MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

ZEBU

Bos taurus indicus · *also called humped cattle*

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

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal: domestic cattle (Bovidae)
FIRST TAMED	South Asia, more than 8,000 years ago
FOUND TODAY	Asia, Africa and South America
DIET	Grazer: grass and hay
SIZE	Varies by breed; miniature zebu about 3–3½ ft at the shoulder
WEIGHT	300–600 lb (miniature) to 1,000–2,200 lb (Brahman)
LIFESPAN	Around 20 years
STATUS	Domestic animal (not on the IUCN Red List)
OUR ZEBU	Grace, Loki and ZeeZee



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- A zebu's hump is mostly muscle, and it holds some fat over the shoulders.
- The dewlap is a long fold of skin under the throat that helps shed heat.
- Zebu have larger and more numerous sweat glands than European cattle.
- India alone has registered at least 55 native cattle breeds.
- Zebu pull plows and carts, and breeds such as the Brahman are raised for beef.

Words to know

Domesticated: tamed and raised by people over many generations.
Dewlap: a fold of loose skin under the throat.
Grazer: an animal that eats grass.
Breed: a group of animals with the same look and traits.

Think about it

1. Where were zebu first domesticated, and how long ago?
2. What is a zebu's hump mostly made of?
3. Name three body parts that help a zebu stay cool.
4. Why are zebu the working cattle of choice across much of the tropics?
5. What wild animal did zebu come from, and does it still live today?

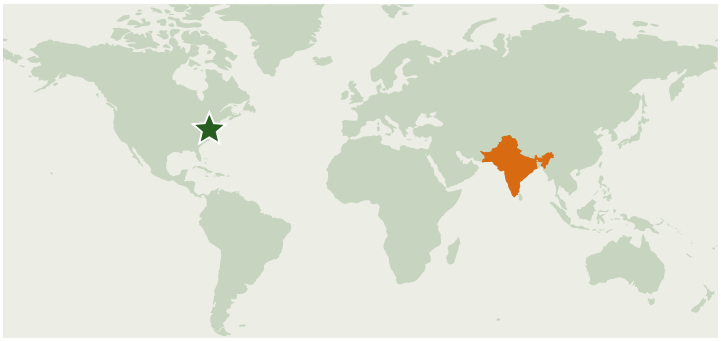
Draw it

Draw a zebu. Label its hump, dewlap, drooping ears and short, sleek coat.

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

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.G**

Where people first raised it



First raised here ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/zebu/ · **Sources:** Pérez-Pardal et al. 2018; Gangal et al. 2014; ICAR-NBAGR; Oklahoma State University Breeds of Livestock; Colorado State University AgNext; Phaniraja and Panchasara 2009; Heath 1979; Utsunomiya et al. 2019; Animal Diversity Web
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G)
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ZEBU

Before and after your visit

Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

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

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.

☐ Domesticated ☐ Dewlap ☐ Grazer ☐ 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 zebu.

_____

_____

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. Page 1 says: First tamed in South Asia, more than 8,000 years ago. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Grazer: grass and hay. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

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

• What is a zebu's hump mostly made of?

_____

_____

• Name three body parts that help a zebu stay cool.

_____

_____

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.