MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

PATAGONIAN CAVY

Dolichotis patagonum

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

GROUP	Rodent; cavy family
DIET	Plants, especially grasses
NATIVE RANGE	Argentina
OTHER NAME	Patagonian mara



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- A mara is a rodent, not a rabbit.
- Front feet have four toes; hind feet have three.
- Stotting is a four-footed bounce.
- Several pairs can share a nursery burrow.
- A mother recognizes and nurses her own pups.

Words to know

Rodent: A mammal in the order Rodentia.
Herbivore: An animal that eats plants.
Stot: Bounce with all four feet leaving the ground.
Nursery: Sheltered space where young animals stay.

Think about it

1. Is a Patagonian cavy a rabbit?
2. Where is it native?
3. How many toes are on each front foot?
4. What happens during stotting?
5. How does a mother feed her pups?

Draw it

Draw a mara. Label its ears, legs and feet. Explain how one body structure helps it.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

STANDARDS · GRADES 1–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 1-LS1-2**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.1.B**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/patagonian-cavy/ · **Sources:** Smithsonian's National Zoo; Animal Diversity Web; Argentina's National Parks biodiversity system; Giannoni and colleagues, 2021
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 1-LS1-2 (3.1.1.B)
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PATAGONIAN CAVY

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the Patagonian cavy live?

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Rodent ☐ Herbivore ☐ Stot ☐ Nursery

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the Patagonian cavy.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Argentina. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Plants, especially grasses. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• Where is it native?

_____

• How many toes are on each front foot?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.