

Leapin' Lemurs!

A look at lemur twins

Lynne Villers, curator at the Indianapolis Zoo, manages the current studbook and management program for the ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur catta*) in North American zoos and other institutions. She keeps an enormous amount of data on every individual, that includes births, deaths, transfers from zoo to zoo, and other important events. Currently, over 530 individuals in the North American captive population have been genotyped by Dr. Jean Dubach, wildlife geneticist, for nine of these genetic markers, or STRs.



Why use DNA?

These STRs come about due to errors made during DNA replication. The simple repeats, usually only 2-6 bases long, are a result of a duplication error. However, because they repeated bases are unique to the individual and are passed from one generation to the next, they can be used to identify individuals and determine an organism's parentage. There are two copies of each gene inherited, one from the mother and the other from the father. Therefore, these STRs can be used to provide some very important information. DNA must be used since it is difficult to visually identify individuals, females may mate with multiple males making it difficult to determine paternity and

females sometimes steal infants of other females, raising the offspring as their own. Remember, if a locus is homozygous, the numbers for both sequences will be the same. If they are different, the individual is heterozygous at that locus.

Ring-tailed lemurs are a prosimian, a type of primate, from the island of Madagascar which is located off the East coast of Africa. Lemurs are endemic to Madagascar, meaning they live nowhere else. They earn their common name from their easily recognizable erect tail that is covered in alternating white and black bands. They live in large groups that are female dominated, a system common among almost all lemurs. They typically weigh about five pounds and, with their long tail, measure about thirty-six inches long. These lemurs are diurnal. Though mainly arboreal, they are the most terrestrial of all lemurs, spending as much as 1/3 of their time on the ground. The ring-tailed lemur is also omnivorous, eating a wide range of plant materials as well as insects and other invertebrates and the occasional vertebrate like small birds or lizards. Ring-tailed lemurs have 56 chromosomes.

Ring-tailed lemurs often produce twins in zoos though not much is known about this in the wild, possibly due to their limited resources and the presence of predators. In zoos, where food is plentiful and safety is almost always guaranteed, this species of lemur often gives birth to twins. Since experts like Villers and Dubach are interested in keeping the gene pool diverse and healthy, it is important to determine if these twins are identical, from a single egg and genetically the same, or fraternal, from two separate eggs and, therefore, genetically different.

Procedure:

- 1) Obtain a Ring-tailed Lemur DNA Analysis Form from your teacher.
- 2) You will need to go through each line of DNA sequence and find the STR sequence. In these DNA sets, the repeat will only be 2 or 3 letters in length.
- 3) Once you have found the repeating sequence, count the number of times it repeats and write it on the line labeled
- 4) Then turn your sheet over and log your data into the table provided.
- 5) Wait for your teacher to give you the signal to find your twin. You will know your twin by the "Studbook ID #" at the top of your DNA Analysis Form. Twins' ID numbers are sequential.
- 6) Once you have located your twin, compare STR numbers and determine whether you are identical or fraternal.
- 7) Answer the analysis questions together.

Your name: _____ Your twin's name: _____ Period: _____

	Loci A	Loci B	Loci C	Loci D	Loci E	Loci F
YOU	/	/	/	/	/	/
YOUR TWIN	/	/	/	/	/	/

Analysis Questions:

- 1) Was your twin identical or fraternal? _____
- 2) Provide evidence to support your answer for question 1. _____

- 3) Why is this type of twinning beneficial to a lemur population? _____

- 4) How do these short tandem repeats (STRs) come about? _____

- 5) Why are STRs ideal for distinguishing one individual from another? _____

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6) Since STRs identify an individual, what other questions could they answer? _____

7) Circle the loci you had that were homozygous: A B C D E F

8) Circle the loci you had that were heterozygous: A B C D E F

Your name: _____ Your twin's name: _____ Period: _____

	Loci A	Loci B	Loci C	Loci D	Loci E	Loci F
YOU	/	/	/	/	/	/
YOUR TWIN	/	/	/	/	/	/

Analysis Questions:

- 1) Was your twin identical or fraternal? _____
- 2) Provide evidence to support your answer for question 1. _____

- 3) Why is this type of twinning beneficial to a lemur population? _____

- 4) How do these short tandem repeats (STRs) come about? _____

- 5) Why are STRs ideal for distinguishing one individual from another? _____

- 6) Since STRs identify an individual, what other questions could they answer? _____

- 7) Circle the loci you had that were homozygous: A B C D E F
- 8) Circle the loci you had that were heterozygous: A B C D E F

Ring-tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*) Genotype Data

Locus		A	A	B	B	C	C	D	D	E	E	F	F
ID#	Sex	LC5A	LC5B	LC6A	LC6B	LC7A	LC7B	LC8A	LC8B	LC10A	LC10B	Maki215a	Maki215b
1636	F	25	27	27	27	26	26	29	30	23	23	25	26
1637	F	28	30	26	33	31	32	31	33	19	31	26	26
1682	F	29	29	26	27	28	32	29	30	23	24	25	27
1683	F	29	30	27	27	24	32	29	30	23	24	29	29
1732	M	27	28	26	27	31	32	30	31	23	24	26	29
1733	M	29	30	27	27	31	32	31	31	23	30	27	28
2441	F	27	32	26	27	23	28	30	31	23	26	26	29
2442	F	27	32	26	27	28	30	30	31	23	26	26	27
2491	F	27	28	26	27	23	30	30	31	23	23	26	28
2492	F	28	32	26	27	23	23	30	31	23	26	25	27
2837	F	30	30	27	31	23	23	29	31	25	31	26	27
2838	F	30	30	27	31	32	33	31	33	25	29	27	28
2879	M	27	28	27	27	24	32	29	31	30	31	25	27
2880	M	27	27	26	27	30	31	28	30	27	30	25	28
2900	M	28	31	27	27	23	30	29	29	26	29	27	27
2901	M	28	31	31	30	23	30	29	31	23	26	27	27
3025	F	25	25	26	26	23	29	29	29	19	19	26	27
3026	F	28	30	27	28	29	33	28	28	19	24	26	27
3029	M	27	29	27	27	24	24	31	36	27	27	24	26
3030	M	27	27	27	27	24	24	36	36	24	27	26	26
3116	F	24	27	27	27	23	24	30	32	24	24	26	27
3117	F	29	30	27	27	24	29	30	32	24	27	26	27
3243	M	25	27	27	27	24	33	30	31	24	24	27	27
3244	M	25	27	27	27	33	33	30	31	24	24	27	27
3308	F	25	29	27	27	23	30	29	34	23	24	26	26
3309	F	25	29	27	27	23	30	29	33	23	29	26	26
3322	F	24	25	27	28	24	33	31	34	23	27	25	27
3323	F	24	25	27	27	24	33	31	33	23	23	27	27
3365	M	30	32	27	27	24	33	29	33	25	25	25	28
3366	M	30	32	26	27	23	33	29	33	23	23	26	28
3397	M	28	28	27	28	24	24	31	32	23	23	26	27
3398	M	24	28	27	27	24	33	31	32	23	23	26	27
3532	F	25	28	27	27	30	33	29	34	23	31	25	26
3533	F	25	25	27	27	30	30	29	34	23	23	26	27