

My Nunoa Experience

My name is Alison Bush and I am a third-year veterinary student at Colorado State University. This past summer, I attended the North American Camelid Studies Program with The Nuñoa Project, as well as joined the project on their bi-annual trip to Peru.

The North American Camelid Studies Program was a great opportunity to learn more about camelid medicine and various practical techniques necessary for camelid herd health. Though we learn some information about alpacas and llamas in veterinary school, we do not learn enough to be confident in our camelid examinations. Dr. Steven Purdy was a great mentor for that week. Hearing stories from his career about different cases, what's worked what hasn't worked, and his experience working with these animals was more beneficial than a lecture by a professor who has limited experience working with these animals. In addition, the hands-on portion of the course was extremely beneficial. I'm glad I decided to take this course this summer, and I feel more confident working with alpacas and llamas because of it.

The trip with Dr. Purdy and The Nuñoa Project to Peru was the most humbling experience of my life. We worked with five alpaca herding communities near Pucara. It was interesting to see the condition of the alpacas and the hardships both the animals and farmers go through in the Alit Plano. It was an honor to join The Nuñoa Project to help to improve these herds and progress the alpaca industry in Peru. The work we did was extremely meaningful, and I went to bed each night feeling like I made a difference in the farmers' lives. In addition, the farmers were very appreciative of our work and glad we were there to help them. The highlight of this trip was chatting with the farmers after our work. They'd confide in us on what problems they had during the previous breeding season, and we would



work together to identify a solution. This trip was extremely rewarding, and I was so fortunate to have experienced this opportunity.

In addition, The Nuñoa Project worked with Llama Pack Project in Urubamba, and we evaluated the llamas in the communities that are involved in this project. The llamas had never seen a veterinarian before, so most importantly our work started to build trust between the farmers, Alejandra & Coqui, and veterinarians. It was a huge accomplishment for both projects and I am so glad I was a part of it. We even taught a farmer how to halter train his llama. I've never seen a bigger smile, he was very excited to take one with him to start training the rest of the herd in preparation for their llama treks.

Thank you to Dr. Purdy and The Nuñoa Project for giving me the opportunity to go on this trip and gain such a wonderful experience. I learned a lot during it and I am excited for my future career in international livestock medicine.

Sincerely,

Alison Bush