



Alpaca Care in Italy

Feeding

Alpacas eat grass, hay, haylage, silage. In fact they eat the same as sheep. Be careful not to give high protein and high carbohydrate supplements as the norm. Males kept as pets do not need these. Breeding females that are pregnant and with crias at foot may need extra supplements. Zarza will advise you.

Ensure all alpacas have free access to good quality hay all year round as they need the roughage.

At Zarza we give them alfalfa (lucerne) in pellets called 'erba medica' as well as a nutritional supplement called Camelibra. Zarza is a stockist of Camelibra throughout Italy. It is available in 20kg bags and we would give an adult about 60g per day depending upon their weight.

We also give them apple cider vinegar with garlic for two weeks in every four to prevent intestinal worms.

Fleece

Alpacas are usually shorn early in the summer due to the intense heat here in Italy. Zarza will advise on a suitable shearer. People used to shearing sheep can be trained to shear an alpaca. The handling is very different so please be sure you are trained to undertake this task as the alpacas may be very frightened.

The topknot and tail are only lightly trimmed in order to give protection from the sun and insects.

At shearing time also trim their nails, check their teeth and also ensure vaccinations are up-to-date.

Handling

Alpacas need handling in order to gain confidence in their owner. They can be trained to accept the headcollar and lead rein. Always walk or train them in pairs or trios and they will quickly learn. By ensuring they will stand still without fear you will be able to easily perform routine tasks safely. Zarza stocks headcollars in different sizes especially made for alpacas.

Teeth

At the front of their mouth alpacas have teeth only on the lower jaw. These grow continually and may need levelling once a year to ensure they meet the pad on the upper jaw. This enables them to graze effectively. Your shearer will check and trim them for you.

Alpacas may get tooth root abscesses. This is usually noticed by a lump on their jaw or, if the abscess is severe, there may be unexpected weight loss as they have not been able to eat properly.

Contact your vet immediately as the alpaca may need a course of antibiotics or tooth extraction and will certainly need pain relief.

As a precaution check for lumps whenever you handle your alpaca by running your finger along the jawline.

Toenail clipping

Alpaca toenails grow quite fast. Check, and if necessary, clip every 3-4 months.

Vaccinations

Alpacas are vaccinated against clostridial diseases that are common to sheep.

Be guided by your vet who is familiar with diseases that are common in your area. At Zarza we use Miloxan and give 3ml to adults every six (6) months.

Crias are given 2 ml six(6) weeks after birth, at three (3) months of age and then every six(6) months.

Vitamins

Breeding females and youngsters may require extra vitamins. These are given orally or by injection as suggested by your vet. We use Rorcortin B12 or Duphafra Multi and Selevit.

Weight

Alpacas need to be lean but healthy. Overweight alpacas may have difficulty mating and giving birth. Zarza will show you how to check condition if you do not have any weighing scales.

Worming

Alpacas have similar worms to sheep but different worms from cattle. If you keep you alpacas with other livestock or if they share ground grazed by other livestock they will need regular worming. Be guided by your vet. At Zarza we use Hapadex which is given orally.

However the best way to prevent worms is to keep your pasture clean.

Training

Zarza will advise on training alpacas and runs regular courses in breeding, husbandry and assessing alpacas.