

Merycoïdodon

Common Name:
Sheep-like mammal

Classification:
Class: Mammalia
Order: Artiodactyla
Family: Merycoïdodontida



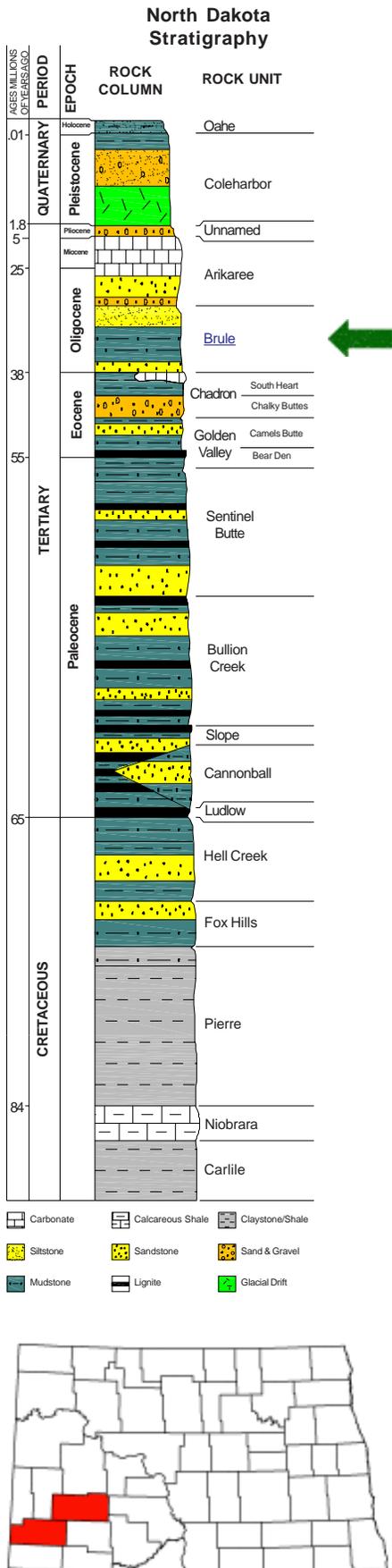
Skull and lower jaws of the sheep-like mammal, *Merycoïdodon culbertsoni*. Brule Formation. Stark County. Specimen on exhibit at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck. Width 198 mm. North Dakota State Fossil Collection ND303.1.

Description:

Merycoïdodon was a member of the now extinct family, Merycoïdodontidae, which are also sometimes called oreodonts. These animals had some features that are typical of pigs and some features that are typical of camels. They possessed advanced teeth with long-lasting grinding surfaces adapted for effective side to side chewing of vegetation. *Merycoïdodon* was sheep size, about 4 feet in length, but probably appeared more pig or peccary like. They were heavily built with short fore-toed legs and were not efficient runners. Fossils of *Merycoïdodon* are common indicating that these browsing animals lived in large herds on the North Dakota savanna about 30 million years ago.



Merycoïdodon. Painting courtesy of Simon and Schuster Publishing Company.



Locations where fossils have been found