San Clemente Goat

*Capra hircus*

Fact Sheet

**Status:** Common, though the San Clemente breed displayed at the zoo is rare

**Distribution:** Since domestication, these goats have been spread all over the world by humans. The San Clemente breed inhabited San Clemente Island, located off the coast of southern California until it was systematically removed in the years following 1980. Now it is bred on special farms.

**Habitat:** *Capra hircus* has been kept successfully in all climates. Feral groups are found usually in rugged mountain country, rocky crags, and alpine meadows.

**Diet:** Need a year-round supply of roughage, such as pasture, browse or well-cured hay but can survive on very thin deposits of grass. As mentioned above *C. hircus* requires grass for grazing, but prefers to browse brush lands and a varied selection of pasture plants, including non-noxious weeds.

**Length:** From 3 and one-half feet to over five and one-half feet. San Clemente goats are relatively small, close to the maximum standard for dwarf breeds.

**Weight:** 19.8 to 248.6 lbs (9 to 113 kg) However, they usually average around 99 lbs (45 kg)

**Reproduction:** Humans usually control the breeding behavior of these goats, but whether in the wild or in captivity breeding follows a polygynous system. Most breeding cycles occur in late summer to early winter. The female goat has an 18-21 day estrus cycle or "season." The doe's "season" lasts from a few hours to two or three days. The gestation period is five months. Twins are common.

**Longevity:** 10 to 22 years.

**General Description:** Horns are prominent in both genders of the San Clemente goat. Although the island population of the San Clemente goat once exhibited a wide range of colors and color markings, the goats are now mostly red or tan with black markings.

**Behavior:** Domestic goats have a well-developed herding instinct and prefer to be in groups of 2 or more. Goats are diurnal, and spend most of the daylight hours grazing. In the wild there is a hierarchy structure in the herds, with the males competing for their place in the hierarchy by engaging in head butting contests. However, in captivity, much of this animals daily social behavior is controlled by humans.

**Did you know?** On a worldwide basis, more people drink the milk of goats than any other single animal. The San Clemente goat is a historically significant breed as it was introduced in the 1500s by the Spanish.

**Where can you find them?** Farms, there are very few registered with the International Dairy Goat registry. They can also be found in some zoos.
Cowichan Bay Farm

San Clemente Goats

PURPOSES: Meat and pet stock
PRACTICAL TRAITS:
• Unusual hardiness & thriftiness
• Highly disease resistant, therefore fewer vet bills
• Does twin easily
• Strong maternal instinct
• Horned in both sexes
• Small animal averaging 55–75 cm high
• Make wonderful pets

HISTORY: The origins of the San Clemente goats remain obscure. There are several theories to explain their breed ancestry and how the goats initially arrived on San Clemente Island, just off the Californian coast. One popular theory is that the goats were brought to San Clemente Island in the 1500’s, on exploring ships by the Spanish, and the goats were deposited on the island as a ready source of fresh meat for later voyages.

In 1934 the U.S. Navy became responsible for San Clemente Island. The army allowed hunting and trapping of the goats; however, by 1972 the goat population was as high as 11,000. A stock-reduction program was implemented for the goats, supposedly to preserve endangered plants although, ironically, the Navy also used this island for bombing practice!

The Fund for Animals recognized these goats as a breed to be saved and then placed in new homes. The goats were promoted as barnyard pets, and an adoption system was implemented. Because the goat adoption contract discouraged and forbade the breeding of the San Clemente Goats on the mainland farms, many of the goats were neutered before being transported to their new homes. It is believed that many of these goats (80%) are now dead.

The American Minor Breeds Conservancy is very concerned about the status of these goats, as there are less than 200 worldwide, and they are encouraging farms to take part in a conservation plan, to maintain this unique gene pool. The San Clemente goats are critically rare, but they can be saved.

STATUS: RARE (according to the American Minor Breeds Conservancy.)
Cowichan Bay Farm keeps a small herd of registered San Clemente Island Goats, having drawn their breeding stock from reputable farms across North America. These intelligent animals represent some of the rarest domestic livestock on the continent. Cowichan Bay Farm is pleased to have provided breeding stock to other conservation-minded farms across Canada and in the States. Each February our San Clemente Island does kid out a small group of
delightful baby goats, which are lovingly raised to weaning age and then are established on other farms. Interested parties should contact us early as these rare and beautiful animals tend to sell out quickly.

From: http://www.cowichanbayfarm.com/San%20Clemente%20Goats.htm