

Overview

Rickets is a syndrome caused by Vitamin D deficiency in growing alpacas.

During winter, blood levels may drop to as little as one-sixth of their summer levels.

Vitamin D helps the uptake of calcium from the diet and kidneys and helps to mineralise bones. Therefore when Vitamin D drops, bone begins to thin and disease soon ensues.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary markedly:

- Shifting leg lameness, bunny-hopping gait, reluctance to move
- Enlarged joints
- Limb deformities
- Ill thrift, weight loss, anaemia
- Grazing whilst recumbent

Management/ Prevention/ Treatment

Prevention

- Supplement Alpacas with Hideject (injectable A, D E, given under skin)
- Give 2 injections over winter
- Inject dams 4 - 6 weeks from unpacking

Hideject dosage	
Age	Dose
8 week old	0.25ml
6 month old	0.5ml
Adult	1ml

Vitamin D can be toxic in high doses, and is a **prescription only product**.



ALPACAS: A GUIDE TO Rickets

Treatment

- Approach with caution - excessive Vitamin D can be toxic
- Vet involvement required
- Any treatment is best attempted while the animal is still able to move, not fully
- In severe cases, euthanasia is the only option

Who is at high risk?

- Developing foetuses, especially if the third trimester coincides with winter
- Autumn-born cria; with little opportunity to build up good levels of Vitamin D heading into the winter months
- Thicker fleeced, or black alpaca – higher levels of melanin in the skin prevents the absorption of UV
- Growing animals under 3 years old.

When to call us

- Swelling and pain in the joints, particularly the carpus (knee)
- Alpacas may show signs of pain when touched, especially along the spine or in the limbs
- Severely affected animals may be less interested in eating and begin to lose weight.



*Updated Nov 25