

Suggestions for using the Renco PregTone on Alpacas

From the PregTone instructions: The PregTone emits high frequency sound waves called *ultrasound* from the probe. The ultrasound waves travel into the body of the alpaca and reflect (echo) back from the tissue and fluid surfaces to the probe. The reflected sound waves are processed by the instrument to determine if there is amniotic fluid in the uterus. The presence of fluid in the uterus indicates pregnancy. If fluid is detected a continuous tone is produced.

I have used the PregTone on my herd for 3 years now and it has been 100% accurate. I usually breed and confirm the female's pregnancy using spit testing for the first 45 days. I use the PregTone to make sure that the female has not resorbed or aborted the fetus up to the last trimester. Through the last trimester, the pregnancy is visually confirmed by obsessively staring at the female's belly, in anticipation!

From the Llama & Alpaca Neonatal Care book: "Three to four weeks following mating, the embryo finally attaches to the uterine wall and begins to develop a placenta."

"More than 95% of the embryos migrate to the left horn of the uterus and attach there."

"It is recommended that 28 to 60 days is a good time for an ultrasound confirmation of pregnancy. Transabdominal ultrasound does not work well until the fetus has grown sufficiently large enough to pull the uterus forward and down into the abdominal cavity. **Up to this time the fetus is relatively small and the distance between the ultrasound head and fetus is less than 4 inches. From approximately 90 days until birth, the uterus is close to (or touching) the body wall and the fetus can be visualized across the body wall (transabdominal)."**

"By 4 months of gestation the llama cria is approximately 8 ½ inches in length and weighs approximately 200 grams (less than ½ pound) , while the alpaca cria at the same stage of development will be somewhat smaller. From three or four months of gestation until birth, the primary fetal changes are completion of organ development and overall growth. During this period (four months of gestation to birth), body weight will increase fifty or sixty times, with **the most dramatic growth occurring in the last third of gestation.**"

180 days gestation (6 months), alpaca cria weighs 1.3 lbs. 230 days gestation (7.6 months), cria weighs 5.5 lbs. 345 days gestation, cria weighs 19.8 lbs. Total weight gain in last 1/3 of gestation - 14.3 lbs!

From the Medicine and Surgery of the American Camelid book: "Compartment one of the stomach occupies the entire left side of the abdomen, so the pregnant uterus is diverted to the right side."

Based on this information I can conclude that prior to 45 days there may not be a sufficient amount of fluid to be detected by the PregTone. I begin by ultrasounding from the left side of the female prior to 60 days. From 60 days on I work from the right side. If I do not get results from the left side, I will always try the right side, since you may have a pregnancy in the right uterine horn.

On some females, you may need to shave a small area on the belly to get good contact. I used to routinely shave, but I have since found that if I apply some of the contact oil and smooth the hair down, then apply more oil to the probe, I can usually get good contact without shaving. The hair in the proper area for testing is usually fairly smooth and thinly distributed.

I have used water based OB lubricants such as KY Jelly. Apparently, due to cold temperature, these products sometimes will trap air bubbles which affects the ability of the ultrasound to penetrate the skin. I have used mineral oil which has eliminated this problem, but is harder to keep on the probe. Frequently, what ends up happening is, I use KY Jelly to smooth down the hair and prepare an area for the probe and then I end up using mineral oil to get good contact with the probe. You will need to experiment to see what product works best for you. Remember, the idea is to get all of the air between the probe and the skin out so that the ultrasound waves can be transmitted. They will not transmit through the air.

With the female standing, I usually place the probe about six to eight inches down from the females udder. On maiden females, you may need to place the probe a little higher, about 5 inches from the udder. I don't always get a contact tone (which is an intermittent beep). Often, the positive tone is immediate when good contact is made. I point the probe straight into the belly from the angle that is defined by the females belly. Sometimes, directing it up to a more vertical line. See drawing. It would be difficult to pick up the female's bladder from this position without really pushing into the belly and directing the probe toward the rear.

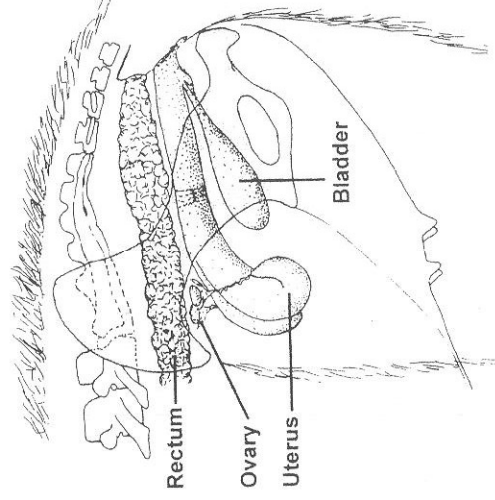
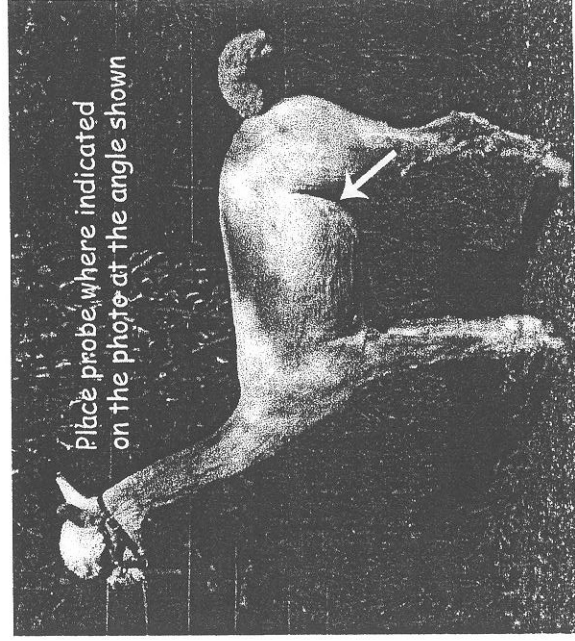


Figure 1.3. Reproductive anatomy of the lama showing the relationship of the genital tract to the pelvis. In the pregnant animal, the uterus extends forward and drops down to the body wall.

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Elsa is not a representative for Renco Corp. and has no interest in their product other than as a helpful tool that she is successfully using on her alpaca herd.