

## Meet "Indy" the Baby Mountain Cow

"Indy" wasn't born at the zoo, he was brought from the southern village of Independence by the Forest Department in mid-June, and has quickly won the hearts of the entire Belize Zoo staff.



A baby tapir, or "Mountain Cow", resembles a gibbon. They are covered in stripes and spots, and for the first few weeks of their lives, truly are "gibbon-like" in appearance. Their entire baby-spotted coat takes an entire eight months to fade away. Then they are left with a brown coat which is a suitable "overcoat" for the rest of their lives.

"Indy" should still be nursing with Mountain Cow Mom, and while we do not know the circumstances involved which led to his arrival in Independence, TBZ staff has readily taken up the important role of "Nanny" to the little fellow. He eagerly receives his bottle of milk and vitamins three times every day, and receives a visit during the evening hours, too, for his milk and banana.

The routine favored by baby "Indy," is to be fed his bottle and then to be "belly scratched" until he rolls back and goes into "Mountain Cow nap phase." He is one very happy baby tapir!

Once "Indy" gets older, TBZ staff will introduce him to the resident tapirs in the zoo. In the wild, tapirs exist as solitary animals. If they are ever viewed as pairs, most likely it is the mother with a youngster. The young remain with their mothers for nearly two years before striking out on their own into the tropical forests.

A definite habitat requirement for all tapirs is to live near fresh water. Our National Animal not only enjoys a swim, but each day, when they feel the urge to "poop", guess what? They absolutely have to do this deed in fresh water! How does TBZ address this need for little "Indy"? In his temporary holding enclosure, there is a small pond. And yes! "Indy" is quite fond of his little pool and makes good use of it every day.

Since "Indy" receives so much care and attention, it is a sure thing that his arrival to the main zoo grounds will see him in "fine action" meeting and greeting all zoo visitors who stop by.

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