



A Guide to Walking with the Alpacas

We are really pleased that you would like to come and walk with our alpacas. Walks for groups of up to six friends or family take place along the green lane adjacent to the farm and around our farm fields. They last around one and a half hours. We will be walking alongside our farm fields and are happy to tell you about the crops that we grow as we go.

We can take up to six alpacas for walks at a time. The minimum number for walking is two as alpacas are herd animals and like to stick together. Children over 12 may be able to take charge of their own alpaca. Children under 12 will lead on a second rein with an adult taking charge of the alpaca. The walk isn't really suitable for children under 8.

Alpacas like to stop and browse as they walk so we will be travelling at their pace. The total distance walked is just over a mile on grass track.

Please wear sturdy footwear and appropriate clothing for the weather. We can walk in light rain but we may have to postpone walks in strong wind and rain, or if it is just too hot. If we encounter a sudden shower the alpacas will sit down on the lane quite happily until it passes and we will be the ones to get wet!

Parking is in the farm yard. We will come out and meet you when you arrive. To help us with farm biosecurity we will ask you to dip your boots in a disinfectant solution when we walk over to the paddocks.

1. Preparing for a walk

We will gather in the lane-way between the paddocks and introduce you to our alpacas. Neel or Kath will go into the catch pen in the paddock and halter the alpacas that will be walking with us. Based on the confidence of the walkers we will decide which alpacas will come with us and who will lead whom. Whilst we do this we will talk about alpaca behaviour and the best way for everyone to stay safe on the walk. Once they are haltered, we will lead the alpacas into the lane-way and have a practice walk before we set off. If you have any concerns at this point do let us know as we appreciate that leading an alpaca for the first time can be a bit daunting. We are very happy to help, or spend a bit more time practising.

2 Safety First

We will take every precaution to ensure the safety of the walkers and of other users on the green lane where we walk. However, walking with alpacas outside the field does carry some risks and you need to be aware of these and agree that these risks are acceptable. You will be leading a large animal on rough terrain with likely encounters with horses, dogs and, very occasionally, vehicles.

You are responsible for your own safety and that of any children in your care. Please also watch out for the safety and well-being of everyone around you.

When we give instructions it is important that you act on them promptly to ensure no people or animals get hurt. We have the right to change the route, cut it short or take back control of your alpaca in the interests of safety.

Walkers of all ages will need to stay quiet and calm around the alpacas and not make sudden movements.

Children under 12 will be able to help lead an alpaca on a second rein. If you agree, children over 12 may be allowed to lead by themselves at our discretion when we are in a safe situation with nothing unusual happening. You must stay near the child if they are leading and be ready to take over if they get into difficulty. Most adults can restrain a haltered alpaca but younger children cannot.

Alpacas may kick if they sense something close behind them. We don't want that to be you or the alpaca behind. Please be aware of their hind legs and keep humans and animals away. It is especially important to remember this if we engage with people we meet on the walk who haven't been briefed, especially children.

We will be responsible for alerting other green lane users of our presence. There will be one guide to every four alpacas and they will generally walk one at the front and one behind the party.

Walking with alpacas is fun! Expect a peaceful, trouble free saunter through beautiful countryside with lovely gentle animals, glorious views and enjoyable encounters with other people.

3. Understanding alpacas

Alpacas are largely confident and curious while out walking and will enjoy looking around and meeting people. They take most things in their stride but they don't like confined spaces and may need some time and encouragement to deal with strange obstructions like fallen branches, long grass that was short last time they walked or parked farm vehicles. Sometimes if one of us slips or breaks a twig it can startle one alpaca which startles the others, so be on the lookout for them making sudden movements and just stay stable and calm. They will soon settle down.

When free in the paddock alpacas will back off if you try to touch them as they are making sure they won't get caught. Once they are haltered and on a lead they give up their need to avoid you and will walk happily beside you. You may be able to lightly touch the neck but this is infringing their space so it isn't polite to try it too often. Likewise an alpaca should respect your space and not nudge or nibble you. Never touch the rump, although we may do so to encourage an alpaca to move out of danger.

Alpacas are herd animals – they believe in sticking close together for safety. If one gets left behind he may start to run to catch up, or stop altogether if he is unsure where the leader is. For the safety of the people at the back, the front party needs to **stop and wait if a gap opens up between the alpacas**.

If you drop the lead your alpaca will stay in the group and not run off unless very alarmed. We can then pick up the lead and carry on.

On a walk you are part of their herd. They trust us to be good, calm, confident leaders.

This walk is for them as well, so make sure they have fun and get to stop and admire the view when they want to, or need a toilet break!

4. Leading Techniques

Your lead has a knot at the end. This makes sure it doesn't pull out of your hand. Do not wrap the lead around your hand – you need to be able to drop it quickly if you are in danger.

Alpacas don't like a tight lead or being dragged. You can encourage them forward using short ratchet movements: pull – release – pull – release. Give them time to work out new situations.

Most of the time you should keep the lead loose and you may hold it with just one hand at the end. When you need more control, place your second hand on the lead, about 30cm from the alpaca's head. If you are in danger of falling or being dragged, drop the lead. However if you are dealing with a passing farm vehicle or other danger you need to make a judgement between your safety and that of other people and the alpacas.

Watch out for the lead rope getting wrapped round your alpaca's neck. If this happens, hold the end of the rope and manoeuvre yourself around the alpaca so you are back on the right side.

5. A Note on Snacking

Alpacas enjoy stopping to eat grass on the way and we are happy for them to do that as it makes the walk fun and interesting for them. We will keep a watchful eye on what they are munching just in case it is something that is bad for them!

6. Terrain

The green lane next to the farm and the route around the fields are generally flat and provide easy walking, but the ground can be uneven in places and the grass can be longer, or the path muddy, at different times of year. There will be nettles and brambles along the way and you need to protect yourself from sun, rain, cold and insects.

Please wear sturdy shoes and be prepared to walk for about an hour unless otherwise arranged.

We can tailor the walk to suit the party's abilities. The green lane and field paths are not suitable for buggies (unless they have off road wheels), or people with mobility difficulties, but we can arrange to walk a shorter distance on land adjacent to the alpaca paddocks if you would prefer to spend time with the alpacas rather than walk on the green lane.

7. Vehicles

We may occasionally meet vehicles, such as tractors or bikes, on the green lane. We all need to be on the lookout and if one approaches we shorten the leads and draw the alpacas onto one of our fields along the lane, or onto the verge, to let the vehicle pass. In some cases we may go ahead and ask a vehicle to stop and wait for us to make room for them to pass safely.

8. Horses

Horses get spooked by strange things like alpacas. In the worst case they may bolt or rear causing harm to the rider. Our policy is to move the alpacas well off the lane and onto our adjoining fields. Or if that's not possible we turn round and walk back until we find somewhere to get out of the way. The riders really appreciate this.

9. Dogs

Think dogs and sheep, except that alpacas are bigger and will defend themselves. Everyone is asked to keep a look out for dogs and alert the group. If we see people approach we may call out to see if they have a dog and ask them to put the dog on a lead. We then take avoiding action – walking the alpacas well into the side of the lane or getting further away if the dog is loose. Most dogs act cautious but can turn aggressive through fear or the scent of prey. Alpacas are both alert and curious around dogs. They may attempt to touch noses if they feel the dog is safe. Do not allow this. It may provoke the dog to defend itself.

10. Pedestrians and Cyclists

No dangers here, but we need to be respectful. For cyclists we get off the lane to allow them to pass easily. For pedestrians we look for signs that they are wary of the alpacas and again keep out of the way. If pedestrians show an interest we will stop to say hello. This is a nice way to brighten up someone's day and spread good will.

11. Mobile Devices

You need to be alert and in charge of your alpaca at all times. However, taking photos is an important part of the experience so feel free to snap away when you are in a safe place with no obstacles, vehicles, horses, dogs etc. We will take photos for use on our Facebook page and website to promote our activities. Please let us know if you don't want your photo to be used. Similarly, please respect the privacy of other people when posting your own photos.

Please refraining from using your phone during the walk as this may be annoying to other people out for a quiet walk with the alpacas! Also, you need to be able to pay attention at all times to your alpaca and the conditions around you.

12. Back in the field

Once the alpacas are back in their penned area and the gates are closed we will remove the alpaca's halters. When we have done this we will give you some apple so that you can thank your alpaca.

Please wash your hands after your walk. A sink for hand washing is available near the paddocks.

We have small samples of fibre from your alpaca that we will give to you to take home. We also sell yarn and handmade products so do ask if you are interested.

Please tell your friends about your experience, share your photos and our Facebook posts and tell us if there was anything we could have done better.

Thank you for walking with the alpacas.

Kath and Neel Shearer

Alpaca Walk Terms and Conditions

- All walks are supervised by a suitably trained and experienced person. Customers are not permitted to take the alpacas unaccompanied or leave the group with their alpaca.
- Walks include a safety briefing at the start. Anyone not adhering to the information provided in this briefing will be asked to leave the walk without compensation.
- There will be a maximum of 6 alpacas and 6 people per walk.
- Alpacas are social animals so we can walk with a minimum of 2 alpacas.
- All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult (aged 18 years +).
- Children under the age of 12 must share an alpaca with a responsible adult over the age of 18. We can provide a second reign. Children over the age of 12 may be able to lead their own alpaca.
- The walks are not suitable for children under 8.
- Hand washing facilities are provided. Adults who accompany children have responsibility to ensure that adequate hand washing takes place.
- There are toilet facilities on the farm campsite.
- Customers must dress appropriately. Please wear closed toe sturdy shoes. Sandals are not suitable and we will not walk with anyone not wearing appropriate footwear. Loose fitting clothing that may flap is also unsuitable. We still walk in light rain so please bring waterproofs if necessary.
- We are happy to reschedule bookings if you need to, or if the weather looks like it is going to be too bad to enjoy the walk. Cancellations under 24 hours (other than for illness or terrible weather) cannot be rescheduled and will not be subject to refund.
- Gift vouchers must be redeemed by the date shown.
- The walks take place on a farm and there can be mud. Please bear this in mind as shoes can get dirty and we will not be held responsible for this or compensating for damages to clothing.
- Walks are weather dependent and if the weather is unsuitable for walking we will cancel the walk and offer an alternative date suitable to you. We cannot give refunds for other circumstances out of our control.
- Please phone either the night before, or on the morning of your walk to check that it is still on.
- A risk assessment has been undertaken for the walking route and is available upon request.
- We try to stick as close to our time as possible but Alpacas walk at their own pace. If you are time restricted and need to leave at a certain time please let us know at the start of the walk.
- During the walk we might ask you if we can take photos that will be published to our social media profiles and website, please let us know if you do not want your photo taken.
- Data Protection: We take your privacy seriously. Ling's Meadow will only use your personal contact details in order to complete the booking process and to inform you of updates and offers if you have asked us to. We retain this information with your booking record for the standard accounting period of six years. Your personal details will not be used for any other purpose or passed on to any other third party. If you would like to be contacted with updates and offers via email then please sign up to our Alpaca Antics mailing list on freerangefibre.co.uk. Our secure card payment processor is Stripe.