

Llamapacking 101 Presentation
Margaret Van Camp, Pitchfork Llamas

I. How to choose a pack llama

- a. What can be observed
 - 1. Gender
 - 2. Wool type
 - 3. Size
 - 4. Conformation: Balance, gait, topline, legs
 - 5. Physical and mental maturity
- b. What must be ascertained
 - 1. Weight tendencies
 - 2. Physical longevity
 - 3. Attitude

II. Developing a Pack Llama: Training, conditioning and experience

1. Training—GO SLOW. BE PATIENT.

- a. Desensitizing *Begin immediately*
- b. Accepting the training pack: *Begin no younger than 12 mos. of age (no weight!)*
 - 1. Put on, remove towel, then put on, remove pack
 - 2. Walk with pack: in yard, on roads, on trails
 - 3. Fiddle with pack while on llama
- c. Saddling: *Begin no younger than 18 mos. (no weight!)*
 - 1. Girth, Chest, and butt straps
 - 2. Panniers (fill out for width)
- d. Loading panniers: *Begin no younger than 2 years*
 - 1. Balance (from side to side)
 - 2. Maximum load of 10% of llama's weight for age 2-3, 15% for age 3-4, 25% thereafter.
- e. What every pack llama should know
 - a. Positioning on the trail
 - b. Picket line
 - c. Trailering
 - d. Hiking in a pack string
 - e. Handling feet, legs, belly and head
 - f. No snacking (unless invited)
 - g. Obstacles
 - 1. Jumps, step-overs, duck-unders
 - 2. Water and mud
 - 3. Bridges
 - 4. Deadfalls and rock rubble
 - h. Encounters (dogs, people, horses, wild critters)

2. Conditioning: The most neglected part of llamapacking

3. Experience: there are no short-cuts

III. Safety practices

- a. Adequately prepared and conditioned?
- b. Not overloaded?
- c. Familiar with route? Others are aware of your plans?
- d. Ready and alert for the unexpected (i.e dogs, broken equipment, etc)?
- e. Llamas are trained to tether calmly?
- f. ID tags on halters?
- g. First aid kit?

h. Emergency communications? (the dreaded cell phone)

IV. Types of packs

- a. Training packs: one piece design
- b. Beginner (show) packs: saddle with small detachable panniers
- c. Full-sized pack systems: saddle with full-sized detachable panniers

V. Other equipment

- a. Halter and lead (with shock absorber) Preferred: Mt. Sopris
- b. Stake-out line (with shock absorber) and picket screw
- c. Hand-held scale for packs
- d. First aid kit
- e. Collapsible bucket and feed pan / feed?
- f. Brush
- g. Any equipment for your activity (camping gear, food, etc.) Pack light!

Llamapacking Resources

Books:

Packing with Llamas (4th edition) by Stanlynn Daugherty

Llamas on the Trail by Amy Rubin and David Harmon

The Camelid Companion by Marty McGee

Websites:

Pack Llama Trial Association: www.packllama.org

North American Ccara Association: www.ccarallama.com

Pitchfork Llamas: www.pitchfork.org

About the presenter: Margaret Van Camp - email pitchfork@usol.com

- From Swartz Creek, MI (60 mi NE of Detroit)
- Working with llamas since 1996
- Aficionado and breeder of classic (ccara) llamas
- Together with Cindy Ciecwiwa, own & operate Pitchfork Ranch, raising three longwool breeds of sheep and Ccara llamas
- 4H llama show judge
- Llamapacking presenter at multiple MI llama events
- Chair of Michigan Llama Association Pack Committee
- Former participant and organizer of PLTA trials
- Retired Spanish teacher