

Name _____



The Circle of Life: How Zebras Reproduce

Zebras are fascinating animals, and their way of bringing new life into the world is just as interesting as their stripes. Zebras reproduce through mating, and their behaviors during this time are unique and important for their survival.

Zebras live in groups called herds, which usually include one male, known as a stallion, and several females, called mares. During mating season, the stallion protects his group and competes with other males to keep his herd. These battles may involve chasing or kicking, but they rarely result in serious injuries. Once a stallion secures his group, he mates with the mares.

When a female zebra becomes pregnant, the gestation period lasts for about 12 to 14 months. That's more than a year! At the end of this period, the mare usually gives birth to a single foal, though twins are very rare. Zebra foals are born with brown and white stripes, which darken to black and white as they grow older.

Zebra mothers are very caring and protective of their young. Within minutes of birth, the foal can stand up and walk, and within hours, it can run. This is important because zebras live in the wild, where predators like lions and hyenas are always nearby. The mother keeps her foal close to her and teaches it to recognize her scent and sound, so the foal doesn't get lost in the herd.

For the first few months, the foal drinks its mother's milk. After that, it starts eating grass but continues to nurse until it is about a year old. The strong bond between the mother and her foal ensures the young zebra's survival during this critical time.

Zebras typically reproduce once every two to three years. This allows the mother to focus on raising her foal and ensures the herd remains healthy and strong. These family-oriented behaviors are key to the zebra's success in the wild.