

Episode 7: Mongoose Lemurs



Faye: Hi! I'm really excited to introduce you to these awesome mongoose lemurs. In this enclosure, we have Bonita, the female mongoose lemur. She's the one with the white chin. And then on—Oh! They switched places! This is Mico, the male with the orange chin.

You can see that male and female mongoose lemurs have different coloration. We call this **sexual dichromatism**.

In the wild in Madagascar, mongoose lemurs are typically found in northwestern dry deciduous forests. In these forests they can find all kinds of wonderful things to eat, like leaves, fruit, flowers, and nectar.

Since most lemurs primarily eat fruits, vegetables, leaves, and flowers in the wild, their diet here at the Duke Lemur Center looks pretty similar. They're going to get a variety of fruits and veggies every day. Those will change daily, so if a lemur has a favorite fruit or veggie, she just needs to wait for her favorite day of the week!

Lemurs will also receive enrichment items based on their individual diets. This might include insects,





or other forms of protein like nuts; or flowers or browse. "Browse" is another word for fresh leaves. In addition to their fresh produce, lemurs also get a primate chow biscuit. If you have pets at home and you feed them a kibble or chow, it's pretty much the same thing, but designed specifically to be healthy and nutritious for lemurs.

In this video, Mico and Bonita are only six and four years old. For lemurs, that means that they are already fully grown. In the wild, the average lifespan of a lemur varies by species. Wild mongoose lemurs usually live around 15-20 years on average.

Lemurs at the Lemur Center tend to live much longer than they would in the wild, due to their exceptional care and safety from environmental risks. Most lemurs at the DLC live into their twenties, but we do have some super seniors here that are already in their early 30s.

Because lemurs live so much longer here at the Duke lemur Center, we have to make sure that we can take good care of our senior citizens. Sometimes when lemurs start to get old, they might start to lose their hearing or their vision, or they might start to lose some of their tooth power. So we have to make sure that their diet reflects their needs in that way. A lot of our older lemurs will get their vegetables cooked so they're nice and soft, or they might get extra-soft foods like applesauce or even





baby food.

At the Duke Lemur Center, we have both **diurnal** lemurs, who are active in the daytime; and **nocturnal** lemurs, who are active at nighttime. But we also have **cathemeral** lemurs. Cathemeral lemurs can change their activity cycle so they can be active during the day sometimes and during the night sometimes.

This is really beneficial for animals that live in deciduous forests like the mongoose lemurs. During the dry season in Madagascar, the leaves will fall off the trees. In that time of year, there is not as much to eat and it's easier for predators to spot the lemurs in those leafless trees. So, to keep themselves safe and healthy, those lemurs will switch to a nocturnal activity cycle to avoid predators and to come out at night when there's less competition for food. Then, when the wet season comes back around and food is plentiful, they switch back to a diurnal activity cycle and hang out during the daytime.

Unfortunately, due to deforestation, mongoose lemurs are critically endangered in Madagascar. The Duke Lemur Center's efforts to protect lemurs here and in the wild are funded by grants, by the education department, and by donations from people like you. Learn more online at lemur.duke.edu/protect.

Thanks so much for learning about mongoose lemurs with me today!

