

SCIENCE NEWS

POO MYSTERY SOLVED!

SCIENTISTS have finally worked out why wombats have cube-shaped poos.

You do know that wombats have cube-shaped poos, right?! Exactly how the Australian mammal makes its unusual poops has puzzled scientists for years.

Some experts thought the poo became a cube at the moment it was squeezed out. Others suggested it was squashed into shape inside the animal, by nearby bones.

Another slightly bonkers idea was that the wombats moulded their poo into square shapes after passing them! Yes, this really is the sort of thing that scientists spend their time thinking about.

But new research has shown that wombats have two types of muscles in their intestines (guts). One set is stiff and one is more flexible. As the waste passes through the muscles of different thickness, it gets moulded into cubes.

So, now we know how the square shapes are made, but that still leaves the question of 'why'.

Dr Scott Carver, who led the research team, thinks the cube shape might stop the poos from rolling away. As wombats use their dung to communicate with each other through smell, it might be useful to have them hanging around for longer!

The study was published in the science magazine *Soft Matter* (yes, really!).



Wombats are marsupials (the family that includes kangaroos and koalas)

Questions on: 'Poo mystery solved!'

1) Where do wombats live?

- Australia Albania Austria

2) What is unique about their poo?

3) Which sentence is correct?

- Scientists have been studying the poo for a long time.
 Scientists have been puzzled about the poo for a long time.
 Scientists have written many reports about the poo.

4) Can you find **three** ideas that experts came up with to explain why the poo is shaped like a cube?

1.
2.
3.

5) Which idea is described as “slightly bonkers”?

6) How many different words for ‘poo’ can you find in the article?

7) Which part of the news report tells you that wombats are from the marsupial family?

- headline caption
 first paragraph photograph

8) This report is about serious science research, but it’s a funny subject! Find the places where the writer has tried to make you smile.

WORLD NEWS

CANADA



RECORD-BREAKING BRICK BALANCE

Twelve-year-old Auldin Maxwell from Canada has set a new Guinness World Record for the most Jenga blocks stacked on one vertical (upright) block.

Auldin balanced a whopping 693 Jenga blocks on top of the one base block.

He smashed the previous record of 485, set last year.

We're not sure about you, but we're totally going to try stacking our Jenga blocks at home during lockdown now. Though something tells us it's not as easy as it looks!



USA



PLASTIC BAGMAN

A man in Brooklyn, New York, has made headlines as the city's newest superhero: Plastic Bagman!

Using a 'snatchinator' – his home-made grabbing device – Plastic Bagman has been spotted plucking plastic bags that have been caught in trees. He is on a mission to rid the city of this polluting, plastic menace!

He's even set up a website, so that citizens can summon him, should they need a plastic bag removed from a tree near them. Go, Plastic Bagman!



FRANCE



MAN LEAVES HIS FORTUNE TO A VILLAGE

An Austrian man who fled from the Nazis during World War Two has left his fortune to the French village that saved him.



Eric Schwam and his family were Jewish refugees. They arrived at the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in 1943. The family were taken in and hidden in a school for the rest of the war.

Eric, who died on Christmas Day, aged 90, is thought to have left the village about £1.5 million.

GLOSSARY

NAZIS – The name of the people in charge of Germany during the Second World War. Adolf Hitler was their leader

REFUGEES – People who have been forced to flee their country because of violence or danger at home

Questions on: 'World News'

1) Match the person to the correct country.

Eric Schwam

USA

Plastic Bagman

France

Auldin Maxwell

Canada

Look at the news from Canada.

2) Explain exactly what Auldin has a world record for.

3) What do you find out in the last paragraph?

- The number of blocks Auldin balanced.
- The writer's thoughts and opinions.
- Auldin's thoughts and opinions.

4) What does the writer want **to do**?

What does the writer **think**?

Look at the news from France.

5) Fill in the gaps.

Eric Schwam and his family were _____ refugees who fled from _____ to _____ during World War _____.

6) Where did the village hide Eric and his family?

7a) How do you think Eric's family felt when the village agreed to hide them?

7b) How do you think the village felt when they heard about Eric's gift?

Look at the news from the USA.

8) Can you spot the words or sentences that have been written **in the style of a superhero story**?

BIG NEWS

MESSI SCORES 650TH GOAL



LIONEL Messi has scored his 650th goal for Barcelona.

The Argentinian superstar reached yet another amazing milestone with an excellent free-kick against Athletic Bilbao.

Messi managed to scoop the ball into the air, and sent it soaring over seven Bilbao players – as well as the goalkeeper!

Barcelona won the match 2-1. The victory took Barca to second place in La Liga (the top football league in Spain). As *First News* went to press, Barca were ten points behind the leaders, Atlético Madrid.

Messi has also been in the news for other reasons this week. The Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* has revealed details of how much he is paid by Barcelona.

According to the newspaper, Messi is earning an astonishing £480 million over four years. That's £10 million every month! It's not known how *El Mundo* got hold of the confidential information.



Questions on: 'Messi scores 650th goal'

- 1a) Which country is Messi from?
- 1b) Which country does he play in at the moment?

- 2) Find the details of the match where Messi scored his 650th goal for Barcelona.

The teams: Barcelona v

The score: -

- 3) What is La Liga?

- 4) How many players did Messi's free-kick go past, in **total**?

- 5) Can you find the **word** used to describe the movement of the ball?

- 6) True or false?

	True?	False?
Barcelona are top of the Spanish league.		
Barcelona were ten points behind the leaders when this story was written.		
The nickname for Barcelona is Barcella.		
The writer says the amount Messi is paid is "astonishing".		
<i>El Mundo</i> is a Spanish newspaper.		

- 7) What does the word **confidential** tell you about the information published by the Spanish newspaper?

- 8) What do you think about top footballers earning such huge sums of money? Can one player ever be worth so much money?

ANIMAL NEWS

DOGS USED TO BE SIBERIAN WOLVES

IT seems hard to believe, but every dog in the world – from pugs to poodles – is thought to have come from the wolves of Siberia!

New scientific research has been published explaining that all modern-day pet dogs originally came from wolves in Ice Age Siberia.

To make this discovery, scientists looked at DNA samples and examined archaeological evidence (the remains of dogs left in the ground from past ages).

The wolves are thought to have been tamed around 21,000BC (21 thousand BC).

This was the height of the last Ice Age. Experts think that because of the harsh conditions, wolves struggled to find their usual prey, such as reindeer and bison. They were forced to rely on human camps for scraps of food. It was then that the wolves began to develop a close relationship with humans. They began to be tamed.

Within 8,000 years (around 13,000BC) the wolves, or rather dogs, were much more like the pooches we know and love today!



GLOSSARY

DNA – The set of instructions for a living thing. This code is found inside our cells (the tiny building blocks that make up our bodies). DNA is passed on from parent to child, so can explain how creatures are related

ARCHAEOLOGICAL – “arc-ee-o-loj-ic-al” to do with learning about history by finding and examining objects left from the past

ICE AGE – A time when the planet was very cold and ice covered much of the Earth’s surface

Can you believe that these two are distant cousins?

Questions on: 'Dogs used to be Siberian wolves'

1) According to scientists, all pet dogs have come from which animal in the dog family?

- fox wolf
 jackal dingo

2) **Where** did this animal first become tame?

3) What did the experts study in this research? Choose all correct options.

- maps
 DNA
 interviews with people from Siberia
 animal remains left in the ground
 fossils

4) About how long ago were wolves **first** tamed? Remember to add 2,000 to the 'BC' number!

- 23,000 years ago
 21,000 years ago
 13,000 years ago

5) Find two creatures hunted by wolves at this time.

1.
 2.

6) Can you explain why wolves began to hang around humans at this point in history?

7) How long did it take for wolves to change into something closer to a pet dog?

8) Can you see the wolf in a pet dog, even a small one?!

How is a dog still similar to a wolf?	How is it different?