

Red River Hog

Potamochoerus porcus

Red river hogs look like familiar domestic pigs, except with bulkier bodies, longer snouts and tails, and costume-like coloration. They have bright orange hair with white trim on their cheeks, white circles around their eyes, and long-haired white stripes down their back. Ears and tails sport tassels of hair. Males and females have tusks, with the lower ones up to three inches long and sharp as a knife. Females are smaller than males and have less prominent tusks. Males have ridges and warts on their faces, often covered over by hair.

What They Eat

Generally, red river hogs eat just about any food item they find. If it's alive and fits in their mouth, red river hogs will probably eat it! Roots, bulbs, and fallen fruit are these hogs' favorite foods, in addition to eggs, insects, small reptiles, birds, and mammals. Their tusks work like garden hoes to help them dig up food from beneath the ground.

Where They Live

Red river hogs thrive in forests, savannas, swamps, and steppes with plentiful shelter and water in western and central Africa, south of the Sahara desert. Sometimes they live in farmed areas. Though they do like to be sheltered by grass, brush, or trees, they are not too particular about the type of habitat.

What They Do

As members of the swine family, red river hogs are social animals, living in family groups consisting of 12 to 20 (and sometimes up to 100) individuals. These groups, called "sounders," are usually led by a single male. The hogs rest during the day in burrows dug in dense cover, then come out at night to root around in forest, thicket, pond, or stream for food. Sharp tusks, tough hooves, and a long nose help red river hogs root around in the soil in search of food.

Like other members of the swine family, red river hogs give birth to multiple young. About four months after mating, females give birth to 1-6 piglets. The young live off their mother's milk for 2-4 months with both parents providing care. At about 6 months of age, they leave the sounder. They are old enough to breed at around 18 months of age.

How They're Doing

Red river hogs are plentiful throughout their range, thanks in part to lower numbers of their main predator, the leopard. When they are found near civilization, they may be hunted as agricultural pests.

Interesting Facts

- Red river hogs use their sharp tusks to tear up the ground in search of food.
- Male red river hogs fight by butting heads and whipping each other with their tails. Their warty faces help protect them from each other.
- Red river hogs fluff out their face hair when threatened. This makes them look larger and more threatening to the enemy.
- The red river hog is one of at least 16 species of swine found around the world.
- Like other members of the pig family, red river hogs have a flat disk made of cartilage at the end of their snout. Muscles in the snout allow them to move the disk around as they search for food.
- Red river hogs are prey items for leopards, lions, spotted hyenas, pythons, and people.
- Exceptional hearing and eyesight help red river hogs locate worms and other meals.
- Red river hog piglets weigh about 1.5 pounds – as much as a big loaf of bread!
- They can live up to 22 years in captivity.
- Red river hogs weigh between 100-250 pounds

