

Educational Plan

Animal Control and Animal Welfare Authorities

prepared by the National Lama Intervention & Rescue Coordination Council (IRC Council)

Animal control and animal welfare authorities are sometimes called upon to remove llamas and alpacas from situations where their welfare is compromised or to capture loose camelids whose presence has become a traffic hazard. Most of these authorities have little or no experience assessing “at risk” situations involving llamas or alpacas, nor do they have experience catching, handling and transporting camelids. This educational plan, along with the resource materials suggested, is designed to help camelid organizations close that gap by suggesting ways they can provide educational opportunities for the animal control officials in their states.

Resource Materials

Catching and Handling Llamas and Alpacas. Prepared by the IRC Council, this fact sheet provides basic tips on the safe catching and handling of camelids, emphasizing how they are different from other livestock.

IRC Council: National Camelid Welfare Group Stresses Education. This fact sheet spells out the IRC Council’s purpose and goals and provides contact information for the council’s regional coordinators.

Minimum Standards of Care for Llamas and Alpacas. Designed for animal control officers investigating camelid care situations, this fact sheet defines elements necessary for camelid survival and humane treatment.

Recommended Practices in Caring for Llamas & Alpacas. The purpose of this brochure is to provide basic and important information on how to create a healthy and safe living environment for llamas and alpacas.

PowerPoint Presentation on Minimum Standards and Recommended Practices. This presentation is a good way to visually present camelid care information at workshops, conferences or other educational gatherings.

Local Llama and Alpaca Owner Contacts. Camelid organizations should provide animal control officials in their state or region with several key camelid contacts who can provide advice or coordinate help from willing members or other llama and alpaca owners when needed.

All of these materials (except the local contact lists) will be available at www.icinfo.org (the web site for the International Camelid Institute). Just click on Resources, then Animal Rescue, then Educational Plan for Animal Control. You will then be able to click on individual documents as well as the Camelid Standards of Care title that will take you to the three pieces involving camelid care and practices (the “recommended practices” piece is set up for either single-page or duplex printing). All of the material was produced with the intent of being copied and distributed wherever needed. It is suggested that camelid organizations include a copy of each of the fact sheets and brochures in a simple three-ring binder or folder to present to each animal control or animal welfare office in their area. Use the PowerPoint presentation when designing a workshop or clinic for these same groups.

Identify Your Audience

Animal control authorities operate differently in various parts of the country. They have different titles and different responsibilities. Each camelid organization needs to identify what these officials are called in their own particular state or region, as well as how to reach them. Sometimes their titles even differ from county to county within the same state. Some of the possibilities include animal control, animal welfare, humane societies, animal health, county sheriffs and town constables. Some are public officials (city, township, county, state) while others are private contractors.

Determine How to Reach Them

Many animal control personnel have regularly scheduled conferences or workshops that may provide llama and alpaca organizations with an opportunity to present a session on camelid care and handling. Even a one-hour class using the above PowerPoint presentation and supplemental handouts would go a long way in introducing officials to specific care problems and handling techniques involved with llamas and alpacas. Camelids usually make up little, if any, of the animals most authorities deal with on a regular basis. Though we don't want to overwhelm them with more information than they will read or assimilate, we have an obligation to try and help them understand how camelids are different from other livestock they deal with and why they usually require a different approach.

A camelid organization could also offer a special half-day or daylong training clinic for animal control personnel in various locations throughout the state. Besides the PowerPoint presentation and handouts, it would be ideal to offer some hands-on training opportunities so that animal control authorities have the opportunity to practice catching and handling techniques as well as learn how to do basic body scoring and make other "at risk" assessments. If your camelid organization holds a conference or other educational event on a regular basis, you might consider inviting animal control officials to attend at no charge.

Other Suggestions and Considerations

Some animal control authorities will be more receptive than others to your attempts to provide training opportunities. In some cases it may be more effective to work on a county by county basis where relationships already have been established between key camelid owners and their local animal control. Take advantage of those good working relationships to promote further education regarding llamas and alpacas. Enlist the help of supportive animal control and animal welfare officials in making contacts with those in other counties or areas of the state. A big first step is simply letting animal control authorities know who they can contact for help or advice when they are faced with a rescue or intervention situation involving llamas or alpacas.

In other areas it may be advantageous to contact an office or department at the state or regional level for help with animal control contacts and opportunities to provide them with education on llamas and alpacas. State officials may be willing to have you provide camelid information or articles for their newsletters or other communication vehicles or list upcoming llama and alpaca training sessions in the calendars of events for their employees. Again, provide these officials with a folder of camelid resource materials, as well as someone to contact if they need additional information or help.

To get an educational program for animal control and welfare officials started in your area, it would be good to have a subgroup of several interested members of your organization work together to determine: the need for such a program in your state (are some counties or areas in more need than others), what opportunities already exist for tapping into with camelid information (animal control conferences or workshops) and what other educational opportunities could be created (a series of hands-on training clinics or classes).

It's easy to become overwhelmed with the prospect of trying to reach every animal control and animal welfare agent in the country with information on camelids, but just as we break training sessions for our llamas and alpacas into smaller more manageable chunks, that's what we need to do with our educational efforts. We all need to do what we can where we are. If we in the camelid community work together and are consistent in the information we provide and the helpful attitude we display to animal control authorities at every level, they will see us as part of the same team. And, indeed, we are—we all simply want to ensure the safety and well-being of these animals.

