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Vitamin D injections for Alpacas

Vitamin D controls calcium and phosphorus balance and is therefore essential for the growth and maintenance of a healthy skeleton. Deficiencies in vitamin D cause skeletal abnormalities and rickets especially in growing crias.

Vitamin D requires UV sunlight for its synthesis in the skin. Unfortunately British UV levels are well below that of South America and are insufficient for alpacas to synthesise enough vitamin D, especially during the winter.

It is therefore essential to supplement vitamin D in alpacas, especially growing crias.

Vitamin D is ideally supplemented as a subcutaneous injection. A single subcutaneous injection of 2000 IU / kg has been shown to maintain normal vitamin D blood levels for up to 3 months.

It is advised that growing crias and yearlings receive 2-3 injections spaced over the winter time and a further injection during summer. Adults should receive two injections per year biased towards the winter time.

Dosing regimen may be altered depending on specific problems but not without veterinary advice, as overdosing can be harmful.

Oral vitamin D pastes are also available but absorption is not as reliable as with injectable forms. For oral preparations it is advised crias receive 2000 IU / kg orally every 4 weeks over the winter, this should be increased to every 2 weeks if problems exist or for dark coated crias. Dosing frequency can be extended over the summer and for adults.

Unfortunately injectable vitamin D is no longer available in the UK but we have imported some 'Hipravit ADE Forte' under an import license which is now available at the practice. Hipravit ADE Forte contains 75,000 IU of vitamin D per ml.

At the dose rate of 2000 IU / kg a 75kg adult would require 2ml injections, a 37kg adolescent 1ml, and an 18kg cria 0.5ml etc. It has a long shelf-life of over 12 months.

Oral pastes are available from a few alpaca websites. We would however advise injectable vitamin D over oral preparations.