

# Tips & Tricks for Shearing Llamas

By Russell Gent

## Using a chute when Shearing Llamas

With the arrival of spring, many owners are making plans to shear their camelids. In a previous article, I gave recommendations for shearing using a shearing table when shearing alpacas. As additional information, the only time I would shear an alpaca standing up is if it was a heavily pregnant female. (See next issue of *Cool Camelids* for details.)

Often I am asked my opinion about using a chute when shearing llamas. I do not like chutes and prefer using a gate tied in a corner to create a triangle instead. This allows the shearer to stand close and be more aware of the body language of the llama. For example, by having one hand on the llama while shearing the more sensitive parts (belly, legs) you will feel him tense and so get some warning if he is becoming stressed or upset. To use a gate, tie your camelid's lead close, leaving about 8" of wiggle room.



**NOTE:** If the animal is likely to want to sit down while being shorn, you must tie the animal low enough so that if he sits down he will not strangle himself. Alternatively, wrap the lead around a post or rail 3 or 4 times and get your helper to hold on to it, so that

if the animal sits down the rope can be eased out. If the llama is trying to swing sideways and is pushing you around, pull the gate in closer, so he has less room to move.

Standing forward of the llama's back leg and keeping close to the animal makes it difficult for him to kick you and is much safer. Even if he does manage to kick you, he will not be able to generate much power.

If he kicks, don't struggle with him. Calmly move to a different area and begin shearing there. Gently manipulate the hip on the other side as you shear the legs and belly. Then, after he relaxes, go back to the original site and continue shearing. After you have finished shearing one side, move to the other side of the animal to shear it.



Most importantly, when shearing your llamas be calm, patient and deliberate. Usually, they will follow your cue and stand quietly while you shear them.

## Shearing Suris

There is much debate about whether to use hand shears or electric ones when shearing suris. I prefer to

blade shear using hand shears. Doing this helps maintain the lock structure and ensures more consistency in the fiber regrowth. This also allows you to leave enough fiber on the animal to protect against sunburn, chilly weather, etc. My experience has shown that exceptionally high quality suri (high level of purity) will retain their lock structure even if they are shorn close. The fiber on these will relock; however, my personal preference remains hand shearing for all suris.

If you are not skilled in blade shearing, by giving your comb a lot of lead and shearing with a high hand, you should be able to leave at least 1/2" - 3/4" of wool on. Also if you shear across the way the wool is laying (not coming up under it) you can also leave

quite a lot more wool on.

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