

ZEBRA FACTS

Learn all about Zeb's herd

- Zebras are part of the equidae family along with horse and donkeys.
- Zebras are mammals.
- They are herbivores eating mainly grass.
- They live about 25 years.
- They stand 1-1.5 m tall at the shoulder with a weight: of between 200-450 kg.
- Common plain zebras have tails around half a metre in length.
- Wild zebras live on grasslands, savannas, woodland, mountains, scrubland and coastal hills in Africa.
- There are three species of zebra: Grevy's, mountain and plains, the latter of which is by far the most common.
- Every zebra has a unique pattern of black and white stripes. They act like an equine fingerprint. Foals recognise their mothers by the pattern of their stripes, as well as by scent and call.
- Zebras have excellent eyesight and hearing.
- It's thought that a zebra's stripes serve to help camouflage the animal in long grass, and distract predators.
- Recent research also shows that a zebra's stripes may have evolved to keep biting insects at bay - the monochrome pattern seems to throw off the eyes of flies.
- When they are in a herd the zebra's distinct stripes merge into a big mass and make it hard for predators to single out individual animals.
- Zebras are very fast-moving animals, and can reach speeds of up to 65 kmph when galloping across the plains. This is just fast enough to outpace predators such as lions. They combine this fast running with excellent stamina as well as being able to run in zig-zagging motions to evade predators that are chasing them.
- A zebra's stripy coat is thought to disperse more than 70 per cent of incoming heat, preventing the animal from overheating in the African sun.
- While Grevy zebra society tends to be fairly open, that of plains and mountain zebras is more tight-knit, with the animals living in harems of up to six breeding females and their young, with a dominant male. Each female has a place in the hierarchy.
- These groups are so close that if a predator injures one individual, fellow members will circle it and attempt to scare the intruder away with their teeth and hooves.
- They also prefer to graze together and will groom each other.
- Like horses, zebras sleep standing up, and usually only when in the safety of a group.
- For protection, zebra groups often come together in large herds, regularly mixing with other grazers such as wildebeest. As well as providing more eyes and ears to look out for danger, a large herd is confusing to a predator, making it harder to single out individual prey.
- One of the most extraordinary phenomena in the natural world is the annual 1,800-mile migration of millions of zebra, blue wildebeest and other antelope between the Serengeti in Tanzania and Kenya's Masai Mara in a constant search of food and water.
- In Ancient Rome, Grevy's zebra were trained to pull chariots at Roman circuses under the alias 'hippotigris' ('horse-tiger').
- Mother zebras are very caring and protective mothers. Infant zebras (foals) are able to stand, walk and suckle shortly after birth, and will continue to drink their mother's milk for the first year of life.
- Foals can run with the herd within a few hours of birth.
- All zebras are close to their mothers, but males also form strong bonds with their fathers.
- Zebras communicate with each other through various vocal expressions including sniffing and balking, but also through the position of their ears and tail. They can turn their ears in almost any direction and harness this ability to communicate their mood e.g. pulled backwards when angry, or standing erect when feeling calm and friendly.
- In Native American shamanism, the zebra is a symbol of balance, agility, clarity, and sureness of path.
- Zebra crossings (pedestrian crossings) are named after the black and white stripes of zebras.
- A zebra named Marty starred in the 2005 animated film *Madagascar*.

