



BACTRIAN CAMEL



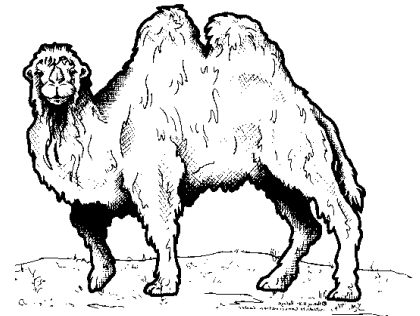
Phylum Chordata, Class Mammalia, Order Artiodactyla, Suborder Tylopoda, Family Camelidae
Camelus bactrianus

Height: Adults range from 6 to 7.5 feet.

Weight: Adults range from 600 to 1500 lbs.

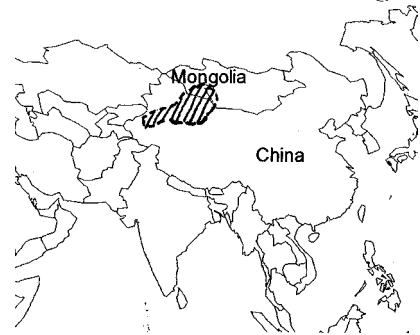
Lifespan: Bactrian camels may live as long as 40 to 50 years.

Status: Only an estimated 500 to 1500 wild Bactrian camels remain in their native range. The main threat to the Bactrian camel's survival is habitat loss. Towns are spreading into the once wild areas of the Gobi Desert and taking away waterholes that the camels need to survive.



Habitat & range: Bactrian camels are found in the arid lands of the Gobi Desert and nearby dry steppe (grassland) in China and Mongolia.

Diet: Bactrian camels feed on a wide variety of plant material, including grasses, herbs, and leaves.



Special features:

- Although many people think the humps contain water, they actually contain fatty tissue rich with dissolved minerals. The humps may flatten or sag if the animal is not getting enough to eat.
- Bactrian camels have two visible humps on their back. Dromedary camels have only one hump.
- Camels have broad feet that are adapted to walking on soft sands. The walking surface has a soft pad made of an elastic layer of connective tissue. Camels move with a swinging stride - the front and hind legs on each side of the body move in unison. They can run at speeds up to 40 miles per hour.
- Camels have several adaptations that protect them during sandstorms. They have slit-like nostrils that can be closed down tightly, and heavy eyebrows and eyelashes to protect their eyes. Camels also have a see-through third eyelid that can close over their eyes during sandstorms, but still allow them to see where they are going.
- Camels have an extremely good sense of smell and keen vision.
- There are an estimated 14 million domestic camels in Africa and Eurasia. Most are domestic dromedary camels, but the majority of the estimated 1.5 million domestic camels in China and Mongolia are domesticated Bactrian camels. Domestic camels may be used for transport, meat, milk, hides, and wool.
- Bactrian camels have many special adaptations to help them survive the extreme temperature fluctuations of the Gobi Desert. Winter temperatures can dip as low as -22 F. During the winter, Bactrian camels have long hair that is thickest on their humps, forelegs, head, neck, and tip of the tail. The coat is shed with the onset of warmer weather. Summer temperatures may reach 122 F. The camels have black skin that resists sunburn.
- The Gobi Desert receives little rainfall. In fact, even the region with the highest average annual rainfall – the northeast portion – receives only 8 inches of rain each year. Therefore, the Bactrian camels are adapted to conserve water. Camels can lose as much as 40% of their body weight in water and still survive. However, they will lose weight and strength if they have to go for extended periods of time without water.

Social structure & behavior:

While little is known about the behavior of Bactrian camels in the wild, some observations indicate that they live in family groups. The groups usually consist of one male, several females, and their offspring. "Surplus" males live alone or in bachelor groups.

Breeding & caring for young:

- Females become sexually mature at 3 - 4 years of age, males at 5 – 6 years.
- Gestation lasts from 12 to 14 months, and, in the wild, the peak birth season is from March to April. Females usually give birth to one offspring, and the young will nurse until they are 1 – 1.5 years old.
- Bactrian camels are usually full grown around 5 years of age.

