



In this issue...

April Greetings from Marty

Camelidynamics Guild: 300 Members & Growing!

AOBA National Conference Appearances

New Halter Sizing

Practitioner Program Expanded

Advanced Clinic Added in September

Special Joint Clinic with Amanda VandenBosch

2006 Events -- Around the Globe

Quarterly Training Tip: Tale of Two Camelids—The Toenail Problem

Removing yourself from mailing list

April Greetings from Marty

The Cascade mountains are still stunningly white after a great snow year, but we are sure thinking about spring around here. It is hard to believe that we moved to our new place, the Camelidynamics Center, over a year ago. Our dog Halsey is already a year old! We got him a puppy for his first birthday. Rigby is a black “golden doodle” and they are non-stop entertainment. We have lots of changes planned around here to make this year’s clinics even more fun and efficient. Whether you are coming into spring or fall in your part of the world, I hope this finds you enjoying your animals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Marty'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. It is positioned to the right of the main text and is enclosed in a dashed blue box.

Alyson Gilman 3/30/06 2:23 PM

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Camelidynamics Guild: 300 Members & Growing!



We're excited at the growth of the Guild. Our online Forum has generated nearly 1,000 posts on topics from shearing to leading, giving shots to paca packing. I can no longer answer training and handling questions by email, but the Guild is even better. I personally monitor every post on the Forum and reply with other like-minded alpaca and llama owners and handlers. You get the benefit of not only my opinion but others who may be dealing with the exact same issue. [Click here](#) <linkgo:GuildForum> to view the Forum.

Benefits of membership include access to The Guild Library, which now includes "Camelidynamics STEP-BY-STEP" downloadable pdf documents. These Step-by-Step guides "talk" you through the important details of various handling tools and techniques. We are also working on a special Guild Member-Only section of our webstore to offer periodic promotions and gear discounts available only to members. Membership is just \$30 per year.

Join the Guild and you'll have DIRECT ACCESS to...

- Marty McGee Bennett's 25 years of experience
- Online forum dedicated to training & handling
- Weekly digest of posts to keep you informed of forum activity
- Personal advice from Marty and Practitioners
- Collective wisdom of of like-minded camelid owners and handlers
- Camelidynamics Handler Seal certification
- Comprehensive resource library
- Advance notice of all clinics and free workshops
- Members-only gear discounts
- Practitioner Program
- Quarterly e-newsletter

AOBA National Conference Appearances

This is AOBA's 20th anniversary, and I have attended almost every conference. In those years, I have taught pre-conference workshops, been part of the children's program, offered break-out sessions but until now have never had the honor of being a "General Session" speaker. This is the year! In all my 25 years of involvement with

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llamas and alpacas, I am absolutely thrilled to have this opportunity. Hope to see you there!

Booth Demos

When: May 18-21

We'll be staffing a Camelidynamics Booth, and I will be conducting roving demonstrations at breeder booths. Guild Members are invited to contact me (marty@camelidynamics.com) to schedule a demo at their booth.

Alyson Gilman 3/30/06 2:25 PM

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Early Bird Workshop

Class Title: Camelidynamics: Alpaca Handling and Training Secrets

When: Wednesday, May 17

Class description: Do more...wrestle less! This information should be top secret. By rights you should have been pitched into the dung pile at least once, worn some spit and been dragged around the paddock a few times before gaining entry to this inner sanctum. These simple tips and techniques will make you look like a veteran animal handler as soon as you try them. For newcomers to the alpaca business this class is indispensable but even if you have been at the alpaca game for a while you will find a number of nuggets of wisdom to add to your "toolbox."

General Session Speaker

Class Title: Marty's Top Ten List The 10 Most Frequently Asked Training Questions from the "Field."

When: Thursday, May 18 and Saturday, May 20

Class description: In over 25 years in the camelid business, I have just about heard it all. Find out what fellow alpaca breeders the world over want to know. The questions AND the answers may surprise you!

New Halter Sizing

We've got your size! THE NEW & IMPROVED
Zephyr HALTER
New Sizing For *Even Better Fit*



The new halters are now available and we will be rapidly phasing out the old sizes. We currently have all sizes, species and most colors in stock. Visit our webstore for more information about choosing the correct size halter for your llama or alpaca. The new sizing system fits a much wider range of head sizes with less extra strapping to cope with.

Practitioner Program Expanded



Based on further reflection and feedback from Guild members, the Practitioner Program has evolved. We have added a Practitioner level for people who are interested in teaching private and semi-private lessons rather than clinics *as well as a step toward becoming a clinician*. Don't hesitate to send any questions or comments about the Guild Guidelines to marty@camelidynamics.com.

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Advanced Clinic Added in September

I have good news and bad news...The first two Advanced Clinics are already sold out. The good news is that we have added a third Advanced Clinic on September 17-20, 2006 to meet the demand. It is already more than half *filled*, so don't wait to sign up. If you are interested in being added to the June or July/August training waiting lists (there are *sometimes* cancellations) or enrolling in the September clinic, email marty@camelidynamics.com. [Click here](#)<LINKGO:AdvancedClinic page> to learn why these Advanced Clinics are so popular.

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Special Joint Clinic with Amanda VandenBosch

August 13–16 in Bend, Oregon

If you haven't been to a basics Camelidynamics clinic *or want to attend another*, consider coming to the joint clinic with Amanda August 13–16 in Bend Oregon. This is an opportunity for one-stop "shopping" and a great way to visit Central Oregon and experience the new Camelidynamics Center. Amanda is a fabulous teacher and lots of fun.

A special aspect of this joint effort is that that both of us will be attending each clinic. You can see the principles of Camelidynamics applied to checking fleece and handling the animals during Amanda's clinic and Amanda will be on hand to offer her insights as a judge during the Camelidynamics clinic. This is a first for both of us. [Click here](http://www.camelidynamics.com/Clinic_jointBasics_w_AmandaVandenbosch.html) <linkgo:http://www.camelidynamics.com/Clinic_jointBasics_w_AmandaVandenbosch.html> for more specifics about this event. Email marty@camelidynamics.com to enroll or get more info.

2006 Events -- Around the Globe

Visit the [Guild Calendar](#)

<linkgo:http://camelidynamics.com/guildForum/calendar.php> to check out the latest events. Along with Marty's clinics, our first two Camelidynamics Practitioners, Dorothy Hunt (US) and Julie Taylor–Browne (UK) are conducting clinics and spreading the work of Camelidynamics around the world. Calendar can be viewed by non-members.

Quarterly Training Tip: Tale of Two Camelids—The Toenail Problem



For this quarter's tip, *we present* one of the many success stories that unfolded on the Guild Forum.

To give you a hint on the outcome of the Tale of Two Camelids... *this is* the picture Nina attached in her last post with the caption of:

"Hurray, Gypsy is jumping for joy since he discovered how easy it is to hand me his front feet for a nice toenail clipping."

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to view this and all the discussions on the Guild Forum. Join the Guild now to post your
own question today.

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NinaFaust

12-27-2005 01:05 PM

Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

My two alpacas have confounded me on toenail trimming. I have just the 2 as pets. I have trained them on all other things, haltering, leading, coming, cushioning, jumping obstacles, ringing a bell, touching a ball, with a combination of Camelidynamics methods and clicker training. Both put their noses in their halters for me, stand still to have it taken off, are comfortable with me standing next to them, and more. We take long walks almost everyday. However, both will not cooperate on toenail trimming.

One animal, Gypsy, was raised by the herd and has excellent manners, is very cooperative and learns easily and willingly. I got them both when they were one year old and had them gelded 4 months later as the fighting between them was intensifying. They have mellowed and do not fight nearly as much. Gypsy seems as though he wants to please me, loves the training games, and will cushion on command. The previous owner trimmed nails by grabbing them, forcing them against a fence while they struggled. I was too naive then but knew I did not want to continue that. I had the vet do nails with chemical help, but that is still a struggle and we all hate it.

The other animal, Indigo, who was the original owner's pet, is forward and does not have real proper alpaca manners. Fortunately, I read Marty's article about aberrant males a few days after I got him so I did not tolerate cutesy behavior with humans. I think I would classify him as a very bright, control-oriented, hard-wired fellow. If anything irritates him, he makes his precursor "grrr" which is often followed by spitting. He does this to me, he does this to Gypsy. I say "Stop it" and turn my face away with my nose up, just like his pal Gypsy does, and he usually stops after one spit. He only does what I want when he wants. He does not cushion for me yet. He also get mad and goes after Gypsy when I am training Gypsy as if he want all my attention, so I have to tie him to await his turn. Gypsy I can just tell to cushion off to the side and he will.

Neither of these two fellows likes to be restrained. I have tried working with their feet with them tied to a post. I have had someone hold their lead and try to keep them in balance, but they become very nervous about the other person. I have tried the taming the tiger setup but the two available helpers did not work out. One prefers the idea of getting a belly band to velcro them to the wall, an idea I have thoroughly nixed. So I have backed off all this.

I am trying to work more with getting them to stand in balance, touching their toes with a wand. Out in the field, I will stand next to them, then bend down, and touch their toes with a stick. They have started to tolerate this, but Indigo only accepts a tiny bit before the usual "grrr". In the barn while eating hay I have actually massaged Indigo's toes and even had his foot in my hand a couple inches off the ground for a

double toe massage. He seemed to like it, but only tolerated it about 15 seconds. I feel like I am making tiny progress, but it is not yet enough. The dreaded task is about 3 weeks away, and it looks like I will have to have the vet come again.

I have time and patience, but I am frustrated with this difficulty. I read Marty's article in the Guild Library about toenail trimming. I do not have a chute, but given their reaction to being restrained, I am not so sure they would like a chute. Suggestions on other things to try will be appreciated.

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Marty McGee Bennett
12-28-2005 12:47 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Do your best to focus on the progress instead of the difficulty. It sounds to me like you are doing better than you think. Getting an alpaca to trust having his toenails handled is one of the things that takes a long time. It sounds like you are on the right track but keep in mind that restraint only scares an animal and makes it more frightening next time you attempt the process. Are you sure you need to trim again right now? Long toenails are usually not a problem unless they get REALLY long. Perhaps you could wait awhile. If you do decide to have the vet out perhaps you need a bigger dose of whatever you used last time. If you haven't tried "torb" you could ask you vet about it, it seems to be the best chemical help.

It may be best to take walks and have fun as a way of building trust instead of focusing on the toenails. Sometimes working on the "problem" only makes it worse. I would work on getting your alpacas to stand quietly in an area that is just the size of an alpaca and eat some grain or other treat and work on touching the nails as you have been with the goal of trimming the toenails on the ground. Perhaps after you have done this a few times your alpacas will feel more confident about having you pick the feet up. I think a bit of sedative with trimming on the ground is a good way of getting the job done without an argument.

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LovelyBoys
12-29-2005 05:19 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Just a short note that I hope helps....We had problems with one of our llamas when doing toenails. He was a jumper and hated being restrained. I've written about him in the Guild before. We used Rescue Remedy (spraying in the nose area). Now, not liking restrained in a catch pen, he had little problem with a chute. Seemed better in the chute than one holding the lead and the other in a small area of the catch pen doing the nails. He has jumped a few times in the chute, but not near as much as in the catch pen. Plus, it was safer for us as for him. We just trimmed another boy's nails yesterday. Using chute, Rescue Remedy, and a butt board, we were done in record time. Feeding carrots or grain during trimming helps also. Hope this was of some help.

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NinaFaust
12-31-2005 07:52 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Marty,

How long is too long? Their toenails were last cut around Oct 20 and they should be done before I have to leave on a month's trip. Indigo's are already about 1/4 inch below his pad. They do not seem to be causing him any problems walking in the snow and on the ice, but I don't want to cause them any foot problems. I can see some progress, as I am being persistent. Today in the barn, while they were eating carrots and hay, both were fairly comfortable with the wand on their nails and swishing up their legs while I was about a wand's length away on a tiny stool, breathing and talking to them. If I move closer in a stance that would be used for clipping, they do get nervous. I plan on talking to the vet about the other sedative you suggest to see what she says. I would like not to undo the progress I have been making, especially as they both were pretty comfortable with what is going on right now.

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Marty McGee Bennett
01-02-2006 09:29 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

It doesn't sound to me that they are a problem right now. I have seen some really long toenails and the animal really didn't seem to notice. In my opinion toenails are a bit self-limiting. If they get too long they turn to the side and if the ground is unyielding they will break off. If the ground is soft then the ground yields and the toenails will get unsightly but won't cause lameness. I certainly agree that nicely trimmed toenails look better but I don't know that a knock down drag out fight is really worth it. If it were me I would continue on with very short lessons and work towards being able to trim the nails on the ground and perhaps you can work with your vet on a better level of sedation if you feel that you have to trim them right now.

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NinaFaust
01-02-2006 12:59 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

I am going to keep working on this. Last night, Indigo was so enjoying his carrots and hay that while sitting on my little stool, he let me pick each foot up just a bit to massage the toes and not once did he get upset or try to spit. Sounds like I might even make it with him before I even need to work with the vet. Gypsy is watching all this but is not quite accepting of my handling his feet yet. I am still working with the wand on him and will slowly hope to gain his trust to get near enough to clip nails on the ground. Will keep you posted and hope to have a success story in the near future. Thanks for the ideas. Nina

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Marty McGee Bennett
01-05-2006 10:15 AM
Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

wow it sounds like you are really making progress. Keep us "posted"

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NinaFaust
01-13-2006 11:25 PM
Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

The Tale of the Two Camelids continues to get better! I have spent almost every day of two weeks for at least a half hour at a time in the barn with Indigo and Gypsy working toward clipping their toenails. I have been able to clip all four of Indigo's feet, mostly on the ground at this point, but even partly with the back feet in my hand. It is not a perfect job by any means, but it can only get better as I continue to work with him. Not only has Indigo, my incredible spitter, not spit while I have worked on his feet, he has pretty much ignored it. After he is done eating we have started to work on a new chore for him--"Give me the Frisbee." He now picks it up and gives it to me. Not only that, his spitting fits are lessening, and he is no hurry to leave the barn when we are finished with the day's barn lesson. And today, he finally cushed for me on command. He has only been watching Gypsy do this for the past 6 months!

Gypsy, the dancing fellow, who would not stand still for me to even get close enough to touch his feet, has now had all but one toe at least somewhat trimmed. He will not yet let me take up his feet, but he is standing still long enough for me to get a foot done and now lets me squat down by his feet without trying to get away from me to the other side of the barn. He cushes on command, waits for his halter to be taken off, and then enjoys a nice scratch on his chin. When I open the door to leave, he will just stay cushed.

Spending quality time in the barn with these two guys has taken their trust level of me forward by light years. I intend to keep working with them in this way so that eventually I will be able to do a nice foot trim. At least when the vet comes next week, it will only be for an easy vitamin shot rather than a wrestling match. All of us are going to be happier. Now with all the volcanic ash falling, I think we are going to be spending a bit more time in the barn together! Good thing we get along so well! Thanks for the help on this. Any more ideas for me to try, let me know.
Nina

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Marty McGee Bennett
01-14-2006 05:01 PM
Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

I am so pleased. It really hasn't taken very long either. I think it important to remember that it takes a bit of time to learn to trust and trying to skip steps or hurry the process only makes it take longer! You have done some very good work. Congratulations. Please keep us all informed about your continuing progress.

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NinaFaust

03-03-2006 01:28 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Well, I am a little puzzled still about progress in clipping toenails on my two alpacas. Gypsy, the one who always jumped around and would not let me touch his back legs, is slowly learning to stand still and let me touch his rear legs and toes. He has always been the compliant, gentle one, and his trust level is improving as we continue to work on this.

Indigo, the stubborn, independent, smart fellow who does spit at both me and Gypsy, has gotten pretty comfortable with my holding his rear feet, massaging them, and clipping the nails. However, he is much more sensitive about his front feet. I am barely able to clip them on the ground, unless he is in a mellow mood.

I think I am finding these guys are much like people. Some are pretty mellow all the time. Others tend to be a little crabby. If you catch them in a good mood, they are most pleasant and cooperative. If not, beware. Indigo is very much like that. Some days he placidly stands eating his food, enjoys a good foot rub on his two back feet, and lets me work on his front feet. Other days, there is no touching any foot.

Has anyone else noticed this about their animals. Any further suggestions would be appreciated! Thanks.

Nina

:eek:

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Marty McGee Bennett

03-09-2006 11:39 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Progress is often not linear--whether or not it is a two-legged learning to ski or an alpaca learning to trust having his toenails trimmed. Remember it is about your handling skill too so it may be that you are better on some days than others! If you ever feel like you aren't having a good day feel free to quit and pick up the lesson another time. Also remember that this is not about de-sensitization or conditioning and more about acceptance. You can sometimes go backwards if you work too much and begin to make it annoying. Take long walks work with obstacles and have fun and you may find that you alpacas will trust you more with their legs JUST BECAUSE they trust you more.

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NinaFaust

03-13-2006 11:58 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

I think you are right on that. We do take long walks together everyday, weather

permitting. Probably some days my work with them is off and would benefit by backing off. Other days, I think they are just plain not in the mood. I try to read their moods because by being sensitive to that, I have found I have really good days with good progress. What sorts of simple obstacles do people use to train? I have two jumps but need to add more. Indigo is bored with it and needs new challenges. I have not seen any literature on the types of obstacles people use other than the cavern of confidence, which is a little more elaborate than I want to build right now.

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Marty McGee Bennett
03-13-2006 01:25 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

You can use the idea of the cavern of confidence without going to the trouble of the entire set up. Use poles on the ground next to a wall or fence, you can use a panel with a tarp draped over it for a side and drape the tarp over fence and over the panel to create something to walk under too. Clear plastic on the ground is another useful obstacle.

Remember that for obstacles to teach trust and confidence you must be willing and ABLE to make the obstacle easier if the animal thinks that they are unsafe. I also like to use the potato rule (counting to 30 potatoes) and just aim the animal at the obstacle and use pre-empting signals to keep him from backing up but DO NOT ask him to come forward. Just wait quietly and don't say a word. This gives your animal time to think and is a great way of getting an animal to load. There are more articles in the library that talk about obstacles and leading and more suggestions for obstacles and how to use them in The Camelid Companion.

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jo overbey
03-14-2006 07:15 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Nina,

Over the years, I have come to the conclusion that my alpacas prefer me to work on them by myself. I think they start to feel "ganged up on" when I have someone else there with me! ;-) So, it sounds to me as though you are doing everything right.....mainly taking the time to build their trust. I won't give you a date, but I would put money on you being able to trim them with no fuss in a very short time. Congratulations. This can be a very intimidating job, and you have hung in there and clearly are making great progress! Good job.

Cheers,
Jo Overbey

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NinaFaust

03-14-2006 09:48 PM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Jo,

I am glad to hear I am not the only one who has found that their animals seem to prefer one person. I should not be surprised since I spend the most time with them. They like other people, especially kids, but they don't really trust anyone much except me. So I think you are right, it will only get better as I continue to gain their trust. I will be happy when the day comes and they both will stand contentedly quiet while I clip their toenails. Then I will proclaim myself the master alpaca pedicurist and foot masseuse!

Nina:rolleyes:

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NinaFaust

03-26-2006 10:31 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

Hurray, Gypsy is jumping for joy since he discovered how easy it is to hand me his front feet for a nice toenail clipping. Now if he will just figure out it is that easy with the back feet!

Nina;)

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Marty McGee Bennett

03-28-2006 08:01 AM

Re: Tale of two Camelids--the toenail problem

It is great to see a photo on the forum. She looks so happy and focused. Well done!

[Removing yourself from mailing list](#)

If you no longer want to receive our newsletter, please send an email from the account that you wish to unsubscribe to unsubscribe@camelidynamics.com.