

# **NEAOBA 101 Secrets & Helpful Hints of New England Alpaca Farmers**

## **How to use a Dremmel**

Trimming teeth is made fast and easy with a Dremmel! We use a battery-operated model with a diamond wheel. It takes two people - one to hold the alpaca and one to operate the cutter. If the person cutting is right handed stand on the right side of the alpaca facing the same direction as your animal. Place your left arm around the alpaca's neck and your left hand (GLOVED! THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR OBVIOUS REASONS!) with your fingers under the jaw and your thumb in the alpaca's mouth to keep it open and hold the tongue back. With your right hand you can quickly and easily cut the teeth. We have tried many, many ways to cut teeth and this is the easiest, fastest and best method by far. It takes less time and stress to do it than it did to read this!

*Janet Swift*

*Mariah Alpacas*

## **How to herd your Alpacas**

When I attended a shearing clinic at Champlain Valley Alpacas, they showed us how one or two people could very easily herd alpacas without a lot of running and arm waving. Since I am often working alone with my animals, this has made a huge difference. Using long pieces of 3/8" or 1/2" PVC pipe, your "arm span" is significantly increased. You just hold the pipe across your body so that it extends out on each side, and then steer and guide with your "extended arms". The pipe is lightweight, inexpensive and readily available at hardware stores. I have several, and keep them stashed in various paddocks.

*Marcia Humphrey*

*Fancy Fleece Alpacas*

## **How to use a down vest as a cria coat**

Another idea that I read I believe on Alpaca site, is to use a down vest for an animal that needs extra warmth. I had a cria who needed a coat, so I bought a child sized, artificial (saves on cost) down vest. It goes on easily, zipping up over her back, and is washable. By accident I discovered that having a flap inside the zipper helped to keep fleece from getting stuck in the zipper.

*Marcia Humphrey*

*Fancy Fleece Alpacas*

## **How to Stock up on Colostrum**

Alpaca owners could seek out a local goat or llama farmer in their area for colostrum and keep this in their freeze. It's important to have this on hand if and when you need it rather than scrambling when the need arises. Just remember to date it and replace it when needed. I also believe in having a feeding tube on hand sterilized and ready to use.

*Shelley Riley*

*Golden Touch Farms*

## **How to feed the small herd**

What eager little piggies our alpacas are at feeding time - jostling around to see who will get to the food first. We have tried lots of techniques to assure that each alpaca gets exactly what we want them to get without having them all go to separate feeding pens (another option). We learned which pairs eat well together but need to be separated from the herd and made three catch pens. A few go in each and the rest remain in the main paddock area. We have some slow eaters and we've found that it is best to separate them to assure that they are not bullied away from their meals by the more aggressive animals. I built a carry box (like a tool carrier) that would fit a dozen coffee cans lined up in separated bins (kind of like an egg case but with a flat bottom of course). When we feed the herd, we get them all situated in their

pens. Back in the barn, we measure out the feed, vitamins and whatever else we are giving them, into their individual coffee can. Then walk to each feeding station and dump the contents of the can into their feed buckets. This method also proved invaluable while Abby was away and I had to do the morning feeding and still be on time for my teaching job at 7:15. I would make up all the feeding units the night before, after the evening feeding, which helped expedite the process in the morning.

*John & Abby Fitzgerald  
Blueberry Farm Alpacas, LLC*

## **How to water more effectively**

During the 3 non-freezing seasons I use a Gardeners Supply 75' coiled hose. It stretches to all my water buckets for filling and then, in literally seconds, recoils and lays in 3 wire holders attached to the wall next to the pump. (The holders can also be purchased from Gardeners.... one holder per 25' of hose.) No more hose laying on the barn floor or winding up on a round hose holder. In the winter, I use a large watering can to fill the heated buckets, which is easier to pour than a regular bucket and eliminates the need to carry the clumsy heated buckets with electric cords attached.

For cleaning my water buckets...I use a hand strainer to scoop out any hay in the bucket when just topping it off with water. For cleaning the buckets, I use the type of toilet brush with an extra small brush attached. The smaller brush gets into the inside edges around the bottom and cleans any dirt that may have collected there.

*Deanna D. Britton  
Snowflake Farms, LLC*

## **How to reconfigure with those green panels**

A “secret” we now know here is “you can never have too many green panels!” We have found them indispensable as we use them to reconfigure our barn in minutes. We use them inside the barn, and attach them to the walls on a hinge they can they be swung like a gate into any direction and form any kind of stall we need. On a growing farm, as needs change; separating animals can be a real challenge. However we have found having these panels makes it super easy. As babies are weaned, they love being close to mom and touching noses, but still separate enough to encourage independence. These panels are lightweight, and easy to move! And we don't even sell them!

*Val & Gary Newell  
Crown Point Alpacas*

## **Overhangs and Storm**

Living on the coast, we are faced with severe Nor'easters through all seasons. Our barn faces south and has a 20' by 8' overhang on the north side. The coldest winds come in from the north and northwest, so the overhang is exposed to wind driven snow and rain in most of the severe storms. This year I fastened tarps that clip onto the overhang. Depending on the wind direction, I can batten down the entire overhang, or fold back a triangular flap to make a door, or roll up or remove the tarps for good weather. When closed the tarps allow light into the overhang. They are a great improvement over past attempts using plywood. A bonus has been the crias getting used to walking through a tarp doorway and not being frightened by the sound of it rustling in the wind. A good confidence builder for performance classes at shows.

*Sea Hill Farm*

## **How to Calm an Alpaca**

Holding an Alpaca at the base of the ear, and gently massaging the area around the base seems to have a calming effect. I grabbed my imported Mom by the ear to hold her head steady for medication and noticed she seemed to calm down and tolerate whatever I was doing. I have experimented on several animals and am now reasonably sure that holding the ear and massaging the base seems to calm the wildest Alpaca. My

wild import now tolerates hot cloths (for draining a painful abscess) on her chin and just stands calmly or cushes and tolerates this unnatural interaction with humans.

*Dick and Marcia Benton*

*Blue Lake Alpacas*

## **How to assist mom in weaning baby**

One tip we have for small alpaca breeders that don't have the space to separate moms from their weanlings.

Sometimes a weanling will insist on nursing or is so persistent that the Mom allows it to nurse. We have also a Mom who absorbed the fetus and encouraged its previous cria to begin nursing again, especially when all the other moms in the paddock were have new babies. If the farm can't separate them because of lack of space, we have been successful at deterring the nursing by applying Bag Bam to teats of Mom. You don't need very much, just a swipe, baby hates it. You only need to apply every other day, but you must be diligent at this for a week or more, baby will continue to check. The position of the teat on Mom is tucked up enough that the Bag Bam doesn't make any mess. Like I said before, only a little dab will do.

*Doris Randall,*

*Randall Stick Park*

## **How to help adjust your animals for shows**

We have a radio playing in the barn 24/7. We change the stations often, and we turn it up when doing chores. This helps get them used to loud speakers, and sounds of commotion.

We have neighbors that have a day school, and we have them come over to visit the animals and this gets them used to some of the mauling, flailing hands and folks poking that may happen at a show. Ask a grade school k-4 to come on a field trip.

We get them used to the trailer by taking them walking around it and in it, and take them for several short rides with a buddy, it will help them when they have venture out on their own.

*Dean & Barbie Tilton*

*Someday Farm Alpacas*

## **How to use carabiners on your farm**

We have discovered that there are an amazing amount of creative things you can do in the barn with carabiners. You can buy these at any Wal-Mart in the camping section. They come in bright colors and are somewhat oblong shaped with a spring clip that opens and closes. They are strong enough to use for hanging buckets, hay feeders, putting up tarps to hook eyes, etc. We can't keep enough of them in stock!

*Kate Lathrop*

*Great Rock Alpacas*

## **How to get those pictures**

"A picture is worth a thousand words." One of the toughest tasks we had when we first started developing a marketing plan was the total lack of good graphics to use in building websites and other marketing collaterals. It seemed that no matter how many times I chased around the pastures with camera in tow, nothing of note ever presented itself. Then my astute partner, after a day of farm visits by families with children, mentioned that we should be taking pictures through the course of these visits. We began looking for those "special" moments - unavoidable with small children and cute alpacas. As well, during the visit, securing a signed release becomes important - what better time? And you don't want to have to chase down these folks two years later to a get that release signed. Getting related contact information, a critical key to growing your business, is also really easy at this time. Everyone is feeling good after spending some quality time with your herd, and most everyone gives this personal information freely. Don't abuse this trust - another topic for another time.

Grab as many quality pics as you can to build a library of custom, personal to the farm, fresh marketing ammunition. Stash them away until your next brainstorming session, and then you will be better prepared to produce fast, effective materials to carry your message forward.

*Jay Couture & Jo-Ellyn Harris  
Destiny's Farm LLC*

## **How to keep weight on**

Feeding problems? Trying to keep weight on your animals in the winter cold? Try this!

After the animals cannot graze in the pasture in the fall, we begin to supplement their normal grain with alfalfa pellets. I usually mix the alfalfa pellets with the regular alpaca feed in a 3-to-1 or 4-to-1 ratio, depending on your animals feed habits. I have a standing order at my local feed store for a certain number of bags per month thru the winter. I slowly cut back the alfalfa as the grass comes in again in the spring. At first, your animals may not like the alfalfa, but if you introduce it slowly, they will gradually catch on. Some of my adult males still will not eat it, but my lactating and pregnant females love it. The first year I tried this, it took them awhile to like them, after that, each year, there was no hesitation! It has helped my females hold their body weight and that in turn helps them stay warmer through the bitter cold. It's gets really cold here in Lancaster...-34F a few days this year!!

*Janice A Thompson*

*Darron Spalty*

*New Millennium Alpaca Farm*

## **How to better Drive By Breedings**

We encourage and offer a discount to our drive-by breeding customers. At a recent vet seminar by Dr. Ahmed Tibary, we confirmed some facts that we had already been given by our own vet. **Did You Know That It Takes ...**

- \* 30 minutes to 1 hour after breeding for the female to produce the hormone (LH) that is necessary for ovulation to occur.

- \* 36-48 hours post breeding for the mature follicle to burst (for ovulation to occur).

- \* 5-6 days post breeding for the fertilized egg to reach the uterus.

Thus, travel stress may not be an issue for quite a few days. Dr. Tibary recommended that the female, however, should not be transported for about an hour after breeding while her system is producing LH.

### **Why Consider "Drive By" Breedings?**

Consider them first and foremost, for the health and well being of your female alpaca, the cria by her side and the other members of both herds.

### **Herd Health**

In addition to the required transport papers and current vaccines/worming, we request a statement of a full health/condition/fecal exam (including external parasites) & a reproductive exam - even on maidens, which would also be checked for a persistent hymen.

*Linda & Bill Ley*

*Parris Hill Farm*

## **How to protect your herd**

We use a llama as a livestock guard. She is very attentive and will pace the fence line if she is not sure about something she sees. If she feels there may be a possible threat, she will give out a warning sound and all the alpacas will stop what they are doing and look at her. If she still feels a threat, she will give the warning again and all the alpacas will come to her. If the llama moves towards the barn while giving the warning sound, all the alpacas will head into the barn. She has been very effective and fits in well with the herd.

*Debra & Glenn Johnson*

*Chee Chee Mamook Farm*

## **How to get inexpensive feed troughs**

Grain troughs- plastic guttering makes a great and inexpensive trough for feeding grain to your alpacas. It is easily nailed to the wall of the barn - the end caps prevent spillage and cover the slightly sharp edges.

*Marcia MacDonald*

## *Long Plains Alpacas*

### **How to herd your Alpacas**

When I attended a shearing clinic at Champlain Valley Alpacas, they showed us how one or two people could very easily herd alpacas without a lot of running and arm waving. Since I am often working alone with my animals, this has made a huge difference. Using long pieces of 3/8" or 1/2" PVC pipe, your "arm span" is significantly increased. You just hold the pipe across your body so that it extends out on each side, and then steer and guide with your "extended arms". The pipe is lightweight, inexpensive and readily available at hardware stores. I have several, and keep them stashed in various paddocks.

*Marcia Humphrey*

*Fancy Fleece Alpacas*

### **How to safely lower hay bales.**

I didn't like lugging bales of hay downstairs from the hayloft, but when I dropped them from above I was afraid I would hit a dog or child—and, the alpacas didn't like the kaboom! My ever-resourceful husband, Hugh, scrounged around the cellar and found a block and tackle, an old mountaineering rope, and a carabiner. Now I clip the caribiner to one of the bale strings and gently lower the bale to the barn floor below.

*Pamela Hardwood*

*Longwoods Alpaca Farm*

### **How to Prevent Choking on Feed**

If anyone has a problem with over aggressive eaters and are worried about choking simply put rocks (4"-5") in the feed pans or trough this will slow down eating and help prevent choking.

*Shelley Riley*

*Golden Touch Farms*

### **How to give shots alone**

Part of our halter training procedure starts with tying the weanling to an 18" bungee cord. There are many benefits to training an alpaca by the use of this method, but I find it is also training grounds for the handler. If one allowed the alpaca to reach the end of the cord and stepped your knee in front of his chest and leaned over the alpaca, it becomes the perfect opportunity to administer a shot. This can be done from either side. Once you learn this, you can just as easily do the same thing in an open area with no restraints. I find this method much easier to do alone without the need for someone to hold the alpaca.

*Mike Tierney*

*Maple Brook Farm*

### **How to get rid of insects, and gain a companion**

Chickens, guinea fowl, ducks or geese make great companions for your alpacas. They devour insects and clean the manure piles of fly larvae. Yes they are a bit messy but since your cleaning up anyway.... the amazing job they do for insect and fly control plus the added bonus of fresh eggs is well worth it.

*Marcia MacDonald*

*Long Plains Alpacas*

### **How to wrap an Umbilicus Hernia**

From time to time we'll have a cria born with a slight umbilicus hernia. We use duct tape and a quarter to correct this. Massage the protruding hernia back into the belly. Place a quarter over the spot and take a 12-inch piece of duct tape centered over the quarter around the crias mid section. Now take a longer piece of duct tape (long enough to completely "belt" the cria) and wrap it entirely around the mid section making

sure to pull it snug but not too tight. We leave this "belt" on for about two weeks. At the end of two weeks DON'T cut the tape out!!! That will leave a ring in the fleece! Loosen the tape at the top and leave it. Very soon, in just a matter of days, the tape will get looser in the dust, rain and every day life of the cria. When it's loose enough we simply tug the tape off. Work it slowly around pulling the tape off in little sections while you hold sections of fleece in the other hand. It sounds tedious but it really isn't. We have had tremendous success with this method.

*Janet Swift  
Mariah Alpacas*

## **How To Feed The Lowest On The Totem Pole.**

In every herd there is an alpaca or two who are the lowest on the totem pole in the herd hierarchy. If you are concerned about this lowly alpaca getting his/her share of grain, try doing what we've done. You put out one more feed-dish of grain than there are alpacas. Then if Miss Lowly Girl gets chased out of each dish as she goes to it, there is still an extra dish that is free and eventually she'll get her share.

*Lana Nickerson & Dick Dole  
Foss Mountain Farm Alpacas & Ragdoll Cats*

## **How To Scratch an Alpacas Back**

When the local Town was getting ready to change their street broom we asked for the worn out broom. Hung it on a rod and it is ideal for the alpacas to scratch themselves. Round and about 4 feet tall it gets all areas of "itches."

*Linda Adelman  
Six Paca Farm*

## **How to label your products**

We find many customer or visitors prefer to buy a product with the name and picture of an alpaca they just have been introduced to.

*Donna & Bob Ferrera  
Oakhill Alpaca Ranch*

## **How to keep your water buckets fresh in winter**

One tip that may help in this weather is: put a heated bucket in the stall, add a little water (about 3 inches) then put a second bucket into the heated bucket that contains the drinking water for the alpacas. That way, emptying the drinking water and refilling with fresh water is not a hassle (unplugging the cord of the heated bucket, etc).

*Roxanna Smolowitz,  
Coonamesett Farm*

## **How to keep your water fresh and clean.**

We are fanatics about clean fresh water for all of the animals on our farm. Obviously, it is too wasteful to dump out 300 gallons of water every day, so we use 100 gallon troughs made by Rubbermaid that are a light gray in color. We prefer the light gray to the black because we can instantly determine if the troughs need to be emptied and scrubbed. The smallest amount of algae stands out like a neon sign! Another trick we use between trough scrubbing is a fish tank net to scoop out leaves, acorns and any other debris that may find its way into the water. Much easier than chasing all those oak leaves around in the water during the fall! We also use 5 gallon yellow water buckets in our barns. The bright yellow allows us to see with a quick glance if the buckets and water are clean.

*Leslie Bacon  
Stonewall Farm Alpacas*

## **How to Keep your *Heated* Water Buckets from Freezing in Sub Zero Weather.**

In central Maine winter temperatures can plummet to the single digits and below. Factor in a severe wind of 20-50+mph and the wind chill readings are truly staggering. We have employed heated buckets for years and have generally been satisfied with their performance but even they can reach their limits in conditions like these. We have found that sheltering the buckets from the wind by placing them adjacent to or inside the shelter increases their reliability significantly. If the buckets happen to be placed away from the shelters then bank them with snow. This is a simple, quick method that is extremely effective. Believe it or not, we have been forced to bank our buckets that are already inside the shelters! To our amazement the alpacas manage to handle these severe cold snaps in stride. I guess winter wind is the price we pay for receiving those cool summer breezes here on the ridge.

*Dawn & John Brooker*

*Fiber Fields Alpaca Farm*

## **How To Avoid Being In The Crossfire.**

We have a couple of food-aggressive alpacas in our girls' barn that chase me around when I'm putting out grain. Since they are 'fighting' over who gets to the food first, there is a lot of spitting going on and I'm in the crossfire! So to avoid being chased around, I herd them all out of the barn, close the doors and let them back in after the grain is out. They are so used to this routine that they all come out of the barn automatically now when I come down at feeding time. No more alpaca-piranhas breathing down my neck!

*Lana Nickerson & Dick Dole*

*Foss Mountain Farm Alpacas & Ragdoll Cats*