Villa de Alpacas Farm New Cria Check List

1) Check breathing – clear nostrils and mouth of epidermal membrane and check mucosal membranes.

2) Dip the umbilical cord. Nolvasan (chlorhexidrine) solution has been shown to be the most effective in reducing bacterial counts in research trials. Nolvasan is made by Fort Dodge Pharmaceuticals. Nolvasan needs to be diluted to a (0.5%) solution by pouring 4 ounces of Nolvasan into 12 ounces of tap water. Diluted Nolvasan must be kept in a dark bottle and discarded after two weeks. A smaller quantity may be prepared by placing ½ ounce (1 tablespoon or 15ml) of Nolvasan in 1 ½ ounces (3 tablespoons of water). When you dip the cord, completely saturate the entire cord multiple times. I like to use an old film canister. Throw away the Nolvasan in the film canister after each succession of dips. Nolvasan is better to use than Betadine – which is too drying on the cord and can cause it to crack; thus infection can start.

3) Dry cria with towels if she is cold. In cold weather, you will need to move the cria and dam into a heated/draft free area in the barn until she is dry and her temperature is at least 99 degrees. You may also use a hair dryer on the cria to dry her off and keep her warm. Cria coats may also be needed. Be careful when using a cria coat, as some dams may reject their crias when the coat is put on them, but this is rare. Use care and common sense. It would also be best to use a "clean" cria coat – and one that has not been recently worn by another cria. Cria "smells" are extremely important to the new dam. You don't want to cause confusion or rejection based on another cria's smells. A cold cria will also not absorb colostrum properly, which is important to assure a good IgG. Thus keeping the cria warm enough is critical to its health and future survival.

4) Check the sex. (You probably did this first!)

5) Move dam with the cria into a small fenced in paddock in view of her friends so that it is easier for the cria to the find the teats and start nursing as well as to bond with the dam. Some dams so not do well when confined; therefore, use common sense and make changes to accommodate each dam's requirements. A dam which is "pacing" and stressed will not allow her cria to nurse easily.

6) Re-dip the umbilical cord with Nolvasan. You will need to dip the cord at least 3 or 4 times - 5 to 10 minutes between each time. If the cord is excessively long on the cria, cut it short (leaving ½ to 1 inch away from the skin). You can cut this using clean, sharp scissors, or tie a string of dental floss around the cord to cut it off. Make sure you dip the cord immediately after cutting it short!

7) Strip dam's teats; check for presence of colostrum and note consistency. Also note the size and shape of the teats. Clean udder area if only muddy or dirty. Dam may be very uncomfortable at this time, especially if she has not passed her placenta.

8) Weigh cria once she is dry.

9) Re-dip umbilical cord. This may seem like a lot to do, but these first steps can all be done within 20 minutes or so.

10) Leave dam and cria alone to bond for at least an hour. Observe from a distance to record when cria is first standing and attempting to nurse.

11) Start a record on the cria and a "tickler" system for future vaccinations, weighing of cria, and fecal checks.

12) If the cria is not nursing within 2-3 hours, assist. First, try holding the mom and helping the cria attach on her nipple. Second, try milking out the dam a little, putting the colostrum in a shot glass and then using a syringe without the needle and placing it directly into the cria's mouth. Then place

the cria back under the dam's udder. Patience is required. It is very important that the cria get as much colostrum as possible and as early as possible for optimal IgG transfer. Colostrum is sticky and often much "thicker" than milk; you don't want to waste a drop as it is truly important for the cria's health. It is like "gold"! Thus it is not wise to try to put this very thick colostrum in a bottle. There is not a large volume of it, and you don't want to waste any of it, which can mostly stick to the sides of the container, and not get into the cria!

13) I like to use llama plasma for my especially valuable crias. Llama plasma can be purchased from Triple J Farms in Bellingham, Washington. Their phone is 360-398-9512. I will either slowly syringe the defrosted plasma into their mouths within the first 8 hours after birth, or completely tube them with it in 2 – 3 tubing sessions. Never defrost the plasma in a microwave. Just put it in a bowl with warm water – sitting upright. I have had a few of these plastic plasma bags leak from the top, so I have learned to always keep it upright. Sometimes, I will use cow/bovine colostrum which can be purchased at Southern States or your local farm store. It is a powder and must be mixed with warm water immediately before use. You can either put this in a bottle, or slowly syringe it into their mouths. Remember, that the bovine colostrum will not show up on a camelid IgG test. Too much bovine colostrum can also cause loose stools in crias. My absolute favorite product to use is the llama plasma, but it is expensive – at least $125 per bag plus the overnight shipping costs, but it does raise the IgG. I will often order multiple llama plasma bags from Triple J at once; this reduces my shipping costs tremendously. Once the extra bags arrive, I will keep them wrapped in plastic bubble wrap to protect the bags. I will store them in my freezer with ice packs around them until I am ready to use them. If the plasma somehow defrosts, it must be used immediately. You can not refreeze plasma. Therefore, keeping it completely frozen is important. Try not to use cow's milk within the first 24 hours after birth unless it is absolutely necessary for the survival of the cria, as this has been shown to close down the IgG absorption of the cria's intestines much faster.

14) Give oral E-Coli Vaccine (3cc) kept in the refrigerator within the first 6 hours after birth. You can purchase this oral E-Coli vaccine from PBS Animal Supply or KV vet Supply. It is a bovine product.

15) Give 1/2cc Vitamin A & D Shot – IM – around 12 hours after birth.

16) Watch for cria to defecate. If the meconium doesn't pass the first day, give the cria a 2 ounce warm water enema. This is very important, as a "stopped-up" cria will not nurse very well.

17) If the dam doesn't have much colostrum, milk, or volume in her udder, start her on Domperidome or Equitox paste (Equidone 11%). This needs to start immediately after the birth in order to be the most effective. Give the paste orally to the dam (5cc - twice per day). Use up the entire tube, which is usually around 40cc's. Dr. Rob Pollard Herbal Mix (lactation stimulation) also works very well in stimulating milk production in the dam. Feed 2oz – twice per day – for llamas, or feed 1oz – twice per day for alpacas. You can purchase this from Useful Lama Items, or contact Robert Pollard, DVM directly at 16615 Isom Lane Sonora, CA 95370.

18) If the dam has had a difficult birth, and she is very sore, I would start her on 3 days of Banamine. The dam may also have very sore teats, which will inhibit the cria from nursing. Give Banamine (SQ) with a small gauge needle. I would dose it at 1cc per 100 pounds of the dam's body weight. Give this to her twice per day – morning and evening.

19) After 24 hours, weigh and pull blood sample for IgG testing. This may also be a good time to pull enough blood for ARI registration purposes (blood can be stored in the refrigerator with an anti-coagulant for DNA blood testing.) I use the Triple J's Radial Immunodiffusion (RID) test plates. RID plates are specific for camelid immunoglobulins or IgG. You may get anti-bodies and immunities from cow colostrum, but these are not measurable on this type of RID plate.
If you need to send blood work for IgG testing, you may send it to: Mel Hopkins at M&M Labs in Milan, Michigan: 734-439-2698.