

Alpacas in Pennsylvania – Exotic or Livestock?

“Pennsylvania law contains no definition of what types, or families, of animals are and are not considered livestock.”

- Kristen Rotz

Regulatory Reform Director

at the PA Farm Bureau

According to Webster’s Dictionary, livestock is defined as “useful animals kept or raised on a farm or ranch” while exotic is defined as “being of foreign origin.” It is true that alpacas were imported from South America over a decade ago but now there is a large North American herd of alpacas being bred and raised here, thus, adding much value to the American fiber industry. Due to the lack of laws and regulations in Pennsylvania, it has been at the discretion of local governments to dictate their own policies regarding the classification of alpacas.

We recently moved to a new township to start our new alpaca farm. Before moving, we expressed our intent to the local officials about raising alpacas in their municipality. They agreed to let us raise alpacas and furthermore stated that we were exactly the type of people they were looking for in order to keep the township agricultural. Months later, we were approached by our township official. They wanted us to purchase an exotic animal permit. This came as quite a shock to us since we considered them livestock.

After researching, we discovered the PA Game Commission is in charge of issuing exotic permits for the state of Pennsylvania. The PA Game Commission lists on its website what it considers “exotic” and the special requirements that would be mandated to own exotic animals. Nothing remotely close to the Camelid family is listed.

We then contacted the Department of Agriculture and talked to:

Murray A. Glickman, DVM

VMO Vet. Svc. USDA

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After he researched, he sent me the following documentation:

1.) From the Code of Federal Regulations

“Ruminants. All animals which chew the cud, such as cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats, deer, antelopes, camels, llamas and giraffes.”

2.) A letter from the USDA

“Please find enclosed some copies of federal regulations pertaining to

Camelids. Llamas, alpacas, and vicunas are members of the Camelid family. Camelids are ruminants and are therefore under federal regulations as “livestock”.

We also contacted the Director of Communications and Governmental Relations, Mr. Gary Swan, at the PA Farm Bureau and explained our situation. Kristen Rotz replied back to us in a letter with the following key points:

- Under the Domestic Animal Act, any animal that is kept in captivity is considered a domestic animal. But the law does not make a distinction between livestock and other types of animals.*
- Alpacas would be considered livestock, but there is no specific legal definition or document to support this.*
- Alpacas and llamas will be included in the United States Animal Identification Plan alongside traditional “livestock” animals, while your typical “pet” animals such as cats and dogs will not be included.*

Furthermore, Mr. Swan emphasized that the ear identification tag/microchip strongly supports that alpacas should be classified as livestock since they are included in the Nationwide Livestock Identification Plan.

Once all of the information was collected, we presented our case to our township official. He agreed with our point that alpacas are livestock and withdrew his request for us to purchase an exotic animal permit.

The alpaca population is continually increasing in Pennsylvania necessitating the need for alpacas to be clearly defined and correctly classified in Pennsylvania Law.

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You can obtain a copy of these documents by contacting me at debbie@alpacaholic-acres.com or by logging on to the PAOBA website at www.paoba.org.

A special thanks is extended to Mr. Swan of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and Mr. Glickman of the Department of Agriculture.

Every Pennsylvania farm owner should consider joining the PA Farm Bureau. They have the resources available to work for protecting your property rights. You can join online @ www.pfb.com. Prices to join vary by your residing county.

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