

Alpacas

Frank and Jesse James

Frank is smaller, lighter in colour and has a black nose. Jesse is larger and darker in colour. They are very inquisitive animals and like being close by, spending most of their time eating and sitting around the firepit and pool. Both our alpacas were born in 2016.

We feed them every few days with some additional grains to help with their health. You are welcome to feed them daily during your stay but there is no requirement if you do not want to.

They will get excited if they see you walking to the shed and will most likely follow you and can even run a little so don't be alarmed. They will usually run to the top of the mound in front of the chickens.

FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS:

Green and yellow buckets are stored in the greenhouse (near the chickens) or around the large green shed. This is where the alpacas water is, you are welcome to top this up. Use the mug to get some of the supplied mix, usually 2-3 cups per bucket is enough.

Place their food in the buckets inside the shed. They will try getting it straight away and can sometimes spit at each other. You can either let them eat the food from the bucket while you are holding it or place it on the ground.

Some people get a fright when they spit at each other but it is quite normal for them so don't worry. We just put their buckets about 1m apart from each other so they don't argue about the food. We recommend to avoid walking or standing around the back of the Alpacas while eating, as they can slightly kick when they are hungry.

INTERESTING FACTS:

- Alpacas are very hardy animals and require little attention.
- Alpacas are similar to llamas but much smaller.
- Llamas are used as pack animals but alpacas were bred specifically for their fleece.
- Alpaca fleece has two distinct qualities. The finest part of the entire fleece comes from the back and sides. The lesser quality fibre comes from the animal's neck and legs.
- Alpaca fleece is warmer than sheep fleece and is not prickly like wool. Alpaca fibre is smooth and silky to touch.
- The fleece is removed from alpacas in the same manner as a sheep is sheared. The fibre is then combed, carded and, after a simple washing process, is ready to spin.

HISTORY:

They originate in the high altitude region of the Andean mountains in South America. The climate in this area consists of hot days and freezing nights.

Alpacas were first imported into Australia in 1858 but none of the alpacas are known to have survived. It wasn't until 1988 when the next alpacas arrived. They adapted well to Australian climatic conditions. Today, in Australia there are approximately 25,000 alpacas owned by some 1,600 breeders.

BREEDS OF ALPACAS:

Alpacas are part of the camelid family - that is, they are related to camels and they originated in South America. There are two breeds of alpacas - the Huacaya and the Suri, **our alpacas as Huacaya.**

Length of gestation for the Huacaya and the Suri breeds range from 341-345 days respectively. 90% of all births occur between 7am and 1pm. It is considered that this gives the best survival chance to the newborns before it gets too cold at night.

The Huacaya is the most common breed in South America and Australia. Its body is densely covered with fleece from its head extending down its legs. The Huacaya grows a "corkscrew" straight fibre.

The Suris is less common than Huacayas and Australia has only a small number of Suris alpacas. Their fleece falls straight down from their body and looks similar to long, thin locks, very similar to "dreadlocks". Their fleece has a silkier feel than the Huacaya.

HERD PROTECTORS:

Although alpacas are quiet and friendly, their survival in the harsh environment of the Andean mountains of South America depended upon developing instincts to fend off predators. Alpacas are, by nature, a herd animal. Both males and females are protective of each other and especially of their young.

Farmers began raising alpacas with their flocks of sheep. This tactic proved very successful as the alpacas not only become members of the flock, but also their protectors. Alpacas have very good eyesight and remain very alert.

When danger is sensed, an alarm is sounded and all the adults herd the young into a circle to protect them against any danger. Then the leaders of the herd charge the intruder stomping, spitting, kicking and/or biting. This generally surprises the predator and he/she retreats to a safe distance.

Chickens

Chickens are some of the most understood animals on the planet, yet they're some of the most loveable animals. They can live 10-15 years and have been known to live as long as 25 years.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Chickens are territorial and do not wander far from their home, preferring to roost in a familiar place. They can be kept with other livestock except for ducks/geese, as chickens need to stay dry to be healthy. Some roosters may get along together as bachelors, but they often will fight over hens; the ideal ratio is 1 rooster per 8-10 hens. Chickens molt once per year, usually in the autumn; the process takes 2-3 months

DIET

Chickens love tomatoes, lettuce, apple parings, bits of toast, plants, seeds, and insects.

Chickens must be fed daily and should have access to grassy areas. They should always have access to fresh water and their containers should be raised off the ground. We provide the chickens with Pellets and laying mix as well as kitchen scraps to ensure the chickens receive enough nutrition to produce eggs.

Cracked corn can be given as a treat, especially in winter, as it can help keep them warm overnight; black oil sunflower seeds can also be mixed into their feed for extra calcium.

Please DO NOT FEED chocolate, onion, garlic, or raw potato peelings (they cannot digest) and beef or pork scraps.

CHICKEN BEHAVIOURS

- Chickens do not get 'sad' when you take their eggs - Laying eggs is as instinctive to hens as perching and scratching. It's something they need to do, but they are not doing it with thoughts of hatching chicks, and will leave their egg as soon as it has been laid.
- Chickens have a 'pecking order' - which means that some chickens will rule over others and be the first to get food and have their first choice on nests etc.
- A chicken can lay 5 or 6 eggs a week. She can lay up to 300 eggs in a year.

INTERESTING FACTS:

- Chickens can recognise up to 100 faces - Chickens don't just recognise other chickens, either. These faces included those of humans! Chickens even remember positive or negative experiences with the faces they recognise and pass that information on to members of their flocks.
- Chickens dream - Similar to dogs and cats who may act like they're chasing something while asleep, chickens also have very vivid dreams. Chickens experience rapid-eye movement (REM) sleep, but researchers don't yet know what they dream about. We can only imagine!
- Chickens chirp to their eggs - One of the sweetest things you'll ever hear is that hens chirp to their babies while they're in the eggs and the chicks chirp back! They also make around 30 different calls to communicate with each other, expressing everything from "thanks for the food!" to "there's a predator in the coop!"
- Chickens use past experiences to make decisions - Like how we've learned not to touch a hot stove or why we need to wear sunscreen, chickens use past experiences to inform their decisions. They'll remember enjoying certain foods or what brought danger to their flock and make decisions based on those experiences.
- Chickens empathise with their peers - Chickens are the epitome of empaths. Empathy is one of the most interesting things about chickens. If a peer is hurt, stressed, or even happy, other chickens will not only understand, but share those feelings.
- Chickens have great memories - They can solve puzzles by pecking at the pieces with their beaks to let their human helpers know which ones go where. Chickens have also been caught on tape finding treats hidden under cups.
- Chickens purr like cats! - When a chicken is happy, cosy, and safe, they will close their eyes and purr softly. You'll just have to trust us on this one.

HISTORY:

Our chickens arrived straight to us from Watson's Family Produce. This locally run farm was founded in 2016 when Matt and Hayley decided they wanted a different life for their children. Providing top quality food to other families as well, was an added bonus - now it's become the driving force for each and every day.