



Council Matters

Those of you who attended the Association conference in November will not need telling how successful it was. As Chairman and on your behalf, I am indebted to Jane Brown who ran an efficient and friendly two days with great aplomb. There never seems to be enough time for people to talk at these events and we found ourselves having to ask people to move into the hall after breaks when they patently wanted to chat. We shall have to programme a little more break time into the programme to meet the need!

I am aware that many members at the conference were keen to see more basic stock tasks demonstrated and wanted the opportunity to practice under supervision. The only way that we could achieve this would be on a regional basis. Some of you have already been kind enough to offer your farms as hosts. Thank you for that. I will take this to Council in January and see if we can get something on the road for Spring 2005.

Our Association show - Camelid Fiesta '05 - is due to take place next September and there is an introductory article about it in this newsletter. We shall be inviting interested parties and those we think may be interested to take trade stands and consider sponsorship at the Fiesta. David Pryse and Alastair Fraser will be leading a committee to organise this event and if you feel that you can contribute in any way I would encourage you to contact David and offer your assistance.

The Health & Welfare Committee, which is run jointly with BAS, has now met and has begun to perform a joint function for the two societies. It is important that the committee develops a liaison with the British Veterinary Camelid Society in order to be able to draw upon its professional expertise and represent both lay and professional points of view in its recommendations to Council and the board of directors of the BAS.

Council has been aware for a while now that there are some disadvantages to BCA's present structure of advisory groups acting as sub-committees to Council. Whilst they have devolved a significant part of the workload from council members to the committees and allowed more members interested in development of the Association to actively participate, it has resulted in somewhat extended lines of communication and duplication, and the system is proving somewhat cumbersome in effectively creating an unnecessary layer of management. Paul Rose, Arish Turle and I have had some preliminary discussions as to how we might re-organise so that the species groups have

elected members and are thus able to meet as separate council with the opportunity to come together as a full 'Association Council' as and when required. The principles emerging are along the lines of a federated body with the species groups as autonomous units. We are proposing to set up a larger committee to develop the concept and we shall be taking advice and ideas from the full membership. We shall publish a discussion paper and take the matter to the AGM in April 2005.

We have recently reopened discussions with the BAS following two meetings between Rob Bettinson, chairman of BAS, and myself. The creation of a single alpaca registry for alpacas has long been a rational objective. I feel that it is now once again possible to contemplate the creation of such a registry and if successful we will be able to look forward to determine how the various interest groups within the wider 'Camelid Community' can co-operate with each other. Progress along these lines could dovetail well into the federated style of Association that we are examining as outlined above.

The ownership of Camelids has grown significantly over the last two years; more owners throughout the country with more veterinary practices meeting camelids for the first time and it makes sense that we should develop a 'representative organisation' which is in the public eye and which both government and the outside world recognise as speaking on behalf of the whole community. There are significant benefits to be gained for all parties from the concept; not the least of which is a recognised representation with veterinary involvement opposite DEFRA. We have to consider that until DEFRA recognises Camelids in their own right as distinct from other farm stock we shall always be treated as sheep and cows and reap the consequences of inappropriate disease control policy and testing procedures.

We welcome your views on these and any other issues raised. Council next meets on 19th January 2005.

Nick Weber

Chairman in the role of dentist



**We wish our
members a very
Happy New Year!**

This newsletter reports the BCA Conference and also that of the British Camelid Veterinary Society. The reports include reviews and lecturer notes so some duplication occurs in the cause of offering both the more technical and the "lite" versions!

BCA Conference - November 2004

Once again British Camelids produced a conference for its members which was fun, relaxed, friendly, fascinating and really educational; organised immaculately by Jane Brown.

The programme was split very sensibly between two days so that members could choose at which level they wanted to attend. The first day included a series of talks from American vet Chris Cebra on disease and digestive disorders. This was followed by Mike Bruford, Professor of Biodiversity at Cardiff University, who spoke on the application of DNA sequencing and genetic typing to South American Camelids and his colleague, Catherine Nakielny of CBS Technologies, who gave a clear picture of how DNA testing would be applied to the Alpaca Registry in 2005.

The atmosphere was so relaxed and friendly it was difficult for the poor organisers to persuade members to give up their conversations in order to get the programme under way. However eventually Chairman Nick Weber managed to persuade everyone to gather in the old converted barn for Chris Cebra to give his presentation. Chris is an Associate Professor in veterinary medicine at Oregon State



Conferences are a serious business



Alpaca handling

University but is no stranger to the British scene having done some of his training at Langford vet school, Bristol University. While at Langford he was sent off to Exmoor to help a farmer during lambing and here, he told us, he learnt more in one night about mal-presentations at birth than he ever would from text books or exercises in the class room. Chris specialises now in internal medicine, which, as he explained, means that progressively like all specialists he has learnt more and more about less and less.

His first talk was on basic herd health and was based on the theory that the earlier the problem is recognised the easier the cure. He provided a 10-point plan for good health management:

1. Assess your animals often both subjectively and objectively. Subjectively by using your eyes and your hands and objectively by weighing, where possible, regularly and by keeping accurate records.
2. Assume that abnormal animals are sicker than they are. Camelids are famously stoic as, being a predated species (by puma and the Andean fox) in their native environment, they have learnt to hide health problems in order not to be caught out as the weak animal.
3. Learn to recognise the signs of abnormality. Essentially the two simplest signs are watching them eat or defecate. Providing that food was passing in sufficient quantity through the animal and passing out in a healthy state then there was probably little likely to be wrong.
4. Learn to hit the jugular vein accurately. Although this was aimed more at vets than at owners, he stressed this was an important factor in being able to take blood quickly and with the minimum stress for the animal.
5. Test sick animals' blood. This was particularly useful in fat related disorders but could also identify a lot of other problems otherwise difficult to find.
6. Treat with fluids, the right fluids and not excessive fluids. It was important to have plasma available and not to drown them in excessive inappropriate fluids.
7. Plasma is an essential part of sick camelid treatment. 61% of sick animals have low blood protein and plasma provides a kick start. However in crias he agreed that although plasma was a useful tool for those whose mothers were not providing the necessary antibodies from colostrum, it was more effective to treat the neo-nate with colostrum rather than plasma. Colostrum from other species could be used but he warned about passing of disease, particularly Johnne's Disease from cows and goats.
8. Do not surpass the animals stress threshold. Stress was one of the leading causes of death and it was important to realise that camelids did not always appreciate the regular handling of them when ill. At times it was important to recognise that it was better to do less rather than more in saving the animal.



9. Use adequate restraint, either physical or pharmaceutical. Here he showed various physical restraints that they used at his research facility but he pointed out that the sooner the camelid realised that there was no possibility of escaping the sooner they stopped trying to get away.
10. Learn what is common and what is not. Here he referred to the excellent book on camelid medicine by Murray Fowler, well known to most camelid owners, and also to a forthcoming book due out any day co-written by him and Claire Whitehead.

His second presentation on Digestive Disorders gave his audience another insight into the possible problems which just might affect their animals. Starting with what to look for he gave another useful list based on the letter F which apparently is easier to remember than most other letters of the alphabet:

1. Face – teeth, swellings or abscesses.
2. Fluid – Dribbling, regurgitation (sick not spit!) and movement in the neck.
3. Faeces – amounts, consistency and straining.
4. Frail – weight and body scoring.
5. Football – looking at the shape of the abdomen.

In addition he recommended watching out for colic, a twist in the uterus, lethargy, shock, 'dying alpaca syndrome' (when the neck twists back in a dramatic fashion) and for ulcers, which are just about impossible to diagnose until post mortem.

Chris then went to describe the results of a fascinating survey he carried out on diarrhoea in crias over a four year period. Because of the many vets who had little experience in camelids but a life time of experience in other large species there was a general view that diarrhoea was usually either worms or coccidiosis. His survey of 43 crias showed the following problems:

- 12 No pathogens detected
- 0 Salmonella
- 1 Nematodes
- 1 Rotavirus
- 4 Cryptosporidium
- 6 Eimeria
- 8 Giardia
- 11 Coronavirus

Now before all camelid owners in the UK go back to their vets to tell them to check for these diseases it is worth remembering that Giardia and Coronavirus can only be detected under electro microscopy and neither are prevalent at the moment in Great Britain. In addition Chris was due to talk to the British Camelid Veterinary Society the following weekend so he would be alerting them to the results of this interesting survey.

By now in the fashion of all good presentations by vets he had shown some really graphic pictures of vomit and diarrhoea in full technicolour and thus had prepared his audience well for the delicious lunch that was about to follow.



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Camelid Digestive Disorders

Christopher K. Cebra VMD, MA, MS, DACVIM-LA, Associate Professor, Large Animal Internal Medicine, Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Several surveys have indicated that digestive disorders are the most common causes of illness and death in New World camelids. In spite of this, there is relatively little scientific information concerning these disorders, and popular discussion has focused on certain ones, such as gastric ulcers, clostridial infections (and Johne's disease), to a degree disproportionate to their importance. In recent years, we have tried to publicize some of the more important (though often neglected) disorders, including tooth root abscesses, grain overload, gastrointestinal obstructions, and infectious and parasitic diseases of the abdomen. Unlike ulcers and clostridial disease, some of these other disorders have real treatment and survival possibilities, which count of course on correct and early identification of the disorder.

Signs of digestive disease include: facial masses, malaligned teeth, dropping feed from the mouth, salivation, regurgitation, gurgling sounds from the throat or abdomen, a fluid wave in the neck, weight loss, weakness, obtundation, a staggering gait, retroflexion of the head over the back, dehydration, high or low body temperature, high or low heart rate, high or low respiratory rate, labored breathing, congested mucous membranes, sudden death, lack of abdominal fill, abdominal distention, colic, straining, fresh blood in the stool, tarry stool, lack of defecation, and diarrhea.

Some of these signs arise early in the course of the disease, others late. Some are relatively specific to certain disorders or at least gastrointestinal disorders. Others are general findings common to many diseases of different organ systems. Finding any one of the signs warrants further investigation, possibly including a more thorough physical examination, laboratory tests, and other diagnostic modalities.

In some cases, the sign is obvious. In others, it requires careful examination. Observation of the animal and frequent monitoring as discussed above are the best ways to detect problems early.

The most common digestive problems of the head are tooth root abscesses and malocclusion. Tooth root abscesses (impacted teeth) are infections around the base of the tooth and are most common on the cheek teeth of the upper jaw. Hard lumps and occasional drainage are the most common signs. Antibiotic treatment or surgical removal of the infected tooth may lead to resolution of signs. Malocclusion usually relates to how the incisor teeth (lower jaw) interact with the dental pad (upper jaw). Alpacas especially have problems with incisors that are aimed more forward than up. In some cases, a too-short upper jaw is at fault. Malocclusion may affect the animal's ability to eat, especially on pasture, and is usually treated by corrective trimming.

The most common digestive problems of the neck are choke and megaesophagus. Megaesophagus is a result of ineffective muscular contractions of the esophagus, and is especially important in camelids because of their

upright neck and the need to regurgitate cud back up the esophagus. Common clinical signs include salivation, weight loss, abnormal cud spilling, and a fluid wave in the neck. Choke, or esophageal obstruction, causes the same signs and is often the result of megaesophagus. In other cases, a dental abnormality, greedy chewing, inflammation of the esophagus (from *Rhododendron* family plants), or especially fibrous feedstuffs can lead to choke. Choke is usually relieved by passing a stomach tube. Megaesophagus may be managed by a careful feeding protocol – pellets fed from a height is my preference.

The most common gastric disorders are Grain Overload in the first compartment and Ulcers in the third compartment. Grain overload is the result of over-ingestion of carbohydrate-rich feeds (grains or fruits). We believe that camelids are relatively susceptible, as they evolved in environments where nutrients were scarce. Accidental overfeeding, animals escaping into the grain store or orchard, and bullying by certain animals in a group are the greatest risk factors. Signs start as weakness with obtundation, anorexia, and a staggering gait, and progress to recumbency with the head flopping over the back. Multiple camelids may be affected. Medical treatment with oral and possibly intravenous alkalinizing fluids is usually successful. Ulcers are still a bit of a mystery. They appear to be the result of stressful situations and possibly high-energy feeds (including copious lush pasture). These may slow emptying of the stomach into the intestine and hence promote gastric acid retention. Signs are often very subtle and treatment is controversial.

The third compartment is also the site of infestation by Stomach Worms. These are mainly the same worms that affect sheep and cattle, and hence can be shared between these species. Loss of blood, protein, and weight lead to an unthrifty animal, and diagnosis is made by fecal examination. Treatment is through deworming medication and possibly some pasture management. Resistance to some common dewormers including ivermectin is becoming a problem.

Worms can also affect the intestine, as can Protozoal Parasites. The most commonly reported protozoal parasite is *Eimeria* spp. or *Coccidia*. This mainly affects juveniles between about 1 and 18 months of age, but can affect older camelids that have poor immune function or are confronted with a large parasite load (overcrowding). Multiple camelids may be affected. *Cryptosporidium* can be an important parasite of young crias, and in some areas *Giardia* is common. The protozoal pathogens cause loss of protein and weight, and frequently also cause diarrhea. They are diagnosed by fecal examination and treated with appropriate medications and pasture management.

The most common Viral Infections of camelids at our practice also affect the intestine. Coronavirus, and to a lesser extent Rotavirus, damage the intestinal lining and cause diarrhea. Dehydration, anorexia, and obtundation may be present in severely affected camelids. Younger



camelids are affected most frequently, but Coronavirus at least also affects adults. Outbreaks are common. Diagnosis is by fecal examination by electron microscopy, which should be available at the local veterinary diagnostic laboratory. Treatment consists chiefly of supportive care with fluids, and possibly antibiotics to prevent secondary bacterial infections.

Bacterial Infections of the intestine appear to be less common in camelids in our practice than in other large animal species. Salmonella infections occur sporadically, as do a variety of other bacteria including *E. coli*, *Actinobacillus*, and *Clostridium*. Unfortunately, many of these infections are highly invasive and lead to a rapid demise of the animal. In some cases, we believe the bacteria invade existent lesions, possibly originally created by viruses. Diarrhea is a less consistent finding than signs of sepsis: congested mucous membranes, high heart rate, anorexia, and obtundation. Diagnosis is by clinical signs and blood work. Treatment is a course of antibiotics and usually anti-inflammatory drugs.

Other infections in the abdomen can affect the gastrointestinal tract. Ruptured ulcers are one uncorrectable source. *Streptococcus zooepidemicus* is another infection that frequently inflames the lining of the abdomen. Affected camelids usually have a fever and a

history of exposure to horses. Diagnosis is by cultures of blood or abdominal fluid, and treatment consists chiefly of antibiotics and supportive care.

Intestinal Twists and Obstructions are relatively rare, but are certainly seen at any large camelid practice. The list of possible lesions is long. As a few general rules, blockages near the end of the stomach cause mild pain signs, but also cause abdominal distention, dehydration, obtundation, and anorexia. Blockages further down the intestine cause more violent pain signs, and possibly straining. Because "gas colics" are rare in camelids, any camelid showing signs of abdominal pain should be examined by a veterinarian. A variety of diagnostic options are available, with treatments depending on the identified lesion.

The above list is not comprehensive, but should address the majority of the digestive ailments. Some items are common, others are more sporadic. Some can be avoided or managed. Regardless, early and correct identification offers the best treatment success, and as the owner or farm manager is the one in most frequent contact and most intimately aware of the individual camelid's habits, it often falls to that person NOT to make a diagnosis, but to recognize that an abnormality exists, and thereby initiate the process to seek a diagnosis and a cure.

Camelid DNA Services

CBS Technologies was created in 2001 as a spin-out company from the University of Wales Aberystwyth. We specialise in sheep and offer a range of services from artificial breeding (laparoscopic and cervical artificial insemination, embryo transfer and semen freezing), scrapie genotyping, and parasite diagnosis to parentage assignment. Two of the services we offer, scrapie genotyping and parentage assignment, use molecular genetics i.e. DNA. The scrapie genotyping service was developed in conjunction with Cellmark and is used by sheep breeders to identify individual animals which are resistant or susceptible to the sheep disease scrapie. This is done by identifying different alleles at 3 specific sites on the Prion Protein gene using Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs). These are variations in the DNA sequence that occur when a single nucleotide (A, T, C or G) in the genome is altered i.e. AAGGCTAA to ATGGCTAA. A low cost, high throughput service has been developed using a fully automated system, utilising robotic technology in the laboratory provider and a purpose designed database with barcodes leading to an internal tracking system and specially designed sampling kits and submission forms means that human error is kept to a minimum. This means that costs have been kept to

a minimum allowing all sheep breeders to access the technology which has now become a routine procedure in their breeding programme.

Parentage assignment on the other hand uses DNA microsatellites. These are short sequences of DNA which are repeated many times. Different versions of the same microsatellite are identified by their length and each animal has two versions of a microsatellite. One is passed on from the sire and the other the dam. Therefore for an individual to be the offspring of a certain pair of animals, all the results must match those of the parents. Between 10 and 15 microsatellites 'markers' are used in each test and animals are excluded as parents as soon as there is 'mis-match' i.e. the microsatellite present in the offspring is not present in its parents.

CBS Technologies is launching a new service in conjunction with the British Camelids Association to allow breeders to access a range of DNA services. Using expertise at Cardiff University CBS Technologies will be offering three tests. The first is a DNA profile which provides a unique DNA 'fingerprint' for each animal which is stored for future reference. The second, parentage verification will confirm parentage whilst the third service parentage assignment will identify the correct parents when there are multiple potential dams and/or sires.

Dr Catherine Nakielny



DNA & Genetics

The first afternoon's sessions - following Chris Cebra's talks on Medical success in Camelid Herds and Digestive Disorders in the morning session - were described in the programme as:

Michael Bruford: "Camelids: from wool to genes."

Michael's talk will focus on the application of DNA sequencing and genetic typing to South American Camelids, including wild species and domestic populations. He will examine the DNA-level similarities and differences among these species and show how this approach has been used to understand the domestication of the alpaca and llama. He will also talk about the issue of genetic 'purity' and describe some recent studies from Peru which examine this.

Catherine Nakielny, CBS Technologies: "The application of DNA technology": Catherine will give a brief overview of CBS Technologies and then talk about how CBS use DNA. She will give examples of how the different technologies are used, in particular scrapie genotyping (for the sheep industry) and paternity testing. She will then finish by discussing the future of DNA and what kind of opportunities it can offer to animal breeders.

Here, Rodney Newth gives his "layman's review" of these two sessions.

Mike, who is Professor of Biodiversity, School of Biosciences at Cardiff University, is well known for his work on DNA sequencing and genetic typing of South American Camelids.

Mike introduced the subject with a short guide to the science of genetics and DNA. He identified seven areas where the work that he and colleagues both in the UK and in South America have done and are still progressing:-

- 1) Insights to the domestication of the llama and the alpaca
- 2) Diversity both within and among breeds
- 3) Diagnostics
- 4) Traceability
- 5) Parentage and Pedigree
- 6) Genetic Management
- 7) Identifying genes of Economic Value

The publication in 2001 by the Royal Society of the findings of seven experts including Michael, Miranda Kadwell and Jane Wheeler in a paper "Genetic analysis reveals the wild ancestors of the llama and the alpaca" has concluded that based on a microsatellite DNA approach there is very strong evidence that the guanaco is the wild ancestor of the llama and the vicuna is the wild ancestor of the alpaca (both huacaya and suri types).

A shortened version of this research paper appeared in Camelids Chronicle No 53 (issue 2 of 2001). Perhaps because of our pre-occupation with the aftermath of the

Foot and Mouth epidemic this article did not get the recognition that it deserved at the time.

Another paper has been written by Jane Wheeler, Lounes Chikhi and Mike Bruford and is due to be published in 2005 titled "Case Study in Genetics of Animal Domestication: South American Camelids." This paper gives a brief history of the research into the origins of llamas and alpacas, and draws together the mitochondrial research and the Microsatellite marker research findings before discussing the conclusions reached and identifying areas for future research.

The research is perhaps unique in that in very few cases are the ancestors of domesticated species still alive and flourishing. A microsatellite DNA approach to investigate the genetic diversity within and among the wild camelids of Peru led to the chance discovery of two species specific markers for vicuna and guanaco. Many different microsatellite loci were tested, but only two of them were diagnostic. The YWLL 46 Allele frequency graph for the two wild species is shown below compared with similar graphs for alpacas and llamas. LCA 19 graphs show a similar pattern.

We know that after the fall of the Inca Empire the two domesticated species were widely interbred and there may have been some crossing with the wild species. (The research showed that there was no evidence of guanaco/vicuna interbreeding "in the wild"). Not surprisingly the conclusion drawn from the DNA research is that it is likely that the guanaco is the ancestor of the llama and the vicuna of the alpaca.

The researchers conclude that in their sample of llamas and alpacas only 35% of domestic animals have not undergone any detectable hybridization based on mtDNA and on the 2 diagnostic microsatellites analyses. 80% of the alpacas had detectible hybridization compared with 40% of llamas.

To my mind what is important is not the percentage of llamas or alpacas that are genetically "pure" but the loss of fibre quality since the days before the Spanish Conquest when micron counts in the area of 17 to 22 were common. Now in Peru 90% of alpaca fibre produced is over 25 micron. Further research (possibly involving DNA from mummified llamas/alpacas) is being targeted at identifying the genes responsible for fibre quality and turning this knowledge into a practical genetic management tool for South American Camelids.

There is an old saying that maternity is a matter of fact whereas paternity is a matter of speculation - not any longer thanks to DNA analysis. Mike briefly covered the science of DNA analysis that can, with a high degree of accuracy, identify paternity and confirm maternity of any one alpaca (or indeed llama) from DNA samples of the cria and the two parents. This will become ever more important as embryo transplant techniques are developed.

One of the identified problems with the attempts to



establish a unified Alpaca Registry for the whole of Europe was the cost of the very comprehensive analysis proposed by the German laboratory specializing in DNA analysis for confirming maternity/paternity.

Utilising the expertise of Mike and his colleagues costs can be reduced to an affordable level by reducing the number of markers in the standard DNA analysis whilst still retaining a high probability that there will be no duplicates of the DNA profile for any particular sire or dam. Samples of the original material from which the DNA analysis was made will be kept by the laboratory. In the very unlikely event of two animals appearing to have an identical DNA profile the stored samples can be re-analysed with additional markers to determine true paternity (or indeed maternity).

Catherine Nakielny reviewed the work that CBS Technologies has carried out with other breeds and it seemed clear to me that this company has the technical competence and expertise to offer BCA the kind of DNA analysis, recording and facilities to retain DNA samples as back up to any possible later queries.

These two sessions were fascinating and there can surely now be no remaining doubts about the origins of the llama and the alpaca, let alone in individual cases paternity or maternity.

Relevance to BCA

Whereas DNA profiling is very important for the next stage in the development of the Alpaca Registry it could be just as rewarding for the llama fraternity.

Recent articles in the Chronicle indicate that the range of

sub-types of llamas within the basic Ccara and Tampuli types are recognized in South America. The control groups of vicunas and guanacos contained samples from throughout their natural habitats in the Andes. The llamas used in the sample covered all types including animals from Peru, Argentina and Bolivia.

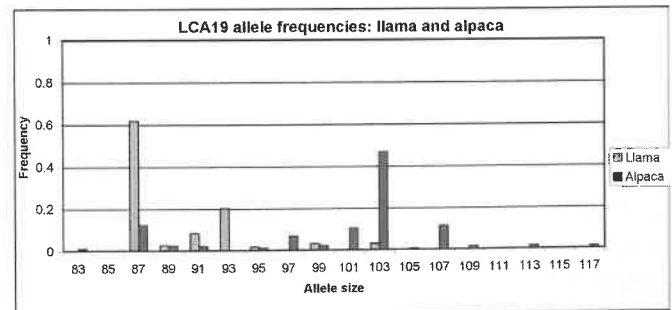
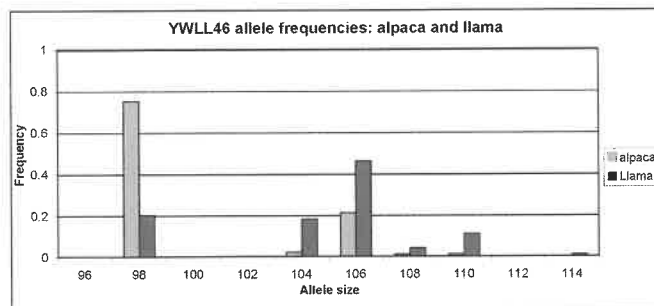
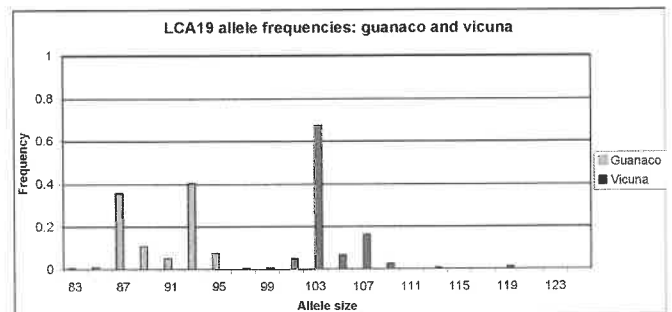
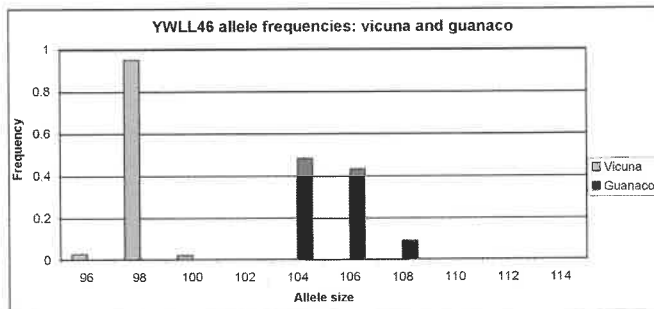
It therefore follows that it is technically feasible to ascertain whether any particular llama is DNA "true to type" as well as the more traditional phenotype assessments that we are used to in the UK. Most of us have more experience and familiarity with Ccara type llamas. The increasing interest in the other types of llamas will give the Llama Advisory Committee a lot of homework in drawing up profiles for the four main types.

I hope that they will liaise with Mike Bruford to ascertain if (in cases of doubt) the relevant DNA analyses on YWLL 46 allele size frequencies, and also on LCA19, can be made available to UK owners at a reasonable cost. The committee may find some "stimulation of the little grey cells" is required on the obvious "follow-ons" e.g. in deciding how cria with different parental types should be classified in the llama herdbook and register, amending guidelines for show judges etc.."

My thanks to Professor Bruford for checking that my review of these two sessions gives a fair reflection of them both.

Rodney Newth

Ed: And our thanks to Rodney for his effort in getting to grips with these issues and for his help in getting the members' reviews written!



YWLL 46 allele size frequencies in SACs

LCA 19 allele size frequencies in SACs

Basic Herd Health

Presented by Chris Cebra, this presentation was aimed at new camelid owners, but there was some new information and ideas from over the water.

What should we feed?

- Water
- Roughage
- Supplements including vitamins and minerals

Providing water is essential, although most of a camelid's daily intake comes from grazing pasture. They are very finicky about what they drink. It should be emphasized that water must be fresh, in clean containers free of algae, and should not be contaminated with hay, feed, leaves etc. The daily water requirement of camelids is approximately 3% Body Weight per day, which is relatively low. (Cows will drink three times that amount). NB. These animals have oval shaped red blood cells and it is thought that this shape prevents them bursting when excessive water is consumed, which has been seen in other species.

Pasture and hay is classified as roughage. Pasture changes throughout the year and camelids are well adapted to coping with less pasture at times. Roughage is essential to general well being and gastric movements. It prevents bacterial overgrowth, keeps the system flushed and helps heal the lining of the intestine.

Camelids are selective grazers and, in their native environment, tend to select leafy browse as their primary foodstuff. These are low lying; nutritious plants, high in protein and quality, and fairly soluble. In this country, lucerne hay provides a similar food. However, the stems are often left uneaten and should be discarded. Mixed natural pasture is always best as it provides variety.

Poisonous plants are a risk but very few cause problems. Some clovers e.g. sweet and brown clover carry toxins but any symptoms are rare. The common poisonous plants are laurel, rhododendron, and yew. Oak is toxic to animals, and acorns are poisonous in large volumes. Bracken ferns can cause cancers.

It is very important to check the quality of the forage you are feeding. Good quality hay should be green in colour, and dry. It should smell sweet and should not contain mould or be excessively dusty. There should be a good variation in the length of the fibres. The gold standard is to have your feed analyzed before feeding. Hay loses quality in warm conditions and so should be stored in a cool, dark, well ventilated area.

In America and the UK, we have better grazing and better quality food than in the altiplano, where there is high altitude and cold weather which provides a lower cell wall content and higher nutrient availability, in the plants that grow there. Low altitudes and mild weather provide rapidly growing, high quality plants but during long dry days in summer there is a reduction in the

nutrients available.

General trends

Camelids are capable of surviving harsh environments and are accustomed to intermittent fasts. They tend to select the highest quality feeds available. Typical forage contains enough energy and protein for most camelids, approx. 10% protein.

Most problems in North America are related to obesity. Lucerne hay provides 10 - 20% protein. Poor quality hay should not be fed where only poor quality pasture is available.

Camelids are not used to cereal grains. They are not ruminants and as a result there is a slower passage of food through the stomach, which means greater fermentation and utilization. They have a lower daily dry matter intake 1.2 - 1.5 (males) as opposed to 2.0 - 3.0 % in cattle and sheep. Smaller amounts of food must contain enough nutrients to sustain them. Ideally, fresh hay should be made available little and often. A 50kg alpaca will eat approx. 300kg hay per year, if no pasture is available, and a llama will eat 1 ton per year.

Typical rations

Water

Forage pasture, browse, and hay

Supplements grain, salt, minerals, vitamins (1% of total daily intake)

Mineral requirements

Selenium, required for immunity, at 1mg per day

Vitamin E, essential for the production of Vitamin C, 400 u/g per day

Vitamin D, required for skeleton, 30 - 40 u/g per day or inject 1500u/kg monthly or bimonthly. (also can be given in gel form). Necessary in young and pregnant animals.

Ideally, supplements should be supplied in the feed, on a daily basis. Care should be taken if giving loose mineral salts, e.g. horse licks etc. they are often too high in copper. A formulated, pelleted mix is the best option. Blood tests can be taken to measure mineral levels, which will confirm adequate uptake, by individuals.

Cereal grains, which have been processed i.e. split, cracked, rolled etc are more highly fermentable and should be avoided. Whole grains are preferable.

Animals in different life stages have different energy needs. This can be demonstrated as a factor of their energy requirements.

Growth 2 - 3 x

Lactation 2 - 4 x



Pregnancy 2 x
Exercise 1.2 x

Illness and cold weather also require more energy. There is an increased demand for protein, calcium and potassium.

In the pregnant animal, as the foetus grows, there is less room for feed in the stomach. Higher quality pasture and hay is needed e.g., alfalfa, legumes, and peas.

Providing higher protein in conjunction with higher energy is better than high energy alone. It should be noted that higher protein levels would increase the micron count by 2 - 5 microns.

Summary

Weigh

Body score

Keep records

Weigh, or condition score, males and non-breeding females monthly and pregnant and lactating females every 2 weeks. Allow gradual changes of diet over 7 - 14 days.

Be aware of thin or stressed animals and try to remove

any sources of stress. This may be bullying within the herd or reluctance to feed with other animals. Do not separate thin animals by themselves and do not feed cereals alone to increase weight.

Decreased protein and calories can lead to fatty liver. Mineral levels are regional and should be evaluated. Excessive copper can lead to liver damage. Too many nitrates can cause anaemia.

Camelids are generally healthy. Well-handled animals results in reduced stress at times of treatment e.g. toe trimming, dental care. Fighting teeth should be removed, using a wire saw.

Vaccinate with a clostridium vaccine containing tetanus. It is recommended to vaccinate first time pregnant females twice during the last 3 months of pregnancy, and then vaccinate the cria after 2 months. In lambs vaccinating before 7 weeks has proved ineffective. Avoid the first 60 days of pregnancy.

Vaccines and vitamin injections can be given sub-cutaneously and have been proven to be effective, in spite of manufacturers directions. Vitamin injections are known to be painful when given intra-muscularly.

Helen Macdonald

Fleece Management

We had a really interesting talk from Joy Whitehead on fleece management. She began with some background on fleece management and then moved on to problems with fibre experienced by her and others. The other subjects that were covered were about times to shear and how often, the different methods used, micron testing, field care, how to prepare for shearing, sorting fibre into colours and qualities and judging the fineness of fibre.

Joy stressed the importance of clearing any debris from the fields where your alpacas or llamas are grazing to keep their coats from picking up any miscellaneous brambles, burs, goose grass and other weeds because, of course, as we have found, they are bound to roll particularly if you are about to shear them. From our own experience young alpacas always roll and have the worst mess in their coats, which is a great annoyance when the first clip usually has the best micron count and is the softest fibre imaginable. Joy's opinion is that it is worth spending time walking the fields and removing any brambles, loose straw or hay, pieces of barbed wire etc. before they become

embedded where you do not want them.

We were treated to some tricks of the trade which I am sure we will all find very useful to bear in mind like Joy's use of ping pong tables for spreading the fleeces out and sorting them into three categories of fibre - saddle, neck and leg. Joy talked about the importance of record keeping - include the alpaca's name, the year of the shearing and which part of the fleece ie. the firsts (saddle), seconds (neck) and thirds (leg) and anything else that you feel might be relevant and helpful to you when sorting fibre and selling it.



A display of Llama fibre products

We had a look at some fleeces of various qualities, colours and ages and Joy explained about how the different stages of shearing are undertaken, how the different grades of fibre are divided up and dried, if necessary. We all discovered 'suant' and I hope I have spelt it correctly. 'Suant' is the alpacas' equivalent of lanolin, the oily matter which greases sheep's wool.

Lucy Prendergrast



Guidelines for medical success in camelid herds

Christopher K. Cebra

Veterinarians commonly attend to camelids for the first time when the camelids are in the end stages of a disease process. Predictably, treatment is often unsuccessful and both the owner and the veterinarian become frustrated. The lack of success has led to a variety of negative mantras, like “all sick camelids die” or “a down camelid is a dead camelid.” Though I cannot deny the inevitability of death with many advanced diseases, treatment success and satisfaction of the people involved can be markedly improved by following a few simple guidelines.

1. Assess your animals often, subjectively and objectively.

Regular, systematic assessment results in earlier identification of abnormalities, and thereby the possibility for earlier medical intervention. This in turn leads to greater patient survival.

Subjective assessments include how bright the animal appears, whether it is maintaining itself with the herd and in its normal spot in the social hierarchy, and whether it spends adequate time at the feed bunk, dung pile, or chewing its cud. Every camelid is unique in how it acts in these respects, thus knowing individual behavior is helpful. In general, I recommend seeing each camelid eat and/or chew its cud at least twice a day (once in the morning and once in the evening). Elimination behavior (urination and defecation) is less fun to watch, and usually only noteworthy if the camelid is under surveillance for other concerns or if it spends too much time trying to complete the process.

The most common objective assessments are body weights and body condition scoring. These are important because camelids' fiber coat can conceal many changes in body condition. Alpacas are especially vulnerable to mis-assessment. A general rule of thumb is that a 5% reduction of body weight (about a condition score) means the animal should be observed closely for the next interval, with special attention to feed intake, attitude, and general physical activity. A 10% reduction

warrants veterinary attention, and a 20% reduction (a drop of 2 condition scores) warrants immediate action. Fleece weight and weight changes associated with pregnancy or parturition must be considered when assessing body weight.

Weights are also an important consideration when calculating necessary food and dosages of medications. Estimation can be dangerous in these regards.

The saying “the dullest pencil is better than the sharpest memory” comes into play here: record your findings (more often on computers than paper nowadays), do not expect to remember them.

2. Assume that abnormal animals are sicker than they appear.

Camelids have a reputation for being stoic. This is partially true. Like most prey species, they try to hide injuries and illnesses. However, we have many tools available to us that are not available to most predators, such as scales, blood analyzers, ultrasound machines, the internet, and opposable thumbs. We can use these advantages as well as careful monitoring to identify camelids in the earlier stages of illnesses and injury.

Refusal to eat and inability to stand are common reasons for seeking veterinary attention in camelids. These are common endpoints from a variety of disorders, many of which presumably had some earlier manifestation, and also bear with them their own complications: weakness, debilitation, and mobilization of fat reserves with feed refusal and pressure sores and muscle damage with recumbency.

Contributors to why camelids are first seen at these endpoints include stoicism and lack of monitoring, but they also include people not responding to the earlier manifestations, such as an abnormal gait or difficulty rising (preludes to full recumbency) or a loss of weight or partial decrease in appetite (prior to complete feed refusal).

We need to see and react to these

earlier signs. In some ways, we even need to overreact compared to what we do in other species. In addition to showing subtle signs, we need to acknowledge that camelids seldom have illnesses that respond well to simple, short-term medication (like pain medications to a colic horse or a single dose of a long acting antibiotic in a coughing cow)—camelids take care of those minor issues themselves without any demonstrable signs.

3. Learn to recognize the signs of abnormality.

Knowing signs is very important, both for the owner and the veterinarian. Various specific signs include the postures of abdominal pain (legs kicked out to the side, animal laying on its side, rolling), signs of fluid or feed accumulation in the abdomen (distended abdominal contour), signs of irritation or blockage of the esophagus (vomiting, salivation, gurgling, retching), signs of straining to urinate or defecate. The list is long, the message is short: know what is normal and what is not.

4. Learn to hit the jugular vein quickly and atraumatically.

This is more for veterinarians than owners, but still an important point. Complications associated with drawing blood from the jugular vein are relatively uncommon in most large animal species, and can range from minor hematomas to more serious deep infections. In contrast, complications in camelids are common and can be fatal. These complications can be completely avoided through practice and skill.

5. Do blood work.

This relates to animals' being sicker than they appear (stoicism) and also to the fact that many of the illnesses we see are of an internal nature and poorly reflected by clinical signs. We are often surprised by blood work: some camelids have severe, unforeseen abnormalities (such as evidence of infections, kidney failure, or acid-base disturbances) that warrant aggressive, specific treatment. Others have no abnormalities in spite of severe clinical signs. In some cases of the latter, the



lack of abnormalities are because we are running the wrong tests.

6. Treat with fluids, the right fluids, and not excessive fluids.

Although camelids showing illness often are suffering some degree of dehydration, experience has showed us that we frequently administer either too little or too much fluids. Too little is the result of not recognizing the severity of the illness or not running blood work. Too much comes from our conventions and formulae from other species. Camelids often tolerate high volumes of fluid poorly, because they frequently also have insufficient blood protein when they are sick.

7. Plasma is an essential part of sick camelid treatment

This point is definitely for the veterinarians. Plasma is necessary for advanced medical treatment of camelids. Neonates with failure of passive transfer will benefit from the immunoglobulin in plasma and adult camelids, approximately 50% of which at our clinic have some degree of hypoproteinemia, will benefit from all the proteins. Protein/plasma

administration is especially important if you listen to point #6.

8. Do not surpass the animal's stress threshold.

Overhydration and stressing camelids to death are probably the two leading causes of death of camelids in veterinary hands, superseding even euthanasia. Stress may also come from interactions with other animals, particularly dominant camelids or predators. The results can be worsening of their previous condition and even death.

Signs of stress include struggling, open-mouth, labored breathing, rapid oscillations of the eyes, and the head bending over the back. Although instinct often tells us to do more in these situations, the correct response is often to do less, to back off and let the camelid recover its facilities. Once the camelid has recovered, procedures may be done in a measured fashion.

9. Use adequate restraint, physical or pharmaceutical.

Adequate restraint of the camelid during procedures is safer for the camelid and all humans involved. Rapid movement or struggling can

lead to a variety of injuries, some of which are life threatening. Ropes, chutes, manual restraint and sedatives all can aid in examination and procedures.

10. Learn what is common and what is not.

Unlike twenty years ago, there is now a lot of reference material available concerning camelids, some in the lay literature, some in the scientific literature, and some in other places, such as the minds of colleagues or their web sites. Some of this information is even accurate.

There is a saying in medicine: "common things occur commonly." Pretty straight forward and about as true as anything I have ever heard, however, it has only been with the compiling of our years of experience that we have truly been able to judge what is common and what is not in camelids. Geography and other factors certainly affect these lists too. It for this reason that attendance to meetings like this one is so important. The more we know and the more we exchange ideas, the better prepared we are to prevent and confront adversity.

Camelid queries

In the July issue a reader asked: We had a calf born at 8 o'clock in the evening on the first rainy night after a long heat-wave! The calf, although wet, appeared strong and healthy, but had not suckled as dark began to descend early on this miserable night.

What should be done?

- *Dry off the cria with a towel and leave it to suckle from mum in its own good time? Give it colostrum substitute and leave it (risking it will lose the incentive to suckle from mum)? Feed it through the night (increasing the risk of rejection).*

And should it have been

- *Left in the field with its peer group? Taken with mum away from the group into a smaller enclosure where it will have less distraction? Be put in a stable for the night?*

Paul Rose replies: *In the absence of responses from experienced readers (experienced in camelids rather than reading) I canvassed opinions and also asked one or two vets at the Camelid Veterinary*

Conference for their views. The points that appeared to be agreed were:

- *Do dry off the cria (and apply iodine to the navel at the same time).*
- *If the calf fails to suckle within an hour or so of birth or before dark, try to introduce the cria to the mother's udder yourself*
- *If this fails then administration of a colostrum substitute (artificial or colostrum kept for the purpose such as frozen camelid or goat's colostrum) would be essential.*
- *Whilst in "normal" circumstances one should avoid moving a female from her peer group or from her familiar surroundings in the period before and after calving, if you could not manage either of the above in the field then it would be advised to move the pair into housing for the night.*
- *If the calf still does not take milk in the hour or so after giving the colostrum, then milk feeds would be advised through the night. It is most likely that the calf would then feed from the mother in daylight. Calves can be confused in buildings however, and try to suckle from stable corners (they look for the shadowy "corner environment" of the udder between the mother's legs), so monitor carefully. Try again to put the calf to the mother's udder if necessary and return the pair to the field as soon as possible.*



British Veterinary Camelid Society Conference 2004

Janet Nuttall reports on this year's gathering of camelid vets

Thirty vets gathered in Dorset in mid-November for the British Veterinary Camelid Society's tenth annual conference. Headquarters was in Shaftesbury and practical facilities were kindly offered by UK Llamas Trekking Centre and Wessex Alpacas.



Dr Chris Cebra

Guest speaker this year was Dr Chris Cebra from Oregon State University. Chris spent the weekend discussing the diagnosis and treatment of camelid gastro-intestinal problems, which account for a sizeable proportion of his case load. In most surveys,

digestive disorders account for over a quarter of life-threatening complaints in camelids.

The peculiar anatomy of the camelid GI tract confers some advantages - such as the ability to thrive on very low quality foodstuffs and to conserve water to an amazing degree - and some disadvantages, for example the inability to cope with sudden changes of diet and the narrow spiral colon, which can easily become obstructed. The take home message is to feed camelids a high fibre, low energy diet, make any dietary changes very gradually and avoid stress such as overcrowding or frequent transport which predisposes to gastric ulceration, often within a few days.

Simple diarrhoea (or scouring) in youngsters is common, frequently due to diet changes or immature gut flora and will often respond to treatment with probiotics. However, scouring can also be a sign of serious conditions requiring full investigation and rapid treatment, so if the cria appears depressed or ill, inform your vet immediately. Electrolyte solutions can be used to correct dehydration but those designed for cattle should be used at half strength in camelids.

In most surveys, digestive disorders account for over a quarter of life-threatening complaints in camelids.

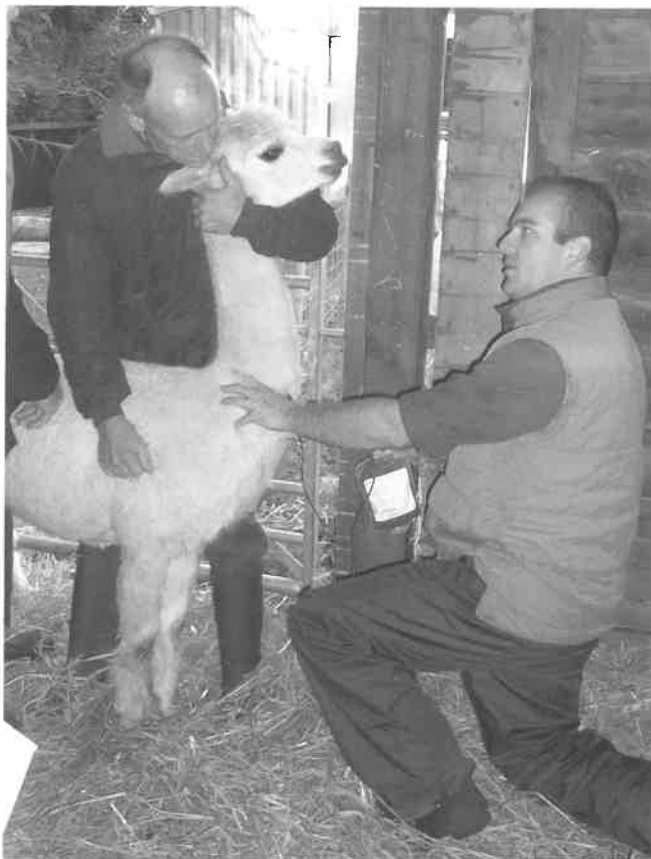
Because adult camelids can resorb huge volumes of water from the faeces, gut problems can be masked for much longer than in other ruminants, so any sign of scouring should be taken seriously as it can be an indication of a severe systemic or abdominal disorder. Colic (abdominal pain) tends to be far less obvious than in other animals but can be shown as restlessness: getting up and down, frequent stretching of legs, rolling from sternal (sitting

in the cush position) to lateral (lying on one side) recumbence or by lying in a different position to the norm for that individual, such as flat on one side or with both hindlegs outstretched on one side. Colicky camelids may stand quietly when restrained for examination, but then revert to these subtle signs when they think they are not being observed.

Feed camelids a high fibre, low energy diet, make any dietary changes very gradually and avoid stress such as overcrowding or frequent transport which predisposes to gastric ulceration, often within a few days.

As well as abdominal disasters (grain overload, twists, tumours, obstructions etc), there are many bacterial, viral and parasitic problems which can be shared with other ruminants. However, coccidiosis tends to be species-specific. Coccidia are usually very small parasites which reproduce in the cells lining the intestine. *Eimeria macusaniensis* (which has gained the nicknames of Big Mac or iMac) is a much larger species, which affects camelids, is becoming increasingly important in the USA and is known to be causing problems in the UK.

Unlike other coccidia which primarily affect young stock, especially those in overcrowded or unsanitary conditions,



Collecting blood samples



Big Mac can cause severe scouring in adult camelids, often after exposure for the first time when visiting a stud or at a show. Diagnosis is difficult as large areas of the gut may be affected before coccidial oocysts (eggs) can be found in the faeces and treatment needs to be continued for a long period to ensure complete elimination of the parasite.

In addition to hearing from the guest speaker, another important element of the annual conference is the chance to share information. Several of the conference delegates had interesting case histories to discuss.

We also heard of a new testing kit which can detect failure of passive transfer - inadequate protection of the new born cria via colostrum which can lead to lifelong problems if not detected and corrected at a very young age. The IGg test detects the level of protective antibodies passed on via colostrum and requires a blood sample from the cria, so should be done by a vet. We discussed 2 different kits: the first is American and is already available but takes 24 hours incubation to obtain the final result and costs £15-20 for a single test (cheaper if several tests are done simultaneously). The second comes from Europe, takes only 30 minutes to obtain a result and is likely to be much cheaper but has only just started being tried out here. Both seem reliable and are specific for camelid IgG.

The practical sessions provided us with the opportunity to learn more about routine procedures such as castration. Three llamas provided us with good examples of individual reactions to the same dose/body weight of a combination sedative and painkiller given intramuscularly. The first refused to go down initially, then succumbed just as plans were underway to perform the operation standing. The

"Always use the right side of the neck when blood sampling or giving intra-venous medication, to avoid inadvertent damage to the oesophagus which could lead to cudging problems in the future"

second went down nicely but refused to get up afterwards until given the optional antidote. Only the third behaved as expected! The combination used was butorphenol (a pain killer), xylazine (a sedative, muscle relaxant and pain killer) and ketamine (a dissociative anaesthetic). This can be supplemented with local anaesthesia if necessary. Atipamazole (Antisedan) can be used to counteract the xylazine if there are any concerns about the patient or recovery is slow. Each vet has a different preferred dosage regime and as well as individual response of the patient, weights are usually estimated, hence the wide range of response. Generally speaking, alpacas require a 25% higher dose of sedation on a body weight basis when compared with llamas.

Chris stressed the importance of always using the right side of the neck when blood sampling or giving intra-venous medication, to avoid inadvertent damage to the oesophagus which could lead to cudging problems in the future.

We also discussed a beautiful llama, imported as a youngster with a view to becoming a stud male.

Unfortunately, his testicles did not keep pace with increasing body size and the general view was that as this trait could be passed on, it would not be wise to try breeding from him.

Another male appeared to have wry face (a severe facial deformity) which caused difficulty with grazing unless the incisors were kept trimmed. This is a simple procedure, providing good handling facilities are available and sedation is used if needed. However, wry face is congenital (present at birth), whereas in this case, the condition seemed to develop much later, probably as a result of injury. His extremely long, straight legs - which predispose to stifle problems - probably resulted from castration earlier than the recommended 18 months to 2 years of age.



A case "J" wry face?

A youngster with a large, non-painful swelling on an upper eyelid reminded us of the importance of going back to first principles. Sedation, surgical removal and submission to a laboratory was recommended: these lesions are often seen in other species and frequently turn out to be a benign condition of one of the lubricating glands of the eyelid.

Ultrasound examination of the abdomen took up a large part of the second practical session, but we were also treated to a guided tour and discussion about the daily management of a very busy and diverse alpaca enterprise, as well as collecting blood and processing it to produce plasma which was frozen for future use in sickly crias.

As the population of camelids continues to grow in the UK, so too does the number of vets who have regular contact with them. The BVCS is a valuable source of information throughout the year, as well as hosting an excellent gathering each autumn. It is worth saying again: please make sure your vet is a member (it only costs £10 a year), and if not, point them to www.camelidvets.org



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Welcome to new members

Interest: A: Alpaca; L: Llama; G: Guanaco

Nicholas Acworth: Cranleigh, Surrey (P)
Nick & Sue Atkins: Minchinhampton, Glos (A)
Simon & Carol Austin: Dorchester, Dorset (L)
Patricia Bowles: Llangollen, Denbighshire (L)
Jo Clarkson: Falmouth, Cornwall
Peter Corkill: London
Fiona Gazeley: Petersfield, Hants (L)
Ben Harford: Tetbury, Glos (A)
Heather Hoddinott: Walford, Herefordshire (A)
Simon Hughes: Bicester, Oxon (A)
Carol Jerman: Corwen, Denbighshire (L)
Simon McMahon: Buxton, Derbyshire (A)
Kate Monaghan, Moretonhampstead, Devon (A)
Paula Sells: Denbigh, Denbighshire (A)
Jessica Smith: Lower Upham, Hants (L)
Raymond Smith: Halesworth, Suffolk
Paul Soden: Ruthin, Denbighshire (A)
Margaret Steinschaden-Silver: Malmesbury,
Wilts (A)
Ian Waldron: Umberleigh, Devon (A)
Chris Whittington: Pershore, Worcs (A)
Sally Wilson: Southampton, Hants (A)

Events 2005

Springtime Trek

The Midlands Group of BCA cordially
invites all members to a new
Springtime Trek - The Star Trek (it's
really a pub crawl)
Sunday 3 April 2005

Commencing at 10.30am from The
Crown Inn, Weston, for coffee &
biscuits.

Trekking at 11am to The Star Inn,
Sulgrave to arrive by noon for a
quick snifter and then trekking back
to Weston for Sunday Lunch at The
Crown by 1.30pm.

Cost around £16 per head (tbc).

Numbers must be confirmed and paid
for by 24th March please.

For details, directions etc. contact
Mary Pryse 01295 768676
e-mail: mary@llamatrekking.co.uk

Springtime Gathering

BCA South West will be having
its Springtime social gathering at
Roseland Llamas in Devon on 23rd
April, 11.00am.

Come and join us - It's free, just
bring a dish (with something in it) for
lunch!

All members welcome.

Contact Jenny Rogers 01837 82747 or
Paul Rose 01363866056 (e:
roseland@llamas.co.uk)

Fiesta '05

The Association Annual Show... plus
much more!

Please join us

24/25 September 2005, Forest of
Dean

FOR SALE

Male Llama, "Cuzco" born 2/11/03.
£400.

Contact: Rosemary Alexander
Tel: 01993 830484 (Oxon)

Teach your llamas and alpacas the
kind and effective way! Marty McGee
Bennett's Camelidynamics range of
books, videos and equipment for sale
from Carthvean Alpacas. Contact Julie
at taylor.browne@clara.net or ring
01209 831672 for price list or advice.

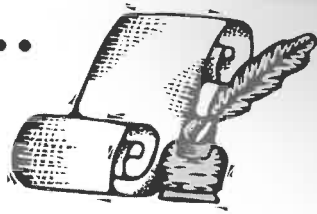
AGM British Camelids Association

11a.m, Sunday 10th April
2005

Jersey Pavilion, NAC, Stoneleigh

Do please attend. This
will be an important
meeting with decisions to
be made about the future
organisation and direction of
the Association. As indicated
in "Council Matters", more
information will follow.

Members' Write ...



their herders trading goods between the mountains and the valleys of Bolivia. So imagine how pleased I was that Maggie Bolton was one of the guest speakers at the excellent two day Association Conference 2004, an event which was thoroughly enjoyable and

packed to capacity!

Susan Brooke

Hobby Day

At school, given the choice for the following day of normal lessons or presenting my hobby to my classmates with a tabletop display, I chose the latter. Armed with head collars, grooming brushes, two types of carrier packs, a sweet-smelling sample of goat mix that our llamas love, hand shears, stacks of photos and samples of natural shearing and smooth spinning of fibre from llama, alpaca, guanaco and suri for comparison, I laid out the display, not forgetting to place a copy of "The Camelid Chronicle" in pride of place. Regrettably the only thing that was missing was my favourite llama.

I then spent the whole afternoon answering questions to the best of my ability.

My Headmistress expressed a keen interest in my hobby and asked a lot of questions too.

All in all, the afternoon went very well and out of about thirty display tables, my llama table top got 1st Prize for the most interesting hobby and best presented table.

Emily Stoakes (aged 13)

Ed: Well done Emily! A prize for "Great Initiative In Spreading the Camelid Message" is on its way to you...

Dear Editor

I do want to congratulate The Camelids Chronicle on yet another appreciated magazine - both informative and sometimes amusing! For me the November Chronicle had two articles of particular interest, the first being "The Argentine Type Llama" by Paul Taylor which was fascinating.

The second article was "The Llama Herders of Sud Lippez" by Dr Maggie Bolton, describing the llama caravans and

Llama Walk

On a grey Saturday morning in late September eleven llamas, assorted owners and walkers, and an alpaca called Paddington, set off on a walk through the Sussex countryside, courtesy of Tina O'Donnell, ably assisted by Ruth.

Bluecaps Farm was the starting point, and indeed it was - eventually - after several phone calls from diverse compass points in the vicinity. Road, track and field provided the leisurely means by which we skirted Bewl Water and its startled visiting weekend campers and bikers. Locals, however, seemed to have been well trained as our entourage caused barely a flicker of consternation, and good manners on both sides were the order of the day. Our perambulation was made even more leisurely by the individual and collective 'comfort breaks' enjoyed by our camelid companions. This, of course, enabled us to become engaged even more in one of the real pleasures of any decent walk - the talk - before we reached our intermediate destination - the pub, The Old Vine. By this time the greyness had failed to follow the meteorologists' predictions and had turned to a warm but persistent rain. The pub's sun shades now came into their own as umbrellas for the human element as we enjoyed our al fresco ploughmen's lunches.

The break also allowed the llamas and Paddington to provide an education for the many pub customers who emerged from within and who may, initially, have considered that they had 'over-indulged' when confronted by the unexpected sight that greeted them in the garden.

Lunch was followed by the relatively short walk back to the farm and, with the rain seemingly set for the rest of the afternoon, we said our goodbyes and gave our thanks to our organiser and guides.

Andy Stewart

Volunteers!



Wanted!

Can you help?

We need someone to take on the role of Association Treasurer? If you are numerate and willing, do please email or call Jane Brown for further information.



Do you have all round legal skills or knowledge of company law? Would you be prepared to give us advice and guidance from time to time on legal matters concerning Association business? If so, again, do please email or call Jane Brown for further information.

BCA Publishing Data

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ADVERTISING: Please contact Jane Brown as above for details and rates.

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BCA

Fiesta - 0 - Five

24th and 25th September 2005

Well, somehow the Association Show did not happen in 2004 but we're going all out for an extravaganza in 2005!

The event will be much more than just a Show. There will be of course lots of camelid camaraderie and the usual show classes, plus fun classes, agility events, fancy dress opportunities, displays, stalls offering camelid wares, Andean music, and hopefully lots of Andean food (and more standard fare for the gastronomically less adventurous)...

Day 1 is proposed as a members-only day with Day 2 open to the public.

That's the basic plan so far and it may yet be revised (or even cancelled if sufficient support is not shown in these early days) - so to make it come together we will need our members' support - your support - more than ever before. First announced in the November Chronicle, you have nearly a year's notice, so please put 24/25 September in your diary and join us for a great weekend! Bring a couple of camelids (or more) if you can (facilities will be on offer), and just yourselves if you can't! And if you can't manage both days, do come for at least one of them....

The event will take place at Speech House Hotel which is a 17th century former hunting lodge set in the heart of the Forest of Dean. The hotel is offering a special accommodation discount for BCA members and guests, and there is plenty of other accommodation in the area: hotels, B&B's, camping etc. Details will follow in the March Chronicle.

Here's the most important bit for now ~ how you can help...

- Please tell ten friends (we know you do have ten friends) or more, and relatives too, and ask them to join us.
- Please ask them to each invite ten more friends and relatives...
- As soon as possible (probably around March) we will put a colour poster on the BCA website which you can print off and distribute - please ask your family and friends to do the same.
- If you know personally the management of any commercial camelid-related companies that might like to book a stall (including insurance brokers, agricultural buildings and product companies, feed companies, craft producers etc, please ask them to contact us or let us know their details!



How about getting together with other members in your region and car-sharing, or organising a minibus, or even galvanising enough people in your region to make it worth while organising a coach to come to the event! Please discuss it with your BCA regional co-ordinator. If you are considering the possibility of transport share/hire, please let us know too!

- Perhaps you know of someone (Yourself? Your company? Your bank? Other?) who might like to sponsor marquees, individual events, even the portaloos (for which everyone would be especially grateful)! Again please ask them to contact us or let us know their details!
- Apart from commercial stalls we are especially keen to promote our members' camelid wares and enterprises. If you make things with your camelid fibre, for example, we would love to include them in one of the displays or ask about having your own display. Please contact David Pryse.
- In fact if you would like to help in any way be it physically or with ideas, please contact David... (see contacts).