

Name: _____

Rabbits & Hares

If we take a stroll in a park at dusk, we can often spot a rabbit nibbling grasses or tree bark. We'd like to get nearer for a good look at this furry animal. But its long ears pick up the sound of our footsteps. It quickly hops across the green field and disappears into the twilight.



We often call a rabbit a hare or a hare a rabbit. But there are some noticeable distinctions between these two look-alike animals. The easiest way to tell a rabbit from a hare is to see its newborns. Baby rabbits are born hairless, blind, and completely helpless. Baby hares have furry coats. Their eyes are wide open, and they can hop around soon after birth.

To tell the difference between an adult rabbit and an adult hare, you may have to run after the animal to see where it lives. Rabbits dig holes and live in burrows under the ground. Hares build their nests above the ground. Rabbits like to live in large groups. Hares tend to be loners. Usually hares are bigger and move faster than rabbits.

Rabbits and hares are highly adaptable animals. They are found in all sorts of environments and all over the world. They can survive in extremely cold places (such as Arctic hares). They also live in extremely hot places (such as black-tailed jackrabbit). Some live in high altitude places (such as volcano rabbits). Most live in grasslands (such as European rabbits).

Despite their cute appearance, rabbits and hares are often considered pests. That's because they destroy crops and gardens. To make matters worse, rabbits and hares are very prolific breeders. Both female rabbits and hares give birth to several litters a year. Each litter has three to eight young. A female European rabbit can have babies when she is just three months old! So, if there are rabbits running loose in your farmland, you may soon find yourself in very big trouble! This is no exaggeration. That is exactly what happened in Australia!

In 1859, a farmer named Thomas Austin brought twenty-four European rabbits from England and released them on his farmland in southern Victoria, Australia. A decade later, the twenty-four rabbits had multiplied into millions! The Australian government has invested lots of energy and money trying to solve the problem. But it has yet to find a way to rid the country of rabbits.

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Questions

- _____ 1. "Rabbit" and "hare" refer to the same animal, and these two terms can be used interchangeably.
- A. false
 - B. true

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- _____ 2. What does "prolific" mean in paragraph 5?
- A. destructive
 - B. cute and furry
 - C. pests
 - D. producing a lot of offspring
- _____ 3. Which of the following about rabbits is true?
- A. Baby rabbits have fur at birth.
 - B. Rabbits like to live a solitary life.
 - C. Rabbits are usually smaller than hares.
 - D. Rabbits are native animals to Australia.
- _____ 4. Which of the following about hares is true?
- A. Hares usually run faster than rabbits.
 - B. Hares feed on insects.
 - C. Hares usually live in burrows.
 - D. Hares give birth to a single young every year.
- _____ 5. From where did Thomas Austin bring rabbits to release them on his farmland in Australia?
- A. Austria
 - B. Germany
 - C. England
 - D. France
- _____ 6. In which of the following biomes can we NOT find rabbits or hares?
- A. grasslands
 - B. mountains
 - C. deserts
 - D. none of the above
- _____ 7. Why do farmers consider rabbits and hares pests?
- A. because rabbits and hares eat crops
 - B. Farmers welcome rabbits and hares to their fields.
 - C. because rabbits and hares carry germs that are harmful to plants
 - D. because rabbits and hares eat bees that help fertilize crops