

Submitted Abstract

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First Author First Name Last Name	Carlos Gomez
Submitting Author First Name Last Name	Carlos Gomez
Correspondence	cagomez@lamolina.edu.pe
Co-Authors >> E-Mails will be not listed	Barrantes, Cecilio; Viera, Mario
Organisations	Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, Peru
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Abstract

An analysis of the population of cattle, sheep and alpacas in the Andes of Peru is presented. The last census of 2012 reports 3774, 8972 and 3685 thousands head of cattle, sheep and alpaca, which represents 73, 94 and 99% of the national total for each species, respectively. In 1961; 2367, 21515, and 2337 thousands head of cattle, sheep, and alpacas were reported, which were affected later by the implemented agrarian reform from 1969 to 1980. Before the agrarian reform, livestock in the Andes (more than 3,800 masl) was in the hands of communities and big farms and as an effect of this reform, big farms were converted into cooperatives that failed, ending up abandoned or parceled out. For 1972, a decrease in the population of alpacas and sheep is reported, while cattle increased. For 1994, the cattle population continued to increase by 18% compared to the previous census, likewise, the alpaca population recovered while the sheep population continued to decline. Sheep population during the agrarian reform passed into the hands of communities and small owners, with low technological levels and as a result of terrorism between 1980 and 2000, migrations were promoted from the rural sector to population centers with decapitalization mainly of sheep. Currently the number of cattle, sheep and alpacas per owner is 2.7, 6.4 and 2.6, respectively, indicative of small holder families who represent a high proportion of the total peruvian population living in extreme poverty requiring important interventions for their improvement. The decrease in the sheep sector is explained by the lack of resources to improve their genetics and technical assistance and on the low prices of wool in the international markets. In conclusion, livestock population in the Andes has been differentially affected (increase in number of cattle and alpacas and decrease in sheep), maintaining similar animal units per unit of land area for which there is available 18.7 million ha of natural pastures conflicting with mining use and areas at lower altitudes in the interandean valleys that compete with agricultural uses. The main factors that caused the changes in livestock population have been the changes in ownership due to the agrarian reform law and the lower competitiveness of sheep production in relation to cattle and alpacas. Additional changes are expected in land use due to a growing reduction in the carrying capacity of pastures in the Andes caused by the effect of climate change.