



Llama Link

The British Llama Society's quarterly magazine



Issue No 56
Spring 2020



Welcome

I have never been more sincere, than when I write that I hope you and your llamas are all keeping well in these strange times we are currently finding ourselves living in. Life as we know it has changed dramatically in a few weeks, but make yourself a cuppa and sit back and relax with this edition of Llama Link; I hope you'll find it to be a welcome tonic indeed!

In this issue we have the usual round up of llama news, the first of two articles on llama teeth by vet, Graham Duncanson and a sad, but interesting tale from Mary Walker of Lakeland Llama Treks, who lost a young and fit llama due to a set of extraordinary circumstances. We also have an insight into future happenings - there's information about a new features section being introduced - we do hope you'll take part - and Matt Yorke shares his vision for a new llama sanctuary.

Last, but not least there's a couple of Society notices - page 22 contains a form for anyone wishing to advertise in the 2020/21 Business Directory (if you don't want to lose the page - please photocopy it or email Caroline Bennett for a digital version).

Finally, I'm also asking all of you to consider whether you may step up and become more involved with the running of the society - it's really not as dull or as taxing as you may think. Page 19 has all the details!

Happy reading, keep well and see you all again soon!

Caroline

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NTS

Chairman's Notes



■ Caroline Pembro

Looking back over the past year

It has been a year now since I took over the helm of chairman for the British Llama Society - and what a year it's been!

Having taken over from Tim with little more than a set of headed notepaper and information about the upcoming AGM, it's been a bit of a steep learning curve and for me, personally, I've felt progress at times has been painfully slow. The BLS is run by volunteers, all of whom lead very busy lives and trying to arrange meetings, get decisions made and get feedback emailed in a timely manner has, at times, been quite a challenge.

However, looking back over the past twelve months reveals that, in fact, good progress has been made and so, moving forwards, I would love to see greater involvement from the membership (no matter what their level of llama ownership experience is), in order to drive the society forwards and modernise it to create the type of society we can all be proud of.

Back last Spring, I started by reviewing the full workings of the BLS. During my first couple of months, I received a huge number of calls and emails from members with suggestions and requests for various changes going forwards. These were all looked at in turn and formed the basis of many changes made during my initial year at the helm.

At the end of the day, my overriding mission going forwards is to increase membership numbers to enable the society to continue to exist for the benefit of the llamas. This includes educating both existing and prospective owners; promoting best practice for those keeping llamas, whether for fun or for profit; assisting llama owners if they run into issues; liaising with government bodies and other societies as/when appropriate and generally encouraging a friendly and supportive community amongst our membership). The last point is of particular importance and I would love to see more events held for members throughout the year,

with or without their llamas in tow!

New Trekking Guidelines

Representatives from the BAS and the BLS worked together to complete new guidelines/code of conduct for trekking businesses, which was implemented during the summer of 2019. Ten trekking ventures have currently signed up to the new guidelines and now have special links from the BLS website to their websites. We are currently (May 2020) in the process of renewing all our advertisements for the business directory and any trekkers who have not signed up to the code, will not, in future, be able to advertise their trekking business through us or benefit from any advantages of being a signatory to the guidelines.

Website

A review of the website found it to be quite outdated (the "latest news" on the homepage was from 2017) and it felt a bit unloved so a brand-new website has been designed. It is still very much a work in progress, with a long way to go, but it looks a lot fresher, is linked to our social media accounts, has updated information on it and we have many more plans for it - eg to digitise all past Llama Links (for members only to read) and to implement a pictorial family tree of llamas in this country. The website is now beginning to generate a small amount of revenue for us.

Policies and Procedures

A review of all our policies and procedures has begun, since it appears several have not been formally reviewed since the day they were written! Once they have been successfully updated, they will be on the website for all to see, with review dates stamped on them to ensure we regularly review our advice and information.

Membership

A review of our membership process was undertaken and despite two changes in Membership Secretary and a long period without anyone at the helm, the welcome pack

has been dramatically improved and now clearly sets out what the society is all about. Our membermojo system has been overhauled and although membership numbers themselves remain low, we are seeing a slow increase and fewer non-renewals at the end of the membership term. There are still a few issues linked to membermojo, which we hope to be able to iron out over the coming months.

Llama Link

Our magazine has had a change in editor and a slight change in focus – although I would still like to see news and photographs from a bigger proportion of the membership. Print costs have been reduced from £3.19 per copy (Jan '19) to £1.74 per copy (Jan '20) and I hope that there hasn't been any noticeable drop in quality.

Social Media

Matt Yorke has been excellent at generating an interesting public Facebook page, which is steadily growing in audience and reach. The plan is now to use this to raise awareness of BLS and get more new members to join us, now we have a new-look website and have improved the membership process. Our members-only Facebook page continues to be used daily by many and is the go-to place for advice, support and for sharing highs and lows of llama ownership! Going forwards, we will need to address other forms of social media and will need help to manage this and other forms of PR.

Events and Shows

Back in May, 2019 we enjoyed a very successful AGM and members' day, which had one of our best-ever attendance rates. Grateful thanks to Annie Austen and her team for hosting it.

Members exhibited at both the North Somerset (May) and the Royal County of Berkshire (September) shows and although there was a slightly lower than normal turnout, the BLS annual show was a great success, (despite the poor weather on the second day) and valuable funds were raised for the welfare fund. Thanks to everyone involved who worked hard before, during and after to ensure the success of the events and it was lovely to see several members who weren't exhibiting llamas, but who turned up for a chat on the day.

That's all from me, for now!

Caroline Pembro

Chairman, British Llama Society



Noah

Photographed by Matt Yorke

No Showing for llamas this year

At the time of writing, the showing calendar for all livestock during 2020 is looking pretty sparse and for llamas, there is no exception. The first show of the year, the North Somerset Show, scheduled for Sunday, 3rd May has had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures currently in force.



The ever-popular Newbury Show, usually held in September, has also fallen victim to the Coronavirus, with the organisers deciding to cancel early, rather than spend time and resources planning, only to find exhibitor or visitor numbers are down, or indeed, public events are still prohibited.



Both shows hope to return, bigger and better than ever, in 2021.

BLS AGM and Members' Day



Another casualty of the Coronavirus has been our Members' Day and AGM. Whilst it is looking increasingly unlikely that we will be able to hold a members' day this year, the AGM is likely to occur via electronic virtual conferencing. We will inform all members in advance of the date, so you can all join in, should you wish to.

British Camelids Limited AGM

Another disruption to camelid affairs is the AGM of British Camelids Limited, which will now be taking place on Wednesday 20th May, 2020 and will be carried out via ZOOM (teleconference).

This will only be the BCL AGM and not the business meeting. That will take place at a later date, when the committee is permitted to all sit around the same table!

For anybody wanting to join in on BCL's telephone conference AGM, you will need to ring Duncan on 07496 578781 to book your virtual place. You are

welcome to attend the conference, but you won't be able to vote on anything. The meeting is likely to be as short as ten minutes.



Antibodies from llamas could help in the fight against COVID-19

The hunt for an effective treatment for COVID-19 has led one team of researchers to find an improbable ally for their work: a llama named Winter. The team -- from The University of Texas at Austin, the National Institutes of Health and Ghent University in Belgium -- reports their findings about a potential avenue for a coronavirus treatment involving llamas on May 5 in the journal, *Cell*. The paper is currently available online as a "pre-proof," meaning it is peer-reviewed but still undergoing final formatting.

The researchers linked two copies of a special kind of antibody produced by llamas to create a new antibody that binds tightly to a key protein on the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. This protein, called the spike protein, allows the virus to break into host cells. Initial tests indicate that the antibody blocks viruses that display this spike protein from infecting cells in culture.

"This is one of the first antibodies known to neutralize SARS-CoV-2," said Jason McLellan, associate professor of molecular biosciences at UT Austin and co-senior author, referring to the virus that causes COVID-19.

The team is now preparing to conduct preclinical studies, with the hopes of next testing in humans. The goal is to develop a treatment that would help people soon after infection with the virus.

The paper's other authors are Gretel M. Torres, Wander Van Breedam, Kenny Roose, Loes van Schie, Markus Hoffmann, Stefan Pohlmann, Barney S. Graham and Nico Callewaert.

"Vaccines have to be given a month or two before infection to provide protection," McLellan said. "With antibody therapies, you're directly giving somebody the protective antibodies and so, immediately after treatment, they should be protected. The antibodies could also be used to treat somebody who is already sick to lessen the severity of the disease."

This would be especially helpful for vulnerable groups such as elderly people, who mount a modest response to vaccines, which means that their protection may be incomplete. Health care workers and other people at increased risk of exposure to the virus can also benefit from immediate protection.

When llamas' immune systems detect foreign invaders such as bacteria and viruses, these animals (and other camelids such as alpacas) produce two types of antibody: one that is similar to human antibodies and another that's only about a quarter of the size. These smaller ones, called single-domain antibodies or nanobodies, can be nebulized and used in an inhaler.

"That makes them potentially really interesting as a drug for a respiratory pathogen because you're delivering it right to the site of infection," said Daniel Wrapp, a graduate student in McLellan's lab and co-first author of the paper.

Scientists were inspired by antibodies produced by this llama, named Winter, to develop their antibody against SARS-CoV-2.

Winter is four years old and still living on a Belgian farm that is operated by Ghent University's Vlaams Institute for Biotechnology.



PHOTO: Tim Coppens

The finalised paper will appear here on May 5:
[https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(20\)30494-3](https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(20)30494-3)



Remembering Mary-Ann

by Tim Crowfoot

Mary-Ann died last summer; she was 22 years old

Born on the 8th September 1997 at Maplehurst Llamas and named Moonbeam, she was part of a large herd of pregnant female llamas owned by the late Pam Walker. Terry and I were looking for a female llama, preferably pregnant, to join David, who was alone following the unexpected death of our other young llama, Thomas. As the herd of females surrounded us in one of Pam's barns I became moonstruck and Moonbeam came home with us. We re-christened her Mary-Ann after Terry's sister. She was 4 years old at this time in 2001, just after the terrible foot and mouth crisis.

Mary-Ann proved to be virtually uncatchable, but, hey, she was pregnant and due in January, a few months away, so she could be excused her flightiness. Well, January came and went - no cria - so did February and March! We were sure that we were going to be disappointed. Then one day in late April we went down to the fields where we keep the llamas, about three miles from our home, to find a black dog worrying Mary-Ann. We shot into the field to chase it off only to discover a



Editor's note: I have personally enjoyed spending time with Tim and Terry when, with the help of Mary-Ann, they have opened their doors to demonstrate to members the finer points of llama cart driving.

black cria, which we called Tom. Pam, bless her, had seemingly got her dates muddled!

Mary-Ann proved to be a good mother and also became a little more approachable, but still preferred to move away from us. By this time, about a year or two later, Terry was starting to train the other llamas (using click and reward with very good results), but would Mary-Ann become clicker-wise? No she would not!

Having mastered clicker training with the boys (by this time we had five male llamas) Terry was looking for other challenges with the llamas so what about driving one? Various US videos were acquired and studied, Mary Pryse was consulted and sold us a driving harness she had used a few years earlier and we took a trip to Oregon to talk to several llama drivers there. We also discovered Barb Brady, who owned Llama Hardware in Washington State at the time and who eventually made us our second-generation driving harness. All our US contacts gave us much good advice but the common denominator was that one had to select a llama that was not herd bound and preferably liked walking out.

On our return home we initially tried our male llamas, who had responded so well to the clicker training. Would they walk out alone away from the herd? No they would not! Perhaps it was the clicker training, since they always wanted to turn towards us seeking a reward. Then Terry had a brainwave, "What about Mary-Ann? She always moves away from us."

Well to cut a long story short, Mary-Ann became the one and over the space of a year or more, was trained to become a good driving llama.

She proved to be excellent in traffic, certainly round our country lanes, and, wonder of wonders, became more and more personable to the point where she was always one of the llamas we would take to village fetes and other shows we went to. She was always up there with the public, who loved to give her her favourite treats.

She had a very prettily marked face, which made her especially attractive, despite a ragged ear that she had gained from a stud male llama when we tried, without success, to get her pregnant again.

All this was not without some setbacks. There were several instances, notably near Beacon Hill in the South Downs National Park, when Mary-Ann decided she was not going to pull that damned cart any further and attempts to get her to move on resulted in great showers of spit! On other occasions she would sit down between the shafts in the middle of a drive and the only way to get home was to take the cart off and walk her home. Guess who had to take the cart home! Despite this, Mary-Ann became my favourite llama.

Driving a llama is very dependent on voice commands, augmented by gentle tugs on the reins. The llama driving halter has no bit and the reins are simply attached to a part of the harness that is a snug fit to the nose. Training the llama to respond to voice commands is essential for safe progress. The most important of course is "Whoa"!

A secondary benefit of all this was that Mary-Ann the uncatchable, became Mary-Ann the catchable since one only had to walk towards her and call "Whoa" and she would stop dead with her head in the air and wait to be caught. Wonderful!

Mary-Ann also became an advertising star, along with some of the other llamas, and was filmed pulling the cart down the lane for an advert for RIAS, the insurance company. As part of the same advertising campaign Terry was photographed with Toby, another of our llamas, and appeared in an advertisement on the back of a bus, but that is another story (and no Terry does not look like the back of a bus!)

So life continued with the occasional drive out walking, trotting and even cantering (llamas can canter between the shafts), even at speeds of nearly 20mph for short distances.

In 2019, at the age of 22 Mary-Ann was still active and ready to pull the cart, but we would go more slowly and not so far, in deference to her advancing years. However, one day she was sitting in the middle of the field and was reluctant to get up and would not eat or drink. After a day or so we called the vet, who listened to her gut – no sounds from her digestive system. The vet thought it likely that there was a blockage and in view of her age, advised against trying to operate so we made the reluctant, but we feel humane decision, to put her to sleep.

She died peacefully after what we hope was not only a long life but a happy one. Mary-Ann certainly gave us many happy experiences and she definitely enjoyed meeting the public when she was out and about.

I miss her a lot.

The Llama Sanctuary GB

Matt Yorke explains his new concept

Some of you may have seen mention of 'The Llama Sanctuary' across Facebook and social media channels over the past few weeks. I thought I should give a quick overview of this organisation and its relationship with the BLS.

I have served as BLS rehoming coordinator for about eight months now and have seen a steady stream of llamas in need of rehoming during that time. In fact, another case has just popped into my email inbox as I write!

Fortunately, most llamas get taken in by you generous BLS folk, although there have been several occasions where it has proved to be quite a challenge. I have been wondering for some time what would happen, should I be unable to locate a suitable home. With llamas currently being highly fashionable, I can't help but worry that our membership's capacity for rehoming won't cope with demand.

On the opposite side of the fence are the non-members who often contact me looking to source llama(s). I always recommend joining the BLS, since animals are only rehomed to members of the society.

As long as these two factors stay in balance, then future rehoming should hopefully remain relatively stable.

However, as Rehoming Coordinator, it felt wrong to me that I wasn't in a strong position to take in llamas myself, should we be unable to establish a safe home. Hence the concept of the Llama Sanctuary (or more accurately the Llama Sanctuary GB - since I believe there is another llama sanctuary in Canada).

Essentially the Llama Sanctuary aims to be a last port of call for

any llama that I am struggling to rehome. This concept is very much in its infancy at the moment - I am experimenting with crowd funding and will start pushing this a bit more heavily over the coming weeks.

I admit that this a completely new direction for me; I have no prior experience with not-for-profit, so if anyone out there happens to be a pro in this area, I'd love to hear from you! If this becomes a success (and it is still very much at an experimental stage at the moment) then the next step would be to try and make the whole thing sustainable by offering llama experiences to the public. We would also be looking at offering charitable llama visits to community groups. However, this is realistically several years down the line (unless we can secure some very generous donations!).

people looking to rehome) at the same time. As mentioned, I don't have a background in not-for-profit but I have read up a lot on this area over the last few weeks and it seems like an interesting fulfilling place to be.

This whole concept has been run past the BLS board and I understand that feedback has been positive. Feel free to fire questions, concerns, constructive (polite) criticism to me at:

matt@thellamasanctuary.uk

I am always happy to take on feedback and change things where needed.

For more information you can have a look at the website:

www.llamasanctuary.uk

To summarise how this works in conjunction with the BLS rehoming function:

1. Rehoming case gets flagged up to the BLS rehoming coordinator, who distributes details amongst all members of the BLS as normal.
2. If there is interest, llama(s) get rehomed to a BLS member and a donation is made to BLS welfare fund as normal.
3. If there are no takers, rehoming coordinator refers the llama to the Llama Sanctuary. Sanctuary rehomes the llama and makes a donation to the BLS welfare fund.

What's in it for me? Well, I get to do what I love doing, working with llamas and helping them (and the

Comment from Caroline Pembro (Chairman) on behalf of the BLS:

Members of the board were interested to learn of Matt's idea and, whilst there is no expectation for the rehoming coordinator to personally offer or indeed, guarantee, a home for llamas in need, we recognise that there may become a time when the demand for new homes exceeds availability. At this early stage, as a society, we are more than happy to direct Matt to appropriate sources of advice and guidance, as we would for any other BLS members wishing to start a new venture, but we would not be able to officially endorse the sanctuary until all aspects of its operational procedures have been finalised and can be seen to be running in accordance with models of best practice. We do however, wish him luck with his plans.

Quentin's Questions

Introducing Quentin, your news-reading llama reporting for duty! Based at Briery Hill Llamas, when he's not busy trekking, he'll be writing his own column in future Llama Links, putting you in the spotlight and find out more about all you llamazing people out there!

Find out what Quentin has to say in each Llama Link!

In the coming weeks, you'll all be receiving an email from Quentin. He'll ask you a few short, llama-related questions and he really hopes you'll have the time to answer him. Everyone will get the same questions and it is hoped over time, we'll all learn a little bit more about each other and our llamas. And, of course, we'd love you to share a photo or two of your lovely llamas.

Look out for his email or should you wish to be in the spotlight contact Quinnie via: info@brieryhillllamas.co.uk



SUNSHINE ON A CLOUDY DAY

You may remember the article by Annie Austen, in the last edition of Llama Link, (Issue 55, Winter 2019/20 p.15-17)? Unfortunately, during the editing process, a paragraph that Annie describes as being, "probably the most helpful and relevant paragraph of all for most members!!" was inadvertently missed out. Here it is for your information:

Edible AD&E :

"There is more than one brand on the market but the one I refer to here is Triple D, distributed by Eggsport, and is available online in two sizes, a 60ml syringe or a 300ml cartridge, for which the maker also offers a calibrated gun dispenser. The instructions are to give the paste as a drench directly into the llama's mouth, but in its undiluted form it is quite strong smelling and presumably strong tasting, so there is always the possibility that your llama may spit it right back at you! As an alternative, you can try stirring it very well into your llamas feed and offering it this way. It does mean feeding every llama separately to ensure that each one gets the correct dose, and some may choose to reject it. Most will learn to accept it, sometimes rather grudgingly, and there is no reason why you can't make it really dilute by spreading the dose over two or three days. The paste contains the same three vitamins as the injection, AD&E, but it also includes Vitamins C, K and B12 as well as calcium and phosphorous in the correct balance. The manufacturer's recommended dosage rate is 5ml per 25 kilos, given monthly, and on that basis one cartridge would treat around ten adult llamas and costs about £18. It also has a good shelf life, and is not compromised once the syringe or cartridge has been started, although if you are carrying over from April to October a tube that you have already started then the advice would be to discard the first 5ml come the autumn. Store between 5 and 28 degrees C, out of direct sunlight."

Stop Press! Annie has just advised me that: "A new injectable from Bimeda has just come onto the market. It is licensed for use in the UK (so is readily available), but not yet tested on camelids of course!! It is a better balance, because the Hipravit injectable has a very high vitamin A content, potentially hazardous for pregnant females. With this product, we can give adequate vitamin D without risking overdoing the vitamin A. As always, please consult with your vet with regards to correct dosage". For further information, please visit: <https://www.bimeda.co.uk/bimeda-products/product-detail/belavit-ad3e>

WHAT'S YOUR LLAMA STORY?
PLEASE SHARE YOUR LLAMA NEWS, VIEWS, PHOTOS
WE'RE WAITING TO HEAR FROM YOU!

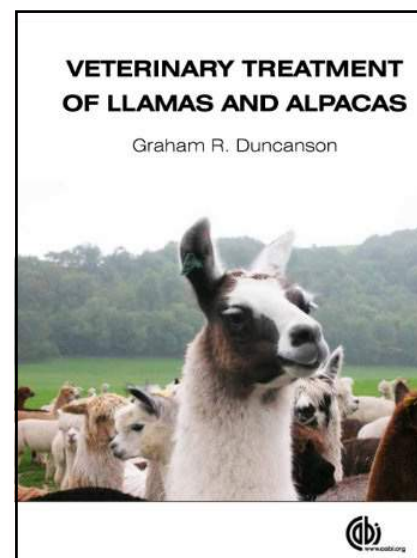
Where's my

Caroline Champion, Shropshire

tooth?

The photograph opposite, of Cassie, one of Caroline Champion's llamas, prompted a light-hearted exchange between the two Carolines late one evening. Whilst Caroline Pembro mused as to whether the tooth fairy visits llamas, and if so - what was the going rate for a llama's tooth? - Caroline Champion was more concerned about whether or not llamas can grow new teeth!

Fortunately, Vet Graham Duncanson BVSc, MSc (VetGP), DProf, FRCVS was on hand to offer some sensible guidance. Author of the book entitled, *Veterinary Treatment of Llamas and Alpacas*, he has also offered to write an article on abnormal tooth problems affecting llamas and alpacas for the next edition of Llama Link.



**Veterinary Treatment
of
Llamas and Alpacas**

(ISBN - 13:978 1 78064)

Llamas' teeth

The evolution of teeth is a fascinating subject. Llamas and humans, which both rely on having two sets of teeth (deciduous - often called milk teeth - and permanent teeth) have a lot to learn from elephants, which have six sets of teeth. Elephants can grind down approximately one set of cheek teeth every ten years and live to a ripe age of sixty years. Without the help of dentists repairing our teeth, we would probably lose our teeth long before sixty years of age. Sadly, llamas grind their teeth when they are eating and cudding and their cheek teeth will disappear in their late twenties.

Teeth are also categorised into four types; incisors, canines, premolars and molars. Llamas appear to have no upper incisors, only a dental pad. However, they do have an upper incisor that has migrated caudally and resembles a canine tooth. Thus in the upper jaw they appear to have two canines on each side, but in the lower jaw only one.

The three pairs of deciduous lower incisors erupt between birth and up to three months of age. These are replaced sequentially by permanent incisors, starting with the centrals at just over two years old. The middle incisors are replaced at approximately three years of age and the corners at four years.

Llamas have five cheek teeth in the four rows: two premolars and three molars in each row. The two premolars are present at birth but are not replaced rostrally from the front until between four and five years of age. The three molar teeth erupt rostrally from the front before this time, at approximately nine months, two years and three years respectively. Thus a llama does not have a 'full mouth' until five years of age.



PRESENTS

THE LUCKY LLAMA

CLOTHING RANGE

A range of alpaca & llama tees and hoodies presented to you either for individual purchase or bulk farm souvenir purchases.

Tees available at
peruvianthreads.teemill.com



Children's tees! Now available!

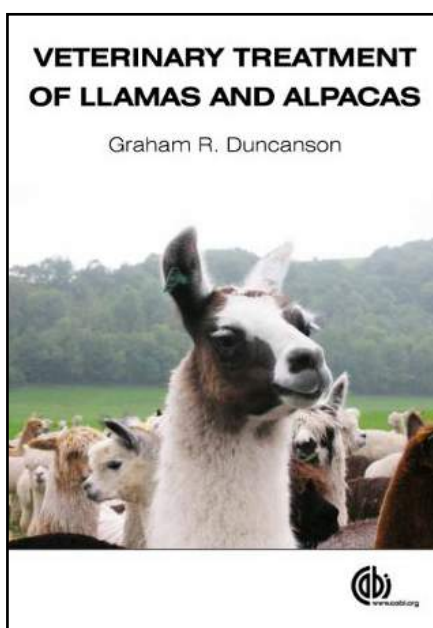
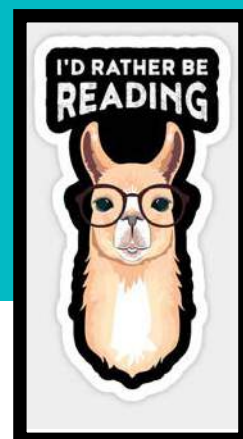


PERUVIANTHREADS.CO.UK



Book Reviews

Have you or your llamas read any good books lately?
If so, please let us know



Veterinary Treatment of Llamas and Alpacas by Graham R. Duncanson

Llamas and alpacas are a globally expanding area of interest in the farming world. Kept as pets, stud animals, livestock guardians and farmed for fibre and meat, national herds continue to grow and are an increasingly frequent presentation for large animal vets. This book provides practical everyday veterinary advice on common conditions and surgical procedures. Basic husbandry, nutrition, examination, vaccines, analgesia, anaesthesia, dermatology and poisons are covered, together with medicine and surgery options arranged by body system. Zoonotic diseases are treated with particular interest as alpacas are a common petting farm animal. An important field guide for any veterinary practitioner, this book is also of interest to veterinary students and camelid breeders. It is available in both hardback format and as a Kindle edition for digital download.

Hardback: 224 pages

Publisher: CABI Publishing 1st edition (27 July 2012)

Language: English

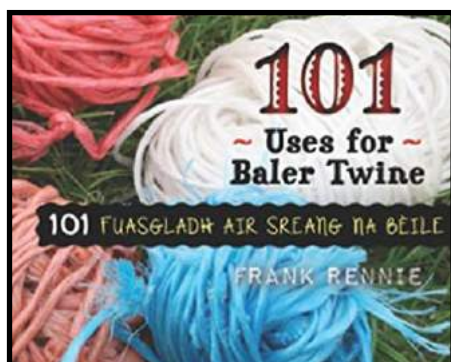
ISBN -10: 1780640064

ISBN-13: 978-1780640068

After my request in the last edition of Llama Link for ideas on using up leftover pieces of baling twine, Norma Chandler-Paterson kindly got in touch with me about this little book:

101 Uses for Baler Twine

by Frank Rennie



Described as a, 'must have for country dwellers the world over', this isn't so much a craft book, as something to sit on a coffee table to flip through and smile at!

Paperback: 107 pages

Publisher: Acair Ltd 1st edition (30 Oct 2013)

Language: English

ISBN -10: 0861525167

ISBN-13: 978-0861525164

Val Crank also emailed me to suggest using baling twine to weave into doorstep mats. Apparently, they are really good at trapping mud. Thanks Val, think I'd best get weaving then!



Golden Oldies ...it comes to us all!

Having been inextricably involved with llamas and the love of trekking for over twenty years, inevitably we have got to the stage where there are some challenging and often heart-breaking issues to face. This last year or two has been particularly challenging for us as it has seen the demise of some lovely llama friends that to all intents and purposes were a real part of our family.

Generally, old age has crept up on them and in true stoic llama style they didn't let us know things were going downhill till they just faded away in a short time. However, one great ongoing story is that Bilby, our original trekker from many years ago, is now 29 and still going strong! He loves trekking still and is always the herd leader, although we do try to limit his outings to two or three mini treks a week at the most. I'm sure he would be most upset if he didn't get to go out because he still is a great crowd pleaser and loves his photo shoots! He is fit, hale and hearty with no arthritis or dropped pasterns in sight...a tad skinnier now than we would like but not slowing down at all.

I'm not sure he isn't the oldest llama still trekking in the UK now but I could be wrong?

One particularly heart-breaking death recently has been of our home-bred llamas, 7-year-old Marco...just coming into his own as a leader and a big strapping and healthy llama right up to the end. I thought other llama keepers may be interested in hearing his story because it highlights the potential dangers of anaesthesia in llamas, even for a relatively minor procedure.

Marco was seen trying to urinate unsuccessfully in mid-December so we monitored him closely. After several vet's visits over the following couple of days, where the usual checks, blood tests and history were taken, Marco was given a muscle relaxant, a mild sedative and a pain killer to try to get the urethra to slacken and allow what we thought was a stone to

Marco: A cautionary tale of llama anaesthesia

by Mary Walker
Lakeland Llama Treks

pass.

In the meantime he was well in himself, still grazing and did not seem to be in pain or distress, which was amazing given that he hadn't passed urine for three days by then! His bladder was also scanned a couple of times to ensure it wasn't going to rupture whilst waiting for the stone to pass.

Blood tests revealed abnormalities in kidney function, as you would expect, but he was holding his own. It was decided to send him to Leahurst Hospital's Large Animal Unit in Liverpool to try to remove the stone. After his arrival with travelling companion Gucci, Marco was scanned again and given a drench to try to dissolve the stone internally.

His body score was good and there were no concerns about his weight and he was duly taken round to theatre the following morning, having arrived late the night before. The surgeon was able to remove the stones and gravel through a small incision and I had a telephone call from him to say that the short operation had been successful and that Marco was now in recovery.

All being well it was hoped that after a short recuperation any residual matter would be expelled when Marco urinated successfully. He could then potentially come home.

Five minutes later, however, I received another call saying they had sadly lost him in recovery due to pneumonitis, caused by aspiration of stomach contents!

This was a huge shock to

everyone and I could tell the vet himself was upset because he really had not expected this to happen, to a young, fit llama, especially after what had been a fairly simple operation in the end.

We needed answers and the general consensus was that Marco had had calcium stones, which are quite common forms of kidney stone and so not entirely unexpected, but what happened next had been entirely unexpected.

The hospital had thrown away the stones after removal and had not sent them for histology, but our own vet wanted them analysed, if possible, to be sure what they were.

At our request, another on-duty surgeon was asked if she could find the stones, but, being unable to locate them, she took it upon herself to cut open Marco's penis to see if there were any stones remaining. Thankfully there were. The uroliths (stones) were found to be ammonium biurate and can form in a number of ways. They are most commonly found in alkaline (high pH) urine, when urine volume is decreased, often following decreased fluid intake or in some cases during urinary infections.

Llamas rarely have an alkaline urine so to have had an accumulation of so many stones was clearly a highly unusual problem. However, this was not really related to the pneumonitis and it was difficult to understand why Marco's natural reflexes did not prevent the aspiration of his stomach contents.

The hospital was not

licensed to carry out post-mortems out of hours and our own vet wanted to see if there had been anything else going on so we decided to bring Marco's body home to have our own post-mortem performed.

On starting the PM, the vet was shocked to find a huge volume of subcutaneous body fat and almost had to fight his way to the internal organs, which were equally swamped with fat.

This was most unexpected because Marco had shown no signs of obesity on body scoring, appearing to have been a fairly normal but good weight.

It was becoming clear that the aspiration could have been related to the anaesthetic drugs, which had been stored in the body fat and only released slowly, delaying the recovery. Once the airway support had been removed Marco would not have had full control of his breathing, hence the aspiration.

Obviously this could not be proved to be the cause but it seems highly likely to have been the case.

It was quite surprising to find that we could have underestimated Marco's body fat so much by relying on body scoring, but it is difficult to see how we could have known since even the hospital failed to realise.

We do have photos of the huge fat stores that poor Marco had, if anyone is particularly interested, but we purposely haven't put them in this article because they are not a pretty sight, as you can imagine.

Kidney stones were still a potential worry for the rest of

the herd, in case there had been a nutritional reason for the alkaline urine, so we set about trying to collect urine samples from the other llamas to get them analysed.

If you have never tried catching a llama mid flow believe me, it is an art form! The minute you approach them with a collection jug it has the miraculous effect of persuading them that they didn't need a wee in the first place!

I have never seen such immediate sphincter control; I'm sure that most post-partum human mothers would love to know the secret of this ability to stop instantly in full flow.

We resorted to taping the

collecting jug to a broom handle, in order to try and collect the urine from a distance, but to no avail. Finally, after about three weeks, we got five samples, all of which were normal acidic pH so we concluded that it had just been one of those things that had been peculiar to Marco.

This whole situation has highlighted the need for vigilance in ensuring your camelids drink enough water, particularly in cold weather when troughs can freeze and icy water is not pleasant to drink.

Also, regular weighing may help to judge weights more accurately, although Marco's weight had been normal and hadn't shown any increase.

Life continues to be a challenge with some of the more elderly in our workforce and for the next issue of Llama Link I have another interesting case study with a long-standing eye problem, its care and outcome and the need to nip these things in the bud at an early stage to prevent sight or even eye loss.

We also have a new mum and baby that have joined us last month after a very difficult life and we will be documenting their progress back to health and their ongoing training, so watch this space. Life is never dull with llamas, as I am sure you are all well aware but who would be without them?



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Your Society needs help

The British Llama Society needs your help. Urgently. I took over as chairman for a year and that year is nearly up. I would love to continue but at times it has been a bit of a lonely task. A couple of stalwarts have helped me through but for the most part I have relied on late nights and the understanding of my family. It could be so different.

If I had a vice chairman, someone to talk things over with, someone to bounce ideas off, someone who could help me keep track of where we are up to and what is next, I would be able to carry on. As I see it, a vice chairman's role would involve communicating with me via email in order to liaise over different projects, helping to form a working party and chasing people for information as projects get underway. I am thinking that it should take no more than an hour or so per week, maximum, pretty much all by email with the occasional telephone call. Attendance at our occasional board meetings (roughly three per year, biscuits, gossip and lunch provided!) would be invaluable.

We are also looking for enthusiastic people with fresh ideas to join the board. This would entail attendance at the infrequent meetings and an ability to work independently on any projects that you may feel able to contribute towards developing. Again, with good organisation, this needn't take up too much time, maybe a couple of hours a month.

Don't fancy a permanent position on the board? A couple of people have already come forward to say they would be more than happy to support us in developing particular projects going forwards as a one-off. If again, you would be happy to work as part of a small team, gathering information, for a particular project and collaborating to get an idea off the ground, again - we would love to hear from you. This would enable us to develop projects we'd like to start working on (e.g introducing agility for llamas, working with animal-assisted interventions, looking at the possibility of virtual showing classes - the possibilities are endless) but we do need more people to get involved, otherwise we simply can't get the projects off the ground. With this type of project, it might mean a more intensive use of your time, but for a shorter period if that makes sense?

We also need to raise the profile of our society, so is there anyone out there happy to use social media and/or is good at marketing? We have a busy Facebook page, but we really need people who are happy to contribute towards other areas, such as pinterest, instagram and organising press releases for when we do amazing things that the rest of the world should know about! The website is an ongoing project. We have a designer, but they need content to put on the site. Anybody out there with content ideas? You don't necessarily have to write all the content but ideas are definitely needed. Similarly, with Llama Link; are there people out there who would be prepared to chase up people for articles? Find ideas for the news section? Maybe take charge of a particular section - such as book reviews?

Are any of these people you? Or a member of your family? Older children are very welcome to contribute too (although not as a board director!) and often also have a valuable contribution to make - and the time to get involved! It also looks great for their CV. Please don't be shy. I am awaiting your response with baited breath! Please email any ideas or offers of help to me, at cpembro@gmail.com. Whether you are a new owner, inexperienced owner, long-time llama-business owner, very experienced owner or even have yet to own llamas, if you are a member of the BLS, you all have an equally valuable insight to bring, from your own individual viewpoint.

Contact me now, to help make our society the best it can possibly be!

Caroline

Camelid Industry meeting with Defra/APHA

report by Tim Crowfoot

Many of you will know that BAS and BLS met with Defra Policy and APHA representatives in February 2020, to discuss the management of bTB in Camelids. Historically regular meetings were held (every six months or so) but various issues (judicial reviews and Brexit) meant there had been a two-year gap since the last meeting.

The meeting was convened to discuss matters of policy development and implementation in the field. DEFRA/APHA will not discuss details of specific cases in this forum for reasons of client confidentiality/data protection. Whilst this point may be a source of frustration to some BAS members, BAS and BLS representatives considered this opportunity worth taking to try and develop an improved understanding between BAS and Defra/ APHA.

Several specific items were discussed. The main points that might be of interest are summarised below.

- **TB testing on a contiguous test**
(Scenario 4c in the official documents)

The industry sought two changes in this scenario:

1. The separation of Contiguous Testing from Co-location and Back Tracing
2. Confirmation regarding a request for change from having to perform a comparative skin test followed by a serological blood test, to giving a single bovine tuberculin for the purpose of priming in a more easily accessible location on the camelid followed by a serological blood test.

If you are subjected to a Defra-funded contiguous TB test in England, it is now permitted to use a single bovine tuberculin injection at a site at the base of the neck cranial to the shoulder blade which is not required, to be 'read' as it would be in a comparative skin test. The usual site at the top of the leg behind the elbow may be used as an alternative. This is only acceptable when bovine tuberculin is being injected for TB antibody test 'priming' purposes, i.e. when the skin reaction to tuberculin is NOT being read 72 hours after the injection but will be followed by blood sampling 10-30 days later.

The BLS and BAS requested this change to allow easier administration of tuberculin (for llamas in

particular) as the 'armpit' site is much more difficult to administer. This new regime is also less stressful because it does not require double handling three days after the injection of tuberculin.

- **Scenario 1**

Defra has asked BAS and BLS to come back to Defra/APHA with thoughts on their proposal to change Scenario 1, whereby a stricter regime is applied that would require one round of comparative skin herd testing following the removal of a single Enferplex (4-spot) seropositive animal that is M.bovis negative on culture. **If you have any views on this please let Tim Crowfoot know** (timcrowfoot@btinternet.com).

- **Voluntary testing for Export**

The industry sought information on serological TB testing of alpacas for export.

Defra/ APHA pointed out that the "hoops" for testing prior to export (for any diseases) are set by the importing (destination) country. Regarding EU customers, now UK has left the EU the export rules from the UK to the EU will be determined by them, as with any importing country.

Defra explained that the EU Commission is finalising detailed rules on animal movement into and **within** the EU, which are planned to be implemented in April 2021. A significant feature of the rules is the need for exporting farms (even for intra-EU trade) to have an on-going bTB surveillance system in place. The UK government is unlikely to implement this in any form that they manage, but the EU will probably require it of any UK farms exporting to the EU. This means individual farms will need to understand the requirements and implement them on their own holding. Information is available on the commission website [here](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/health/animal-diseases/bt/tb_en), noting in particular Annex II Part 2.

BAS continues to recommend a blood test (Enferplex) for any proposed exports.

- **Testing in – Scenarios 4a, 4b and 4c**

Industry sought clarification on which tests are now being offered in these scenarios, as DEFRA/APHA informed us that this has recently changed.

Testing is available using IDEXX, Enferplex or DPP VetTB tests. From now, if more than 40 samples are presented for testing the DPP VetTB system is not routinely to be used in order to save cost and time and so it will now be a combination of Enferplex and IDEXX only. So, where the “owners’ choice” of test used to be was stated it is in the scenario document it no longer included DPP VetTB for 40 plus samples.

• Private Voluntary testing when a herd is under bTB movement restriction

Industry sought clarification of use of private voluntary testing when a herd is under restriction.

The possibility of private voluntary testing (serological) at owners’ expense in a confirmed outbreak is a useful management tool to help eradicate the disease quickly. At present permission to do this is discretionary for APHA.

The possible answers owners may get after a request to privately test are:

1. No private test allowed (but Defra has informed us that they could not think why that should ever be the case)
2. Private testing allowed but no compensation for any culls
3. Private testing allowed and compensation paid for any culls

The industry requested that DEFRA / APHA agree to a position where private testing is considered a normal action of the owner if they wish. Defra agreed it was the right mind set and will develop some wording around this idea to encourage field officers to grant permission.

In Scenario 4a, where a case may be suspected but a culture to confirm is underway, the aim would be that in this period of uncertainty (which is likely to be a minimum of 180 days if a case is confirmed), private testing can be done to help manage an outbreak and/ or give more clarity of the herd situation to the owner.

APHA representatives pointed out that in herds with a confirmed TB outbreak its veterinary inspectors already have discretion to trigger additional rounds of statutory blood testing at Defra’s expense between skin tests (i.e. intervals shorter than 90 days after the removal of the last positive clinical case). This can be considered in those situations where there is strong evidence TB is still spreading within a herd after the initial skin and antibody test.

Research

The government response to the Godfray Review will be published this Spring (2020). The main findings were:

- industry must take greater responsibility for on-farm controls, biosecurity and safe trading practices to stop the disease spreading.
- more can be done to help farmers make purchasing decisions that reflect the risks of cattle being infected.
- evidence shows that badgers do transmit bovine TB to cattle and contribute to the persistence of the disease.
- disease reduction would benefit from greater flexibility and agility in adapting bovine TB control measures as new research findings emerge.
- A new independent body on disease control would be helpful to take over disease control operations from APHA, Natural England and local authorities (this recommendation will be considered by the government in light of the wider Dame Glenys Stacey review into farm inspections).

Defra explained that plans for field trials of the vaccination of cattle with BCG (and the allied DIVA skin test) are likely to start in the next year, with results expected in 2025. A similar trial on alpacas is not part of Defra plans at present.

Conclusion

BAS and BLS felt that the meeting was positive in attitude on all sides and wish to continue the work with a meeting in the autumn. Currently the best course of action for BAS and BLS members to keep bTB at bay is a good biosecurity plan and regular TB testing.

Defra confirmed that members wishing to meet with officials can request this. Additionally, if they wish BAS and BLS attendance and assistance, they can contact Duncan Pullar (CEO BAS) or Tim Crowfoot (BLS Health and Welfare Officer) to discuss.



BRITISH LLAMA SOCIETY BUSINESS DIRECTORY 2020/2021

The Business Directory will be published as a pull-out section in the Summer Llama Link and will be published on the BLS website. It is for our members to promote all of their llama and llama-related businesses regardless of size – *and what's more you can include your business free of charge!*

BUSINESS DIRECTORY CATEGORIES:

CODE	Description
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E	Training & Equipment
F	Trekking: For this category advertisers will be required to be a signatory to the BLS Trekking Code of Conduct.
G	Visitor Attractions
H	Insurance

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Reference: BLS.BD. and your membership number. For example: 'BLS.BD 01066'

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PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR REMITTANCE TO:

Business Directory Co-ordinator Caroline Bennett.

Either by email caroline@carolinebennett.co.uk OR by post to

Caroline Bennett BLS, c/o Wills Cottage, 64 Britons Lane, Linley Brook, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 4TA

Spring photos

These gorgeous llamas narrowly missed out on being our cover stars for the spring edition of Llama Link. Thanks to Diane, Charlotte and Annie for sending them in. Also to Matt Yorke, whose llama, Noah, made it onto page three!




Marlia & Bella
by Diane Weymouth



Anya
by Charlotte Wheatley




Spring has sprung!
by Annie Austen




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Points of Contact

HELPING YOU STAY CONNECTED

The British Llama Society prides itself on being a friendly, welcoming society. All llama owners can experience problems from time to time and questions will arise. Take time to check out the BLS website, look through the list of contacts below and if Facebook is, 'your thing', please email Caroline Champion and request membership of the closed, members-only Facebook group. It is a thriving community of BLS members who share llama stories and pictures and it's a great place to ask for help if you need it.

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REGIONAL CONTACTS

If you would rather make contact with other llama owners in your locality, please contact your nearest regional coordinator, who will be able to put you in touch with fellow members living near to you.

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