

Blue Wildebeest / Brindled gnu



Afrikaans:

Blouwildebees

German:

Streifengnu

French:

Gnou à queue noire

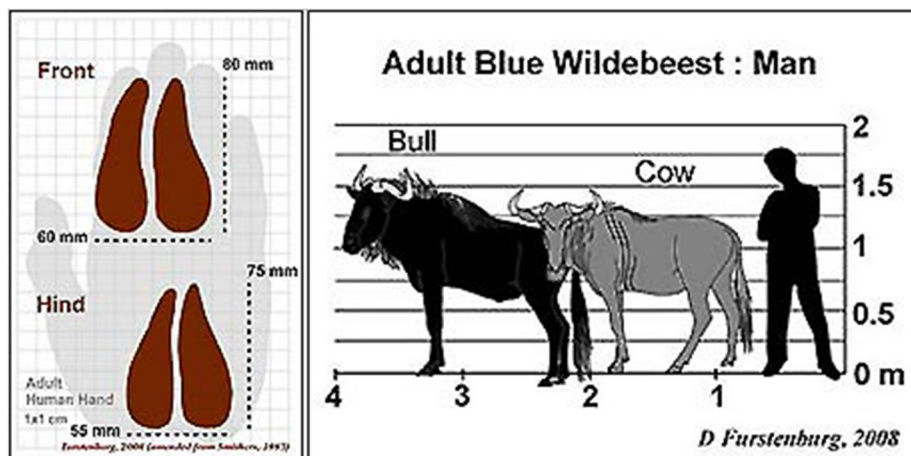
Early authors divided the blue wildebeest in as many as 12 subspecies, but this has been terminated. The golden wildebeest that game farmers currently breeds is no

subspecies, but a colour variant of the southern blue wildebeest, similar as the white and yellow blesbok, the black impala, and the white, black and copper springbok. The name red wildebeest is used to refer to genetic hybrids of southern blue wildebeest that has cross-bred with black wildebeest. Such hybrids produce fertile offspring and are banned by South African authorities. Their trophies are not accepted by official game trophy registries.

Description

A large antelope with heavier front, than hind quarters, a black mane that lies flat on the neck and spine, a black beard that ends at the end of the throat, and a horse-like tail with long black hair. The body is dark bluish-grey or silver-grey, giving rise to the name “blue” wildebeest. The forehead, face and muzzle is darker in colour than the body. Calves are prominent light fawn-brown. The English name “brindled” gnu refer to the dark vertical stripes, caused by skin-riples, on either side of the neck and shoulders, whereas “gnu” refers to the bulking sound of the animal. The white-bearded gnu from the Serengeti and East Africa has a distinctive white beard down the chin and throat, where as the Mozambique wildebeest has a horizontal white band across the muzzle. Several blue wildebeest populations on game farms in the northern regions of South Africa have signs of a white marking either on the forehead or on the muzzle. This creates possibilities that such wildebeest might share genetic elements of prior hybridization or origin, with the Mozambique subspecies.

Comparison To Man



Trophy

Both sexes bear well developed, smooth horns that grow from thickened bosses on the head. They extend horizontally, side-ways and slightly downwards and then turn in an upwards curve towards the ends, with the tips projected almost vertical. The horns of cows are thinner, lighter in colour, and have smaller bosses than that of the bulls. Horn development is relative rapid and trophy status can be reached after 3 years.

Habitat requirement

Short grass (less than 12 cm in height), sweet-veld, in medium thick to open woodland, savannah plains. The eco-tones on the perimeter of bushveld vegetation. Sour-veld, bush thickets, forests, mountain slopes and highland plateaus is marginal to unsuitable. The availability of surface water for daily drinking is essential. Optimal annual rainfall is 250-450 mm. Heavy frost and snow are not tolerated. The climate needs to be either subtropical or semi-arid, but not temperate. In optimal habitat and at optimal climatic conditions, blue wildebeest tend to have little impact on veld, but in marginal habitat, and with poor conditions, they can become highly destructive.