



Kudu



KUDU

## Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) Kudu “Greater Kudu”

*Tragelaphus strepsiceros* (Pallas, 1766)



Photo: Doug Lee

**Arikaans:**

Koedoe

**German:**

Kudu

**French:**

Koudou

There are two species:

- the greater kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*
- the lesser kudu *Tragelaphus imberbis*,

and three sub-species:

- the southern greater kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros strepsiceros*

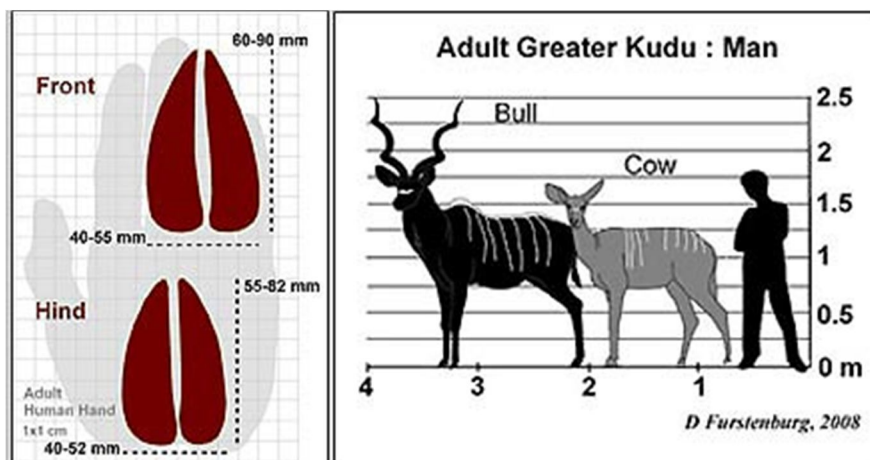
- the East African greater kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros bea*
- the northern greater kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros cottoni*

During the 1700's and 1800's the Eastern Cape kudu became isolated from the rest of South Africa's populations as a result of human settlement. At present this population is managed as a sub-population that differs in size and trophy quality. This is a mistake, as a genetically new sub-species is being created artificially.

## Description

A large, slender, elegant antelope. Adult bulls of the greater kudu are generally 35% taller than the lesser kudu. Both sexes of the greater kudu have a mane that continues as a whitish dorsal crest. The lesser kudu does not have a mane. The greater kudu has 9-10 vertical white stripes, the eastern African greater kudu 6-8 and the northern greater kudu, 4-7. The colour of the coat differs, being a pale greyish in the southern greater kudu, a comparatively richer colour in the eastern African greater kudu and much paler in the northern greater kudu. The underside of the short, furry, bushy tail flashes white when the animal is in flight. Ears are large, round and with a white fringe. The maximum mass for cows is reached at 4-5 years and then decreases slightly with age. Bulls do not reach their maximum body size before the age of 12 years.

## Comparison To Man



## Trophy

The magnificent horns are spread in beautiful open spirals, and smooth without grooves. The number of turns of the spirals is related to age. There is no scientific proof for claims that narrow horns relate to bush dwelling or montane kudu and wide horns to plains kudu, as the two forms are found in both habitats.

Well developed horns in bulls but cows with inferior, rudimentary, deformed horns occasionally occur. Rowland Ward trophy status is reached after seven years.

## Habitat requirement

Broken bushveld, savannah and open woodland of deciduous plants with scattered thicket bush clumps for refuge, both on plains and mountain slopes. Kudu are widespread in the savannahs of eastern and southern Africa, ranging from Sudan and Ethiopia in the north, to the Western and Eastern Cape in the south. Their use of a specific habitat is reliant on the density of woody plants. Kudu are seldom found in completely open country although they may be temporarily attracted to it by forage such as broadleaf forbs and dwarf succulents. It is essential that the habitat contains a high diversity of fodder plants, especially trees and shrubs, as they do not thrive on homogenous vegetation of low diversity. Highly dense coastal dune thickets and evergreen forests are totally avoided. Optimal annual rainfall is 300-500 mm. High mortalities are common when sudden wet, cold spells occur, especially during periods of drought. Such mortalities were widespread in the Karoo and Eastern Cape in 1979, 1983, 1991-'92, 1996 and 2002, most deaths being adult cows aged over six years. Kudu are naturally diurnal but human disturbance has forced them to become predominantly nocturnal.

## Kudu Facts

**Diet:** Herbivore



**Size:** 0.8–1.2m (31–47in)



**Weight:** 120–256kg (265–565lbs)



**Top Speed:** 95km/h (60mph)



**Life Span:** 8–14 years



**Lifestyle:** Herd



**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



**Colour:** Brown, Grey, Red



**Skin Type:** Hair



**Favourite Food:** Leaves



