

Animal Facts and Handling Information

How to act around animals:

1. Never feed an animal you don't know. Between their regulated diet and the need to keep your fingers safe, it's never a good idea to feed an animal, especially from your hand.
2. Please use good indoor voices around animals. Loud noises, screams, and yells tend to startle animals that are prey in nature and they will be less likely to trust you.
3. Do not tap on the animal's pens to get their attention (ex. Tap on the chicken pen to get the hen's attention). Imagine someone tapping on your window to get your attention...ALL THE TIME. 😊
4. Please don't chase or run behind the animals. If you move slowly and not straight at them, they will usually let you come up to them. **Try this**...go into the pen and stand there and just wait and see who comes up to you out of curiosity. Fear and curiosity are mutually exclusive, meaning that a curious animal is not scared and a scared animal is not curious.
5. Remember that the animals have visitors all the time and there may be times they don't want to be social. The inside pen and the outside shelters are their space. Please don't follow them into those areas.

Animal Behavior:

Most of the animals in our mini farm are prey animals, meaning that, in the wild, they would normally be the ones being chased and eaten by the bigger, faster predators. Prey animals have physical differences such as eyes on the sides of their heads, allowing for a wider range of vision while sacrificing depth perception, and behavioral differences as they are always on the lookout for danger. We, as humans, think and act like predators. Predators have eyes located in front of their head allowing them to focus in on what they are chasing. Prey animals think in zig-zag lines while predators think in straight lines. What does that mean to us? When we approach animals, we will naturally go for their head with our arms out to touch them. To a prey animal, you are coming to get them and they will react instinctively. We must lower our voices, not approach them directly but rather in a roundabout way, and we need to not make eye contact with them...all predator like characteristics. Animals cannot change their natural instinctual behaviors. However we as humans can adapt and change our approach.

Thought to Ponder: Have you ever come across someone who communicates in a different way than you? How do you respond? Do you change your methods to make sure you are understood by them and that they understand you?

Fun facts relating to several of the mini farm residents:

Goats, sheep, and cows do not have top front teeth but rather a hard palate. They are also ruminants which means that their stomach has 4 compartments that allows them to fully digest their food and be able to extract nutrients from otherwise poor quality hay. Rabbits only have one compartment for their stomach but to gain those extra nutrients, they will practice something called coprophagy where they will eat their own droppings to get as much from their diet as possible. It sounds weird but it's necessary!

If you were to ask us which animals are the noisiest, we'd probably tell you that the ducks, sheep, and the donkey are the three loudest animals. They are usually the ones we feed first so that they are quiet! The quietest, by far, are the rabbits.

Who's the boss? If the miniature horse is in the pen, he's the boss. Our brown goat Skia rules the roost when he's not around and the sheep as well. Alpacas rank near the bottom when it comes to this even though alpacas are typically guard animals of a farm.

Our favorite pastimes to do at the mini farm:

1. Watch the ducks swim in their trough.
2. Watch and listen to the coos and clucks as the hens sift through fresh straw in their pen.

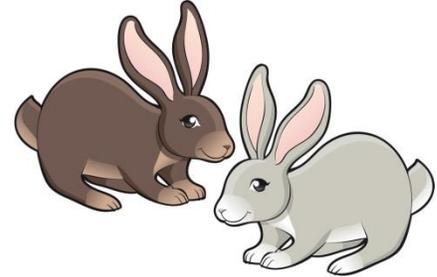
3. Watch Chauncey the pig carry dried leaves and straw to make a pile he can lay in for a nap.

Rabbits

White rabbit with black ears and nose is a male Californian breed named “Lagamorph” (means long eared animal). The 2 female red rabbits in same pen are named “Hannah” and “Elsa” and are a New Zealand Red/Satin mix. Red female rabbit in inside pen is “Ginger”, a New Zealand Red. The Grey rabbit inside is a mixed breed named “Momma bunny”.

Rabbit facts:

- Rabbits can jump over 3 feet up in the air and over 9 feet out.
- Rabbits have excellent hearing, smell, and vision with nearly a 360 degree range in vision.
- Rabbits are herbivores, meaning they have a plant based diet.



Dairy Calves

Calf Info: We partner with a local dairy farmer who allows us to borrow his calves a few months at a time. Most of the calves are a week or two old when we get them. They are fed a milk replacer until they are old enough to eat grain.

Calf Facts:

- Cows will spend 10-12 hours of their day laying down.
- Holstein calves weigh 80 lbs at birth and no two calves will have the same pattern of spots.
- There are, on average, 9.2 million dairy cattle being milked in the United States each year.

Chickens

We have 23 brown egg laying hens at camp, of all breeds. There are no roosters at camp.

Chicken Facts:

- Hens will lay eggs regardless of whether or not there is a rooster around. Ours lay about 18 eggs/day.
- Chickens are omnivores, meaning they will eat plants, grains, and even small insects and rodents.
- Chickens have over 100 different kinds of vocalizations they will use to communicate with each other.

Ducks

There are 6 ducks, all males, at camp. Breeds: Mallard, Khaki Campbell, Blue Swedish, Cayuga

Duck Facts:

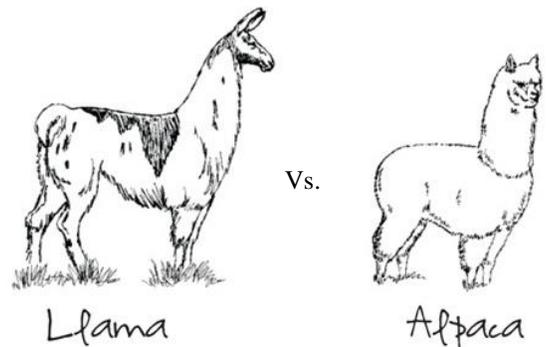
- Duck’s feet do not get cold regardless of the temperature of the water/ground they are on. This is due to a cool temperature exchange so that the blood is already cooled by the time it gets to their feet!
- Ducks are omnivores, eating both grains and small insects/fish.
- A duck’s quack does, in fact, echo.

Alpacas

“Wolfie” is a 13 year old Huacaya breed fawn colored male alpaca and “Baby Alpaca” is a 2 year old Huacaya breed black female alpaca.

Alpaca Facts:

- The fiber from an alpaca’s fleece is flame resistant!
- Alpacas and Llamas are closely related but alpacas are much smaller than their llama cousins by over 500 pounds and a few feet in height.
- Alpacas rarely spit, usually only when they feel threatened or when competing for food.



Sheep

“Elijah” (male) and “Lily” (female) are 2 year old Shetland/Hampshire/Suffolk sheep.

Sheep Facts:

- A sheep's bleat sounds like a "Baa" while a goat's sounds like a "Maa".
- A sheep has great peripheral vision due to their horizontally slit-shaped pupils but poor depth perception.
- Sheep are mostly herbivores, eating a plant based diet.

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Teacup Pig

Chauncey is a 7 year old teacup pig.

Teacup Pig Facts:

- Teacup pigs can live 12-15 years of age.
- Pigs are quite clean by nature, contrary to their reputation.
- Teacup pigs can be potty trained to live indoors!

Pigs

Our pigs at the lake village settlement are commercial pigs and will grow upwards of 250-300 pounds when full grown.

Pig Facts:

- Pigs don't sweat and therefore must wallow in mud to keep cool.
- Pigs are the 3rd most intelligent animals, behind dolphins and chimpanzees.
- Pigs can run as fast as 11 mph!
- Pigs are omnivores, eating both grains and meat.

Miniature Donkey

Dudley is a 13 year old miniature donkey.

Donkey Facts:

- A donkey is, on average, stronger than a horse of the same size.
- Donkeys can utilize over 95% of whatever they eat, allowing them to be sustained on sparse vegetation normally found in deserts.
- Donkeys are not easily startled or frightened and are much more curious than their horse cousins.

Miniature Horse

Ace is a 14 year old brown miniature horse who's been trained to drive a cart.

Miniature horse facts:

- Miniature horses are known to be service animals just like dogs.
- A miniature horse is not the same thing as a pony. They are smaller than a pony and must stand less than 34" tall.
- Miniature horses will live 1/3 longer than the average horse's life span (25-30 years). The oldest miniature horse on record lived to be 51 years of age!

Goats

"Skia" is a female brown Nubian goat approximately 5 years old. "Jedidiah" is a male black Nubian goat approximately 1 year old.

Goat Facts:

- A goat's cry sounds like a "Maa" while the sheep's bleat sounds like a "Baa."
- Goats are one of the oldest domesticated species on earth, used mostly for milk, meat, and hair.
- Goats can eat toxic weeds that other species cannot. Some places "hire" goat herds to come and eat down their overgrown areas (ex. Airports)

