



ALPA COMPASS

-QUICK STARTER GUIDE-



WELCOME TO ALPACOMPASS

You may recognise this.

You see an alpaca somewhere. You look at it and before you know it, you are completely captivated.

Those big, curious eyes.

That soft, fluffy fleece.

That calm, almost stubborn character.

And suddenly you think: I want this too.

A few alpacas in your pasture. Enjoying these remarkable animals outdoors.

But before you take that step, there is one thing you should know:

A GOOD START MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

In my work with alpacas, I regularly meet people who began their journey full of enthusiasm, only to discover that there were things they wished they had known beforehand.

For example:

- How much space alpacas really need
- How important the right herd composition is
- Why a “cheap” alpaca can turn out to be the most expensive choice

That is exactly why I created this Quick Starter Guide: to help you explore, calmly and thoroughly, whether alpacas are right for you—and how to make the right choices when you decide to begin.

Along the way, you will be guided by Nafisa.

Nafisa is the alpaca guide of Alpacompass. She will introduce herself later in this guide. Wherever you encounter her, in this guide or on our socials, her compass points you in the right direction. Sometimes she offers a tip, sometimes a warning, and sometimes an insight you may not yet have considered.

So whenever you see Nafisa, you know you have found a piece of extra alpaca wisdom.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	1
Let me introduce myself... I am Nafisa!	4
AlpaCompass	5
• Mission and Vision	
• AlpaFacts	
Chapter 1 I want an Alpaca	7
• Space and Facilities	
• Time	
• Costs	
Chapter 2 The biggest Beginner Mistakes	9
• Impulse Purchase	
• Cheap becomes Expensive	
Chapter 3 Putting your first Herd Together	10
• Hobbykeeper or Breeder	
• How many Alpacas will you keep?	
• Herd Composition	
• Housing	
Chapter 4 Where to buy Alpacas	13
• What do you look out for?	
Chapter 5 Your first year with Alpacas	15
• Feeding: keep it Simple	
• Care: Observing is key	
• When should you act	
• Shearing	
• Veterinarian	
• A good Start is half the Battle	
Want to know more?	18

LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF ...



Hi, I'm Nafisa.

I am the alpaca guide of Alpacompass.

Wherever you see me, I will help you with tips, warnings, and useful insights about keeping alpacas.

A good start really does make all the difference.

If you see me, my compass is pointing you in the right direction.

... I'M NAFISA

ALPACOMPASS

- MISSION AND VISION -

AlpaCompass helps people realise their dream of keeping alpacas in a responsible and well-prepared way. By providing knowledge, guidance, and honest information, we make future alpaca owners aware of the needs of these remarkable animals and the choices that come with them.

This enables them to make decisions that suit their wishes, possibilities, and circumstances, and helps prevent mistakes that can have lasting consequences for both people and alpacas.

We believe that every alpaca deserves an environment where its wellbeing comes first, and that proper preparation makes the difference between an impulsive purchase and a sustainable, fulfilling experience as an alpaca owner.

By informing, guiding, and supporting people, AlpaCompass aims to contribute to a world in which alpacas are kept with knowledge, respect, and care.

- ALPAFACTS

- ♡ *Alpacas originate from South America (the high Andes mountains)*
- ♡ *A male is called a macho or intact male; a female is called a hembra*
- ♡ *A castrated male alpaca is called a gelding*
- ♡ *A baby alpaca is called a cria or foal*
- ♡ *Alpacas are intelligent, curious, and eager to learn*
- ♡ *An alpaca is not a cuddly toy*
- ♡ *Alpacas can live up to 20 years*
- ♡ *An adult alpaca weighs between 50 and 80 kg*
- ♡ *Alpacas usually do not spit at people*
- ♡ *Alpacas are easy to keep (with proper preparation)*





CHAPTER 1

- I WANT AN ALPACA -

You probably know the feeling. At an unexpected moment, you see an alpaca, look into its eyes, and you are immediately sold. Suddenly, you start noticing them everywhere. Alpacas grazing in nearby fields. One alpaca after another appearing on your social media feed. Alpacas showing up in your favourite TV series. Even in advertisements. Each one cuter or more mischievous than the last.

And you think: I want this too. You are completely in love.



And honestly, I understand. Those big round eyes, those pointed ears, and that cuddly appearance.

“Of course you want one of those in your garden...”

Your dream is born, and your decision is made: you are going to get an alpaca.

You have a patch of grass and a small shed where the alpaca could shelter. You see alpacas offered online for very little money, and then that one photo appears. That is the one. You want it.

You plan to stop by before and after work every day to give the alpaca some feed and attention. And the costs? They cannot be that high, just the occasional bag of pellets and a bucket of water.

You can already picture it perfectly!



CHAPTER 2

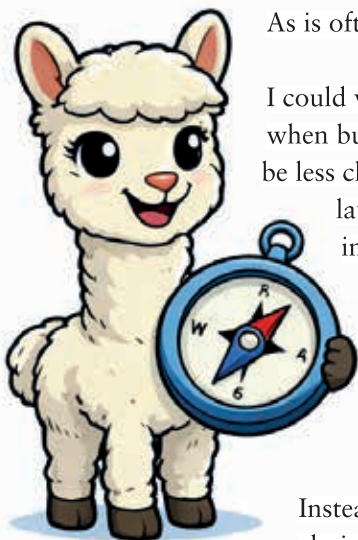
- THE BIGGEST BEGINNER MISTAKES -

This is exactly the situation I often encounter in my work as an alpaca breeder and shearer: people who, full of love and enthusiasm, impulsively bought an alpaca. Only to run into all kinds of problems. Problems that can sometimes follow them for years.

With this Quick Starter Guide, I want to help you avoid those mistakes and prepare properly for acquiring these beautiful, noble animals. The right start makes all the difference. That is why AlpaCompass exists. I want to be your compass in the world of alpacas.

The 3 biggest beginner mistakes...

- ◆ Buying that one cute, cheap alpaca on impulse...
- ◆ Discovering that the garden is actually too small...
- ◆ Choosing a “pair” (a male and a female) because a cria next year would be so lovely for the (grand)children...



As is often the case: cheap becomes expensive.

I could write an entire book about what you may encounter when buying that one cheap alpaca. The one that turns out to be less charming than it first appeared. That has grazed your lawn bare within a week, or dug holes to roll around in. That constantly moves around in stress because it is looking for companionship. Or that male who becomes so protective of his single female that he reacts aggressively when you or your children come near.

But I will not do that here.

Instead, I want to show you how to prepare calmly and make choices that suit you and your household, so you end up with alpacas that truly make you happy.

CHAPTER 3

- PUTTING YOUR FIRST HERD TOGETHER -

Before you start looking for your first alpacas, it is important to understand that an alpaca should never be kept alone. Alpacas are herd animals. If you want to start keeping alpacas, you must always acquire at least two, preferably three.

Next, determine your goal.

Do you want a few alpacas as hobby animals, simply to enjoy at home?

Do you want to use alpacas for recreational purposes, such as walks or meet-and-greets?

Or do you want to take it further and start breeding? Raising crias each year, possibly for sale or to expand your herd? Do you want to participate in shows or have the fleece processed into products?

It is important to think this through carefully in advance.

- HOBBY KEEPER OR BREEDER ? —————

- Great! A few alpacas at home, purely for enjoyment.
- Actively working with alpacas: organising walks, meet-and-greets or hosting visitors.
- Starting a breeding programme and possibly participating in shows or producing fleece-based products



HOW MANY ALPACAS WILL YOU KEEP?

As mentioned, one alpaca is not an option. The minimum is two, but with only two animals, one often becomes dominant and the other subordinate. From three alpacas onwards, you create a more stable and balanced herd.

HERD COMPOSITION

If you are keeping alpacas as companion animals, choose geldings or females. They are generally the most suitable. If cost is a factor, geldings are often the more affordable option.

I strongly advise against keeping a male and a female together as a pair. This often leads to possessive behaviour in the male and stress in the female. Even breeders keep males and females separated.

If you would like crias in the future, consider purchasing pregnant females instead. This maintains a stable group dynamic without introducing a dominant male.

Young crias are, of course, the most appealing. However, when purchasing your first animals, make sure they are not too young. Alpacas younger than six months should not form a herd on their own. They have usually just been weaned and benefit from the presence of slightly older animals. Without this, they can quickly become insecure. Always seek proper advice from a breeder.

HOUSING

Alpacas are not demanding, but they do have basic needs.

For two alpacas, you need approximately 1,000 to 1,500 m² of land. Each additional alpaca requires an extra 250 to 500 m².

They also need shelter from rain, wind, and sun. A simple field shelter or lean-to with three sides and approximately 2 m² per animal is sufficient. The most important requirement is that they can lie down in a dry place.

Fencing should consist of mesh with a minimum height of approximately 1.30 metres.



Three things to arrange in advance

- Book a shearer well in advance; they are often fully booked before the season begins.
- Find a veterinarian in your area with knowledge of alpacas
- Arrange a reliable source of feed and high-quality hay

CHAPTER 4

- WHERE TO BUY ALPACAS? -



Be well prepared and use the checklist that follows this guide.

Know what you are looking for: how much space you have, what facilities are available, how many alpacas you want, and which sex.

Visit several breeders who can advise you properly. It is valuable to be able to return to the breeder with questions after your purchase. Something that is often not possible when buying from a trader.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK OUT FOR?

Avoid alpacas with genetic defects such as loose kneecaps, blue eyes, severe dental issues, pronounced X- or O-shaped legs, or a kinked tail.

If you plan to process the fleece into products, pay attention to fleece quality, especially fineness and the absence of coarse guard hairs. White fleece can be dyed easily; darker fleece is much harder to recolour.

Always check the sex of the animal before purchase. It is not uncommon for buyers to discover later that their “female” is actually a male or gelding.

If you plan to breed, request a health certificate and, where appropriate, fertility or pregnancy guarantees.

- CHECKLIST

- No visible genetic defects; the animal is healthy.
- The alpaca matches your intended purpose.
- For breeding animals: appropriate guarantees.
- Halter-trained, vaccinated, and properly documented.
- Microchipped and registered.

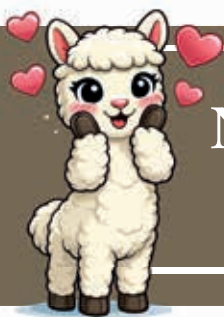


CHAPTER 5

- YOUR FIRST YEAR WITH ALPACAS -

You have taken the step. Your first alpacas are in your pasture. This is a special moment and the beginning of an adventure that will stay with you. The good news: alpacas are not demanding animals. However, they are prey animals and tend to hide signs of illness. That is why regular observation is essential.

Learn to recognise your animals when they are healthy, so you can quickly notice when something is wrong.



Nafisa
says:

An alpaca that is sick hides it. Not out of malice, but based on instinct. Get to know your animals when they are healthy. Then you will also know immediately when something is wrong!

FEEDING: KEEP IT SIMPLE

Alpacas originate from the Andes, where food is scarce and low in nutrients. Their digestive system is adapted to this.

The basics:

- Fresh, clean drinking water available at all times.
- Good-quality hay with a fine structure, year-round.
- Alpaca pellets with the correct vitamins and minerals.

NEVER feed alpacas bread, fruit, sugary products, or human food. This can seriously damage their digestive system.

CARE: OBSERVATION IS KEY

Spend time each day quietly observing your animals.

Do all alpacas come to eat, and do they get the opportunity?

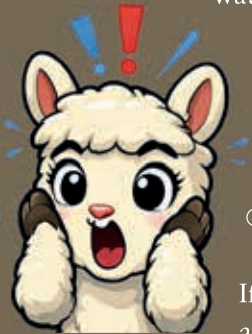
Are all animals well integrated into the group?

Is their dung normal?

Are they moving and standing properly?

- WHEN SHOULD YOU ACT? —————

Watch for warning signs:



- Teeth grinding (often a sign of pain)
- Rapid weight loss
- Excessive lying down (especially on the side)
- Pale mucous membranes
- Not eating or eating very little

If you notice any of these, contact your veterinarian immediately. Do not wait.

SCHEARING

Alpacas must be shorn every year. Without shearing, they risk overheating and skin problems.

The shearing season runs from approximately April to June (northern Hemisphere). Book your shearer well in advance.

Shearer or veterinarian

There are things that are best arranged in advance. This includes arranging a shearer for the annual shearing or finding a veterinarian who knows about alpacas.

VETERINARIAN

Not every veterinarian has experience with alpacas. Find one before you acquire your animals.

Ask other alpaca owners or your breeder for recommendations.

When in doubt, it is better to call your vet once too often than once too late.

A GOOD START IS HALF THE BATTLE

Your first year will be a learning experience. For both you and your animals. Take the time to understand their behaviour and establish a routine.

And don't forget:

*Good preparation,
consistent observation,
proper care, and timely access
to a veterinarian and shearer
form the foundation
of a healthy, happy herd.*



- WANT TO KNOW MORE?! _____



With this Quick Starter Guide, you now have a solid foundation. But in truth, this is only the beginning.

I am Chantal Versleijen, alpaca breeder, professional shearer, and founder of Alpacompass. For more than fifteen years, I have worked daily with alpacas and with people who love these remarkable animals.

I see the same questions come up time and again. About behaviour, feeding, health, shearing, breeding, and more.

That is why I created the Alpacompass Starter Guides: so you have the answers before the questions arise. Everything you need. Not only to make a good start, but to become an alpaca owner your animals will thrive with.

More depth. More clarity. More completeness.

Nafisa will guide you. As always.





Discover the AlpaCompass Starter guides at alpacompass.nl

© 2026 AlpaCompass | cTal | Chantal Versleijen-Van de Winkel
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced
or made public without prior written permission from the author.

*The information in this guide is based on practical experience and intended as general guidance.
AlpaCompass is not a veterinarian. Always consult your vet for health-related concerns.*

ALPACOMPASS -QUICK STARTER GUIDE-

Chantal Versleijen-Van de Winkel - alpaca breeder and founder Alpacompass



I AM HAPPY TO HELP YOU
FIND THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

Keeping alpacas starts with the right knowledge.

Alpacompass is your compass, from first orientation to advanced alpaca keeper.



Follow us on Instagram and Facebook: @alpacompass



start@alpacompass.nl



alpacompass.nl