

# Making the World a Better Place - Two Dogs at a Time

For two weekends each year, in true Brigadoon style, the International Village at Overlook Farm comes alive and Orion and Galileo get to return to their roots and assist in combating world hunger at the same time. Orion and Galileo are Peruvian Hairless Dogs; Overlook Farm is the Northeast Regional Learning and Livestock Center for a non-profit organization called Heifer International ([www.Heifer.org](http://www.Heifer.org)). For over 60 years, Heifer International has been involved throughout the world carrying out its mission of working with communities to end poverty and hunger and care for the earth. Through the gift of livestock, Heifer International improves the standard of living one family at a time.

Located in Rutland, Massachusetts, the International Village at Overlook Farm is an important educational resource. Along an extended woodland circuit, visitors can view home sites similar to those of Heifer International's project partners in Guatemala, Eastern Europe, Africa, China, Thailand, Appalachia, and Peru. During a weekend in June and again in October, the International and Harvest Festivals are visited by over five thousand people touring the village sites where animals, crops, and the representative crafts and activities of each location are carried out by volunteers.

The Peru site is set on a rise to represent the highland regions and contains a home of handmade brick with a clay roof, an outdoor cooking site, a rock wall enclosure for the herd, and shelters for the araucana chickens, muscovie ducks, llamas, alpaca, and guinea pigs. Terraced gardens growing typical Andean crops such as corn, quinoa, nasturtiums and oca complete the site.

It is this setting the Peruvian Hairless Dogs help bring to life. Orion, and his coated brother Galileo, were provided with intense early socialization to develop them into the public relations Peruvians they are today. They are accustomed to most types of animals, humans of all ages, wheel chairs, baby carriages and motorized vehicles. When in public, they remain on a leash attached to an adult, or chaperoned inside an exercise pen (for their protection, not the crowd's). A secluded covered bedded crate gives them a place to rest away from the public eye.

As the alpaca and llamas graze behind fences the visitors get to feel their fiber; model typical llamero (llama farmer) garments; and try their hand at drop spinning. The araucana chickens scratch in the dirt and lay pastel colored eggs much to everyone's delight. In the guinea pig enclosure, the resident garbage disposals munch on weeds pulled from the terraced gardens and enjoy a quick pat from the visitors. At the outdoor cooking site, [Andean Stew](#) (recipe attached) bubbles over a fire of dried llama manure. Galileo or Orion and a volunteer in Peruvian garb provide interpretation throughout the day. If they sit on an alpaca blanket on the floor of the house it is appropriate to discuss dogs as bed-warmers. When the team sets up in a doorway or beside the house, the dogs lead to a description of the breed and a discussion of genetics (how a coated and a hairless dog could be full brothers born to two hairless parents). If the dog and volunteer position themselves at the bench beside the fire, they provide the visitors with a sketch of how life would be for a typical Heifer International project



Orion and Heifer International Volunteer (Jake Evarts) Outside of the Peru House



Galileo and Orion Outside Peru House

partner family in Peru. After interacting with the llamas, alpaca, chickens, and guinea pigs who will tolerate a pat then move out of reach, the visitors are delighted to come upon the Peruvian animal ambassadors who just can't get enough attention. The dogs love being in public.

When climate and soil conditions are harsh and life is

difficult, change comes slowly to a region. For this reason life in the high Andes is little different from what it was centuries ago. While Peruvian Hairless Dogs are rare enough today that it would be unlikely to find them on a high Andean homestead, the time warp aspect of the culture allows the dogs to be discussed in light of their historical role. They provide a valuable example of cultural changes in a minimally changing culture.

In a subsistence culture one cannot afford the luxury of pets. Even though they are well-loved and



**Orion and Mistral (Alpaca)**

not specifically raised for meat, llamas and alpacas enter the food-chain at the end of their productive life span. [The quechua word *charqui* (spiced, thin sliced, dried meat) is the source for our word *jerky*.] Guinea pigs (or cui as they are called in Peru) are kept not as pets, but as a food source. With these cultural dietary differences, the visitors are relieved to know that hairless dog is no longer a culturally acceptable food source in Peru. Orion and Galileo are secure knowing that they won't be part of the Andean Stew at some future date!

### ANDEAN STEW

Cook in a crock pot or over an open fire for 7-8 hrs on high or 3 ½-4 hrs on low:

#### Meat

1½ lbs culturally acceptable meat deboned and cut into 1" cubes coated with Peruvian rub and browned

#### Liquids

2 cups stock

12 oz chicha, an Andean fermented corn beverage which may be substituted with light beer

4 tsp lemon juice

#### Vegetables (cut into bite sized pieces)

1 medium sweet potato

2 medium carrots

1 small white onion

2 stalks celery

6 oz turnip

1 15 oz can hominy rinsed & drained

### PERUVIAN RUB

1 tsp dried garlic (2 garlic cloves crushed )

1 tsp ground cumin

¾ tsp salt

¾ tsp crushed oregano

½ tsp ground ginger

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

¼ tsp crushed thyme

¼ tsp ground allspice

2 tbsp brown sugar

4 tsp cilantro



Each day of the Festivals begins with a parade. Handlers dress in clothing typical of their area and parade, by country, past a packed field of viewers. Because parade order is subject to change, one time Orion and Galileo followed the llamas and were right in front of a yak. In the next parade they led the Peru contingent; came after the water buffalo; and had the alpaca at their rear. For most of the viewers, this is their first glimpse of a hairless dog of any type and most certainly their introduction to the Peruvian Hairless breed. Orion and Galileo are curious and anxious to meet people and animals of all types with only a few exceptions. From their points of view, snakes are to be avoided; squirrels are to be chased; and small boys are welcome visitors only if they remove their hats.

Orion and Galileo provide us the opportunity to introduce people to the breed, present a vignette of peasant life in Andean Peru, and share Heifer International's vision of Passing on the Gift. We couldn't love them more!



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Ellen Zepp is a consultant for The Awen Group, a volunteer for Heifer International, and lives with her husband Mike, 26 llamas, 1 alpaca, a herd of nubian goats, 2 cats, 3 parrots, and 3 adorable dogs at Orchid Patch in Southbridge, Massachusetts. Together, Ellen and Mike present "Andes Alive", a program that takes the culture and agriculture of the Andean highlands into the classroom. Their Peruvian Hairless Dogs, Orion and Galileo, were born on the Florida Space Coast. Photos by Mike Zepp. Ellen's e-mail: [orchidpatch@charter.net](mailto:orchidpatch@charter.net)