



## UNNECESSARY BOTTLE-FEEDING OF NEWBORN SOUTH AMERICAN CAMELIDS

The American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners strongly recommends against unnecessary bottle-feeding of newborn South American Camelids (SAC). The practice of removing newborn SACs from their dams and unnecessary bottle-feeding can lead to detrimental and potentially dangerous behaviors in the animals.

Bottle-feeding newborn SACs can result in over-socialization to humans, which can become a severe problem when the animal reaches sexual maturity. Bottle-fed male SACs will often become aggressive toward humans and display dangerous dominance behavior such as: spitting, attempting to mount, biting, and trampling. Castration rarely results in changes in behavior. This aggressive behavior has been described as Aberrant Behavior Syndrome, colloquially known as Berserk Male Syndrome. These animals are frequently euthanized due to the safety risk they pose to humans. Females are not quite as aggressive as males, but they may become a nuisance as they seek out human attention. In addition to the risk to human safety, bottle-fed animals do not socialize well with other SACs and may become aggressive towards them.

In situations where bottle-feeding of young SACs cannot be avoided, owners are encouraged to work with their local veterinarian to develop plans to reduce human contact during feedings to help prevent detrimental behaviors. For example, the young animal should always be kept with the herd even if its dam has died. Caretakers should walk away as soon as the animal is done feeding and should provide no other human interaction. A wall or other barrier with a hole for the bottle can be constructed to reduce the association of the bottle with humans. The wall or barrier can be covered with sheared SAC fiber or a tanned SAC hide to further reduce association of feeding with humans. If a newborn SAC has to be fed a bottle for a few days, such as in cases of illness, prematurity, or short-term lack of milk production in the dam, the dam and newborn pair should be left alone after bottle-feeding. The pair should be re-introduced into the herd as soon as possible.

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SMALL RUMINANT PRACTITIONERS  
8550 United Plaza Blvd., Suite 1001, Baton Rouge, LA 70809  
[AASRP.ORG](http://AASRP.ORG)