



# Aridity

Mention of arid land primarily conjures up images of deserts, hostile living conditions, economic hardship and lack of water. However, this is no longer a completely accurate picture. The main characteristics of arid lands are:

- scant, infrequent, irregular and unpredictable rainfall;
- significant variations in day and night temperatures;
- soils that contain little organic matter and lack water; and
- flora and fauna that have adapted to the climatic conditions (drought-resistant, salt-tolerant and heat-resistant species, and species able to cope with a lack of water).

With good management, arid lands can be fertile and sustain plant and animal populations.

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## 1 The total number of people in the world who live in arid lands (apart from deserts) is approximately:

- a. 100 million people                       c. 1.5 billion people  
 b. 350 million people                       d. 2 billion people

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## 2 What percentage of all arid lands are under cultivation?

- a. 33%     c. 55%  
 b. 44%     d. 66%

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## 3 What percentage of cattle is fed on arid lands?

- a. 15%     c. 50%  
 b. 35%     d. 75%

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## 4 What is the approximate percentage of arid lands under cultivation?

- a. 30%     c. 50%  
 b. 40%     d. 60%

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## 5 The biggest area of arid land is situated in:

- a. Australia, Asia and North America       c. Latin America  
 b. Africa     d. Europe
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**6** Most of the world's population who live in arid lands live in developing countries.

- a. True  b. False

**7** What is the approximate percentage of arid lands used for grazing?

- a. 30%  c. 50%  
 b. 40%  d. 60%

**8** Human settlements in arid lands are concentrated around the few water sources such as rivers, streams, wells, reservoirs and oases. Settlements comprise approximately what percentage of arid lands?

- a. 1%  c. 5%  
 b. 2%  d. 10%

**9** Complete the sentence: Difficult climatic conditions in arid lands ...

- a. ... have led to the appearance of a relatively large number of endemic species.  
 b. ... have drastically reduced biodiversity in these regions.

**10** Approximately 99 percent of the surface of Kazakhstan, Moldova and Turkmenistan are classified as arid.

- a. True  b. False

ANSWERS: 1-d 2-b 3-c 4-b 5-a 6-a 7-d 8-b 9-a 10-a

