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# AAI Newsletter

## Winter 2020

Welcome to the AAI Newsletter Winter 2020 edition!

As you probably already know, we have changed the Newsletter from a monthly to a quarterly format and we hope that this change will allow us more time to gather informative contributions from across the spectrum of the alpaca community in Ireland.

With this in mind, our next edition will be in April 2021 and we would be delighted to hear from you, so get typing!

Feel free to email your articles to [alpacaassociationofireland@gmail.com](mailto:alpacaassociationofireland@gmail.com), or directly to me (Paula Lunn) at [ashfordalpacas@gmail.com](mailto:ashfordalpacas@gmail.com).

In this edition, we have a little bit of everything, from a personal story about owning alpacas, to a useful checklist of farm-related tasks for the winter months, to the formation of a regional group of alpaca owners supporting each other and sharing experiences, to a very interesting article about clostridial disease. Thanks so much to all who contributed!

All the best for now,

*Paula*

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# Our Alpaca Journey

by Christina Mc Quillan McGrath



Summer 2017, a campsite somewhere in Northern France, a travelling Circus and an Alpaca! We fell in love immediately and there started our Alpaca Journey.

Our first two pet boys, Dude and Spitz (names compliments of our then 11 year old son), arrived in January 2018. My husband, having built a fine shelter for them, spent many a day looking out the window at them, in total dismay, sitting in the pouring rain. We thought it must have been facing the wrong way and they couldn't see enough! They are noseey!



The 'culprit' on the campsite in France



The journey begins, the new arrivals Dude and Spitz

Having read that Alpacas fare better in groups of three or more, we didn't need much of an excuse to add to our 'herd' and off we went searching again. Bear, a one year old male, arrived to us very soon after. We had the perfect 'herd'.



And then there were three, Bear, Dude and Spitz

In November of 2019, we noticed blood in Bear's poop and he was generally a little off in himself. We contacted the Vet immediately and he diagnosed it as a 'worm burden' and treated him for that. No improvement, so I set about reaching out on the Alpaca Chat Ireland page. There somebody mentioned the dreaded word 'coccidiosis'. I couldn't pronounce it let alone spell it, but mentioned it to the Vet on his next visit. We were very hopeful and, for a short time, there seemed to be an improvement. However, his condition deteriorated very fast and he became lethargic, went off his food, had laboured breathing and more blood. We tried everything, but, regrettably, he passed very soon after. It was absolutely heartbreaking.

Our Alpaca search began again and we ended up with two new pet boys, Larry and Alfie. Larry came to us as a kind of 'foster' and we fell in love with him immediately. He was hopping on one of his back legs when he arrived. We think he sustained a leg injury at some point and stopped putting weight on that leg and, over time, the tendons became constricted. We had him referred to UCD Veterinary Hospital and they suggested physiotherapy. With the help of Jane Tyrrell, Inver Dea Veterinary Physiotherapy, there has been some improvement and Jane continues to work with Larry, although he will never fully recover and will always limp. Otherwise he is happy, moving around with the herd and being an Alpaca.

Alfie was a bit of a 'we have to have him, he is gorgeous' purchase. He was the fluffiest little fella we had ever seen. He came to us from Ellie in Boyne Valley Alpacas.



Larry and Alfie when they arrived to us



Larry's nails when he arrived to us



We were delighted when Adrian, Moonhall Alpacas in Kilkenny, reached out to see if we would be interested in becoming part of a local group of owners in the South East. We have an amazing support group on WhatsApp and we are hoping to have a Husbandry Course here in the South East very soon.

Have we space for a fifth boy? Ellie in Boyne Valley Alpacas seems to have another one of those 'we have to have him, he is gorgeous' purchases. She has too many of those!



Boy number 5?



Best friends, Larry and Alfie



Spot the odd one out?



Dude wondering if he is allowed in?  
out!



Do you mind? I need to get  
out!



It's my hay!



A spot of sunbathing

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## Husbandry tasks for the Winter months

by Sharon Moore, Hummingbird Alpacas

Task	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Feed hay ad lib, feed pregnant and nursing dams extra protein				
Body score, check for jaw abscesses, check teeth and toenails, look for evidence of mites and treat if necessary				
Give supplement of vitamins ADE every 6 weeks				
Consider giving a Winter drench of minerals				
Get poo samples checked regularly for evidence of worms (Faecal Egg Counts)				
Weigh late born cria and monitor weight gain, record details				
Wean cria who are 6 months old and are well grown (over 25 kg in weight) and dose with anti-coccidial wormer (Baycox or equivalent) 7 days after weaning				
Insert microchip in cria who are now 6 months old and register with AAI				
Begin halter training weanlings				
Use the winter months to thoroughly clean equipment such as nail clippers, halters, buckets etc				
Plan your field/paddock rotation for the coming year				
Plan matings for this year, especially if you want to avoid winter births				
Castrate males over eighteen months of age in winter to avoid the possibility of fly strike				

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# The Sunny South East Alpaca Group (SSEAG)

by [Adrian Murphy](#), [Moonhall Alpacas](#)

About a year ago, the Sunny South East Alpaca Group (SSEAG) was formed. The reason for the group was borne out of a need for local alpaca information, advice and general camaraderie. When we bought our first alpacas a few years ago, we relied heavily on our seller for initial advice. He was very helpful but it was not a practical solution given the distance between us in Ireland. We discovered Hummingbird Alpacas locally and their advice and support was and still is invaluable.

The overall aim of SSEAG is to assist all local owners in animal husbandry and welfare. Although we are not officially part of the AAI, we do adhere to and promote the AAI ethos regarding animal welfare and code of practice.

COVID ensured our first year was challenging but, with a strong group of active members on board, we have implemented the following:

- A WhatsApp Group for sharing information and reminders – this is a very active platform with lots of discussions and helpful information;
- Regular meetings with various topics such as basic husbandry. A restricted, socially distant TB related meeting was held more recently during a particularly difficult time in the local group;
- The group purchases AD3E and needles and currently distribute these for over 130 animals. The benefits are:
  - minimal cost price per animal
  - a fresh supply of AD3E
  - clean needles and
  - a timely reminder that might otherwise be forgotten
  - local centralised source of alpaca feed.

In 2021, we are planning some additional events:

- training days (2) will be organised as soon as restrictions are lifted. 30 members will get training in the region rather than having to travel
- we will hold a skirting workshop and have our inaugural fleece show for local members
- we will include vaccinations and other medications in our local distribution network
- we hope to cover all the agricultural and local shows in our area.

We currently have over 25 farms represented. This includes almost 40 members on the WhatsApp group. We offer advice to prospective new alpaca owners and share information on farm visits. We always advise purchasing from approved AAI members.

It enables regular, local contact between farms in the southeast region, enabling them to get their alpaca provisions (feed, medications, information) more easily. It pairs neighbouring owners, allowing them to share the collection runs and assist each other in dosing and carrying out husbandry tasks. The local group model has worked very well here during the past year. Our membership and engagement continues to grow as new owners come on board. Our own virtual AGM last week was very well attended, which is a validation of the work going on here.

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## Clostridial Confusion

**Permission to print from John Robinson MVB - Animal Health Care Veterinary, Teeling St, Rathnakelliga, Ballymote, Co. Sligo**

Submitted by **Andrew Chilton, Knockvicar Alpacas**

Clostridial diseases are the oldest known diseases and occur worldwide. Clostridia is bacteria which forms spores (comparable to plant seeds). These spores exist in soils and enter an animal's body either orally or via a wound. Once in the body, they are dormant until activated by tissue damage, and the toxins produced locally by the growth of the bacteria cause the disease. Hence, the disease presented depends on the strain of the bacteria involved, plus the particular organ of the body involved.



Clostridial diseases are not contagious from one animal to another, but they are highly infectious, i.e. if one animal in a field has been infected by spores in the soil, there is a very high chance all the animals in the field have also been infected.

Some farms are known to have Clostridial disease, while others have never had the problem. For farmers buying in stock, even if their farm has never had Clostridia, the bought-in stock may already be harbouring the Clostridial spores. Hence vaccination is always recommended.



Vaccination product data sheets list the bacterial strains covered, but don't translate these to the common names of the diseases. I will try:

C. chauvoei: otherwise known as Black-leg, a gangrenous disease of muscle anywhere in the body. Thought to be started by bruising in the muscle.

C. perfringens type D: otherwise known as Pulpy Kidney, or overeating disease. Associated with a high starch diet, the kidneys are affected. This strain can also cause Blacks disease - in this case, the liver is affected, and the initial insult is the migration of liver fluke.

C. septicum: otherwise known as Braxy. Eating frozen food damages the lining of the stomach and the spores are activated. This strain of Clostridia also causes Malignant Oedema or big-head disease - associated with a wound and local extensive swelling.

C. tetani: otherwise known as Lock-jaw, associated with a deep penetrating wound and subsequent muscle rigidity.

C. novyi: otherwise known as Red Water. The liver is affected, causing jaundice and rupture of red blood cells. This presents as red urine, not to be confused with Babesiosis, the tick-borne disease which is also known as red-water. The tick-borne red-water has a completely different cause and epidemiology.

Some farmers vaccinate their stock once only and think it is working. This is a delusion. The body's immunological response is triggered by the second injection, 4 - 6 weeks after the first. Every year in practice, I see Black Leg disease in calves which were vaccinated only once.

Interestingly, in ancient farming, if a calf died from Blackleg, the affected limb was hung in a chimney. Months later after curing, the muscle was cut into strips and threaded through the dewlaps of other cattle. These amazing farmers were, without knowing it, actually vaccinating their cattle. They were giving the inactivated disease-causing agent to healthy cattle: Clostridial pioneers!

**John Robinson MVB**

Footnote by Andrew Chilton: When choosing to vaccinate for Clostridial Disease, it is important to discuss this with your LOCAL veterinary practitioner who has LOCAL disease knowledge to select the most appropriate vaccine for your farm. Heptavac P covers 7 Strains of the disease whilst Covexin 10 covers 10 strains, so using Heptavac may not inoculate your animals against the Clostridial disease strains that are present on your land. Local knowledge is invaluable to provide the best cover and protection for your animals.

**WEBSITE: [www.alpaca.ie](http://www.alpaca.ie)**

