### SOP No: 18

**SOP** Alpacas  
**Scientific Name:** *Lama pacos*  
**Category:** 2, 3, 4, 5

**Approval Level:** Category 2: School Principal may delegate  
**Activities requiring Category 2 approval**
- Mustering, drafting (in crush or bailhead), capture, restraint and handling of non-free-living domesticated animals (grooming or holding an animal, collecting a milk sample, non-invasive measurements, leading or riding an appropriately trained animal).
- Observation of particular animal behaviours, e.g. oestrus, parturition
- School performance by outside agencies that have animals as part of their exhibits
- Organisations bringing animals to school (such as Delta Society programs, RSPCA or PetPep).
- Breeding of mice or other appropriate animal in the classroom.
- Non-invasive measurement of body weight, body condition by visual assessment or condition scoring, growth, body proportions, pulse or blood flow, respiration, skin temperature (non-invasive), age by dentition, scrotum and testicles (palpation).
- Familiarisation activities.
- Administering water as a treatment.
- Collection of wool, milk, faeces or urine samples (non-invasive).
- Administering a topical treatment to the udder.
- Coat care and grooming.
- Tail tagging.
- Animals on loan from the Nature Education Centre. (Note: the NEC will report directly to the Animal Ethics Committee on the number of animals loaned so schools should not include them in their returns)

Category 3: School Principal may NOT delegate  
**Activities requiring Category 3 approval** - Category 3 comprises many routine techniques but none which requires the breaking of skin or any blood loss (e.g. blood samples, ear tagging etc).
- Non-invasive measurement of body condition by ultrasound
- Measurement of mild dietary effects (provided the normal nutritional needs for the life stage of the animals are met), high/normal protein, high/normal energy, high/normal fat, palatability
- Taming/gentling.
- Training for competition or showing.
- Tethering animals.
- Collection of saliva.
- Measurement of body temperature (invasive).
- Administering topical treatment by backline, spray or dip.
- Administering drench or capsules orally.
- Administering injections into the udder.
- Coat clipping.
- Loading and unloading animals onto transporters.
- Showing animals at school and away.
- Foot bathing.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 4: Animal Ethics Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities requiring Category 4 approval - Category 4 comprises many routine husbandry techniques which have the potential to be painful or distressing to the animal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Administering intraruminal, subcutaneous or intramuscular injections.</td>
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<td>• Administering winged capsules orally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Administering intravenous injections or intrauterine pessaries.</td>
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<td>• Tattoo application.</td>
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<td>• Shearing of alpacas and llamas.</td>
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<td>• Crutching.</td>
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<td>• Oestrus synchronisation.</td>
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<td>• Microchip tagging.</td>
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<td>• Commercial activities (for example growing turkeys for commercial sale)</td>
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### Category 5: Animal Ethics Committee

Activities requiring Category 5 approval - Category 5 comprises many husbandry techniques which have the potential to be painful or distressing to the animal and require a level of expertise or supervision to ensure that adverse events do not occur.

- Collection of faeces, ruminal fluid or blood (invasive).
- Artificial insemination.
- Semen collection.

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**Authority:**

Government Schools – Department of Education and Children’s Services Animal Ethics Committee

Independent and Catholic Schools - Non Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee

**Authority Approval Date:** 1 August 2010

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**Disclaimer:**

This document may be updated at any time. You should check the web site regularly to ensure that you are meeting the most recent recommendations. If you note any concerns with the information provided (inadequate, incorrect) please contact the relevant AEC (Refer to bottom of Standard Operating Procedure).

**Licensing Requirement:** Not applicable

**Compliance Requirement:**

The keeping of this species requires approval from the School Principal or the AEC. It is recommended that this Standard Operating Procedure be followed as a minimum in the provision of appropriate care and housing for this species.

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**General Information:**

Variatel range differences - Alpacas are a member of the Camelid group. In Australia, there are two types: the Huacaya and the Suri. The former is the more common. It has a soft bonnet of fibre on the forehead and ‘mutton-chops’ on its cheeks.

The body fibre grows straight out from the body and is not unlike Merino fleece. Suri alpacas are covered in long, pencil-fine locks, similar to dreadlocks. The fleece has lustre and feels more slippery and silky than that of the Huacaya. Alpacas begin life as Crias. They
grow into Tuis (adolescents) and then Hembras (adult females) and Machos (adult males).

**Physical Attributes:**
- **Size:** 78 cm-104 cm at the withers
- **Weight:** 47 kg- 80kg
- **Age at adult size:** 2-3 years
- **Average life span:** 15-25 years
- **Weight at birth:** 5 kg-10kg
- **Gestation period:** 335 days (range 11-12 months)
- **Number of offspring:** 1 (twinning extremely rare)
- **Sexual maturity:** females, 12-24 months; males, 18-24 months
- **Weaning age:** 6-8 months
- **Body temperature:** 38°C
- **Heart rate:** 60-100 beats/minute
- **Respiration rate:** 20-30 breaths/minute

**Behaviour:**
Alpacas are normally alert and inquisitive. They move together when herded. They groom themselves by having regular dust baths and scratching on posts or bushes. The herd will have a community dung pile and, if necessary, animals will even line up and wait for their turn. Alpacas chew their cud, usually while lying down early in the morning. They will sprawl out and sun themselves, especially after periods of rain, and will wade in creeks, dams or even water troughs to cool down. Alpacas can swim.

Alpacas are herd animals and need the company of other alpacas. A minimum of two animals should be kept.

**Environment:**
Alpacas may be kept in extensive situations with carrying capacities similar to those for large sheep. Alpacas need to run and need room for a dust bath. Access to shade at all times is essential and sprinklers may be provided on very hot days to allow the animals to cool down. Alpacas prefer shelters that allow them to see out.

Sheep fencing to a height of 1 200 mm is adequate to keep alpacas penned. Do not use barbed wire. Alpacas rarely test fences but, if they are confined and stressed, they will jump easily over 1 000 mm pens, particularly if they are confined without companions. For this reason, it is always advisable to take them to shows and displays in pairs.

Alpacas can survive harsh conditions but are susceptible to heat stress. They should be provided with access to shade and sprinklers in very hot weather. They rarely seek shelter from rain but usually lie down with their legs tucked underneath them. Cria and freshly-shorn alpacas need protection from the cold.

Because of problems of fleece contamination, bedding for penned animals should be made from woven or slatted rubber matting rather than straw. If straw is used, ensure that it is free from seeds, as it is very difficult to remove them from the fleece. Alpacas avoid defecating in their pens unless they are confined for long periods. They usually wait until they can get to the dung pile.

**Feeding:**
Although they are slightly heavier than sheep, alpacas are more efficient feed converters, so they require a similar amount of feed. A maintenance diet is about 1.5 per cent of body weight each day on a
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dry-weight basis. The additional energy and nutrition needs of lactating alpacas increase the daily requirement to 3-4 per cent.

Supplementary feeding may be necessary if insufficient grazing is available on pastures. Alpaca can have their diets supplemented with a stud mix, lucerne hay or alpaca pellets. Seek advice from the Department of Agriculture for correct feeding, pasture quality and supplementation.

**Breeding:**

**Handling:**

Alpacas need to be handled calmly and with care to prevent distress and injury to the animals and their handlers. When working with alpacas, consistently quiet and slow behaviour makes them very easy to handle and they usually herd easily. Alpacas learn quickly and will learn to come up to a feeding pen when called.

They need to be shorn yearly, generally around September-October.

**Hygiene:**

**Disease prevention:**

Disease control methods and internal and external parasite control programs should be developed in consultation with veterinarians or the Department of Agriculture. All actions should be documented in the appropriate records.

**Signs of illness:**

Alpacas’ health should be monitored daily or even more often. The first sign noticed is often a change in their natural demeanour. They may be listless or lethargic and closer examination may show variations in:

- body temperature;
- gastrointestinal function, e.g. diarrhoea, weight loss, loss or change of appetite;
- regular dust-bathing habits or bathing in unusual places;
- urogenital function, such as abortion, infertility or abnormal discharges; or
- respiratory function, e.g. persistent coughing, gasping or panting.

There may be evidence of:

- skin condition such as lesions or abnormal growths
- tucked-up appearance, stiff gait, abnormal posture, patchy coat or loss of hair
- excessive scratching or rubbing or
- swollen joints or lameness

A failure to thrive or grow is another sign of illness.

**Treatments:**

If it is not possible to identify and correct the cause of ill-health, assistance from veterinarians familiar with alpacas should be sought. Illnesses, injuries and treatments given must be documented in the appropriate records.

Treatments must be documented in the appropriate records.

**Euthanasia:**

In the case of an alpaca becoming so sick, diseased or injured that recovery is unlikely or undesirable, on humane grounds euthanasia must be arranged with a veterinarian or a person competent in the technique for alpacas. Any death must be reported to the Animal
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Ethics Committee using the appropriate form (see section relating to ADVERSE EVENTS). Forms are available on the relevant websites – see contact details below.

Disposal/fate planning: Alpacas can be sold privately or at auction. They must not be released into the wild. Carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with local council regulations.

Holiday and weekend care: Alpacas need to be monitored, checked and fed regularly over weekends and holiday periods.

Approved activities: Observation, breeding and farming.

Resources:
Websites: www.aahc.com.au
           www.alpaca.asn.au
           www.pir.sa.gov.au

Texts:

Contact:
DECS Animal Ethics Committee
Department of Education and Children’s Services
Website: http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/animalethics/
Phone: 8207 1806

NGS Animal Ethics Committee
For 2010
Association of Independent Schools of SA Inc
Website: http://www.ais.sa.edu.au > School Management & Governance > Animal Ethics
Phone: Executive Officer, 8179 1400

For 2011 & 2012
NGS Animal Ethics Committee
Catholic Education Office
Website:
Phone: Executive Officer, 8301-6830