

DOBBY'S DIARY

August 2014

Issue Number Two

An Exceptional Rodent



Remind me, please, what is a CAPYBARA?

**CAPYBARAS ARE THE
WORLD'S LARGEST RODENT!**

WHERE'S THAT "E" THAT USED TO BE AT THE END OF DOBBY'S NAME?

Facebook has been at it again, but this time the news is good!

Continued on Page 2

ARE YOU READY FOR A PET CAPYBARA?

This is a quiz with no right answers, funky scoring, and very little encouragement. How does that work?

Continued on Page 3

STACY'S FUNNY FARM

The small pet sanctuary at Dobby's house has incorporated as a Washington State Non-Profit Organization and has just received approval for §501(C)(3) tax deductible status.

Continued on page 15

This time, we're taking a quiz!
Do you think you are ready to
own a capybara?



You called?



How do you spell klutz?



Breakfast time already?

Most capybaras come
from South America,
but I'm from Texas.

My parents and
grandparents were
born in Arkansas.





I write all the blogs. Well, most of them. Okay, I write SOME of the blogs.



An All-American Capybara!

FACEBOOK CHANGES FOR DOBBY/DOBBYE

Dobby's *username* at Facebook has always been *dobbywinnick*, but they never allowed him to use Dobby as a *name*. So, his Facebook profile name had been Dobbeye Winnick for over 5 years, when he was suddenly deleted without warning. They allowed him to convert to a page, and his 3,000 friends became "likes." Because the "Dobbeye Winnick" profile became his admin but no longer existed, Dobby's new page had limited functionality. Now there was absolutely no way to correct Dobby's misspelled name. One day, "someone" accidentally logged out and couldn't get back in, leaving the page orphaned. An amazing User Interface Engineer at Facebook fixed the problem the following day, making Stacy Winnick the new admin! Then, the amazing Stacy Winnick applied for a name change and Bob's Your Uncle! If you are a very good detective, you might discover that Dobby also has a new profile, but you didn't read that here. Right?

LITERARY NEWS

Top secret news: Prince Dobalob (AKA Dobby) will be featured in an adventure story book. Written by Stacy Winnick and illustrated by Sonya Reasor, Dobby is joined by his duck and chicken friends, rabbits, and a bunch of weird but wonderful smaller rodents. Watch this space!



CELEBRITY VISITOR!

Melanie Typaldos, world famous expert on pet capybaras, came to visit us in July! She discovered that while he is not very well behaved, Dobby most certainly is BIG! Follow this link to read about her visit. Check out parts 3 and 4, too!

[Dobbeye Trip Part 2](#)

ROUS FOUNDATION

The ROUS Foundation provides funds for select veterinary expenses associated with the care of captive capybaras with services provided by Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine.

The goal of the ROUS Foundation is to improve the quality and duration of life of captive capybaras kept as pets, in small zoos, or in major zoological parks. A first objective of the Foundation is to learn the life expectancy of captive capybaras and why they die early so often.

Tax deductible donations may be made through the Texas A&M University website:

[ROUS Foundation at Texas A&M University](#)



Are You Ready For a Capybara?

Most of you aren't considering getting a pet capybara, but a disturbing number of newbie capybara enthusiasts decide to get one as soon as they learn of their existence. These are tame wild animals, not domestic pets, and we really don't want to see a lot of them showing up in rescues, do we?

I have been tracking pet capybaras, and at this writing I know of about 30 in the US and Canada. That isn't very many: this is uncharted territory. Thirty owners, thirty opinions, and each one of us feel we have the answers and are approaching it correctly. Sixty opinions if you ask the spouses, too!

This isn't like one of those regular quizzes, where you tally your score and discover you are 73% ready to get a pet capybara. Consider this a glimpse into Dobby's World, a game, an adventure, and a completely bogus and unscientific glimpse into the reality of keeping a pet capybara happy. And alive.

A VERY BOGUS QUIZ

1 Are you legally allowed to keep a capybara where you live?

- A. I have absolutely no idea!
- B. My country allows private individuals to own a capybara
- C. My state allows private individuals to own a capybara
- D. My county allows private individuals to own a capybara
- E. My city allows private individuals to own a capybara

F. My homeowner's association (or CC&R's) allows individuals to own a capybara

G. I am a legal petting zoo

H. I am an AZA accredited zoo

2 What kind of animal experience do you have?

- A. I have never owned a pet
- B. I have had cats and dogs
- C. I have had several pets from this list: hamsters, rats, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, budgies, cockatiels, doves or pigeons, finches, outdoor rabbits, chickens, tropical fish
- D. I have had several pets from this

list: house rabbits, ferrets, chinchillas, degus, sugar gliders, hedgehogs, ducks, geese, goats, pot bellied pigs, saltwater aquarium, parrots

E. I have had one of these pets: horse, raccoon, opossum, macaw, cockatoo, full grown Iguana, other large wild or exotic bird/animal, or special

needs bird/animal

3 Are you afraid of animals that bite?

- A. Yes, and I have small children
- B. Yes, but I can overcome my fear by starting with a baby animal
- C. Not really, but my experience includes only domestic animals
- D. Not really, but do they all bite?
- E. No, do you want to see my scars?

4 Do you have the support of your family for this long term project?

- A. I have a child/children under the age of 12 or I live alone
- B. I have a partner/family, but they will not be involved in this project
- C. My partner is supportive and we will not be starting a family for a couple more years
- D. My partner/family is supportive, expects to take part in some aspects of care
- E. My partner/family and pet sitter are totally committed to this project



Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

5 How much time can you devote to this pet?

- A. I'm pretty booked up but I can find time.
- B. I have little kids, so I'm home all the time, anyway.
- C. I have a couple of dogs already, so adding time for a capybara is no big deal.
- D. I work 12-hour shifts so I have lots of days off.
- E. I work full time, but I'm single, so I have lots of time for a pet.
- F. I work from home, so I'm here all the time.
- G. I work part time.
- H. I don't need to work.

6 What kind of exotic animal care experience do you have? How about your partner?

- A. I have read a lot of books about it
- B. I am a nurse
- C. I have volunteered at a zoo or aquarium

- D. I work as a vet tech or I have a horse
- E. I work as a vet tech for an exotic animal veterinarian
- F. I own an exotic pet shop
- G. I operate a small petting zoo
- H. I am a veterinarian, exotic animal breeder, or zookeeper

7 How agile are you? Can you still manage a flying tackle?

- A. Why do you ask?
- B. I am handicapped, and not able to respond quickly.
- C. I'm pretty active, but I'm usually wearing the wrong shoes for tackling capybaras.
- D. I can manage if I have to.
- E. I'm in respectable condition for my age.
- F. I'm in great shape, not a problem.

8 What will your capybara do while you are at work or away?

- A. It can stay in the basement while I am away
- B. It's just going to run around the house, watch daytime soaps
- C. The neighbor can see it from their window
- D. My kids can play with it when they get home from school
- E. My wife says she will feed it
- F. My dog walker will come every day
- G. I work from home
- H. I don't work



9 What will you do with your capybara when you go on vacation?

- A. I will take it with me
- B. My husband doesn't travel with me and can stay home with the capybara
- C. My brother/grown son will come by daily to feed it
- D. My sister/grown daughter will come stay with it
- E. My pet sitter has agreed to give it a try
- F. My pet sitter has exotic animal experience
- G. I don't take vacations

10 Does your veterinarian have exotic animal experience?

- A. I don't have a veterinarian
- B. I have a veterinarian for my dog/cat
- C. I will be able to find an exotic vet in my area
- D. I have a veterinarian for my rabbit/guinea pig/exotic animal
- E. My veterinarian knows I am getting a capybara and is very supportive
- F. I am a veterinarian



Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

11 In an emergency, can you come up with a wrangler?

- A. I can get him to the vet alone
- B. There are some kids across the street who can help
- C. I have a grown son living nearby
- D. My neighbors are generally pretty good with livestock
- E. My partner is usually around here somewhere
- F. I have hired help around all the time

12 Do you have adequate housing for a capybara?

- A. I live at my parent's house
- B. I have an apartment.
- C. I own a condominium with a patio
- D. I own my urban home and we have an alley
- E. I own my suburban home and it has a little back yard
- F. I own my suburban home and it has a large yard
- G. I own my rural home with a huge yard
- H. I own my rural home on acreage
- I. I own my farm, have acreage and a barn

13 Is your home capybara-ready?

- A. What do you mean?
- B. How is it different from cat-proofing a house?
- C. We already have dogs, so it is all set up with a dog door
- D. All power cords are covered for safety
- E. The house plants will be removed



14 Not all capybaras are well behaved enough to live in a house. Do you have a "Plan B" for housing your capybara if it becomes territorial?

- A. Capybaras are a good investment: we would make money if we sold ours at that point.
- B. A well-trained capybara is housebroken. Dobby's owner is a lousy trainer.
- C. We will just rip out the carpets, sell the furniture, turn the house into a barn, and hope the bank doesn't notice before the mortgage is paid off.

D. Our house has an area we can isolate for the capybara so he can still come into the house.

E. We are prepared to keep our capybara outdoors if that is what he wants.

F. Capybaras are outdoor animals. Once ours is big enough to live outdoors, he'll move outside

15 Do you live in a "capybara friendly" climate? That would be about 60-90°F (15-32°C) with lots of rain.

- A. I live in Florida
- B. I live in the South
- C. I live in the Southwest
- D. I live in the Northeast
- E. I live in the Midwest
- F. I live in the Pacific Northwest
- G. I live in Canada
- H. I live in [your town here] but I have a heated barn near the house.

16 Do you have suitable outdoor space for a capybara?

- A. My capybara will be an indoor pet
- B. I have no secure outdoor space.
- C. My back yard is mostly fenced
- D. I live next door to a park or school
- E. My capybara yard is fully fenced with 4' high chain link fencing
- F. My capybara yard is fully fenced with 6' high sight-obscuring secure fencing.
- G. Delivery people do not pass through the secured capybara yard
- H. My capybara yard is double gated for security



Are You Ready for a Capybara?

17. What kind of swimming pool are you getting?

- A. Our house has a bathtub
- B. One of those inflatable wading pools
- C. A hard plastic wading pool
- D. A stock tank
- E. An above-ground swimming pool
- F. A built-in swimming pool that we can all share
- G. A built-in swimming pool that we never use

It can get a little messy and, of course, carrying a large shallow pan of filthy water through the house to a dumping location has drawbacks. Where will yours be located?

- A. In the kitchen
- B. In the hallway
- C. In the laundry room
- D. In the mud room/back porch
- E. In the guest bathroom
- F. In the kid's bathroom
- G. In the master bathroom
- H. Outside

D. I can supply him with many activities and amusements throughout the day

E. We have geese, ducks, and chickens he can play with

F. We are getting two or more capybaras



20 Is your yard safe for a capybara?

- A. It has been more than 2 years since any herbicide or pesticide has been used in my yard
- B. My dogs have never eaten anything toxic out there
- C. My capybara will not have access to Rhododendrons, azaleas, or other toxic plants
- D. My yard has no toxic plants that I know of
- E. I have fenced off the

toxic plants

F. I have had a consultant over to evaluate my yard for toxic plants, which I then removed

21 Capybaras are herd animals. Hope do you propose to supply a substitute herd for your capybara?

- A. I will be his playmate
- B. We have a dog he can play with
- C. We have goats he can live with

22 Can you fit a bale of hay in your vehicle?

- A. A WHAT? Doesn't that make a huge mess?
- B. I don't think I can buy hay anywhere around here
- C. I think it will fit in the trunk of my Camry
- D. I can borrow a truck
- E. I've put worse things in my car
- F. I have a truck/van/SUV
- G. I'll just have everything delivered

23 Is your vehicle interior indestructible?

- A. What are you talking about?
- B. My copy can ride in the back of my truck with the dogs
- C. I am ready to sacrifice my only car to my capybara
- D. My car is already ruined
- E. I have a spare car I can sacrifice



18 Where will your baby capybara sleep?

- A. Outdoors with the dogs
- B. Outdoors, in its pen
- C. In the garage
- D. In the house, in a secure area
- E. In the house, wherever it wants to
- F. In our bed!

19 Baby capybaras readily use a shallow pan of water for a toilet.

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*corn on
the cob

lettuce

potatoes

24 How much extra space do you have in your refrigerator? What can you fit in there right now?

- A. A quart of yogurt
- B. 10 pounds of potatoes and apples
- C. A case of 24 heads of romaine
- D. A box of 48 fresh corn-on-the-cob
- E. All of the above

25 What's in your pocket

(besides your cell phone)?

- A. What are pockets?
- B. A pocket protector
- C. Lipstick and powder. You meant my purse, right?
- D. Car keys
- E. My wallet and a dirty handkerchief
- F. Swiss Army knife
- G. Cable ties, some bits of wire, pieces of string, and part of a plastic bag

THE VERY BOGUS ANSWERS

I warned you that there are no real answers, and until people have kept capybaras as pets for a few generations, we're not likely to see any consensus. For this quiz, I made up the questions and I am making up the answers, too. It is completely based upon my priorities, and my opinions. I have one big, grubby male capybara, and that's the extent of my personal experience. I hear about a lot of disasters, though, and that helps me to keep Dobby safe. This quiz is completely without any scientific basis. So, let's not take it too seriously, okay?

Pick your favorite answer before you look at the scoring. Or cheat. I don't care. Point score is that bold number next to each answer. Then, go ahead and tally your points and then I'll try to give you a score at the end, in spite of all of my misgivings about doing that.

1 Are you legally allowed to keep a capybara where you live?

- A. 0** I have absolutely no idea!
- B. 1** My country allows private individuals to own a capybara
- C. 1** My state allows private individuals to own a capybara
- D. 2** My county allows private individuals to own a capybara
- E. 3** My city allows private individuals to own a capybara
- F. 3** My homeowner's association (or CC&R's) allows individuals to own a capybara
- G. 4** I am a legal petting zoo
- H. 4** I am an AZA accredited zoo

If you don't know the legal status of exotic animal ownership in your location, your pet may be confiscated. It has happened. Then the state is caring for your capybara, with all of their vast know-how regarding exotic animals. If you live in a city and your pet bites someone, or even a dog, your pet may be confiscated, even though it is legal for you to have one. That has happened, too.

2 What kind of animal experience do you have?

- A. -100** I have never owned a pet (MINUS POINTS!)
- B. 1** I have had cats and dogs
- C. 2** I have had several pets from this list: hamsters, rats, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, budgies, cockatiels, doves or pigeons, finches, outdoor rabbits, chickens, tropical fish
- D. 3** I have had several pets from this list: house rabbits, ferrets, chinchillas, degus, sugar gliders, hedgehogs, ducks, geese, goats, pot bellied pigs, saltwater aquarium, parrots
- E. 4** I have had one of these pets: horse, raccoon, opossum, macaw, cockatoo, full grown Iguana, other large wild or exotic bird/animal, or special needs bird/animal

This is a wild animal that gets large and can become aggressive. Some remain gentle as teddy bears, some do NOT. They have a finicky digestive system, like a guinea pig, rabbit, goat, or horse. Many young ones die from severe gastric distress. These are not beginner pets.

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

3 Are you afraid of animals that bite?

- A. 0 Yes, and I have small children
- B. 1 Yes, but I can overcome my fear by starting with a baby animal
- C. 2 Not really, but my experience includes only domestic animals
- D. 3 Not really, but do they all bite?
- E. 5 No, do you want to see my scars?

Capybaras bite. Capybara owners get bitten. Big, razor sharp teeth.

4 Do you have the support of your family for this long term project?

- A. 1 I have a child/children under the age of 12 or I live alone
- B. 1 I have a partner/family, but they will not be involved in this project

C. 2 My partner is supportive and we will not be starting a family for a couple more years

D. 3 My partner/family is supportive, expects to take part in some aspects of care

E. 4 My partner/family and pet sitter are totally committed to this project

Capybaras are tame wild animals, not domestic animals. A capybara over the age of about 6 months can become aggressive enough that I would not allow a child under 12 to be unsupervised with it. I had a couple 10 year old boys over once that were poorly supervised by their parents and I had to ask the family to leave. I have had younger ones here that were fine, but I hover near enough to jump in if necessary. Visitors to the Funny Farm can attest to my diligence and caution when Dobby meets new people. As for family support, I couldn't have done this without my partner.

5 How much time can you devote to this pet?

- A. 0 I'm pretty booked up but I can find time.
- B. 0 I have little kids, so I'm home all the time, anyway.
- C. 1 I have a couple of dogs already, so adding time for a capybara is no big deal.
- D. 1 I work 12 hour shifts so I have lots of days off.
- E. 2 I work full time, but I'm single, so I have lots of time for a pet.
- F. 3 I work from home, so I'm here all the time.



G. 4 I work part time.

H. 5 I don't need to work.

Baby capybaras are actually quite fragile. They are too little to be left outside unsupervised, but if they don't get outside enough, they risk not getting enough Vitamins C & D. Lack of Vitamin D, "The Sunshine Vitamin," can lead to rickets, affecting bone density. In the wild, capybaras get Vitamin C from fresh grass. Too little Vitamin C and they get scurvy. Limited variety or not enough food and they will stay small and not mature properly. It isn't like putting puppy chow in a bowl and taking it for a walk once a day.

I took Dobby to work a few times, but he was so curious and distracting I couldn't get anything done, and neither could anyone else. I think if you were working from home, you'd never accomplish anything. It is like having a very rambunctious puppy that just gets more and more challenging as it grows up. Plus, most offices don't have much sunny pasture.



Wrangler

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

6 What kind of exotic animal care experience do you have? How about your partner?

- A. 0 I have read a lot of books about it
- B. 3 I am a nurse
- C. 2 I have volunteered at a zoo or aquarium (BONUS! 2 points for each year)
- D. 3 I work as a vet tech or I have a horse
- E. 4 I work as a vet tech for an exotic animal veterinarian
- F. 4 I own an exotic pet shop
- G. 5 I operate a small petting zoo
- H. 5 I am a veterinarian, exotic animal breeder, or zookeeper

A cat or dog is not adequate pre-capybara experience. You are getting closer with a house rabbit. Horses are even more challenging, expensive and time-consuming. I had a pet raccoon when I was 20 and haven't had fewer than 30 pets at a time since 1990. Capybaras are not "beginner" pets.

7 How agile are you? Can you still manage a flying tackle?

- A. 0 Why do you ask?
- B. 0 I am handicapped, and not able to respond quickly.
- C. 1 I'm pretty active, but I'm usually wearing the wrong shoes for tackling capybaras.
- D. 2 I can manage if I have to.
- E. 3 I'm in respectable condition for my age.
- F. 4 I'm in great shape, not a problem.

My partner, Dick, suggested that I include this question. Having had to tackle Dobby more than once (and

even little Mia once!) I can't believe I originally overlooked this aspect of capybara care. You have to be ready for anything.

8 What will your capybara do while you are at work or away?

- A. 0 It can stay in the basement while I am away
- B. 0 It's just going to run around the house, watch daytime soap
- C. 0 The neighbor can see it from their window
- D. 0 My kids can play with it when they get home from school
- E. 1 My wife says she will feed it
- F. 2 My dog walker will come every day
- G. 3 I work from home
- H. 4 I don't work

These are intelligent, curious animals. It would be like giving a monkey free range of your home while you are not there: your house will be destroyed and/or they will find something dangerous to eat. You need to provide plenty of enrichment for them: if you don't keep them busy, they will choose their own projects. They need a warm, secure area with food, water, and potty bowl, preferably outdoors where they can graze on fresh grass and get plenty of vitamin D.

9 What will you do with your capybara when you go on vacation?

- A. 1 I will take it with me
- B. 2 My husband doesn't travel with me and can stay home with the capybara

- C. 2 My brother/grown daughter will come by daily to feed it
- D. 3 My sister/grown son will come stay with it (house-sit)
- E. 4 My pet sitter has agreed to give it a try
- F. 5 My pet sitter has exotic animal experience
- G. 5 I don't take vacations

Before I had Dobby I went through several pet sitters who wouldn't even deal with my chickens. My current sitter has nerves of steel but I still have to set up Dobby's area so that he can care for him without entering the pen. Another time, Dobby was so upset by my absence that he bit my daughter,

whom he adores. She won't sit for him anymore, though Dobby has since forgiven her. So, don't assume that you can find a sitter.



How about traveling? I thought I would at least be able to take Dobby to my own cabin, and he loved it when he was little and was allowed inside. Now, he barely tolerates the 1-1/2 hour car ride, and the ferry ride scares him. He is nervous there during the day and sits at the glass slider looking in at us after dark. After all this time, he should be comfortable out there, but he's not. Don't assume you can travel with your capybara unless you are actually joining a circus.

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

10 Does your veterinarian have exotic animal experience?

- A. 0 I don't have a veterinarian
- B. 1 I have a veterinarian for my dog/cat
- C. 2 I will be able to find an exotic vet in my area
- D. 3 I have a veterinarian for my rabbit/guinea pig/exotic animal
- E. 4 My veterinarian knows I am getting a capybara and is very supportive
- F. 5 I am a veterinarian

I discussed capybara care with my veterinarian months before I acquired Dobby, and made certain he was willing to commit to caring for my capy. He agreed, quipping "I would be honored to have a capybara bite one of my fingers off!" Of course he was delighted when this didn't occur, and he has grown fond of Dobby.

You will want your veterinarian to examine your pet capybara as soon as it comes home. This is to determine a baseline of temperature, weight, and general health. Because I did this, my veterinarian was able to save Dobby's life when he became seriously ill shortly after. Surprising an unknown veterinarian in a 24-hour emergency clinic with a sick capybara is not going to result in a positive outcome.

11 In an emergency, can you come up with a wrangler?

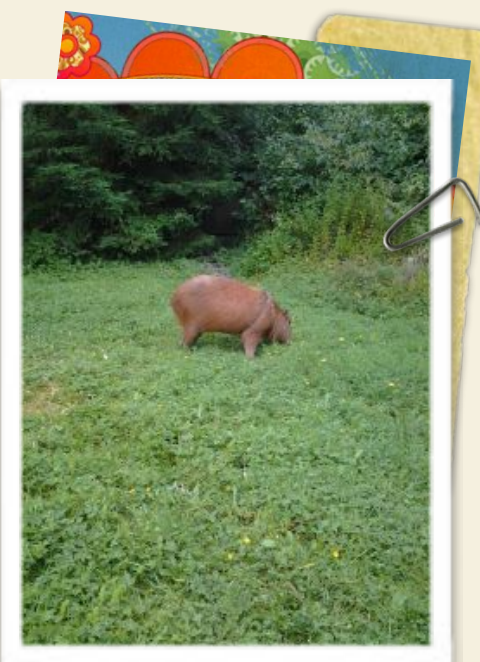
- A. 0 I can get him to the vet alone
- B. 0 There are some kids across the street who can help
- C. 2 I have a grown son living nearby

D. 3 My neighbors are generally pretty good with livestock

E. 4 My partner is usually around here somewhere

F. 5 I have hired help around all the time

Once your capybara is about 6 months old, getting it to do anything



it doesn't want to do will take two people. It is safe to assume that if your capybara is injured, the last thing it will want to do is put on a harness and get in the car. Safe wrangling takes two people, one to drive, one to manage the animal. It took me three hours to get Dobby out of the car one time. It's funny now, because he wasn't hurt, we were just doing a trial run to the new clinic. But three hours? Yep.

12 Do you have adequate housing for a capybara?

- A. 0 I live at my parent's house
- B. 0 I have an apartment.
- C. 0 I own a condominium with a patio
- D. 0 I own my urban home and we have an alley
- E. 1 I own my suburban home and it has a little back yard
- F. 2 I own my suburban home and it has a large yard
- G. 3 I own my rural home with a huge yard
- H. 4 I own my rural home on acreage
- I. 5 I own my farm, have acreage and a barn

Capybaras are wild animals and should live outdoors. Tame capybaras may be able to tolerate coming into your house briefly, or to sleep, but they cannot thrive indoors. Young capybaras need to be outdoors or they do not get enough Vitamin D, which can lead to low bone density. But they are small and vulnerable and need to be supervised in a secure area.

Capybaras need to graze, so you will need pasture, and they need to swim. In cold climates they will need shelter and being prone to frostbite they need to be able to get out of snow and off of frozen ground. If you do not own your property, there is no guarantee that you will be allowed to make the accommodations necessary to maintain your capybara's health.

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued***13 Is your home capybara-ready?**

- A. 0** What do you mean?
- B. 1** How is it different from cat-proofing a house?
- C. 2** We already have dogs, so it is all set up with a dog door
- D. 3** All power cords are covered for safety
- E. 4** The house plants will be removed

It's like having an oversized rabbit (or maybe a big parrot) in your house chewing everything up. They can stand up and reach things, they are surprisingly good jumpers, and they can be rather belligerent if you try to separate them from a "project." They are notorious for biting through cords and can sever one faster than an electrician. Dog doors are a mixed blessing, and anyway, my Dobby would just eat the plastic flap to get it out of the way.

**14 Not all capybaras are well behaved enough to live in a house. Do you have a "Plan B" for housing your capybara if it becomes territorial?**

- A. -25** Capybaras are a good investment: we would make money if we sold ours at that point
(MINUS POINTS!)
- B. 0** A well-trained capybara is housebroken. Dobby's owner is a lousy trainer.
- C. 1** We will just rip out the carpets, sell the furniture, turn the house into a

barn, and hope the bank doesn't notice before the mortgage is paid off.

D. 3 Our house has an area we can isolate for the capybara so he can still come into the house.

E. 4 We are prepared to keep our capybara outdoors if that is what he wants.

F. 5 Capybaras are outdoor animals. Once ours is big enough to live outdoors, he'll move outside

Most people with pet capybaras keep them outdoors, contrary to the prevailing myth. I know of only two healthy grown capybaras who lived in

a normally furnished home, and they both belonged to Melanie Typaldos. That is probably no coincidence. It didn't work for me, and the other indoor capybaras you see frequently on the Internet are either

very ill, very young, or are not living in a furnished home. What will you do if you get a headstrong territorial capy like Dobby?

15 Do you live in a "capybara friendly" climate? That would be about 60-90°F (15-32°C) with lots of rain.

- A. 4** I live in Florida
- B. 3** I live in the South
- C. 3** I live in the Southwest
- D. 2** I live in the Northeast
- E. 1** I live in the Midwest
- F. 2** I live in the Pacific Northwest
- G. 1** I live in Canada
- H. 4** I live in [your town here] but I have a heated barn near the house.

Capybaras are kept in zoos all over the world. The premier American capybara breeder was in Arkansas, not exactly a tropical climate. These are professionals. With care, capys can live anywhere they have access to bathing water and heated winter shelter. They develop skin problems in hot dry climates, and we have seen



more cases of frostbite than I thought possible. You must be able to build the accommodations you need to keep your capybara healthy. That is why you need to own your home, not rent. Personally, I watch the winter weather here because I have many animals that suffer in low temperatures, but I am always ready to bring Dobby in if I am not certain his heated area can meet the winter challenge.

16 Do you have suitable outdoor space for a capybara?

- A. -5** My capybara will be an indoor pet (MINUS POINTS!)
- B. 0** I have no secure outdoor space.
- C. 0** My back yard is mostly fenced
- D. 0** I live next door to a park or school
- E. 1** My capybara yard is fully fenced with 4' high chain link fencing
- F. 2** My capybara yard is fully fenced with 6' high sight-obscuring secure fencing.
- G. 3** Delivery people do not pass through the secured capybara yard
- H. 4** My capybara yard is double gated for security

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

One pet capybara needs about 2,000sf of secured grazing pasture, which is not the same as a lawn that has been chemically fertilized or had Weed & Feed on it. They also need a swimming pool or at least a very large stock tank. Wading pools are cute toys for young capybaras. They tend to go walkabout if not securely fenced, often with deadly consequences. We've seen that happen, too.

17. What kind of swimming pool are you getting?

- A. 1 Our house has a bathtub
- B. -1 One of those inflatable wading pools (MINUS POINTS!)
- C. 2 A hard plastic wading pool
- D. 3 A stock tank
- E. 4 An above-ground swimming pool
- F. 3 A built-in swimming pool that we can all share
- G. 5 A built-in swimming pool that we never use

Do you have room for a pool? In dry climates, capybara skin can dry out so swimming- more than wading- is very important. Capybaras love to bite pools, so inflatable pools are a waste of money. Even some of the cheaper brands of large above-ground pools are defenseless against capybara teeth. (Dobby is on pool #6.) Sharing your built-in swimming pool with your capy sounds great until you know that many capybaras poop in their pools. Suddenly it doesn't sound so fun to swim with them. How much does it cost to drain and refill your pool monthly? It is probably more manageable to

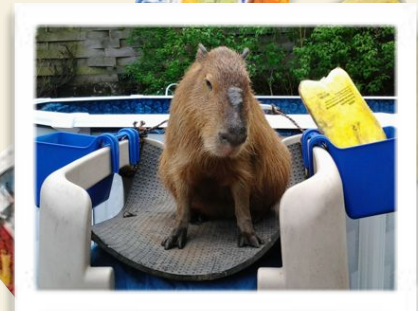
drain and refill an above-ground pool. Other considerations are filter systems that can handle the mud and grass, winterizing your pool, what kind of chemical treatment to use or not use. For some reason, Dobby doesn't EVER poop in his pool, so I can get away with draining/refilling it occasionally. Water is cheap and relatively plentiful here. It is too cold here to swim with him, so I let the water get green and put goldfish in for mosquito abatement. It isn't too good for underwater photography, though.

18 Where will your baby capybara sleep?

- A. 3 Outdoors with the dogs
- B. 4 Outdoors, in its pen
- C. 0 In the garage
- D. 2 In the house, in a secure area
- E. 0 In the house, wherever it wants to
- F. 1 In our bed!

Capybaras are creatures of habit. Choose wisely and think through the consequences of your choice. If your capybara is ill or recovering from surgery can you accommodate him? How will his sleeping arrangement work when the pet sitter has to care for him? Will your pet sitter be able to feed your dogs safely if the capybara shares living quarters with them? Will you still want her in your bed when she weighs 140 pounds and startles at the sound of 4th of July fireworks? How about if he urinates in his bedding like Dobby does? They like to eat their poop in bed, too.

Baby capybaras are quite defenseless, however, so if yours is going to sleep outdoors, the pen must be secured, top to bottom. Dobby moved out at 5 months, to a pen with a heated kennel pad in his bed. The pen is against the house (outside my bedroom) on one side, the other sides are chain-link with a sturdy metal mesh roof. We slept out there with him for the first three nights, and he seems quite happy out there with his Disney Princess blankets.



19 Baby capybaras readily use a shallow pan of water for a toilet. It can get a little messy and, of course, carrying a large shallow pan of filthy water through the house to a dumping location has drawbacks. Where will yours be located?

- A. 0 In the kitchen
- B. 0 In the hallway
- C. 1 In the laundry room
- D. 4 In the mud room/back porch
- E. 2 In the guest bathroom
- F. 1 In the kid's bathroom
- G. 3 In the master bathroom
- H. 4 Outside

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

Capybaras,, like guinea pigs, are prolific pooping machines. Baby capybaras typically use a shallow pan of water for a potty bowl, and most continue in this fashion until they are about 6 months old. At that point, a few continue with the potty bowl but most graduate to outdoor hard surfaces. Carrying a loaded shallow potty bowl through the house to a dumping place is not recommended. Locate your potty near a toilet, preferably in a bathroom with little traffic and where the door can be expected to stay propped open. I actually built Dobby an outdoor bathroom. Don't even think about disposing it on site, there is too much! Figure at least a quart of poop a day for a 130 pound capybara.



20. Is your yard safe for a capybara?

- A. 1** It has been more than 2 years since any herbicide or pesticide has been used in my yard
- B. 0** My dogs have never eaten anything toxic out there

C. 2 My capybara will not have access to Rhododendrons, azaleas, or other toxic plants

D. 1 My yard has no toxic plants that I know of

E. 3 I have fenced off the toxic plants

F. 4 I have had a consultant over to evaluate my yard for toxic plants, which I then removed

The capybara community loses more baby capybaras to toxic plant poisoning than any other single cause. Babies will just eat anything. Many houseplants are toxic, so watch out for those, too. Older capybaras seem to be more discriminating, but they are very trusting and may assume anything accessible to them has been approved for capy consumption.

21 Capybaras are herd animals. Hope do you propose to supply a substitute herd for your capybara?

- A. 1** I will be his playmate
- B. 2** We have a dog he can play with
- C. 0** We have goats he can live with
- D. 3** I can supply him with many activities and amusements throughout the day
- E. 3** We have geese, ducks, and chickens he can play with
- F. 4** We are getting two or more capybaras

I am a big believer in the value of enrichment. Even if you intend to be your capybara's best friend, you are not likely to spend 24 hours a day

with him. Dobby adores his chickens but they aren't out all of the time, either. I spend a good part of my afternoon with Dobby, but he is a remarkably self-sufficient capybara. I work hard to attract wildlife to my yard for him, and he has access to the house all day. He has toys to rub his nose on, a selection of pools, balls to play with, burlap sacks, blankets, beds in his favorite resting spots, and a predictable succession of snacks throughout the day. While it is true that he is obsessively bonded to me, he is also very busy and happy.

22 Can you fit a bale of hay in your vehicle?

- A. 0** A WHAT? Doesn't that make a huge mess?
- B. 0** I don't think I can buy hay anywhere around here
- C. 1** I think it will fit in the trunk of my Camry
- D. 2** I can borrow a truck
- E. 3** I've put worse things in my car
- F. 4** I have a truck/van/SUV
- G. 5** I'll just have everything delivered

Capybaras eat a lot of hay, especially in winter. Once you put a bale of hay in your car, you will be finding bits of hay everywhere, forever. Plus, they are bigger than they look. In the Pacific Northwest, trucks have limited utility: your hay will be soaked with rain by the time you get home. Do I need to mention that you need a dry storage area? Having hay delivered indicates that you have your financial priorities skewed toward capybara care. Good for you.

Are You Ready for a Capybara? *continued*

23. Is your vehicle interior indestructible?

- A. 0 What are you talking about?
- B. 0 My capy can ride in the back of my truck with the dogs
- C. 3 I am ready to sacrifice my only car to my capybara
- D. 4 My car is already ruined
- E. 5 I have a spare car I can sacrifice

Some capybaras are well behaved in the car, but if they get spooked, accidents can happen. One baby got his leg caught and broke it. As long as your capy fits into a carrier, use it. Obviously, a capybara in the back of a truck needs to be in a carrier, they can get right out of any harness. A full grown capy is unlikely to get into a carrier without some serious training*, and anyway you won't be able to lift the carrier with a full-grown capybara inside. You'll want to line your car with blankets, and

install a pet car barrier to keep your capy off your lap while you're driving. Duct tape comes in many colors, now, so you'll be able to find one to fix the bite marks in your vinyl, and seat belts can be replaced. *I can't even get Dobby onto a scale.

24 How much extra space do you have in your refrigerator? What can you fit in there right now?

- A. 0 A quart of yogurt
- B. 1 10 pounds of potatoes and apples
- C. 2 A case of 18 heads of romaine
- D. 2 A box of 48 fresh corn-on-the-cob
- E. 4 All of the above

Dobby has his own refrigerator, and when I pick up corn and lettuce on the same day, it overflows into MY refrigerator. Which is already full of

guinea pig food. Furthermore, you should try getting corn-on-the-cob in January. Do you have a good working relationship with your grocer's produce manager?

25 What's in your pocket (besides your cell phone)?

- A. 0 What are pockets?
- B. 0 A pocket protector
- C. 0 Lipstick and powder. You meant my purse, right?
- D. 1 Car keys
- E. 2 My wallet and a dirty handkerchief
- F. 3 Swiss Army knife
- G. 4 Cable ties, some bits of wire, pieces of string, and part of a dirty plastic bag

This is a lifestyle question. You need to be prepared for anything. Capybaras are not designer pets. Let's all hope we never see one in Paris Hilton's handbag!

SCORING

Now, tally up your points and divide by the number of questions, 25. I know you're going to want to know how you did, so here you go, just pretend you are back in high school. Keep in mind that this quiz has absolutely no meaning, and a top score does not win you a capybara!

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 3.7 & up | A | You get it and your lifestyle could be capybara compatible. |
| 2.7-3.6 | B | You get the idea, but you need to make some major adjustments. |
| 1.7-2.6 | C | You need to do a LOT more research. |
| 1.0-1.6 | D | You just took the quiz for fun, right? |
| 0.9 & below | F | You have never even seen a capybara in real life, have you? |

Prince DobaJob

Let me know how you did!

Stacy's Funny Farm

STACY'S FUNNY FARM IS NOW A §501(C)(3) TAX DEDUCTIBLE CORPORATION!

Stacy's Funny Farm has been providing sanctuary for homeless pets for over 40 years. The Funny Farm specializes in small birds, rodents, chickens, and ducks but has also been known to take in fish, feral cats, and rabbits. Sometimes, the animals just show up, like the peacock who landed in the yard and stayed. The Funny Farm started with rodents: as a toddler, Stacy learned to walk by dragging around a hamster cage for balance. She has had pet hamsters, rats, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas, a flying squirrel, and a vole. Her dream of having a pet capybara is an adventure that began in 2008, when she first contacted domestic breeders regarding availability, and simultaneously enlisted the aid of her veterinarian, who agreed to treat her pet capybara, in the unlikely event that one would actually be forthcoming.

In addition to Prince Dobalob, there are a few indoor pets at the Funny Farm. Dobby reluctantly shares his kitchen space with several noisy birds. Stacy inherited Jorge, a rescued

cockatiel and provided him with a companion, Vincent, an older bird listed for sale on Craig's List. Spike was found recovering from an illness in the back room at Petco. He was brought home to cheer up Krumpit, the handicapped sparrow, when two older rescued budgies passed. Krumpit seems to need adversarial birds nearby for enrichment. Pirate, a handicapped dove, also lives inside.

The Dude Ranch, a little herd of four rescued guinea pigs, live down the hall.

Most of the poultry is hand-me-down pets. The Funny Farm provides sanctuary for older hens and elderly ducks. Right now the Funny Farm houses only drakes, to keep springtime antics to a minimum. A large flight cage houses over twenty doves (and a pigeon!), most of which came from one owner. There is also a rescued turtle in a large stock pond, safe from herons and my own ducks!

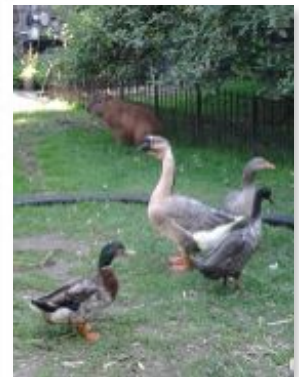
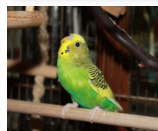
The barn and aviary are patrolled by a pair of tomcats, Kitty Hawk and Grover. They came from The Alley Cat Project in Seattle. They were feral, trapped, and neutered but could not be released because they tested FIV+.

Donations may be made at <http://stacysfunnyfarm.wordpress.com/>



Sanctuary for little homeless pets, forever.

Fostering for little homeless pets, as long as it takes.



Not always in the background, Dobby watches over his herd.

<http://stacysfunnyfarm.wordpress.com/>

An Exceptional Rodent



I made this newsletter so that you can read it online or print it out and have your own paper copy to show your friends. You can even print it out, fold it, stamp it and SNAIL MAIL it to your friends! If you like this newsletter, let me know! And if you want to see MORE newsletters, tell me what you want me to write about next! hippoPOTATOmus@gmail.com

DOBBY'S DIARY

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