



*To help promote, market, educate,  
and create a support network for  
New Hampshire Lama Owners  
and Enthusiasts.*

**Web Site**  
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## History Of The NHLA

The New Hampshire Lama Association was established in 1991. From an initial membership of about twelve, we have grown to over seventy members! We distribute a newsletter six times a year and have four regular meetings each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. These are social events as well as business meetings, held at a member's farm.

With the increasing presence of alpacas and guanacos in New Hampshire, the NHLA members voted to change the name of the association in March 1995 from the New Hampshire Llama Association to the more generic New Hampshire Lama Association. The 1-L in the name "lama" is the genus name for llamas, alpacas, guanacos, and vicunas. In 1995, the New Hampshire Lama Association was registered as a nonprofit organization with the State of New Hampshire.



NHLA welcomes members from other states, as well as people who don't own llamas but want to learn more about them. So don't hesitate to give us a call to find out more about our organization!

## What Is A Lama?

Lamas originated in North America about 9-11 million years ago and subsequently traveled to South America and Asia. The lama in Asia became the dromedary and bactrian camels. The lama in South America became the guanaco and vicuna, as well as the domestic llama and alpaca. The camels are the closest relatives to the lama. "Camelid" is the term used when talking about the four species of llamas as well as the two species of camels. Lamas died out in North America about 10,000-12,000 years ago, possibly due to hunting for clothing and food by humans.



J. Daley

The llama is an animal that is native to South America. "Lama" is the genus name for the animal comprising four different species: llama, alpaca, guanaco, and vicuna. Another term for these four species is "lamoid". It is believed that the llama was domesticated from the wild guanaco for use as a pack animal (can carry 80-100 pounds when an adult) and that the alpaca was domesticated from the wild vicuna for use as a fiber-producing animal. These four species are very similar and can still interbreed. Both the llama and alpaca are used for meat in South America. There are still guanacos and vicunas in the wild, although the vicuna has been on the endangered species list due to hunting the animal for its fiber.

## Anatomy

Lamas are cud chewers, having a 3-chambered stomach. They have 6 incisor teeth on the bottom jaw in front and a hard dental pad on top. In the back of their mouth, they have 3 molars and 2 premolars on each side of their jaw, both on top and on the bottom. When males reach about 2 years of age, they develop 6 fighting teeth (sharp canines) which they will use to go after any male that threatens their territory. The females also develop fighting teeth, but at a much later time, about 5-6 years of age. Lamas lose their deciduous teeth (milk teeth) at about 2 years of age.



A lama has a two-toed foot with a leathery pad on the bottom and a hard toenail on top. This enables them to be very sure-footed in the mountainous regions of South America. Their upper lip is split, enabling them to use it as we use our fingers, to grab food and manipulate it into their mouths. When full grown, llamas can weigh 300-500 pounds and alpacas can average 130 pounds. Baby llamas weigh 20-35 pounds, and baby alpacas weigh 10-18 pounds. Alpacas come in two varieties, Suri and Huacaya, which is designated by their wool type. The life span of all of these animals is from 20-25 years.

## Behavior

Lamas are very intelligent animals and have an excellent memory. They will often learn a task in 2-5 repetitions and will remember it forever, even if not reinforced. They can be taught to kush (sit down) on command, load into a vehicle, ride in elevators, carry a pack, pull a cart, or be ridden (by children only). They will quickly learn their name and some general commands. Lamas do spit, generally at each other at food time. A properly raised lama will not spit at people. Lamas use a common dung pile; however, the males will often establish several to mark out their territory. Lamas communicate through voice (humming, orgling, alarm cry), and the position of their tails, necks, and ears. Lamas are curious animals and are very gentle, even breeding males are not dangerous around small children! Female llamas establish a pecking order within the herd.

In the wild, a male becomes territorial once he reaches maturity (4-5 years of age) and he stakes out his territory. Females join his herd and breed with him. He chases all predators out of his territory. When the young in the herd are around 8 months of age, he will drive them out of the herd (this prevents inbreeding). It is common to see young males (as young as a week in age) play breeding and fighting. The behavior is there from birth. The fighting does not become dangerous until the male develops his fighting teeth. Then, he can do damage to another male!



## Breeding

The gestation period of a lama is approximately 11.5 months in length. Female llamas do not go into heat, they are induced ovulators; that is, the male will mate with a female and 24-36 hours later she will ovulate (produce an egg) that is then available to be fertilized. The male llamas make a sound called “orgling” during mating, which can last 15-60 minutes. Females can be bred as early as 6 months of age, although it is recommended that they not be bred before they are 1.5-2.0 years old. Males also begin breeding at about 1.5-2.0 years of age.



The young lama is called a “cria”. The cria is typically up and about within 30 minutes and begins looking for mother’s milk almost immediately. The first milk of a mother is called “colostrum” and is only produced for the first 24 hours of a cria’s life. Colostrum contains all the antibodies the cria will need to fight germs and infection during the first few months of life. The cria must ingest the colostrum during the first 24 hours of life as the intestines will lose the ability to absorb the antibodies after this time.