

Name _____



The Life Cycle of a Hippopotamus

The life cycle of a hippopotamus begins when a female hippo gives birth to a single calf after a gestation period of about eight months. The calf is born in the water and weighs around 50 to 100 pounds. Right after birth, the baby hippo can hold its breath underwater and will often nurse while submerged.

During the first few weeks of life, the mother hippo stays close to her calf, protecting it from predators and other adult hippos. Calves rely on their mother's milk for the first eight months, but they begin nibbling on grass when they are just a few weeks old. Hippos are herbivores, and grass remains their primary food source throughout life.

As the calf grows, it starts spending more time with other young hippos in the pod. A pod is a group of hippos that typically includes around 10 to 20 individuals. The dominant male leads the pod and protects the group from threats. Young hippos learn social behaviors and survival skills by observing the adults in their pod.

By the age of five, most hippos are considered fully grown and may begin having young of their own. Hippos can live up to 40 to 50 years in the wild, although life in captivity can sometimes extend their lifespan due to better care and absence of predators.

Throughout their lives, hippos continue to spend most of their time in the water, which helps keep their skin moist and cool. Their life cycle, from birth to adulthood, highlights the importance of family groups and water habitats for their survival.