

## What Will It Cost Me To Start My Own Alpaca Farm?

When starting your farm with the intention of raising alpacas to sell, or sell stud services, you are starting a business. It will pay in the long run to go about it in the most professional way possible. You need to have a clear, realistic picture of the cost of starting your farm and maintaining it through the first year. The federal government views alpacas as livestock so you will qualify for many tax advantages. Finding a good agricultural accountant who can advise you of those advantages, and help you set up your bookkeeping is a must. Next determine where you want to be with your business in a year, five years, and write up a business plan to help you stay on track. Remember if you aim at nothing you will hit it.

Your start-up costs are much more than just the purchase of your animals. If you have land and a barn that is adaptable for alpacas that is a huge step! If you do not, then plan on building a barn and/or shelters for your animals against the elements, for hay, and feed storage. You will also need plumbed in water and electric, proper fencing (a four or five foot no climb is recommended), stock trailer and a truck to pull it. Some of the other needs are hay feeders, water buckets or automatic waterers, an alpaca scale, dung tools, wheel barrows, feed bowls, halters and leads, medical supplies, a supply of good grass hay, alpaca chow, and mineral supplement. Depending on where you live in the country you may need fans or a swamp cooler for the summer months. Depending on the size of your farm you may need a tractor or a gator to manage loading of hay and for other heavy work. You will need to find a veterinarian and expect to have some veterinary expense each year. Most farms these days have their records on a computer. You may want to have a software program to manage your animal's medical and breeding records, an accounting program, picture program that allows you to create your own advertisements, printers, a fax machine, and a camera. At some point in the first year of business

you will want to design your business cards, brochures, and a web site. Can you manage your own web site or do you need the help of an expert? If you plan to show, you may want to have a banner and a display to promote your farm. If you go to the shows you will want to join AOBA and possibly the affiliate in your area. You will need to join The Alpaca Registry and plan to register each new baby born on your farm.

Some other expenses you can expect to have will be education, travel expense, insurance, advertising, and shearing your alpacas annually.

Of course the fun purchase is the alpacas themselves. Remember they will be the foundation of your business. Buy quality! You are better off to buy two good pregnant females to start with than four mediocre animals. There are lots of wonderful males out there to breed your girls to through the first couple of years. Do some outside breeding rather than buying a male. Pick the bloodlines that will further your business and put you on track for your business plan. Do your research and go into the alpaca industry with good planning and a vision for the future of your farm.

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