



## **Animal Digestion**

The following activities are intended for use following the virtual tour of the Toronto Zoo's giraffe house, with a focus on digestive systems in animals.

### **ACTIVITY ONE - Animal Digestion Puzzle (pieces attached to accompanying link)**

Your goal is to piece together the digestive systems of a herbivore (plant eater - Rhinoceros) and a carnivore (meat eater - Arctic Wolf). What do you notice about the digestive system in each animal? Parents, please see the next page for prompting questions to ask your child.

### **ACTIVITY TWO - Prehensile Challenge**

You have learned that giraffes have a prehensile tongue (remember, prehensile means they can use it like a finger!). Pretend your finger is a giraffe's tongue - how many items in your home can you pick up with just one finger? Can you pick up more items that your sibling and/or parent?

### **ACTIVITY THREE - Food Log**

Keep a food log for a day (writing down everything that you eat). Are you a herbivore (plant eater), a carnivore (meat eater), or an omnivore (plant AND meat eater)? Research some other animals that fall into the same category as you.

### **ACTIVITY FOUR - How do Giraffes Drink Water?**

Since they are so high off of the ground and their legs are so long, it is not easy for a giraffe to get a drink of water! Draw how you think a giraffe would get a drink of water in the wild.

### **ACTIVITY FIVE - Food in the Wild**

You have learned what giraffes eat at the zoo. Do some research about what they might eat in the wild!

Discussion points for Activity One (puzzle):

**What do you notice about the size of a carnivore’s cecum? Why do you suppose it is reduced in size?** (Cecums’ contain lots of healthy bacteria to help animals digest tough plant matter. Herbivores need larger ones as they eat so many plants!).

**You may also notice that the intestines in general appear to be much shorter.**

(Since meat digests a lot easier than plant matter, carnivores have a smaller and shorter digestive system. As flesh rots very quickly, carnivores require that their digestive system be able to break down all the nutrients as fast as possible, so that waste can exit the system prior to making them sick.)

**What do you notice about the teeth of the carnivore? What about the teeth of the herbivore?**

The carnivore teeth are much sharper in order to tear the meat apart. Herbivore teeth are quite flat in order to grind up the plant material that they eat.

Below is the answer key for the digestion puzzle:

