MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

PYGMY GOAT

Capra aegagrus hircus · also called African pygmy goat

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal: domestic goat breed
NATIVE REGION	Breed developed in West Africa, first called the Cameroon Dwarf Goat
DIET	Herbivore: hay, grain, grasses and shrubs; prefers browse
HEIGHT	16–23 in at the shoulder
WEIGHT	70–90 lb; varies with age, sex and condition
LIFESPAN	About 15 years
SOCIAL LIFE	Herd
STATUS	Domesticated; not an IUCN risk category



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

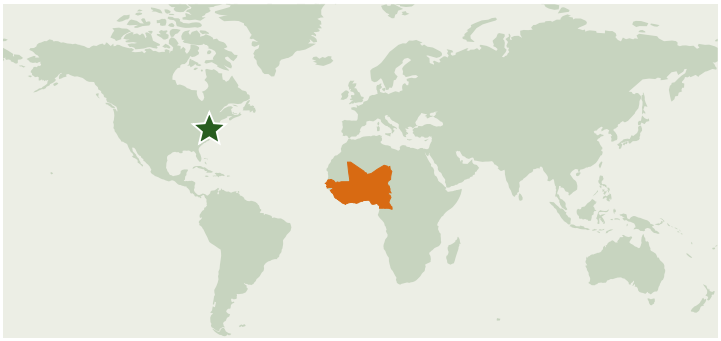
Did you know?

- Pygmy goats come from West Africa, where they were first called Cameroon Dwarf Goats.
- Both males and females have horns.
- To reach high branches, they stand up on their hind legs.
- Hair between their hooves gives them grip on smooth surfaces, so they are agile climbers.
- When threatened, the herd forms a ring with the mothers-to-be and young in the center.

Words to know

Browse: To eat leaves and shoots from shrubs and other woody plants.
Ruminant: An animal that brings food back up to chew again as cud.
Kid: A baby goat.
Breed: A group of animals shaped by people through careful breeding.

Where the breed began



Breed developed here · Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. Where did pygmy goats come from, and what were they first called?
2. How is browsing different from grazing?
3. What is a goat doing when it chews its cud?
4. How does a goat herd protect its young from danger?
5. Is a breed the same thing as a species? Explain.

Draw it

Draw a pygmy goat standing on its hind legs to reach a branch. Label its horns, ears, muzzle and hooves.

STANDARDS · GRADES 1–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 1-LS1-2**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.1.B**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/pygmy-goat/ · **Sources:** National Pygmy Goat Association breed standard; Oklahoma State University, Breeds of Livestock; Animal Diversity Web; Oregon State University Extension 4-H
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 1-LS1-2 (3.1.1.B)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo

PYGMY GOAT

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where did people first raise this breed?

Circle one:

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Browse ☐ Ruminant ☐ Kid ☐ Breed

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the pygmy goat.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Where the breed began: Breed developed in West Africa, first called the Cameroon Dwarf Goat. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Herbivore: hay, grain, grasses and shrubs; prefers browse. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• How is browsing different from grazing?

_____

• What is a goat doing when it chews its cud?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.