



Care For Us

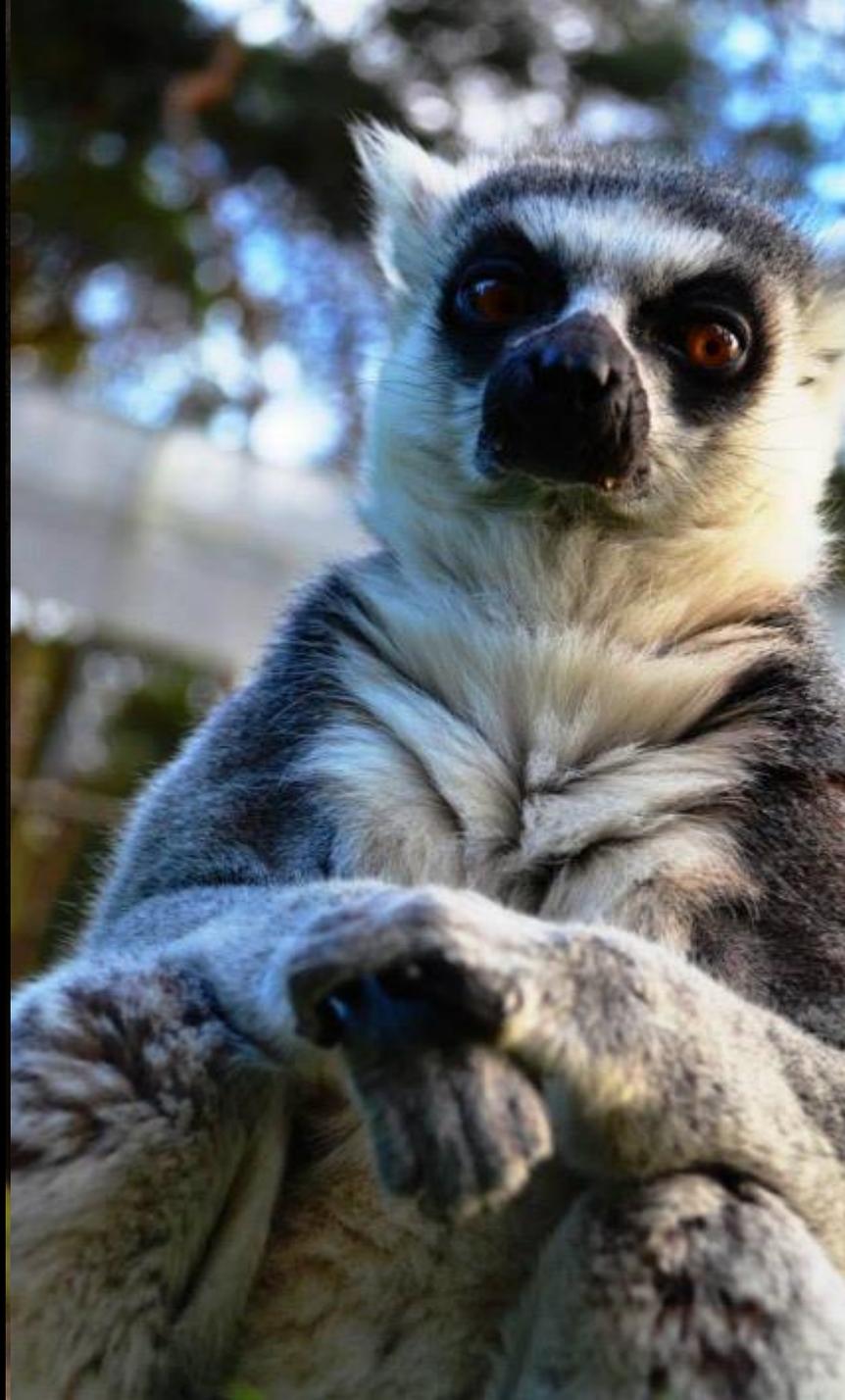
Ring-Tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*)

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have a good standard of welfare.

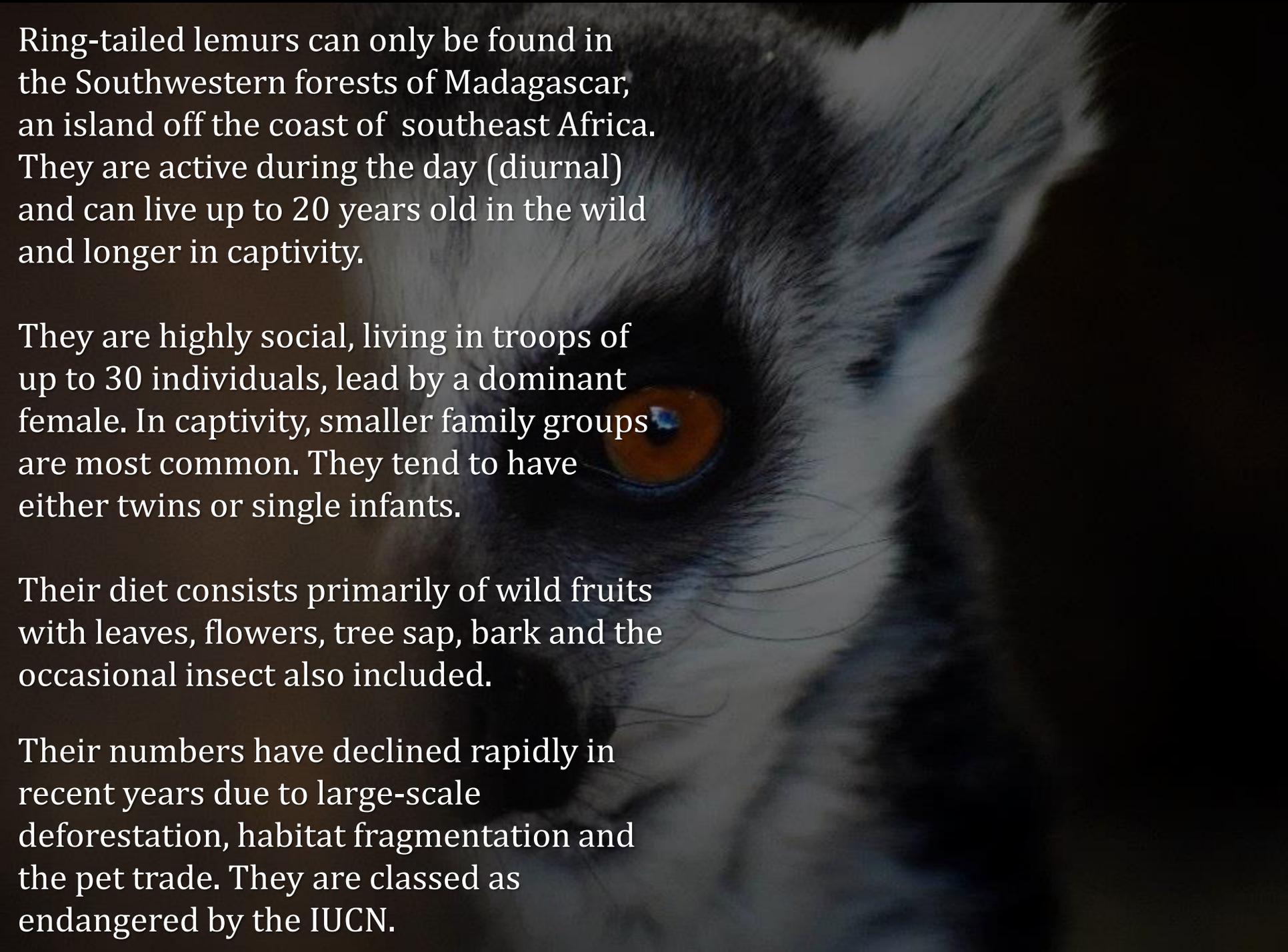
A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.





Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.

A close-up photograph of a ring-tailed lemur's face, showing its eye and the characteristic white stripe that runs through it. The background is dark and out of focus.

Ring-tailed lemurs can only be found in the Southwestern forests of Madagascar, an island off the coast of southeast Africa. They are active during the day (diurnal) and can live up to 20 years old in the wild and longer in captivity.

They are highly social, living in troops of up to 30 individuals, lead by a dominant female. In captivity, smaller family groups are most common. They tend to have either twins or single infants.

Their diet consists primarily of wild fruits with leaves, flowers, tree sap, bark and the occasional insect also included.

Their numbers have declined rapidly in recent years due to large-scale deforestation, habitat fragmentation and the pet trade. They are classed as endangered by the IUCN.



Lemurs like to climb

Ring-tailed lemurs are very good at climbing through trees and jumping very far, but they also spend up to a third of their time on the ground. They have a long tail to help them balance but they cannot grip anything with it.

Lemurs should always have the opportunity to move around their enclosure at multiple levels.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

A mixture of static and moving branches, as well as trees will provide the opportunity to climb. Ropes and cargo nets which are often moved around the enclosure provides a dynamic environment. Varied substrates and climbing opportunities will encourage multi-level movement and exploration.

Lemurs are social

Ring-tailed lemurs are highly social, living in female-led troops and interacting frequently through vocal, tactile and scent-based communication. They should never live on their own. Appropriate group sizes for the space available should be held and population management should consider social structure.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Opportunities for behaviours such as grooming will promote social cohesion within a troop. Ensuring enclosures have available spaces for the entire troop to be together will encourage resting behaviours. Multiple entrances and exits to indoor housing should be available to reduce potential aggression. There should be ample resource provision to avoid resource competition amongst the group.

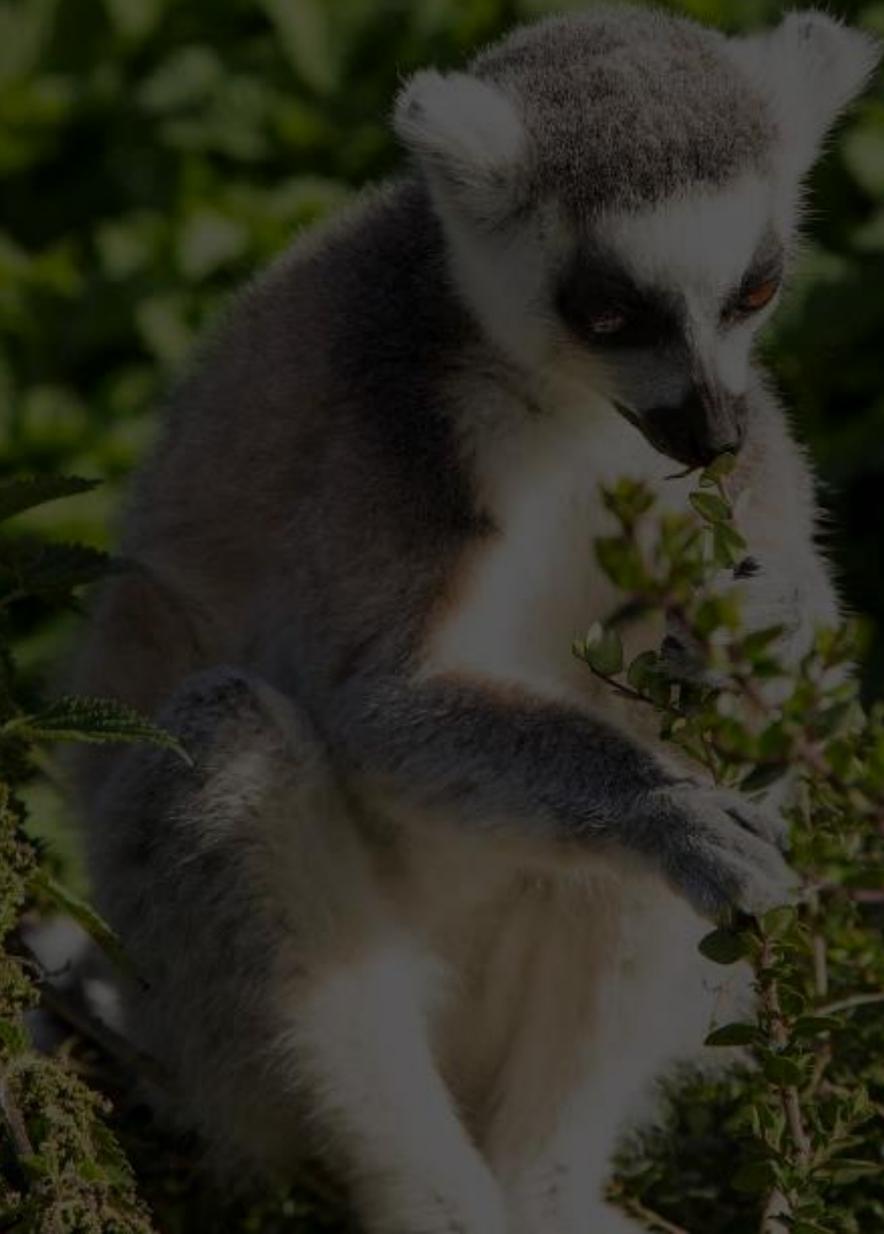


Lemurs Like to Forage

Lemurs spend the majority of their time (up to 50% of the time they are awake) actively foraging for food. They will browse leaves from trees and find fruit wherever it grows too. Lemurs will also forage for food on the ground but will avoid areas with long grass where they might be susceptible to predators.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Chopping food into smaller pieces, scattering it around an enclosure or in forage boxes, and using enrichment devices such as puzzle feeders to create access challenges are all great ways of encouraging lemurs to forage. Having established browsable trees is also recommended. Feed multiple times a day to encourage foraging.

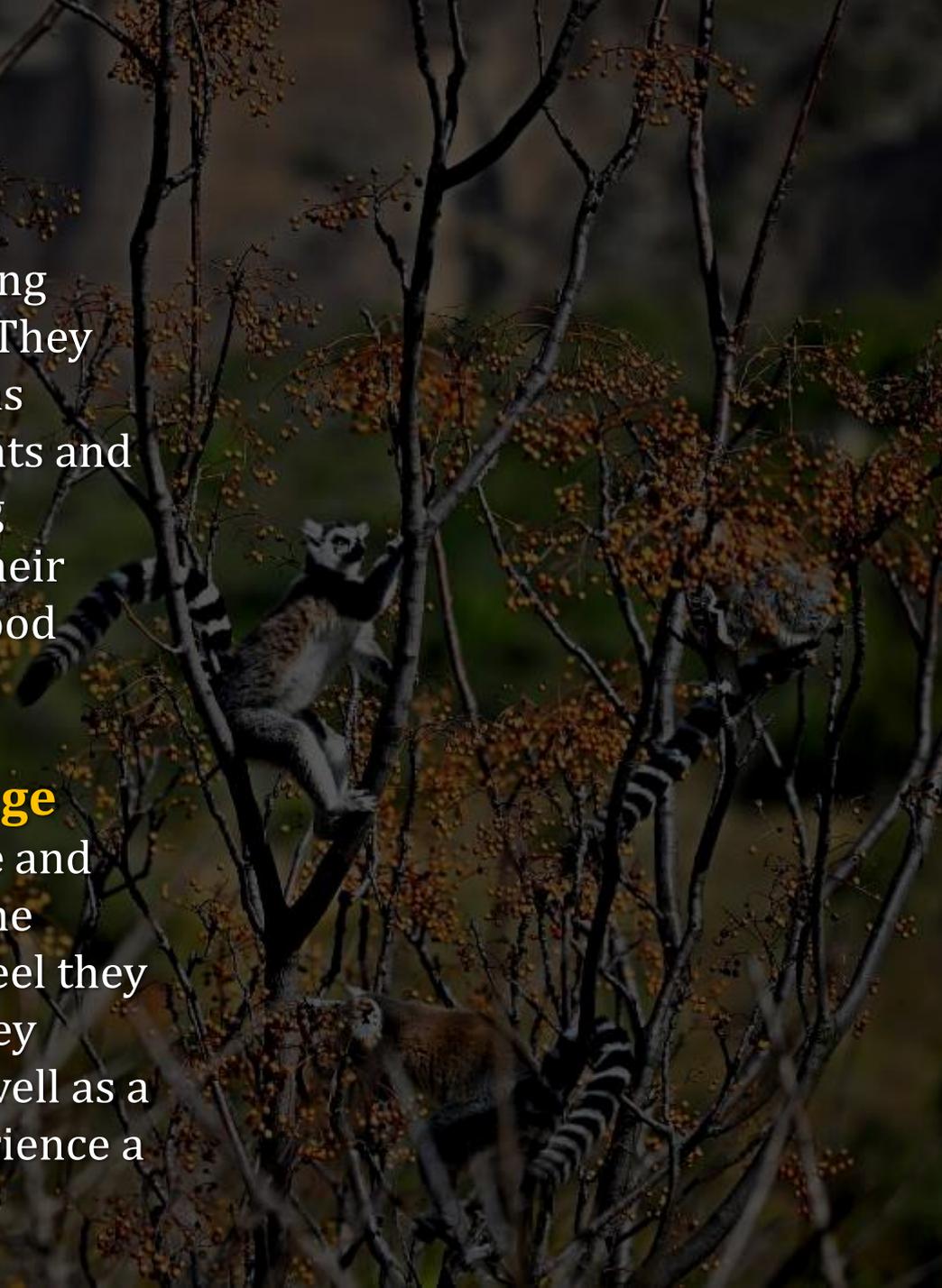


Lemurs like specific environments

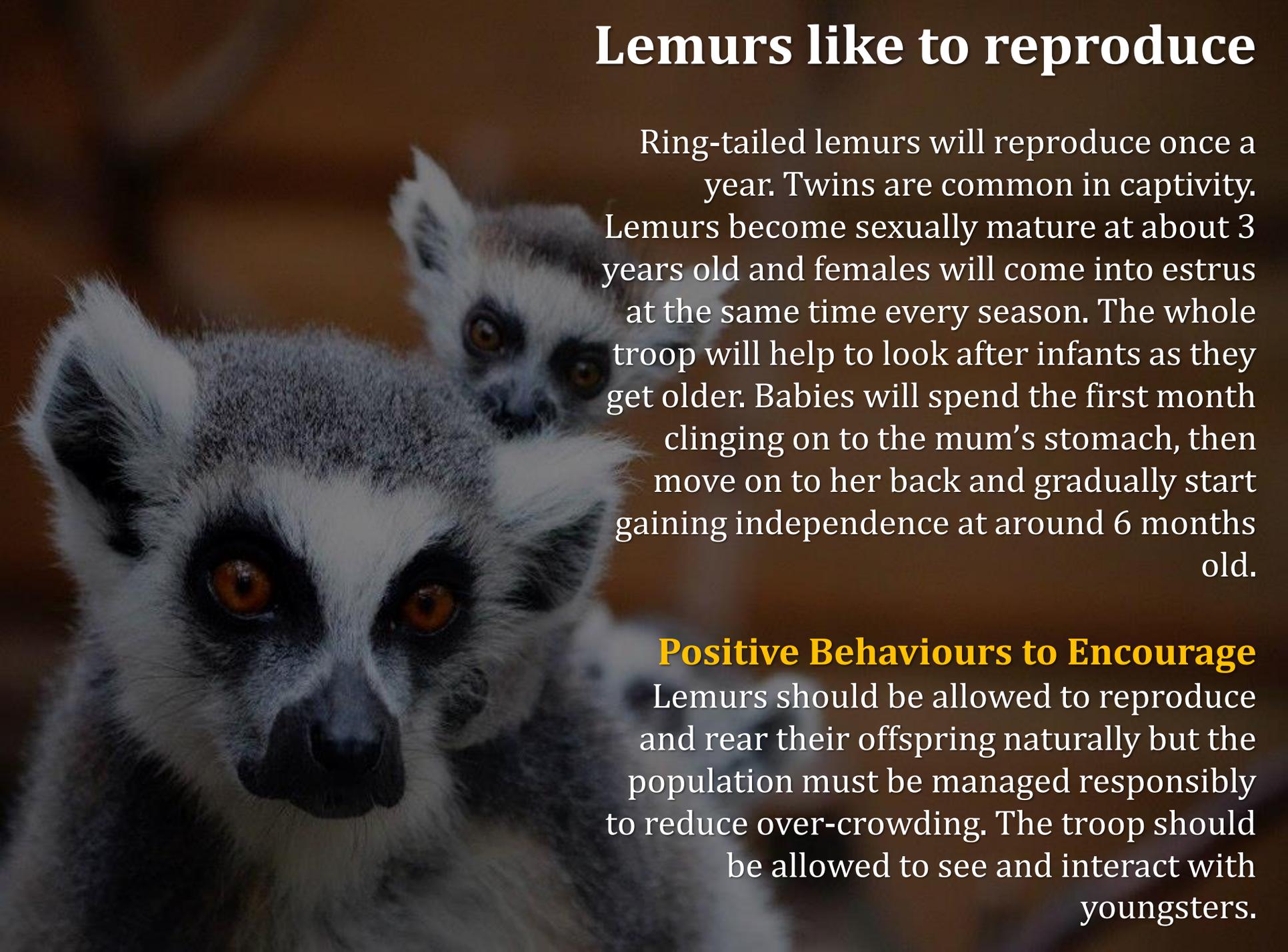
Lemurs thrive in temperatures ranging between 18 and 30 degrees Celsius. They will need access to warm refuge areas which are protected from the elements and away from public view. A stimulating environment which encourages all their natural behaviours is essential for good lemur welfare.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Opportunities to rest, explore, forage and interact socially must be offered in the lemur's environment. If the lemurs feel they have choice and control over how they interact with their environment, as well as a good level of comfort, they can experience a good standard of welfare.



Lemurs like to reproduce



Ring-tailed lemurs will reproduce once a year. Twins are common in captivity. Lemurs become sexually mature at about 3 years old and females will come into estrus at the same time every season. The whole troop will help to look after infants as they get older. Babies will spend the first month clinging on to the mum's stomach, then move on to her back and gradually start gaining independence at around 6 months old.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

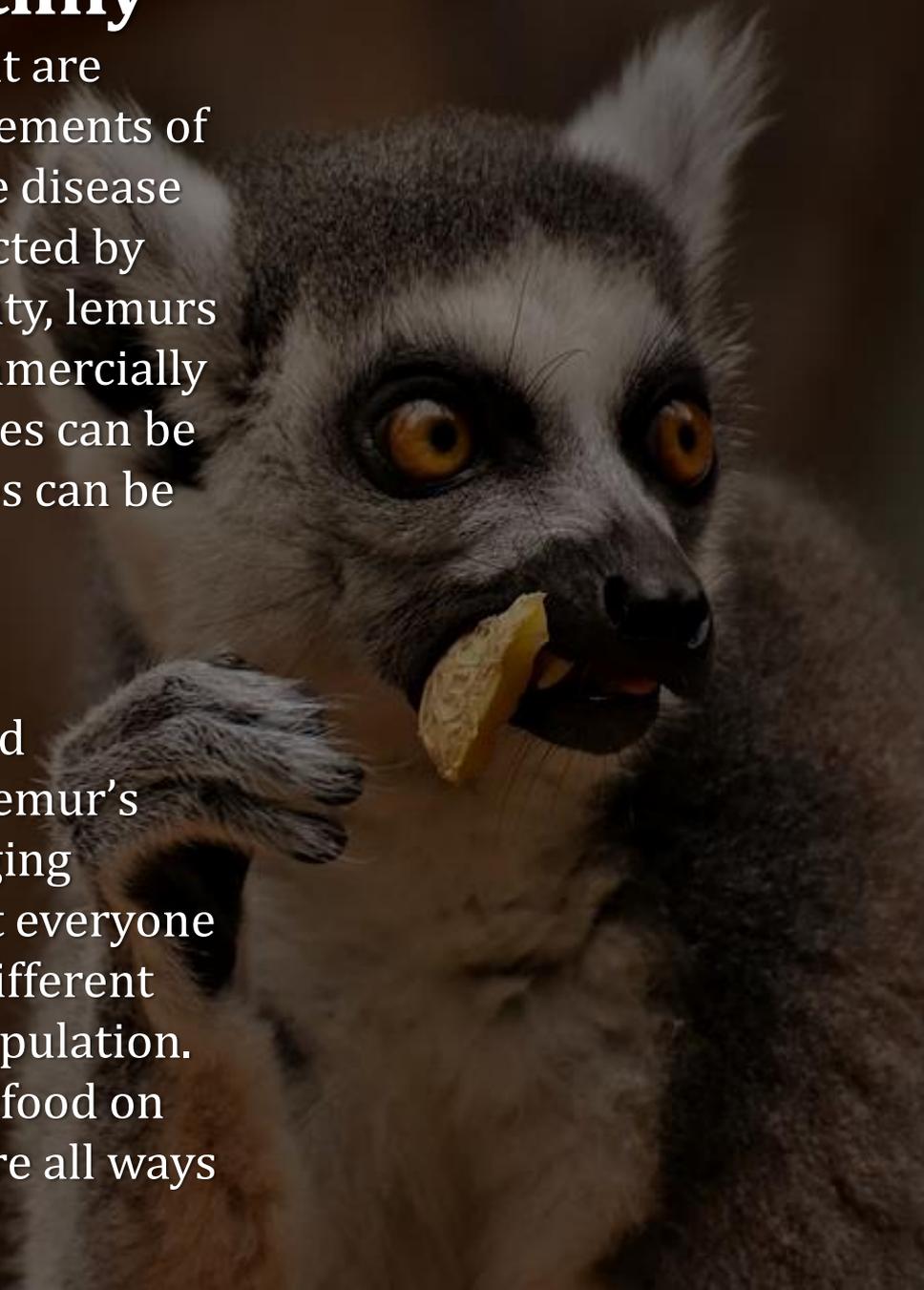
Lemurs should be allowed to reproduce and rear their offspring naturally but the population must be managed responsibly to reduce over-crowding. The troop should be allowed to see and interact with youngsters.

Lemurs like to eat healthily

Lemurs primarily eat fruit in the wild but are classed as omnivores due to the other elements of their diet. They are prone to iron storage disease if given an inappropriate diet, also impacted by tannin availability from leaves. In captivity, lemurs can contract diabetes from a largely commercially grown fruit-based diet so some vegetables can be given to reduce sugar content. Vegetables can be steamed to increase palatability.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing a diet with lots of variation and delivering it in different ways gives the lemur's choice and control and encourages foraging behaviours. Chopping up the diet so that everyone gets a share is important but choosing different sizes will promote exploration and manipulation. Scattering feeds, puzzle feeders, spiking food on branches and creating fruit smoothies are all ways to make lemur diets more interesting.



Lemurs enjoy

Eating foods that are healthy for them and having to search for their food. They enjoy climbing, investigating new things and living together in a group.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

