

BLESBOK

Phylum: Chordata, Class: Mammalia, Order: Artiodactyla, Family: Artiodactyla
Damaliscus dorcas

A characteristic of the Blesbok is the prominent white blaze on the face and a horizontal brown strip which divides this blaze above the eyes. Body color is brown with a lighter colored saddle on the back, and the rump an even lighter shade. The legs are brown with a white patch behind the top part of the front legs. Lower legs whitish. Smaller relatives of the wildebeest, Blesbok populations have rebounded after being hunted to near extinction during the European colonization of southern Africa.

Height: 34-40 in

Weight: male - 143-176 lbs, female 121-154 lbs

Lifespan: Up to 17 years

Horns: Both sexes carry horns, ringed almost to the tip. Female horns are slightly more slender.

Habitat: Highveld, or higher elevation grasslands

Range/distribution: South Africa

Status: Recently, population numbers have recovered dramatically due to vigorous conservation in game reserves and farms. Unfortunately, Blesbok have been introduced to areas far beyond their original range. Today they are commonly found on enclosed land in smaller herds, and numbers are estimated at 120 000. Subspecies, bontebok is endangered

Diet in the wild: Grazers; eating grass in sparse wooded areas

Breeding and Caring for Young:

The Blesbok is a seasonal breeder. Rutting occurs during March to May. Births peak during November and December after a gestation period of about 240 days. Females give birth to single calves. Blesbok calves differ from most other small or medium antelope species by staying with their mothers instead of hiding.

Cultural & Conservation: The common name is a derivative of the Afrikaans words for blazed antelope, which is in reference to the white blaze found on their face. By eating grasses, Blesbok keep the grasslands trim, spawning new growth. They are food for larger predators. Their numbers suffer due to habitat loss and pelt trade. In addition, encroachment and competition with domestic livestock are a constant threat.

