

AFRICAN CRESTED PORCUPINE

updated March 2017



! Status: protected

Range	Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy and Sicily
Habitat	Forests, rocky areas, mountains, croplands and sand hill deserts
Diet (wild)	Bark, roots, tubers, bulbs, fruits
Diet (captivity)	Fruit, vegetables, dog food
Description	Length: 36 inches; weight: 40–60 pounds. The head, neck, shoulders, limbs, and underside of body are covered with coarse, dark brown or black bristles. Quills along the head, neck and back can be raised into a crest. Sturdier quills about 20 inches long along the sides and back half of the body are generally marked with alternating light and dark bands. The soles of the paws are naked and have pads. Eyes and ears are very small.
Lifespan	Captivity: 20 years
Reproduction	Females usually have one litter per year of 1–2 young after a gestation period of 112 days. There is a long intensive care period of the young within the family group. At birth, the young are covered with short hair and the back spines are soft; the spines begin to harden after one week. Mating occurs only at night, both in and out of the burrow. Females are aggressive toward non-familiar males. To mate, the female raises her tail and the male stands on his hind legs supporting himself with his forefeet on the female's back. They usually reach adult weight at 1–2 years and are usually sexually mature just before then. The female often establishes a separate den within the burrow system for bearing young. <i>(Most available information comes from captive animals.)</i>
Behavior	African crested porcupines are excellent diggers and live in an extensive burrow systems, caves, rock crevices or aardvark holes. They are terrestrial, rarely climbing trees, but able to swim. African crested porcupines have shorter tails than their New World cousins and the presence of rattle quills at the end of the tail make a hiss-like rattle when they vibrate. The quills are used for defense against predators. These porcupines are considered agricultural pests because they gnaw the bark of plantation rubber trees and eat corn, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and other crops. Their meat is considered a delicacy and in some areas they are hunted at rates which may be unsustainable.
Our animals	1 male. Arrived at PPZ in 06/1999. Birth place unknown
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quills of African crested porcupines serve as an effective defense against predation. When disturbed, they raise and fan quills to create an illusion of greater size. If the disturbance continues, they stamp their feet, whirl their quills and charge the enemy, back end first, attempting to stab with the thicker, shorter quills. Such attacks have been known to kill lions, leopard, hyenas, and humans. • Quills are also used by humans as ornaments and talismans. • African crested porcupines are the largest porcupines in the world and the largest rodent in Africa. • “Porcupine” comes from the Latin <i>porcus</i> for pig and <i>spina</i> for spine: “spiny pig.” • All Old World porcupines have spines of some sort, but their spines lack the barbules that characterize the spines of North American porcupines. • These animals are terrestrial, not climbing trees in the manner of North American porcupines.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
RodentiaFamily
HystricidaeGenus
Hystrixspecies
H. cristata