



## **Awesome Animal Families**

 **beanstack originals**



# Awesome Animal Families

*Animal families come in all different shapes and sizes!*



Like humans, animals have families. And just like with people, these families can take many different forms! Read on to learn about different ways animals live together. Some might even be like yours!

## *Lion Prides*

**Roar!** Lions are some of the world's largest big cats (only tigers are bigger!). They live in grasslands across parts of Africa, where they hunt animals like antelopes, zebras, and more. Lions live in groups called prides. Prides can have as few as two lions, or as many as 40!

In a pride, every lion has a job. Female lions work together to lead the pride. They guide the pride to find the best places to live. They also do all the hunting. Female lions, or lionesses, usually stay with one pride for their entire life. Male lions help keep the pride safe. They mark the pride's home, or territory. To do this, they use their pee! The scents in the pee let other lions know that the area is taken. Male lions also help chase off any danger. Prides usually have only a few male lions. These males may come and go from pride to pride.

Lion babies, or cubs, are important to the pride, too! No matter which lioness gives birth, all the lionesses help raise the cubs together. They keep the cubs safe and teach them how to hunt. When they are old enough, male lions may leave to find or start another pride. And the female lions often stick around to become the new leaders!



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A large herd of elephants walks together across the savanna.

### Elephant Herds

Have you heard about elephant herds? Like lions, elephants live in large groups. However, elephant groups have a different name: herds. Like human families that come in different sizes, the number of elephants in a herd can be very different from herd to herd. For African elephants, which live across parts of Africa, herds can reach up to 100 elephants! Asian elephants, which live in parts of southeast Asia, tend to have smaller herds. There are usually only about eight to 12 Asian elephants in a herd!

For both Asian and African elephants, herds are led by one female elephant. This elephant is called the matriarch. She is in charge of guiding the herd to food and water. The rest of the elephants in the herd help out, too. When an elephant gives birth, the other elephants help raise the baby, called a calf. They even take turns babysitting!

#### DID YOU KNOW?

**Female elephants are called cows, and male elephants are called bulls.**

In elephant families, males tend to spend more time on their own. Sometimes, they set out alone. Other times, they form small groups of male elephants. But scientists have discovered that, while they sometimes set out by themselves, male elephants still keep close relationships with their family members. Even when they're apart, elephant families stick together!



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An adult emperor penguin watches over a group of fluffy young chicks.

### Penguin Parents

Perhaps one of the most famous animal families are those of penguins. Why's that? Because penguins—emperor penguins in particular—would do almost anything for their babies.

Emperor penguins live in the chilly Antarctic. Antarctica, also known as the Antarctic, is a continent located at the southernmost part of Earth. It is covered in ice, but is actually a desert—meaning it gets very little rain. Hardly any humans live on this continent, but other creatures do—like emperor penguins! They are the largest type of all penguins, reaching more than 3 feet (1 m) tall. That's about as tall as an average 6-year-old human! These penguins live in huge groups called colonies. In one colony, there can be tens of thousands of penguins. That's a big family! Emperor penguins can also form smaller family groups within big colonies.

#### FUN FACT

**Emperor penguin chicks are born brown.**

During mating season, emperor penguins separate into pairs. Once the female penguin has laid an egg, the family's work begins. The penguin mother gives the egg to the father, who balances it on top of his large, webbed feet. This keeps the egg safe and warm. Meanwhile, the mother penguin travels a very long way over the freezing ice. She might travel hundreds



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of miles before she reaches the ocean. This journey can take two months. All this time, the male penguins are guarding the egg. They do not leave it alone—not even to eat!

When the mother returns, the egg has hatched into a baby penguin, called a chick! The chick is usually very hungry. Luckily, the mother penguin has a meal for it: the fish or other sea animals she caught in the ocean. Where is she keeping that food? In her belly! That's right—to feed her chick, the female penguin throws up her meal. That's love!