



SPRINGBOK, *Antidorcas marsupialis*

Legal Status: Springbok are not regulated by CITES or covered by the Endangered Species Act. The IUCN Antelope Specialist Group considers Springbok to be Lower Risk / Conservation Dependent.

Description: The general external appearance is very much like that of other gazelles. As a genus, springbok (*Antidorcas*) are separated generically from other gazelles, *Gazella*, because of their teeth. In the lower jaw, springbok have five pairs of grinding teeth in the lower jaw, true gazelles have six. The one peculiar and striking external difference of *Antidorcas* is the fold of skin extending along the middle of the back to the base of the tail. This fold is covered with hair, much lighter in color than the rest of the back. When the animal becomes alarmed, it opens and raises this fold so that the white hair shows as a conspicuous crest along the back. While displaying this fold, the white hairs on the rump are erected and frequently they leap high in the hair, their back bowed, in a display known as 'pronking'.



Range: Springbok are found in most of the drier parts of southern Africa lying west of the Drakensburg Mountains and northwards to southern Angola and central Zimbabwe.

Habitat: Springbok live on open dry savannas, arid plains and grassland.

Diet: Springbok are both grazers and browsers. They thrive on karroo shrubs and grasses and are able to get along without water for prolonged periods, though they will drink if water is available.

Social Organization: The springbok are highly gregarious; historically migratory herds contained over one million individuals. Although numbers have been greatly reduced, groups still occasionally contain up to 1,500 individuals. In the dry months populations are divided into smaller groups of up to one hundred females and young, each associated with a number of adult males. Non-territorial solitary males from bachelors herds of up to fifty individuals.



Threats to Survival: Humans have extensively hunted Springbok for its excellent meat and because ruinous effect their mass migrations have on crops. As a result, they have disappeared from most of South Africa but reintroduced populations may be found in many parks and reserves in that country. To the north, it still occurs over most of its original range but is much less common than in the past. Today (1989) their total numbers are estimated at over 600,000.

Zoo Programs: A Regional (North America) studbook is maintained for springbok and the first edition should be distributed in the spring 2001. Springbok were once very popular in zoos but less than 50 animals are exhibited in 2000. The Antelope Advisory Group recommends a Population Management Plan (PMP) with a three-year population target of 75 animals education and display. There has been a resurgence of interest in Springbok and the San Diego Zoo plans to import 6 (4.2) specimens of the Angolan subspecies, *Antidorcas marsupialis angolensis* in the near future. The unique pronking behavior exhibited by the springbuck makes them a visitor's favorite.

Conservation: The Springbok is the national emblem of the Republic of South Africa, virtually assuring them a place on the South Africa Plains.

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