

Kid's KOrner

The Llama That Went To School

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Lancaster Farming Staff
MILLERSVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — You've heard about Mary and the little lamb that went to school, but students at Letort Elementary School had an even bigger surprise. They were delighted when a llama came to their school.

Levi the llama is a friendly fellow who enjoys the hugs the students give him. He likes when people stroke his long white wool.

He even has his own language, said Clyde Habecker who owns the llama.

"When Levi's ears are up, that means he is listening," Clyde explained. "When his ears lay back, that means he has a question, and when his ears lay down against his neck that signals that he is feeling hostile."

Fortunately, Levi did not lay his ears against his neck during his visit to school. Clyde said that llamas rarely feel hostile and if they do it is usually against another animal.

Levi visited the school as part of the Ag in the Classroom program.

Clyde and his wife Luella raise three llamas on their Lebanon County farm. The llamas eat grass, hay, and llama chow.

"A female llama costs from \$4,000 to \$10,000. A male costs \$2,000, and a gelding, which is a castrated male, costs about \$1,500. Levi is a 6-year-old gelding who weighs 80 pounds.

Llamas make excellent pets. They are friendly and known to help psychologically stressed people to relax. Llamas do not have an odor.

Llamas are "potty trained." Clyde said, "They always drop their 'llama beans' in the same place."

Clyde speaks very gently to Levi as he strokes his neck. Both he and Levi love to visit retirement homes and hospitals. Levi goes into the buildings, through hallways, and even up elevators. Children and adults who are on wheelchairs roll their chairs under Levi's neck so that they can reach up and give him a hug.

Levi is especially good with autistic children, who are often withdrawn from reality. These children respond well to Levi so Clyde often takes Levi to hospitals for these children.

Llamas weigh 25 to 30 pounds at birth. As soon as they are born, they can stand on their feet to nurse. The crias, as baby llamas are called, are trained to wear halters at a young age. They must remain with their mothers for at least six months. Llamas live to be 25 to 30 years old.

Llamas are often used as pack animals in countries such as South America. They can carry 80 pounds of gear. Sometimes Levi and Luella take their llamas with other members of the Greater Appalachian Llama Association and go on a llama trek. The llamas carry tents and camping gear on back packs.

Llamas can tolerate very cold weather but they may suffer heat stress in temperatures above 85 degrees.

The luxurious wool from a llama is very expensive. Sweaters made from llama wool cost \$400 according to Clyde.

If you would like a llama for a pet, you need to buy two as llamas become lonely without another one to keep them company. Clyde said, llamas also get along well with sheep and goats.

Although Levi enjoys going to schools, he also likes when people come to visit him on the farm.



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FOOD SHAPES

Color and cut out the food shapes. Glue the food shapes under one of the proper food group headings.

- BREAD, CEREAL, AND PASTA
- MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, AND EGGS
- FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
- MILK AND CHEESE

