

## **How to Feed from Bowls**

We bowl feed our alpacas, rather than trough feed them. We feed them Blue Seal's Norm Evans Formula. The nursing moms get Gestation & Lactation. The crias and weanlings also get Gestation & Lactation until one year old. The amount is determined by weight and age. Everyone else gets the Maintenance Formula. As you can see, trough feeding would be impossible with this feeding program. Slow eaters are together and with green panels and gates, we can put 2-3 alpacas in each section. The bowls are marked with their names so that each animal gets his/her rationed formula. At feeding time the gates are opened and each alpaca runs to his/her "spot," even the two-month-old crias. We currently have 14 alpacas and will just add extra "spots" as we need them. Another thing that we do is use commands for the alpacas. We use "stand" when we need to trap or halter. If an alpaca crowds another alpaca or wants to enter another alpaca's eating spot, we say, "back." The alpaca will back up. When we need to get by an alpaca, particularly when they are all just standing around the paddock, we say, "excuse me" and they move out of the way – I'm not kidding!

*Geri and Frank Gabriel*

*Lakeside Alpaca Farm*

## **How to keep an Alpaca Cleaner for Shearing Day**

We lay a lumber cover; it's like a big plastic tarp, in the barn. This is placed in a 12x12 stall where the alpacas have to stand on it; about a month before shearing day. This has one edge folded under so they still can relieve themselves in their area-But; they have to be closed in the stall on top of it. This keeps them from getting any sawdust, hay, etc. into their fleece. They get turned out during the day into their paddock area, and at night they are closed in the barn and have to stay on this tarp. It gets swept off each morning- so anything that comes off them in the night is removed.

This also is a great aid in getting them set for obstacles in the show ring!

*Dean & Barbie Tilton*

*Someday Farm Alpacas*

## **How to get ready to give Shots**

I have a 10x12x12 piece of corrugated cardboard (a shoebox could work here) that I have punched holes into (using scissors to start the hole, rotate the blade around to make the hole) that hold the syringes upright. (Note: The hole should be just big enough to slide the syringe in-with needle cap on-but, small enough to hold the suspended syringe in the hole.

Above each hole I have written each alpaca's name. I weigh the alpacas a few days before I plan to give shots, then draw the shots and store the syringe in the cardboard. At shot time, I can carry the cardboard with me in the barn so everyone's shot is handy, and as each alpaca is caught up, I select their syringe and administer the shot. Shots go quickly and easily, and it's easier over before they knew it had started.

*Catherine Conner*

*Ibiwisi Alpacas*

## **How to Simplify Giving those Shots**

To give any injections, we put the herd in a holding pen. With them all together in a small area they are easy to catch!

*Brenda & Tom Lawrence*

*Sweet Maple Alpacas*

## **How to Add to the Quality of the Fleece**

You can change the quality of fiber by feeding more protein in the form of alfalfa. I do it in the winter mainly to because their systems have to work harder on cold days to keep them warm and as a bonus I have found that their fleeces are finer at shearing time. I know some people use cracked corn in the winter but I like alfalfa. (Please check with vet, as there are mixed thoughts on both supplements)

*D. Rose*

*Moonlight Rose Alpacas*

## **How to help yourself at tax time**

If during the year you keep an expandable folder with a section for each category you use on your Schedule F deductions and file paid bills and receipts accordingly, they are all easily accessible if you need for reference at tax time or for audit purposes.

Roy & Cindy St. George  
Oak Ridge Alpacas

## **How to bring water to a show**

When traveling we bring water in 5 gallon pails with a spicket and lids-you can get these from a beer supply store. If you bring one with a spicket and a bungee cord, you can hang it at the top of the pen, with a regular bucket under it. Only fill the bucket half way this keeps it fresher and cleaner without waste. Having it above your bucket saves you from hauling buckets around, simply turn on the spicket. Bring another 5 gallon water bucket with ice from home in the water-keeps it cold and you dump from here into the spicket pale when low.

*Dean & Barbie Tilton*  
*Someday Farm Alpacas*

## **How to haul Your Alpaca stuff**

Use a utility ice-fishing sled to haul poop, hay, grain, etc.

*Howard & Linda Dix*  
*Summerhill Alpacas, LTD.*

## **How to work your breeding Plan**

I use the three consecutive day then skip a week method and it has worked every time. I then spit test once a week for eight weeks then test once a month for the next three months. NOTE: There are many different theories here about breeding, study up, ask your vet, and do what works for your farm.

*D. Rose*  
*Moonlight Rose Alpacas*

## **How to store hay in a paddock**

I have also found that large plastic containers with lids and wheels are convenient hay holders. I found large ones at Wal-Mart that fit a bale (or most of one), and can be covered if necessary, and easily wheeled within a stall or paddock. My clever llama has figured out how to open the latches though - so an additional bungee may be necessary if you have clever and hungry critters.

Marcia Humphrey  
Fancy Fleece Alpacas

## **How to make shearing smoother**

Shearing Tips: (Attend a shearing school) and new cutters and combs are often not truly sharp and need to be hand sharpened for those good cuts.

If your equipment is pulling as you are shearing, it is time to change the blade set. This is when you get nicks, because you are pulling the skin up into the combs...

This can also happen with very finely fleeced animals, even with newly sharpened equipment. I experienced this while shearing on another farm in Connecticut with very fine fleeces. (Esp. cria) My equipment simply was not sharp enough. You have to just keep changing 'til you get a sharp enough set, if cranking down doesn't solve it.

The very best Shearer's know this and will carry their own sharpening stuff. However- there are a few of the very best sharpeners out there too!

*Les*  
*Champlain Valley Alpacas*

## **How to save time with opening and closing gates**

Use quick latches on your heavy traffic gates, they cost \$3-4.00 apiece and they save time...The latches are basically 'u-shaped' hooks attached to a 'z' chain that connects around the swinging gate. One side of the hook slips into a metal eye on the fence post. The o-ring attaches to the other side of the u-shaped hook dropping down against the first side simply by gravity. Once in place, the latch is in the way. These quick latches can be opened one handed, by squeezing the o-ring up and slipping the hook out of the eye. This is very handy when you are carrying a bale of hay or a water bucket leaving you one handed.

*Norman A. Nadeau*

*SunsetHill, llc*

## **How to treat your alpacas.**

Use fig newtons for treats! Alpacas love them, and they become quit friendly towards humans. Fig Newtons are a nutritious (you can touble check with your own vet) treat but don't over do it-, no more than 5 a day; you can break them into quarters so the feeding and petting sessions last longer, this makes a greater experience for newcomers in our industry...

*Norman A. Nadeau*

*SunsetHill, llc*

## **How to Store Fiber**

When either storing fiber, or sending it out to be processed keep it in 100 lb. nylon grain bags, possibly you can get these at your feed store. Using these grain bags allows the fiber to breathe and help prevent sweating as plastic bags do and also when shipping significantly cuts down on the cost. These bags are easily sealed by hand

sewing or simply taping with packing tape.

*Shelley Riley*

*Golden Touch Farms*

## **How to rid of those grain bags**

Recycle! The grain bags pile up fast but the good news is that they are recyclable- so when you are going to the recycling bin take them with you.

*Marcia MacDonald*

*Long Plains Alpacas*

## **How to get a poop spot-on the spot- at a show!**

To let your alpacas know where to go when away at a show put a dirty cloth (one that has spent a little time in the poop spot, dried of course) where you want them to go. They will sniff this and be relieved to know where to go as well as it smells of home. Just put it in a small bag, which you can use to pick it up with.

*Deb Wright*

*Wright Choice Alpacas*

## **How to get help with your composting manure**

Composting is another great way to recycle and will result in a product that you can use or resell. If you are unsure of what to do to recycle your manure contact your local county extension service for help. A pile of manure left alone will eventually break down but just by occasionally turning your pile and wetting it when it gets dry will speed up the microbial process.

*Marcia MacDonald*

*Long Plains Alpacas*

## **How to help offset costs on your farm**

Introducing a Farm Store will allow you to expose many people to alpacas to the value of their fiber and can help offset the cost of routine alpaca care, feed and sometimes a little more.

*Donna & Bob Ferrera*  
*Oakhill Alpaca Ranch*

### **How to make a temporary chute**

We built our own chute from chain link fence parts, plywood and some 2x4's. We were new to alpacas at the time and had already spent a lot of money on barns, fencing and useful gadgets. We decided to make a temporary chute that would be cost effective and still help us handle the few animals that we had. We always planned to upgrade when we had more animals. Ironically, we never found the need to upgrade. As it turns out, we learned a lot more about animal handling and found that we didn't use the chute very often. For the few times that we still use it, it works great. When not in use, it can be partially disassembled and folded up for storage.

*Laura & Michael Busky*  
*North Brook Farm Alpacas & HandWovens*

### **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 keep cria coats on**

We found through time that the jackets for crias lose their velcro capability---so we started using the large diaper pins to secure them. No more jackets found on the floor every am from others picking at them.-----They are very safe and other crias cannot pick them off.—

*Penny Mullen*  
*Southwind Farms*

### **How to remember what to bring to a show**

Getting ready for a show can be a crazy time and trying to remember all the many things needed provides too much opportunity to overlook a much-needed items. We created a Show List that includes everything we could think of that we might need to bring to a show. When it comes time to pack, we look at the list. We may decide that we don't need to bring a certain item on the list to a particular show, but it serves as a great reminder. We rely on the list so much that we once forgot to bring our fleece competition because it wasn't yet on the list! You can bet we added it when we got home. Now, we may not always have fleece to bring, but we always have a reminder!

*Ed & Deb Brattan*  
*Maple View Farm Alpacas*

### **How to organize your shearing setup**

At shearing time, the shearer typically wants to move as quickly as possible from animal to animal. This leaves little opportunity to label the fleece bags properly during the shearing process. Instead, I create labels for each animal ahead of time using a label template on my PC.

I change just a few key fields (name, color) and quickly have 3 labels specifically for that animal; one each for the blanket, seconds and thirds. As each animal is stretched to begin shearing, I place the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bags in large kitchen sized trashcans labeled for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>s. You want the cans labeled because the bag label won't readily be seen and you want to be able to quickly and easily determine which bag to place the fleece in as it comes off the animal. And, the cans are easy to move around where you need them as you move around the animal to shear. When finished, simply remove the bags and replace with bags for the next animal.

*Ed & Deb Brattan*  
*Maple View Farm Alpacas*

## **How to stay clean**

When shoveling poop, please be sure to be nice to your spouse, especially if she has the shovel!!

*Roy & Cindy St. George*

*Oak Ridge Alpacas*

## **How to help prepare for a show**

Always plan ahead with registering animals. Shows come up fast, send in registrations at least 2 months before the show you are entering.

*Roy & Cindy St. George*

*Oak Ridge Alpacas*

## **How to be sure your farm is covered**

Make sure you have checked with your insurance agent. Once you are filing a Schedule F, you are running a farm and need a farm insurance policy. A homeowner policy does not give proper coverage for property or liability.

*Roy & Cindy St. George*

*Oak Ridge Alpacas*

## **How to keep your poop spot from eroding**

To keep from eroding your poop spot, put down a stall mat that you have made cuts or drilled holes through. It works best if it lines a depression with stone under it. For greater detail contact me.

*Deb Wright*

*Wright Choice Alpacas*

## **How to Build A Shelter**

When we first started to build the shelter for our girls, we had no idea that the outcome would bring some good and bad results. We had two pregnant girls and one maiden at the time so we decided to make it 16' wide x 12' deep, which would allow us some room to grow. We wanted it light and airy so we added a large window on each wall with hinged covers that we close and latch in the winter. We built a 16' feeder along the back wall to keep the hay dry and off the floor. The feeder was 2' off the ground, had a ¼" wire mesh bottom and extended out from the wall about 20".

The feeder worked great until we started to grow! I then realized that we had some "top" feeders and some "bottom" feeders. Most of the animals would stand at the feeder while they ate. However, some would push down sticking their heads under the feeder above to eat. The end result was a topknot that was packed with very fine hay droppings and whatever else fell in there. It happened so fast that they were packed before we realized we had a problem. The topknots are a nightmare to untangle and I would highly recommend against this type of feeder. We removed ours shortly thereafter and now use outside feeders, which I am still experimenting with.

The unexpected bonus from our window design is for the expectant moms. When our girls are in their last trimester and really don't feel like they can go down that hill to graze, they spend a good part of their day staring out at the herd while staying nice and cool in the barn. They don't seem to feel the separation and are satisfied until the herd returns.

*Geri and Frank Gabriel*

*Lakeside Alpaca Farm*

## **How To Speak to Your Alpacas**

We weigh our crias daily; we follow the same routine. In the beginning we herd them to the scale-Say "Up on the scale" then "stand", in no time at all they will do this with just saying the words.

*Brenda & Tom Lawrence*

*Sweet Maple Alpacas*

## **How to Clean Your Barn Floor**

We found a 'scraper' from Farmtek. It is long handled and has a metal blade. We push it along the floor of the barn and it scrapes everything free. It works better than anything we have tried.

*Brenda & Tom Lawrence*  
*Sweet Maple Alpacas*

### **How to sort fiber at shearing**

When shearing with no time for individual sorting; place fiber in double thick leaf bags – blanket in center, leg and neck in each end.

*John & Lyn Callen*  
*Mettowee Valley Farm*

### **How to teach an Alpaca to Lead**

When training to lead, bring the excess lead around the upper rear legs. If they refuse to walk-give a tug. Seems to work fine!

*Howard & Linda Dix*  
*Summerhill Alpacas, LTD.*