

# Medical Room in my Barn?

by Dolores Gardner

A medical room in my barn, you say? Yes, I know it may sound odd, but the benefits of having a special place to treat your camelids far outweigh the cost of supplies and initial time to organize it. In an ideal world this room would be in the middle of the barn, easily accessible to both the owner and the animal in need of treatment. I have personally seen treatment rooms on back porches, in sunrooms, in garages and in one instance in the bedroom of the house. Although I find the bedroom a little extreme, the point is that if you don't live in the ideal world, there are other options available to you. You do need a safe, clean environment for your animal and a convenient area for you and your veterinarian.

Basic essentials in your medical/treatment room should include electricity with even, sufficient lighting, a heat source for cold weather, ventilation for hot weather and odors, air movement for hot weather, a water source with a utility sink and hot water. An on-demand water heater is ideal for this situation. It is inexpensive and unobtrusive as there is no holding tank. Of course, you are limited only by your imagination as to other amenities you may want to include. The actual lay out or design of the room should be dictated by the work being done there. For example, I saw a very nice medical room at a farm, but the scales were directly in line of the door. This is great for llamas to walk in and be weighed; it is not great for the animal that staggers in and has to be led around the scales. Do keep in mind a floor with drainage so it can be hosed for cleaning.

When designing your room, remember you need to be organized

and clean. You can accomplish this several ways—with shelves, cabinets, counters and pegboard. You may use the pegboard to hang equipment for easy identification and quick access and store items in the shelves and cabinets. You should meet with your veterinarian and the two of you (and your manager if you have one) can customize your room. Some of what you have will be dictated by how comfortable you are doing specific kinds of procedures. You and your veterinarian will determine some things as basic need items.



I have found stacked closed bins on rollers work better for me than anything. The items in the bins stay clean and I can move them when needed. One set of bins holds items used on a regular basis. The other set holds those items not used often but needed nevertheless. Here is how they are organized:

## **BIN SET I - THE ESSENTIALS**

1. Thermometer - digital or mercury. Tympanic thermometers do not work. Always have a spare, as one

sometimes cannot be found or is not working when you need it.

2. Stethoscope - Used to listen to heart sounds and lung sounds and to count the rate of both.

3. Heavy-duty bandage scissors - These are the kind you see on paramedics and others these days. Also a good idea to have two pairs of these.

4. Forceps or hemostats - These will reach into small places, hold tiny objects and clamp a bleeding umbilical cord (rare, but this does happen).

5. Gauze sponges - Twice as many as you think you need. Keep a minimum of 10 packages of 4X4's (two to a pack). These can be purchased in bulk packages, similar to those used in surgery by humans, but they are much harder to keep clean (forget sterile). 2X2's are handy for small cuts, etc.

6. Roll gauze - 2 inch and 4 inch, one for babies, one for adults

7. Tape - any kind that can be torn so that you don't have to stop and cut it. Silk tape and plastic tape work well. Paper and old-fashioned adhesive tape do not.

8. Betadine

9. Betadine solution

10. Triple antibiotic ointment

11. Vet wrap - 2 inch and 4 inch. This is indispensable in my bin.

12. Syringes and needles - Your veterinarian can help you choose sizes.

13. Latex gloves

14. Topical wound spray

15. Styptic powder

16. Saline solution/sterile water - Both can be used for wound irrigation, although saline solution is better (my opinion only).

17. Scrub brushes - There are wonderful for cleaning NEW wounds and human hands.

18. K-Y jelly or other water based lubricant

19. Vaseline or other petroleum-based lubricant

20. Pen light or small flash light

21. Paper towels



Some of you might want to include cotton, alcohol and peroxide in this essential list. I have never used cotton and am not likely to start anytime soon. I see no purpose for it. I do not use alcohol on the skin to sanitize, as alcohol must stay in contact with the surface for ten minutes to kill anything. Soap, water and friction work better than anything. I do not use peroxide in a wound as it macerates new cell buds in a healing wound. Again, cleaning a wound with saline works better; it is just not as dramatic as all that bubbling with peroxide.

## **BIN II - NEEDED, BUT HOPEFULLY NOT OFTEN**

1. Nail clippers

2. Stomach tubing gear - Most folks use a red rubber catheter with a syringe attached. I use a disposable enema bag. I have found this as effective and I cannot “lose” the tubing. It won’t slip off the syringe and be swallowed (also rare, but has happened).

3. Shears - Shearing allows better visualization of a wound or FLT (Funny Looking Thing).

4. Mineral oil enemas - Handy for a cria that has not passed the meconium stool.

5. Towels

6. Twin size electric blanket - I use this as an alternative to towels and a heating pad and there is no likelihood of any kind of burn as there is with a heating pad.

7. Hairdryer

8. Baby bottle with adapted nipple

9. Obstetrical sleeves (gloves, the really long kind) and other items you and your veterinarian determine are needed in an obstetrical emergency. Again, this depends on you and your comfort level in giving care.



10. Electrolytes - Powder form is easy to store. I also keep a bottle of pedialyte on hand. Sometimes it expires before I use it; sometimes it doesn’t. Newborn crias are born hypothermic and hypoglycemic. If they are weak and you can get the body temperature up to 98 or above, tubing with pedialyte will raise the sugar, give them electrolytes and sometimes this is all you need to do.

## **GENERAL ITEMS IN THE ROOM**

1. Extension cord

2. Scales - cria and other

3. Refrigerator

4. Hand soap

5. Bleach - This simple product will kill almost anything, including HIV. Use it to disinfect the area after each procedure. It won’t hurt anything to use it when a routine cleaning is performed.

I am sure there are some items that some other breeders find essential that are not on this list. In the beginning, I had every size of vet wrap and gauze and every kind of tape. I have found some not to be as useful as others.

You should have a close relationship with your veterinarian. If there are items you have and you do not know how to use them, (s) he can teach you. Before I moved to deep East Texas and no camelid veterinarian within 100 miles, I apprenticed myself to my veterinarian for six months. I earned no wage, but what I did learn was how to properly care for my llamas, even in an emergency. Some people do not respond well in emergencies, but knowing you have

what you need, will help you maintain a sense of control.

Notice that I have not talked about the medicines you need to stock in your treatment/medical room. You and your veterinarian should decide, based on your confidence in treating and your level of expertise. Also, there are considerations in what vaccinations to give based on your geographical area. (S)he is the most knowledgeable person to decide what to give and when to give it.

Our ultimate goal is to learn how to care for our camelids in the proper manner. After all, they enrich our lives and in turn, we need to see that their lives are healthy. Let us help them keep the dignity innate in their being.



*About the author: Unusual circumstances led to Dolores Gardner learning about the medical care of llamas. When she bought her first one in 1986, there were no veterinarians in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex who would take care of this exotic creature. For the next six years she and a physician friend researched, learned and developed protocols for both their herds.*

*Dolores has an extensive background in nursing with 36 years experience. Working for several years in a large teaching facility expanded her knowledge base so that not much in medicine intimidates her. She is comfortable performing many procedures on llamas and giving others advice, if they ask. Her approach to care is based on her research as well as the extensive research of others. She has also found care in llamas is very similar to care in humans.*

*Before relocation to deep East Texas, she apprenticed to a camelid veterinarian. She knew she was moving to an area where there was*

*no llama-knowledgeable veterinarian within 100 miles. She was concerned about emergencies that might arise before she established a relationship with a veterinarian. This six-month apprenticeship aided her in a dystocia emergency when her veterinarian could not come for two hours.*

*She is frequently called for advice from other llama owners and non-llama veterinarians.*