

# WHAT DO YOU NEED IN YOUR BARN BEFORE THE ALPACAS ARRIVE?

By Leslie Bacon, Stonewall Farm Alpacas  
Searsmont, Maine

## A PLAN!

This sounds simple enough – but if you think through every scenario you can think of prior to your alpacas coming home you at least have a starting point to work from and tweak.

## A VET!

Do not wait until you have an emergency to find a vet or get to know a vet! Go meet him/her, or better yet, invite them to your farm so they know where your farm is located and who you are. It's never fun meeting someone for the first time in a crisis situation!! Many vets will not even return an after hours/weekend phone call if you are not an established client.

## HAY

Make finding a great source for quality second-cut hay a top priority. Many good hay suppliers pre-sell their entire crop or are sold out within weeks. Buy more than you think you'll need (plan on at least 10% of the load will not be feedable and allow for waste). It is far better to have hay left over when it's time for the new crop to come in than to run out and try to find more to get you through the season. Trying to find good hay in the middle of winter is right up there with trying to pick the winning lottery numbers!

## GRAIN

Many grain stores do not keep alpaca grain in stock. Talk to your local grain dealer and let him know your feed requirements. Our dealer gets in fresh every time we place an order – which is great; however, again you need to plan ahead. A back-up grain source is always a good idea. I know of one breeder who ran out and her local supplier was unable to fill the order for ten days. This breeder had to drive over 100 miles to get grain. This breeder has not made this mistake since!



## THE BASICS

**Scales** – adult and cria. These are critical. Cria need to be weighed every day for at least the first week of life. A cria not gaining an appropriate amount of weight needs a vet (have you gotten to know your vet yet?!?) We weigh every day until they have doubled their birth weight and then every few days until they reach 50 pounds.

Adults get weighed once a month right before they are due for their worming shots.



Giving shots and/or vaccines without knowing the animals' correct weight is useless. Giving too little does no good and some meds can be toxic if over administered. Knowing the current weight gain/loss of an animal can be an invaluable diagnostic tool for your vet.

**Trailer/Van** – Have a way to get you animal to a vet! Murphy's Law is simple: Your alpaca will get sick when your vet is on vacation and you will have to transport the animal to another vet. It's not a good idea to wait until an emergency arises and not be able to move an animal quickly. Plan ahead!

**Medical Kit** – the basic kit that can be purchased from various alpaca/llama suppliers is a good start. You will undoubtedly add to it as you go along. Check with your vet to see if there are any other items they would like you to keep on hand.

**Emergency Phone Numbers** – Keep a list of numbers in your barn.

- Vet
- Neighboring Alpaca Farms
- Alpaca/Llama Supply companies
- Fencing Company
- Grain Supplier

### Reference Books & Catalogs

Three books that every barn should have on hand –

- Norm Evans, Alpaca Field Manual
- Eric Hoffman, The Complete Alpaca Book
- Smith, Timm & Ling, Llama and Alpaca Neonatal Care

Catalogs

- Ridge Mist Llama Supplies
- Stevens Llamatique
- Useful Llama Products
- Quality Llama Products
- Jeffers
- KV Vet Supply – Master Catalog



Cria coats – rain sheets and lined warm coats  
Adult coats – rain sheets and lined warm coats  
Grain  
Bedding  
Wormers – Ivomec/Dectomax, and Panacur/Safeguard  
Feeding Pans  
Rodent Proof Grain Storage Containers  
Needles/Syringes  
Water buckets/troughs  
Fans/Heaters  
Halters/Leadlines – a set for each animal plus a couple of extra  
Thermometer  
Lubricant – KY Jelly or similar water-based non-spermicidal lubricant  
Toe Nail Clippers  
Hair Dryer  
Clean Terry Cloth Towels

Dung Transport – how are you going to move the dung from your barn, paddock, etc to the farm manure pile? The methods will vary from farm to farm – gator, wheelbarrow, etc. Just remember that after a good rain that dung can get pretty heavy. Also, snow adds another level of difficulty. Plan ahead!

Stone dust – for those lovely craters that get created in your paddock from picking up the communal dung pile.

Heated Water Buckets – a word to the wise – don't wait until the weather turns frigid to get these – many local feed stores sell out before winter and do not automatically re-stock.

Moveable Panels – If you need to create a small area to isolate an animal(s) these are great. They are also very useful as feeding pens.

The list could go on forever, but these are the BASIC items that every new breeder should have and know how to use!



*Stonewall Farm Alpacas, located in Searsmont, Maine, is a full-time alpaca breeding farm. Our breeding program is large enough to offer a varied selection of the finest bloodlines available while still being small enough to provide meticulous care and support.*

185 Pond Road, Searsmont  
207-342-2246

[www.stonewallfarmalpacas.com](http://www.stonewallfarmalpacas.com)