

# RABBIT

Phylum: *Chordata*, Class: *Mammalia*, Order: *Lagomorpha*, Family: *Leporidae*

**Status:** Common

**Length:** Varies according to breed

**Weight:** Varies according to breed

**Habitat:** Dry, well-drained slopes on field edges, grassland, woodland and dunes.

**Range:** Throughout the world

**Diet:** Any vegetation within reach

**Lifespan:** 8-12 years

## Special Characteristics:

- A male rabbit is called a buck. A female is called a doe, and the young are called kits or kittens. A group of rabbits is a herd.
- Rabbits are not rodents, but lagomorphs.
- There are difference in rabbits and hares. Hares are born above ground with a full coat and eyes wide open. Rabbits are born in a den dug by its mother, hairless and with eyes closed. Hare are built to run long distances, while rabbits will run a short distance or burrow underground for protection.
- There are 12 species of rabbits in the United States with the cottontail being the most numerous.
- Rabbits groom their fur frequently otherwise it will become matted and lose its insulating properties.
- A rabbit has large sensitive ears that can be turned in any direction. They have acute hearing that provides maximum information about their surroundings and alerts them of any danger.
- Highly social, they live large communities.
- The warren, or burrow, can be up to 10 feet deep with numerous entrances. Inside is a complex network of passages and interconnecting tunnels.
- Mainly nocturnal.
- One rabbit is always on guard when they are feeding. When danger approaches the guard stamps its feet and the whole colony will bolt down their warrens
- The rabbit rests in its warren after feeding and passes soft droppings formed of partly digested food. The rabbit then eats these droppings to extract the maximum nourishment from the food. Afterward, the rabbit produces hard, pellet-like droppings which it deposits outside the burrow.
- Glands under the rabbit's chin generate a secretion used to mark territory.

## Reproduction:

- Rabbits breed continually. Within hours of giving birth, the doe will mate again producing up to 7 litters per year.
- Gestation lasts 30 to 33 days, and an average litter size is seven offspring.
- Kits are born helpless in a shallow depression lined with grass and mother's fur, but they grow rapidly and are weaned when less than half the size of the adult.
- A doe will nurse her babies for approximately 5 minutes per day.
- Mother rabbits do not sit on their babies to keep them warm. Baby rabbits are often "rescued" by well-meaning humans who think that they have been abandoned. Fewer than 10% of these babies survive.

