

Bactrian Camel

Scientific Name: *Camelus bactrianus*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Camelidae



These camels have two humps and a color varying from deep brown to dusty gray. The long hair is thickest on the head, neck, humps, forelegs and tip of tail. It sheds rapidly and in clumps. The height is 6 to 7½ feet at the shoulder. Weight can range from 1,320 to 2,200 pounds. The nostrils can be closed to keep out dust and sand. Hooves form in front of the common sole so that camels do not sink into the sand. They walk on their toes.

Range

Their range is central Asia to Mongolia.

Habitat

They inhabit dry steppes and semi-desert.

Gestation

12 to 14 months

Litter

1

Behavior

Bactrians live in the Gobi steppe along rivers and move into the desert as soon as the snow melts. They can stand extreme heat and cold and are good swimmers. They can travel carrying 375 to 600 pounds at 3 or 4 miles per hour for 4 or more days. They can store up to 80 pounds of fat in the hump. The hump shrinks as this fat is used. Food is not chewed completely before swallowing. They bring up partly digested food, called cud, and chew it, then swallow it again. Their mouths are tough enough that they eat the thorniest plants without injury. They can drink brackish water if they must and will eat fish when hungry enough. They can drink as much as 30 gallons of water in ten minutes. Camels live in groups of up to 30. When rival males meet, they display by urinating, defecating, tail slapping, and spreading hind legs. If these measures are ineffective, mortal combat may ensue. Camels have no enemies.

Reproduction

Females give birth in March or April every other year. Offspring weigh 75 pounds at birth and can walk after one day. They will nurse for 1 or 2 years and will mature in 3-4 years if female and 5-6 years if male. Mating is preceded by the male blowing up an extension of its soft palate into a red "balloon" that hangs out of the side of the mouth and arouses the female. Females are sitting during mating. Males have periods of reduced sexual activity and often give up herd leadership at such times.

Wild Diet

Any vegetation, leaves, herbs, grasses, halophytes