



## WILDEBEEST (GNU)

**Kingdom:** Animalia **Phylum:** Chordata **Class:** Mammalia **Order:** Artiodactyla **Family:** Bovidae  
*Connochaetes taurinus*

**Description:** The Masai say the wildebeest, also known as the gnu, is made of creation's leftovers. It has the head of a locust, horns of a cape buffalo, legs of a goat, mane of a lion, body of a donkey and the tail of a horse.

**Length:** 5-8 feet

**Height:** 50-58 inches males and up to 47 inches female

**Weight:** 500-600 lbs

**Lifespan:** 21 years

**Habitat:** plains and woodlands

**Range:** Kenya to South Africa

**Status:** The Blue Wildebeest is numerous, but the black wildebeest was nearly wiped out in the 19th century. Today its numbers have risen to 4,000.

**Diet in the Wild:** grasses and succulents

### Special Features:

- Live in herds of up to 100 animals.
- Not aggressive or particularly dangerous.
- The name *gnu* comes from the Bushman word for the wildebeest's bellow.
- Both males and females have horns, although the male's horns are thicker and heavier.
- To groom itself, the wildebeest rubs its face either on the ground or against a tree.
- Although wildebeests are known for their seasonal migrations, not all wildebeests migrate. If there is a constant supply of fresh green grass, they will stay in one area. When they do migrate herds of over 1,000 animals will thunder across the plains raising dark clouds of dust visible for miles. Hundreds die on these journeys and many down as they try to cross fast-flowing rivers.

### Breeding/Care of Young:

- Sexual maturity at 2-3 years old.
- Gestation: 8-9 months
- Calves born at beginning of rainy season when the food is most abundant.
- Usually just one calf.
- A calf is stand within 15 minutes and runs shortly thereafter.
- Weaned at 9 months
- Only 1 in every six calves survives its first year.
- The males owns the females who come into his territory and he will run after a female until he hits another male's territory when he will come to an abrupt stop. A wildebeest will do anything to avoid a fight to prevent losing a horn. One a males loses his horn, he will never attract another female to mate again.

