

Rabbits



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Introduction

Rabbits are small mammals with fluffy, short tails, whiskers and long ears. There are more than 30 species of rabbits around the world. Rabbits are small mammals that belong to the lagomorph (lag-ah-morf) family. Rabbits have a lifespan of about 10 years.



Hoppy Habitats

First found in Europe and Africa, rabbits now live all over the world. Wild rabbits live in woods, forests, deserts, mountains, grass-lands, and even the snow-covered arctic. Many rabbits are also raised on farms or kept as pets.

Wild rabbits create their own homes by tunneling into the ground. These tunnel systems are called **warrens** and include rooms for nesting and sleeping. They also have multiple entrances for quick escape. Warrens can be as deep as 9.84 feet (3 meters) underground.



Diet

Rabbits are **herbivores**. This means that they have a plant-based diet and do not eat meat. Their diets include grasses, clover and some vegetables, such as broccoli and Brussels sprouts. Sometimes they will eat fruits, seeds, roots, flower buds, and tree bark when it is available.



Rabbit Life

Rabbits are very social creatures and live in large groups called colonies. Female rabbits are called does and males are called bucks just like deer! The busiest time of day for rabbits is at dusk and dawn. This is when they venture out to find food. The low light allows them to hide from predators.

Their predators include owls, hawks, eagles, falcons, wild dogs and cats, and ground squirrels.



Made for Survival

Rabbits can be very crafty and quick. To get away from a predator, a rabbit will run in a zigzag pattern and reach speeds of up to 18 mph. The rabbit's long legs and ability to run for long periods at high speeds are **adaptations** to help them escape predators.

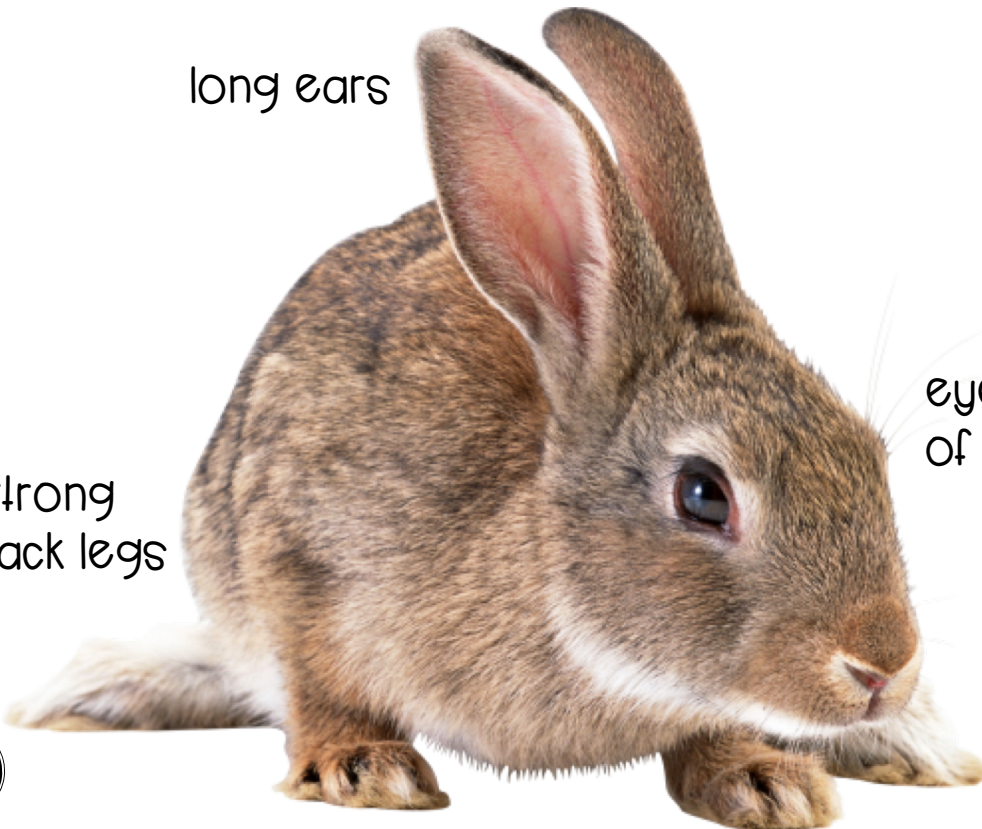
Their ears can grow to 4 inches (10 cm). This allows them to better hear predators that may be approaching. It also allows them to stay cool in hot climates. Extra body heat is released through blood vessels in the ear.

Their eyes are made for safety, too, since each eye can rotate 360 degrees. This allows them to look behind them without turning their heads.

long ears

Strong
back legs

eyes on side
of head



Bunny Babies

Rabbits have babies 3-4 times a year. Young rabbits, called kittens or kits, are born with little fur, blind and helpless. The kittens are kept in nests, and are well hidden inside the nest. Mother rabbits only visit their young to feed them once every 24 hours. The mother rabbit seals the nests in between visits to protect the young from predators. After four to five weeks, a kit can care for itself. In two or three months it is ready to start a family of its own.



Other lagomorphs

Lagomorphs have several characteristics in common. They have babies several times each year, have powerful hind legs, long ears, and front teeth that are always growing.

Lagomorphs are most active at dusk and dawn.

Pikas are smaller than rabbits and hares. They are typically found in cold climates. Pikas have shorter, rounded ears and no tail.

Hares and rabbits appear very similar, but there are a few differences. Hares are born with fur and raised out in the open. Rabbits are born furless, blind, and raised in a nest.

Pikas



Hares



Glossary

Adaptation- a change over time by which a living thing or species becomes better able to live in its environment

Colony- a group of rabbits

Herbivore-animal that eats only plants

Lagomorph-an animal group that includes rabbits, hares, and pikas

Warren- a group of burrows connected by tunnels

