

Important notice and disclaimer:

This information is not intended to be comprehensive or provide all information required. While it is based on sources which are considered reliable, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made or given about the accuracy or completeness of the information or opinions contained in this document. No responsibility or liability is accepted.

A brief guide on how to care for alpacas, with Q&A

Alpacas are relatively easy to care for compared to other livestock. They are herd animals and require a community setting with multiple alpacas, access to fresh water and adequate pasture or hay.

It is important to handle alpacas calmly and with care to prevent distress and injury to the animals and the handlers. When working with alpacas, consistent quiet and slow behaviour makes them very easy to handle and they will usually herd easily.

Alpacas are hardy and generally disease-resistant. However, performing basic practices such as twice yearly vaccinations, regular toe and occasional dental care are recommended to ensure good health.

Alpacas enjoy human company, but they do not need regular supervision. Should you decide to breed alpacas, you DO need to be around at birthing.

In terms of nutrition, alpacas require a diet that is high in fibre and low in protein. They should be fed good quality hay or pasture, and their diet should be supplemented with a small amount of grain and minerals. It is important to ensure that alpacas have access to clean water at all times.

Shearing is an important part of alpaca care, and it should be done once a year. Shearing helps to keep the alpacas cool in the summer. It also helps to keep the alpacas clean and healthy. Shearing is usually the time when their toenails are trimmed, and they are given their injections.

In summary, caring for alpacas in Australia involves providing them with a safe and secure setting, access to fresh water and adequate pasture or hay, and fencing.

There is lots of information about how to care for alpacas here: [Alpaca Care - Australian Alpaca Association](#)

Answers to some frequently asked questions

1. What kinds of alpacas are there?

There are two breeds of alpacas: Suri and Huacaya. Most of the alpacas found in Australia are Huacaya, and that is the breed we mainly sell. Huacaya has fuzzy wool and look like a toy animal. Suri alpacas grow long locks of fibre that can look like ringlets or dreadlocks.

2. How many alpacas do I need?

Alpacas are herd animals. They need at least one other alpaca to be happy. A single alpaca will be extremely lonely and won't be happy. Ideally, you should keep at least 3 alpacas. They are happiest with a herd of at least 3, and we will only sell to herds of three animals.

3. *Do alpacas require shelter?*

We have provided 3-sided shelter sheds for our alpacas. Initially they didn't use the open sheds at all, but now they use them only in the coldest and most inclement weather. We would say, it is a "nice to have" not a must have.

4. *What do you feed alpacas?*

Mainly they graze on pasture (grass). Most owners supplement feed them every few days or at least weekly. We give them a mix of combi-chaff, Alpacas grain (Laucke Alpaca Blend Animal Feed Supplement), cracked lupins, Alpaca pellets (Barastoc Alpaca Pellets Grain Maintenance Food).

Alpacas love lucerne hay and it helps them maintain weight in winter.

5. *What fencing is needed for alpacas?*

Simple fencing is best. Be very careful about using barbed wire or electric fences to keep alpacas contained. Both are likely to cause injury to alpacas and aren't necessary. If you need to use an electric fence to protect your alpacas from predators, add the electrical wire on the outside of your regular fencing and away from where your alpacas can reach them.

6. *How many alpacas can graze on an acre of land?*

Five alpacas can comfortably graze on an acre of land. If the land is more barren, then you will need to reduce the number of alpacas. More land is fine, they just wander around at their leisure!

7. *What climate is best for alpacas?*

Alpacas are very adaptable to nearly any climate, but they may need a little extra care in extreme weather. They need shade in the Australian summer. Alpacas were bred in the highlands of Peru and South America so they can handle freezing temperatures. They have adapted to thrive in the cold without a struggle.

8. *What can I do with alpacas?*

Firstly, they make great pets. Alpacas are gentle and curious. They can be playful. They care for their young. They have distinct personalities, as you will see.

Secondly, they will help keep the grass down.

Thirdly, their manure is magic on the garden. It is literally some of the best fertiliser you will find, and can be put straight on the garden without leaving it to mature. (And alpacas like to poo in the same place in piles, not like cows...).

Fourthly, Alpaca fleece is beautiful. It can be spun, felted and used for a range of crafting activities, used for cushion filler and in dog bedding. It is usually sold in three main batches. The blanket or saddle section comes from the backs of the alpacas and is the highest quality of fleece. The second section includes the neck and upper legs of the alpaca. Thirds include everything else; around the backside, the lower legs where the fibre is dirtier and courser.

Fifth, you can breed alpacas.

9. How much wool does an alpaca produce?

Alpacas produce about 2kg of fleece a year.

10. What maintenance is needed?

Annual shearing

Toenails clipped 2-3 times a year

Minimal vaccinations

We will provide you with details of shearers, alpaca dentist, and you can DIY injections or ask the vet to assist

11. What is the difference between Alpacas and Llamas

Alpacas and llamas are sometimes confused as the same animal. They are related as they are both a part of the camelid family. There are some big differences between these cousins.

Alpacas are half the size of llamas. While an alpaca reaches 45-70 kgs, a llama will reach 90-150 kgs. Plus, alpacas have small ears that look like a rabbit's ears. Llamas have long ears that are shaped like a banana.

Alpacas produce a lot more fibre than a llama even though they are smaller. That's because alpacas have been bred for hundreds of years for their fine wool, while llamas were bred to be a pack animal.

Llamas have a coarse outer wool and a finer under the fibre layer. Alpacas have more finer fleece and it is only one layer.

12. Do alpacas spit?

Alpacas do spit, but mostly at each other. They rarely spit intentionally at people, although people can get caught in the crossfire of an alpaca fight. Alpacas mostly spit to fight over food.

13. How long do alpacas live?

Alpacas live for 15-20 years.

14. *Are alpacas dangerous?*

No, Alpacas are not dangerous. They do not bite or kick. Alpacas are very good with children but can get nervous around unfamiliar people.