

Tips 'n Info

Heat Stress

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Heat stress in alpacas and llamas is a universal possibility around the globe. With the combination of higher and often prolonged temperatures, humidity and a wool coat, the body temperature begins to rise. Under these conditions, additional activities and/or stresses such as shows, parades, breeding, packing, fence pacing, weaning or late pregnancy can push body temperatures even higher. It is important to know each animal individually and have a plan in place to mitigate and/or prevent an occurrence of heat stress when conditions seem likely. Some animals tolerate the higher temperatures remarkably well while others can struggle with temperatures in the 70's and little humidity. Any alpaca or llama not acting as they normally would should be cause for immediate examination. It is important to respond as soon as you notice any possibility. Heat stress can and does result in death. Signs of possible heat stress include:

- Normally active animals not moving much, lethargic or unwilling to get up
- Depressed attitude
- Uncoordinated and/or stiff movement
- Open mouth breathing
- Flaring of nostrils
- Increased respiration
- Drooping lower lip
- Drooling or foaming
- Depressed eye
- Loss of appetite
- Swelling of testicles
- Trembling or shaking
- Elevated body temperature

Ways to minimize the possibility of heat stress (and should be available for each animal) include:

- Shearing each spring being mindful to open up the air flow areas around the armpits and belly

- Removal of matted and felted fiber in any areas not shorn to facilitate better air flow
- Ongoing source of clean fresh water (electrolytes can be added in to the water)
- Shaded areas
- Fans – a good breeze and ventilation so that air can move underneath each animal and connect with the “thermal window” area.
- Water sprinklers
- Many alpacas and llamas enjoy being sprayed on the chest, belly, legs and rear with a hose
- Wet sand areas
- Plastic wading pool
- Adequate nutrition
- Parasite control