

PEARSON PONDS RANCH REVISITED

WHEN SERVED a LEMON, MAKE LEMONADE!

By Kathy Peterson

Pearson Pond Ranch (PPR) in Ellijay, Georgia, faced off and stood down a barrage of deadly parasites almost 18 months ago. Even while they were in the midst of treating and trying to save 20 llamas that were severely affected, the Pearsons openly discussed their ordeal and offered assistance and comfort to other camelid owners who were experiencing similar problems.

Tracy recalls that one veterinarian had once described the Pearson Pond Ranch llamas as a “virgin herd,” because they were virtually parasite free. The downside, however, was that “virgin” translated into “no resistance.” This lack of resistance came to the forefront when Jack and Tracy Pearson brought newly-purchased llamas onto their farm. As Tracy puts it, “We purchased the haemonchus parasite for a tidy price.”

As time and experience revealed, the root of the problem was fatty liver disease, which had been brought on from stress caused by the haemonchus parasite. When the problem finally was under control, the Pearsons had saved 11 of the 20 severely affected llamas. “We could have saved many more, had we known what we know today,” says Tracy. “With the help of veterinarians, through experimentation and resolve and sometimes simply by following a gut feeling, we developed a treatment plan that worked for us. Today we understand haemonchus is not just a Southern parasite. We have calls from all over the U. S. from farms that have or have had a significant parasite problem. We hope that, by sharing our experiences, others will find a few nuggets of information that will be helpful.”

The program used at Pearson Pond Ranch follows. *Please first read the disclaimer below:*

Pearson Pond Ranch is happy to share information concerning treatment methods, herd management and hus-

bandry that have worked for them; however, they are not recommending others follow their practices. Circumstances and conditions vary, and you should seek veterinarian advice and assistance to address your specific needs.

The Key: When it’s wet, parasites bloom!

- Haemonchus appears WHEN IT’S WET! Rain or dew allow parasites to float to the tops of the grass blades, where the animals nibble them.

- Combination of uncommon rain and tropical conditions not normally experienced caused the problem.

- Haemonchus preys on animals that are under stress.

- Birthing season is a particularly susceptible time. Haemonchus sheds during the two months before and two months after an animal gives birth.

- Rainy season – spring & fall – check more frequently. Every animal: Do hands-on check, do fecal check (fecal float) using a glove (name of llama on glove), weigh on scale, check FEMACHA with a FEMACHA chart (for goats).

{FEMACHA explained: This visual examination of the color of the inside of the lower eyelid can tell if – or how badly – an animal is suffering from bloodsucking stomach parasites, which make the animal anemic. The paler the color of the lower eyelid, the more serious the situation. Dark pink indicates the animal has few or no parasites; an almost white color is the warning sign of very severe anemia, as the worms in the stomach are draining the animal of its blood – up to ½ cup a day.}

Triggers

- Shows, sales, change of location, weather, travel, parasites and herd politics: Any of these can cause an animal to become compromised.

- A compromised liver can kill an animal before parasites do.

- PPR llamas died from fatty liver created by stress from parasites – not from the parasites themselves.

- *Eimeria macusaniensis* (E-mac) attacks protein and the immune system; strongyles cause anemia.

- Stress created by these can cause fatty liver disease and the beginning of a downward spiral.

- Fatty liver disease develops.

- Without timely intervention, liver stops functioning.

- Pull blood and check protein and liver enzyme level, if you suspect any kind of problem.

Pay Attention!

Slow down. Pay attention to the personality and behavior of each animal.

- Normally aloof, but suddenly “asks” for a kiss or becomes more approachable. We may think it’s a kiss, when it may actually be a request: “Something is wrong, and I need help.”

- Laid back personality gives even less signs because the animal’s natural demeanor is stoic.

- Any changes in behavior are important.

- Radical weight loss (5 - 10# in a week)

- Unsteady, wobbly, side stagger when walking

- Lying around more than usual

- Has short bursts of energy, but not stamina.

- Fat loss in body in a matter of a few days: What was firm is now loose, spongy skin.

- With your hands, check teat area, top of back, hips, along the breast bone between the front legs.

The Key for PPR: Isolated the Problem

- Closed the farm: No animals in or out until the problem was under complete control.

- Shut down all five barns and allowed no movement of animals from one barn to another.

- Determined two barns had the problem.

Prevented the problem from spreading

- Applied Clorox spray to tires of all farm equipment as it left each pasture.
- Dipped shoes in pan of Clorox water when leaving each pasture or barn.

Became a hawk instead of a dove.

- Had the problem under control within three months. Since then fecals on 200+ animals have revealed 1, 2 or 3 parasites in 4 out of every 100 animals.

- Doesn't mean there are no parasites, because parasites are intermittent shedders.

- Key is to keep checking under the microscope.

Treatment (works about 50% of the time, if fatty liver slide is caught in time)

1. Quest Paste

- Used Quest paste (for horses) to control it.

- Dewormed all animals according to their weights.

- No idea if animals would live – but they lived and “sang!”

- Dewormed again in 14 days with Quest paste.

Note: Used Quest paste initially and rarely have used it since.

2. Red Cell for horses

- Used to treat anemia caused by blood-sucking parasites.

- Gave orally five days in a row at 7cc/100#.

Skip five days; then repeat.

3. Vitamin B Complex injections for stress & appetite

- Animals absorb what they need and through urine throw off what they don't need.

IM 2X/week for at least four weeks, 4-6 cc dosage.

4. Master Blaster Mega Symbiotic paste (daily)

5. Animals that won't eat

- Gave Fibervive (timothy hay base with vitamins, minerals & dehydrated mineral oil) to keep organs functioning. Fibervive provides minimal calories, but is a stop-gap to get the animals eating again.

- Mix 1 part Fibervive and 3-4 parts water.

- One pint at least 4X/day using the doser available with Fibervive.

- Animals may have gas and cramping, because bodies are trying to shut down.

- Give 1cc Banamine per 100# IM for relief of pain from cramping associated with gas.

- If animal is extremely stressed, to prevent ulcers give gastrogurad in conjunction with Banamine.

If animal is off fluids, tube 1 quart/3X/day of unsweetened electrolytes (parasites thrive on sugar). Prefer pedalyte over animal electrolytes.

6. Eating is the secret to overcoming fatty liver.

Once the animal is able to eat, offer free choice feed (alfalfa hay, alfalfa pellets, free choice feed mix, etc. – anything you can get them to eat and as much as they will eat).

Maintenance (after the problem is under control)

1. Limit pasture grazing on wet pastures.

- a. Stay in large paddock areas (Dirt is good!)

- b. Allowed into pasture after dew has dried.

2. Remove pasture and paddock area beans every day.

- a. Lime potty areas in fields throughout the year.

- b. In poop spots after cleanup: During rainy season, burn area with propane torch & douse with water after burn. This minimizes walk-through contamination.

- c. Apply Clorox solution (1 part Clorox to 5 parts water) in paddock areas where beans have been removed.

3. If fecal analysis indicates deworming is necessary, after deworming keep animals in paddock area for 24-30 hours, allowing dead parasites to be deposited there instead of in the pasture.

4. Keep feeding containers off the ground & contained in a dry paddock.

5. Constant monitoring & control are the keys. Breed the animals who best tolerate/resist parasites.

6. Pearson Pond Ranch Deworming schedule:

- a. Deworm everyone in January &

June after rainy seasons. (When or if you deworm will depend upon the climate in the area where you live.)

- b. Deworm only according to what you see under the microscope.

- c. Check with your vet.

Pearson Pond's Nutritional Program: Nutrition is Everything!

1. Custom Milling Golden Blend Llama & Alpaca Supplement

- a. Animals are satisfied after eating.

2. Masterplan Minerals (a complete & balanced blend for llamas & alpacas developed under the direction of Pearson Pond Llamas).

- a. Formulated specifically for llamas & alpacas. Supports the llamas nutritionally, which aids them in building their own immune systems.

- b. Lab developed & veterinarian approved.

- c. Offered free choice in small amounts to maintain freshness & top dress the feed.

- d. Animals eat only the amount they need when they need it.

3. Master Blaster Mega Symbiotic with 10X the micro-organisms of other brands

- a. Use during stressful conditions such as showing, transferring and for any animal on antibiotics.

4. Hay: Coastal Bermuda horse grade. (Test hay for its nutritional value.)

How do you know the program is working? You will see it in the animals' fiber, in their growth and in their overall vitality.

Tracy's final thoughts: "There's no shame in having parasites. The shame comes only if we don't recognize there's a problem and deal with it. I now "live" with a microscope. It's my friend and, although they don't realize it, it's our llamas' friend too. Regrettably, there is no silver bullet, but there is hope. The biggest and most costly mistake any of us can make is to be so arrogant as to think, 'It can't happen to me.'"

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