Student Handout 3 – Large Mammals and Nomadic Pastoralists

Horses: The horse is often the animal most beloved by the nomadic people. The horses of Central Asia have been known for their stamina, strength, speed, and endurance since ancient times. They are adapted to the extremes of weather and terrain of this region, making them valuable forms of transportation. The mane and tail are used for making rope, weaving, and even musical instruments. Horses are not generally raised for food or hides, though they may be utilized for meat or leather. The milk of mares is made into a fermented beverage by some groups of nomadic herdsman. The famous horses of Ferghana were especially valued and used as tribute to the Chinese emperors. The Khans used the small and seemingly tireless Mongolian ponies as they began their quest across the continent to establish the Mongol Empire.

Sheep: The staple livestock of the nomadic people, sheep are valued for their milk (used to make dairy products) and mutton (meat from an adult sheep which was a basic part of their diet). The sheep's wool adapts it to the environment in terms of its texture and length. The wool is used for felt, carpets, and clothing. The hide is also valued for leather products. Sheep require protection from predators, as well as fresh pasturelands.

Goats: The goat is valued by Central Asian nomads for their meat, milk, hide, and particularly wool. As with sheep, these products are important in providing food, clothing, and products to sell. In some areas of Central Asia, the production of cashmere has become an especially profitable product of this animal. These animals are also adapted to the mountainous terrain of Central Asia.

Camels: The sturdy, steady camel is an important livestock commodity as transportation. In an arid region, this animal can survive for up to a month without fresh water. The camel is especially helpful as a beast of burden in the desert areas, with feet, hides, and eyes particularly adapted to this environment. In addition, the milk, meat, and wool of camels are also important to the people who raise them. It was the domestication of the camel that made travel along the Silk Road possible for the purposes of trade.

Bovines: (Cows/Yak/Ox) The shaggy yak is the animal of high altitudes. Cross breeding with cattle has produced a domestic ox that is a valued animal in parts of Central Asia. The domestic yak of today provides milk and meat, which is consumed fresh or dried. Hides are used for leather, and hair is used for rope and cloth. The yak is also utilized as a beast of burden and transportation as they are well adapted for their high altitude environment, much as camels are used in the desert. The less sturdy cow is found in flatter elevations and used for milk, meat, and leather, though it is not used for transportation and carrying things.

Dogs: The only non-livestock animal that is frequently found among the nomadic people of Central Asia, the dog is used to guard livestock and property. Dogs keep predators such as

wolves at bay and may be used for hunting. They are not considered pets, though they are admired for their loyalty and valued for their courage.

Source: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/12/g68/animalnomadstudent.pdf

Group Discussion Questions – Information to present to the class:
- *How common is this animal in our society? Why?*
- *What role does it play? How is it utilized?*
- *What qualities would we use to describe this animal?*
- *Do you think the use of this animal has changed through our history? How? Why?*
- *Why might this animal be especially valuable to a nomadic pastoralist?*

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Animal Uses Checklist: Listen to your classmates' presentations, and place an "X" in each category as appropriate. If an animal did not provide the item to people, leave the space blank. Identify one unique quality about each animal (what makes it different from the rest?) summarize in the space provided.

	Horse	Sheep	Goat	Camel	Bovine	Dog
Milk						
Meat						
Hide (skin) or hair/wool						
Transportation						
Unique Quality						