



Care For Us

Capybara (Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris)

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have a good standard of welfare.

A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare throughout their entire life.





Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.

A capybara is the central focus of the image, standing in a grassy enclosure. It has thick, brownish fur and a large, dark nose. In the background, there is a wire fence supported by wooden posts, and some green foliage is visible. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Capybara can be found in South America. They live in forest, savannah and marshland habitats and are well adapted to life in the water. They are crepuscular therefore most active at dawn and dusk.

Capybara are the largest rodent species in the world. They have teeth that continually grow and are classed as herbivores. Capybara eat a variety of grasses and plants which require lots of chewing.

Capybara can live up to 12 years in captivity and about 10 years in the wild. They mature at about 15 months old and can give birth to up to 8 pups at a time after a gestation period of between 5 and 6 months.

Their population numbers are stable and they are classed as a least concern species according to the IUCN.



Capybara like specific environments

Capybara benefit from having an environment that mimics their natural habitat. They need large grassy areas of varying topography to roam and graze on, several shelters for privacy and rest and they need to be close to a large body of standing water. They prefer a range of temperate climate temperatures from between 15°C to 30°C. They are also very tactile so enjoy objects to rub on such as sticks and branches.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

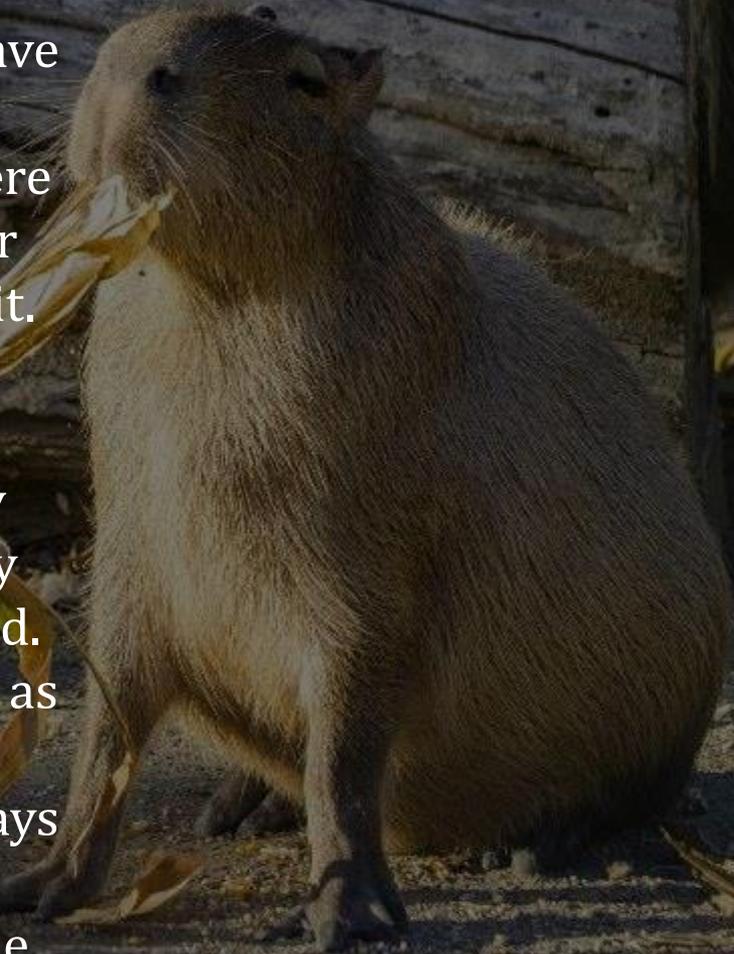
An environment should provide and encourage exploratory behaviours with choice as to where an animal can go and what they can do. A choice of substrates, as well as different shelters will benefit them.

Capybara like to eat

Capybara diets consist of a variety of grass species as well as some fresh fruit and vegetables. They are unable to make Vitamin C in their bodies so they must have access to it through their diets. Capybara also exhibit coprophagic behaviours where they re-ingest their faecal matter in order to ensure they get all the nutrients from it.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing constant access to grasses, hay and fresh produce will keep them healthy. Grazing behaviours should be encouraged. Providing food in a stimulating way such as in puzzle feeders, scattered around an enclosure and floating in water are all ways in which foraging behaviours can be encouraged. Providing access to chewable materials will help keep their continuously growing teeth healthy.



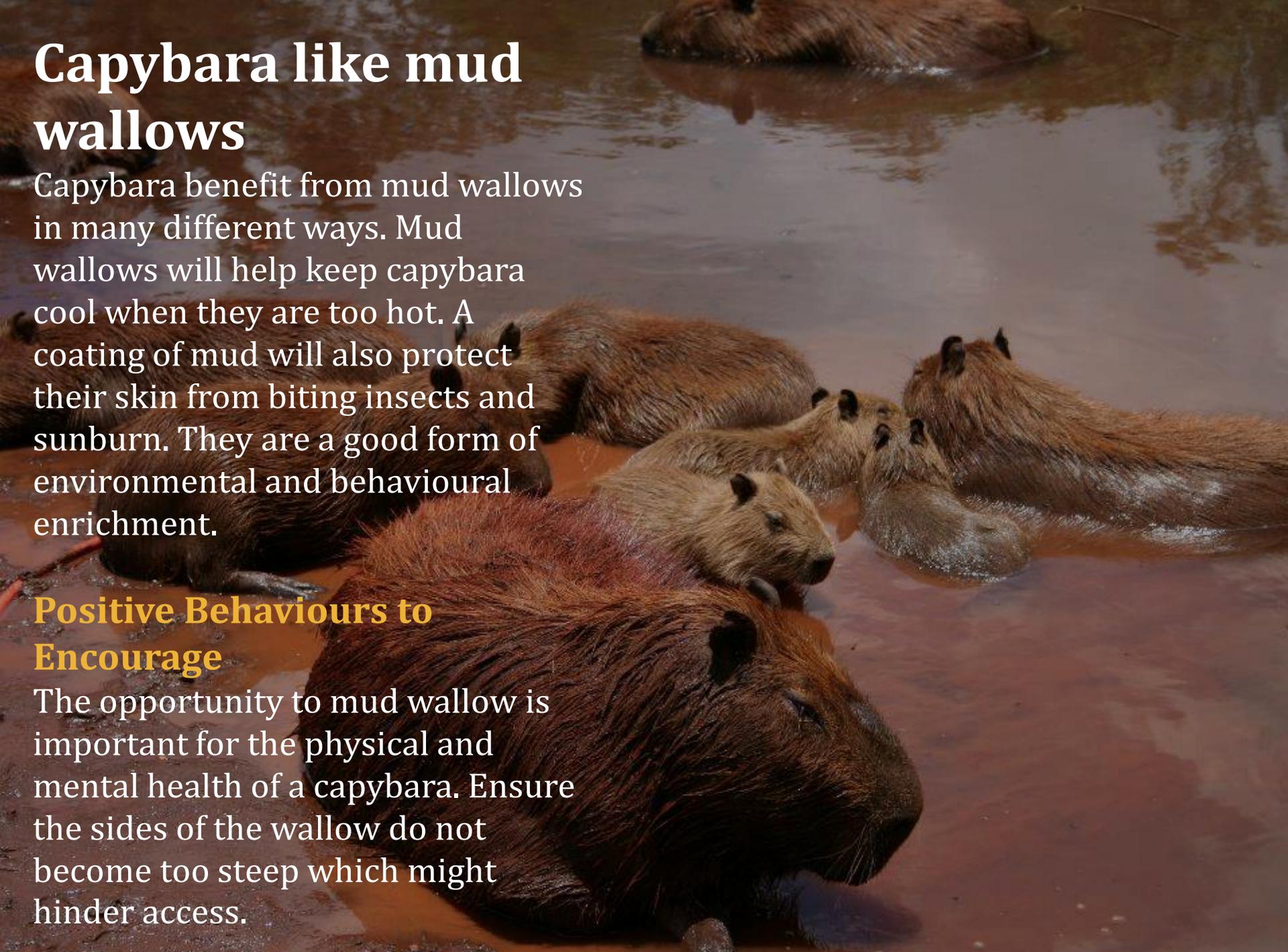
Capybara like to live near water

Water is an essential component for Capybara welfare. They can hold their breath underwater for up to 5 minutes and have partially webbed feet to help them to swim. They will often defecate in or near bodies of water and water is where they go when they feel scared. Lakes and ponds should have sloping sides to enable easy access. If they do not have access to a body of still water it can be very distressing for them. In the wild they also eat plants that are found in or near the water.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

A large, clean and easily accessible body of water will encourage swimming, defecating and foraging behaviours as well as ensuring that they feel safe in their environment.

Capybara like mud wallows

A group of capybaras is shown in a muddy wallow. One capybara is in the foreground, facing right, with its head and front legs visible. Behind it, several other capybaras are partially submerged in the water, some with their heads above water. The water is a dark, muddy brown color. The background is slightly out of focus, showing more of the wallow and some greenery.

Capybara benefit from mud wallows in many different ways. Mud wallows will help keep capybara cool when they are too hot. A coating of mud will also protect their skin from biting insects and sunburn. They are a good form of environmental and behavioural enrichment.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

The opportunity to mud wallow is important for the physical and mental health of a capybara. Ensure the sides of the wallow do not become too steep which might hinder access.

A photograph of a capybara and its cub resting on a wooden platform. The capybara is on the left, looking towards the left. The cub is on the right, resting its head on the capybara's back. They are in an outdoor enclosure with a pond in the foreground and a grassy area with rocks in the background.

Capybara require specific health care

Because Capybara teeth are constantly growing, they can sometimes undergo dental problems. Their skin can also be sensitive, particularly in harsh environments and may crack or become sore. The webbing between their feet is particularly susceptible to this. Daily observation of skin and food uptake should be undertaken in order to check these particular issues.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

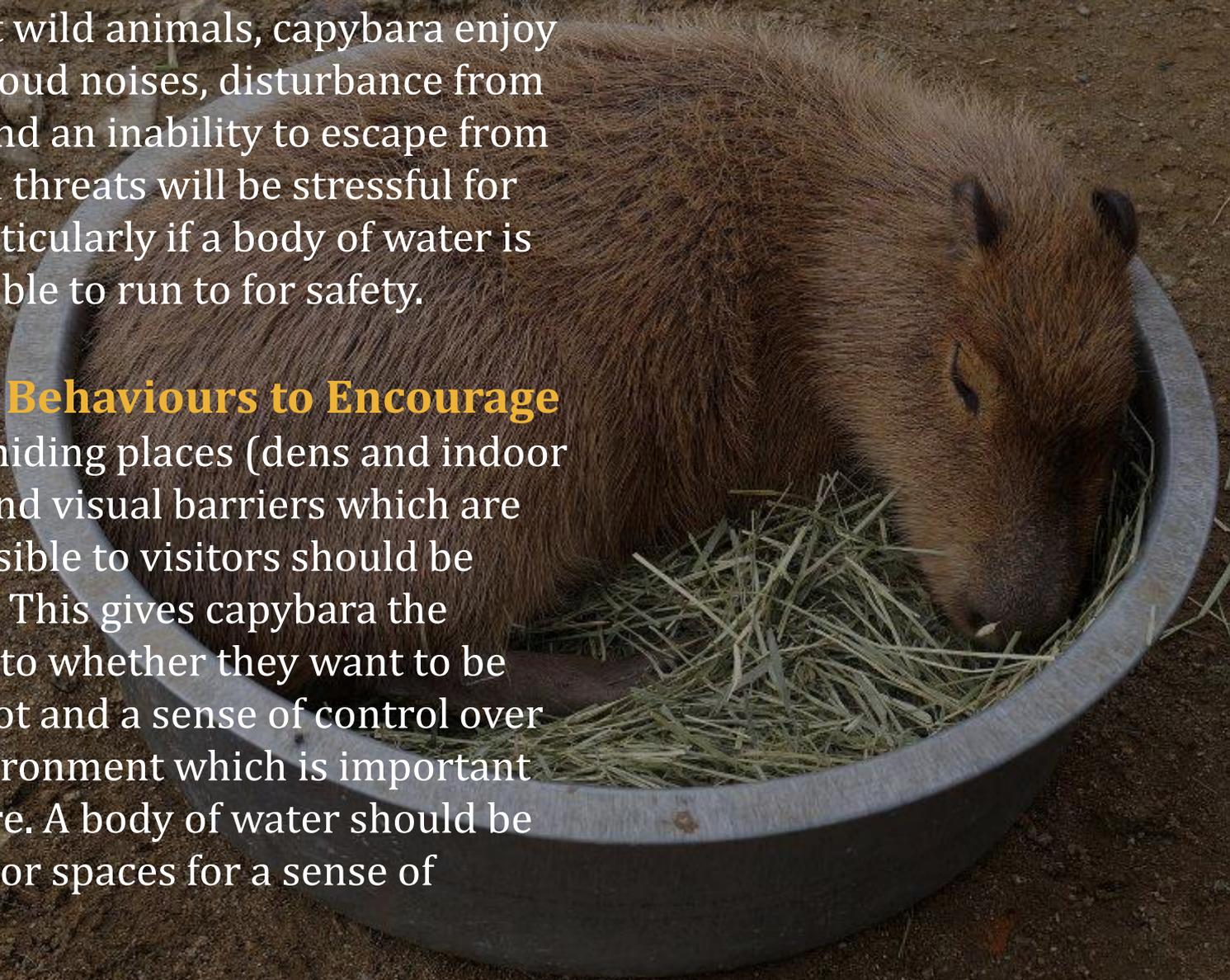
Providing branches and hay to chew on should ensure teeth are continuously gnawed down and kept healthy. Access to mud, water and warm places should ensure healthy skin. Daily health checks will ensure health problems are seen and acted on as soon as possible.

Capybara like privacy

Like most wild animals, capybara enjoy privacy. Loud noises, disturbance from visitors and an inability to escape from perceived threats will be stressful for them, particularly if a body of water is not available to run to for safety.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Multiple hiding places (dens and indoor spaces) and visual barriers which are not accessible to visitors should be provided. This gives capybara the choice as to whether they want to be seen or not and a sense of control over their environment which is important for welfare. A body of water should be near indoor spaces for a sense of security.



Capybara like to be social

Capybara are social animals and often live in groups of up to 10 individuals, usually led by a dominant male. Positions in social hierarchies can change. They communicate through sounds such as squeaks and rumbles. They also scent mark areas of their territory. Sociality can lead to aggression if resources are limited therefore food should be spread out and there should be enough shelters for the number of capybara

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Social species should be kept in compatible social groups. Isolation of a social species can be seriously detrimental to the health and welfare of that individual.

Capybara enjoy

A suitable environment that promotes all their natural behaviours including a large body of water. A varied diet with additional vitamin C. Privacy from humans but opportunities to socialise with other Capybara.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

