

Chapter 24

The Capybara Paradigm: From Sociality to Sustainability

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24.1 Introduction

Capybaras are not merely unusual, they are extraordinary. Of course, it is widely known that they are the largest living rodent (c. 50 kg). It is less well known that their biology is exceptional in many other regards, as documented in the foregoing chapters of this book, *Capybara: Biology, Use and Conservation of an Exceptional Neotropical Species*.

A snapshot of capybara extremes begins with their digestive system: they are not only the largest rodents, but also the largest species to both engage in cecal fermentation and be a cecotrophous mammal (Herrera 1985, 2012a; Borges et al. 1996; Hirakawa 2001, 2002; Mendes and Nogueira-Filho 2012). Furthermore, the occlusal morphology of their cheek teeth is so peculiar that it was necessary to develop a specific nomenclature for them (Vucetich et al. 2012) – capybara have unpaired

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