

Name _____

Does a Cheetah Form Relationships with Other Species?



Cheetahs are known for being solitary animals, but they do have interactions with other species in the wild. These relationships can be categorized into mutualism, parasitism, and commensalism.

Mutualism occurs when both species benefit from their interaction. Cheetahs don't commonly have mutualistic relationships, but scavengers like jackals and vultures may follow cheetahs to benefit from leftover prey. In return, the presence of scavengers can alert cheetahs to potential dangers nearby, providing a minor benefit.

Parasitism involves one species benefiting while harming the other. Cheetahs often face parasites like ticks and fleas that feed on their blood. These parasites can weaken cheetahs and make them more vulnerable to disease and other threats.

Commensalism occurs when one species benefits while the other is neither helped nor harmed. Birds like oxpeckers sometimes perch on cheetahs to eat insects off their fur. The cheetah is unaffected, but the birds get a meal.

Cheetahs may also have indirect relationships with species they don't directly interact with. For example, by hunting prey like gazelles, cheetahs help keep prey populations in balance, benefiting the entire ecosystem.