



# Lesser Kudu

*Tragelaphus imberbis*

## Classification *What groups does this organism belong to based on characteristics shared with other organisms?*

Class: Mammalia (all mammals)

Order: Artiodactyla (even toed ungulates)

Family: Bovidae (antelopes, cattle, gazelles, goats, sheep)

Genus: Tragelaphus (bongo, bushbuck, nyalas, and relatives)

Species: imberbis (Lesser Kudu)



## Distribution *Where in the world does this species live?*

Lesser Kudus inhabit a range in northeast Africa and are native to Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

## Habitat *What kinds of areas does this species live in?*

Kudus live in the arid and semi-arid scrublands found in their African ranges.

## Physical Description *How would this animal's body shape and size be described?*

- Kudus are spiral-horned antelope where males have horns that twist 2.5 times, form a chevron pattern above their heads, and may reach 3.5 feet (60-105 cm) in length.
- They are sexually dimorphic (sexes have different characteristics) with the males having a grey-brown hide and horns, while females have a reddish-brown hide and no horns.
- Males are also larger than females, standing about 37-41 inches (95-105 cm) at the shoulder and weighing 203-238 pounds (92-108 kg). The smaller females stand about 35-39 inches (90-100 cm) and weigh 123-154 pounds (56-70 kg).
- Both sexes have a white stripe running down the back with 11-14 branches that run down the kudu's sides

## Diet *What does this species eat?*

*In their historic range:* kudus feed of the leaves, twigs, grasses, herbs and fruits found in their habitat.

*At the zoo:* Alfalfa hay, wild herbivore grain, browse (natural plants) and produce.



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## Predators *What eats this species?*

Lions, leopards, wild dogs, and spotted hyenas all prey on these antelopes. These antelope are also hunted by humans.

## Social Organization *How does this animal interact with others of its species?*

Female lesser kudus will form small groups of twos or threes; males sometimes form small bachelor groups, but are typically solitary. Kudus do not express any territorial behaviors and fights are rare, typically only seen in breeding season. Kudus of both sexes will stand on their hind legs and take part in shoving contests. Kudus browse the scrubland bushes at dawn and dusk, seeking shelter in the dense brush during the daytime.

## Life Cycle *How does this species mate, raise young, grow and develop?*

With no set breeding season, rutting males test the urine of all females they approach to determine their readiness to breed. Females carry their offspring for 6-8 months before segregating themselves to deliver a single calf weighing 16.5 pounds (4 to 7.5 kg). These calves remain hidden in grasses while their mothers forage for about 4 weeks. After that initial period, they gradually spend more time with their mother until they are weaned at around 6 months. Fifty percent of calves do not survive to six months and if they survive, will reach sexual maturity at 15-18 months. Males do not commonly reproduce until 4-5 years when they achieve the required social status to be successful. Kudus have a lifespan in the wild of 10-15 years and may reach 20 years in captivity.

## Adaptations *What physical and behavioral characteristics enable this animal to survive and thrive?*

- Lesser kudus have **cryptic coloring** (coloring which allows them to blend with their environment) provides excellent camouflage in the shrublands that make up their habitat.
- Kudus enhance the effectiveness of their camouflage by **remaining motionless** for long periods of time, making them hard to spot.
- These antelopes have **large ears** and fantastic hearing to help them detect predators.
- Kudus use a **warning bark** to warn others of the presence of predators when threatened.

## Collection Connection

- Moscato is a female born here at the zoo 9/17/2013. She is shy and can be identified by her orange tag.
- Joe was born 4/20/2015 at another zoo. He is friendly, loves scratch sessions with his keepers. Joe's tongue hangs out due to an injury at another zoo, but it does not bother him. You may see Joe with browse caught on his head after a sparring session with it.
- Elsa wears a blue tag and was born 4/5/2014. She is a curious and brave kudu, occasionally accepting treats from keepers, but only on her terms.
- Winifred was born at the zoo 2/5/2019. She sports a yellow tag and is braver than mom, Moscato. Winifred likes to hang out with Elsa and Eleanor.



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- Eleanor was born 10/23/2019. Mother Moscato is unable to nurse her was bottle raised. She doesn't have a tag, and is curious and friendly, but spends most of her time with the herd.
- Lawnald is the newest calf born 1/29/2020 at the zoo. He is curious and brave and is his dad's little man. When he is not bounding around his habitat, he is often hanging out next to dad, Joe.

## Conservation Status *Is this animal at risk for extinction and why?*

*IUCN Status: Near Threatened*

Lesser kudus are at risk from agricultural activities, civil unrest, and hunting.

## Resources and Where to Learn More

Animal Diversity Web: [Lesser Kudu - March 2020 Format.docx](#)

Smithsonian National Zoo: [Lesser Kudu - March 2020 Format.docx](#)

Fort Worth Zoo: [Lesser Kudu - March 2020 Format.docx](#)

Maryland Zoo: [Lesser Kudu - March 2020 Format.docx](#)

African Wildlife Foundation: [Lesser Kudu - March 2020 Format.docx](#)