

## **Policy Statement Concerning Unnecessary Bottle Feeding of Newborn Camelids**

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

The practice of taking newborn South American camelids from their mothers and placing them on bottles to make them more tractable in a contact or petting zoo venue is unnecessary and detrimental to the animal. This generally results in over socialization of the young animal to humans which predictably become a severe problem when the animal reaches sexual maturity. Male camelids raised in this way will become aggressive toward humans and 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 and male animals that display this behavior are frequently humanely euthanized. Affected animals do not readily regress from this undesirable behavior even if castrated. Females are not quite as aggressive, but will spit and on occasion strike or kick. In addition to the risk to human health that they cause, the animals themselves do not socialize well with other South American camelids.

The American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners strongly recommends against unnecessary bottle-feeding of young camelids. Further information on unnecessary bottle-feeding of camelids can be obtained from AASRP.

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