

PADDOCK CARD - BIRTH - UNPACKING



- **Gestation period: +/- 335 days, can be up to 30 days more**
- **Most births happen during daytime between 7am and 2 pm**

Shorter gestation or early birth can result in **premature** cria (more than 2 weeks early). Some cria may be **dysmature** - full term, but not fully mature. **Late in day or night time births** can indicate a problem. All these cria may need special care - keep a close watch and check with your vet.

NORMAL ALPACA BIRTHING SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

Two weeks prior to birthing

Some or all of these may occur.

- ✓ Returning often to one spot (choosing place to birth)
- ✓ rolling
- ✓ sitting alone more
- ✓ sitting down more
- ✓ slight to more prominent increase of udder size
- ✓ a little discharge at vulva

Changing the paddock now will make her look for a new spot to birth.

2-6 hours prior to birth

- ✓ Restlessness
- ✓ Discomfort
- ✓ Lots of humming
- ✓ Frequent visits to dung pile
- ✓ Isolation from herd
- ✓ Tail is up often
- ✓ Discharge from vulva

This may not be noticed if it is an early morning birth, unless you are up that early.

Have your cria kit ready.

Birth is close (1 - 2 hours)

- ✓ Rolling
- ✓ Swelling of the vulva
- ✓ Lying down & getting up
- ✓ Straining over dung pile with little result
- ✓ Trying to look under the tail
- ✓ Tail is up continuously
- ✓ Arched back
- ✓ Very wet tail - waters have broken (+/-1 hour to go)

Be prepared - get your cria kit and vets phone number.

Actual Birthing - unpacking

1. Amniotic sac may appear as a small balloon at the vulva and rupture, and water will be expelled (may happen earlier)
2. forefeet and nose appear (nose can be above or below feet)
3. if only one leg out, second will usually appear soon
4. a pause, female can lie down or walk a bit, or even eat
5. pushing the head out, forelegs will dangle out
6. another pause, and cria drains lungs
7. pushing out the shoulders - the largest body part to come out
8. short rest
9. the rest will easily slip out

If birth is progressing normally, watch and marvel.

- ✓ A normal birth can be over in 20 to 50 minutes.
- ✓ Female usually stands when pushing.
- ✓ Female can lie down to rest and get up several times.
- ✓ Once the head and legs appear, birthing should occur in 30 minutes.
- ✓ Once the shoulders are out there should be no further birthing problem.
- ✓ Until the placenta has been expelled, the female may not have milk, and may not let the cria nurse.

The placenta is usually expelled within a couple of hours.
If it takes longer than 6 hours you may need vet assistance.

No progress in birthing a visible cria in 15 minutes, and you may have a birthing problem - see box. Call your vet.

BIRTHING PROBLEMS

Dystocia (difficult birth)

- Mostly due to abnormal presentation of the cria
- Poor condition of female
- Obesity of female
- Cria getting "stuck" - very large cria and/or young and/or small female

Abnormal presentations

Any situation where you do not have the head and both legs visible at birthing e.g.

- only one leg and head
- two feet and no head
- placenta appearing first
- prolonged labour, no cria
- dam distressed

**CALL YOUR VET
IMMEDIATELY**

INITIAL NEONATAL CRIA CARE

After a normal gestation period and normal birth no special care is needed. If you are there, the following is recommended as initial care.

- ✓ **Check the airway**
- ✓ **Clean out any mucus from mouth**
- ✓ **Clean away the stringy webbing from head and whole neck**
- ✓ **Check navel and swab umbilical cord with antiseptic**
- ✓ **Check udder for milk**
- ✓ **Clean & massage udder with sponge and warm water to clean out wax or strip out wax in teats by hand if no milk**
- ✓ **Make sure cria is drinking**
- ✓ **Weigh the cria**
- ✓ **Check all of placenta has been passed - remove and bury**
- ✓ **If still no milk after placenta is expelled, ask your vet for injection to start milk**
- ✓ **Give cria colostrum from other source in meantime**
- ✓ **Avoid handling the cria too much - let mum and cria bond**

Your secondary care would then be

When it is cold and/or raining:

- ✓ Dry cria with towel/hairdryer
- ✓ Put cria coat on and/or place with mum under cover overnight
- ✓ Avoid touching or covering head and rump scent glands

Late & Night births

- ✓ Put mum and cria under cover
- ✓ Dry cria with towel or even hair dryer
- ✓ Make sure cria drinks before you leave
- ✓ LEAVE THE LIGHT ON to create day-time situation for nursing
- ✓ Give mum her favorite nuts or hay and water
- ✓ Check during the night - get mum up for cria to drink

Premature & Dysmature crias and/or crias with difficult and/or prolonged birth

Will take more attention, but follow all the initial steps as above. If necessary ask your vet for assistance.

Premature & Dysmature Signs:

- ✓ Teeth are not through
- ✓ Toenails are not fully developed (soft in all newborns)
- ✓ Ears are very floppy
- ✓ Can't straighten legs at all, especially hind legs
- ✓ Can't stand (premature or something wrong)
- ✓ Can't hold up its neck (premature or something wrong)
- ✓ General weakness, can't suck (something wrong, premature)
- ✓ Weight 5kg or less

In serious cases in which the cria can't drink by itself the vet must be called immediately if not already there.

See the Information Pack for more detail on cria care.

**IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ALL IS OK,
CALL FOR VETERINARY HELP**

NORMAL BIRTH

