



Standards for the inclusion of alpacas in mobile farms

The Northern Ireland Alpaca Group (NIAG) is a regional sub-group of the British Alpaca Society (BAS). The aims of the Group are:

- To facilitate mutual support among members;
- To build the capacity of those keeping, or wishing to keep, and/or breeding alpacas in Northern Ireland;
- To champion the welfare of alpacas and the education of their owners in Northern Ireland;
- To represent its members at local and regional level.

Alpacas are a popular animal present in many mobile farms operating across Northern Ireland. Such activities provide an excellent opportunity for the wider public to become more aware of these animals and to learn more about them. While the Northern Ireland Alpaca Group welcomes and encourages the inclusion of alpacas in such enterprises, it is essential that every action is taken to ensure the animals' welfare.

As such, the Group has produced minimum standards to ensure the welfare of alpacas included in mobile farms operating in Northern Ireland. The Group expects such standards to be maintained by the members of the NIAG, and encourages non-members to adhere to these standards in their businesses. The Group further encourages all event organisers and those soliciting the services of mobile farms to ensure the provider adheres to the minimum standards set out below.

The Standards

1. Where alpacas are present in a mobile farm exhibit, there shall be a minimum of two alpacas at all times. Alpacas are naturally herd animals and only feel safe with their own kind. They must never be kept singly, even for short periods of time, as this will cause unnecessary stress for the animal.
2. Where possible, exhibits should be erected on grass suitable for light grazing. Where this is not possible, hay/haylage shall be provided for the duration of the event. Fresh drinking water shall be available for animals at all times.

3. Enclosures shall be of sufficient area to accommodate the number of alpacas present, and no smaller than 5.3m² for up to 4 alpacas, additional size required for more. Barriers of at least 1.1m in height shall be used to construct the pen. We recommend interlocking galvanised pedestrian fence panels.
4. Alpacas shall not be exhibited in the same enclosure as other species.
5. It is encouraged that signs shall be erected to discourage 'petting' of alpacas. Unlike many other animals, including dogs, horses and cattle, alpacas are not licked by their mother at birth, and are therefore not conditioned to experience petting as affection.
6. Alpacas shall be unloaded from, and loaded to, suitable transport ideally using appropriate, correctly fitted, halters and lead ropes. While in the enclosure, lead ropes can be removed.
7. Droppings can be used to mark a toilet area for the alpacas before their unloading. All droppings shall be regularly tidied throughout the duration of the event, and the site cleaned at the end of the day.
8. All general standards of welfare required elsewhere shall be maintained during events.

Alpaca Education

The Northern Ireland Alpaca Group strongly recommends that those providing mobile farm services has sufficient knowledge of alpacas to educate members of the public on them. This includes challenging and dispelling unhelpful assumptions and misconceptions about alpacas and their behaviour. Providers may find it useful to have a supply of the NIAG leaflets, providing basic information about alpacas, on hand during events. We can supply these at no cost to any interested parties.

Further Information

The Northern Ireland Alpaca Group is happy to provide advice and guidance to providers to support them to adhere to the minimum standards set out about. For more information visit www.alpacani.org or email chair@alpacani.org.