

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE

As I write this the end of the year is nigh and snow from the last snowstorm of the year 2000 is beginning to accumulate. It has been a good year for our llamas and us.

We started this day by weighing, body scoring and injecting each of our llamas with Ivermectin. We live in meningeal worm territory and we give our llamas monthly injections of Ivermectin from April through December. In February we will worm the herd with Panacur. In my first column I had mentioned that we use our trailer for trimming toenails. We have now expanded the use of the trailer and are also using it for giving injections. The trailer has a gate that can be used to divide the trailer into front and back sections. We bring the llama into the trailer and then close it into the front half with me. Jeanne stays in the back half and holds onto the lead while I perform the injection and/or nail trimming. We, and our llamas, find this to be less stressful (for most there is little or no stress) than using the chute. There is ample room to move around while maintaining a semblance of confinement. Our trailer is parked next to the catch pen in the pasture we use for the females. After the first two llamas were weighed and then led out to the trailer for their injections and body scoring, the remaining females caught on to the pattern and immediately made a beeline for the trailer after having been weighed. It was not long before all twenty of our llamas were processed. This process also reinforces our trailer training. If you decide to try using your trailer for either nail trimming or injections, it should have rubber floor mats.

Our scale is the floor of our chute. This not only facilitates weighing the llamas it exposes them to the chute under benign circumstances.

Toujours Manure

As noted earlier, the year 2000 has been good to us. Amongst our good fortunes, until this snowstorm, we have experienced relatively little barn poop this winter.

We are still at that stage where each pellet is an asset to our farm. We are constantly being asked if we are willing to sell our 'excess production'. With a few exceptions we have been keeping and using the entire supply. In 2001 we are planning, as a good will gesture, to package and sell some of our manure at

Maine Open Farm Day. We plan to develop "interesting" packaging for our product. We are already quite well known in our local area. Our manure packaging should help in our never-ending process of becoming better "known".

To help collect this valuable by-product of our llamas we acquired a John Deere Z-Trak last year. We first read about the Z-Trak in Tony Woods's amusing article *Get on Z Trak* in the June 1999 issue of the GALA Newsletter. While the Z-Trak is not the perfect solution to the gathering of manure, we have found it to be an invaluable time saver during those portions of the year when it can be used. Our early experience with the Z-Trak may be found online at www.greenbriarllamas.com/Volume99-3.htm in the section on Pasture Management.

If you are an organic gardener or a 'wannabe' organic gardener you might wish to look at our experience with llama pellets, pulverized pellets and llama tea in *Confessions of an Organic Gardener, or, Nothing but the Straight Poop* in www.greenbriarllamas.com/Confessions.htm and *More Confessions of an Organic Gardener, or, Toujours Manure* in www.greenbriarllamas.com/MoreConfessions.htm.

Hay

In my last column I mentioned that we were having our hay tested. Conditions for growing hay were much better this year than the past several years. The tests confirmed this and the hay we acquired had relatively high protein content. This was both good news and bad news. The good news is obvious, the bad news is that we have to closely monitor the amount of hay consumed by those of our llamas who tend to become over conditioned.

As a follow-up to my last column, we have substantially changed our nutrition program. We have dramatically reduced our grain usage and, reluctantly, have changed the brand of grain we use after several more bad experiences with quality control. Our llamas have adapted well to these changes. One of our issues with the prior brand had been palatability of the product. Palatability is no longer an issue, which has eliminated some nutrition management problems we had encountered.