

# WHITE CAMELS OF BALOCHISTAN

(Short Communication)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are two main types of camels found in the World. One humped camel generally called Dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*) is found in the Arabian deserts, Iran, Afghanistan, Central and South Asia and the other is Bactrian (*Camelus bactrianus*) two-humped camel, which is found in central Asia, Russia and China. The term "dromedary" is derived from the *dramas* (Greek for "road") and thus is directly applicable only to the racing or riding dromedary. However, the term is used throughout the world to describe this specie. The name Bactrian is derived from a place name, Baktria, on the Oxus River in northern Afghanistan, from where it was originated.

In Pakistan, the dromedary type of camels are found with a population of 0.8 million (2), while the number of Bactrians are said to be approximately 1000 animals only, which are available in extremely northern areas of the country or a few specimens are kept in the zoos.

## 2. HABITAT

The camel is a hardy animal, survive in harsh environment of arid, semi-arid and sandy deserts. This animal can prove its worth in the conditions where others animals can't survive. Camels are mostly found in the rangelands of Balochistan, coastal areas and desert area of Cholistan, Thal and Tharparker. In Balochistan rangelands, the main stay of the economy of the pastoralists lie on this specie, which is interwoven in their socio-economic system and provides them milk, meat, draught power and other livelihood.

According to a preliminary survey by the authors (4), the mountainous animals of northeastern Balochistan are white in color, not reported before in the literature. The authors initiated the first study of its kind on white camels in Kohlu Dist of Balochistan, where majority of this breed (48,443) of white camels are found, therefore, the Kohlu survey is the best representative of this breed of camel (Figure 1). The white camels are actually the offshoot of mountainous camels, which are locally called as *Kohi* breed and some animals known as *Khander* with a little variation in color from *Kohi* breed, are found in the piedmonts of Suleman Ranges in Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan.

The *Kohi* camels are found in the six northeastern Districts of Balochistan, which are mostly concentrated in Kohlu, Barkhan and Musa Khel Districts while some animals are also available in the Districts of Loralai, Qila Saifullah and Zhob. About 27 % of the camels of Balochistan are found in this area. Population of these districts as of last census (1) is given in the following Table 1. The latest figures will be received at the end of this year (2006), which is the population census year.

White camels are predominantly found in the Rod Kohi areas of the Suleman ranges where vegetation in the form of forage trees (*Acacia modesta*, *Olio cuspidata*) and tall bushes (*Caragana imbegua*, etc.) are abundantly available, which minimize the saltiest taste of their milk and meat. This makes one of the significant reason for these white camels's export or illegal transfer to Iran and Middle Eastern countries because of the desirable taste of the meat. However, the saltiest taste is dominant in the products of the camels ranging on saltbushes and other trees of the deserted lands.

## 3. POPULATION AT DECLINE

At present their population has been estimated as 0.8 millions (2). Balochistan province has the dense population of camel, which habitats about 41.51 % of the total population, while 7.96, 22.95, and 27.55 % of camels are found in NWFP, Punjab and Sind provinces, respectively.

A decreasing trend of population has been seen in the past as confirmed by some authors (3), who has reported a decrease of 29 % in Pakistan during the last decade (1994-2004). Some of the reasons for decline in camel population in Pakistan have been detailed out (5). The changing scenario of infra-structure development in

Balochistan, drought prevailed during the past decade and the after war effects in the neighboring country Afghanistan, had made the population of white camels at stake.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Further studies are underway which will reveal more facts on this neglected specie of the past. This will also evaluate and characterize the white camel and their place in the socio-economic scenario of the pastoral economy of the Balochistan province. The authors suggest that a Camel Research Institute (CRI) be established in the province to explore the production potential of the all camel breeds especially the white camels.

#### REFERENCES

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4. **Raziq, A. and M. Younas. 2004.** Personal communications during various visits to Balochistan rangelands for the conduct of survey of white camels and the uplift of pastoralists through model camel farming.
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.Table 1. Population of Camels in northeastern Districts of Balochistan.

District	Male	Female	Total
Barkhan	2,098	4,078	6,176
Kohlu	24,796	23,647	48,443
Loralai	1,396	494	1,890
Musa Khel	6,708	13,898	20,606
Qila Saif Ullah	6,369	4558	10,927
Zhob	2,343	844	3,187
		<b>Total</b>	91,229

(Census of Livestock, 1996)

Figure 1. Showing the White Camel of Balochistan.

