

Capture, restraint and handling - alpaca

Recommended instructor to student ratio: 1 instructor to 30 students for instructing, 1 instructor to 1 student for supervising
Recommended student to animal ratio: 30 students to 1 animal for observing, 2 students to 1 animal for performing

Category

3. Minor conscious intervention

Objective

To instruct students in methods of capturing for human handling in yard facilities; to lead, tie up and stand in show setting.

Alternatives to animal use

None

Equipment

[Videos on handling](#)

Halters

Drugs, chemicals or biological agents

Warm soapy water for cleaning hands and udder

Procedure

Where possible, it is recommended that the alpacas and llamas be herded into a smaller enclosure or their usual handling area, where they are more comfortable and settled, before handling the animals. Isolating an animal is best performed by slowly confining the herd into increasingly smaller numbers.

In areas where alpacas are handled, illumination should be uniform and shadows and bright spots minimised. Objects or items such as clothing hanging on a race may stop animal movement.

One method of confining the herd is to use a moveable fence, working in a quiet, calm manner. A moveable fence can be established by having a long rope held at waist height between two people and stretched across a paddock. This enables the alpacas and llamas to be herded to a particular location.

Extra care should be taken when handling pregnant alpacas, crias, lame alpacas, machos or isolated alpacas. Always ensure that an alpaca has one or more alpacas in close proximity or view to avoid them becoming stressed and possibly dangerous to the handler.

Capture is easiest with the handler's arm high up around the animal's neck. Even though most alpacas and llamas do not enjoy being cuddled or touched around the head, they will be quite comfortable in this position while a halter is fitted. Before students attempt these tasks, they should be familiar with alpaca and llama behaviour and be instructed to move quietly and slowly.

Ensure halters fit correctly. Incorrectly-fitted halters could slide down over the soft tissue of the nose, collapsing the nasal passage and preventing the animal from breathing. Halters should not be left on the animal when not in use.

Avoid penning animals for long periods and return them to feed and water as soon as possible after handling and yarding. Always ensure that a camelid has one or more camelids in close proximity or view to avoid the animal becoming stressed and possibly dangerous to the handler.

Camelids can be restrained for a procedure by holding the animal's head and neck firmly to the handler's chest with the other hand resting over the withers. If necessary, another handler can be used to pin the back end of the animals firmly against the side of the pen, taking care to ensure the animals cannot get its legs caught in the fencing. Tethering in only ever a short-term form of restraint, in the presence of adequate close supervision as camelids are prone to entanglement.

Alpacas can be chucked, a procedure where a rope is tied firmly around the hindquarters to immobilise the rear legs and keep the animal in kush. Llamas are generally too large to safely immobilise by chucking. The rear legs can be lifted and the feet placed into the loop of soft rope under the abdomen. If it is necessary to lay the animal down, use two people standing on one side of the animal. Both lean across the animal's back and grasp the legs closest to the handlers. Carefully flip the animal over with the front handler also supporting the neck.

Impact on wellbeing of animals

Low impact if supervised by skilled handlers

Animal Care

Hold the neck gently as it is long and does not require firm restraint.

Pain Relief

None required

Qualification, experience or training necessary to perform procedure

Demonstrator: Proficient at handling and restraining alpaca