

VAAL RHEBUCK

Phylum: Chordata, Class: Mammalia, Order: Artiodactyla, Family: Bovidae Subfamily: Peleinae
Pelea capreolus

Great controversy surrounds the relationships between this 'antelope' and the rest of the *Bovidae* - different authors have grouped the rhebuck with reedbucks, dwarf antelope, and goats. To prevent complete confusion, it is generally given its own subfamily - *Peleinae*. On a more commercial note, it is said that the popular sneaker "Reebok" is named after the rhebuck.

The thick, woolly coat is greyish brown above and lighter below, with the inner thighs and underside of the bushy tail white. The fronts of the lower legs are darker. The body is small, with long, graceful limbs and a slender neck. The long ears are slender and pointed. There is a dark facial blaze, and the nostrils are bulbous and black. A white eye ring contrasts sharply with the black-lidded eyes.



Body Length: 3.5-4.1 ft.

Shoulder Height: 2.3-2.6 ft.

Tail Length: 4-8 in.

Weight: 40-66 lb.

Horns: The stiletto-like horns are found only in males, and rise directly above the eyes. Bent forward slightly, they grow 15-29 cm / 6-11.6 inches long.

Life span: 8-10 years.

Diet in the wild: Grasses, leaves

Habitat:

Range/distribution:

Status: The rhebuck is classified as a low risk, conservation dependent species by the IUCN (1996).

Special Features: The rhebuck has a jerky, rocking gait, and when in flight holds its tail erect, displaying the white underside. An agile climber, the rhebuck is also a good jumper.

Behavior:

Active during the day in sporadic bouts of grazing and resting, the rhebuck generally rests in shade during the noon hours. While the rest of the herd forages or rests, an appointed 'sentinel' watches for signs of danger. If a threat appears, this guard makes a cough-like grunt to alert the rest of the family, and then leads the group to less accessible ground.

Breeding and Caring for Young:

Small harem herds about 12 animals in size consisting of one male, a few females, and their offspring. Adult males who are not able to control a herd are solitary. The dominant male in a harem herd is territorial, defending a central home range from intrusion by other males. Males are extremely aggressive during the breeding season, with conflicts quickly escalating from posturing and vocalizing to serious fighting, where it is not uncommon for one of the contestants to be killed. Mating occurs in April, with births taking place in late November and December. The young lie hidden away with their mothers for as little as a few days to 6 weeks after birth. Gestation Period 8.5-9 months. Sexual Maturity reached at 1-1.5 years.

