

Story of Cashmere

Dong reaches down and lifts a handful of clean yellow sand. "These sand grains are coarse and very uniform in size," he continues. "This allows spaces to be created between them, spaces capable of trapping drops of water, which allows plants to grow."

Over time, as the plant roots stabilize the sand, each plant helps fix the dune, while blown sand and newer dunes roll over the tops of existing megadunes. These new dunes are then held in place by the plants beneath, and revegetation begins on the new top layer.

Like a bed thick with quilts of Velcro, the megadunes have seen successive fresh covers for millions of years. "At the interior of each megadune," says Dong, "you may have a dune 4 to 40 million years old—though a precise age has yet to be determined. But no matter how old the base of a megadune is, its top layer, its newest feature, may be only one year old. It's a complex process. Layer on layer on layer, requiring time and the area's characteristic mix of sand and rain."

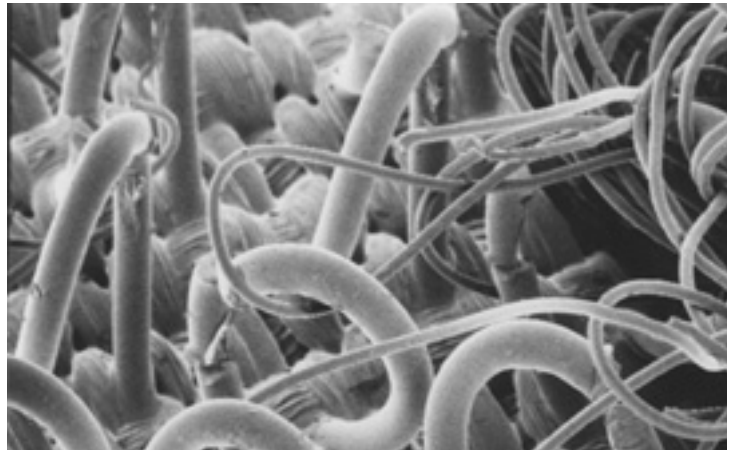


Supermarket Cashmere Twinset. 100% cashmere. "I appear to be an economic miracle, and the ultimate sign that luxury is for all.

How am I so seductively soft and cheap?

Thank China for the fact that you are able to casually toss the diamond fibre into your trolley along with frozen peas and multibuy chicken breasts. There are now 2,000 cashmere companies in China, that together control 93% of the global cashmere clip. The pressure is on; specifically it's on the fragile ecosystem of the Alashan plains of Mongolia to support an ever-increasing goat herd so we can get this fibre fast and cheap. Not that all of my provenance is quite so exotic. Please don't look at me under a microscope. Yes, my label says 100% cashmere, but tests show that I am technically just 88.3% cashmere. All those pressures and an increased herd and production cycle mean things are getting rough out there. Once the diamond fibre was the silkiest thing imaginable, at just 18.5 microns (a human hair is 60 microns). Today, it's edging towards 26 microns. Besides, 3.2% of my fibre is plain old wool, 6.5% is frankly unidentified and 0.7% is rabbit fur - apologies if you're squeamish about animal fur. There's a cost to democratisation, you know."





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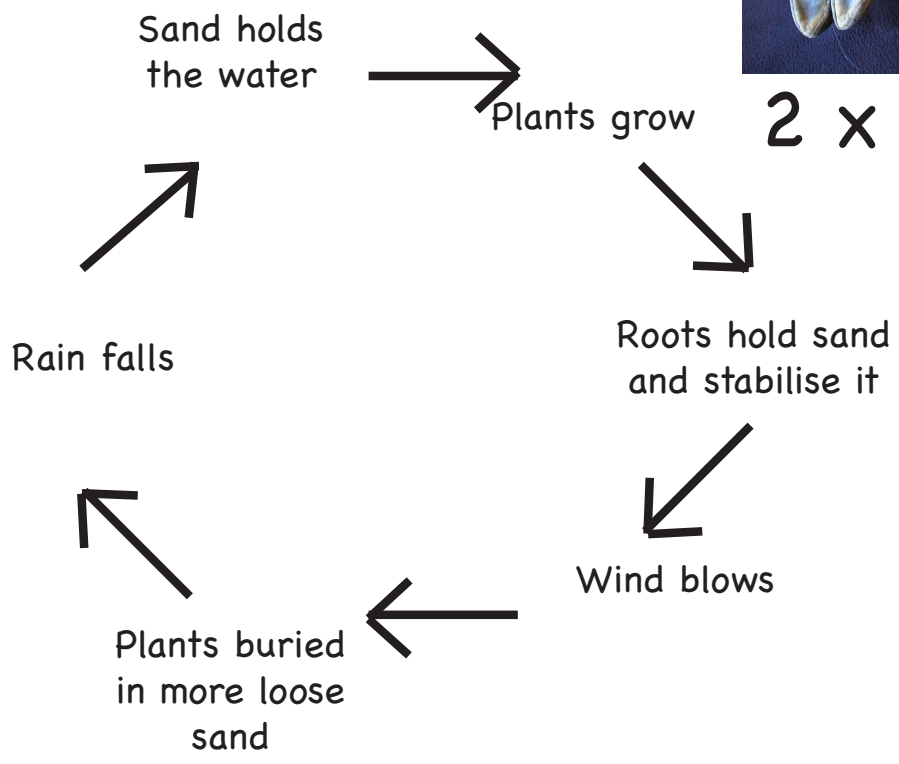
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How Sand Dunes grow in the Gobi Desert



2 x 2.4M

1990

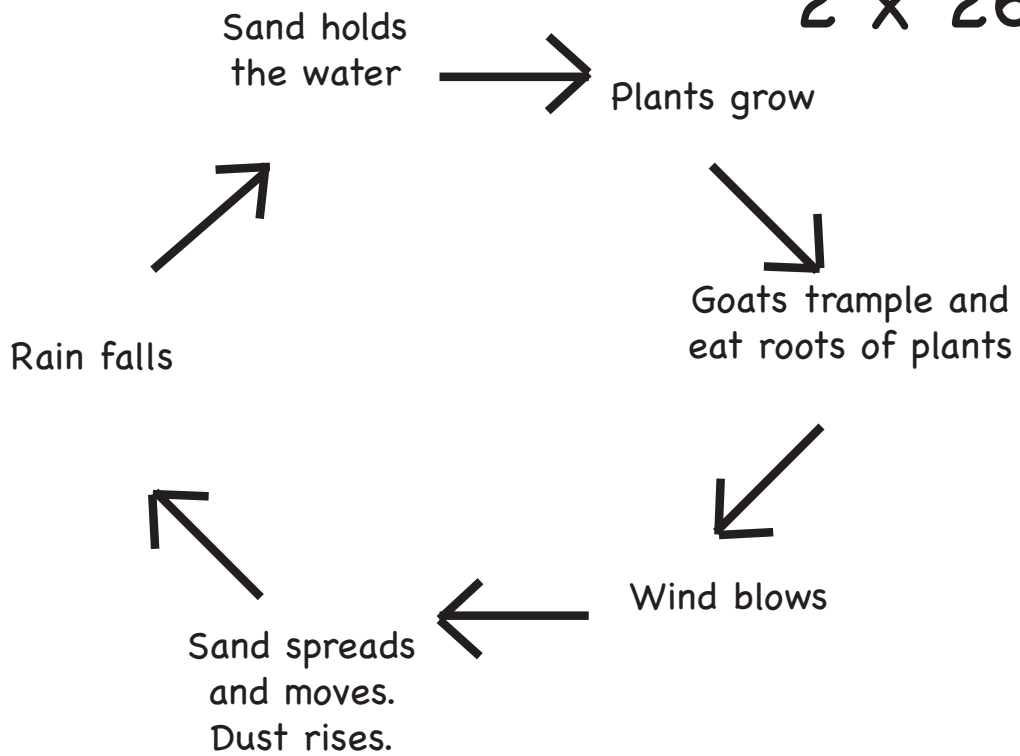


How Sand Dunes move in the Gobi Desert

2004



2 x 26M



Goat Feet and Camel Feet



I'm a Bactrian camel. We are called ships of the desert..



..because our feet float on the surface.



We are desert goats. We survive..



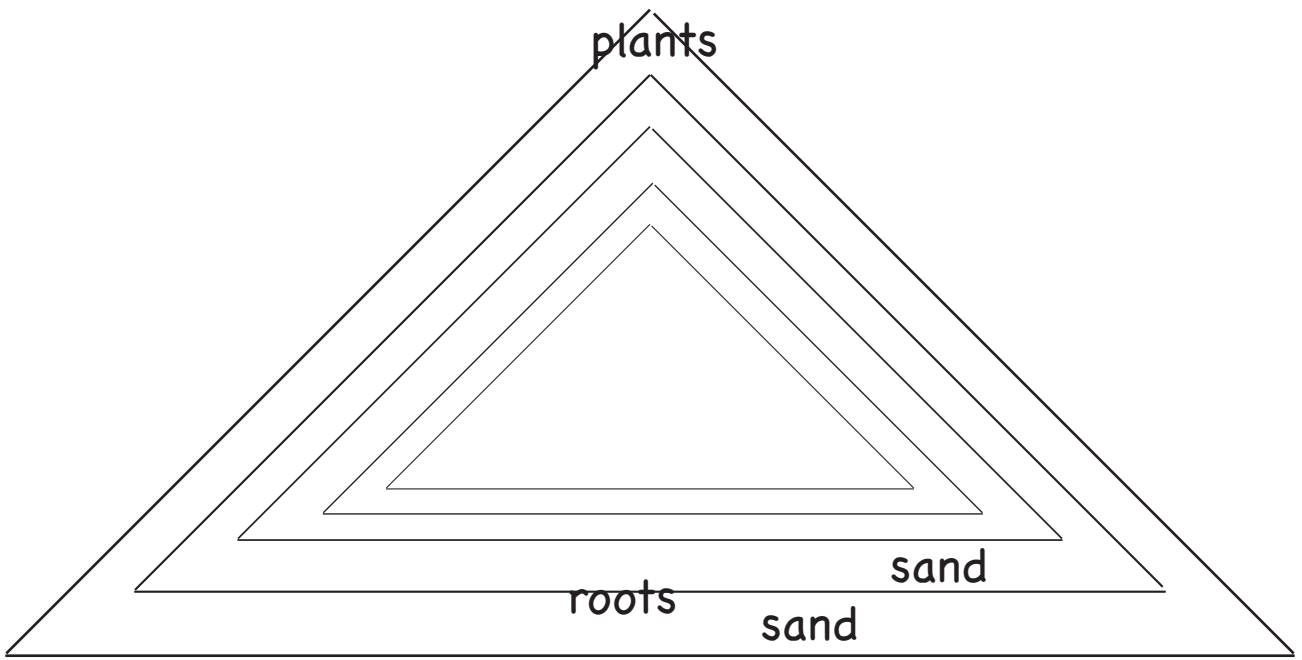
..because we can eat everything and our hooves are good as knives and forks.



We are megadunes in the Gobi desert. We grow in one place because..

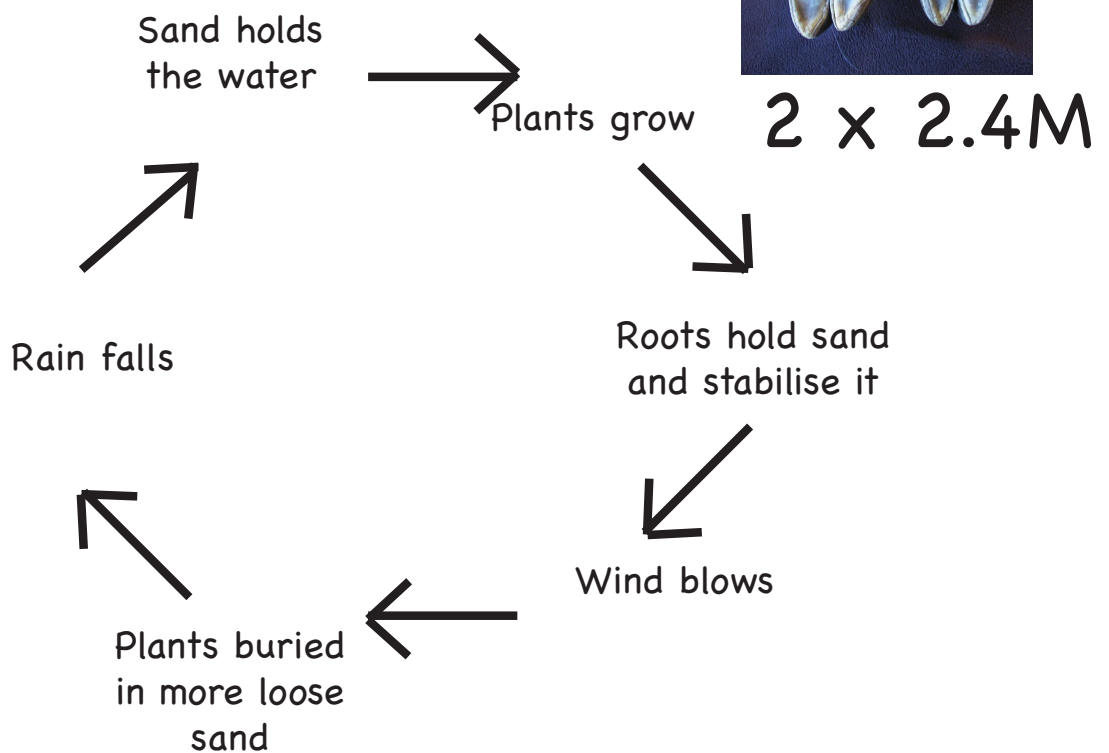


..our sand particles hold water well and plants love to grow on us



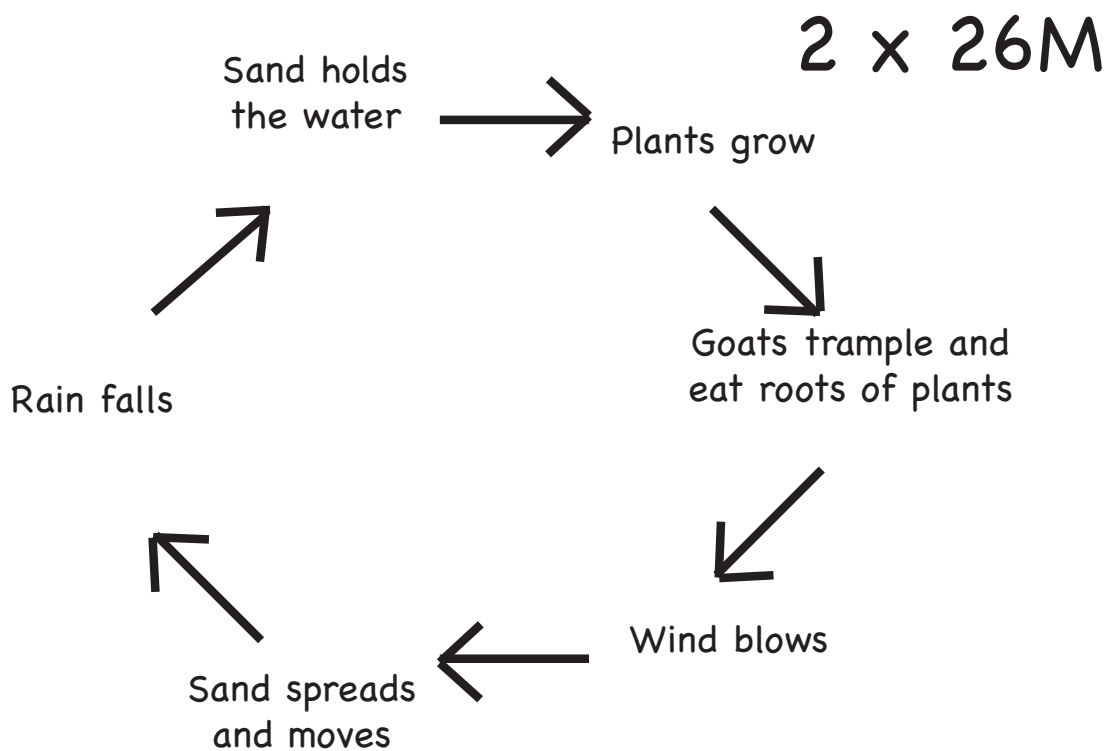
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Story of Cashmere Goats in Mongolia

