

International Camelid Institute

Assessing an Animal Prior to Calling Your Veterinarian

It is very important to call your veterinarian any time there is a medical problem with one of your animals. When you call your veterinarian, being able to report some basic information about the animal and its environment can greatly improve the veterinarian's ability to assess the situation and determine the steps required to resolve the problem.

The following guide can help you report the information that will be most beneficial to your veterinarian. More in-depth explanations can be found by watching the ICI video "Examining Your Animal before Calling Your Veterinarian".

1) Check Respirations

- For the most accurate results, check respirations before handling the animal.
- Watch the chest movement: does it appear to be even and regular or rapid and shallow?
- Look at the nostrils: is there excessive flaring of the nostrils?
- Assess respiratory rate by counting the number of breaths taken in a 15-second period and multiplying by four to get "breaths per minute".

2) Heart Rate

- If you have a stethoscope, place the bell against the chest wall, behind the elbow (either side); count the number of beats in a 15-second period, then multiply by four to get "beats per minute". You can hear what a "normal" heart sounds like on the video.
- If you do not have a stethoscope, place your hand over the same area and feel the beats for a 15-second period, multiply by four.

3) Temperature

- Restrain the animal so that you are able to lift its tail to insert the thermometer into the rectum; a quick-reading digital thermometer is recommended for accuracy and to lessen discomfort to the animal.

4) Mucous Membranes

- Check the color of the third eyelid by pulling lower lid down; it should be pink - make note if it is bright red or very pale.
- Check the gums by pressing on them, waiting 2-3 seconds to make sure color returns.

5) Listen for C1 contractions

- This is done by placing the stethoscope over the C-1 compartment of the stomach, on the left side of the animal, behind the last rib and listening for 2-3 minutes (see picture below). Normal gut sounds will sound like soft, rolling thunder (you can hear this on the video).

6) Palpation of the Abdomen

- Place your hands on each side of the animal's abdomen. Is it larger than usual? Does it feel tight? Is the animal resistant to being touched?

7) Feces

- Note if the animal has passed feces (manure), and the consistency (diarrhea, dry, clumped, etc.) and color of the feces.

8) Environmental Assessment

- Note whether the animal has access to feed and water. Also note if the animal is eating and drinking normally.
- Note the temperature outside. Is the ambient temperature extreme (hot or cold)?

