



What We Have Learned About Alpacas

Alpacas tend to be very calm, gentle, and curious animals. They like the companionship of their herd mates, so you need more than one or two of the same sex. While two may be okay, the alpacas are more comfortable with more than two.

In our 15 years of raising alpacas, we have found that each has its own personality. Some are calm, cool, and collected, while the next one might be a spitfire and hard to handle. Most will NOT come up to you to be petted—they are standoffish like a cat. We have found that the alpacas are very routine-oriented – they seem to know that when it is a particular time, they are waiting for the food delivery to arrive. Our girls will stay in the cool barn until about 6:30 a.m., when they will come outside and look at the house as if to say, “where are you. It’s our breakfast time”. They are always watching what is happening on the farm, who is coming and going. They seem to know if there is something or someone out of the ordinary.

Alpacas can be haltered trained pretty quickly for ease of handling. This is especially useful for medical attention, and for general veterinary work on the farm.

Halter training is also required for entering the show ring with your alpaca if you decide to enter a show.

Alpacas come in various colors, from white to brown, black, and gray. The Alpaca Owners Association chart shows 16 natural colors; of course, there are many variations of those 16 colors. I like to see all the different colors in our fields.

We feed our alpacas grass hay with about 10% alfalfa and mineral pellets formulated with their specific needs. They also eat soaked, shredded beet pulp. The mineral pellets and beet pulp feedings are alternated— one day, mineral pellets, and the next day, shredded beet pulp. We have never fed our alpacas anything other than these three items. I know some people feed sliced carrots and apples, and one person we know feeds animal crackers as a treat to her alpacas.

Alpacas can and do spit at each other, and you might happen to be in the line of fire, so to speak. This is especially true at feeding time. They will spit at you if they feel threatened or in pain.

Alpacas are generally very calm animals. If you are feeling stressed, spend a little time with them. You will be amazed at how relaxed you will be!