

Handy Alpaca Ranch Equipment

Husbandry Hints

by Bill and Sherri Duey

There are many pieces of equipment that can improve efficiency on an alpaca ranch. This article lists items ranging from mouse traps to barn desks and gives examples of their usefulness. (Prices shown are in U.S. dollars.)



Velcro Straps for Toenail Trimmer Holster. This simple little item really comes in handy at toe nail trimming time. Use one double-sided Velcro strap through the belt loop on your toenail trimming holster. Sew a second strap to the lower tip of the holster. Strap the holster around the calf of your leg and the toenail trimmer is right where you can reach it when you are trimming toenails. The straps can be found at office supply stores (for managing computer cables), farm stores and boat shops (for managing coils of ropes) or building supply stores (for managing electrical cords). (\$4)



Metal Calculator/Clipboard. A modern version of the old clipboard (this one has a built-in calculator). It is handy to use for all kinds of note taking. Use one for taking notes during alpaca birthing events, inventorying feed and supplies, and other planning activities around the ranch. (\$42)



Dry Erase Note Board. Helpful for jotting down notes such as lineage, breeding dates and spit testing, expectant dam due dates, vet procedures, etc. The board is also a nice reference for ranch visitors. Mount the markers close to the board for convenience. (\$15)



Live Mouse Trap. Barns attract mice and auto-resetting mouse traps work great for catching the pesky critters. These multiple-catch traps have proven to be the best choice. They really work. Use peanut butter and cracked corn for bait. No chemicals or poisons needed. (\$9)



Shearer's Screw Driver. Alpaca shearers find this handy tool perfect for helping out at shearing time. This three-point screwdriver has tips for those big screws on combs and cutters, as well as the assembly screws on the shears. Get one for your set of shears – it really makes changing combs and cutters a breeze. (\$14)

Bill and Sherri Duey operate Southern Iowa Alpacas, 60 miles southeast of Des Moines. They incorporate innovative features into their ranch and conduct seminars on business planning, animal selection, and ranch setup for new alpaca ranchers. They also enjoy helping existing ranchers learn about new products and techniques. View their site at southerniowaalpacas.com or contact them at alpacas@southerniowaalpacas.com.

Hand Truck. Two-wheeled hand trucks or carts are very useful on the alpaca ranch. A heavy-duty cart with an extra long tongue that can be dropped down to carry larger items like hay bales or show boxes is the best model. Throw one in your truck or trailer and use it for moving in and out of alpaca shows. You can load them up and save yourself lots of steps and back work. (\$40)



Barn Desk. Do you fumble around with notebooks, pens, paper, lists, vet records, etc.? Do you need to make notes during monthly weigh-in and toenail trimming time? This metal barn desk is perfect. The desk attaches to the wall or board fence and the door swings down to provide a writing platform. It has storage pockets for pens, paper, record books, etc. When you are finished using the desk, simply swing the writing platform up and out of the way. It comes in galvanized or stainless steel, and is even strong enough to support a lap top computer. (\$54 for galvanized; stainless steel version is \$80)



Kaycee Twine Cutter. A specially-designed twine cutter makes cutting the twine off small square hay bales both safe and efficient. The cutter has a handle large enough to even use with gloves. No more fumbling with pocket knives or a cutting knife in the winter. The blade on this cutter is mounted back in the handle to reduce accidents. (\$5)



Kiwi Gate "J" Hooks. Kiwi gate hooks or "J" hooks are very helpful for ranchers who continuously go through gates. The hook can be opened with one hand and is resistant to alpaca escape artists. They can be anchored to wooden posts with giant staples, screw eyes, or eye bolts. They are really handy and the price is right. (\$3)



Sharpening Stone for Toenail Trimmers. Even the best set of toenail trimmers gets dull very quickly. This sharpening stone is inexpensive, easy to use, and really puts the cutting edge back on the trimmers. Just touch up the edge of the trimmers before each trimming session and they are as sharp as new. (\$6)



Alpaca Carry Sling. If you ever have a sick alpaca that you need to move, this carrier will be worth its weight in "royal baby alpaca fleece." The carrier is 48" X 30", has six handles, and is a vet's best friend. How else are you going to move that alpaca? (\$40)