MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

ALPACA

Vicugna pacos

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Camel family (Camelidae)
NATIVE REGION	Andes of South America
DIET	Hay, grasses and other plants
HEIGHT	2 1/2 - 3 1/2 feet
WEIGHT	100 - 175 lb
LIFESPAN	Often 20 years or more
SOCIAL LIFE	Herd animal
STATUS	Domesticated; not an IUCN risk category



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- Alpacas were bred especially for fiber, rather than to carry loads.
- Huacaya fleece is crimped and woolly; suri fleece hangs in locks.
- Alpacas communicate with hums and body posture.
- Their soft, padded feet are different from hooves.
- A baby alpaca is called a cria.

Words to know

Camelid: An animal in the camel family.
Fiber: Hair used to make knitted or woven items.
Cria: A baby alpaca.
Domesticated: An animal species bred by people over generations.

Think about it

1. Why were alpacas bred by people?
2. How does huacaya fleece differ from suri fleece?
3. What sounds and movements help alpacas communicate?
4. What do alpacas mainly eat?
5. What is a baby alpaca called?

Draw it

Draw an alpaca. Label its pointed ears, small head, long neck, fleece and padded feet.

Where people first raised it



First raised here ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS3-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.C**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/alpaca/ · **Sources:** Oklahoma State University Extension; Animal Diversity Web.

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ALPACA

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where did people first raise this animal?

Circle one:

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Camelid ☐ Fiber ☐ Cria ☐ Domesticated

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the alpaca.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Where it was first raised: Andes of South America. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Hay, grasses and other plants. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• How does huacaya fleece differ from suri fleece?

_____

_____

• What sounds and movements help alpacas communicate?

_____

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/alpaca/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

Grades 3–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS3-1** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.C**

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