

gorges. (A wolf, for instance, can eat one-fifth of its total body weight at one meal-the equivalent of you or me devouring a 30-40 lb. steak at a single sitting.) Their food is of high nutritional value and there is little wastage. Their faeces, however, are messy and smelly and defecation involves special behaviour patterns. In some cases the faeces are actually buried and the site carefully covered over. In others, the act of defecating is always carried out at a considerable distance from the home base. When young cubs foul the den, the faeces are eaten by the mother and the home is kept clean in this way.

Simple food storage is undertaken. Carcasses, or parts of them, may be buried, as with dogs and certain kinds of cats; or they may be carried up into a treelarder, as with the leopard. The periods of intensive athletic activity during the hunting and killing phases are interspersed with periods of great laziness and relaxation. During social encounters the savage weapons so vital to the kill constitute a potential threat to life and limb in any minor disputes and rivalries. If two wolves or two lions fall out, they are both so heavily armed that fighting could easily, in a matter of seconds, lead to mutilation or death. This could seriously endanger the survival of the species and during the long course of the evolution that gave these species their lethal prey-killing weapons, they have of necessity also developed powerful inhibitions about using their weapons on other members of their own species. These inhibitions appear to have a specific genetic basis: they do not have to be learned. Special submissive postures have been evolved which automatically appease a dominant animal and inhibit its attack. The possession of these signals is a vital part of the way of life of the 'pure' carnivores.

The actual method of hunting varies from species to species. In the leopard it is a matter of solitary stalking or hiding, and a last-minute pounce. For the cheetah it is a careful prowling followed by an all-out sprint. For the lion it is usually a group action, with the prey driven in panic by one lion towards others in hiding. For a pack of wolves it may involve an encircling manoeuvre followed by a group kill. For 24