

Alpaca Shearing

Why do we shear:

Alpaca health - the fleece has no natural growth stop

Production of quality fibre

Financial return for owners

How do we shear:

Hand shears

Electrical/mechanical hand piece

Standing, in harness or using table

Pre-Shearing

Keep alpacas protected from vegetation and environmental contamination - topped paddocks, bonfire ash, rain.

Think about the shearing area layout and flow to maximise efficiency and reduce stress for the alpacas.

The shearing area should be solid, smooth and free of debris.

Keep children and pets out of the area and do a risk assessment of possible hazards.

Decide whether you are skirting and classing as you go or are you going to bag and store the fleeces.

Use mechanical cleaning if possible to avoid cross fibre contamination. Do not use blowers.

Make sure all the equipment you need is available and ready to use like marker pens, poly bags, bins, bale bags, fibre sample bags, pre-printed labels and so on.

Make sure you have plenty of paper towels to mop up spit or urine plus a spray for wounds and fly spray.

Have you arranged enough human help.

Human helpers will need drinks, snacks, lunch, access to a loo and hand washing facilities.

Shearing Day

Different methods are used by owners and shearers but the majority of alpacas will be sheared using a restraint method.

Shearing tables where the alpaca is secured whilst standing and then manoeuvred into a lying position.

Most will restrain using a conventional rope harness that positions the alpaca on a ground mat.

Shear alpacas in colour order, white through to black, young through to old. This will help avoid cross contamination and reduce the amount of between alpaca clearing up.

Never put the whole fleece in one bag. Bag the blanket, put the neck in another bag. Outsorts from all the alpacas can go together, white in one bag, coloured in another

Thorough clean up required in between colour changes.

Remain calm and respectful to the alpacas and release them back into their group as soon as possible.

Good time to trim toenails, check dentition.

A shorn alpaca has lost its thermal blanket so may require housing in bad weather.