

The Skinny on Alpacas and Llamas

Caring for Llamas and Alpacas a Health and Management Guide by Clare Hoffman, DVM and Ingrid Asmus published by Rocky Mountain Llama and Alpaca Association – March 2003

Nutrition:

Water – average adult llama needs $\frac{3}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of clean water each day

Average adult alpaca drinks 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of water each day

Water needs increase with exercise, lactation and high environmental temperatures

Energy

Feeds – good quality hay – at least 25% of food needs to be roughage

Dried feed intake for a llama is 1% – 2% of body weight per day

Alpacas need $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent of their body weight per day

Grass hay is usually 7% to 10% protein, alfalfa is about 16% protein.

Protein

Adult llama on maintenance diet need 8% to 10% protein, pregnant and lactating need 12% to 14%, babies and growing need 10 to 16% protein

Cereal grains (corn, oat) are about 8% to 10% protein

Minerals

Salt – loose salt should be available free choice

Calcium to phosphorus ratio in llama diet should range from 1:1 to 2:1 and increase with pregnancy, lactation and growth

Selenium – only necessary in selenium deficient area. Virginia is a selenium deficient area. 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ mg of selenium per day as an oral supplement is sufficient for an adult llama (no information about alpacas available in this text)

Zinc – normal levels for llamas are unknown.

signs of deficiency are: skin problems, poor appetite, decreased growth rates, reproductive imparities

Copper – normal level unknown.

Deficiency sign – excessive levels of molybdenum in the body

Determining Ideal Llama Condition:

1. It is normal to feel the ribs easily through the fiber. If you cannot feel the ribs, your llama is too fat.
2. The inner thighs are bare of fiber and easy to see. If they jiggle when your llama walks, it is too fat.
3. The breastbone should be easily felt and seen between the front legs. If no bone can be felt and the chest is the consistency of Jell-O, your llama is too fat.
4. If the llama feels well-padded just behind the withers, your llama is too fat and if you can feel bones across the back, your llama may be underweight.

Continued on next page

Alpaca Field Manual by C. Norman Evans, D.V.M., 2003 edition, published by?

Forage: Pasture and Hay

Forage makes up to 80% of the healthy alpaca's diet.

Orchard grass is a favorite of the author as it is palatable and nicely balanced in minerals.

Brome grass is best suited to the northern half of the U.S.

Bermuda grass is best suited to the southern half of the U.S.

Tall Fescue – use only endophyte-free varieties. Never use Ky-31 tall fescue because of fescue toxicity.

Annual Rye grass has high nutritive value and very palatable but can become overly competitive because of its fast start and can be very high in potassium, which can tie-up calcium, phosphorus and magnesium, because of required fertilization necessary for fast growth.

Perennial Rye grass – not for alpacas as it causes seizures in all alpacas.

An alpaca consumes 10 to 12.5 pounds of pasture daily.

Six to ten alpacas to an acre of grass on rotational grazing

Breeding Maiden

Increase energy by 25% for three weeks prior to breeding by adding .25 pounds of additional cracked corn or sheep sweet feed per 100-150 pounds of body weight in addition to giving .6 pound per day of high-fiber alpaca chow. 1.5 pounds (dry matter basis) of 10-12% crude protein grass hay or pasture per 100 pounds of body weight. After conception free choice grass pasture and .5 to .67 pounds of alpaca chow.

Gestating Female

Good quality pasture or hay plus fortified alpaca chow through 9-10 months of pregnancy. Gestation diet 80% forage and 20% alpaca supplement. .5 to .67 pounds alpaca chow and about 2 pounds of good grass hay that is 10-12% crude protein, a minimum 55% TDN. The maximum alfalfa in the forage should be 20-30%.

Late gestating or lactating female

80% forage and 20% chow for gestating. Late gestating should start to receive extra energy 3-4 weeks prior to birthing in the form of cracked corn or sheep sweet feed.

Pets, geldings, non-breeding males

Limit grazing of good quality grass or hay. They need about 1-1/2 pounds of 9-10% crude protein grass or hay daily. 60 – 75% less alpaca chow as the other animals.\

Show animals

2 pounds daily of 12-14% crude protein hay that has TDN of 58-62%, .5-.67 pounds of alpaca chow a day. Make these changes gradually throughout six to 10 days.