Capybara fact sheet

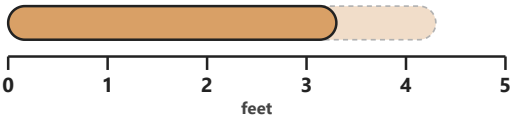
True facts about real capybaras



Fact card

Kind of animal	Mammal. The largest rodent alive.
Scientific name	Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris, which means "water hog"
Length	100 to 130 cm (about 3.3 to 4.3 feet)
Height	50 to 60 cm at the shoulder (about 2 feet)
Weight	27 to 79 kg (60 to 174 pounds), says the San Diego Zoo. Other sources give 35 to 66 kg.
Lives in	South America, always close to water
Eats	Grass and water plants
Babies	Called pups. Usually 4 or 5 at a time.
Lifespan	Up to about 10 years in the wild, up to 12 in a zoo
Status	Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (not endangered)

How big is a capybara?



An adult capybara is about 100 to 130 cm long, which is 3.3 to 4.3 feet. The dark part of the bar is the shortest adult and the light part is the longest.

Why two numbers?

Where sources give different numbers, this sheet gives the range. That is how scientists do it too.

My notes

8 true capybara facts

1. The capybara is the largest rodent alive today. Mice, squirrels and beavers are all smaller cousins.
2. Its eyes, ears and nostrils sit high on its head, so it can see, hear and breathe while the rest of its body is underwater.
3. Its feet are partly webbed, which helps it swim.
4. A capybara can stay underwater for up to five minutes to hide.
5. Capybaras have no tail.
6. An adult eats 6 to 8 pounds (about 3 kg) of grass a day.
7. They live in groups, often about 10, and many more can gather around the last water in the dry season.
8. Birds really do ride on capybaras. Some of them pick off ticks, which helps the capybara and feeds the bird.

Sources: San Diego Zoo; Animal Diversity Web; Rainforest Alliance; National Geographic; Columbus Zoo and Aquarium; San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Library. Every source and link: lumiscove.com/animal-facts/capybara

For personal and classroom use.

Capybara quiz and report

Page 2. The answers are upside down at the bottom.

Name: _____

True or false?

Circle your answer. Try it before you look at the fact sheet.

1. The capybara is the largest rodent alive. **True** **False**
2. Capybaras have long, bushy tails. **True** **False**
3. A capybara can stay underwater for up to five minutes. **True** **False**
4. Capybaras eat mostly fish. **True** **False**
5. Capybaras like to live alone. **True** **False**
6. Baby capybaras are called pups. **True** **False**

My capybara report

A capybara is a kind of

_____

Capybaras live in

_____

Capybaras eat

_____

My favorite fact

_____

_____

One thing I still wonder

_____

_____

Draw a capybara

Answers: 1. True. Mice, squirrels and beavers are all smaller. 2. False. A capybara has no tail. 3. True. It hides there from danger. 4. False. They eat grass and water plants. 5. False. They live in groups, often about 10. 6. True. There are usually 4 or 5 at a time.

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