



Giant African Snails - Invasive Species

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

Achatina fulica, the Giant African Snail, is one of the world's most **prolific** invasive species. Native to East Africa, it has spread to over 60 countries. Adults reach 20 centimeters — the largest land snails on Earth. Their rapid **proliferation** in non-native environments threatens agriculture, local ecosystems, and human health.

The snail's reproductive capacity is extraordinary. Each individual can **fertilize** itself or mate with any other snail it encounters. A single adult lays up to 500 eggs per clutch, with multiple clutches annually — potentially 1,200 offspring per year. Combined with a lifespan of nine years, this **fecundity** makes population control extremely difficult once a colony is established.

Giant African Snails are generalist **herbivores** consuming over 500 plant species, including cassava, papaya, and peanuts. They also compete with native snail species, often driving local **fauna** to extinction. In Hawaii and Florida, infestations caused hundreds of millions in losses, requiring years-long government **eradication** campaigns.

These snails are known **vectors** of *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, a roundworm causing meningitis in humans when ingested. Infection occurs through contaminated produce or handling snails unprotected. In Taiwan and Southeast Asia, disease outbreaks have been directly linked to Giant African Snail populations in farming areas.

Control strategies range from manual collection to **biological** control using natural predators — though introduced predators may target native species instead. Trade regulations now **prohibit** live snail imports in most countries. Despite these efforts, eradication once a population is established remains costly and rarely complete.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. prolific ____ | a. the animals of a particular area |
| 2. proliferation ____ | b. relating to living organisms or life processes |
| 3. fertilize ____ | c. the ability to produce many offspring |
| 4. fecundity ____ | d. to officially forbid something by law or rule |
| 5. herbivores ____ | e. rapid increase in numbers |
| 6. fauna ____ | f. to combine sperm and egg to create new life |
| 7. eradication ____ | g. animals that eat only plants |
| 8. vectors ____ | h. the complete removal or destruction of something |
| 9. biological ____ | i. organisms that carry and transmit disease to others |
| 10. prohibit ____ | j. producing large numbers of offspring or results |

B. True or False

- ___ 1. Giant African Snails are native to East Africa.
- ___ 2. Each snail can only reproduce by mating with another snail.
- ___ 3. A single snail can produce up to 1,200 offspring per year.
- ___ 4. Giant African Snails eat fewer than 100 plant species.
- ___ 5. They have caused significant agricultural losses in Hawaii.
- ___ 6. Giant African Snails can carry a parasitic roundworm.
- ___ 7. Biological control always solves invasive species problems safely.
- ___ 8. International trade regulations now restrict importing live snails.
- ___ 9. Giant African Snails can live up to nine years.
- ___ 10. Eradication of established populations is usually quick and cheap.

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: prolific, proliferation, fecundity, fauna, eradication, vectors, biological, prohibit

- 1. Giant African Snails are one of the most _____ invasive species.
- 2. Their rapid _____ makes them very difficult to control.
- 3. The snails' _____ of 1,200 eggs per year creates huge colonies.
- 4. They serve as _____ for a parasitic roundworm that infects humans.
- 5. Most countries now _____ the import of live Giant African Snails.



D. Comprehension Questions

- 1. Why is the Giant African Snail so difficult to control once established?
- 2. What are the public health risks associated with Giant African Snails?
- 3. What are the risks of using biological control to manage invasive species?

E. Discussion Questions

- 1. Should countries prioritize preventing invasive species or managing them after arrival?
- 2. How does global trade and travel contribute to the spread of invasive species?

Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-j, 2-e, 3-f, 4-c, 5-g, 6-a, 7-h, 8-i, 9-b, 10-d

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-T, 4-F, 5-T, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T, 10-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-prolific, 2-proliferation, 3-fecundity, 4-vectors, 5-prohibit

D. Comprehension:

1. High reproductive rate, long lifespan, and ability to self-fertilize
2. They carry a roundworm causing eosinophilic meningitis in humans
3. Introduced predators may target native species instead of the snail

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