

Shearing Prep

Shearing day is one of the most important days of the year on alpaca farms. It is the day that we harvest the beautiful fiber that our alpacas have grown over the last year. Preparing for shearing day and getting organized for the day ahead of time, certainly makes the day less stressful and chaotic. Teamwork and a well thought out plan will make shearing day run like a well oiled machine.

The cleaner your alpacas are on shearing day: the more value your fiber harvest will have. It has been said that you should “Groom your pasture, not your alpacas.” Make sure that stickers, sticks, dead leaves, and other small, loose vegetative matter are removed from your fields so that it doesn't get into the alpacas' fiber.

Book an Alpaca Shearer: Secure an appointment with a professional alpaca shearer ahead of time. Their schedules are tight, especially during peak shearing seasons.

Shearing Space Setup: A clean, dry, 12x12 space, well lit is essential for effective alpaca shearing. Shaded area if temps are hot. Test the electrical outlets that you plan on having the shearer use, or a working generator with extra fuel. Ensure your area is ready to go.

Here is a list of items to have on hand on shearing day:

- Large sheets for collecting blanket (prime) fiber. Plastic tablecloths work nicely for this, or a large plastic bag cut up both sides. If not noodling, Clear plastic bags work fine as well.
- Large clear plastic bags for seconds (neck and upper leg) and noodled blanket fiber. Clear bags can be hard to find. Check Costco or Home depot. Read how to noodle alpaca blanket fiber .

- Trash cans for collecting thirds (leg fiber, tail, top knot, trimmings), or a smaller bag if you plan to weigh fiber from each alpaca.
- Trash can for contaminated fiber.
- Labels to identify fiber from each alpaca. We also have a clip board to record fiber weights. Some people will weigh their alpacas that day as well.
- List of alpacas in order you plan to shear, light to dark colors, is most common. Shear either your group of males, then females, or visa versa
- Loaded syringes if you plan to administer shots the day of shearing.
- Towels/socks for “accidents”.
- Brooms for sweeping fiber. A leaf blower is also handy for fiber clean up between animals.
- Halters/leads to move alpacas to shearing area and back to pasture or barn.
- First aid kit for humans and animals
- Table for the shearers supplies. Usually a 4 to 6 foot table is sufficient. Get a spill proof cover, so no oil gets on that table.

Alpaca Readiness: Catch your alpacas the day before and put them in holding pens. This reduces their stress and expedites the shearing. Please don't make the shearer wait on you, as they are super busy, and may be shearing other farms that same day. If you require a certain style of shear job, let the shearer know before you start!

The Day of Alpaca Shearing:

- **Early Kick-off:** Start the day early to keep on schedule. Have your alpacas ready for the alpaca shearer. Sometimes shearers are running early, and sometimes they're running late. Plan on being available the whole day, and if you can't be, make sure your shearer is aware of this.

- **Alpaca Shearer Assistance:** Be available to assist the shearer with handling the alpacas if needed. Have helpers, a least 2 to help move animals, 2 to help gather and bag fiber. We like to have extra people to help, as many get tired. This is a long dirty day for the larger ranches. Volunteer to Help out another ranch, and hopefully they can help you as well. Some farms will have skirting tables at shearing , so you will need extra people to help sort and skirt.
- **Efficient Fiber Collection:** After shearing, promptly collect and store the alpaca fiber in the prepared bags.
- **Clothing and foot wear:** Be prepared to get dirty. Old clothes you don't mind getting dirty is best. Long pants, comfortable shirt and closed toed shoes. It hurts to get stepped on, when you are in sandals.
- **Have snacks and beverages:** Your shearers and helpers work hard. Have lots of water available. Along with some light snacks. We usually have coffee and some breakfast food available for everyone . As well as lunch, and or dinner too. Take care of your crew.
- **If you have dogs:** either pet or guard, this can be stressful on them as well. Keep your guard dogs penned up to prevent any unwanted interference.

And most importantly, relax, & have fun