

## **FEED PREFERENCE AND GENERAL BEHAVIOUR OF ALPACAS IN SZEGED ZOO**

**BODNÁR<sup>1</sup> ÁKOS, ANDREA PRÁGAI<sup>1</sup>, RÓBERT VEPRIK<sup>2</sup>, ANDREA K. MOLNÁR<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>International Development and Tropical Department, Szent István University, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Páter Károly u. 1., H-2100 Gödöllő, Hungary, [bodnar.akos@mkk.szie.hu](mailto:bodnar.akos@mkk.szie.hu)

<sup>2</sup>Szeged Zoo. Cserepes sor 47., H-6725 Szeged, Hungary, [info@zoo.szeged.hu](mailto:info@zoo.szeged.hu)

<sup>3</sup>Research Institute for Animal Breeding and Nutrition, Gödöllő Research Institute. Isaszegi u. 200., H-2100 Gödöllő, Hungary, [amolnar@katki.hu](mailto:amolnar@katki.hu)

### **ABSTRACT - Feed preference and general behaviour of alpacas in Szeged Zoo**

Feed preference trials and behaviour observations were done with four alpacas (1 male and 3 female) in Szeged Zoo, Hungary. Alpacas are kept in zoos and wild animal parks as exotic animals in Hungary. However, due to the producing of wool for high quality textiles, it can be expected to keep alpacas as livestock animals, too. Nowadays, special wool producing alpaca farm was founded in the east-western part of Hungary. According to this, it could be very important to observe general behavioural patterns and accommodation ability of these animals. Based on the previous results of several Hungarian zoos one can tell that alpacas have adapted well to the local climate, and also show very well results in reproduction.

Portions of the 32 different feedstuffs (4 similar kind of feeds, 1 kg from all at the same time) were laid at the entrance of the yard, next to the gate where the animals left their stable. Free choice of the alpacas was ensured by 1-1.5 m distance between the different portions. Based on the results, one can tell the tubercles, fruits and vegetables can be given to the alpacas anytime, because the animals can utilize their vitamin and carbohydrate content very well. It is necessary to pay attention to the low dry matter and fibre content of these kinds of fodders when eaten up. To feed these fodders is advised only together with fodder with a high dry matter and fibre content (hays, chopped dry corn-stalk etc.). It was found that the alpacas preferred the different hays and the alfalfa pellet, but the pellet is a very expensive fodder. Therefore, the grass or alfalfa hay should be the basic fodder because these can provide the suitable amount of dry matters, fibre content and crude protein for the animals.

Due to the general behaviour of alpacas it was found, that the animals showed a very moderate behaviour in the herd. Alpacas used special vocalization and body movement to communicate during the observation. Compared to other literatures, same results were found according to the social behaviour of alpacas. They are very social and the herd should be handled as a unit by the stockperson. Alpacas have strong hierarchy which can be observed before and during feeding.