

Tips for new Buyers – Llamas

Llamas have a unique way of enriching our lives and once you have discovered these magical creatures, you can't imagine life without them! A unique aspect of llama owners is their willingness to share information and experiences. We're an approachable group of people and eager to share our passion for llamas. Your first llama purchase should be an enjoyable and exciting experience with no surprises. By following a few basic guidelines, you can avoid costly mistakes in the pursuit of your perfect llama.

The Internet is a fabulous tool and a great place to start your research. While you are researching the idea of adding llamas to your life, one of the best learning opportunities is to visit a variety of farms. Contact your local llama club or association for a list of llama breeders in your area, or if you're planning a trip, check out a few llama farms near your destination. The Llama Canada's website has a listing of llama breeders.

While you're "cruzin" the web shopping for your ideal llama, make note of what type of llama you are looking for and what is your intended end use. Llamas have a wide range of uses including: fibre production, showing, carting, packing, companion animals, therapy assistants, breeding stock, golf caddies and livestock guard animals. You need to establish your price range and intended use before you go shopping to purchase a llama. The price you'll pay is directly related to the individual breeding potential and the potential quality of the offspring. For example, a gelding (castrated male) has no breeding potential and therefore may be less expensive to purchase. On the other hand, a high-quality breeding female has a very high breeding potential and can be worth several thousands of dollars.

Farm visits are great for gathering ideas for setting up pastures, barns and feeding areas so don't forget your camera and a list of questions for the llama breeder. Look at the products of their breeding program to determine if they have the type of llama you're searching for. If a llama on a farm catches your eye, ask to halter it and walk the llama around. This will give you a sense of how easy or difficult that animal is to lead, manage and interact with. The personality of your llama is just as important as the visual appearance.

Attend country fairs, agricultural events and llama shows to see a variety of llamas and to talk with several owners about their breeding programs and the types of llamas they have available.

A livestock auction is not the place to buy your first llama. You will not likely be given the opportunity to interact with the llama and take the chance of purchasing a llama with behavioral problems. You want to have an enjoyable experience with a well behaved manageable llama.

Llama breeding is a huge responsibility and requires a large commitment of time and resources. It is really important to learn conformation, bloodlines, breeding objectives and proper health maintenance of your llamas. Also keep in mind that not every llama is

breeding material and careful thought should be given to what you select for your breeding program. We should not be breeding llamas merely for the sake of having cute babies!

Breeding stock must be registered or eligible for registration, therefore ask to see the llama's pedigree. The Canadian Llama and Alpaca Association (CLAA) is incorporated under the Animal Pedigree Act of Canada and as such is the official Llama Registry in Canada. You may also check a llama's pedigree with the on-line herd book that can be found in the Herdbook/Pedigree section of the CLAA web site.

Negotiate a deal that works for you and get all the details in writing. Discuss fertility guarantees, rebreeding of females, cria health and live birth guarantees, health records, financing, payments, transport, boarding fee and registration. It is also common practice when purchasing breeding stock to request a pre-purchase veterinary health check and have that written into your purchase agreement.

Deal with a breeder you feel comfortable with and who is able to provide the llama you're looking for. It's important to establish your intended use and price range before you start shopping. The only downfall of llama shopping is it's difficult to stop at one!