

PEOPLE AND PRODUCTS

ALPACA DRAINPIPES - NOT FLARES

Having bred Alpaca since 2008, it still amazes Helen Kendall Smith that no one has created a “lightweight easy to clean, stand alone, long feeding trough” of a height to prevent badger access yet. She has the solution....

You can purchase steel sheep troughs and cattle troughs (very expensive) some even at a height that badgers cannot get into – but still the only feed troughs available for Alpaca seem to be the equestrian hang on the fence bucket ones ... or the inevitably heavy black sheep feeders that sit on the ground. These are easily eaten from by roaming wildlife.

Few Alpaca like to have their heads “engulfed” in the bucket on the fence types, as they have peripheral vision, although some do. They are also individually pretty expensive if you have a large herd to feed.

Whilst Alpaca crop the grass - eating at that level, it is also accepted that in order to enhance the strength of your own biosecurity and prevent from other critters being able to eat from your Alpaca feed troughs; you need to raise them. So it is good practice to heighten the feed troughs. This is easily done by a variety of means and bricks / blocks are always easiest.

However, these can often be knocked off when a group are eating and keen for their feed. Obviously they also need to vary in height as young Cria (Alpaca babies) cannot reach those set at the heights of adults. They need to gradually be heightened as the Cria grow.

Inevitably these troughs are heavy and easily fill with water if not turned over once feeding is done. In addition they are not cheap and not really very aesthetically pleasing in the open countryside either!

They are functional though and keep the feed off the ground because you will always have some Alpaca that will not use our new methods try though we might to persuade them!

So what do we do? Well, we

found very early on in 2008 when we started breeding Alpaca, that many Alpaca eat slowly, some quickly and some inevitably can choke on the Camelid specialist mix that we use by gobbling.

It is also difficult when using the more common larger black troughs (shown) to evenly distribute the feed or see who is actually eating it. Whilst standing watching at feed time, a lot of “argy bargy” goes on and some will stand and argue rather than eat - leaving those quick of the mark to eat it all – if enough trough space is not allocated. Whilst one should “body score” checking the Alpacas weights regularly, it always helps to see who is pushed aside at feed time.

In addition, we found that sometimes a hormonal “spitty” pregnant female would inevitably spit into the food by accident and ruin the trough full. This would then require immediately cleaning – as boy does that smell and no one would eat from it again if you did not.

Never fear – start a fashion trend and stop the “flares” at feed time – use simple drainpipes!



If you do not use longer screws - as the Alpaca naturally push down onto the drainpipes when feeding, the short screws will come out and the drainpipe will flap and fall.

Do not use stops on the ends. You can easily release water (shown) by sliding back the drainpipe when necessary and/or clean. Also, when feeding do not put feed right up to the ends as inevitably Alpaca chase the food and it will fall off.



I am not saying that the initial outlay to install drainpipes and with the wooden backs (shown) is inexpensive but the long term benefit is huge. On small or larger herds where you have fence space!

- Easy to clean
- Easy to remove rainwater
- Easy to erect
- Everyone can see who is getting what
- No arguments as plenty of trough space room for all

First of all you need a handy person to put them up. Easier with two - than one but can be done alone.

Secondly you need to erect a baton onto which your drainpipes will screw.

Thirdly you need to use longer screws than are provided with the drainpipe holders. Don't forget to buy the drainpipe holders in the first place. We use three holders to one 3m section of drainpipe.



Cria need encouraging with troughs raised underneath at first and as they grow, they get the hang of it. Patience is required as Rome too was not built in a day. Some of the initial reactions to heightened troughs will always mean a few hungry mouths to start off with as a few hold back from “change.”

GOATS AND GRASS TO GO

Urban Myth 741 - goats eat anything. Right? No! says Bruce Dolby The bald fact is that this myth is wrong, wrong, wrong with a capital R.

Yes, we've all heard the stories..."I know they do, 'cos my neighbour's friend had a Nanny goat who ate her Laptop including the memory stick..." etc., etc.

Unfortunately, while goats can legitimately be accused of many crimes, being unfussy feeders isn't one of them. In fact, goats are probably the most awkward animals to feed out of all of the farm's clientele (perhaps excluding the farmer's 15 year old daughter Chloe, who is worried about her weight).

Let's talk about goat pasture. We've all seen glorious lush grass that the cows just love, using their long tongues to lasso it down in industrial quantities ready for processing into liquids, semi-liquids and gas.

How about that, goats?

Nope. Really into this newly planted rose hedge in the corner though.

So, what about the lovely inch-long sward so coveted by the sheep? Sorry - these brambles are just soooooo

moreish. And as for the specialist low-sugar Ryegrass leys for thoroughbred horses....

It's not just that goats are basically browsers and not grazers - the trouble is, goats want variety, they want to pick and choose, they want their taste buds tickled and most of all, they want to be bloody-minded.

I remember going to an agricultural show many years ago where I spotted a broad spectrum of goats who were all basically ignoring the perfectly rectangular pristine bales of weed-free monocultured hay provided. A decrepit van arrived with some dark brown bales of hay in the back that looked like they had fallen off a cliff and then been salvaged. I helped unload and soon found they contained lots of stinging nettles, brambles, things that bit me and ingredients that required gauntlets for safe handling.

However, this hay did smell wonderful and the goats would do anything (including standing on their kids) to reach it. As we walked through the aisles there was a stampede at one of the larger pens to get there first...

So if you want to produce a goat pasture that has a chance of being considered worthy of the noble Guild of Goats - and to then



use this grass to make some hay that will be given the caprine thumbs-up, then it must have the following:

A large variety of goodies growing together, so that the fiends can select the items that appeal to their palate on that particular morning.

A wide spread of heading dates, so that there are plenty of ears/flowers to nip off. Any goat owner knows what a perverse delight they take in whipping the flowers off the Floribundas when someone has left the gate open and they've got into the garden....

Should contain old-fashioned grasses and herbs - known to be acceptable and far better than any single grass. Will also produce fragrant hay with a high sugar content that will store well.

Plenty of clover (red and white) - especially the long stemmed varieties if available (goats go mad for clovers!) And don't worry if a few stinging nettles or brambles sneak in - goats aren't

prejudiced!

Capriley is a grass seed made for grazing and haymaking and as its name suggests, especially for goats.

The cost is £56 + delivery for a half acre pack. Great for haymaking or grazing as there is a wide spread of heading dates - so always something tasty to chomp on. Can be sown in Spring after the frosts (if it ever stops raining) or in the Autumn before the frosts.

You can get this goat's dream grass seed from Goat Nutrition - a company who is expert in all matters goat. They can offer help and advice in your choice of products - visit their website gnltd.co.uk or simply phone them on 01233 770780. They also offer a range of packaging for all things dairy and cheese and yoghurt making equipment. Recipes are also on offer. Let them help you to make the right choice for your goats.

LAMBING ESSENTIALS

Fearing have a 16 page catalogue which is a 'must keep' as it has all those lambing essentials that you will need (and most are also suitable for kidding).

The Lambing Essentials Box is ideal for flocks up to 50 ewes and it includes a lamb colostrum feeder, castration ring pliers with 100 rings, navel clamps, lambing rope, iodine, gloves, super lube gel, teat dipper standard, lamb volostrum, digital thermometer and a pocket note book. For a limited time there is also a sheep tag voucher also included. It costs £59.99

Everything you could want for a successful lambing or kidding is in these useful catalogue - all the feeding requirements for rearing orphan lambs and even the famous Lammacs - ideal protection for newborn lambs. Check out www.fearing.co.uk or call them on 01604 881 491



We have in the region of 40 Alpaca as I write and it works very well for us. Stud boys do it... No feed is wasted, all Alpaca can feed, easy to clean and inexpensive to maintain. Yearlings do it... When feeding in barns, drainpipes can be erected along the backs at the correct height too - this also frees up floor space that troughs would otherwise take up.

If you think the feed amounts in the photos are profligate - you are right because it took several shots to show different age groups feeding! Helen Kendall Smith, Kensmyth Stud. www.kensmyth.co.uk