

# Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

*(Sylvilagus floridanus)*



## **DID YOU KNOW:**

The wild rabbit you see in your yard and in parks is called the Eastern Cottontail because of the white, cottony fur on the underside of the tail. Baby wild rabbits are born naked and helpless with their eyes closed. The rabbits you see in pet stores are really 'hares'. Baby hares are born covered with fur and with their eyes open.

## **EATING HABITS:**

Rabbits eat grass, clover and fresh greens. Their favorite foods are strawberries and dandelion flowers. In winter, they dine on twigs, bark and seeds.



## THE YOUNG:

During warm weather, rabbits may have as many as six litters, each averaging four to five babies. The way rabbits outsmart the many hungry hunters that eat them



is to have lots of babies. Baby rabbits are called 'kittens' and grow quickly. The baby cottontails' eyes open when they are one week old. They are weaned from their mom's milk in about two weeks. After three weeks, they are as big as an orange and on their own.

## HABITAT (HOME):

Cottontails live in fields, brushy areas and even in our back yards. We can help rabbits and other wildlife by providing some natural areas in our yards. Tall grass and bushes provide food and places to hide.

## DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Rabbits will freeze and try to stay hidden if they feel threatened. If danger gets too close, rabbits will escape by running in a fast, zigzag pattern. They have strong legs and, while running, can jump more than 10 feet. If grabbed, rabbits can kick out with their powerful legs to protect themselves.

## UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Sadly, the biggest problems rabbits face is being caught by cats and dogs. We can help rabbits by keeping an eye on our pets when they are outside.
- It is against the law to keep wild rabbits as pets. They are so nervous around people that they can die from fear.
- If you want a pet rabbit, there are many unwanted domestic rabbits that need a good home.