



# CHACOAN PECCARY

**ARTIODACTYLA**  
**Family: Tayassuidae**  
**Genus: *Catagonus***  
**Species: *wagneri***



**Range:** Gran Chaco of Paraguay, southeast Bolivia and northern Argentina.

**Habitat:** Dry thorn forests with isolated savannahs. Thorny bushes and succulents, with large trees distributed throughout.

**Niche:** Diurnal, terrestrial, herbivorous

**Wild diet:** cacti, some bromeliad roots, acacia pods and cacti flowers.

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild) 16 years  
(Captivity)

**Sexual dimorphism:** None

**Location in SF Zoo:** Across from Eagle lake near the café and puffer train

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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The Chacoan peccary have a bristly brown and grey coat, which helps them blend in and protects them from the thorny brush and succulents of their habitat. They have long ears and a large head with a large tough snout provides a keen sense of hearing and smell. The legs are relatively long and adapted for running, with dew claws only on the forelegs but the relatively small feet help the peccary to move around the thorny plants of their habitat. Nasal chambers and sinuses are well-developed, possibly an adaptation to the dusty conditions found during much of the year in the Chaco.

<b>Weight:</b> 66 – 95 lbs
<b>HBL:</b> 3.2 - 3.9 ft.
<b>SH:</b> 1.7 - 2.3 ft.
<b>TL:</b> 1.2 - 4 in.

Peccaries use their tough snout to roll cacti on the ground knocking spines off cactus pads and dig up roots that provide nutrients and water. They may also pull off the spines with their teeth and spit them out. They are non-ruminating with a two-chambered stomach that is specialized to digest cacti and specialized kidneys to break down acid from the cacti and secrete concentrated urine to conserve additional water. Peccaries get most of their water from their diet.

Elongated, pointed head plates of the peccary skull allow the peccary to burrow and furrow for food while keeping its sharp incisors and canines in a frontal attack position. When the Chacoan peccary is nervous or frightened it flees, while raising the hairs on its back. While escaping the Chacoan peccary sprays secretions from their prominent dorsal glands. This is thought to be a signal for other peccaries to keep the group together through the dense bush.

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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The Chacoan peccary is classified as endangered by the IUCN (1996). Chacoan peccary herds are decreasing as a result of habitat loss and fragmentation due primarily to increase in the number of ranches, oil exploration, road construction, and uncontrolled hunting.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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These social mammals communicate by various sounds ranging from grunts to chatters of the teeth. They travel in groups of two to ten and they are generally not aggressive but individuals may occasionally exhibit aggressive behavior like charging and biting. As a defensive strategy, members of a herd may line up in a defensive wall.

They frequently bath in mud or dust and defecate at particular "midden stations" to mark their territory. Peccaries will scentmark using their dorsal gland. Chacoan peccary produce an odorous and milky substance, which is dispersed by rubbing and marks their territory. Peccaries also "bond" by rubbing other group members with the smells produced by their scent glands.

Peccary seek out naturally occurring salt licks formed from leaf cutter ant mounds. These ant mounds have significantly higher concentrations of calcium, magnesium, chlorine, and sodium than the surrounding soil. Peccary gain these essential minerals for their diet from this mineral rich soil.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Births have been linked to periods of food abundance and rainfall with most occurring from September to December. Young are precocial and are capable of running hours after they are born, providing them a better chance of survival.

Gestation: 5 mos

Sexual Maturity: 3 years

# of Mammas: 4 pairs (pectoral, 2 abdominal, inguinal)

Weaning Age:

# of Young: 1 - 4

Weight at birth:

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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Scientists believed these animals were extinct until a living population was reported in 1972. The word "peccari" is of Brazilian Tupi Indian origin, meaning "an animal which makes many paths through the woods."

Peccaries are distinguishable from pigs by having upper canines that are relatively small and point down, as opposed to the large, upper canines of pigs that curve upward and outward. Peccaries, like pigs, have four toes on the frontfoot, but pigs have four toes on the hindfoot, while there are just two functional toes on the hindfoot of peccaries.

### Sources:

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Walker's Mammals of the World Vol II © 1999, Ronald M. Nowak Johns Hopkins University Press, p 1063-1065.

[http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Catagonus\\_wagneri.html](http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Catagonus_wagneri.html)

<http://lazoo.org/animals/mammals/chacoanpeccary/index.html>

[http://library.sandiegozoo.org/factsheets/chacoan\\_peccary/peccary.htm](http://library.sandiegozoo.org/factsheets/chacoan_peccary/peccary.htm)