



Biodiversity

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity is the variety of living things on Earth. It includes ecosystem diversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes humans play an important part in creating ecosystem diversity.



Native Americans set prairies on fire when hunting animals and clearing land. Tall grass and other prairie plants with deep roots survived the fires. The prairie grasses provided food for large herds of bison, which in turn supplied the Indians with food and hides for clothing and shelter.



SPECIES DIVERSITY

Species diversity refers to the variety of living things on Earth.

The variety of bovine species is one example of species diversity. All bovines are similar in that they are hoofed, even-toed mammals, and usually have horns. But within this group of mammals, there is a dazzling variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. Altogether there are over 140 different bovine species.



The yak lives in the cold, high mountains of Asia.

On the plains of Africa, the wildebeest grazes on grass, the eland browses on leaves and twigs, and the impala feeds on both grass and shrubs.



The smallest of all antelope, the royal antelope, lives in hot, tropical forests of West Africa.



Domestic cows, sheep, and goats are bovines that live on farms.

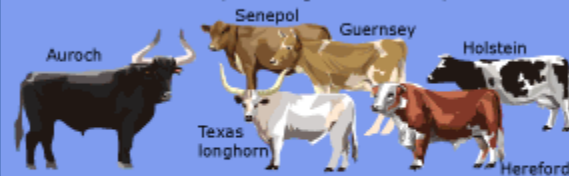
GENETIC DIVERSITY

Genetic diversity is the variety of traits found within each species.



All humans (*Homo sapiens*) share certain general traits, such as ten fingers and ten toes. Also you may resemble other members of your family, because you inherited your traits from your parents. But each of us is unique!

Sometimes humans help create genetic diversity.



Until the 1600s, the wild ancestor of the domestic cow, the auroch, lived in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. It was bigger and more dangerous than the domestic cow. Several thousand years ago, humans began breeding many different varieties of cows for meat, milk, or for pulling wagons and plows.