

Name _____



What Does an Armadillo Eat?

Armadillos are fascinating creatures with unique eating habits. They are insectivores, which means they eat mostly insects. Their favorite foods are termites and ants. In fact, an armadillo can eat thousands of termites and ants in one night!

To find their food, armadillos use their strong sense of smell. They sniff out termite mounds and ant hills, even in the dark. Armadillos are nocturnal, so they hunt for food at night. Once they find a termite mound, they use their powerful claws to dig into it. Their claws are sharp and strong, making it easy to break through the hard soil.

An armadillo's tongue is another tool for finding food. It is long and sticky, which helps them scoop up termites and ants quickly. Their tongue can be as long as 12 inches! When they stick their tongue into a mound, it acts like a sticky tape, catching hundreds of insects at a time. Armadillos can eat so quickly that they often finish a mound in just a few minutes.

Although armadillos mostly eat termites and ants, they sometimes eat other insects if they can find them. However, they are not omnivores or carnivores because they don't eat plants or larger animals. Their diet is very specific to insects, which makes them a key part of the ecosystem. By eating so many termites and ants, armadillos help control these insect populations. This protects plants and trees from being damaged by termites.

Armadillos are perfectly adapted for their diet. Their strong claws, excellent sense of smell, and long sticky tongue all work together to help them find and eat their favorite foods. Without armadillos, termite and ant populations could grow out of control, causing harm to the environment.

Now you know why armadillos are known as the "earth pig" — not because of their looks, but because they work hard digging and eating insects that live in the soil.