

How best to make friends with an AK alpaca

In general paddock alpacas are very timid and flighty. These are natural instincts that serve them well and help them avoid harm and predation.

Unless specifically trained and handled it is quite difficult to physically interact with alpacas. However, if trained and acclimatised to being around people it is possible to dampen these instincts and have them be comfortable with people and in busy noisy environments.

Every alpaca is different, however in general these guidelines will help you with your interaction – which can be very special and memorable when it occurs.

- 1. Before approaching the alpaca directly, ask the handler for any interaction tips.**
2. Alpacas aren't particularly fans of being touched so keep contact very slow, reserved and brief.
- 3. Best to let the alpaca make the approach and the moves.**
- 4. Try not to rush towards an alpaca or make quick arm/hand movements towards the alpaca. Keep movements slow and reserved.**
5. Do not grab, hold or restrain the alpaca. This can be particularly scary for alpacas. They can feel trapped and vulnerable.
- 6. Avoid surprising them with a touch or pat on their back or rump.** This can initiate a reactive back leg kick out with some alpacas.
7. A slowly presented low flat hand can prompt an alpaca to greet it with a gentle 'kiss' or gently take a treat that you may have for them.
8. If you are keen for a 'kiss' then place your head down at their level and softly hum ('mmmm'). If the stars are aligned at the time, the alpaca will approach and say hello by very gently and softly placing their nose momentarily against yours.

This is a very special moment. When it occurs, time seems to stand still and for an instant it is just you and mother nature. *"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin" ~ William Shakespeare*

- 9. Be patient and gentle.** The handler will know how best to facilitate interaction for you. Listen carefully to them and follow their instructions. They may even move the alpaca away from you ('reset') and then re-approach you to initiate a new interaction moment.
10. Give the alpaca space. Wait your turn for interaction. Like us, alpacas are not fans of being overcrowded.
11. Do not feed the alpacas unless the handler indicates that it is ok.
12. Please understand that the handler may need to remove the alpaca from the setting to permit a toilet break or the like.

ASK THE HANDLER FOR SOME LIQUID HAND SANITISER AFTER YOUR INTERACTION. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU **WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER CONTACT WITH SOAP AND RUNNING WATER BEFORE EATING.**

Please go to our FAQ page on our website for more information.