

Basic Facts About Llamas

- Llamas live about 20 years.
- Llamas weigh 18-35 lbs at birth, and 250-450 lbs as adults.
- Llamas are often classified by their fleece coverage: light, medium, or heavy.
- Llamas are used as guardian animals, fleece producers, pack and cart animals, and pets.
- Llamas are easy to care for and require relatively little space.
- Llamas are naturally curious and intelligent, and have unique individual personalities.



Llamas are gentle, curious animals that are easy to care for and useful for many purposes.

References:

Andelt, W.F. (1995). "Livestock Guard Dogs, Llamas, and Donkeys." *Management*. No. 1.218.

California Department of Food and Agriculture. "Choosing a Guard Animal." *Livestock Guardians*. Brochure.

Franklin, W.L. and Powell, K.J. (1994). "Guard Llamas: A part of integrated sheep protection." Iowa State University Extension Brochure.

International Llama Association. (1995). "Guard Llamas." ILA Educational Brochure #2.

Resources for Additional Information:

International Lama Registry
<http://www.lamaregistry.com/>

Llamapedia
<http://www.llamapedia.com/>

Llama Web
<http://www.llamaweb.com/Uses/>

Michigan Llama Association
<http://www.michiganllama.org/>



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Guard Llamas



*Using
Llamas to
Safeguard
other Species*

Llamas as Livestock Guardians



Menacing coyotes may be kept at bay by a guard llama.

Predators threaten many types of livestock: sheep, goats, alpacas, cattle, poultry, and others. Predation can be very costly to a livestock operation, impacting profits and perplexing farmers. Llamas are being effectively and economically used to reduce losses due to coyotes, dogs, and other threatening animals.

How Guard Llamas Work

Guard llamas may defend against predators in many ways. Llamas are instinctively alert and aware of their surroundings, and may draw attention to a menace by making a startling alarm call. They may walk or run toward the invader, and even chase, paw at, or kick it. Some llamas may herd the animals they are guarding into a tight group or lead them away from danger. Others may stand apart from the group, watching intently. Each guard llama may have a somewhat different way of protecting a herd or flock, but still be effective.

While llamas have been known to kill intruders (including coyotes, woodchucks, and muskrats), they should not be considered attack animals. Also, they are generally effective against single intruders only, not packs.

How Effective are Guard Llamas

Most research on the effectiveness of guard llamas has been done with sheep. However, there is no reason to believe they will be any less effective with any other herd species to which the guard llama has bonded.

A 1990 study by Iowa State University found that 80 percent of sheep producers with guard llamas rated them as effective or very effective. The study found that average rates of loss to predators fell from 21 to 7 percent after the introduction of a guard llama. In other studies, over half of guard llamas completely eliminated losses due to predators. By saving animals, guard llamas also save their owners money; how much depends on the value of the livestock they are protecting.

How to Select a Guard Llama

Gelded males are the most common guard llamas. Females can also make effective guardians, but are usually more costly because of their reproductive value. Whole males are much more likely to injure the livestock they are protecting, by attempting to breed them.

Guard llamas should be at least 2 years of age before they are expected to protect other livestock. This allows them to mature physically and emotionally, as well as develop



Silver Sage Llamas

Llamas' natural curiosity and alertness makes them excellent guardian animals. A single llama can protect hundreds of sheep on hundreds of acres.

their natural territorial instincts. A potential guard llama may be introduced to the species they are going to guard at a younger age, but this is not necessary for bonding and effective guarding to take place.

Llamas placed as guardians often have independent personalities, and may not be particularly people-friendly. However, any guard llama should be trained to accept a halter, lead, and tolerate basic care. A llama that is aggressive towards humans is *not* a good candidate for guarding livestock because they may attempt to protect the flock against its human owners.

A guard llama needs to be in generally good health. It must be able to see, hear, forage, and move properly. Llamas that are expected to protect large flocks or herds on rougher terrain may need to be in better physical condition than those used to guard smaller areas.

How to Care for a Guard Llama

Llamas require little special care. They graze and eat hay along with the animals they protect. Depending on the type and quality of forage, a grain or mineral supplement may be necessary, but the small quantity a single llama eats is inexpensive.

Llamas are resistant to many diseases that affect other livestock. However, they are susceptible to certain parasites and should be wormed regularly, vaccinated annually, and observed for signs of infection or infestation.

Llamas should be sheared each spring to keep them cool in the summertime. In winter, they need little more than a lean-to for wind protection. The only other regular care required is toenail trimming 2-4 times per year.