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Alpaca Husbandry

We are seeing an increasing number of alpacas as these charismatic camelids become more popular in the UK. Most common diseases can be avoided through good management and a few preventative treatments. Contact us if you would like a personalised alpaca health plan.



- **Vaccination** against Clostridial diseases – we recommend that all alpacas are regularly vaccinated. We can supply this and advise on the dosing schedule.
- **Vitamin D supplementation** - Alpacas require vitamin D supplementation in the UK due to the low levels of UV light compared to their native South America. Vitamin D deficiency can lead to skeletal abnormalities and rickets. Oral supplements are available but their absorption can be variable, so we recommend using injectable vitamin D (we stock Hipravit ADE).
- **Worming** – the need to worm your alpacas, and how frequently, will depend on the stocking density and whether or not clean grazing is available. We can perform faecal egg counts to gain an idea of when the worm risk periods are for your herd, and we would recommend doing this every 3 months initially. If worm eggs are found then we can advise on what treatment to use.
- **Nutrition** – pasture and hay will usually satisfy the maintenance requirements of alpacas. Long-stemmed fibre greater than 4cm length is required to keep the stomach functioning normally. At times when additional energy is required (e.g. growth / lactation / pregnancy) then concentrate feeds can be added. It is a good idea to regularly handle alpacas and assess their body condition by palpating the muscles over the spine behind the shoulders:

Body Condition Score	Classification
1	Very Thin - Severely concave between spine and ribs
2	Moderately Thin - Slightly concave between spine and ribs
3	Good Condition - Neither concave or convex
4	Overweight - Convex "roundness" makes muscle area hard to palpate
5	Obese - Top of back is almost flat, very difficult to palpate between spine & ribs

We hope to organise a client evening for our alpaca owners in the near future – watch this space!

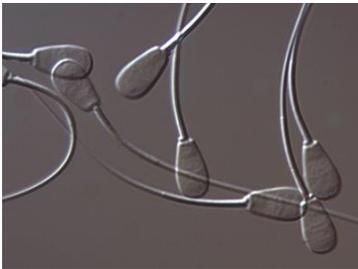
Bull Breeding Soundness Examinations

If you run a bull with your cows or heifers, then you should consider having a bull 'Breeding Soundness Examination' (BSE). The BSE is completed on farm and the results are given straight away.

The examination should be repeated annually, usually 1 -2 months before each breeding season. This will allow time to replace any unsuitable bulls before season begins. It is much better to find out about any fertility issues at this stage, rather than when you PD your cows months later!

The examination consists of several parts:

- Physical examination including body condition, eyes, feet, legs.
- Scrotal circumference – a larger scrotal circumference is correlated with higher fertility.
- Examination of the reproductive tract, including assessment of internal accessory glands.
- Use of electro-ejaculator to assess reproductive function.
- Collection of a semen sample, and examination under a microscope for quality.



The results will give an assessment of the bull's fertility at the time of the examination. It cannot assess libido so passing the breeding soundness examination does not *guarantee* success. It is not valid for the life of the bull because many factors could affect future sperm production, so we advise repeating the test annually.

Free Bovine TB Advice Service (TBAS)

We want to make sure that you are all aware of this service that is offered to all cattle farmers in the High Risk and Edge areas. It is provided for free because it is funded by the EU and Defra through the Rural Development Programme for England. A trained advisor will give advice, either through a phone call or a farm visit, which is tailored to your farm and current situation. They will discuss bio-security, trading and movements, environmental risks and anything else they may find whilst on site, and then they will provide you with a written report with recommendations on how to reduce the risk of bovine TB. Many farmers have already benefited from this service. For more information visit www.tbas.org.uk



WELCOME!

We would like to welcome Melanie Maclean, as our new farm secretary. Mel, who some of you may have already met or spoken to, comes to us with a recruitment background but is keen to learn all things farm! Having probably felt a little like she has had to learn a foreign language this past month, she is getting to grips with it very well. So please say a welcoming hello when you next pop in the practice.



Being a keen animal lover, we have already paired Mel up with one of our friendly stray's, now affectionately named Chilli!



Welcome back to Bella who has returned after having her second baby Arthur. We look forward to having a female influence on the farm side!

Bella is looking forward to getting back out on farm and getting stuck in with routines and general veterinary care.

Bella has also been training to run a half marathon in aid of the charity 'Send a Cow' but has been unlucky as both the races she entered were called off due to snow! In true sportsmanship style she didn't let this put her off and instead ran the 13.1 miles in the snow.