

Black Pine Animal Park

Animal Facts

Breed: ARABIAN CAMEL

Also known as DROMEDARY CAMEL

Names / Sex / Age:

Johnny Male 20

Previous Home: Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus. Trained and under the guardianship of Gunther Gebel-Williams.

Native to: Arabia.

Weight: 1,000 to 1,500 lbs. Johnny weighs about 2,000 lbs. (one ton), heavier than a typical "working" camel.

Life Expectancy: 17-50 years in the wild, 35-50 years in captivity.

Diet: Almost any vegetation in the desert, including thorny twigs and salty plants. Dates, grains, and grasses. When food is scarce, fish and flesh of other animals. When food is plentiful, they overeat, storing excess food as fat in their hump.

Status: Extinct in the wild for several hundred years, though they still exist in large numbers in domestic herds in Arabia. Now raised in captivity throughout the world.

Facts:

- Camels have three stomachs
- They gulp down most of their food without chewing it first, later regurgitating the undigested food and chewing it in cud form
- Camels are descended from llamas
- Camels give birth standing up, with babies born with eyes open, and able to walk in 2-3 hours
- Camels are born without humps, they don't develop until they eat fatty food
- Babies are weaned at about one year, but stay with their mother until 4 years of age
- Camel milk does not curdle and can be consumed by people who are lactose intolerant
- There are no naturally occurring dromedary camels remaining in the wild, they are considered domestic animals
- Camels have three eyelids, and a double row of eyelashes to protect them from blowing sand
- They can completely close off their ears, eyes, and nostrils
- Their lips and inside of their mouths are very tough to withstand eating thorny and prickly plants
- Camels can survive a loss of 40% of their body weight, while most other animals die at a loss of 20%
- Those in the Sahara Desert can go through an entire winter without drinking, because they lose very little water in their feces and urine
- A camel can drink 1/3 of its body weight in water in 10 minutes

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- Known as the “ships of the desert”, their long legs and large webbed feet are ideal for desert travel
- Like giraffes, they move both legs on one side of their body at a time, making for a comical gait
- They can spit accurately to a distance of eight feet.
- There are 160 words in the Arabic language for the English word “camel”.
- Wild herds of the Arabian camel exist in Australia (as feral animals), while attempts to introduce them into the desert southwest of the U.S. and in southern Europe have failed.
- The term “dromedary” actually refers specifically to the Arabian racing camels that can travel 80 to 120 miles per day carrying a rider and packs. The more accurate term is ‘Arabian’, though it’s easier to remember “dromedary” because the hump is like a ‘D’ turned on its side. (The ‘Bactrian’ two-hump camel reference is remembered by ‘B’ turned on its side.)

Personal History:

Johnny was put on hiatus by Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus, and later retired permanently, because he was not needed amidst the other four Arabian camels performing. There was also a desire to replace the circus’s tan-brown camels with white camels during an anniversary year when costuming was going to be all white and metallics.

Before Johnny’s arrival, Black Pine had agreed to take Otto, a co-performer. The park “borrowed” Otto for five years, at which point he became a permanent resident. Otto passed away very unexpectedly in April of 2007 due to an auto immune blood disorder.