

# AARDVARK

*Orycteropus afer*



<b>Order</b>	Tubulidentata		<b>Afrikaans</b>	erdvark
<b>Family</b>	Orycteropodidae		<b>German</b>	Ameisenbaer
<b>Weight</b>	40-65 kg		<b>French</b>	oryctérope
<b>Shoulder height</b>	±61 cm		<b>isiZulu</b>	isambane
<b>Length of tail</b>	45-60 cm		<b>Xitsonga</b>	xomboni
<b>Total length</b>	170-190 cm			
<b>Number of teats</b>	2 abdominal 2 inguinal			
<b>Number of teeth</b>	20			
<b>Gestation</b>	±7 months			

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### What does the scientific name of the armadillo mean?

Tubulidentata means tubular-toothed. *Orycteropus* means digging foot and  *afer* is an adjectival form for Africa.

### Why does the armadillo belong to the order Tubulidentata?

The order Tubulidentata consists of one family and a single species, namely the armadillo. So unique is the armadillo that it cannot be classified with any other animal in an order. It has 20 teeth near the back of its jaw. These teeth never stop growing and have no roots or enamel, but consist of hexagonal tubules surrounded by dentine – hence the name Tubulidentata. Juveniles have double this amount in the form of minute milk-teeth, which are reabsorbed as the animal gets to adulthood.

### Where does the name “armadillo” or *erdvark* come from?

*Aard-* or *erd-* refers to the Afrikaans word for earth because this species is well known for digging large burrows. The *vark* (Afrikaans for pig) comes from its appearance – most likely the pig-like snout and large ears. The armadillo is not at all related to the pig or rabbit, nor the bear – regardless the name “antbear”. The “bear” part of the name could have originated from the arched back which the two species share, and possibly because of the bear-like gait of a running antbear.

### What features identify an armadillo?

Besides its appearance – *the large donkey- or rabbit-like ears (which can move independently*



*of one another), its long, pig-like snout and tail like a rat or kangaroo* – it is not related to any other animal. It is pale yellowish grey and sparsely covered with coarse hair. The hair on the legs is darker while those on the head, back and largest part of the tail are lighter in colour. *Short front legs end in long hoofed claws – four toes on the front feet, five on the hind feet. The toes on the hind feet end in strong, blunt spade-like nails which are used to remove loosened soil. It has a distinctive arched back and a tail tapering to the tip.* The tip of the female’s tail is distinctively white, possibly for the youngsters to use as a beacon when following the mother while foraging in the dark. Armadillos are typically the same colour as the soil where they live.

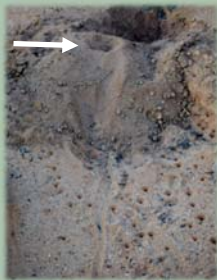


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### Signs to look for



*Imprint of aardvark foot in mud.*



*Heavy tail print of a male aardvark in soft sand. Note the impression left by the testicles.*



*The droppings consist of small, hard pellets, measuring approximately 1,8 x 3 cm and consist mainly of sand and the indigestible heads of ants and termites.*



*Typical evidence of an aardvark feeding site at a termite mound.*



*Not even the dry, concrete-like surface of this dirt road prevented an aardvark from getting at termites.*



*An aardvark obviously cleared away the soil from the entrance to its new den to facilitate easy access. It would not have gone to all that trouble if the hole had been dug for feeding purposes only.*