

A Lama Named Winter and COVID-19

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She's the long-necked beauty in the middle.

Human antibodies are big and Y shaped, and too large to fit the arms of our Y onto the Corona virus shell. Llama antibodies are smaller and can attach to the virus shell, neutralizing it. Llama antibodies already are known to be effective in battling MERS and SARS, and researchers in England were delighted to learn they work against the SARS Covid-19 virus. Llama antibodies can't be created other than in llamas, so the antibodies go away after about six to eight weeks inside of a human. What this means is that healthcare staff can be injected with llama antibodies that will neutralize the virus if they are exposed to it, but they would need to be resupplied with llama antibodies every six weeks or so.

That the antibodies can be isolated means a fast-track stopgap preventative is going to be available soon in limited quantities. Removing them doesn't harm the llama, any more than donating blood harms you or I, and llamas regenerate them quickly.

The researchers say that if this works out, someone should erect a bronze statue of Winter for her service to mankind. Bronze, of course, turns greyish-brown when it weathers.

Anybody want to join me to watch the food fight over who gets the antibodies first?

