

All About Rabbits

Part A

The rabbits eat lots of interesting things in 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' but what is the diet of a rabbit really like?

All rabbits are herbivores. This means that they only eat foods which come from plants. They do not eat foods which come from animals.

In the wild, rabbits eat **a lot** of grass. They feed on grass for most of the day. Chewing on grass wears down rabbits' teeth. If rabbits do not chew to wear their teeth down, their teeth will cut into their gums and hurt them.



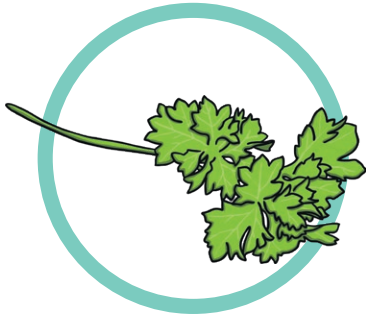
It is important that rabbits that are kept as pets are given lots of grass or hay as this is a key part of their diet. They should never be without a large supply of hay.

Although hay and grass are by far the main thing that rabbits eat, there are many vegetables that it is safe for rabbits to eat. Pet rabbits should be given very small amounts of vegetables when they are trying them for the first time so that they get used to them.

Vegetables that rabbits can eat include curly kale, spinach, broccoli and cauliflower.



Rabbits can also safely eat some herbs. Herbs that are safe for rabbits include parsley, dill, fennel and mint.

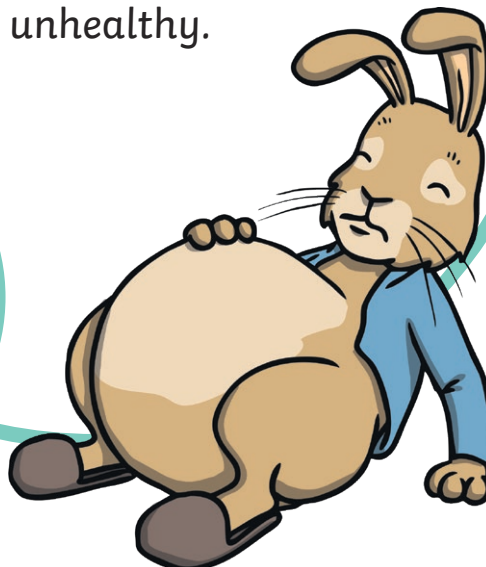


Rabbits should not eat very much fruit at all as fruit contains a lot of sugar. Rabbits should only eat very small amounts of fruit for a treat now and then.

If you see a rabbit eating one of their droppings, it is nothing to worry about. Rabbits often eat their own poos as they contain some goodness rabbits need.

Did you know?

Lots of people think that rabbits should eat lettuces and carrots but these foods are actually **not** very good for rabbits. Lettuce can give rabbits an upset stomach and carrots are very sweet so can make rabbits unhealthy.



Comprehension

1. Rabbits are herbivores. Do they eat chicken? Explain your answer.

2. What food should rabbits eat the most of? Tick **one**.

- ☐ fruit
- ☐ hay and/or grass
- ☐ vegetables

3. Give two examples of vegetables which rabbits can eat.

4. Do you think it would be a good idea to feed a rabbit only herbs?

5. True or false? You should call a vet straight away if you see a rabbit eating one of their own poos.

6. Give one example of a food that could make a pet rabbit ill.

7. Can you think of your own questions about rabbits that you would like to find the answer to?

All About Rabbits

Part B

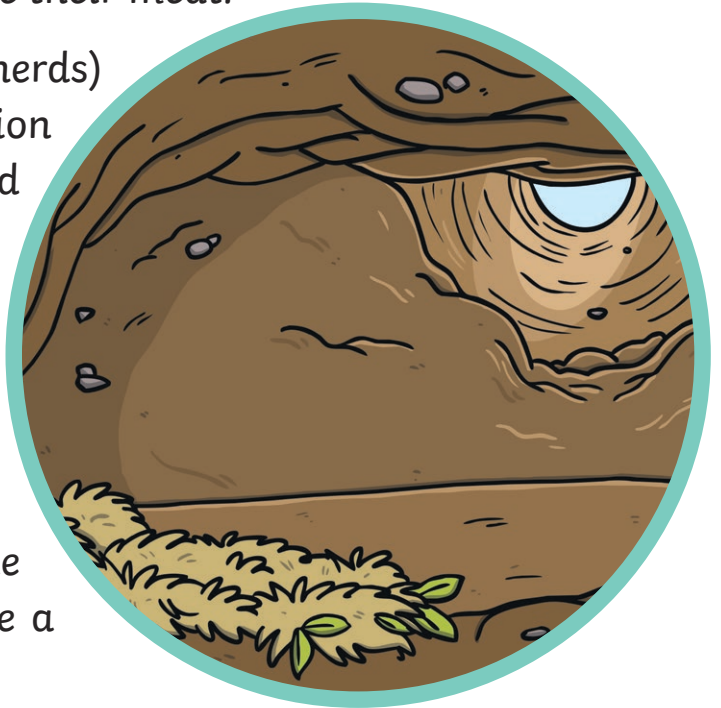
The rabbits in 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' are wild rabbits. Read this information to find out more about wild rabbits.

Rabbits have not always hopped and skipped on the fields of the UK. They arrived 900 years ago when the Normans brought them over from France. People used their fur for clothing and ate their meat.

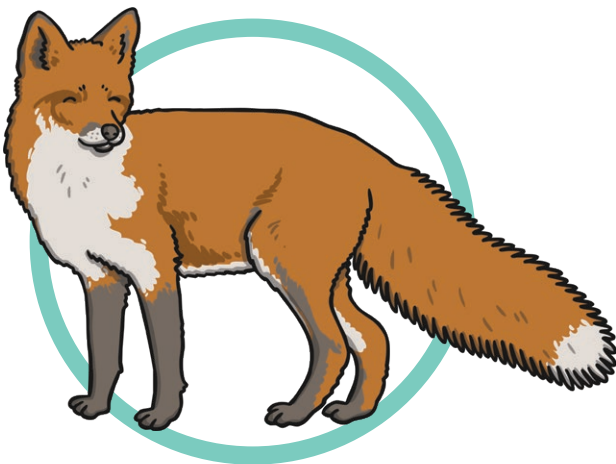
Wild rabbits live in groups (called herds) under the ground in burrows. A collection of burrows linked together underground by tunnels is called a warren.

Female rabbits are called does and male rabbits are called bucks. A baby is called a kit.

Wild rabbits are usually 20-50cm long. They are grey with a white underside and their ears are very long. They have a fluffy black-and-white tail.



Female rabbits give birth to between three and twelve baby rabbits at any one time. They are pregnant with each litter of kits for just one month. The babies are born unable to see or hear and they have no fur. They snuggle close together to keep warm. The rabbits take around eight days to grow a covering of fur.



Rabbits have twenty-eight teeth and their teeth never stop growing. They are ground down by the constant chewing that rabbits do. Rabbits in the wild spend the majority of their time chewing on grass!

As rabbits are herbivores (plant-eaters), they do not hunt for meat but they are hunted by many predators such as stoats, foxes,

dogs, cats, birds of prey (such as owls and eagles), humans and snakes.

Rabbits' big, long ears help them to hear sounds of approaching predators. As rabbits' eyes are positioned on the side of their faces, they can see very well around their heads to check for danger but they cannot see directly in front of them and right behind them. If a rabbit sees a danger anywhere, they may bang their hind leg on the ground to warn other rabbits.



While pet rabbits often live to around ten years old, there are so many dangers in the wild that most wild rabbits only live for a year.

Comprehension

1. For roughly how many years have rabbits lived in the UK? Tick **one**.

- ☐ for thousands of years
- ☐ for millions of years
- ☐ for around a thousand years or less

2. Name two ways in which wild rabbits were useful to human beings in the past.

1. _____ 2. _____

3. What is a warren?

4. Which of the following is true? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Female rabbits are called bucks. Male rabbits are called does and baby rabbits are called kits.
- ☐ Female rabbits are called does. Male rabbits are called bucks and baby rabbits are called kits.
- ☐ Female rabbits are called kits. Male rabbits are called bucks and baby rabbits are called litters.

5. Why do baby rabbits snuggle close together when they are first born?

6. If rabbits' teeth never stop growing, why do they not have extremely long teeth sticking out of their mouths?

7. Name five predators of rabbits.

8. There are two things about a rabbit's body which give rabbits a better chance of knowing that danger is coming. What are these two things?

★ ★ ★
Challenge Task ★ ★

Find the information in the text that tells you what a wild rabbit looks like. Draw and colour a picture of a wild rabbit. Add labels with information about the rabbit's features.



Comprehension Answers

Part A

1. Rabbits are herbivores. Do they eat chicken? Explain your answer.

No. They do not eat chicken because herbivores only eat food from plants.

2. What food should rabbits eat the most of? Tick **one**.

- ☐ fruit
☒ **hay and/or grass**
☐ vegetables

3. Give two examples of vegetables which rabbits can eat.

Answers could include curly kale, spinach, broccoli and cauliflower.

4. Do you think it would be a good idea to feed a rabbit only herbs?

No. Rabbits can eat some herbs but grass or hay should be the main part of their diet. They need to chew on grass or hay to wear their teeth down.

5. True or false? You should call a vet straight away if you see a rabbit eating one of their own poos.

False. (It is normal for rabbits to eat their poo.)

6. Give one example of a food that could make a pet rabbit ill.

Lettuce can give rabbits an upset stomach.

7. Can you think of your own questions about rabbits that you would like to find the answer to?

Multiple answers possible.

Comprehension Answers

Part B

1. For roughly how many years have rabbits lived in the UK? Tick **one**.

- ☐ for thousands of years
- ☐ for millions of years
- ☒ **for around a thousand years or less**

2. Name two ways in which wild rabbits were useful to human beings in the past.

1. for clothing (fur) 2. for food (meat)

3. What is a warren?

A warren is a collection of underground tunnels and burrows (rabbits' homes) underground.

4. Which of the following is true? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Female rabbits are called bucks. Male rabbits are called does and baby rabbits are called kits.
- ☒ **Female rabbits are called does. Male rabbits are called bucks and baby rabbits are called kits.**
- ☐ Female rabbits are called kits. Male rabbits are called bucks and baby rabbits are called litters.

5. Why do baby rabbits snuggle close together when they are first born?

They are trying to keep warm because they are born without any fur.

6. If rabbits' teeth never stop growing, why do they not have extremely long teeth sticking out of their mouths?

Their teeth are ground down by almost non-stop chewing.

7. Name five predators of rabbits.

Answers may include stoats, foxes, birds of prey (eagles, owls), cats, dogs, humans and snakes.

8. There are two things about a rabbit's body which give rabbits a better chance of knowing that danger is coming. What are these two things?

- *They have long ears for hearing. Their eyes are positioned on the sides of their faces for a wide view of their surroundings.*

★ ★
★ Challenge Task ★

Drawings should show:

- *body 20–50cm long;*
- *grey fur with a white underside;*
- *fluffy black-and-white tail;*
- *long ears;*
- *(twenty-eight) teeth;*
- *eyes positioned on the side of the face.*