NEWS LESSON

# Sharing a Neighbourhood with Giant Rodents



BEFORE YOU READ

## 1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. How would you react to a capybara outside your front door?
2. What wildlife do people welcome near their homes?
3. When do people start calling an animal a problem?

## 2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **coexistence** | ☐ | A | strips of land that connect two larger areas |
| 2 | **wander** | ☐ | B | a serious argument between people or groups |
| 3 | **inhabit** | ☐ | C | moving something or someone to a new place |
| 4 | **habitat** | ☐ | D | walk slowly around with no clear aim |
| 5 | **ecosystem** | ☐ | E | all the living things in an area and how they depend on each other |
| 6 | **relocation** | ☐ | F | living in the same place without fighting |
| 7 | **corridors** | ☐ | G | the natural home of an animal or plant |
| 8 | **dispute** | ☐ | H | live in a place |

## 3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

**Residents report damaged gardens, road risks and awkward encounters with pets. Campaigners reply that the capybaras came from nowhere else: the neighbourhood expanded around them.**

1 In most wealthy neighbourhoods, homeowners complain about parking, noisy neighbours or the cost of maintenance. In Nordelta, a large residential development outside Buenos Aires, the most unusual dispute concerns capybaras: giant, semi-aquatic rodents that wander across carefully maintained lawns as if they own the place.

2 Capybaras, known locally as carpinchos, are native to South America and naturally inhabit wetlands. Nordelta, however, was built in an area where those wetlands once spread out for miles. Its artificial lakes and green spaces still attract the animals. The result is an uncomfortable coexistence between wildlife and residents who had not expected to share their gardens with anything larger than a cat.

3 It helps to know what a capybara actually is. They are the largest living rodents in the world, relatives of the guinea pig on a far greater scale, and they live in groups wherever there is water. A family of them grazing on a lawn is therefore perfectly normal wetland behaviour, simply carried out in an unexpected setting.

4 Some people are delighted to see the capybaras, while others report damage to gardens, risks on the roads and awkward encounters with domestic pets. The tension flared up in September 2026, when a resident was filmed shooting towards capybaras near his property. The incident prompted formal complaints and revived a long-running argument about how the neighbourhood should manage its animal population. Residents who had quietly put up with the situation for years suddenly found themselves taking sides in public.

5 Environmental campaigners argue that talk of an animal "invasion" turns the real history of the area upside down. The capybaras did not arrive from another continent. They survived while a human settlement expanded around them and gradually took over the ground they had always used, lake by lake and street by street. That does not make every resident's concern unreasonable, but it does change how responsibility might be understood.

6 Possible responses include protecting the remaining habitat, providing wildlife corridors and finding safer ways for people and animals to move around the same landscape. Relocation or population control may look straightforward on paper, but both raise ecological and ethical questions that are difficult to settle, and neither is cheap. Moving a group of animals, for instance, only works if there is somewhere suitable to move them to.

7 The capybara has become an internet favourite thanks to its relaxed expression and its surprising friendships with other species. Nordelta's dispute is a useful reminder that real wildlife is not a cute social-media character. It is a living part of an ecosystem, and sharing space with it turns out to be considerably more complicated than liking a photograph.

Sources: El País Argentina. Picture: AI illustration.

## 4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The capybaras were living in the area before Nordelta was developed. T F NG
2. Everyone in Nordelta reacted to the capybaras in the same way. T F NG
3. Nordelta residents have voted on whether to move the capybaras. T F NG
4. Moving the animals would be difficult even if residents agreed to it. T F NG
5. The shooting incident was the first time residents argued about the capybaras. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

| awkward | carefully | domestic | formal | gradually | recently | straightforward | suddenly |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. There was an _____ silence when the neighbours realised they had been talking about each other.
2. Dogs and cats are _____ animals, while wolves and foxes are wild.
3. The job looked difficult, but the instructions were so clear that it was _____ .
4. The head teacher wore a _____ suit and tie for the ceremony.
5. The town _____ grew bigger over fifty years as more families moved in.
6. She carried the sleeping baby _____ so as not to wake her.

## 6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Nordelta _____ in an area where wetlands once spread out for miles. (BUILD)
2. Before the incident, many residents _____ the capybaras quietly for years. (TOLERATE)
3. In September 2026, a resident _____ shooting towards capybaras near his property. (FILM)
4. Campaigners say the capybaras _____ from another continent. (NOT ARRIVE)
5. Any plan to move the animals _____ by experts first. (APPROVE (MUST))

## 7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Verbs and nouns often come in fixed pairs. Choose the verb that native speakers actually use with the noun, not one that only seems logical.

| cost | pay | protect | raise | reach | strong | take |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Residents are being forced to _____ sides in a public dispute.
2. The proposal to move the animals could _____ ethical questions.
3. After years of talks, the two sides still hope to _____ an agreement.
4. Wildlife groups want to _____ the remaining habitat.
5. Many residents hold _____ opinions about how the animals should be treated.

SPEAK

## 8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. If homes are built in an animal's habitat, who should adapt?
2. Would you accept a less tidy garden to leave more room for wildlife?
3. What would make sharing a neighbourhood with wild animals workable?

## 9 Role-play: a capybara on the lawn

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

**Student A · the resident**

Capybaras keep eating your garden and you're worried about your dog. Explain the problem and ask what the community will do. You can accept a plan, or ask for something different.

**Student B · the wildlife campaigner**

You think the animals were here first. Listen to the resident, then suggest ways to share the space. Try to find a plan you both accept.

**Useful phrases**

I'm worried about my dog.
They were here long before the houses.
What do you suggest we do?
I'd be happy to try that.
That isn't fair to the animals.
Can we meet halfway?

**Afterwards, tell the class: what plan did you agree, and who gave up more?**

ANSWER KEY

**2 Key words**

1 F · 2 D · 3 H · 4 G · 5 E · 6 C · 7 A · 8 B

**4 True, false or not given**

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

**5 Vocabulary**

1 awkward · 2 domestic · 3 straightforward · 4 formal · 5 gradually · 6 carefully

**6 Verb forms**

1 was built · 2 had tolerated · 3 was filmed · 4 did not arrive · 5 must be approved

**7 Language focus**

1 take · 2 raise · 3 reach · 4 protect · 5 strong

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