

Policy Statement Concerning Unnecessary Bottle Feeding of Newborn Camelids

While there are no doubt understandable indications for bottle-feeding neonatal camelids (llamas and alpacas), human contact during this procedure should be kept to a minimum to avoid undesirable consequences.

The practice of removing newborn camelids from their mothers and unnecessary bottle feeding can lead to detrimental behaviors in the animal. This can result in over socialization of the young animal to humans which may become a severe problem when the animal reaches sexual maturity. Male camelids raised in this way will often become aggressive toward humans. They can be very dangerous in that they attempt fighting and breeding behavior as well as direct social behavior such as spitting toward humans. This behavior has been described as Berserk Male Syndrome/Aberrant Behavior Syndrome. Male animals that display this behavior are frequently euthanized due to the safety risk they pose. Affected animals do not readily regress from this undesirable behavior even if castrated. Females are not quite as aggressive but may be more prone to aggressive behaviors. In addition to the risk to human safety, the animals themselves do not socialize well and may become aggressive towards other camelids.

The American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners strongly recommends against unnecessary bottle-feeding of young camelids. In situations where bottle rearing of young camelids cannot be avoided, owners are encouraged to work with their local veterinarian to develop plans to reduce direct contact during feedings.

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