Letter from the chairman of the Steering Committee

I would like to welcome you all to our first News-sheet.

A lot has happened since our inaugural open meeting in December, some exciting, some very frustrating – namely repeated delays in the process of company registration not yet achieved, therefore bank accounts remain unapproachable.

Exciting because of the interest shown in our Association. We now have 51 members and everyone is most enthusiastic and helpful.

To my committee members, who do all the work, I would like to say thank you very much indeed. To all our members, thank you for your support – don’t be afraid to offer or call for help – it is your Association.

Peter Knowles-Brown

Association News update

At the time of going to print there are 51 members.

Between them they own:

- 69 Alpacas
- 64 Guanacos
- 127 Llamas
- Nil Vicugnas
- 23 Bactrians
- 16 Dromedarys.

13 members do not own animals. 9 members wish to buy either llama, guanaco or alpaca. I wonder if any of these members might consider owning all male herds? Males kept away from females do not fight and if kept in age groups will develop normally. Breeders would be pleased to know where to go to find replacement stud animals. The remaining four members either look after other people’s animals or are animal scientists, or veterinaries.

Many members indicate an interest in research. It could be that most of these are in a position to closely observe their animals and are concerned to know the results of scientific research; but others may be in a position to actually carry out scientific research, these people might welcome cooperation from amongst the interested observers.

Some members intend to breed their animals which is good news, there are so few. May it be carried out with care and due regard for quality. There is considerable demand both nationally and internationally for alpacas, guanacos and llamas of good conformation with high quality fleeces.

Artistic ability is not being judged! What the artists need is an essence on which to work.

Logo

Please will members who have ideas for the British Camelids logo please sketch them out as best they can and get them to Mr. M. D. Warner, The Old Rectory, Thorpe Morieux, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. TP30 ONW not later than Friday, 8th April 1988. Artists in Mr. Warner’s firm will select those considered by them to be the best and present them as logos at the general meeting to be held in June. Members present will be asked to choose the one to be used by the Association.

A logo should be bold, distinctive and memorable. Sketches can be any size. Artistic ability is not being judged! What the artists need is an essence on which to work.

General Meeting

A general meeting is to be held on Sunday, 27th March 1988 at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Safran, The Forest House, Hatchet Lane, Winkfield, Berkshire. Members are invited to arrive at about 10-30 a.m. Coffee will be served. From 11 a.m. to noon Mrs. Safran will show her llamas and give an informal talk. At noon all will adjourn to the Slug and Lettuce, Winkfield, for lunch at 12-30 p.m. The meeting will take place in a room at the pub at 2 p.m. sharp.

Secretory

Excerpt from a letter

By Rodrigo Prado D. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Chile currently on a year long secondment to The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute. His information is based on research done in Peru and on personal experience:-

"Estimated populations of South American Camelids (in thousands):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Llama</th>
<th>Alpaca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2,050</td>
<td>3,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>2,050</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equador</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 200,000 families raise these animals as their main source of income. The Camelids, apart from the fibre, is the main source of animal protein available to the residents of the high Andes. The meat is lean.

The number of vicugnas and guanacos, the wild camelids, decreased sharply until the 1960s. They were killed because of the extremely expensive fibre in the case of vicugnas, and guanacos were killed for its fibre and meat. The meat is dried and then sold. In Chile, as a by-product, the skin of the guanaco female’s neck is used to make lasoos which are many times more resilient and stronger than lasoos made out of cattle hide. The reason why the numbers of wild camelids decreased was the cheap source of meat, fibre and skins.

In the 1970s, both in Peru and Chile, the vicugna and guanaco were legally protected and the population of both species has increased successfully.

Herds of llama and alpaca are kept in the north of Chile. Few guanaco herds live in the north although some live in the high Andes of central Chile. The biggest herd of more than 10,000 guanaco lives in the extreme south of Chile, including the Terra del Fuego, where they are increasing and are protected by law.
In Chile the vucugna lives in the extreme north, near the borders with Bolivia and Peru. We don’t have vucugnas, llamas or alpacas in the south, only guanacos.

Nutritional resources in the high Andes vary considerably throughout the year and at some stages are very low. No supplements from peasant families in the high Andes for llama or alpaca meat. You don’t see llama meat being sold in the markets only occasionally in some parts.

As fertility is low among herds in the high Andes the young born are often used to replace the old ones that are consumed by the owners. In Peru lambing percentage is around 50%.

The alpaca ovulates 26 hours after mating. Mating induces ovulation. Spontaneous ovulation occurs in a small proportion of alpacas, especially in anoestrous females. In a study of 928 alpacas 50.9% had ovulated from the right ovary, 47.4% from the left ovary and 1.7% from both ovaries at the same time. However, most pregnancies develop in the left uterine horn. Both ovaries are active. In a study of 928 alpacas 50.9% had ovulated from the right ovary, 47.4% from the left ovary and 1.7% from both ovaries at the same time. The ovulations are asynchronous.

The gestation period is known to be 308 days (92). 2. the adult females must show an adequate body condition against the likely causes of disease.

Clostridia littering types C & D are problems in young stock and death is the usual outcome. Type A is also mentioned, in papers from South America, as a cause of death but definite evidence appears to be lacking. (It has recently been cited as the cause of death in Water Buffalo. *1) I am certain that Clostridia were the cause of death of two young calves born at Esgryn. One young animal was found dead one morning just fourteen days after birth. A post mortem suggested enterotoxaemia. A second animal was taken ill when about one month old. Injected and oral antibiotics, together with supportive therapy kept it alive for nearly one month but it was slowly fading and sadly had to be euthanased. At post mortem the kidneys were severely damaged, again probably the result of enterotoxaemia.

The gestation period is known to be 308 days in alpacas.
I have enjoyed my first experiences with Guanacos and look forward to learning more about them. I hope these notes will be of interest. Surely the more basic information that can be collected and distributed at this early stage the better the farming of these animals will become in the long term.

References

1. Vet Record 1987 121,278-279
2. Vet Record 1987 120,435-439

Lewis Griffiths. B.V.M.S., M.R.C.V.S.
Lewis Griffiths
Headland Veterinary Services

Bad tempered males

In my experience camelds are inquisitive but timid animals preferring to avoid close contact with humans. They will come quietly to investigate someone in their field but more often than not will not retreat a step or two in response to an advance.

Occasionally, a male isolated from the herd and reared as a youngster can become, as he matures, overly bold and rather aggressive towards humans. The problem develops almost imperceptively - he becomes increasingly ebullient, rushing to you and demanding attention. One fine day he oversteps the mark and is quite rightly reprimanded.

Unfortunately, by this time he is big and strong and retribution usually take the form of a smart thwack with whatever is to hand. In a heated moment he learns, with surprise and hurt, that his kind gentle human friend can be dangerous.

Could it be that from this point on the problem feeds on itself? There are now two animals who mistrust one another; both, on each subsequent encounter, concerned to get their own 'watch out' in first.

Would it be possible to teach the petted or hand reared male words of command and a few house rules at an early stage, when he is still small and gentle? Could these be instilled in him as second nature by the time his friends within him?

Beserk Male Syndrome is something quite different that occasionally occurs.

As the name implies it is irrational hysterical behaviour which people who have witnessed describe simply as terrifying and dangerous. The animal rushes in screaming and baring his teeth, rears up, bangs his head against the ground and attacks with his vicious teeth. He will attack from the bottom of the field, reach over fences to get at passers-by; do anything to get at humans.

There seems to be no reason for its onset and there is no cure - no alternative but to cull the animal before damage is done.

Fortunately both problems seem to be fairly rare but knowledge of them is worth having.

Along came two llamas

When we were out in Germany some years ago we used to go to a local zoo where there were number of llamas. They were enchanting with their long eyelashes, and took food so gently from our children. Since then my husband has always wanted to have llamas. So, when we finally came home to Cumbria, he advertised for two.

I didn't want to have a lady llama and a gent, because I didn't want to breed - I would hate to sell in case they didn't get good homes. We would also have to divide our park into endless paddocks to prevent in-breding.

Therefore, when we heard of two small half brothers near Bradford-on-Avon we were down in a flash to investigate.

Mr. Walker has a wonderful home for endangered species - not open to the public, but we were able to look at the animals. It was fascinating, Grevys Zebra, Przewalskis horses etc. Here was a young male with the not so rare breeds as his set-up was so costly, and so the two young llamas were for sale.

We arrived again a few weeks later to collect them. They were still with their mothers and I felt sorry for them when we took them away and put them into the pony trailer.

They were amazingly sensible - sitting down right away with their long necks stretching out to look out at the window.

We arrived home in the dark and left them in the trailer. Next morning I let them out and they had a good look around. I went away for an hour or so and came back to find David, the younger one who was 3 months old, on the lawn - having jumped the fence to get there. Daniel, who was 4 months old, didn't follow but David jumped out about four times in the next few weeks and then settled down, mercifully for us.

David became very ill when he was about 3 years old. He may have eaten crab apples - we shall never know. The vet came and injected him with something which brought him up with enormous abscesses. This made him much worse and I had a very worrying time nursing him in his shelter. As he wouldn't eat I was giving him glucose and water, and making him get up and walk around.

Months later, we had been away for just one night and came back to find David lying dead in his shelter.

He was found to have an ulcerated stomach - could the cause have been the crab apples? The branch of the tree overhanging the field has now been cut down.

It took us a year to find our lonely llama a companion. He liked the sheep, but eventually mistook them for lady llamas. I had to rush out in my night dress one morning to rescue a poor sheep who would have been killed; so, sadly, he had to have his operation.

Eventually we found Larry in Worcestershire. A three year old white male living on a farm.

The morning we arrived to collect him he was feeling very sorry for himself as his pony friend had been nasty to him. It was not until we got him home that we found he had a broken bottom tooth and a bit off his upper lip.

Larry is a dear, we think that at one time he had been in a small children's zoo, but he is, I'm afraid, rather bossy with our old boy David - but then he is an entire.

I badly wanted to drive my llamas but on talking to the keeper at London Zoo he said that when you break them for driving you want not one, but three competent men; and that they never drive them at the zoo without a man to lead them as well as the driver. Is this really necessary?

We had our llamas sheared once by the sheep shearsers - never again - they looked so miserable for months and we got very little for the wool.

Mrs. J. C. Washington

Llama Driving

Driving a llama and trap combination is a lovely thought. It must be closely akin to the slow motion and silence experienced by balloonists. A suitable pastime for a warm summer's day - padding down the leafy lanes.

Long before one can enjoy such delights, time and patience is required in abundance.

Breaking a llama to drive is a long slow process of daily repetition and patience on behalf of at least two people.

Don't even start until you have found a llama who shows a willingness to learn, who is quite happy to be hussed over, surrounded by people and traffic, and who is unconcerned by being touched all over from his ears to his feet; and until you have a reliable friend who will always be there during training, to be at his head.

Get your llama used to being groomsed all over - dirt in his coat under harness will irritate. Brush him, and blow him whilst running your hands through the coat. Be sure to remove all the debris.

Handle his head and ears, pick up his feet, get him used to being hugged round the girth, touched above the hocks and handled around the tail. Do all this daily until he accepts it completely.

Llama harnesses come in leather or nylon, either is good so long as it is strong and easily adjustable.

The halter should be strong and a snug fit, with a ring under the jaw for the lead-rein and a ring on each side for the reins.

Before putting on the girth for the first time it is advisable to be inside, and have the assistance of two calm people.

Whilst one assistant holds his head, let him see the girth and smell it to his satisfaction, then move to the left side. Have an assistant on the right side and part and straighten the hair in the girth region.

Talk to him in a soothing voice and move the girth slowly - if you surprise him now, he will surprise you.

Place the girth on his back and do it up loosely. Stay with him regardless of his reaction and keep the girth in place. Llamas have long memories as if he rids himself of the girth, by any means once, he may remember to try it again sometime.

Spitting, jumping, kicking and lying down (get him up as quickly as possible) will stop in time so long as you only use your voice to reassure him.

On subsequent days tighten the girth little by little until he will accept it fairly tight.

The next stage is to put on the backstrap and crupper. Again let him see and smell it and then gently put it along his back - if he performs be sure to keep it in place until he is quiet again.

Put your left hand through the crupper, gently take hold of the tail and pull it through the crupper, making sure no hair is tangled up in it.

The breeching should lie loosely well above the hocks, the chest strap should lie comfortably across the chest at the base of the neck.
Do not fix the traces and tugs until you are ready to hitch to the trap, they will only get in the way.

Once sufficient time has been taken to enable you to perform all these tasks whilst the llama stands quietly, and he will walk confidently round a confined area on the lead-rein – take him outside and walk him around some obstacles and amongst people. If all is well attach the reins and, whilst the llama is still being led by your wonderfully patient assistant, get behind him and establish a gentle contact with his head, keeping your hand steady.

Decide on words of command for move on, turn right, turn left, and stop and with the assistant leading him use these words as she walks him around a familiar track.

Gradually introduce a gentle squeezing pressure on the reins at the appropriate times, as well as using the words of command. Remember to cease the extra pressure on the reins when the manoeuvre has been completed – his reward for having done it correctly.

Avoid getting into a pulling match with his head, he must never learn to use the strength of his neck against your hands.

Take as many days or weeks as are necessary to transfer the source of control from the lead-rein to the long reins. When he executes all the usual manoeuvres with calmness and willingness begin to work on large even circles.

Shorten slightly the inside rein and remind him that you want him to continue to go that way by keeping the fingers squeezing and relaxing. Keep a steady hold of his head with sufficient tension on the outside rein for him to execute the bend but to prevent him turning round, and keep him going forward. Practice circles of varying size in both directions until he performs them with confidence and enthusiasm. Vary his daily programme, include all the lessons he has learnt as well as the new one scheduled for that day.

Keep him interested, be liberal with your praise when he does well and be firm with your voice if he misbehaves. Don’t overtime or bore him, little and often is the answer.

Always end the session before he gets tired, after a good move when he’s feeling good in himself.

Take him back to his box, untack him, fluff up his coat, slip him a rewarding nibble then turn him out to the freedom of his paddock.

The day when you pad down that leafy lane is getting nearer.

P.G.I. USA

The Knowledge Pool

Camelids are susceptible to clostridial diseases, the organisms causing these diseases lie dormant in the soil and are found on almost all farms in the UK, therefore the potential for infection is always present. A vaccination regime should be undertaken and begun at least 8 weeks before calving. CONSULT YOUR VET.

Vitamin E/selenium deficiency causes white muscle disease in newborn camelds, this can effect the heart and lung muscle as well as the muscles of locomotion. The baby may be reluctant to rise or he may walk with a stiff legged gait.

A blood test of the dam before calving can reveal a deficiency and treatment of the dam one month before the baby is due is the best way of protecting the baby. CONSULT YOUR VET.

Newborn Camelids must have adequate colostrum within the first 8 hours of life. Don’t interfere too soon, but if either the mother or the calf seems unwilling or unable to suckle try milking the mother and bottle feeding the baby. If unsuccessful use colostrum from a nearby, disease free cow or goat and feed a little every hour. Normally they consume about 10% of their body weight daily.

Camelids requirement for Copper is low.

The stomach anatomy of Camelids differs from that of true ruminants. The stomach has three compartments, saccules in compartments one and two are lined with glandular epithelium which produces, among other substances, a significant amount of bicarbonate. Camelids do not get bloat.

The liver in Camelids is on the right side and there is no gall bladder.

The Camelid foot is unique, there are two digits, the planteuse surface is covered by a soft corniform layer of epithelium, similar to that of the bulb of the heal of sheep and goats. Beneath the protective epithelium lies a fatty fibroelastic pad similar to the digital cushion of the horse.

The foot contains phalanges one and two, lying in a horizontal position. The nail or claw is small and non weight-bearing. The nail or claw may occasionally need to be trimmed back.

The dental anatomy of Camelids is also unusual:

Lamas

deciduous 2 1 3 1 2
Permanent 2 1 3 1 2

Camels

deciduous 2 1 3 1 2
Permanent 2 1 3 1 2

In the lama group of animals the upper incisor has migrated round the side of the jaw and become caniform. All four develop in the male, so with the extra caniform tooth it appears as if there are two canine teeth in each upper jaw. These are the teeth used by the male in fighting with other males and against humans.

Lower incisors may occasionally need to be shortened.

The kidney of the camel is capable of concentrating urine to diminish water loss in conditions of extreme drought. Salt content in the urine from a dehydrated camel may be twice the concentration of salt in sea water. Camelids are capable of taking in, at one drink, sufficient water to reverse a dehydrated condition – without any ill effects.

An abundant supply of water is needed to produce good fibre; pregnant females will drink a great deal.

There is some confusion as to the nomenclature of various age groups of New World Camelids. Some people use equine names and some bovine, since they are neither, perhaps male and female are more appropriate terms for adults. An infant from birth to weaning is a baby, and juvenile is the term for an animal from weaning to adulthood. A castrated male is called a gelding. A group of Camelids is usually known as a herd, but the term flock is sometimes used for llamas.

Old World Camelid females are called cows. The males are called bulls and the newborn is called a calf.

Question?

Are any members in a position to offer help in the following ways.

— Flowers to trim the exhibition at the Royal Show - 4th to 7th July 1988.
— Weaving, knitting and crochet for display at the Royal Show.
— Production of a sign board or banner to identify the British Camelids stand at shows etc.
— To take on the production of the association news-sheet for some time. The production needs to be made self financing e.g. through the sale of advertising. A super challenge for somebody.
— To do printing at a concessionary rate, for a short time. Association information packs, notices, stationery, news-sheet, etc.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Sales

Llamas. Breeding and young males for sale. Williams 02216 5929.

Guanacos. Males and females for sale. Williams, Farm Manager, Bradford-on-Avon. Phone: 02216 5929 or 0225 702011.

Guanacos. Group for sale. 4 mature females, 1 juvenile female, 1 juvenile male. All straight, strong and true. Syke House Alpacas, Newby, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 3ED. Phone: 09314 373.

Wanted

Alpacas. Newcomer to the world of camelids would be most grateful to hear from anyone who has, or may have in the future, male and female alpacas for sale. Please contact Paul Rose, Manor Farm, Temple Guiting, Glos. G54 5RP. Tel: 04515 681.

Llamas. Female Wanted. Phone Williams, Farm Manager, Bradford-on-Avon 02216 5929 or 0225 702011.