help

