Domestic Goat

**Fast Facts**

**Common Name:** Domestic Goat

**Scientific Name:** *Capra aegagrus hircus*

**Family:** Bovidae

**Order:** Artiodactyla

**Class:** Mammalia

**Range:** Originally from Southwest Asia and Eastern Europe, domesticated worldwide

**Habitat:** Mountains, deserts, farmlands

**Lifespan:** 15-18 years on average

**Conservation Status:** Stable

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**What do they look like?**

Domestic goats vary greatly in appearance, from the 20-inch tall Nigerian Dwarf to the 200-lb Boer. Their form matches their function – goats have been bred for many different purposes, including pets, weed-eating, agriculture (meat and milk), draft use (pulling carts and carrying loads), and leather. Most breeds come in a variety of colors and patterns. Their hair type can range from long and silky to short and coarse. Some goats have two horns and some have wattles, small fleshy nodules on either side of the neck. Depending on the breed, some goats may also have a convex or concave nose, upright or floppy ears, or a beard of hair from the chin.

**How do they behave?**

Goats were among the first animals to be domesticated by people over 8000 years ago. Their smaller size, varied uses, and low nutritional requirements make them easy to keep compared to other farm animals. They are inquisitive and agile, often testing fences and climbing trees. They use their prehensile upper lip to grasp and balance and grip.

**What’s on the menu?**

Any plants they find! Goats eat weeds, leaves, bark – basically any plant material they come across. They prefer herbs and woody shrubs over grasses, making them very useful in weed abatement; farmers and land-owners often keep goats to clear vegetation from hard to mow areas. As ruminants, goats chew their cud, which means that they regurgitate previously chewed food and chew it again. This allows them to extract maximum nutrition from their tough plant food sources. At the Zoo, they eat grass hay, timothy hay pellets, and grain.

**How are they born?**

Baby goats are called kids. Kids are usually born as single, twin, or triplet births, although up to sextuplets occasionally occur. Gestation lasts around 150 days. The female, referred to as a nanny or doe, may produce milk for up to one year after birth, making them useful dairy animals. Goats reach maturity between 6-12 months of age, depending on the breed.

**What should you know about them?**

Charities working in impoverished rural communities often provide goats to subsistence farmers. These sometimes take the format of a “goat bank,” in which a breeding nanny is provided to the farmer, to be repaid in the future with a female kid.