



# Ring-Tailed Lemur

(*Lemur catta*)



## Environment

Ring-tailed lemurs typically do well in temperatures ranging from 50 °F to 90 °F; however, adequate social partners and/or shelter space is important for maintaining comfort at temperatures below 65 °F.

## Diet

An appropriate captive diet for ring-tailed lemurs generally consists of commercial primate biscuits supplemented with fresh produce daily. Leaves, fruits, and flowers from local browse can further enhance the captive diet and be a source of enrichment.

## Enclosure Design

Wild ring-tailed lemurs spend a large part of their day on the ground. Captive ring-tailed lemurs benefit from having sufficient space to move around freely on the ground. They also enjoy access to enclosure furnishings that are up off the ground. Providing both stable (perches, platforms, etc.) and dynamic (swings, ropes, hammocks, trees, etc.) enclosure furnishings is optimal.

## SPECIES FACTSHEET

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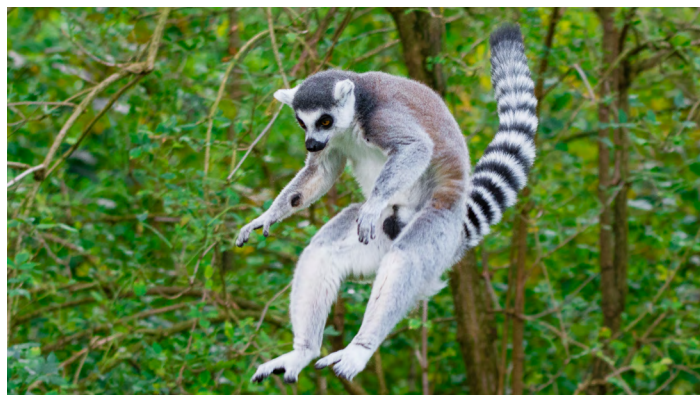
Primate Group



Prosimian

Average lifespan	27 years
Adult body weight	6 lbs., 2.8 kg.
Natural weaning age	5-6 months
Age of sexual maturity	21-30 months
Social grouping	Multi-male/multi-female; harem groups may work better in captivity
Will use a nest box	
Scent mark	

Many captive ring-tailed lemurs will use a nest box as a safe and secure place to sleep. They often prefer a nest box that is up off the ground and away from activity.



Ring-tailed lemurs are reported to be able to jump as high as 9 feet and as far as 30 feet. This ability should be considered when designing the enclosure to ensure they are effectively contained.

Sunbathing is a species typical activity that lemurs will do to warm up their bodies. Access to outdoor spaces with direct sunlight or heat lamps can support this activity.

## Enrichment Strategies

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Lemurs tend not to engage much with object enrichment unless food or scents are involved.

### Foraging

Distributing small food items throughout the enclosure is a good way to encourage exploration and exercise.

### Scent

Using novel scents in the environment can effectively engage this species due to their highly developed sense of smell.

### Puzzle feeders

Use devices or materials that require manipulation to access a food reward. Simple devices are best as lemurs are not as dexterous as monkeys. Consider hanging devices in hard-to-reach places to encourage additional exploration and exercise.

### Browse

Provide non-toxic plant material for exploration, destruction, and consumption.

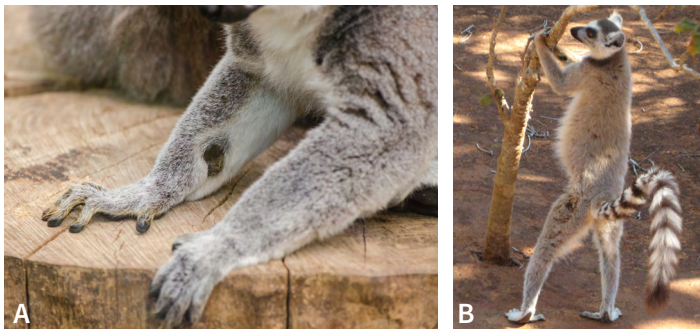
## Social Life

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Lemurs are highly social primates that live in multi-male/multi-female groups. The group is typically made up of a core of related adult females, unrelated adult males, and their offspring.

Females are dominant and in charge of group activities, including defending the group from intruders. Both the females and the males have their own, independent dominance hierarchy within the group.

Ring-tailed lemurs are territorial. Both males and females will mark their territory with secretions from perianal scent glands by elevating their hind quarters and pressing the gland against any vertical surface.



Male ring-tailed lemurs also have scent glands in their wrists. The glands have a spur (A) that the lemurs use to gouge tree bark and leave behind scent (B).

Males will also rub their tails against the scent glands on their wrists and in their armpits to deposit scent on the tail. They will then wave their tail at other males in a dominance display called stink fighting. Stink fighting is most often seen during competition for breeding but may also be seen during hierarchy and territorial disputes.

Ring-tailed lemurs will also communicate using a wide variety of calls including barks, yips, howls, purrs, chutters, mews, clicks, shrieks, spat-calls, and squeals.

## Caring for Offspring

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Ring-tailed lemurs typically give birth to one offspring per pregnancy, although twinning is not uncommon.

Newborn lemurs will cling to their mother's belly for about the first month and then move to her back. At about 3 weeks of age, they start independent exploration and climbing. They also start sampling solid foods around this time but will still return to the mother for nursing until they are 4 to 6 months old.

The whole troop participates in caring for the young and will continue to look after them as they get older.

Female offspring stay with their natal group while male offspring migrate to another group or join a bachelor group at around 3 years old.

## Compatible Species

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Ring-tailed lemurs have been successfully housed with other lemur species. Ruffed lemurs are most commonly encountered in co-housing.

## Common Health and/or Welfare Concerns

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**Toxoplasmosis** is caused by a protozoal parasite that is disseminated in the feces of cats and other carnivorous species. Cockroaches can also be a vector.

Infection is more common in ring-tailed lemurs due to a natural tendency to spend time on the ground. Mortality rates are very high, and lemurs that do survive infection often demonstrate permanent neurological damage.

**Obesity/diabetes** is typically associated with overfeeding or too many calories from treats and a sedentary lifestyle. Excessive fat deposition can lead to insulin resistance and ultimately type 2 diabetes.

## Questions

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Please email us at [CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov](mailto:CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov)