

## **Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus*

### **Classification**

Class: Mammalia  
Order: Artiodactyla  
Family: Suidae  
Genus: *Phacochoerus*  
Species: *africanus*

### **Distribution**

The common warthog's range includes Sub-Saharan Africa from Ghana to Somalia and into South Africa.

### **Habitat**

Open woodland, grassland, floodplains, veldts and heavily grazed areas around waterholes, as well as Mount Kilimanjaro up to elevations of 9,840 feet (3,000 m).

### **Description**

- Warthogs are four to five feet (1.2-1.5 m) long.
- Males weigh 132-330 pounds (60-150 kg), and females weigh 99-165 pounds (45-75 kg).
- Stand about 30 inches (76 cm) at the shoulder.
- They have muscular, barrel-shaped bodies with gray, nearly hairless skin.
- Both males and females have several wart-like growths on their face.
- They have two sets of tusks – one long and one short pair.

### **Diet**

What Does It Eat?

*In the wild:* Grasses, roots, bark and berries, as well as carrion.

*At the zoo:* Carrots, sweet potatoes, endive lettuce, broccoli, bananas, apples, grain pellets and alfalfa.

What Eats It?

The common warthog is preyed on by lions, leopards, hyenas, and wild dogs.

### **Social Organization**

Warthogs are social animals. They live in family groups called sounders consisting of several females with one or more successive litters. Males usually disperse after two years of age and form bachelor groups. Several sounders can join to form a clan. Warthogs display friendly interactions by frequent nose-to-nose sniffing, social grooming and rubbing. Family groups communicate with squeaks, growls, chirps and grunts. Moaning is a sign of courtship and whimpers and squeals are produced when frightened. The common warthog is primarily diurnal, taking refuge at night in aardvark burrows.

### **Life Cycle**

Warthogs reach sexual maturity between 18-20 months but males aren't usually strong enough to win breeding rights until they are about four years old. Gestation lasts 170-175 days – the longest of any pig species. A litter averages two to four piglets, and piglets are born in a burrow where they will huddle together to keep warm. When the piglets are one week old, they can leave the den to begin feeding on grass. They are weaned between three and five months of age. Young males leave their mother at about two years of age, but females may stay with their mothers. The common warthog may live 12-15 years in the wild and up to 18 years in captivity.

### **Adaptations**

#### **Tusks and Warts**

Warthogs have distinctive tusks that the males use as weapons when they engage in combat. Both males and females use their tusks to dig in the ground for roots and tubers. The distinctive wart-like bumps of tissue on the face help protect warthogs during fights. When threatened, the piglets run headfirst into a burrow. The mother follows, whirling around at the entrance and backing into the burrow with her head and tusks blocking the entrance and protecting the piglets.

**On Your Knees**

Because warthogs kneel on their front legs when feeding on grasses or rooting for rhizomes they develop calluses on their knees. The kneeling posture allows them to use their snout and tusks as efficient digging tools.

**Mud, Glorious Mud!**

Warthogs love to wallow in mud. The mud covers their hairless skin, helps keep them cool and also protects them from biting flies and other insects.

**Conservation Connection**

*IUCN Status: Lower Risk-Least Concern.*

Warthogs are not endangered but are considered a nuisance to farmers because they damage crops and can carry diseases contagious to domestic livestock. Warthogs are now being killed as a source of bushmeat.

**Fun Facts**

- Warthogs can run 30-34 mph (55 kph).
- When warthogs root in the ground it helps aerate the soil and this aids in plant growth.

