

Domestic Yak

Bos grunniens

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Mammalia
Order Artiodactyla
Family Bovidae

Native to: Central Asia, Mongolia
and Russia

Status: Not at Risk



There are still over 14 million Domestic Yaks in the world and are therefore not at risk. However Wild Yak numbers continue to decline due to illegal hunting, natural predators, and competition with Domestic Yaks for food, making them a Vulnerable status species.

Appearance & Lifespan

The yak is a very strong sturdy animal. They have humped shoulders with short legs and rounded hooves. They have thick, shaggy fur that is short on their backs and longer on the sides and have wooly undercoats on their chests, flanks, and thighs. Both males and females have horns though the males' tend to be larger and curve outward on the ends. The males are larger in size than females .Domestic Yaks are smaller than Wild Yaks. Domestic Yaks may live up to over 20 years.



Behavior and Reproduction

Domestic Yaks can withstand very low temperatures and are very important to nomadic tribes of the region because they are so surefooted on steep mountain trails. They graze in the early morning and evening and sleep for the rest of the day, and may spend days in the same pasture as they do not like to move about too much. During a severe blizzard, a Yak will turn its tail into the storm and remain motionless for hours. They will make frequent grunting noises, giving them the name "grunting ox."

Mating generally occurs between July and September. For the rest of the year, males will wander in small groups away from the large herds. After a gestation period of 257-270 days, the female will give birth to, usually, one calf in a secluded spot. The calf is able to walk within ten minutes of birth and the pair will rejoin the herd. Calves are weaned at one year and will become independent shortly after. Females will give birth for the first time at 3 or 4 years of age and will reproduce every other year.

Ecology and Conservation

Domestic Yaks are herbivores, grazing primarily on low-lying grasses, shrubs, forbs, and cushion plants found on the Tibetan plateau. They will also consume lichens and mosses. Yaks drink frequently in the summer and will eat snow in the winter.

Yaks are protected in China, however their numbers are still declining. Domestic Yaks are not yet threatened with over 14 million individuals still remaining.

Did you know?

1. Yaks have some of the strongest odors of any domesticated animal, often described as a combination of cow manure and wet dog
2. The yak's digestive system allows food to digest at a temperature of 104 degrees F, keeping it warm even in extremely cold conditions
3. Due to its large lung capacity, yaks can survive in the Himalayas at an altitude as high as 20,000 feet, which is the highest elevation of any mammal's habitat
4. Yak milk is pink

