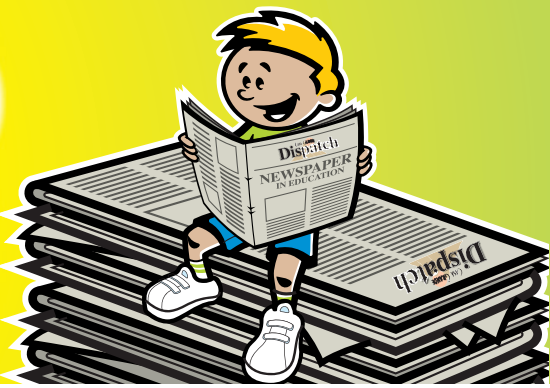


KEEPING STUDENTS WELL INFORMED AT HOME DURING SUMMER VACATION



WORLD OF WONDER

Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

Llamas & Alpacas

Llamas and alpacas are New World camels prized by the people of Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Ecuador.



Llama

Llamas are used mostly as pack animals.

Longer, curved ears

Shorter, pointed ears

Shoulder height 4 feet (1.2 m)

Longer face

Smushed, fluffy face

Coarse outer coat, fine undercoat

Soft, fine coat

200-350 lbs. (90-158 kg)

Llamas tend to spit more often than alpacas.

Alpaca

Shoulder height 3 feet (91 cm)
100-175 lbs. (45-68 kg)



Some basics

Llamas and alpacas come in many color variations. Llamas are vegetarians and get most of the water they need from the shrubs and grasses they eat. Alpacas eat grass and hay. Llamas and alpacas are ruminants, although they have only three stomachs, not four like other ruminants such as sheep and cows.

A little bit of history

Llamas and alpacas originated in the central plains of North America about 40 million years ago, but disappeared there during the Ice Age. They migrated to South America about three million years ago and were domesticated 3,000 to 5,000 years ago.

There are no wild llamas or alpacas.

Useful animals

Llamas are peaceful, hardy animals. Their thick coats allow them to thrive in extreme climates. Over the centuries, they have provided meat, wool and fuel, and they have served as pack animals to the people of northwest Argentina, northern Chile and the high Andes of Peru.

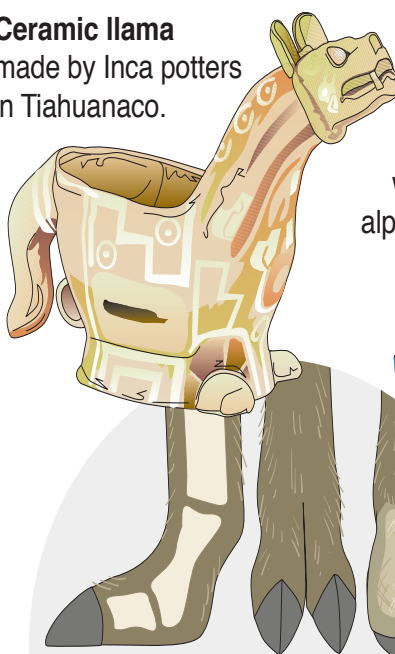
Llamas can carry 25% to 30% of their body weight — up to 75 pounds (28 kg) as far as 20 miles (32 km).

Llamas are also good guard animals and can be used to protect sheep from coyotes, foxes and other predators.

Alpacas have been bred specifically for their silky and versatile fiber. The two most common breeds are the **Suri** (pronounced SOO-ree) alpaca and the **Huacaya** (pronounced wah-KAH-yah) alpaca. The Suri have a long, silky coat, while the Huacaya have a shorter, crimped fleece. Alpacas are shorn annually for their fiber, which is used to make a wide variety of textiles and woven items. Alpaca fiber, is flame-resistant, water-resistant and lanolin-free (making it hypoallergenic for most people).

Ceramic llama

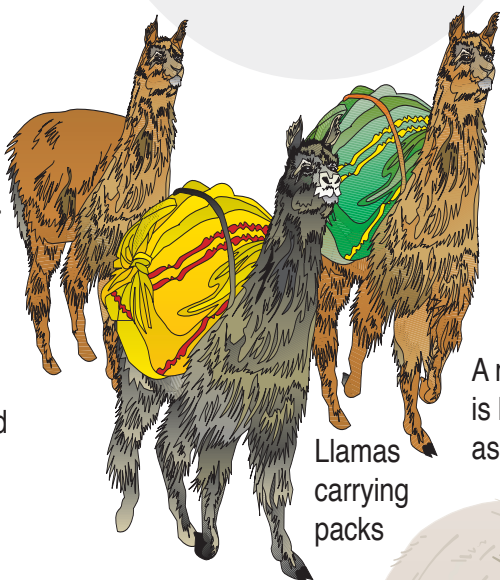
made by Inca potters in Tiahuanaco.



Girl with alpaca

Camelids like the llama and alpaca are not hooved animals. They have two toenails on each foot and a leathery pad underneath.

Alpacas and llamas live 15 to 20 years.



Llamas carrying packs

A mother is known as a **dam**.

Alpacas and llamas can successfully cross-breed. These offspring have longer fleece and are known as **huarizo**.

Baby llamas and alpacas are called **crias**.



Social creatures

Llamas and alpacas are social, gentle and curious animals. They prefer to live with other animals, and herds may include animals of different species such as goats and sheep.

Llamas and alpacas communicate through a variety of ear, tail and body postures. They also have a range of vocalizations including soft hums and a shrill alarm call to warn others of danger.

Llamas and alpacas sometimes spit when annoyed. They will lay back their ears and raise their head high in the air prior to spitting.

Did you know?

Alpacas were domesticated by the **Incas** about 5,000 years ago and raised for their exquisite fleece. Due to its high quality, alpaca fiber was reserved exclusively for the elite and nobility.

Alpacas have been exported around the world, but 99% of the world population of alpacas is found in South America.

Llama and alpaca herds are clean and tend to deposit their manure in one or two spots in the pasture.

Because of their gentle nature, alpacas are becoming popular as pets and as therapy animals in health care facilities and retirement homes.

The llama and alpaca belong to the **Camelidae family**. DNA analysis has confirmed that the **guanaco** is the wild ancestor of the llama, while the **vicuña** is the wild ancestor of the alpaca.

Llamas and alpacas have no top front teeth, so they are gentle grazers.

One good acre of pasture can support up to five alpacas or three llamas. They require minimal fencing.

Alpacas and llamas come in 22 different natural shades.

Alpacas and llamas are smart enough to respond to their names being called.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://www.softschools.com>; <https://onekindplanet.org>; <https://www.desertusa.com>; <https://www.mnn.com>; <http://www.alpacainfo.com>

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