

Feature Bio – “Myia” By Char Hakes

Myia was born in the Bitterroot Valley on a llama ranch, as part of a large herd of superb pack llamas. At a weanling age of 6-8 months of age, she was sold to another family to become a guard llama. Of course, a weanling llama does not make a good protector – it is too young and immature to be effective.



Sadly, Myia’s new owners never removed her halter for several years. As a consequence, the halter grew into her nose bone – or more accurately, her face grew around the very small halter – leaving a permanent notch. To this day I am amazed that Myia has not developed breathing problems. Camelids are obligate breathers – i.e., air travels to/from their lungs only through their nose, not their mouths as in other mammals. Hence, one would expect a llama with a compromised nose bone such as Myia has to have extensive breathing problems.



One day in 1999, I received a call from an elderly sheep rancher who had four llamas recently given to him – otherwise they would have been abandoned. They included Myia (who was bred), her two boys, plus Jack, another male. The rancher asked me to pick them up, but warned me that none had halters on and he couldn’t catch them. I was stunned and so disheartened when I saw Myia for the first time. She was about four years old at this point, so her halter-bearing years were all during her most formative ones. She appeared to be great packer stock, but I worried about her breathing.

Anyway, I caught all of them up and haltered them – except for Jack (see Jack’s story!). The elderly rancher decided to hang onto him to guard his sheep.

Myia did well in my care and gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, “Takia”, in July 2000. She was a good mother and Takia was developing into another big packer llama. Myia is a big, tough, bold girl who always stands out in the herd. Despite my concern for Myia’s breathing and longevity, she has never exhibited any breathing problems during the seven or eight years she has been with the *Safe Haven* herd.

In 2007 Myia was adopted out to a wonderful family that had other llamas. But she never seemed very happy there. We feel it may have been because she couldn’t compete with the top llama in that herd. Her dominating personality, reinforced by her large size, worked in her favor with my herd – but not this new one. She also hated to be caught, shorn and handled in general, often just bowling over her new owners.

Not surprisingly, Myia returned to us in fall 2008. As short as I am, Myia senses that I am the boss and we get along just fine. Recently I was able to treat an infection in her jaw bone without mishap and she healed up quickly.

I think Myia is now (spring 2009) about 14 years old and has once again assumed the boss position among the herd, although she is not super aggressive about it. She comes when you call and eagerly nuzzles her way through the entourage for a handful or three of yummy pellets.

Myia’s health and temperament are good, though we take it one day at a time around here. Her indented nose bone is definitely the worse case I have ever seen. Despite that, Myia remains a “looker” when it comes to judging packer stock females!

