

Collection of colostrum or milk - alpaca

Recommended instructor to student ratio: 1 instructor to 30 students
Recommended student to animal ratio: 5 students to 1 animal

Category

3. Minor conscious intervention

Objective

To collect colostrum or milk to assess colostrum quality, to confirm the presence of milk or if a weak, newborn cria needs hand feeding.

Alternatives to animal use

None

Equipment

20 ml syringe and collection container
Latex gloves

Drugs, chemicals or biological agents

Warm soapy water for cleaning hands and udder

Procedure

This procedure should only be carried out to assess colostrum quality, to confirm the presence of milk or if a weak, newborn cria needs hand feeding.

Restrain the female alpaca in a chute which gives safe access to the udder if possible. If a chute is unavailable or there is a risk to the handler due to reaching between bars, the female alpaca will need to be manually restrained. Alpacas can be manually 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.

To obtain the colostrum/milk the female alpaca can be hand milked. After ensuring hands and udder are clean gently pinch off the base of the teat with thumb and forefinger, maintain the gentle squeeze and pull down thumb and forefinger towards the teat end. This will push the colostrum/milk that is in the teat out through the teat orifice and into the container being used to collect the sample. If it is not possible to hand milk the female alpaca colostrum/milk can be harvested using a 20 ml syringe. Cut the end of a 20mL disposable syringe and remove the plunger. Reverse the syringe casing and insert the plunger through the cut-off end as far as it will go. Using a little milk to create a good seal, place the un-cut end of the syringe over the teat and, very slowly, pull the inside plunger downwards.

It is important to maintain strict hygiene procedures throughout.

Impact on wellbeing of animals

Low impact

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