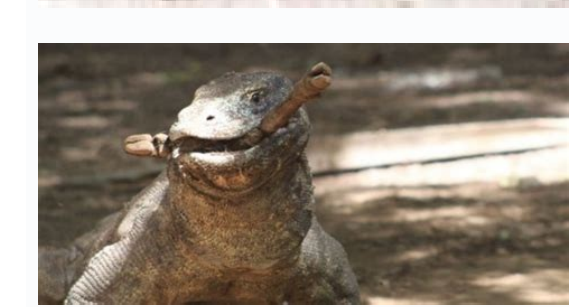


What can eat a komodo dragon

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Komodo dragons are strong, powerful, and deadly—but is there anything or anyone that can defeat them? What can kill a Komodo dragon—diseases, injuries, other predators? How dangerous are Komodo dragons, and do they have any natural predators? Or are they considered apex predators themselves? Keep reading! In this article, we'll answer all of these questions. How Dangerous are Komodo Dragons? Komodo dragons can be extremely dangerous; they are the largest lizards on earth, known for being strong and powerful. Though they don't have the strongest bite force among predators, their mouths are full sharp, venomous teeth. Their mouths are also filled with many kinds of bacteria from decaying meat. These strains of bacteria can cause blood poisoning in any creature a Komodo dragon bites. Komodo dragons use their powerful tails and thick, heavy bodies in a fight; they often fight each other for food or territory and can crush smaller prey without competition. Their bite force, though not the strongest, is still intense for an animal with such a lightweight skull and small teeth. As mentioned, the poison and bacteria in a Komodo dragon's mouth are also extremely dangerous. A Komodo dragon's venom can cause a sudden drop in blood pressure and prevent blood from clotting, causing their prey or a human victim to bleed out slowly over a couple of days, and if the venom doesn't kill it first, the blood poisoning surely will. Are Komodo Dragons Apex Predators? Apex predators are animals that have no natural predators of their own—in other words, they are at the top of the food chain. So, do Komodo dragons qualify as apex predators? Like most predators, Komodo dragons can be hunted and killed when they are young and small, and even the adults may be hunted when they are injured or sick. But healthy adult Komodo dragons have no known predators in the wild—at least not in their natural environment. For this reason, yes, Komodo dragons are considered apex predators. They hunt all different types of prey animals, from small insects and birds to large mammals such as water buffalo. They are not hunted by any animals when they are healthy adults; in fact, they are feared and generally avoided by most animals they come in contact with. Again, though, they may be hunted and killed by other predators when they are young or injured. What Can Kill a Komodo Dragon? According to Reference.Com, young Komodo dragons are sometimes killed by large predators. To protect themselves, juvenile dragons spend much of their time up in trees to help them avoid drawing attention from more deadly creatures; they do this until they are large enough to fight back. Komodo dragons are resistant to many strains of bacteria often found in the carrion they eat; whereas other animals would likely develop bacterial infections from eating bacteria-infested meat, Komodo dragons can eat nearly anything they want without harm. That said, Komodo dragons can die from injuries and infections of other kinds. There are few viruses and bacteria they are not naturally immune to, but injuries can make them more prone to predators and possibly lead to excessive blood loss. Humans can kill Komodo dragons and sometimes do so unintentionally by interfering with their natural habitat and competing for food sources. Sometimes humans will kill Komodo dragons by shooting them out of self-defense or in an effort to protect their livestock from being hunted. Though Komodo dragons have no predators in their natural environments, they could be killed by other predators found in other parts of the world - see our article about a theoretical duel between Komodo dragon and King cobra. Check out this video to learn more about the animals that could kill Komodo dragons if their territories overlapped. Who are the Predators of the Komodo Dragon? Again, Komodo dragons have no natural predators when they are fully grown. Young and injured Komodo dragons may be killed by some predators, including: Large predatory mammals: There are few predatory mammals on the Lesser Sunda Islands, where Komodo dragons are native, but those that do exist sometimes prey on young or injured dragons. Birds of prey: Large birds of prey such as eagles can easily hunt young Komodo dragons that may be attempting to hide in trees. The birds have excellent eyesight and can attack from the air, giving them an obvious advantage. Adult Komodo dragons: Sometimes adult Komodo dragons turn cannibalistic and prey on younger members of their own species. They do this especially in times of food shortage but may do so at other times after getting a taste for their own kind. Conclusion Komodo dragons are apex predators, so there are few things in the wild that can kill them. Humans, diseases, or injuries sometimes kill them, and young or injured Komodo dragons sometimes fall prey to other predatory animals—sometimes juveniles are even eaten by adult Komodo dragons. Common Name: Komodo dragons Scientific Name: Varanus komodoensis Average Life Span In The Wild: Up to 30 years Size relative to a 6-ft man: Reaching up to 10 feet in length and more than 300 pounds, Komodo dragons are the heaviest lizards on Earth. They have long, flat heads with rounded snouts, scaly skin, bowed legs, and huge, muscular tails. Habitat Komodo dragons have thrived in the harsh climate of Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands for millions of years. They prefer the islands' tropical forests but can be found across the islands. Though these athletic reptiles can walk up to seven miles per day, they prefer to stay close to home—rarely venturing far from the valleys in which they hatched. Reproduction Once a year, when they're ready to mate, female Komodo dragons give off a scent in their feces for males to follow. When a male dragon locates a female, he scratches her back and licks her body. If she licks him back, they mate. Males also sometimes wrestle one another to earn mating rights. Pregnant females then lay about 30 eggs, which they bury in the earth until they hatch eight months later. When there aren't any males around, female Komodo dragons have other means of reproducing: As they have both male and female sex chromosomes, female dragons can reproduce asexually in a process called parthenogenesis. Diet As the dominant predators on the handful of islands they inhabit, Komodo dragons will eat almost anything, including carrion, deer, pigs, smaller dragons, and even large water buffalo. When hunting, Komodo dragons rely on camouflage and patience, lying in wait for passing prey. When a victim ambles by, the dragon springs, using its sharp claws, and serrated, shark-like teeth to eviscerate its prey. Feeding The Komodo dragon has venom glands loaded with toxins that lower blood pressure, cause massive bleeding, prevent clotting, and induce shock. Dragons bite down with serrated teeth and pull back with powerful neck muscles, resulting in huge gaping wounds. The venom then quickens the loss of blood and sends the prey into shock. Animals that escape the jaws of a Komodo will only feel lucky briefly. Dragons can calmly follow an escapee for miles as the venom takes effect, using their keen sense of smell to home in on the corpse. A

dragon can eat a whopping 80 percent of its body weight in a single feeding.Threats to survivalWhile asexual reproduction does allow female Komodo dragons to replenish their population—an evolutionary advantage—it has a significant drawback: This reproduction process only results in sons. The death of other females within a population has led to evidence of inbreeding. The reptile’s reluctance to stray far from home exacerbates the issue as the species’ population declines and fragments.Humans have also posed a threat to the Komodo dragon’s survival. People have burned the Komodo dragon’s habitat to clear it for other uses, while poachers target this reptile and its prey. Tourists, too, offer food handouts and disrupt the dragons’ mating process—which led the government of Indonesia to consider a temporary closure of Komodo Island, one of several on which they’re found, to tourism. But tourists are also important to conservation efforts, as the economic boost they provide incentives to locals to help protect the Komodo dragon.ConservationIn 1980, Indonesia established Komodo National Park to protect the Komodo dragon and its habitat. This 700-square-mile refuge is also home to species such as the orange-footed scrub fowl and Timor deer, as well as a rich marine environment supporting whales, dolphins, sea turtles, sharks, corals, sponges, manta rays, and more than a thousand species of fish. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, Komodo National Park has established patrols to prevent poaching. It also works with local communities to build awareness of the species and the importance of protecting it.WATCH: Living Among Ancient DragonsThese big, scaly predators seem like relics of an earlier time. For her article in National Geographic magazine, Jennifer S. Holland spent time among Komodo dragons, learning about their lifestyle and the ways they bring down prey. Something went wrong. Wait a moment and try again. RANGE Found only on the dry, scrub-covered Indonesian Islands of Komodo, Gili Motang, Padar, Rinca, and Flores. The largest number are found on Komodo Island. HABITAT Throughout the islands, from the rainforest covered hills to lowland tall grasses. At night the lizard is usually found in holes among rocks, caves, or between buttress roots of trees. SIZE: Male: Fully grown males average 8 - 10 feet long. Their heads are square in shape. Female: Are slightly smaller. Their heads are more triangular shaped. Weight: 220 to 300 pounds. LIFE EXPECTANCY Captivity: Around 20 to 30 years. Wild: Unknown REPRODUCTION All Komodos are territorial and solitary. Males must move in and overpower the females in order to mate. About 5 weeks after mating in late June or July, the female lays up to 30 eggs. The number varies according to her size and age (the average clutch is 12 eggs.) Eggs are laid in large holes which have been excavated in warm, moist soil. Eggs are left unattended to be incubated by the sun. Hatch in about eight months, producing 6 inch long young weighing 3 ounces. These young dragons immediately leave the nest and climb up trees to avoid being eaten by almost every predator on the island, including feral cats, dogs and other Komodo Dragons. No one knows for sure how long they remain in the trees, possibly a few years. Even after descending from the trees they exhibit what may be a self protective behavior. Young lizards have been observed rubbing their bodies in the hair and intestines of kills, the same parts rejected by adult Komodos. They become sexually mature at about 6 years of age DIET Wild: Young hatchling dragons eat insects and small lizards. Medium sized dragons eat rats and birds. All begin eating carrion when they reach 3 feet (approximately 1 year). Large adult dragons eat goats, pigs, deer, and smaller komodo dragons. They have been known to bring down horses and water buffalo. Zoo: Insects, mice, rats, rabbits, and prepared carnivore diet. Komodos are opportunistic. Their top speed is 11 mph and adults overheat quickly. Rather than pursue prey, Komodos scavenge, lie in ambush in tall grass or shrubs next to trails, or slowly sneak up on their prey. They will attack any animal regardless of size, including humans. BEHAVIOR Komodo Dragons are the main predator on the islands. They have poor eyesight and hearing but have a keen sense of smell. Komodos smell by flicking their forked tongue like a snake to pick up odors in the air. Scent-laden particles are carried to the Jacobson’s organ in the roof of their mouth. They can find injured or dead animals up to 10 miles away and can distinguish the scent of pregnant and non-pregnant prey. They slit the ankles of their victims deeply. Blood loss or a fat-moving bacterial infection kill their prey. Komodo saliva is full of deadly bacteria that thrive in the meat caught between their teeth. A Komodo will try to gulp down as much food as possible before another dragon comes along and runs it off. They swallow without chewing at the top speed of 5 ½ lbs. a minute. Komodos hold down food with their heavy legs and slice off huge chunks with their teeth. The dragon’s can expand their jaws and swallow an entire fawn, a boar’s head, or half a goat, in one gulp. Dragons will converge on a smelly carcass from miles away. This is often the only time, other than breeding, that the Komodos may be seen together. Feeding during such a time is based on the size and aggressiveness of those that meet, with the largest eating first. Smaller dragons have to wait their turn or risk becoming a meal themselves. After eating a large meal the dragons will settle down in the brush and may sleep for up to a week while digesting their food. They have slow digestive systems. The monitors have exceptional strength but don’t always use it. In combat between males, one will dominate, but won’t hurt or bite each other. Females, on the other hand, will tear to pieces a male she does not want to breed with. A loud exhalation of air means “back off”. They fall into a deep sleep at sunset. POINTS OF INTEREST Komodo Dragons are the world’s largest living lizards and the most intelligent. They are able to outsmart a deer or pig when it comes to hunting. Komodos are equipped with large claws and a muscular tail. Their curved serrated teeth resemble those of sharks and flesh-eating dinosaurs more than the teeth of today’s reptiles. Have been seen swimming between the islands in search of prey. The Komodo, a meat-eating monitor lizard, was given the name “buaya-buaya” or “Beoayadarat”, meaning “Land Crocodile”, by the local people. For years, western scientists had heard reports of 23-foot land-living crocodiles from the indigenous people of the area, but it wasn’t until 1912 that the Komodos were “discovered” and brought to the attention of the rest of the world. They are known for their ability to swallow a meal almost equal to their own weight at one time. A 101-pound Komodo Dragon was observed completely devouring a 90-pound wild pig. Also, a 110-pound dragon consumed a 68-pound pig in 17 minutes. Komodo Dragons are not picky eaters and apparently have extremely strong digestive systems since they swallow almost every part of their prey including horns, hooves, even entire porcupines. The average 100 pound dragon will only need around 30 pounds of meat per month compared to a large cat or wolf of equal weight which will need around 300 pounds per month. STATUS Endangered due to habitat destruction and killing of their prey species by humans. Fewer than 5000 left in the wild. Some reports suggest that as few as 700 - 1000 still inhabit the island of Komodo.

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