



6.2 Code of Conduct for Sale Buyer's Guidelines

Look Before You Buy ...

Check conformation and be careful with your cash

For the untrained, the prospect of buying an unsound alpaca without even realising it until too late is quite scary. Not just because of the large financial commitment involved and the fact that an animal with serious faults may affect your breeding program and the saleability of offspring. In time some faults may affect the general well being of the animal and you as the owner would be the one that would see it suffering.

It is important when buying alpacas that you buy one that is sound in conformation.

It is easier to breed-in better fibre characteristics and volume than it is to breed out conformation problems or genetic defects.

To live a long and productive life as a fibre producer, alpacas need to carry their fibre on a sound frame.

There are many genetic defects that are undesirable in alpacas, most of which would meet with immediate disqualification if the animal was taken to a British Alpaca Society run alpaca show.

Alpaca faults in general can be categorized as being caused by:

- 1 Genetic or hereditary traits
- 2 Nutritional or environmental factors
- 3 Injury.

In relation to breeding stock, those faults thought to be hereditary (genetic) are the least desirable. For those falling under clauses 2 and 3 there should be no repercussions in further generations.

Also look out for:

- Tall animals – may have llama genes, tall females may have reproduction problems (check breeding records).
- Short animals – may just be stunted because of poor nutrition or a dwarf.
- Base wide and base narrow – wide or narrow depth of chest effecting placement of feet on ground and size of chest cavity.

Make sure you get your hands on the animal:

- Run your hands over its back and tail
- Look at the eyes
- Run hands over ears
- Look at the mouth and teeth
- Pick up the feet
- Look under the tail at genitals and feel how big males' testicles are (are they the same size?)
- Watch the animal walk away from you and towards you, looking for freedom of movement and angulation of the legs.

The 'perfect' alpaca would probably have the following positive traits:

- Short muzzle
- Triangular and symmetrical head
- Even jaw and bite
- Erect, spear-shaped ears
- Eyes should be bright and alert with no discharge
- Good back line slightly sloping over the rump, with no humps or dips
- Legs with correct angulation, and no deviations
- Good proportion of body, legs and neck
- Good strong base, ie, good depth of chest which allows good placement of legs on the ground
- Will show itself well, with an elect, alert stance

Not all alpacas are 'perfect', so their negative faults must be carefully weighed against their positive attributes before buying an animal or deciding to include it in your breeding programme.