

Nunoa Project Peru: June 2023 Work Trip

Our 15th year of service to Peruvian farmers and veterinary professionals



**(left to right): Dra Jhoana (Peru), Dr Heather (US), Dr Ami and Dr Fay (England),
Dr Camila, vet student Celine, and Dr Randy all from the US**

Nunoa Project Peru worked with Peruvian Alpaca Farmers in the Anansaya Puna region of Peru, 40 minutes from the town of Nunoa from June 12th to June 21st, 2023. We have been working with the Anansaya Puna farmers since 2018 with the cooperation of Dr. Efrain Ccoyto and Wilmer Quispe of Peru, who have been head of the research station Tambo Anansaya Puno, which is 4320 meters above sea level. Our team stays at the research station and makes day trips to farms in the area. The alpaca herders rely solely on the sale of animal fiber to support their families. We decided years ago that we needed to find a way to increase fiber production to increase the income of the farm families. We have been focused on increasing reproductive success through use of quality males which are not overloaded with too many females. We found that a ratio of 20-30 females per male in Peru was the ideal ratio to increase pregnancy rates from 30-50% to 80-100%. We have concentrated on using larger

males with more fiber to improve fiber in the heads through better crias which become the future breeding stock. Each time we visit Nunoa we have a day seminar with presentations and hands on work in selecting good quality males and removing poor quality breeding stock. We have seen the pregnancy rates increasing and production of better crias each year. Each trip we meet new farmers to assist. The altitude is high and the weather is harsh especially in the dry season between May and November. Pasture to feed the animals becomes poorer in quality and animal deaths increase due to starvation. Infant mortality rates are also high because of a lack of quality food and water. Poor fiber quantity equals poor money which adversely affects all of the farm families. Fiber is sold by the pound with no premium price for fineness or any other characteristics.



The primary goals on each trip are to:

- Identify pregnant alpacas and increase cria birth rates.
- Assess the quality of the herds that are using our loaned breeding males, including fiber, cria production, and nutritional status.
- Assess body condition score and age of the individual herds to evaluate nutritional status.
- Assess suitability of young and seasoned breeding males to help farmers select next year's herd sires.
- Discuss herd problems with farmers and offer practical solutions.

In addition, the Nunoa Project (NP) provides the camelid veterinary community the opportunity to learn from other veterinarians, to mentor young veterinarians, and to mentor veterinary students all while collaborating with Peruvian colleagues. It is a unique opportunity in international agriculture and camelid management, reproduction, and problem solving. All team members contribute. Our two experienced team leaders (one from Peru and one from the US) accompany 5 or 6 volunteers each time.

We evaluate the data collected from each herd we visit and discuss results with the farmers. Due to the COVID pandemic and political unrest since 2020, the NP has only had boots on the ground once a year compared to the normal twice-yearly visits. We are back on our twice annual schedule with our next visit planned for early January 2024. These trips are a great opportunity for us to give back to South America where most of our US animals originated.



We need private funding to keep up this very important work. Our goal is to keep spreading the knowledge we have gained over the years to other farmers to help their families.

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