

# European Rabbit

**Scientific Name:** *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

**Class:** Mammalia

**Order:** Lagomorpha

**Family:** Leporidae



The adult European rabbit can measure 16 inches in length and weigh between 2-5 pounds. The hind foot measures 3-4 inches in length and the ears can be 3 inches in length. The fur is generally greyish-brown, but has a great deal of variation. They moult once a year, beginning in March, but the entire coat is replaced by October-November. The North American cottontails differ in skull sizes and the North Americans do not construct burrows as the European rabbit does. Threats to the population include diseases, predation, hunting and habitat loss. Their predators are foxes, dingoes, wolves, lynxes, wolverines and dogs.

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## Range

Native to southwestern Europe and northwest Africa. They have been widely introduced elsewhere, often with devastating effects because of no local predators. European rabbits have been introduced to all countries except Antarctica.

## Habitat

The ideal habitat consists of short grasslands with secure refuge near feeding areas. The burrows (warrens) are where the ground has good drainage. The side and distribution of the warren depends on the soil, how many rabbits will be living there, and food sources.

## Gestation

28 – 33 days

## Litter

3 -7 kittens (babies) per litter, nursed at night

## Behavior

Though the kittens sleep in burrow chambers on grass and fur, the adults sleep on the ground with warmth being secured by huddling. Usually silent, the rabbit does have a loud high treble scream that is a distress call when hurt. Aggression is expressed with a low growl.

## Reproduction

Breeding season is typically between January to August. Though born blind, deaf, and nearly naked the ears gain power of motions at 10 days and are erect at 13 days. The eyes open at 11 days and at 18 days the kittens begin to leave the nest. Sexual maturity of the bucks (males) is about 4 months and for the does (females) between 3-5 months.

## Wild Diet

Herbivores, the European rabbit eats a wide variety of grasses, winter wheat, and vegetables.