



# Llama Link

The British Llama Society's quarterly magazine



Issue No 60  
Spring 2021



## SPRING IS IN THE AIR!



Rowan (Suzanne Benson)



Pedro (Vivienne Ives)



Carlos, Rowan and Jeff (Suzanne Benson)



Emoji (Ann Goldsmith)

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Published by: The British Llama Society

Printed by: Prontaprint King's Lynn

'Chat over a Cuppa' artwork licenced  
from Bethany Drake Illustrations.  
Front cover: Jasmine (Faster Lente  
Llamas)

British Llama Society  
- A company limited by guarantee

Registered in England no. 04897204

Registered office:  
Mansion House,  
Princes Street, Yeovil,  
Somerset, BA20 1EP

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The editor reserves the right to edit any  
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Deadlines for copy and advertisements  
17th March, for April publication  
17th June, for July publication  
17th September, for October publication  
17th December, for January publication

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# NTS



# Chairman's Notes



■ Tina Gambell

Hi everyone. I am the acting Chairman until the AGM which will take place virtually via Zoom video conferencing system on Sunday 25 April at 1.30pm. The relevant paperwork will be sent by email or post to voting members.

Website updates: I am gradually working through areas within the website that are not as user-friendly as they could be. If you visit the 'Llama Services' section, you will now see a drop down box where you can select the service you wish to view. The same is also now in place for the 'BLS Camelid Registry' where you can search by llama/camelid name. If you'd like to add your business or service to the website, please contact me. I am digitising the back editions of Llama Link and although it is an ongoing process, you will now find the page where you can sort by subject (health, behaviour, etc) to view that particular edition.

Our Chat over a Cuppa has been very well received... I have too many to publish in one edition so you will see more over the summer and autumn.

In this issue of Llama Link, love as been in the air and many of our llamas (and some alpacas) are ready to have their babies. You will therefore see lots of photos of mothers and babies, or just cute babies!

May I extend a very warm welcome to new members: Rebecca, Heidi, Evelyne, Carole, Russ, Fiona and Eoin.

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# CHAT OVER A CUPPA!



With Mary Pryse

**Q** What's your story? How did you first come to own llamas, alpacas or guanaco (camelids)?

*I needed a guard llama for my angora goats.*

**Q** How many camelids do you currently own? What ages are they?

*Average herd size 45, fluctuates through the year. From new-borns in summer to most elderly gelding ex stud Spinach who is 26.*

**Q** Are they pets (to keep the grass down) or do you have a business?

*Trekking and breeding so definitely business but regard them all as family members.*

**Q** Where in the UK are you based? Did you move there to be able to own camelids?

*South Northants. They came to us.*

**Q** Who has been the biggest influence on your ownership of camelids?

*In my early days definitely the British Camelid Association as it was called then.*

**Q** What is your most memorable/amusing camelid moment?

*Too many over 25 years!*

**Q** How did you hear about the British Llama Society?

*They were at the CLA game fair back in the 1990s.*

**Q** Has the society provided any assistance to you that you'd like to share with our membership?

*Keeping us all up to date with DEFRA guidelines be it TB testing, or other diseases.*

**Q** What advice would you give to anyone thinking of buying camelids and what important lessons have you learned that you'd like to pass on?

*Try to visit llama farms or try trekking so you know what it feels like. Do your homework and ensure you have everything in place before receiving them.*





### LUXURY & LLAMAS

Graham and Mary Walker of Lakeland Llama Treks announce two new ventures. Just open – the Ravenstone Country Manor Retreat & Spa, and the Coachman Country Cottage, both located close to our llama trekking centre.

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## LETTERS to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I had to put pen to paper or rather fingers to keyboard to thank you for the three articles on llama fibre in the last link.

Keith Payne is always full of interesting and accurate facts. I believe he is a retired vet (from NZ) and in the past has spent time in Peru working alongside Murray Fowler and Julio Sumar to name just two of the world's leading camelid experts, so he goes back a long way. He knows exactly where llamas came from and how they got to be as they are today, all based on scientific facts rather than some ideas put forward, particularly by some in the USA, where they seem to reinvent the llama when it suits.

The amazing Stan from [altiplanoinsulation.com](http://altiplanoinsulation.com) explained the

llamas fibre ecosystem brilliantly in his article. It was also music to mine ears. I have seen for myself heavily fleeced llamas living on the edge of the Atacama desert in northern Chile, perfectly bright and comfortable in extreme heat despite their woolliness. In the beginning of BCA we were told that llamas did not need to be sheared. When we sheared our first llamas 25 years ago we soon found that they did! Even the shorter haired ones. We had discovered for ourselves that llamas were more uncomfortable in high humidity, as we experience here in the UK. They did actually 'sweat' in very hot weather, which created the most awful matting around the pressure points from their love of rolling in dust baths and generally cushioning when they ruminate, play, sleep – or mate! This effectively felted their fibre and the matting was so close to the skin that we could not get our dagging shears underneath it to shear. This meant that when the wind blew the fibre could not blow in the wind, relieving it of dust and debris and allowing the air to get to the skin. It is true that true ccaras will moult. I have three llamas who do not ever need shearing as they have light fleeces and as long as we groom the shedding fibre out at the appropriate time we keep the fibre flowing free. If you don't do this, in our wet and humid climate the shedding fibre gets matted to the new growth so their wonderful natural ecosystem is lost. One of my ccaras was sheared after a few years as I noticed she was rubbing herself against the fence lines. Thinking we may have a case of lice, we examined her skin and found that there were no visitors, but because she rolls a lot and after some of the extreme hot weather, she had a layer of dirt stuck to her skin making her feel really itchy.

Over the years I have met so many llamas who have never been sheared. Quite often they are not even groomed. The outer layer is a solid 'carapace' so if it's like that on the outside just imagine what's happening underneath. Is this ignorance or neglect?

The spread on what some of us are making from our fibre was wonderful to see. I've known Amanda's and Gwyneth's work for a long time but where was yours Caroline Pembro, you do lovely things with your fibre? Interesting though, that those of us who spin, weave and knit are mainly using fibre from short and medium fleeced llamas. I do not have the patience or artistic abilities to needle felt and admire the objects that are produced by this method. All I do know is that it takes an awfully long time to produce something but I don't think it uses much fibre? It would be good to learn more about this. I have table felted llama fibre and made jackets and bags in the past but this also takes a long time to felt and then shrink before you can use it. The items I produced were much admired but were too expensive to sell so I gave up!

I hope more examples of craft work are sent to the link as we should be encouraged to use this natural fibre that we owners can source for free! A few years ago we had a fibre day at Golden Valley, maybe as we come out of lockdown we could think about doing it again as there are now so many new owners who might get inspired to get crafty.

*Mary Pryse, Catanger Llamas*







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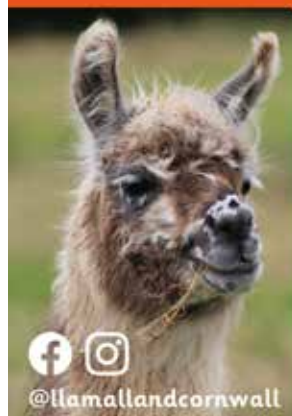


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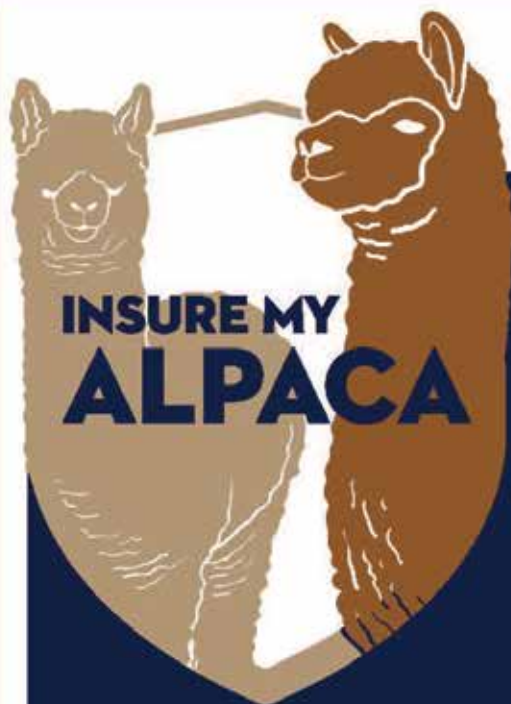
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# A Guide to Feeding Your Llama from the Experts at GWF Nutrition

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Llamas are delightful animals and surprisingly easy to care for. However, the right diet is essential. The basic rule of thumb when it comes to your feeding your llama or alpaca is that the majority of their diet should come from grazing, with additional forage where needed and a small amount of concentrated feeds or minerals. And, of course, access to clean, fresh drinking water.

## **Grazing**

Llamas are grazing animals by nature and this should make up the majority, if not almost entirely, their daily intake of food. Unlike some other livestock, they do not eat docks, nettles or thistles so these need to be controlled. The British Llama Society recommends a stocking rate of 4 animals per acre, assuming your pasture provides adequate grazing. Also look out for plants that are poisonous and make sure they are removed from paddocks.

Aim to provide around 1.5% of the animal's body weight daily in hay or fresh pasture (based on the Dry Matter intake, the weight after all water has been removed.)

Hay or haylage – this is essential during the winter months or where there is not enough access to pasture.

Additional fibre - a slow release, high energy source of soluble fibre will not only support the digestive health of the llama, but will also support the body conditioning.

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GWF Nutrition is a Wiltshire-based manufacturer producing one of the few specialist camelid feeds in the UK.



## Preventing choke

Because llamas can be prone to choke, feed that is 3mm or less is recommended as it greatly reduces the risk. Using a chaff base such as alfalfa to increase the chewing time, or adding some water to the feed can also help. Camelibra NG-2 and Hembra & Cria have both been formulated as 2mm micropellets to make swallowing and digestion easy and worry free.

## Feeding cria

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## Egg counts – Don't have to be expensive or treatment problematic!

Our herd of 90 is split into various small herds of llamas and alpacas, enabling much easier management from feeding, behaviour and of course egg counts. We always collect from each batch and if necessary individual animals, should their health be of concern to us. In the past I have taken these to the practice some 40mins away. Our vet (Julian), always tested the samples at the surgery himself, if he then had concerns, he sent to lab for additional tests. This could prove quite expensive and time consuming, not only taking the samples but then Julian also chasing the lab for results. Time is of the essence if you have particular concerns over an animal or a batch or an individual, especially where a young cria may present unwell. The dreadful emac strain of coccidial can be fatal, for all young camelids and its imperative to treat immediately should this be present. As we know, not all vets are particularly knowledgeable on camelids and with no licensed medications for camelids it can be a tricky area. I recall on one occasion;

Julian was away and new young vet dealt with our sample batches. The results were alarming and I was extremely concerned as we had no animals presenting unwell. I held off, knowing if we followed this advice, we could easily end up spending enormous amounts on treatment and have potential fatalities, from the recommended treatment path, plus resistance through the whole herd. As we suspected when Julian returned, there was no cause for alarm and no cause for any treatment at all! We were so pleased we had built up our own knowledge, it could have been a very different story. Julian has now started up his own practice, however the journey to take samples over is now even further. So, he recommended we sent samples direct to a lab and the results emailed or faxed to him, which would be a much speedier process for all concerned and perhaps more cost effective.

We did some research and found Sarah at Wildwood Animal Health. What a dream of a process! We collect our samples,

complete a form, post them off and results are emailed back normally within 2 days of the sample leaving the farm, easy!! Sarah can e-mail results direct to your vet too. Sarah owns alpacas herself, therefore has a background knowledge of camelids. Although she is not a vet and will always recommend you liaise with your vet over treatment, of which I'm sure she can do so too, should your vet have limited camelid experience. She has great knowledge and can give you information regarding any parasite detected and what symptoms it may link to. She is always friendly and very prompt with her replies whether by e-mail or telephone. Her service is competitively priced and it is a much more cost effective and a quicker process than sending samples via the vets surgery and then to a lab. I would recommend her service to all llama and alpaca owners.

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# Aztec's bum

By Julian Norton, The Yorkshire Vet - Channel 5

There was an anxious wait both at the practice and in Nidderdale for the results of Aztec's biopsy. I had taken a sample of the abnormal anal tissue from his backside the previous week, just as I would from a small animal pet, such as a dog or a cat. This is one of the brilliant things about treating camelids: they live on a farm but yet they are not farm animals. Llamas and alpacas are not killed and eaten for meat; they have quirky and individual personalities, well worth getting to know; they also have enthusiastic owners who are both knowledgeable and passionate and these are all reasons why I've grown to love treating these fascinating creatures. For some strange and unknown reason, plenty of vets seem to shrug their shoulders and throw their arms in the air when faced with a llama.

Whilst awaiting the all-important histology results, Suzanne and I both feared the worst. I had administered some treatment after the sample was taken, which was aimed at supportive care to remove some of the discomfort and relieve some inflammation. Reports from Nidderdale came back that Aztec had improved and was back to health; his ears were up and his appetite back to normal. He'd even completed two treks over the weekend. Were it not for the peculiar lesion around his bum, nobody would know of his ailment. My initial treatment had provided some palliative improvement, but the biopsy, performed under the numbness of an epidural anaesthetic, would hold the key to his future. I peered, anxiously, into the fax machine every time I was in the office.

Mid week had me seeing other interesting patients: a Battaleur eagle with a runny eye. I'm no expert on falcons, but an eyeball is fairly similar in a bird or a mammal, with just a few subtle differences, and I reasoned that the causes of watering in the eye of a bird would be exactly the same as in other patients that I had treated, so off I went. The handsome bird simply had some ingrowing feathers, which irritated the eye surface in just the same way as the extraneous fluffy hairs of a Shih Tzu or Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppy. Veterinary first principles applied in just the same way to an unusual bird as they did with more ubiquitous creatures like a dog.

I instilled some anaesthetic drops into the eye of the bird and reached for my surgical kit. Usually this is called into action for a caesarian on a cow, so most of the equipment seemed supersized, but the important piece- the forceps- were just what I needed. Within moments, three extraneous feathers had been plucked from within the lower eyelid, to everyone's relief: especially the bird's. Various jokes were made about soon being "eagle-eyed" again, none of which were very funny.

Later that day though, the results came back for Aztec the llama with the anal swelling. They were not so good for poor old Aztec. Despite his obvious improvement after the treatments I'd given last week, his results were not what I had hoped nor expected: he had a tumour in his bum called an adenocarcinoma.



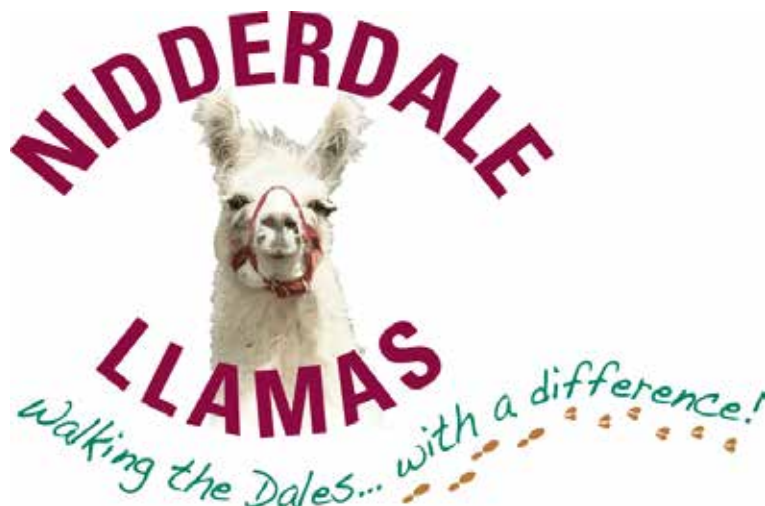
Aztec (Nidderdale Llamas)

Despite the gloomy outlook, there was a glimmer of hope. This particular problem can be treated with an injection called bleomycin. It can be injected directly into the lesion, where its effects are very locally active. The side effects that can come with chemotherapy can be mitigated, and the tumour should regress to manageable proportions. I'd done a similar thing with the same type of growth in the tongue of a cat some years ago, with good success. Suzanne was keen, as long as it didn't involve any unnecessary discomfort.

Once again, I had treated a llama just like I would any other animal. All creatures are creatures. Any enthusiastic vet should realise and embrace this fact and not be wary or fearful of treating these amazing animals, unusual as they may be. I've come to learn, there's no drama treating a llama!

*Julian Norton is a vet who has been treating alpacas and llamas for almost twenty years. He doesn't claim to be an expert, but his enthusiasm goes a long way. He's been involved with Channel 5s long-running series The Yorkshire Vet from its inception and has written six books about his veterinary anecdotes, the latest of which is called All Creatures: Heartwarming Tales from a Yorkshire Vet, published by Hodder and Stoughton. It features plenty of stories about llamas and alpacas.*





## The Yorkshire Vet Channel 5 Oh - Do you mind if the cameras tag along?

From Suzanne Benson, Nidderdale Llamas

We have kept llamas in Nidderdale since 2003, just a few field mowers to start with, we didn't even really handle them. Farming cattle and sheep, we had always used local farm vets and in the early days of llamas we rarely had a situation that required a vet. On the rare occasions we did need a vet to look at a llama, the vets would go through a process of drawing straws, as none of them really wanted to take to the challenge.

During 2007 Suzanne started to research llama trekking and in 2009, after the herd grew slightly the trekking business started. The farm had changed to a different vet practice for the farm stock. Luckily, a vet call out to the llamas was seldom, but as the trekking business started to grow and the llama herd expanded there was more requirements for veterinary treatment. One or two local practices had vets registered with British Camelids, however they admitted they hardly ever came across camelids in our area, so were still perplexed and not

confident at all in treating them. We approached various local vet practices, all with similar (lack of) experiences.

Late 2016, came the time of change, our herd had built up to 43 llamas and 6 alpacas and we were experiencing more health issues that required a vet. Late November, one of our 10yr old boys, Jack, started to appear lethargic and had lost weight in a short period of time. We spoke to a few local vets, and after blood tests, clear egg counts, none were offering any solutions and their final diagnosis was 'it's his age'! It was obvious these vets were totally perplexed; we had much older llamas in better condition and we grew increasingly concerned that if a vet could not be found with camelid knowledge, we may lose Jack.

That week we had heard that a vet had been seen treating alpacas on the TV. We rarely have TV time so were none the wiser to this new 'The Yorkshire Vet' series. We decided to look into where he was from, after all we had nothing to lose in reaching out for help.

After some research we found out it was Skeldale Vets in Thirsk, a 45 minute drive from our farm, much further than our local practices, especially for emergencies or to collect medications. We needed answers for Jack and as Skeldale was also a member of BCVA, it made sense to contact them. Suzanne phoned and was advised Julian Norton would give us a call back. Sure enough, within in the hour Julian phoned. At this point, none the wiser to his rising fame as 'The Yorkshire Vet'. After explaining Jack's symptoms, Julian said he would happily have a look at Jack's blood results if our current vets would not mind. Julian was cautious as our farm was well outside of the Thirsk area and he was clear that, he didn't want to tread on anyone's toes. He also expressed he wasn't an expert on camelids, but he had built up knowledge with experience and was enthusiastic. After a call to our local vets to request blood results to be e-mailed over and obviously explaining 'why', it wasn't a shock to hear that they were totally up for another vet to take over our camelid herd!

Within a couple of hours of Jack's blood results flying through the ether of technology, Julian rang back to say he has concerns over the protein level and it was no wonder Jack was lethargic and lost weight, but he would prefer to take more blood. Once again Julian sounded cautious due to invading another practice's patch. We assured him our vets were keen for him to treat our llamas, so he made an appointment to visit.

To this day, we are truly glad none of us had never watched The Yorkshire Vet, as we all would have been star struck on his arrival and no doubt not absorbed anything he had to say about Jack! Despite the rise in fame, Julian is the most down to earth chap you could ever meet, a true Yorkshire man, considerate to the animals and clients alike. You get a real feel that he cares about his patients and is determined to do his best for them. We honestly have never had this 'style' of veterinary treatment from another farm vet. Julian took more blood from Jack to compare to the previous results and ended treating him for low protein. We did additional egg counts to double check and after prescribing relevant prescription drugs, adapting his diet, giving additional vitamins Jack thankfully started to improve.

On Julian's first visit, he had no idea the size of our camelid herd, so upon seeing we had 43 llamas and 6 alpacas he was quite shocked. He treated large alpaca herds but confessed he had rarely come across llamas, let alone so many in one herd. He spent some time with us in the fields walking around the llamas as he was genuinely interested and confessed, he had a real soft spot for alpacas, so he was really intrigued with llamas. Julian was, however, very honest in stating he was no camelid 'expert' but due to his enthusiasm for them, he was very keen to learn. The

negative side being the distance from the surgery to farm in the case of an emergency. We assured him it didn't concern us as in the years we had kept llamas, we had never had a case of an 'emergency'. With that we agreed to be registered clients. On his departure, he turned to Suzanne and asked if she would object at all to the TV crew attending to any future visits with him. Suzanne's first thought was, 'I must try watch The Yorkshire Vet to see what it's all about'. Of course, she didn't object, as llamas on the TV, whether being treated by a vet or showing off their trekking ability, was not a worry as she knew it would be great for business. Not only did we all feel relieved, that we had finally got answers to Jack, but felt confidence for the first time in a vet to treat our beloved llamas and alpacas, plus how exciting to have a vet arrive in tow with a TV crew!

February 14th, 2017 – Two of our team had gone to herd in the boys to prepare for the days treks, when Dobby (just a 1 year old), appeared from behind the hay feeder, his face covered in blood. He was in a real mess, his mouth wide open, a little like being gob smacked, but it was evident his bottom jaw was swinging. His teeth were smashed and blood oozing from his mouth. Dobby was very distressed to say the least. There was no blood on any other llama, so how he had done such a thing was and still is a mystery. Suzanne immediately rang Skeldale surgery, luckily Julian was on duty and would drop everything to set off straight away. We took Dobby down to the barn accompanied by his best mate Dave. Dobby and Dave are the perfect duo, you never see one without the other, although they are miles apart in personality! We knew Dave would help to keep Dobby calm. The more we looked at his mysterious injuries we became quite worried that perhaps this could be the end for Dobby. How would

he ever be able to eat and chew his cud, with his jaw hanging, was there any hope of repair?

Julian landed after about 40 minutes and sure enough camera crews in tow! As it was an emergency the camera crews travelled with him and were filming from the moment he stepped out of his car. Julian didn't quite realise the extent of injury he was attending; the message he was given wasn't clear and he thought he was dealing with a large gash on a llama's face. Under close inspection, Julian revealed that Dobby's mystery injury was in fact a broken bottom jaw. So, with camera crew in full swing, team all worried and one stressed Dobby. Julian had to take 5 minutes of 'time out' to think! After seeing the cogs of his brain turning, he came up with a solution to give Dobby braces to hold the jaw in place so that it could heal. Not only was Dobby about to undergo the dentist's chair for a major repair, but we also had customers arriving for treks. We all had to step up a gear, remain calm, professional and deal with excited customer's (as Julian's presence had taken a star struck effect on a few ladies!) plus, the camera crew in full action and keeping Dobby calm and comfortable. It was one heck of a couple of hours, but all worth it in the end. The whole scenario was filmed and after drastic editing, shown on Series 4, Episode 1. 4 years down the line, and Dobby is perfectly fit and healthy, all bar a few wonky front teeth, but that doesn't impact his appetite in the slightest! Forever grateful for the change to Julian, and just at the right time. As if it had been other vets, it would unlikely be such a positive result!

Since then, we have been on The Yorkshire Vet a further 10 times, with various veterinary treatments and ailments including castrations, eye ulcers, dental abscess, septic arthritis, mouth tumour, llama with very sore



feet, leg injury, colic, and an incredibly poorly cria. Also recorded and due to be shown at a future date is a llama with lung cancer.

As a team we have become very familiar with the cameras filming, although they don't arrive on every one of Julian's visits, we are no longer phased. The crew themselves are friendly and very professional always putting welfare first and they are fully aware, if you miss some llama drama you will not be able to ask for a repeat on demand!

As for the business, with every series being repeated by other channels, the business has grown immensely and we would like to think our presence on Channel 5 has also helped other trekking centres all over the UK, by promoting llamas! We all know the llamas themselves have grown hugely in popularity over the last few years and they have become a real 'catchy fashion of fun' which has also boosted people's interest in going trekking.

As a team we have grown in human and llama numbers! With Julian's support we have grown more confident and even took in a herd of 7 rescue llamas, all with their health and behavioural issues, which we would never have attempted previously. Our herd currently stands at 76 llamas, 1 guanaco and 13 alpacas. Our knowledge of llama ailments, treatments and health issues of all kinds has vastly improved. Not only does Julian care about his patients but its important to him that we as a team fully understand every procedure, test, diagnoses, and the treatments. We have learnt so much from being involved with his visits and he is the only vet we have ever experienced, who follows up on his patients. Even when he is skiing in the South of France!

Julian and his family have been trekking with us, taking out some of his patients for a bit of relaxing fun as opposed to just turning up to deliver treatments. His passion has grown for our amazing fluffy creatures and he now distinctly sees the difference between alpacas and llamas in terms of their natures and personalities. I think he has secretly become a real llama fan as his voice seems to have a more excited pitch when he treats a llama to an alpaca!

Many customers who phone to book, become all excited, 'Will Julian be around on the day we come', he is honestly like some soap star to some people, we began to think folk thought he lived on the farm! We have now had several occasions where Julian has landed whilst customers are leaving for treks or returning from treks, he always makes time for star struck excited ladies. Allowing selfies with him and a quick chat.

As the series continues there are now changes a foot as Julian has recently invested in his own practice and has developed 2 small animal surgeries along with his wife Ann. The Yorkshire

“

I do believe to this day, if we hadn't made the move to ring Skeldale, we may no longer have Jack or Dobby.

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*Suzanne Benson*



Dobby and Dave (Dave on left, Dobby on right)

Vet will still air, however the company are also filming another Yorkshire practice. Julian remains our camelid consultant and is always at the end of the phone or a text. I do believe to this day, if we hadn't made the move to ring Skeldale, we may no longer have Jack or Dobby.

Yorkshire through and through Julian's books are a very good read and very amusing with his down to earth Yorkshire humour, trust us, go and read them, you will love em!



Julian Taking X-Rays



Yorkshire Vet cameras blending in to everyday duties





# ASK THE EXPERTS

Everything you need to know about llamas.



## Subject: Male adult llama



Message: Hello. I wonder if you could give me some advice please? We have recently rehomed an adult male llama who has lived on his own for most of his life, only with the company of sheep. There is an opportunity locally to purchase two younger males and we are wondering if this is a good idea as company for him? Having never owned llamas we are a little unsure on what might be the best decision. Kind regards, RB



I have kept llamas for 25 years and I can only draw on my experience.

It is always easier to introduce new llamas to a group of older llamas if they are youngsters. There is a definite pecking order within each group and the youngsters will automatically know they are low down the order and therefore not challenge the older ones. I would never turn them out together to start with. Much safer for them to introduce themselves over the fence and once they have established who is who they might then be able to occupy the same paddock. This could take a few hours or a few days, they are all different.

As your older male has spent time on his own (without other llamas) this could make a difference. Llamas can be quite aloof but at the same time quite tolerant of sharing their space with other llamas or other livestock. They do not do mutual grooming like other animals and we find that once our boys have reached full maturity at 4 years of age they are all very independent and run in a group of up to 20 llamas.

Tina has pointed out that if your male is entire then it could make a difference. Usually guard llamas are castrated, it will definitely be easier if this is the case. If he is entire then you will have to be very cautious. In the absence of female llamas it might be fine to allow males to run together eventually.

I know of several young llamas that have been introduced to older ones only to be completely ignored by the oldies.

I'm sorry I can't offer a definitive answer but every situation is different, but on the whole llamas are not aggressive by nature unless they are protecting something – ie in your boys case a flock of sheep when he could consider any new arrivals as a threat.

I hope that helps. Proceed with caution and allow them to get to know each other from the safety of separate paddocks and take it from there.

Best Regards,

Mary Pryse, Catanger Llamas

# SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

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## Our girls

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From Sarah Brown (Catanger Trekking)

Like every year at the farm, this is the time of year where myself and Mary are out in the paddocks following our lady llamas around, peering at their back ends checking for slight changes in appearance and looking for signs of pregnancy. (Yes we do get some funny looks!) Checking for belly depth, vaginal changes (elongating and wrinkling), changes in the udders and teats and sometimes even a kick... we really do have the best jobs! Most years this is sufficient and we know our females inside and out and are usually right about most of them, give or take the odd lady that fools us. But this year we had a slightly different approach, although we are still following them around checking them on a regular basis, back in January we decided to get them pregnancy scanned by our vets.

After much deliberation we decided against buying our own scanner and doing it ourselves and called in the experts. We had one inconclusive and 9 definite pregnancies, so potentially 10 crias due in the spring and summer this year. We think the inconclusive (Orla) was because this was the first female scanned by the vet and she was also the most far gone and more difficult to see on the screen, we are pretty confident that she is though, judging by her enormous belly.

We have four due in May: Ulani, Pecan Pie, Orla and Anya, three due in June; Chilli, Brynj and Cinco and three due in July; Crazy Daisy, Bina and Coya. As well as monitoring our ladies during the last few months of pregnancy we are constantly keeping an eye on all of the ladies and lads at Catanger Farm and regular health checks and body scoring is an essential part of that. We spend a lot of time with our llamas and are lucky that we handle them on a regular basis so can pick up on any strange behaviour, injury or illness. Recently, whilst Mary was doing the afternoon feeding she noticed one of our pregnant ladies, Bina going off her food slightly, being one of the greedier girls in that group this was very noticeable and odd behaviour. The next morning I was called in as a second pair of eyes and to check her over, having two of us around them all the time we notice a lot more and she was very obviously uncomfortable as there was a bit of tail twitching, humming and generally she was not her happy and greedy self. Our routine checks were made; temperature, body condition, eye and gum colour. All were normal so we kept her in to monitor her and try and get some food in her and make her more comfortable while we waited for the vet to arrive. You know you have a poorly llama on your hands when being examined by the vet, they don't move a muscle or try to get out of the crush position. The vet couldn't find anything obvious so then gave her a pain killer and anti-inflammatory to see if it would help her and make her more comfortable to get her eating again. Over the next 24 hours we soon realised that this didn't help at all. We decided to let her out with the rest of the ladies on grass, as we thought a bit of grazing might help, I soon realised after watching her visit the toilet area that she looked as if it hurt her when she passed any urine. Just slight changes in her body posture when she urinated and







also doing tiny little spurts at a time. After relaying this back to the vet, who came back the next day, they decided to scan her to see if they could see anything obvious in there. Having her abdomen scanned (we got a lovely sight of her big baby's head), she was very calm but the minute the scanner was turned towards her bladder she was up like a shot. Our suspicions were correct and there seemed to be a urine infection going on. As being a new mum myself I know that these are quite common during pregnancy but as llamas cannot tell us what the problem is or where it hurts, being a llama detective and piecing all the bits of evidence together is all we can do. After a course of specific antibiotics Bina was back to her normal happy self and is back to being first in line to the afternoon feeding bonanza.

We are really looking forward to meeting all our cria for this year as we start to welcome visitors back to the farm.

We will keep you updated.

*Sarah*





**Q** What's your story? How did you first come to own llamas, alpacas or guanaco (camelids)?

*Began with llamas and alpaca back in 2004 when I retired to NZ. My wife used the fibre for her crafts and I was a keen trekker. Became disillusioned as I found the llamas were not strong and athletic enough for O/N trekking, over time came to realise they were highly hybridised and although wonderful animals were not what I had hoped for. Began to sell off herd when my wife passed away but happened to stumble across a group of neglected forgotten guanaco hidden away in back paddocks. Did my research, acquired them all, had them DNA tested and began a breeding program with the better ones.*

**Q** Are they pets (to keep the grass down) or do you have a business?

*They are pets but in deciding to devote the rest of my life to breeding and training they have become even more than that.*

**Q** Where in the UK are you based? Did you move there to be able to own camelids?

*Originally from Yorkshire, family immigrated to Canada at early age but have lived in 7 other countries worldwide pursuing a career.*

**Q** Who has been the biggest influence on your ownership of camelids?

*Lima based llamas geneticist/archeologist Jane Wheeler has been a big supporter of my program and assisted me with a thorough camelid education.*

**Q** What is your most memorable/amusing camelid moment?

*Memorable moment is difficult to select, llamas can be real characters and have a subtle sense of humour!*





With Keith Payne



# CHAT OVER A CUPPA!



**Q** How did you hear about the British Llama Society?

*I have been in communication with the BLS for many years.*

**Q** Has the society provided any assistance to you that you'd like to share with our membership?

*With many valuable information exchanges.*

**Q** What advice would you give to anyone thinking of buying camelids and what important lessons have you learned that you'd like to pass on?

*Having worked with many animal breeds in numerous countries over a lot of years I find the llama to be tops in wisdom, fierce sense of survival, prepared to accept our human errors, completely aloof and totally independent at times yet loyal and forgiving on an ongoing basis.*

# 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.

SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND

SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

EAST OF ENGLAND

WEST MIDLANDS

NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

NORTH-WEST ENGLAND & ISLE OF MAN

SCOTLAND

NORTHERN & SOUTHERN IRELAND

WALES

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