

# Llamas

## Introduction

Llamas are woolly, gentle animals that come from south America and are sometimes described as 'unusual' or 'exotic' pets. Llamas like Alpacas are types of 'camelids'.

Llamas are very athletic and like to run hence a minimum of 1Ha is required. Llamas are herding animals and are most happy when in the company of other animals. There are many uses for Llamas such as for wool, meat, pets and in the tourist industry.

Llamas have also been used as guard animals for sheep, goats and small horses. Llamas have a life expectancy of approximately 15-25 years. Breeding capability is reached by 16-24 months and females will breed throughout their life. The gestation or pregnancy period is about 11 months.

## The Market

Llamas are not farmed commercially in Europe for their meat. They are commercially viable for their many 'living' qualities. Llamas are imported to Ireland via the UK.

There are a number of potential markets for llamas in Ireland.

- Wool production
- As pets
- Sheep guards
- Creating an on-farm open attraction

As numbers are so low in Ireland, the llama industry currently remains a breeder's market. Since the increase in numbers will be slow, the breeding phase can be expected to continue for some time. Each potential producer must source a market, otherwise financial failure is inevitable.



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*This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.*

*All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website*  
**www.teagasc.ie**

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

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## Requirements

### *Supply*

The nearest supply of Llamas to Ireland is the UK. Contact: Roseland Llamas, Stockleigh Pomeroy, Devon, England EX17 4AY, tel: 01363 866056. <http://llamas.co.uk/>

### *Land*

Llamas are quite easy to handle and don't require any special fencing or handling facilities. Barbed wire should be avoided. One hectare will support 10 llamas.

### *Diet*

Llamas are browsers and eat mainly grass, supplemented by hay if needed. A coarse mix such as for ponies or goats can be given as a treat and supplement. They also enjoy vegetables and can be given carrot and apple peel, cabbage leaves and so on. As a native to the harsh mountain country in South America they are adapted to eating poor quality food.

### *Breeding*

Llamas can give birth throughout the year. Llamas mostly calve on their own without need of assistance. Gestation is 11 months, and females usually have a calf, 'cria', each year of their lives from 18 months of age. Males become fertile usually rather later, around 24 months.

### *Regulations*

Importation of these animals is controlled by the Department of Agriculture, Live Trade Section - Tel: (01) 607 2862.

## Establishment Costs and Profit Margins

Llamas don't require any special fences or handling facilities so the only major capital outlay is the breeding stock. The cost of purchasing a Llama is approximately €1000.

Producing exotic animals still in the breeding phase of an industry can be very profitable but the market is fickle. There is no ready market. Each potential producer must source a market, otherwise financial failure is inevitable.

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