

updated June 2017



Range	Central and southern Andes from Peru to Argentina at elevations of up to 4,800 meters
Habitat	High mountain foothills, domestic areas of grasslands, fields and other pastures
Diet (wild)	Grazing herbivores
Diet (captivity)	Fresh grass and low protein hay, some alfalfa, and small amounts of commercial grains to provide selenium and other needed vitamins
Description/ Size	Height: 32–39 inches at the shoulder; up to 5 feet at the head; weight: 100–190 pounds. Have long necks with a slender body, a small head and big pointed ears. Their feet are soft and padded. Domestic alpacas come in a variety of 22 colors.
Lifespan	15–25 years. Longest documented lifespan is 27 years
Reproduction	Females are “induced ovulators” and will breed throughout their lifetime. Gestation lasts about 11 months. Females give birth to one offspring (twins are very rare), called a cria. Crias weigh 15–19 pounds, and are able stand 90 minutes after birth. Crias are weaned when they are around 6 months old. Males reach reproductive maturity between 1 and 3 years old, while females reach sexual maturity between 1 and 2 years old.
Behavior	Alpacas are social animals that live in family herds with a dominant male, females and their young. In fact, alpacas will show signs of stress when not in the presence of other alpacas. They communicate with each other by humming and other vocalizations. Alpacas are generally very docile and friendly. Herds will use communal dung piles away from where they graze. Male alpacas will form bachelor herds if there are no visible females. However, if females are visible, males may become aggressive toward each other.
Our animals	1 female, 2 males. Born: 05/26/2016 (female [black]); 05/01/10, 05/27/16 (males). They are all Suri alpacas from a private breeder in Michigan.
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two types of alpacas: Huacaya and Suri. The fleece of a Suri has fibers that grow long to form silky dreadlocks, while the Huacaya has a dense, woolly, crimped fleece. Ninety percent of alpacas in North America are Huacayas. • Alpacas are the smallest domesticated camelid species (the other camelid species are the vicuña, guanaco, llama, and the dromedary and bactrian camel.) • Around 6,000 years ago, the wild guanaco and vicuña were domesticated by the developing Andean civilization, giving rise to the two domesticated camelid species, the llama and the alpaca. • Llamas are larger than alpacas and are bred to carry heavy packs, whereas alpacas are bred for their soft fleece. • Alpaca fleece is warmer and stronger than sheep wool. An individual alpaca can produce 5–10 pounds of fleece a year. • Llamas and alpacas can be kept together and llamas are often used to protect herds of alpacas. • Alpacas and llamas can crossbreed to produce fertile young, called a “huarizo.” • Alpaca meat is a delicacy in Peru and Bolivia. • It has been estimated that the world population of alpacas is approximately 3.5 million. Eighty-seven percent of this alpaca population is in Peru, followed by Bolivia with 9.5%. • Alpacas will spit at each other when upset, but they generally don't spit at humans. • South American camelids are ideal livestock for low impact grazing. Due to some of their padded foot soles and light weights, they do not compact the soil or destroy the vegetation in their habitat. Plus, they feed on the natural forbs and grasses in the ecosystem.

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Mammalia

Order
Artiodactyla

Family
Camelidae

Genus
Vicugna

species
V. pacos