

Natural Remedies for Digestive Upset in Alpacas

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Digestive upset in alpacas can happen. Sometimes it's a temporary thing and sometimes it's a chronic condition.

What are some symptoms for digestive upset?

- Poor appetite
- Picky eating habits
- Colic
- Poor body condition
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Increased salivation
- Foamy mouth
- Sitting off to one side
- Tooth grinding

The most obvious symptom for digestive upset is diarrhea. One day they have nice alpaca beans for poop and the next day they have pudding consistency or liquid diarrhea!

With over 100 alpacas here on our holistic ranch, we see lots of digestive upset cases in the rehab animals that are sent here from the vet clinics and we've had our share with our own animals too.

There are many reasons for digestive upset. Sometimes when they internalize their stress, they seem perfectly fine on the outside but emotionally they are a mess on the inside. Internalizing stress causes imbalances in the whole body and especially the digestive system. We all know that alpacas are very good at hiding "I don't feel good" conditions.

Here are some causes of digestive upset:

1. Transporting.
2. Adjusting to a new place to live.
3. Being at a livestock show.
4. Breeding time at home or at another ranch.
5. Changes in the pecking order.
6. Diet changed too quickly.
7. Being confined to a small pasture with no room to move.
8. Change in grain.
9. Feeding too much grain & not enough roughage.
10. Extremes in heat or cold weather..
11. Changing pastures.
12. Injuries
13. Illness
14. Long term dosage of antibiotics & other drugs.
15. Parasite load.
16. Weaning time.
17. Feeding different hay.

One thing we like to do is send some hay and grain when we have an animal go to another ranch or farm. And we usually ask the same when new animals are coming here. This helps their digestive system adjust gradually to a change in their diet as the new grain and hay are added at feeding time. This is a great way to prevent some possible digestive upset issues.

Most of the causes I've mentioned refer to older crias, weanlings and adult alpacas. When dealing with a young cria that has diarrhea, you need to really pay attention and act quickly since things can go downhill fast, especially if they are only a few days old to a few weeks old.

So, if I do have a young cria with diarrhea what do I do?

I take their temperature first. I make sure they aren't dehydrated. Check the skin on the inside of the back leg. If you pull the skin out gently and it stays and doesn't relax back – then they are probably dehydrated & need some fluids. You may want to consult with your veterinarian at this point, especially if they have a fever.

Diarrhea in a 2 day old cria -

Veterinarian's recommendation:

- Excenel (antibiotic injection – adjust dosage to size of cria)
- Children's Immodium (adjust dose to size of cria)
- One Children's Lactaid pill.

(I have never tried this but I've heard it works good.)

*Kaopectate, Pepto-Bismol & SMZ-TMP are other recommendations depending on what is causing the diarrhea. Consult with your veterinarian for dosages.

A Natural Remedy for diarrhea in a cria:

The natural remedy that I like and have had good results with is Soothe-My-Tummy powder. If the cria is running a fever I would consult with my veterinarian. If not running a fever, I mix the Soothe-My-Tummy powder with water or Pedialyte and give orally. If the diarrhea doesn't clear up within 24 hours, I check with my veterinarian for additional diagnosis.

Note: Always consult with your veterinarian when you have a sick animal. This article and the products mentioned are not intended to replace the advice of your veterinarian and are not intended to diagnose, treat or cure any animal. We have found that the products that are mentioned in this article have worked for us in caring for alpacas and they complement the veterinarian's care. The safe and proper use of any natural or holistic product or even medication from the feed store or your veterinarian is the sole responsibility of the user. Be smart and read all the directions.

Soothe-My-Tummy is a great natural product that I always have on hand. It's a gastric aid that is easy to use & works great for bouts of diarrhea or stressful situations that may cause ulcers. It's safe for the smallest member of the herd to pregnant moms. Soothe-My-Tummy is made with a blend of powdered herbs & pro-biotics. You can top dress on feed, mix in water to give orally or mix in moistened beet pulp. Easy to carry to shows with a long shelf life!

Soothe-My-Tummy contains all natural ingredients that promote digestive health in alpacas and llamas.

Ingredients include:

- Marshmallow – good for treatment of any digestive disorder or gastric ulceration, inflammation and colitis.
- Queen of the Meadow – used for gastric ulcers especially those that may be caused by drugs. It protects the digestive tract & reduces excess acid.
- Slippery Elm – soothes and heals, forming a coating in the digestive tract. Traditionally used to treat diarrhea, enteritis, colitis, irritation of the stomach, as it soothes, protects and lubricates the mucous membranes. Used for prevention of diarrhea and treatment of gut ulceration in horses, llamas and alpacas.
- Fenugreek – will stimulate appetite and soothe most gastric disorders.
- Chamomile – for soothing, calming and relaxing. Especially good for diarrhea. Improves digestion, is a natural vaso-dilator with anti-inflammatory and analgesic actions.
- Peppermint / Spearmint – One of the best natural digestive aids and helps soothe and relax the digestive tract. These are stimulant & anti-spasmodic herbs.
- Valerian Root – ideal for relieving nervous tension, restlessness, stress, anxiety, stomach cramps and nervous exhaustion.

- Beneficial bacteria / pro-biotics and bee pollen – ideal for digestive upset and diarrhea problems.
- *Soothe-My-Tummy* is blended with Llama-Zyme which contains Digestive Enzymes, Ginseng, Molasses, Rice Bran, Vit. C, Whey protein, Kelp, Lecithin and Colostrum.

Acute & Chronic Diarrhea Conditions:

- **Acute Diarrhea (comes on quickly)** –

This can usually be cleared up in 24 to 48 hours with some sort of natural remedy unless it's parasite related or due to health issues.

- **Chronic Diarrhea**

(recurring over a period of weeks, months or years) –

This means the animal has been under a lot of stress. Consult with your veterinarian for a diagnosis and try some natural remedies to complement their care.

For either acute or chronic diarrhea, check the eyelids to see if they are a healthy pink color-

- If you see pale eyelids, you will have a longer recovery since something else is going on – diarrhea is just one of the symptoms. It takes a while for the eyelids to get pale and this is usually due to the animal being anemic which doesn't happen over night. Check the fecals first thing. I would also start giving them *Soothe-My-Tummy* which is full of many different probiotics. It can help get rid of the diarrhea and will help soothe & heal for possible ulcers.
- If you see healthy pink eyelids, you have a better advantage. I would also start them on *Soothe-My-Tummy*. Within 24 hours the diarrhea should be gone and if it's not, then we would check the fecals and start our case study workup.

Rehab alpaca with chronic diarrhea-

When Annie was brought to our ranch for rehab, she weighed 77.8 lbs. She had chronic diarrhea bouts for over 2 years and was just wasting away. She had a foamy mouth & drooled. Her eyelids were pale with mucus in her eyes, her fiber was dull & course, her teeth needed to be trimmed and she was sad and depressed. Annie was a mess & in bad shape.

The veterinarians did lots of test and nothing out of the ordinary was found. They believed she had irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Her diarrhea would clear up and a few days later the runny diarrhea started all over again. That's when her owners decided to move her from where she was boarded & get rehab at our ranch.

I started with Diarrex, which is a homeopathic remedy blend for diarrhea. I gave this remedy to Annie twice a day the first two days. Diarrex usually works for diarrhea, but it did not work for Annie. I knew then I would have to determine the appropriate homeopathic remedy for this case if I was going to get rid of that chronic diarrhea.

Homeopathic remedies have been safely and effectively used for over 200 years. Remedies are very dilute amounts of plants, animals or minerals made into small tablets that dissolve in water.

Homeopathic Remedies-

Always consult with a holistic practitioner or a homeopathic veterinarian before giving homeopathic remedies.

Finding the right homeopathic remedy for Annie's chronic diarrhea would involve research and gathering lots of information about her symptoms, past history, emotional state, personality and more to match the best remedy for her case. After all this case taking, case analysis and prayer, Pulsatilla was the choice. Annie's disposition and mental state were the chief guiding symptoms to the selection of Pulsatilla.

This remedy is considered a female remedy, especially for those with a mild, gentle & timid disposition, one that seeks attention and craves company, sympathy and fresh air. Annie would come right up and put her nose in my face seeking attention and was gentle & easy to work with. All the case taking made Pulsatilla look like the perfect remedy match and it worked! After giving the Pulsatilla homeopathic remedy for 7 days, Annie had solid beans!!! But chronic diarrhea wasn't the only thing going on with her. Along with the homeopathic remedy, we used several other natural therapies & remedies including herbs & essences.

Annie progressed slow but consistently - after 6 months she had gained to 104.1 lbs. & was ready to go home but the owners had her stay for breeding. Ten months after arriving at our ranch, she was healthy, happy & pregnant weighing 134.8 lbs!!!! She has since had a healthy cria and now, about 3 years later, Annie is still free of her chronic diarrhea condition.

One homeopathic remedy matched to her constitution was the key to stopping Annie's chronic diarrhea. But to get the digestive system & the total body healed, I used several herbal mixtures. These herbal mixtures were made with herbs from the regions of Peru. I believe these Peruvian herbs from the Amazon are some of the reasons we have such success with rehab alpacas like Annie.

Natural Remedies for Annie:

1. Pulsatilla 30c (homeopathic remedy) – gave orally.
2. Digestive Essence – oral essences are used for healing & balancing the energetic & emotional patterns related to the specific body systems. (Important essence for Annie.)
3. Animal Restore Essence – This essence is used to help restore vitality during periods of recuperation. It can help restore & heal the spirit. (Annie definitely needed this!)

This is the oral mixture we gave Annie to heal the digestive system & build the immune system.

1. Llama-Zyme – probiotics & enzyme mixture which helps optimize the absorption of nutrients.
(This helped Annie's well-being and got her gut healthy & balanced so she could start absorbing her food to help her heal & gain weight again.)
2. Animal Herbal Formula – The herbs in this formula are full of Peruvian herbs (Una de Gato, Chanca Piedra, Jatoba, Boldo, Chuchuhusi, Camu Camu). These herbs are known to aid digestion, reduce pain & inflammation, enhance immunity, protect & detoxify at the cellular level, support the kidneys & the liver and are anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-yeast and anti-fungal.
(This formula was perfect for Annie's condition!)
3. Mama Llama Herbal Formula - The Peruvian herbs (Maca, Muira Puama & Suma) in this herbal formula are known to help both males & females in supporting stamina & endurance and for promoting hormonal balance. These Peruvian herbs are combined with two great immune boosters – beta glucan and colostrum.

The homeopathic remedy, herbal formulas and the two essences were just what Annie needed to help her body get rid of the chronic diarrhea and help the body heal.

Each case is different when it comes to having digestive upset in alpacas. Make your observations of your animal's symptoms and behavior. Check fecals, check for fever and take some action to help their body heal itself with a natural remedy or consult with your veterinarian.

Many of the products mentioned in this article can be purchased at www.alpacasALLnaturale.com

For consultations:

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