

Guanaco

Lama guanicoe

Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Cetartiodactyla*

Family: *Camelidae*

Characteristics: The guanaco is the largest wild member of the camelid family in South America. Guanacos have a long slender neck, and thin long legs. Their thick wool coat is light brown or tan on top of the body, and white on the underbelly and legs. The head is a grey of black color but the lips and ears are white. Guanacos, like other camelids have large pads on the soles of their hooves. The pads help the guanaco to maneuver on rocky terrain. Guanacos measure in at 43-45 inches tall at the shoulders, or less than 4 feet. ([Arkive](#)) This camelid can weigh up to 265 pounds. ([San Diego Zoo](#))

Behavior: Guanacos tend to live in herds or social groups throughout the year. During the breeding season the groups are broken up into family groups, male groups, and small solitary male groups. The family groups consist of one male with several females and young. In winter, females may leave to form female herds or they may remain in large mixed-sex herds of 500 individuals. Guanacos communicate visually and through vocalizations, especially [alarm calls](#) to warn of danger. Odor is also important for the males to mark their territory with dung piles. The males use their enlarged canines to chase, bite, and ram [opposing males](#) and intrusive [predators](#). Another defense mechanism in guanacos is spitting up to 6 feet away from itself. ([Animal Diversity](#))

Reproduction: Females can wait to become pregnant until environmental conditions are right. Guanacos have an 11 month gestation period and give birth to a [single young](#) every year. The newborns weigh only 33 pounds and can stand immediately after birth. ([Encyclopedia of Life](#)) Baby guanaco are called chulengos or gualaquitos. ([San Diego Zoo](#)) Infants will follow the other everywhere as soon as it can walk. The babies will only nurse for a few weeks after birth, then begin to forage. By 8 months of age, they are eating only solid foods. ([Animal Diversity](#))

Diet: Wild: Grasses, shrubs, [lichens](#), fungi, cacti, fruit, and flowers
Zoo: Llama pellets and hay

Conservation: This species is considered to be Least Concern according to [IUCN Redlist](#) due to a wide distribution, presumed large populations and occurrence in numerous protected areas. Poaching and shearing practices severely threaten the population. Guanacos are likely to become extinct in 3 out of 5 countries in their historic range. 80 percent of the total population is utilized for meat or fibre, while only 20 percent of that is legal usage.

FYI: Guanacos are the ancestors of the domestic llama. They have 4x more red blood cells than a human to have more oxygen at high altitudes.



Range & Habitat:

Found in desert grassland, pampas, shrubland, and forest, the guanaco can be found at elevations up to 13,000 feet. They have a large range from north of Peru to southern Chile, including Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.



Lifespan: up to 34 years in captivity, 20 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: The split upper lip acts like fingers to draw food into the mouth.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

