

Training for Stress-Free Leading

Stress-Free Basic Lead Training for Llamas

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The beginning stages of training your llama to lead can be stressful and dangerous for both you and your llama. A panicked llama, rearing and thrashing at the end of a long lead rope, could injure its neck or hit its head on a fence. When larger llamas are being trained, this also becomes dangerous for the handler.

To relieve the stress and danger in the lead training process, try this:

1. Use a short lead rope (12" long) and tie a knot on the hand end.
2. Put your llama in a small (10' x 20') pen.
3. Assuming that you have desensitized your llama's head and have it halter-trained, halter your llama (Read **Desensitizing Your Llama for the Pack** on page 3 of the "Training for Packing" article). Clip the short lead to the halter ring.
4. Hold the lead in one hand and hold your llama behind the neck with the other hand.
5. To get your llama to take its first steps, tug on the lead and at the same time pull to one side with the hand that is at the back of her neck (to get her off balance). Use the "tug and release" method—tug on the lead, then immediately release the pressure when she moves forward. Praise any forward progress.
6. Continue the procedure until your llama understands the message and is following your lead around the small catch pen.
7. If she should panic and start to buck and thrash, drop the lead. The short lead rope prevents further panic by keeping the rope off of her legs.
8. After she has calmed down, approach your llama and start the process over again. After you feel comfortable, snap on a normal lead rope. If you choose, you can let the lead hang to the ground to let her get used to it. Then, pick up the lead and begin the tug and release again slowly increasing the distance between you and your llama.
9. When the process is going well and you're moving around the small catch pen a bit, move into a larger pen. Your llama may panic a bit going through the gate but you should easily be able to control her at this stage so hold on if you can.