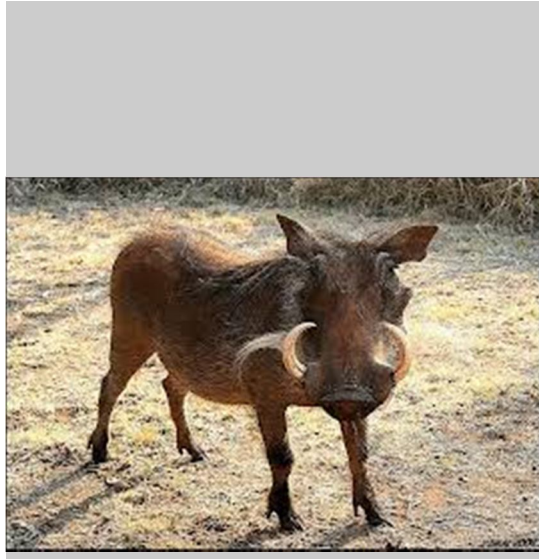




Warthog



Warthog

Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*)



Photo: Doug Lee

Afrikaans:

Vlakvark

German:

Warzenschwein

French:

Phacochère

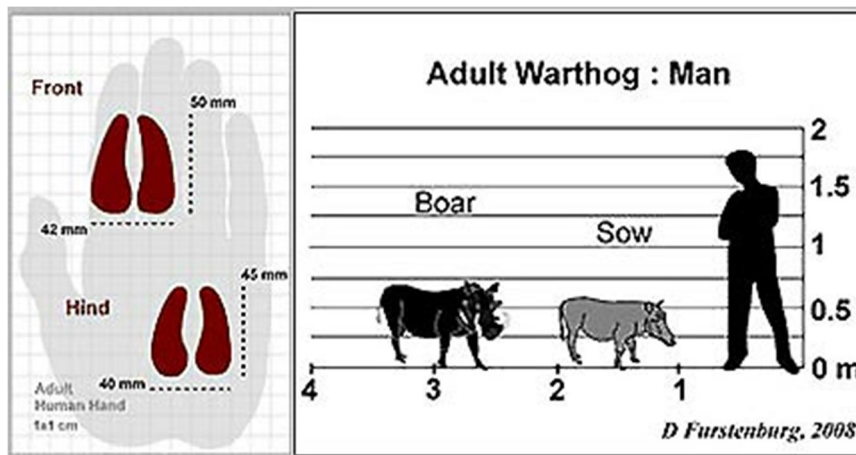
Known for a distinct lack of beauty and its pennant tail, the warthog is unmistakable. Its name refers to the warts carried by the boar, while the Afrikaans name “vlakvark” refers to the animal’s habit of roaming plains along watercourses and marshlands. The warthog has an exceptionally high breeding rate that allows it to invade marginal and degraded habitats. It also contributes to the destruction of

veld condition and damages fences by burrowing underneath to open escape pathways that are also used by game animals and domestic small stock.

Description

A medium sized, pig-like animal with an enormous head, flattened above and with the lower part expanded forwards. Two pairs of tapered, warty growths composed of gristle without a supporting bone structure, occur along the sides of the face. The largest pair of warts are found only in boars and are up to 12 cm long, with a second pair, found in both sexes, growing only 3 cm long. Each cheek has a long flap of skin from the corner of the mouth, furnished with white whiskers. The body is sparsely covered with hair. A long mane of sparse, stiff hair growing from the back of the neck, continues halfway along the spine on the back. The adult sow is noticeably smaller than the boar. The tail is held perpendicular when running and alerted. Both the extinct warthog *P. aethiopicus* and the extant desert warthog *P. africanus delamerei* lack functional incisor teeth in the upper jaw. The common warthog has two in the upper jaw and 4-6 in the lower.

Comparison To Man



Trophy

Trophies consist of the ivory tusks formed from the upper canine teeth. These curve continuously down, turn out and then up to form a semi-circle, causing the lower canines to wear against them. The tusks of the boars are generally larger than that of the sow.

Habitat requirement

Warthogs are generally associated with sub-tropical, open, degraded grassland plains, flood plains, marshland areas and, more particularly, the ring-zone surrounding waterholes. They are also found in open savanna woodland and sparse shrubland, the new grass growth in burnt veld being a particular attraction. Shortgrass habitats with grasses of less than 15 cm that are associated with sweetveld habitat are preferred. A sourveld habitat is unsuitable. Warthog are

fond of mud baths and prefer to be close to water sources. Thick bush, riverine thickets, forests and arid desert environments are avoided. Sub-arid environments are only suitable for the desert warthog and, even then, only marginally so. Warthog die easily during prolonged droughts due to the decline in the nutrient quality of dietary fodder.