

My Experience in Peru with The Nuñoa Project

This past July, I joined Dr. Steve Purdy and the Nuñoa Project in Pucará, Peru, located in the Puno department five hours southeast of Cusco. Over the period of a week and a half, we traveled to several different communities in the Peruvian highlands. We met with farmers and their families and discussed concerns and goals for their herds. This was an extremely hands-on experience and the four students were immediately taught how to ultrasound trans-abdominally, body condition score, assess fiber quality, draw blood, evaluate crias, deworm, and assess possible new reproductive males. I previously had very little experience ultrasounding but by the end of the first day my confidence had grown and I was diagnosing pregnant or open animals in less than twenty seconds. One of the most rewarding moments of the trip was when a farmer's son leaned over my shoulder to see the screen of the ultrasound machine. Eventually the child picked it up and was identifying if the animal was preñada (pregnant) or vacia (open).

One of the organization's main goals is education; Dr. Purdy aims to improve the farmers' skills and techniques so that they are better able to identify problems like unthrifty animals or unfit males. Leaving a community at the end of a day and seeing the family body condition scoring their animals the way we taught them is a truly rewarding experience.



Working with hundreds of alpacas at 12-14,000 feet in the Andean sun was physically and mentally challenging but also one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Hiking up a mountain to ultrasound one hundred alpacas was a beautiful adventure and I am thankful to have had the chance to do something like this.



Before this trip I was not comfortable working with camelids but now cannot imagine a career without them. This was an eye-opening opportunity where I learned about alpaca and llama medicine on an international scale, and how important these animals are from both a cultural and economic standpoint. I plan to return to Peru in the future as a veterinarian and continue working with the Nuñoa Project. The trip and organization mean a lot to me and I hope that other students get the chance to work with this dedicated group of people.



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July, 2015