

Nunoa Project Begins Collaboration with Chijnaya Foundation and CONOPA in Pucara Peru

Dec 1 – 6, 2014

Representatives from the 3 non-profit organizations met multiple times during the week and visited alpaca farmers in 4 communities in the Pucara and Lampa districts of the Department of Puno in the southern Peruvian highlands.

The representatives of the three organizations included:

Nunoa Project- President Steve Purdy and Alpaca Health Specialist Gisela Marcoppido

CONOPA- President Jane Wheeler

Chijnaya Foundation- Pro-DIA staff Jhuver Aguirre and David Cajo; fiber specialist Rolly Thompson

Accomplishments

Four communities had approached CF asking for assistance with improving production of alpaca fiber, crias, and meat: Pucarayllu, Alto Pucarayllu, La Unión (all three in Pucara), and Coarita (in Lampa). Two communities have or are forming a communal herd shared by their alpaca producer associations. This herd is often where the best fiber animals exist in an attempt to produce superior breeding animals for the entire community's benefit. The format of the community visits consisted of a meeting with members of the alpaca producer associations wherein the three organizations described what they could offer them, and the association members presented their questions about the format of the possible projects and discussed the problems they faced in their respective herds.

At La Union the farmers proudly showed us two young Suri breeding males which were recently purchased by the community. They appear to be good future prospects but were mixed in with Huacayas and llamas. The farmers told us this was their intent and asked our opinion. This situation is typical of many Peruvian communities and results in production of inferior fiber, which results in reduced income. A simple change here can make a huge difference. It highlights the need for education of producers on production management. Most communities keep their males in with the females year round. This is not a bad management practice as long as inferior males are removed from the breeding herds, and as long as the remaining superior males are not overwhelmed by breeding too many females. At Coarita we examined many of the females in their communal breeding herd. We were impressed by their size and fiber fineness. Some of the animals lacked density but that can be corrected fairly easily with selecting dense breeding males. They use a controlled breeding period of December through March and keep colored animals, Suris, Huacayas, and llamas separate.

The three organizations signed a general convenio (agreement) to work together to help the alpaca farmers selected by CF under the supervision of the Association Pro-DIA. Individual projects will be covered by individual convenios which delineate the proposed timeline, responsibilities, and costs for the three organizations. These must be approved by the boards of the three organizations prior to funding and implementation within the participating communities. The management of the projects is the responsibility of CF's Association Pro-DIA in Pucara with the assistance of both CON and NP as delineated in each project and as requested during their implementation.

Problems Presented by the Four Community Alpaca Associations

All communities presented common problems which are reducing their production and leading to significant economic hardship. These include the following: high cria loss rate due to infectious diseases (in particular sudden death due to enterotoxemia); poor fiber production and thus low income from fiber sales, problems with herd reproductive and health management, and low income from meat and hides. During the

discussions with the communities it was evident that educational and hands on evaluation programs will be critical to the success of projects undertaken to help the communities. All three organizations are committed to responding to these concerns and looking for solutions which will improve the production of the communities and thus increase income from their alpacas. This in turn will increase the standard of living and self-sufficiency of the farmers.

Projects Identified to Improve Alpaca Production in the Participating Communities

1. The first and most immediate need identified was the implementation of an **enterotoxemia vaccination program** for the current crias which will be born starting at the end of this month. CONOPA has a very effective vaccination available which should eliminate or greatly reduce the 50 to 90 % cria death rate from this disease complex starting now. The prevention program involves vaccination of pregnant females, vaccination of crias, and prophylactic treatment of crias with an anti-coccidia drug against *Eimeria macusaniensis*. CONOPA is assembling a team of veterinarians who will go to Pucara as soon as the vaccine is available to teach members of the 4 communities how to vaccinate and treat their animals over a two day period in each community. The remainder of the treatments will be performed by the trained community veterinary technicians. Careful attention to proper birthing management is also critical to prevent losses from infectious diseases. This training will also be provided by CONOPA veterinarians. CF and NP are jointly funding this first project.
2. **Nunoa Project veterinary team visits** to the region are scheduled for December and July of each year. These visits allow for hands on work with the communities and training opportunities for the community veterinary technicians and for students who work with NP veterinarians Steve Purdy and Gisela Marcoppido. In 2014 we had students from the US, Peru, Argentina, Wales, and China on our veterinary teams working in Peru. CF will provide accommodations and local transportation for the NP team at each visit. NP veterinarians and students will provide their own transportation costs from their country of origin to Pucara. They will also provide their own meals. It is expected that continued financial support from US alpaca farmers will cover the NP veterinarians' travel and material costs, and that private grants may be obtained to support the work of deserving students. Each visit will concentrate on the following areas: responding to problems identified by the local farmers, and evaluation of male and female reproduction animals as to suitability, fiber, and health. This is also a time for exchange of information and mutual education for both the NP veterinary teams and the local farmers. In addition, the July visits will include evaluation of crias produced in the birthing season which extends from December through March, evaluation of problems during birthing season and identification of solutions which may be undertaken, ultrasound examinations to evaluate pregnancy rate in selected herds in each community. December visits will include semen evaluation of breeding males as needed in addition to the educational programs and animal evaluations. NP project has 14 proven males in Peru which are available for use by the 4 communities to improve their production. They will be distributed starting in December 2015.
3. **Education Programs for Peruvian Farmers** will be coordinated by the Association Pro-DIA and provided by CONOPA and Nunoa Project personnel. Topics for seminars and hands on training include: health of crias and adults, reproduction management, prevention of infectious diseases, proper shearing of alpacas and preparation of fiber for sale, and others that may be identified. CONOPA has excellent manuals and workbooks which it has successfully used with farmers in other areas of Peru. Future projects include production of videos and CDs to cover these important topics, and reprinting of the existing manuals and workbooks. Funds will need to be allocated to cover the costs of these items plus the travel and salary for personnel who will provide these seminars and hands on training sessions. Jhuver Aguirre requested training for local community specialists in shearing, fiber preparation and sales, and for community veterinary technicians.

4. **Continual Support for Farmers.** It is important to note that both CONOPA and Nunoa Project will be responsive to the concerns of the Peruvian alpaca farmers as presented to them by the Association Pro-DIA at any time of the year. Short term problem solving and identification of long term solutions are critical to the success of these efforts to assist the farmers.
5. **Shearing and Fiber Sales.** Communities are primarily selling their fiber to regional buyers. They do not sort it according to where it comes from on the body as it does not make any difference in the price they get for it. It is sold for one low price by the pound. Farmers perform their own shearing using hand powered clippers which are inefficient at removing the fiber. The existing shearing process is inefficient and does not generate maximal income for the farmers from their fiber. Nunoa Project has committed to providing electric clippers and generators and rope shearing restraints to the communities. This equipment can be purchased in Peru and will be financed by donations from interested US alpaca farmers. Donated funds will also be used to pay for shearing training in each community by experienced CONOPA personnel. Rolly Thompson of Chijnaya Foundation has made a contact in Cusco who is interested in purchasing blanket fiber from the communities. This is a tremendous opportunity and it will be explored further to provide an outlet for the communities' fiber and a better price than is currently available. It was also suggested that a nearby fiber cooperative in Juliaca be consulted to explore possibilities for joining them or for help in forming a local cooperative to sell fiber and products. Other uses for the fiber were considered including local manufacture of quilts with camelid fiber batting in the communities which suffer deaths of children from pneumonia. Production of other fiber products such as yarn can be explored. Nunoa Project is currently supporting such a project in the town of Nunoa. These would again add value to the communities' fiber, and jobs and income for producers.
6. **Meat and Hide Sales.** Alpaca and llama meat and hides are primarily sold at local markets. Some meat is consumed by the farmers. Markets for meat in Cusco could be explored by Pro-DIA. Jane Wheeler noted that leather and hides are processed in the nearby town of Sicuani. This outlet for local farmers could also be explored as an income source for farmers.
7. **Chijnaya Foundation, Nunoa Project, and CONOPA have agreed to work together to obtain grants to support projects in Peru.** CF President Ralph Bolton has recently identified a private grant in the US and Nunoa Project has identified a foundation grant in the US which is applicable to work with Peruvian farmers. These grants will be worked on in collaboration with CONOPA to attempt to obtain funds for future projects.



Community Center and School at Pucarallyu in the southern Peruvian highlands



CONOPA President Jane Wheeler and Nunoa Project President Steve Purdy sign a cooperation agreement with Chijnaya Foundation Board Member David Cajo in Pucara Peru



**Nunoa Project Alpaca Health Specialist Gisela Marcoppido Inspects a Suri Macho
with Two La Union Alpaca Producer Association Members**



Nunoa Project veterinarians speak with Coarita farmers about improving their Huacaya reproduction herd

Summary

The week in Peru made it obvious that there is much which can be accomplished to help Peruvian farmers near Pucara. The participants from the three organizations agreed that we have the motivation and expertise to meet the expressed needs of the farmers to increase their production and income, and to make a positive difference in their lives. The problems are not complicated, but they require cooperative solutions and consistent planning and implementation. I feel that the three organizations involved are in an excellent position to accomplish a great deal starting right now. I am very optimistic about the future success of our collaborative efforts.

Handwritten signature of Stephen R. Purdy, DVM

Steve Purdy, DVM, Nunoa Project President