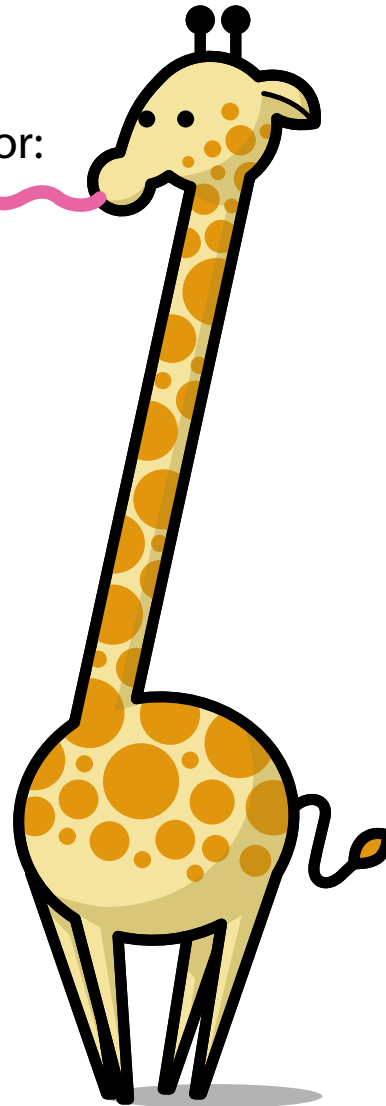


Companion Guide for:

Giraffes... What Do They Eat?

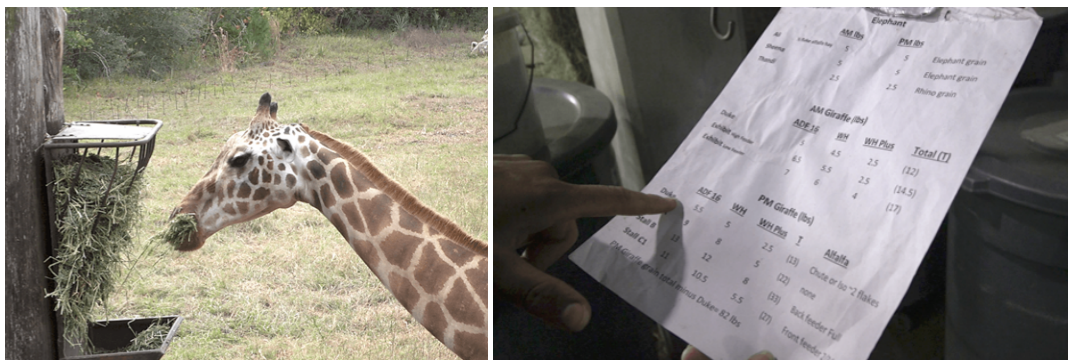


RUMINANTS... WHY DO GIRAFFES SEEM LIKE THEY ARE ALWAYS CHEWING?

Giraffes are ruminants, like cows, and have 4 chambered stomachs (comprised of the rumen, reticulum, omasum, and abomasum) that help digest the leaves and plants they eat. Once they swallow a ball of leaves, those leaves will travel all the way back up their throat to be chewed some more to help digestion. This is why giraffes always look like they are chewing. The leaves will then travel through each of the 4 stomachs to continue digesting the high-fiber food. Giraffes have special microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, and protozoa) in their digestive tracts that help digest fiber through a process called fermentation.

DIET... NUTRITIOUS AND DELICIOUS

- In the wild, giraffes eat mainly leaves and buds on deciduous trees and shrubs, and will also consume herbs, and vines, but prefer flowers and fruit when in season.
- In human care, they receive a varied diet of leaves from deciduous trees including wax myrtle, sweet gum, magnolia, elm, mulberry, sycamore and palms as well as additional nutrition with grains, pellets and alfalfa hay. All giraffes undergo routine health examinations, and fruits and vegetables such as bananas, sweet potatoes and apples are a great way to entice the giraffes to be receptive to veterinary staff.
- In addition to their alfalfa, leaves and fruits, giraffes at the zoo receive additional nutrition as part of their daily diet in the form of a mixture of the following. This is what Aree prepares for Duke in the video: [ADF 16](#), [Wild Herb](#), and [Wild Herb Plus](#).



KOPJES... MAKING GIRAFFES FEEL AT HOME

Kopjes are rocky outcroppings made of extremely old metamorphic rock in the African savanna. For the giraffe exhibit, JZG used boulders to replicate the kopjes found in the giraffe's natural habitat.

