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SPATIAL AND DIET INTERACTIONS BETWEEN VICUÑAS AND DOMESTIC UNGULATES

We present the initial results of a project on spatial and foraging ecology applied to conservation and management of vicuña in protected areas with husbandry activities. This project is framed on a research program called Sustainable economic utilization of wild South American camelids. We investigated the spatial and diet interactions between vicuñas *Vicuña vicuña* and llamas, donkeys, cattle, sheep. The study was conducted in the Laguna Blanca Reserve, Argentina (26° 30' S and 66° 40' W). We conducted censuses of vicuñas and domestics in spring 1999, and in winter and spring 2002, and microhistological and chemical analyses of diet. The main preliminary results are: (1) vicuñas showed an heterogeneous and stable pattern of distribution, (2) there was a certain degree on segregation in food niche between vicuñas and domestic ungulates, however they appeared to compete for grasses, and (3) we did not find difference in diet quality between habitat types, however this could be due to the small sample size.