

## Nunoa Project – 13 years in the Altiplano, and Counting

*Nunoa Project veterinary teams have been working with camelid farmers in Peru since July of 2006.*



Early trips concentrated on meeting farmers, getting used to how alpacas and llamas are managed there, and learning as much as we could. We identified how we could possibly help improve the income of farm families, and how we could coordinate with local officials. **Our goals focus on elevating production in the herds** through improvements in reproduction management and fiber production from alpacas. We have placed multiple teams in the Andes for longer term study and coordination with farmers, in addition to conducting our twice annual two week work trips. Our team members and leaders have come from many countries including the US, Peru, Argentina, New Zealand, the UK, Australia, Canada, and Germany. South American veterinarians maintain contact with Peruvian farmers in between work trips. All of us share a common goal of practical education and helping others to attain a better life.

***The high altitude work at 13,000 to 15,000 feet is difficult*** and uncomfortable by our normal standards. It is very challenging on a daily basis, but the rewards are high. Small changes and interactions with the farm families can make a large difference in their lives. Team members have a strong sense of service to others and a clear perspective of how fortunate we are. Team leaders have developed from early starts with the Project as young veterinarians and students. Team members are comprised of students, veterinarians, and others who want to help. New members start out inexperienced on each trip, but within a few days the teams are working like a well-oiled machine. It is an exercise in international problem solving, teamwork, and flexibility. Schedules are changed on a daily basis, sometimes with no warning. It is the way life is in the altiplano. Team members commonly deal with altitude sickness and gastrointestinal upsets. The showers are cold or non-existent, the food is very basic, sleeping is interrupted due to the altitude, and it is very cold every night in the high Andes. The roads are rough, but at least we have trucks to move between farms unlike most of the farmers with whom we work. The farmers are often wary of outsiders at first, but they soon recognize that the team comes to work hard and to share knowledge. The Peruvians are after all multigenerational camelid farmers. We come to learn from them also. The children are happy and very inquisitive. They want to see ultrasound images of pregnancies and watch closely as we work with their animals. They are curious to look into microscopes at whatever we are examining. They are the future scientists and leaders of the altiplano.

***The work we do includes evaluation of breeding herds*** including body condition scoring as a measure of herd nutritional status, parasite surveys, evaluation of breeding males, measuring pregnancy rate with ultrasound imaging to evaluate reproductive efficiency, evaluations of breeding females and offspring, and talking to farmers about the problems they see in their herds to try to identify simple solutions. The farmers' primary cash product is alpaca fiber for which they are paid a low price by the pound regardless of quality. Our goals include achieving more fiber production from each herd, and the birth and survival of more offspring each year. We conduct training seminars and clinics which are well attended, with demonstrations and education on practical, hands on techniques. We also started a knitting cooperative in Nunoa to get local products to consumers.

***Our most recent trip to Nunoa District*** in the Department of Puno in the southern Peruvian Andes was in June of this year. We interacted with a local government veterinarian and two farmers with whom we have established relationships. They are assisting other farmers in the area. We evaluated hundreds of alpacas and worked with 10 new farmers. All plus more are interested in continuing the work with us in January 2020.

***We rely on private financial support from people like you*** to continue our important work. Our educational programs here in the US dovetail with the Peruvian work, with about half of our team leaders and workers having been trained in Massachusetts.

***Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to Nunoa Project through our website. You can make a difference too through your support.***

Thank you,  
Steve Purdy, DVM  
President Nunoa Project Peru  
Director North American Camelid Studies Program





