

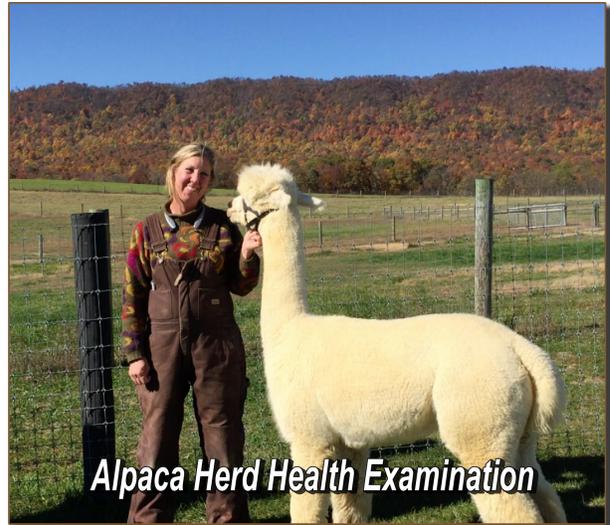
Alpaca Herd Health: Performing an Exam

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Performing regular examinations on your alpacas is critical to maintaining a healthy herd. Those of us living in whitetail deer & snail/slug territory have a regular reminder to do an assessment of our animals when we administer injections to prevent meningeal meningitis infections. A physical examination can take as little as one minute per animal and can be done many times by one person. Plus it offers an opportunity to “train” BOTH alpacas and handlers to relax....because face it, we aren’t stronger or faster than our alpacas...we can only work smarter and get them to trust us.

Alpacas take their cue from those around them so remember to breathe and relax when handling them. I generally herd the alpacas into a small area and I make it very predictable so that they are not surprised by my touch nor feel as though I have “caught” them. I start with the one that trusts me the most thus allowing the other alpacas to watch and hopefully realize that this is not a bad experience.



Starting at the head and working down and back, I do a systematic approach so that I don’t miss anything and the examination becomes secondary and flows well. The accompanying video shows me performing an examination and finishing with me administering their shot. At the end, it is important that the alpaca relax before you walk away. Doing this will affect positively your next encounter with them. If they start to get tense, try relaxing...you will be amazed at the effect relaxation can have on a tense animal.

Ideally it’s good to pick up the feet, but you might not be able to do this without haltering them, which adds time. I work on a dry lot or on concrete so I can at least see their feet well, and then I can come back to them later and check their feet and/or trim toes. I also make a mental note for those that need dental and perform it at a later date. If you have a second handler, you can easily obtain a fecal sample and pick up feet during your examination.

There is a video listed on this same resource page that shows me performing a quick examination we typically do during our herd health or click the link below.

<https://youtu.be/uWA7fQD0Pfw>