

Illegal hunting and cattle, major threats for tarukas

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Tarukas (*Hippocamelus antisensis*) live in the Andes, from northern Peru to northern Argentina, ranging from 2,000-3,500masl at the south to 3,500-5,000masl in Peru and Bolivia. Usually, tarukas live in groups, within rocky outcrops among grasslands. Domestic ungulates increasingly use and invade even the most remote areas used by taruka and might compete with it for food and space, affecting deer populations.

Cattle and sheep ranching are both direct and indirect threats for the taruka. Aside from the competition for space, ranching always include the use of dogs, which can kill adult tarukas, especially when attacking in packs, and kill hidden calves in their first month. A growing threat for tarukas in Peru is illegal hunting, carried out by so called sport hunters, and by personnel working in the mines located in taruka habitat. In the last 15 years it seems that hunters have increased in the high Andes, caused by both the disappearance of terrorist groups in the area and the increase of mining concessions along the high Peruvian Andes. Mining concessions are mostly located on prime typical taruka habitat. Hopefully, legal sport hunters might reverse this trend by working towards a sound management for the species based on trophy hunting on few specimens per year.

Keywords: *Hippocamelus antisensis*, taruka, conservation, Peru, threats, illegal hunting, livestock