



Amazing Animals Fact sheets

Cheetahs

Cheetah are not classed as 'big cats'. Big cats have the ability to roar - cheetahs have instead retained the ability to purr, just like your domestic cat at home.



Cheetah

The cheetah has a slender, elongated body supported on tall, thin legs with blunt semi-retractable claws and a flattened rudder-like tail that measures half of the cheetah's head and body length. Black "tear marks" run down the face from the corner of the eyes down to the mouth. It is believed that the "tear marks" aid in hunting by helping to keep the sun out of the eyes. The coat colour is tan with evenly spaced black spots. The coat is coarse and short. Adult body length 112-135cm; tail length 66-84cm; shoulder height 73-90cm; weight 34-65kg.

Habitat

Cheetahs prefer vast areas of open country, such as grassy plains or savannahs, although they can survive in a variety of different habitats including open woodlands, semi-desert, sandy plains, dense vegetation, and mountainous terrain.

Diet

Cheetahs are diurnal meaning they are active during the day. Cheetahs usually hunt in the late morning and early evening. They capture their prey by stalking until the prey is within 10-30 metres before initiating the chase. Because cheetahs store heat internally they will only chase over very short distances before they must stop and cool down. Chases usually last around 20 seconds and no longer than 1 minute. About half of all chases are successful. Cheetahs use a bite to the throat in order to suffocate their prey. Their diet consists of Thomson's and Grant's gazelles, springbok, reedbuck, waterbuck, kudu, steenbok, duiker, warthog, hare, game birds, and wildebeest. Because of their relatively small size in comparison to other large predators in Africa, cheetahs commonly lose 10-50% of their kills to lions, hyaenas and

leopards. Cheetahs are well adapted to living in arid environments and are not obligate drinkers. They appear to be able to satisfy their moisture requirements from their prey's blood and urine or by eating tsama melons.

Breeding

Cheetah breed once a year. The female raises the cubs ranging from 2-8 (but usually 3 or 4) herself. They will stay with her for up to two years.

Australia Zoo Cheetah profiles



Foxtrot

Foxtrot or Foxy as he is known by his handlers, was born at the Ann Van Dyk Cheetah Centre in South Africa and arrived at Australia Zoo at six months of age with his brother Echo. He is very affectionate and enjoys constant attention. He is often found snoozing next to Echo and grooming his handlers under the shade of a tree. Foxy is always very gentle with everything he does.

At times he can be our most nervous cheetah, often relying on Echo or his handlers for comfort and moral support. Sometimes things can be a bit overwhelming for poor old Foxy. He has a definite phobia of Bush Turkeys ever since the day he opened his eyes from an afternoon nap to see two of them having a territorial fight right in front of him.

Walks around the zoo are an exciting part of Foxy's day. He enjoys taking a leisurely stroll around the zoo, but as soon as he catches sight of the elephants, the walk comes

to a sudden halt. Foxy loves to sit and stare at the elephants. If the handlers try to move him on he will occasionally stamp his feet and squeal in protest. If it were up to Foxy he would spend all day watching the elephants.

Endangered Species!

Very low numbers are left in the wild. Cheetahs are at risk of extinction within the next ten years.

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