

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

DENTAL DETECTIVES



Vocabulary:

- **Carnivore** - animal that eats only other animals
- **Herbivore** - animal that eats only plants
- **Omnivore** - animal that eats plants and animals
- **Incisors** - front teeth used for clipping food

- **Canines** - corner teeth used for gripping and ripping
- **Molars** - back teeth for crushing and grinding
- **Predators** - carnivores that catch and eat their prey
- **Prey** - an animal that is hunted and killed by another for food

Information:

Animals get their energy from food. In order to be able to eat their food, most mammals have teeth and eyes to best suit their needs. By studying a mammal's skull, the bones in an animal's head, it is possible to determine what that animal eats and if it is a predator or prey.

Herbivores are animals that eat only plants. Herbivores in Nebraska include squirrels, deer, rabbits, and bison. They eat things like grass, seeds, and herbs. Herbivores usually have large **incisors** to snip off plants. They also have flat **molars** and **premolars** with ridges to chew their food. Herbivores are frequently **prey**, so they usually have eyes facing to the sides of their head. This lets them see a wide area so they can better detect **predators**.

Carnivores are animals that eat other animals. Many carnivores are **predators** that hunt their **prey**. Carnivores in Nebraska include mountain lions, coyotes, and foxes. Some animals can be both predators and prey. For example, a fox is a predator that eats animals such as mice and squirrels. But a coyote might be a predator that sometimes eats fox. Carnivores usually have large canine teeth to bite their prey, and sharp molars and premolars to better chew meat. They also usually have eyes facing forward. Forward-facing eyes allow them to be better hunters.

Omnivores are animals that eat both plants and meat. They usually have all different kinds of teeth so they can eat all different kinds of food. Most of the time their eyes face forward. Common Nebraska omnivores include raccoons, skunks, and opossums.

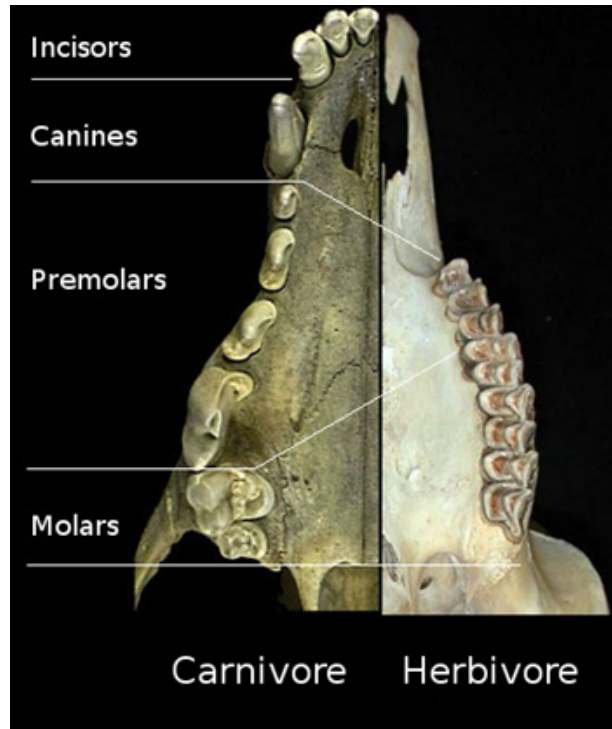


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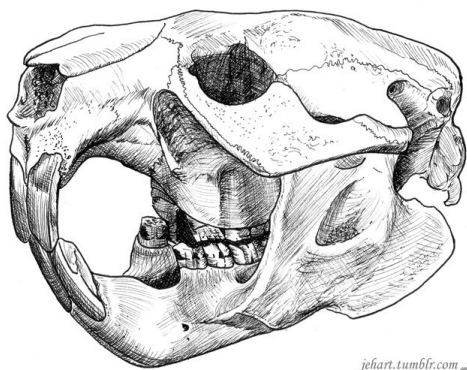
Skull Pictures:

Look at the following image to see what incisors, canines, premolars, and molars frequently look like in carnivore and herbivore skulls.

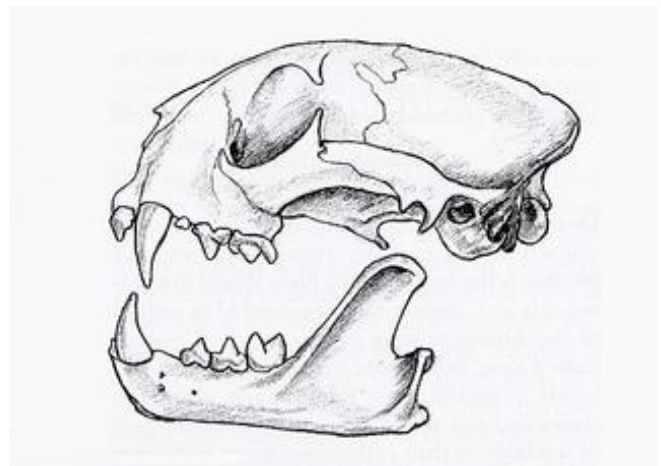


Using Drawings to Make Observations:

Creating a scientific drawing is a way of making detailed observations. Below are some examples of scientific drawings of skulls. On the left is a beaver skull. On the right is a mountain lion skull. What can you observe about these skulls?



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DATA SHEET

OBSERVATIONS OF A SINGLE SKULL



Student Name:

Blank space for student name

Are the eyes on the side of the animal's head or on the front?

Blank space for eye observation



What kinds of teeth does the animal have? (Circle all that are present)

Incisors

Canines

Premolars

Molars

Describe the molars:

Blank space for molar description

Do you think this animal was an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Please explain your answer.

Blank space for carnivore/omnivore/herbivore explanation




DATA SHEET


OBSERVATIONS OF A SINGLE SKULL



Draw a picture of the skull from the perspective of looking at it from the side so you can see the teeth and the eyes.



Look in a mirror and open your mouth. What kinds of teeth do you have? Are you an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Explain your answer.



DATA SHEET

OBSERVATIONS OF MULTIPLE SKULLS



Student Name:

Blank space for student name

Look at the first skull

Are the eyes on the front of the skull or the sides?

What kinds of teeth does the animal have?
(Circle all that are present)

Describe the molars:

Do you think this animal was an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Please explain your answer:

Draw a picture of the skull from the perspective of looking at it from the side so you can see the teeth and the eyes.

Large blank space for drawing the skull from a side perspective



DATA SHEET

OBSERVATIONS OF MULTIPLE SKULLS



Look at the second skull

Do you think this animal was an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Please explain your answer.

Draw a picture of the skull from the perspective of looking at it from the side so you can see the teeth and the eyes.



Look at the third skull

Do you think this animal was an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Please explain your answer.

Draw a picture of the skull from the perspective of looking at it from the side so you can see the teeth and the eyes.



DATA SHEET

OBSERVATIONS OF MULTIPLE SKULLS



Look in a mirror and open your mouth. What kinds of teeth do you have? Are you an herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore? Explain your answer.

Blank white space for writing the answer to the first question.

What are some similarities you noticed about all the skulls you examined?

Blank white space for writing the answer to the second question.

What are some differences you noticed about all the skulls you examined?

Blank white space for writing the answer to the third question.



What is one interesting thing you noticed about the skulls?

Blank white space for writing the answer to the fourth question.

