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FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Visit several farms

The best way to identify the things you like and don't like in an alpaca is to meet as many as possible. Don't be afraid to visit multiple alpaca farms, and ask lots of questions!

References please

It's okay to ask for references from the farmer you are looking to purchase from. Past customers, their vet, and farms who work with them regularly can be great resources.

Negotiate a deal that works for you

Discuss your goals and the details that are important to you, including breeding details, health guarantees, financing, housing, etc. Be sure to get everything written up in a sales contract with the details outlined as agreed upon.

Pro tip: We recommend buyers purchase from members of Alpaca Canada. Members of Alpaca Canada should adhere to standards of conduct which include ethical selling practices and standards of care for alpacas. Check out our "Visit-a-Farm" webpage tab to view current members.

SELECTING YOUR FIRST ALPACAS

Tips for New Buyers





THE BASICS

Knowing the signs of a healthy alpaca beforehand can save you heartache and money in the future. Look for:

- Clear eyes, with no discharge from eyes or nose.
- No sign of skin disorders on extremities, underbelly, face or ears.
- Correct conformation, absent of defects (Visit www.claacanada.com to learn about common conformation faults).
- Good body condition/weight (may need to feel spine to assess body condition)
- No signs of neglect-- fleece has been shorn appropriately, no overgrown teeth or toes.
- Sound gait, with no evidence of lameness or neuropathy.
- If possible, handle the alpaca yourself to assess its temperament, and how easily it can be caught, haltered and handled.

WHATS UP WITH REGISTERED ALPACAS?



Whether you are looking for a pet, a fibre animal, or a breeding and/or show alpaca, registration can be an asset that supports your investment. Registration of alpacas in Canada is for breeding and non-breeding alpacas of every kind and purpose, and does not always mean a higher price tag! It helps to support the tracking of ownership, pedigrees, as well as health and production qualities across the national herd.

All CLAA registered alpacas must conform to a minimum standard which disqualifies the most common congenital defects which can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of your alpaca. CLAA registration also includes DNA validation of parentage, which provides verification of pedigree that can be used to track fleece qualities for fibre producers, and production qualities for breeders. All CLAA registered alpacas are identified with a unique RFID chip, which verifies identity and can help reunite lost or stolen animals to their owners.

If you're interested in breeding, registration increases options for your future customers, expanding your potential customer base. If you are interested in showing your alpacas, registration is a requirement.

KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR

While it is helpful to have an idea as to what you would like to get out of your alpaca experience prior to purchasing your first animals, it can be hard to know where to start and what to expect. National Alpaca Farm Days can be a great way to visit multiple farms and to learn about the animals. Meeting alpacas at alpaca shows, attending alpaca workshops and conferences can help you develop an eye for what you like; a feel for what you're looking for; and contacts within the community who can help you find the perfect fit for your family and business.

Many Canadian Alpaca farmers offer mentorship and after-sale support to their customers. There are also a number of Alpaca organizations throughout Canada who can provide information and access to events and education opportunities.

POTENTIAL RED FLAGS

Be cautious when you see sellers

- Selling bottle-fed cria, especially single cria without verifying that they will be living with other alpacas.
- Selling unweaned cria without dam at side.
- Trying to pressure buyers with sales pitches such as "buy now or I ship to slaughter".
- Selling alpacas online requiring a deposit on animals sight unseen.
- Selling online with relatively new social media profiles which post frequent ads in a short period of time, which may include spelling errors and do not list their location.