

# Tapescript

**Jon:** Hi there. My name's Jon and the topic of my presentation is an animal which originally comes from South America. It's called the llama, and it's becoming an increasingly common sight in North America and Europe, where it's used as a guard animal to protect flocks of domestic sheep and goats from predators. Just the presence of a llama is apparently enough to keep foxes and other predators away – and they are quite large animals. Standing as tall as me, but weighing a lot more! But llamas themselves are domesticated animals, closely related to another smaller animal called the alpaca. People sometimes confuse the two. Alpacas have the same long and slightly curved ears, narrow feet and thick coat, but have a different face, which is shorter [7].

Both animals are related to wild animals which are still found in the Andes mountains. But, whereas llamas come in a range of colours including dark brown, black and white, and often a mixture of the three, the animal from which it is descended tends only to be light brown [8]. This wild animal still lives high up in the mountains – near the snow line – but there aren't that many of them left.

Llamas were domesticated long before European settlers arrived in the Americas. Although their meat was eaten, the largest numbers worked as beasts of burden in mining districts [9] rather than being associated with farming. Ancient pictures do show llamas pulling a plough, but they were soon replaced by the horses and mules introduced from Europe.

Llamas are one of those animals that people seem to like. You hear words like docile and friendly used to describe their character, although the one that comes up most often when people talk about their character is curious [10]. I guess that's why they have been domesticated for so long. They approached humans, and seemed more useful than dangerous.

Some people think that llamas, like the camels to which they are related, sometimes kick people or even spit at them. But, I read that this is a sign of poor training by the humans concerned; that in a well brought up llama, such behaviour would be a sign that they're feeling threatened [11], and not a sign that they feel bored or bad tempered.

Llamas are naturally very sociable animals which like to live in groups. They communicate using various noises. A gentle hum keeps them in touch with their friends and family [12], whereas a bray like a donkey would be a warning to others in the group of impending danger.

These days, llama hair is still used in the spinning and weaving industries, where it is particularly valued because it's grease free [13], as well as being lightweight,

warm and rather luxurious when knitted into garments. Alpaca hair tends to make the best pullovers, however, with llama being used for other things, especially rugs [14], but also wall hangings. And llama is quite often used to make useful things like ropes too.

So, those are the basic facts about the llama. I'd now like to show you some video footage of the animal. But before I do that, does anyone have any questions?