



DOMESTIC CATTLE

ARTIODACTYLA

Family: Bovidae

Genus: *Bos*

Species: *taurus*



Miniature Corriente Cattle

Range: world wide

Habitat: open grass lands, rangelands

Niche: terrestrial, diurnal, herbivorous

Wild diet: grasses, stems

Zoo diet:

Life Span: 25 years

Sexual dimorphism: M larger than F

Location in SF Zoo: Family Farm in the Exploration Zone

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Cattle are large ungulates with cloven hooves; the hoof is split into two toes which are homologous to the third and fourth digits. Most breeds have horns, which vary in size among the breeds. Genetic selection has allowed polled (hornless) cattle to become widespread.

Domestic cows have no upper incisors, instead they have a thick layer called the dental pad. The jaws are designed for the circular grinding motion used to crush coarse vegetation. Cattle are ruminants or “cud chewers”, with four-chambered stomach and foregut fermentation by microbes; they are highly specialized to eat poorly digestible plants as food. These microbes are primarily responsible for decomposing the cellulose of the herbivorous diet. The microbes reproduce in the rumen, older generations die and their cells continue on through the digestive tract. These cells are then partially digested in the small intestines, allowing cattle to gain a high-quality protein source.

Weight: ~ 1,660 lbs varies among breeds
HRL:
SH: 49 – 52 in
TL:

Cattle are dichromatic and having two kinds of color receptors in their retinas, as are most other non-primate land mammals.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Domestic cows are common and can be found throughout the world. A report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that the livestock sector is "responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions". Cows modify environments through grazing. In areas where their population numbers are artificially increased by humans, they can severely impact natural systems, causing erosion, introduction of non-native grasses and herbaceous plants, destruction of riparian habitats, and overgrazing.

There is some interest in conserving rapidly disappearing rare breeds and breeds that may have desirable qualities, such as Texas longhorn cattle and a number of older European breeds.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Domestic cows are social animals and live in groups called herds. Each herd is led by a dominant male who is the sole male to mate with the rest of the females. Cow herds are structured according to a dominance hierarchy. Each individual must yield to those above it in the hierarchy.

The average sleep time of a domestic cow is about four hours a day.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Mating may occur year round, though more calves are born in spring months. Cattle tend to reproduce once yearly.

Estrous:

Gestation: 9 mos

of Mammae: 2 pairs

of Young: 1 – 2

Sexual Maturity: M 1 year, F 18 mos

Weaning Age: 6 mos

Weight at birth: 55 – 99 lbs

MISCELLANEOUS

The **Corriente cattle** breed can be traced back to the first cattle brought to the new world by the Spanish as early as 1493. The Corriente breed is used in rodeos, for roping and bulldogging (steer wrestling) competitions and are judged on their stamina, strength and qualities of their performance. They are fairly small cattle with cows averaging under 1,000 lbs.

Cattle are raised as livestock for beef, veal, and dairy and as draft animals for pulling carts and plows. Other products include leather, dung for manure or fuel. In some areas (i.e. India) cattle have religious meaning.

Domestication of cattle occurred about 10,500 years ago. Wild cattle (*Bos primigenius*) were likely domesticated independently at least twice and perhaps three times. A study on 134 breeds showed that today's cattle originates from Africa, Asia, North and South America, Australia, and Europe.

In 2009, cattle became the first livestock animal to have a fully mapped genome.

Sources:

http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Bos_taurus/

<http://cattle-today.com>

<http://archaeology.about.com/od/domestications/qt/cattle.htm>

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