

#6 Routine Husbandry

Ear Tags

All AAA registered alpacas must have a brass International Alpaca Register (IAR) ear tag displaying that animal's unique registration number

To insert a tag:

- Catch the animal and check its sex. The convention is to insert a female's IAR tag in its right ear and male's IAR tag in its left ear.
- If the animal has already been registered with the AAA, be sure you are inserting the correct tag to match the registration number shown on the pedigree certificate. If the animal is not yet registered, keep a record of the IAR tag number and animal name in readiness for entering registration details on eAlpaca.
- Sterilise the tag and the applicator in disinfectant solution
- Soak cotton wool with disinfectant and rub both the inside and outside of the ear.
- Load the applicator correctly. You could use white paint to mark the side of the applicator with the raised symbol to quickly identify the correct way to load the tag.
- Locate the two cartilaginous ridges on the lower inside of the ear
- Position the applicator with the raised symbol on the outside (hairy side) of the ear
- Aim to puncture between the two ridges and avoid obvious veins
- Punch quickly with one firm squeeze of the applicator
- Spray the punched area with antiseptic spray.
- A day later check the ear for infection and wiggle the tag to free any adhesions
- Monitor the animals for signs of infection.



Toenails

Alpacas have soft padded feet with two toenails on each foot and a soft leathery pad. Depending on the environment the toenails require regular attention at least three to four times a year and at shearing.

Nails will grow at different rates on different animals in particular the toenails of lighter coloured animals seem to grow at a faster rate than the darker coloured animals. Nails left unattended can twist and deform the foot causing lameness, restriction of mobility and ability to move to graze, and ultimately weight loss.

Trimming technique

Animals accustomed to being handled and having their toes trimmed are relatively easy to manage. Firm but gentle restraint is far more effective than force and mechanical restraint (e.g. a crush) and is less stressful for the animal. One person gently restrains the animal with the second person carefully trimming the nails. Using a pair of straight edged cutters (foot rot shears, hoof snips or straight edge secateurs) the second person lifts the foot and trims the nails level with the soft pad. Care must be exercised to prevent cutting too deeply and causing bleeding. If this occurs, spraying with an antiseptic solution will minimize the risk of infection.



Administering injections

As with all livestock alpacas will require injections from time to time. ***As no medications, vaccines or drenches are registered for use in alpacas, veterinary advice should be sought before administration.***

Preparing for the injection

Preparation for giving injections should be carefully planned to minimise stress to both the animal and the handlers.

Firstly, ensure that the drug is the correct one, **read the label** and follow the instructions which will include:

- Dosage and administration technique.
- Expiry date.
- Warnings and contraindications.
- Handling and storage instructions.

Technique for preparing the medication

- Wash hands before starting and use sterile equipment.
- Use a separate needle for each injection wherever possible. If injecting numbers of alpacas, change the needle at least every 10 injections.
- Select the smallest gauge needle that can still handle the volume and viscosity of the product. A rule of thumb: the higher the size number, the finer the bore/gauge of the needle.
- Shake product regularly to ensure proper suspension in the container.
- Do not mix products.
- Only insert sterile needles into the bottle. If multiple injections are required, leave a needle in the bottle and use a separate one for the injections.
- Remove dispensing needle before storage.
- Inject air into the bottle before withdrawing the drug. This equalises the pressure.
- After withdrawing drug, hold the syringe and needle up and tap to move air bubbles up.
- Push plunger carefully to remove any air.

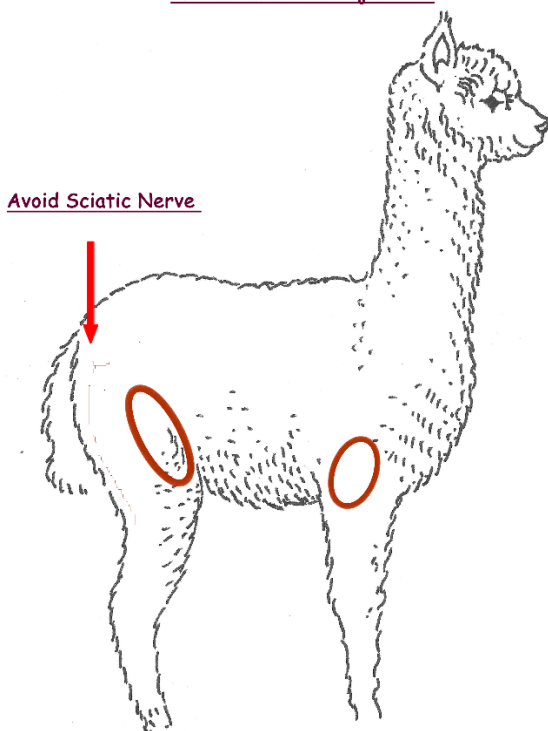
Routes of administration

Most alpaca owners learn how to administer commonly used medications by subcutaneous (SC) and intramuscular (IM) injection, although those lacking the confidence to do so can always get these administered by a veterinarian. Intravenous or intraperitoneal injections can only be performed by a veterinarian.

- The subcutaneous (SC) route is commonly used for 5-in1 vaccinations, selenium and some forms of parasite control.
- The intramuscular (IM) route is used for many antibiotics and vitamins.

The method of administering the injection will be stated on the bottle or in the accompanying literature and must be followed.

figure 1 : Recommended sites for administration of Intramuscular Injections



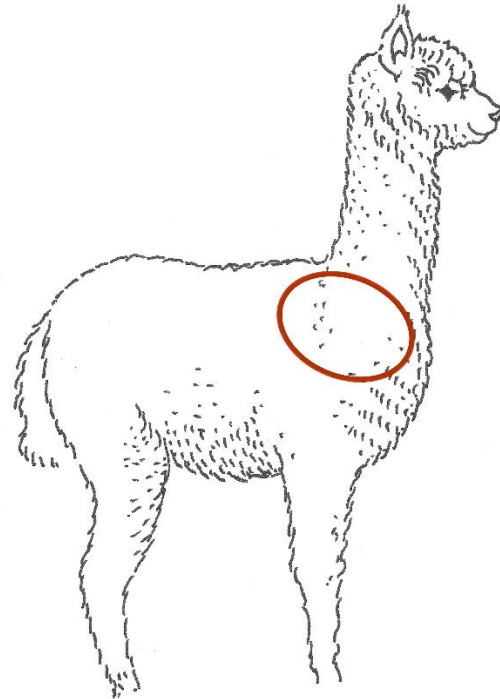
Intramuscular (IM) – Figure 1

- Use a needle long enough to penetrate the skin and fat into the muscle. Make sure needle is perpendicular to the body.
- Pull back slightly on the plunger before injecting to make sure you are not in a blood vessel.
- Inject slowly and gently massage the area when the needle is withdrawn.

Subcutaneous (SC) – Figure 2

- Use a narrow gauge needle.
- Lift the skin and inject into the 'tent' at an angle of 30 degrees to the body. (This technique can be difficult if the animal is in full fleece), or
- Hold the syringe at a 40 degree angle to the skin whilst injecting, or
- • Some breeders find that cutting the end off the needle guard and allowing the needle to protrude only a few millimetres acts as a depth gauge

figure 2 : Recommended site for administration of Subcutaneous Injections



On completion

Following the administration of any drugs:

- Maintain permanent records for each animal which should include:
 - Date of administration.
 - Product name.
 - Dosage.
- Dispose of needles responsibly.
- Wash hands and equipment.
- Monitor animal's response for any adverse reaction

Shearing

As alpacas are primarily farmed for their fleece, correct shearing is important to maximise fibre value. Alpacas in Australia must be shorn annually, preferably in spring or early summer before seed set. Ensure that newly shorn animals have shelter from cold and wind.

Your shearer should be a professional experienced with alpacas.

As a general rule avoid shearing alpacas in the first and last 8 weeks of pregnancy, however careful shearing in late pregnancy is preferable to animals suffering heat stress.

It is not recommended that nail and teeth trimming are undertaken at shearing to avoid contamination of the fleece.