

Hairy Armadillo

Scientific Name: *Chaetophractus vellerosus*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Cingulata

Family: Dasypodidae



The Hairy Armadillo weighs around 1.5 pounds. Its armor consists of the shield on the head, a small shield between the ears on the back of the neck, and the carapace which protects the shoulders, back, sides and rump. The banded portion of the carapace has about 18 bands, of which usually 7 to 8 are movable. These animals have more hair than most armadillos. The Hairy Armadillo usually inhabits open areas and they seem best adapted to semi-desert conditions. They are powerful diggers and live in burrows. The burrows are usually on sloping sand dunes and are several meters long and more than a meter deep. Activity is largely nocturnal in summer, to avoid the desert heat, and diurnal in winter.

Range

Western Bolivia to Paraguay and Central Argentina

Habitat

Semi-desert conditions in open areas

Gestation

65 – 75 days

Litter

2

Behavior

When threatened, they often emit a loud squeal. If unable to find a hole, they try to burrow into the ground. If overtaken while running, or if they do not have a chance to burrow, they draw in their feet so that the edges of their armor are in contact with the ground, and thus protect themselves against canid and avian predators. They anchor themselves in their burrows by spreading their feet sideward and bending their bodies so that the free hind edges of the bands grasp the walls of the burrow. They regularly burrow under animal carcasses to obtain maggots and other insects and sometimes burrow into the carcasses. They have been observed to kill small snakes by throwing themselves upon the snakes and cutting them with the edges of the shell. Under certain conditions they obtain grubs and insects from a few centimeters below the surface of the ground by the unusual method of forcing a hole in the ground with the head and then turning the body in a circle so that a conical hole is formed without any digging. During the summer they feed primarily on insects but may also feed on rodents, lizards and other small vertebrates. They also rely heavily on plant material, especially in the winter, when over half of their diet consists of vegetation.

Reproduction

Hairy Armadillos usually mate in September. They can average more than one litter a year. Litters usually consist of two young, often one male and one female. The young weigh about 5.4 ounces at birth, open their eyes after 16 to 30 days, and reach sexual maturity at 9 months.

Wild Diet

Grubs, insects, small rodents & lizards, plant material in winter