

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE

Oh Chute!

Last spring in my column *The NAO and Other Perturbations to My Idyllic Life* I mentioned that a structure appended to our main barn suffered some significant structural damage to the roof as a result of the heavy snows of last winter. This “disaster” has worked out quite well for us. As part of the repair process we had a concrete floor poured in this structure. My first thought upon seeing the poured concrete was that we should put a “vet room” in this structure. When we first acquired llamas we purchased a chute that we soon decided was totally inadequate for the intended task. At the GALA Conferences and the Northeast Llama Showcase we looked at and were favorably impressed with the chute available through Carol Reigh of Buck Hollow Llamas. I called Carol and we now have one of these chutes bolted to the floor of our new vet room. What a difference it has made in our lives.

As an example, last week fifteen of our llamas were due for their annual physicals and rabies and CD/T vaccinations. With our new chute the process proceeded quickly and safely for the llamas, the vet and us. Jeanne would halter a llama and bring it to me. I led the llama into the vet room and into the chute; the vet put up the belly strap while I adjusted the neck brace and connected the cross-ties. The vet then checked the vital signs of the llama and gave it its shots. The llama then received a small handful of grain as a treat while the vet and I undid the belly strap, et al. I then exchanged the llama with the next llama Jeanne had haltered. This process averaged 5 minutes per llama from the time of the arrival of the vet to the preparation of the bill and there were no evident signs of stress on any of us creatures, llama or human.

We are now using the chute for all nail trimming. We find it reduces the stress on the llamas (and on my back).

As to the old chute, the only good thing I can say about it is that our scale fits exactly within it and thus it serves as a very useful guide for positioning the llama to be weighed.

No Chute!

Our prior procedure for meningeal worm control injections was to halter each llama, bring it to the scale to weigh and then to immediately prepare and give it an injection of Ivomec. Frequently we would take the llama to our trailer for the injection. Our llamas came to know this practice and would often run

to the trailer from the scale (with us in tow). We recently decided to improve the efficiency of this process of periodic injections.

I maintain our herd records in a Microsoft Access database using forms and reports I have designed. The form I had designed for recording weights and de-wormer dosages lists for each llama in our herd the date last weighed, the weight on that date and the date of the last fecal analysis. The form included spaces to enter the new weight, the body score and the de-wormer dosage. The de-wormer dosage I would then determine by referring to a spreadsheet where I had computed the weight range for each de-wormer dosage.

We had heard that some farms had good success at giving periodic injections by just walking amongst their llamas and giving them their shots. We decided to try this technique which led to several changes in our existing procedures. The first change was to separate the weighing from the injecting. The second was to change our weight recording form to automatically calculate and show the appropriate dosage for our de-wormers of choice (Ivomec and Synanthic) based on the last recorded weight. Typically we now weigh our llamas the week before we give them their injections for meningeal worm control. The next week, when I walk amongst the llamas and give them their Ivomec shots, our updated weight recording form already indicates the appropriate dosage. We find that this process is much quicker and, with few exceptions, works quite well. The llamas being injected seem to find comfort being amongst the others.

Kicking the Bucket

Our poop buckets always seem to take a beating. Recently I received an ad over the Internet from Country Home Products, www.countryhomeproducts.com, for *Tub-Trugs*. These are containers made out of recycled polyethylene and are reportedly “tough as a car tire”. I ordered three 12½ gallon containers and am quite pleased with them. They are flexible and impervious to both hot and cold weather. They have two handles which are an integral part of the container. You can grab both handles with one hand for one-handed carrying. Since the containers are flexible you can achieve precision pouring of the contents.

For traveling to events where packing space is at a premium I prefer the collapsible Fiskars Hardshell Kangaroo Containers. Our source for these is Ridge Mist Llama and Alpaca Supply.