

4 Common Myths About Alpacas



Myth #1

An alpaca is a great pet.

TRUTH: Alpacas are herd animals and must live with other alpacas.

Alpacas have become extremely popular due to their adorable features and friendly dispositions. While their gentle nature and intelligence may attract individuals looking for a pet, alpacas are herd animals that should not be kept alone.

Owning alpacas is rewarding, but keep in mind that they are a long-term commitment. Alpacas generally live between 15-20 years and require care typical of other domestic livestock.

Be sure to do your research and contact a reputable farmer before deciding that alpacas are right for you.



Myth #2

Be careful, alpacas will spit at you!

TRUTH: Alpacas rarely spit directly at humans.

Spitting is an alpaca's natural defense mechanism. However, alpacas typically reserve this behavior for other animals. Alpacas will spit when mating, as a show of dominance, or out of fear. An alpaca will usually give a warning before spitting, putting its ears back and tilting its nose up.

Myth #4

Alpacas and llamas are the same, right?

TRUTH: Alpacas and llamas are separate species, though they are related and can interbreed.

Llamas and alpacas possess unique physical characteristics. Alpacas have small, spear shaped ears, while llamas have large banana shaped ears. Overall size sets the two species apart. Llamas were traditionally raised as pack animals due to their larger size, while the smaller alpaca was valued for its fiber.

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Myth #3

Shearing must be painful for alpacas.

TRUTH: A yearly shearing keeps alpacas healthy and comfortable.



Being fully domesticated, alpacas rely on humans to survive. During shearing, an alpaca's fiber is carefully removed with shears. A yearly shearing may yield fine fiber, but more importantly it prevents alpacas from heat stress during hot summer months. Alpacas continuously grow their fiber, so a properly timed shearing ensures that their fleece will grow back to protect them from the cold come winter.