



- Alpacas are social, gentle and curious animals. They do not bite or butt and do not have sharp teeth, horns, or hooves. They have two toenails on each foot and a leathery pad underneath.
- They are a member of the camelid family and originated in South America. They are smaller than llamas.
- Baby alpacas are called crias. A mother is known as a dam. Female alpacas can be bred at any time of year with a gestation period of 11.5 months. Alpacas normally only have one baby. Twins are extremely rare. Birth usually occurs between the hours of nine in the morning and two in the afternoon. It is very unusual for a female alpaca to need assistance with the birth. Babies are typically standing and nursing within an hour of being born.
- They live to between 15 and 20 years.
- They are vegetarian. They are ruminants and only have three stomachs – sheep and cows have four. They have no top front teeth.
- They weigh between 100 and 200 pounds and are about 36” high at the withers (where the neck and spine come together).
- Alpacas produce between 5 and 10 pounds of fleece per year when sheared. The fleece is as soft as cashmere and warmer, lighter and stronger than wool. They are sheared once a year normally in late May/early June. The fleece is flame resistant, water-resistant and lanolin-free (making it hypoallergenic for most people).
- They eat about 2 pounds of grass and hay per day and chew a cud.
- They are very quiet. They make a humming noise to communicate or an occasional shrill sound to send an alarm.
- They are good guard animals and can be used to protect sheep.
- You should never have less than three animals as one is always on guard. Fewer creatures makes life more stressful for them.
- Alpacas come in two breeds.
- The Suri (Sur-ee) have a long silky fleece.
- The Huacaya (wuh-KAI-ya) have a shorter crimped fleece which is teddy bear like.