

## Getting Started

You will find there are many opinions on the best way to get started into the alpaca industry; we'll try to cover the most common. There's a lot to take into consideration such as, cost, land requirements and your goals. First and foremost, you must consider that alpacas are herd animals therefore, it is not recommended to keep an alpaca by itself.

If your goal is to have alpacas for fiber to supply your spinning/knitting needs or for a 4H project, you could find several deals around \$100 per alpaca (these would be geldings or non-reproductive females).

If your goal is to make money raising alpacas (again this is not a get rich quick scheme, but is a way to make money long term), keep in mind that you do not have to start out with the best alpacas on the market. Buy the best alpacas, you can afford and then breed to improve the quality of your alpacas.

Let's consider that you have a farm and are just looking at purchasing alpacas. Our recommendation would be to start out with two or more pregnant females (you can usually get better deals as a package) and within one year you're doubling your herd. You can get female crias a little cheaper, but you will have to wait until they are at least two years old before they can be bred and then would have a breeding charge.

If you are not ready to bring the alpacas directly to your farm or do not have a farm, you can board (ageist) your alpacas either from the person you purchased them from or a farm or ranch near where you live. This way you can visit the farm and learn how to care for your alpacas. Most will welcome help when they do their regular care of alpacas (shearing, vaccinations, trimming teeth and nails and even daily feeding and cleaning of pens).

Another option, if you are limited on funds, is sharing ownership such as purchasing one half of a female, you would then own half of her future crias. Or sharing ownership of a quality stud and receive that portion of stud fees (some studs are co owned by three or more farms). You could choose to purchase a quality stud and you could collect all of the stud fees or could provide multiple breedings to a small farm for a cria from one of their females. Another option is leasing a pregnant female or male for year. By leasing the female, you would have ownership of the cria that is born. By leasing a breeding male for a year, you would be able to use him to breed your girls, but take into consideration what the total breeding fees would be compared to the lease price, is he breeding up your girls. Keep in mind that this varies between breeders, so you need to ask, not assume.