

ALPACA NUTRITION

RULES OF THUMB FOR SUPPLEMENTING CRIAS

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Give your crias the best start in life with these helpful feeding tips.



Crias naturally jump on their mothers and other crias, and will try to do it to you when they get bigger.



- Crias should stand and begin nursing within 1-2 hours of birth. Give the cria time to bond and suckle.
- If the dam has no milk or the cria too weak to nurse, feed colostrum (frozen and stored from another disease-free alpaca/cow/goat or powdered colostrum) via teat (preferably) or stomach tube for the first 3 days of life to maximise antibody uptake into blood (first 12 hours of life) and to provide local gut protection from microbes.
- If no colostrum available, use milk replacer and strongly consider intravenous plasma transfusion for antibody transfer (speak to your vet about plasma use). Use milk in preference to oral glucose/honey and water.

CHOICE AND USE OF MILK REPLACER

- It does not matter which brand or type of milk replacer you use but do not vary the brand of milk replacer once you have made your selection. The way it is fed determines success or failure of bottle-rearing.
- Store milk powder below 30° C and protect from moisture.
- Use clean bottles/teats/feeders, thoroughly clean afterwards.
- Warm milk to 35° C before feeding.

FREQUENCY OF FEEDING

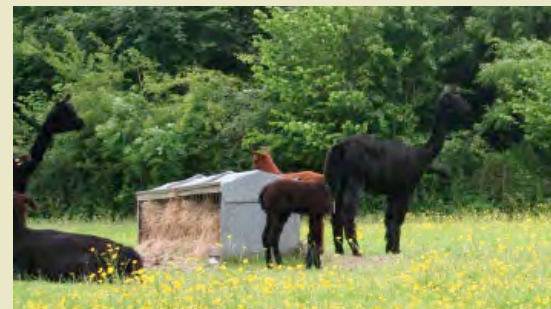
- Aim to feed 10-15 % of body weight as milk per day, to demand, over 6 feeds initially, decreasing to 4 feeds/d.
 - E.g. 10 kg cria requires 1-1.5 L/day, equivalent to 250-375 mL per each of 4 feeds.
 - Feed first thing in the morning, mid-morning, mid-afternoon, last thing at night. Wait-times in between feeds encourage the cria to develop an appetite to:
 - Nurse from dam as much as possible.
 - Start picking at grass/hay/supplements and develop 1st compartment of stomach.
 - Drink enthusiastically from teat when offered.
- Crias should double birth weight by 4 weeks of age, then gain 200-300 g/d from 4-12 weeks of age.
 - Weigh cria regularly to monitor weight gain. Keep good records of weight gain and milk intake.
- Reduce frequency of bottle-feeding from 4 weeks of age.
- Aim to wean from milk replacer at 12-16 weeks of age when the cria is eating substantial amounts of forage.





Do not humanise alpacas:
Do not pat cria.
Bottle feed and walk away so cria
bonds with alpaca herd.





METHOD OF FEEDING

- Tube-feed cria (in consultation with your vet) if animal is moribund.
- Bottle-feed cria with teat, holding bottle vertical and ensuring nose of cria pointing skywards to simulate cria suckling from udder. This posture elicits a reflex in the gut, which allows passage of milk along a groove from the oesophagus directly to the 3rd stomach compartment, by-passing C1&2. In C3, the milk is converted into curds and whey under the effects of acid and enzymes. The whey fraction (sugars and soluble proteins) is then rapidly digested, while the curds (fats and insoluble proteins) are digested slowly over the next few hours.
- Teat feeding is preferred over bucket feeding to ensure milk enters C3 and does not ferment in C1 (appear as pot-bellied, ill-thrifty crias). Teat feeding stimulates saliva secretion to enhance milk digestion.

TIPS TO PREVENT DIARRHOEA

- Keep concentration of milk consistent, do not

fortify by adding more milk powder per litre of water as diarrhoea can develop secondary to higher sugar content of milk.

- If a cria develops diarrhoea, offer oral electrolytes by teat between milk feeds (3 hr apart) and seek vet advice.
 - Do not dilute milk by adding electrolytes to the milk as this prevents curds and whey formation and exacerbates diarrhoea.

OTHER HINTS ON REARING CRIAS

- Always have clean, cool, fresh water available to allow normal C1 development.
- Offer high quality, highly digestible creep feed and hay to develop C1 from 7-10 days of age.
- Aim to wean from milk replacer by 3-4 months provided cria eating good quality forage and weighs $\approx$ 25 kg.
- **Do not humanise alpacas: Do not pat cria. Bottle feed and walk away so cria bonds with alpaca herd. Crias naturally jump on their mothers and other crias, and will try to do it to you when they get bigger.**

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