

ALL ABOUT RABBITS



Rabbits are small mammals with fluffy, short tails, whiskers and distinctive long ears. There are more than 30 species around the world, and while they live in many different environments, they have many things in common.

Size

Some rabbits are about the size of a cat, and some can grow to be as big as a small child. Small rabbits, such as pygmy rabbits, can be as little as 20cm in length and weigh less than half a kilo. Larger species grow to 50 cm and more than 4.5 kilograms.

Offspring

Rabbits breed three to four times each year. This is because only 15 percent of baby rabbits make it to

their first birthday. So, to ensure that the population grows, rabbits have more babies.

Each pregnancy produces three to eight babies, called kittens or kits. ("Bunny" is just an affectionate name for a rabbit, young or adult). 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. If there is a lack of natural predators, an area can quickly become overrun with rabbits.

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 cruciferous plants, such as broccoli and Brussels sprouts. They also eat fruits, seeds, roots, buds, and tree bark.

Habitat

While originally from Europe and Africa, rabbits are now found all over the world. They occupy most of the world's land masses, except for southern South America, the West Indies, Madagascar, and most islands southeast of Asia.

Although originally absent from South America, Australia, New Zealand, Java, rabbits have been introduced to these locations during the last few centuries.

Domestic rabbits need a regulated environment to protect against heat exhaustion or hypothermia. Wild rabbits don't have this problem and make their homes in various temperature extremes. Wild rabbits can be found in woods, forests, meadows, grasslands, deserts, tundra and wetlands.

Wild rabbits create their own homes by tunnelling 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 3 meters underground.

Habits

Rabbits are very social creatures and live in large groups called colonies. 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.

Predators — which include owls, hawks, eagles, falcons, wild dogs, feral cats and ground squirrels — are a constant threat. The rabbit's long legs and ability to run for long periods at high speeds help them escape from things that want to eat them.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How many species of rabbit are there around the world?

2. How long are the smallest rabbits?

3. How heavy are the biggest rabbits?

4. How often do rabbits breed?

5. What are baby rabbits called?

6. How old is a baby rabbit when it can begin to care for itself?

7. Name three things rabbits might eat.

8. Name one part of the world where rabbits are not found.

9. Where can wild rabbits be found?

10. What is a rabbit's home known as?

11. What is a group of rabbits called?
