

WELCOME TO CRIMPY CRITTERS ALPACA FARM



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ALPACA FACTS

About us

Crimpy Critters Alpaca Farm is located on beautiful Gabriola Island, British Columbia Canada. Gabriola Island is a short, 20 minute ferry ride from Nanaimo, which is located in the middle of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Linda and Jim have been raising beautiful huacaya alpacas since 2001, and to date, we have 27 alpacas on our small acreage.

We extend a warm invitation for you to come and visit our farm, see our lovely animals, and learn about alpacas. We can also show you some of the luxurious products made from alpaca fibre.

Frequently Asked questions

- Where are alpacas from, and what are the different kinds of alpacas?

Alpacas are members of the **camelid family**, along with **llamas, vicunas, and guanacos**, and come from the high plains of the Andes Mountains in South America. Alpacas have been used for centuries for their fine, luxurious fibre. The fleece is renowned for its fineness and durability. There are two breeds of alpacas: **huacaya** and **suri**. Their fibre type is the distinguishing factor. The huacaya is much more common, having a very crimped fleece that gives them a fluffy appearance. The suri has a silky hair like fibre, which drapes down in tight spirals and locks. Alpacas stand approximately 3 feet tall at the shoulder, weigh 100 – 175 pounds, and come in a variety of different colours. Alpacas live to be about 20 – 25 years old.

- **Alpacas are sure cute, but aren't they expensive?**

An alpaca's price is directly related to the individual breeding potential and the potential quality of the offspring.

For example, a gelding (castrated male) has no breeding potential and is therefore the cheapest alpaca to buy starting at about \$500 up to \$1000. Many people start with male geldings as pets or as "fibre animals". A high-quality male can have a high breeding potential and can be worth many thousands of dollars. Females are normally sold pregnant, and prices are a reflection of quality, age, breeding history, and to which stud she has been bred to.

- **What do you do with an alpaca?**

Alpacas make excellent companion animals because they have lovely dispositions and are smart. They can be trained to lead and are gentle enough to be handled by children.

Alpacas also provide an investment opportunity in that they are the source of luxurious fibre which can be processed into high quality end products such as sweaters, hats, scarves, gloves, blankets, etc.

Alpacas are also an asset because the females can reproduce and their young, once weaned at about 8 months old, can be sold.

Most alpacas make good pets, but they do not like to be grabbed and held. They are naturally curious, and if you treat them with respect, they in turn will learn to trust you forming a closer relationship with you.

Most alpacas do not spit at people. Spitting is an alpaca's way of saying, "GET LOST!" to other alpacas, therefore they only spit at each other every so often.

- **How many alpacas should I start with?**

Alpacas are "herd animals", meaning they must be together with their own kind. This means that you should have at least 2 alpacas, remembering that when alpacas reach sexual maturity (about 15 months old) the males and females are separated.

- **Should I have males, females, or both?**

It depends on what you want to do with your alpacas.

If you are interested in keeping alpacas as pets, acquiring a few males is a great way to start. This way, you have nice companion animals, and if desired, you could explore processing your sheared alpacas' fleece into different products. You may even decide to enter an Alpaca Show with your boys!

If you are interested in breeding alpacas, you could acquire both males and females, or just females and use the services of a herd sire (stud) to breed your females.

- **How much acreage does it take to raise Alpacas?**

Alpacas are an ideal small acreage livestock. Depending on the layout of your pasture, you can comfortably raise between five to ten alpacas per acre. This makes the alpaca ideal for people who have only one or two acres and who want the pleasure of having a small herd.

- **What kind of shelter do alpacas require?**

Alpacas prefer open shelters as opposed to closed barns. The animals simply need to get out of the weather and have a dry place to eat, drink and lay down. A three-sided lean-to shelter works fine. Gravel, covered in straw or hay, makes good flooring material.

- **What kind of fencing do alpacas need?**

Alpacas do not challenge or jump fences, so you are fencing to keep predators (eg, dogs, bears, etc) away from your alpacas. The type of fencing you require depends on the types of predators in your area. If you have aggressive dogs or wild animals in your neighbourhood, you may have to increase the height and security of your fencing.

- **What do alpacas eat?**

Alpacas like to munch on fresh grass as well as low-protein, grassy hay. Each animal is fed one cup of alpaca pellets twice a day to supplement them with important vitamins and minerals to keep them healthy and strong. They also require plenty of fresh water.

Feed troughs should allow for about 18" per alpaca to eat. This means that 10 alpacas need about 18 feet of feed troughs for their hay and their pellets. It costs about the same amount of money to feed 2 – 3 alpacas as it would cost to feed 1 mid-sized dog.

Alpacas have a split upper lip and only have teeth on the bottom of their mouths, which makes it so they cut the grass as they eat rather than pulling grass out by the roots. Moreover, they are gentle on the land when grazing as they have wonderful pads on their feet which don't dig up the ground.

- **What other health care is required?**

Alpacas are relatively easy to care for and maintain. They require yearly vaccinations and worming shots, as well as yearly shearing normally done in the Spring. Their toe nails need to be trimmed about twice a year, and sometimes their teeth need to be filed. Toe nail clipping and tooth-filing are generally done when the animal is restrained during shearing time.

- **What about alpaca babies?**

A baby alpaca is called a "cria". Females are normally bred when they are 1.5 – 2 years old, and carry their babies for about 340 days until birth.

Alpacas births are generally fairly straight forward, with the mother alpaca giving birth within about one hour of her water breaking. The cria comes out head and front feet first. The cria normally begins walking within the first 45 minutes of life, and will nurse within six hours.

If you would like further information on alpacas, or would like a private farm tour, please call us at **250-247-0009** or e-mail us at **info@alpacabuybc.com**.

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