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FAST FACTS

NAME: Pronghorn

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Antilocapra americana*

AVERAGE WEIGHT: 35 to 70 kg

AVERAGE HEIGHT: 90 cm at shoulder, horns up to 50 cm

AVERAGE LIFESPAN: 9-10 years

DID YOU KNOW? The pronghorn can run up to 95 km/h, making it the fastest land mammal in North America.

PHYSIOLOGY

Though the scientific name translates to “American antelope goat” the pronghorns are in fact more deer-like and are the only animals having branched horns (not antlers). The name “Pronghorn” comes from the odd shape of their horns – forward facing prongs. Female horns are smaller than males. In the late fall or the beginning of winter, the horns will break off to make room for the new ones already starting to grow in.

Pronghorns are very adapted to life in the grasslands. For example, the sandy colours of their bodies provide some camouflage protection from the barren landscape of the flat lands.

With large protruding eyes located further back on their head, they have a wide range of vision so they can see when a predator is coming (up to 6 km away).

The most amazing part of it all is their endurance and speed. With long, skinny legs that let them take larger strides, and a large heart and lungs that allow them more oxygen, the pronghorns can last longer while running distances.

Pronghorns have a distinctive white patch on their rump that they bare to the herd if there is danger.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Pronghorns are roamers and like to feed off of the grasses and other shrubbery they live near. Unlike cheetahs, pronghorns have good endurance even at high speeds. Their main predators are coyotes. Unlike deer they cannot leap the fences that humans have been putting up around the grasslands, and instead crawl underneath them. This reduction of their habitat is becoming a concern.

A breeding pronghorn’s first litter will be a fawn and then other litters will be twins. Although some prefer to live alone, many stay in small groups in the summer and form large herds during winter. Pronghorns are very active day and night, and tend to balance their time between napping and eating.

RANGE

Pronghorns roam the prairies of North America and were once numerous across the Great Plains. In Canada, they reside in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta.