

Common Name: San Clemente Island Goat (San Clemente Goat)

Scientific Name: *Capra Aegagrus Hircus*



Livestock Conservancy Status: Critically Endangered Heritage Breed

Class: Mammalia

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Bovidae

Genus: *Capra*

Species: *Hircus*

Habitat: These goats are from San Clemente Island, which is about 68 miles west of San

Diego off the coast of Southern California and consists of 57 square miles. San Clemente goats no longer live on San Clemente Island. Their habitat consists of rugged mountain country, rocky crags, and alpine meadows.

Physical Characteristics: The San Clemente goat is a relatively small breed of domestic goat. They are hardy and fine, almost deer-like in their appearance with colors ranging from tan to dark brown. Males (bucks) average 28 inches in height; females (does) average 24 inches in height. Their length ranges from 3.5 to 5.5 feet. They can weigh anywhere from 50 to 120lbs. Both genders are horned which are curved-back and will eventually curve up and twist on mature males.

Reproduction: San Clemente does possess good mothering abilities. Breeding cycles generally occur in late summer to early winter. A doe has an 18 to 21-day estrus cycle or “season.” The doe’s “season” lasts up to 2 to 3 days. The gestation period is 5 months. 50% of births are twins; 40% are single births; 10% are triplets. Rarely, quadruplets are born.

Life Span: (Wild) N/A (San Clemente goats no longer live in the wild)

(Captivity) 10-22 years

Wild Diet: Pastured grasses, bark, leaves, twigs, shrubs. San Clemente goats no longer live in the wild.

Resident Animal Specifics: Our San Clemente goats, Bonnie and Sunny, arrived at Mesker Park Zoo on November 3, 2015. Bonnie is a doe who was born on May 3, 2013; Sunny is a buck who was born on April 29, 2012.

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Background: The San Clemente goat is a breed of domestic goat that is derived from feral goats isolated on San Clemente Island. It is a genetically unique breed, and its origins are unknown.

San Clemente goats were brought to San Clemente Island in 1875 and became feral animals. For about 100 years, they lived and reproduced without any natural predators. By 1972, there were 15,000 goats on San Clemente Island. Between 1972 and 1991, San Clemente goats were eliminated from San Clemente Island by trapping, killing, and rescue. The elimination caused them to become a critically endangered breed. Some of the rescued animals were bred to rebuild the population of San Clemente goats. Currently, there are only about 750 San Clemente goats in the world.

For more information, please see Attachment, How the San Clemente Goat Became Critically Endangered.

Conservation Status: The Livestock Conservancy lists San Clemente goats as a critically endangered heritage breed. The San Clemente Island Goat Foundation is committed to “proactively promoting the popularity, increasing the geographical distribution, and preserving the genetic diversity of San Clemente Island goats through responsible steward and breeding practices.” There are approximately 750 San Clemente goats remaining. They now live in the U.S. and western Canada on farms, livestock preserves, and zoos. Low biodiversity exists among San Clemente goats because of the large-scale eradication and their inbreeding within isolated populations.

Uses: San Clemente goats can be used in a variety of ways:

--**Conservation breeding.** Over three dozen breeders in the U.S. and Canada raise the goats. In addition, there are some zoos that have breeding programs for San Clemente goats, including Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington, Illinois.

--**Pets.**

--**Dairy livestock.** Worldwide, people drink more goat milk than the milk of any other animal. San Clemente goats produce a very high-quality milk with a butterfat content that is as high as or higher than other dairy breeds of goats. A higher butterfat content results in creamier milk, butter, and cheese.

--**Meat livestock.** Goat meat is the number one consumed meat in the world. San Clemente goats could be used for that purpose, but their current low population limits their potential use as meat goats.

--**Brush clearance.** San Clemente goats are well-suited for clearing brush.

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--**Inter-breeding with other goat breeds.** As a hardy breed, San Clemente goats can impart “hybrid vigor” when cross-bred with other goat breeds. Feral goats with hardiness, fertility, mothering ability, and resistance to internal parasites can be used to develop new breeds of meat goats that have those traits.

--**Genetic research.** After considering 96 breeds of goats, scientists used DNA from a San Clemente goat, because of the breed’s inbreeding, to develop an improved and relatively inexpensive reference goat genome by using new technologies. A finished, accurate goat genome will permit farmers to select and breed animals with essential traits, such as high-quality milk and meat and the ability to tolerate extreme environments.

Miscellaneous Goat Facts: Goats eat almost all kinds of vegetation, including poison ivy and kudzu. There are even businesses that rent goats out to clear brush and other vegetation.

Goats’ eyes have rectangular pupils, allowing for excellent peripheral vision: 320 – 340-degree field of vision, compared to humans’ 160 – 210 degrees. Their large pupils also give them fantastic night vision.

Goats have 60 chromosomes, compared to 46 for humans and 54 for sheep.