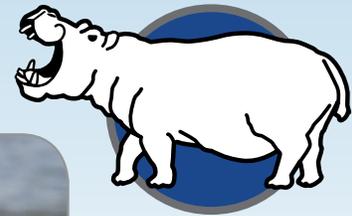


Semi-Aquatic Animals

Beavers, capybaras, hippopotamuses, river otters, tapirs, and other semi-aquatic animals naturally spend part of their time in water and part on land. Having *both aquatic and dry areas* in the main enclosure for these animals is important to support their natural behaviors.



PRACTICAL TIP



Semi-aquatic animals often defecate and urinate in the water. Pools for these species need a maintenance system (filtration, regular replacement of the water, etc.) to make sure the water quality does not cause a health problem.

AQUATIC AREAS

In the wild, semi-aquatic animals will spend time with their entire bodies in the water. Water temperature is important because animals may not use their pools if the water is too warm or too cold compared to what they would experience in the wild.

In captive environments, they need access to pools that are large enough and deep enough for each animal to fully submerge. Another good feature is a gradual or sloped, non-slip entry to the pool. This gives animals an easy and comfortable way to enter and exit the pool. It also offers a place for shallow water behaviors like washing food.

DRY AREAS

Along with their pool areas, semi-aquatic animals need sufficient dry land for their comfort and to support natural behaviors.



For example, some species need dry land for foraging or grazing while others need it for rest.



NATURAL BEHAVIORS

Understanding the natural behavior of semi-aquatic animals in your care will help you decide how much space is enough for both dry and aquatic areas. Consider especially what each type of semi-aquatic animal would be doing in the wild and how to design an enclosure for these activities.

For example, hippopotamuses spend most of their time in the water during daylight hours, often submerging completely for long periods of time and walking underwater. At night, they leave the water to graze. A proper enclosure design would have dry and aquatic areas large enough to support all of these natural behaviors.

