

Overview

- **Occurs between January – May** (late summer – autumn) when it is warm, moist and there is plenty of dead leaf matter on pasture for fungus to grow on.
- The damaged liver is unable to remove toxins from the blood. These toxins react with sunlight in the un-pigmented white skin and the areas not covered by fleece in alpacas.
- Dark coloured animals do not show signs of peeling skin, but they can still suffer serious liver damage.
- **Alpacas are more susceptible** to the toxin than other species, so ANY spore count is considered dangerous
- **Prevention** is key

Symptoms

- Irritation and restlessness
- Skin swelling, crusting and oozing (often around nose and ear margins)
- Decreased production / growth rates
- Abortion
- Death

The signs can present as any of the above but the most common clinical sign seen is sudden death.

Alpaca are reasonably stoic animals and do not often show the subtle early signs that other species do until the liver damage is very severe.



ALPACAS: A GUIDE TO Facial Eczema

Management/ Prevention/ Treatment

- **Assess risk factors** for fungal growth (warm weather, high humidity)
- **Regular spore counts** of pasture being grazed and / or check local spore count reporting
- **Fungal spray of pasture** – does not remove existing spores so will only work BEFORE spore count rises
- **Good pasture management**
 - Minimise build-up of dead litter for fungal growth
 - Kikuyu, chicory, plantain and red clover are safer than ryegrass
- **Supplement with ZINC** (the most critical component)
 - Alpacas require 2g elemental zinc / 100kg bodyweight daily (start supplementation about 3 weeks before the danger period and carry out for approximately 100 days)
 - **DO NOT use Zinc oral boluses** (these are potentially toxic)
 - **Zinc oxide is the best form**
Pre-made pellets containing zinc are available to feed. Powder form can be added to feed (mixing with molasses will help to mask the bitter taste)

- **Zinc sulphate – NOT useful** adding to water troughs. Alpacas do not drink enough water to consume a useful dose. Makes water bitter so may reduce their water intake further.

NOTE:

- Too much zinc can lead to pancreatic disease and copper deficiency
- Do not use any zinc products differently to recommendations (eg: drenching zinc sulphate slurry directly down the throat) as will more than likely kill the animal than prevent Facial Eczema.

Treatment

Facial eczema causes permanent liver damage that can heal to a certain degree, but never back to normal.

Nursing for Alpacas with mild symptoms:

- Low protein feed
- Shade (complete darkness is best)
- Filta-bac ointment on affected areas

When to call us

When clinical signs are showing.

