



## **FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER**

As Groundhog Day approaches, so does Spring! Now is the time to start planning for spring babies, shearing, and showing. It is also the time to seriously think about fecal tests and fly control.

### **CLEAN PASTURES AND DRYLOTS MAKE FOR CLEAN FLEECES!**

All winter long we put out straw for our animals only to clean it up and throw it out the next day! What a cycle! But right around the corner, we will be sending animals out to pasture or out in our dry lots and if we want them to be clean for shearing, we need to keep our places clean of dung, straw, hay, but especially, weeds and grasses with seed heads. This is a never-ending chore but ask any alpaca owner or mill worker and they will tell you that the best way to keep fleeces clean is to keep your pastures and dry lots clean.

If you have pastures, as soon as the snow melts you should be walking your pastures to check for anything that you don't want in your fleeces. If you rotate pastures, be sure to spray for those rotten weeds that ruin a beautiful fleece while the animals are NOT in there. Also, grass heads will stick in their fleeces and farmers will tell you that they have been known to mow if their alpacas can't keep it eaten down.



Those that have dry lots will want to start raking as soon as the ground permits and keep the areas clean of straw, hay, poop, and anything else that blows in, so they don't roll in it. **MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST CARPET AND THEN ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS VACUUM!** Seriously, this is a never-ending chore but the payoff to our fleeces is enormous. If you are showing animals, chances are you put blankets on last fall and come showing day (or shearing day) all you have to do is clean the birds' nest and legs.

### **SHEARING DAY!**

It is shearing day and all you have to do is round up your herd and the shearing guys take over, right? **WRONG!** You would have some very mad shearers.

Whether you have a large herd or a small herd, you need to plan for shearing day. Do you have all the help you need? If not, start rounding up people to help. Usually, the shearer is planning to just shear (They also do toes and teeth if asked). They will need you to clean up your animals and have them ready to be led in, laid down, and sheared.



This is the time to decide in what order you want your animals sheared. So, you will need help catching, haltering and cleaning the animals. If you weigh in, that is done next so you will need help to record their weights. Once the animal is on the ground, you will need someone to give any shots that they will need and do any planned maintenance. You will need someone to collect the fleeces as they come off the animal and either bag it or put it on the sorting table to be skirted and then bagged or noodled. You will need someone to collect the 2nds and 3rds and decide what you are doing with them. You need to decide if the shearers are trimming toes and teeth so that can be done while the animal is on the ground and restrained. Then it is time for weigh out and the alpacas are put back in pens. You will need to provide your helpers and the shearing team with lunch and drinks.

Once shearing is over, you still need to clean up the shearing area and monitor your animals to be sure that none of them were overstressed. It is not uncommon to have helpers accidentally put an animal in the wrong pen (male with females, etc.) so be sure to check that. Then sit back and relax! Shearing is over for another year. Now you just have to decide what you are doing with all that fiber!

#### **LOOK FOR NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER**

We will be talking about preparing for the arrival of new cria.



Also, March 28, 2010 is our Neonatal Clinic with Dr. Toni Cotton. It will be held at the shop at Uinta Alpacas in Willard, UT. This is a must clinic for anyone with animals giving birth. Well worth the cost!