

WARTHOG

RANGE:

Most of Africa south of the Sahara.

HABITAT:

Open savannah grasslands and woodlands, and semi-arid bush.

SIZE:

Head and body length is 3-5 feet. Tail length is 9-17 inches. Shoulder height is 25-33 inches. Weight is 100-330 pounds. The males are larger than the females. The upper tusk length in males is 10-35 inches, and in females is 6-10 inches.

LIFE EXPECTANCY:

12 -15 years in the wild. 14-18+ years in captivity.

REPRODUCTION:

Females that are not nursing are normally receptive for breeding during a 3 day span every 6 weeks. Sexual maturity is reached at about 18 months. Males normally must reach full physical maturity, about 4 years, before they have breeding access to the females. Gestation lasts 5 ½ months. Litter size is 1-8 piglets. Since the female is able to nurse only 4 young at a time, often only 2-3 babies survive. After about ten days, the babies will begin to explore outside the burrow with the mother.

During breeding season the males will battle one another, butting with heads and large upper tusks, in an attempt to attract mates. Their razor sharp lower tusks are capable of inflicting wounds, but serious injuries are rare. The weaker male will usually give up the fight and go away. The large warts serve as shock absorbers during combat

DIET:

Wild: Almost exclusively grasses, but may also include roots, tubers, berries, bark from saplings, carrion, dung, soil and bones for minerals.

Captivity: Mixed grain, unlimited alfalfa and timothy hay, carrots, pears, corn, apples, sweet potatoes, occasional grapes.

BEHAVIOR:

Social organizations consist of several adult females and their young offspring. These groups are called "sounders". Adult males are solitary, but join the sows briefly for mating. Immature males run in temporary sounders.

Warthogs are normally diurnal creatures, but may switch to a nocturnal lifestyle in areas where they are disturbed by humans. They sleep and rear young in abandoned aardvark burrows underground. When threatened they run for the nearest vacant burrow. They can run at speeds up to 30 m.p.h. The young will enter a burrow headfirst. The adults will follow, backing in and plugging the entrance with their large heads, and defending themselves and babies with their sharp lower canines.

Warthogs lack sweat glands, so they often rest in mud wallows during the day to cool their bodies and protect themselves from sunburn and biting insects. At the same time their bodies become camouflaged by taking on the color of the earth. They are good swimmers.

While feeding, warthogs, unlike other pigs, will drop down and shuffle along on their calloused wrists to eat grass and dig up roots with their powerful snouts. They may travel 2-6 mile a day while grazing.

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LOUISVILLE



photo by Cindy Rogers

Order:	Artiodactyla
Family:	Suidae
Genus:	Phacochoerus
Species:	africanus

WARTHOG



Warthogs exhibit social interactions through body rubbing and grooming. They may mark an area that they are using at a given time with saliva, or secretions that come from glands around the eyes. They also communicate with one another through many different vocalizations such as grunts, squeals, and snorts, which are used for greetings, defense, courtship, and submission.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

Warthogs have a long, thin mane of coarse hair that extends from the neck to middle of the back, is interrupted by a bare space, and then continues on to the rump. The rest of the body is sparsely covered with bristles. Adults are dark brown to black. The young are grayish-pink. Males are larger than females. The males also have more pronounced "warts" and tusks. When warthogs move slowly, their tails hang down and swish at insects. When they run, however, their tails are held straight up with the tassel on the end waving as a visual warning to other Warthogs. They tend to be right or left-tusked, so wear is uneven. The tusks grow continuously.

Warthogs are preyed upon by lions, leopards, hyenas and hunting dogs. Young are also preyed upon by large eagles and jackals.

Warthogs have poor eyesight, keen hearing, and an exceptional sense of smell. Their eyes are located high on their foreheads, enabling them to see over a wide expanse of landscape while grazing.

Several times a day warthogs defecate together at a communal dung sites. This ritual may serve to protect the warthogs by preventing predators from discovering lone warthogs or following dung trails to learn where they travel.

STATUS:

Warthogs have been deliberately eradicated in agricultural areas of Africa, because they can carry and transmit diseases, such as swine fever, that are fatal to domestic pigs and other livestock. Warthogs are also hosts for tsetse flies, carriers of sleeping sickness, which is deadly to humans.

Warthogs have been hunted extensively by people for food. They have been eliminated from most of South Africa, but are common in the remaining areas of their range.

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