

Those Wascally Wabbits!

Rabbits are much more than the cute, carrot-munching creatures pop culture makes them out to be. They can dig sophisticated tunnels, grow to weigh more than 20 pounds, and even eat their own poop. Here are some more facts worth knowing about the beloved mammals.

Cartoons suggest that rabbits can happily survive on a diet of carrots alone. But in the wild, rabbits don't eat root vegetables—they'd much rather munch on greens like weeds, grasses, and clovers.

Not all rabbits are cute and tiny. Some, like the Flemish giant rabbit, grow to be downright monstrous. This rabbit breed is the world's largest, reaching 2.5 feet in length and weighing up to 22 pounds. Fortunately these giants are the gentle kind, which makes them popular pets.

A rabbit is ready to start breeding at just 3 to 8 months old. Once they reach that point, they can copulate eight months out of the year every year for the rest of their 9- to 12-year lifespan. A doe's reproductive system doesn't follow cycles; instead, ovulation is triggered by intercourse. After a 30-day gestation period she'll give birth to a litter of about four to 12 kits.

If you spend enough time around rabbits, you may be lucky enough to witness one of the cutest behaviors in nature. A bunny will hop when it's happy and do a twist in mid-air. This adorable action has an equally adorable name: It's called a binky.

One rabbit behavior that is significantly less adorable: After digesting a meal, rabbits will sometimes eat their own poop and process it a second time. It may seem gross, but droppings are actually an essential part of a rabbit's diet. They even produce a special type of poop called cecotropes that are softer than their normal pellets and meant to be eaten. Rabbits have a fast-moving digestive system, and by redigesting waste, they're able to absorb nutrients their bodies missed the first time around.

Rabbits are remarkably hygienic. Like cats, they keep themselves clean throughout the day by licking their fur and paws. This means rabbits generally don't need to be bathed by their owners like some other pets.

While a cat can cough up a hairball after a long day of self-grooming, a rabbit cannot. The rabbit digestive system is physically incapable of moving in reverse. Instead of producing hairballs, rabbits deal with swallowed fur by eating plenty of roughage that pushes it through their digestive tract.

It's hard to sneak up on a rabbit: Their vision covers nearly 360 degrees, which allows them to see what's coming from behind them, above them, and from the sides without turning their heads. The trade-off is that rabbits have a small blind spot directly in front of their faces.

Rabbits are built for evading predators in a hurry, and according to Guinness World Records, the highest rabbit jump reached 3.26 feet off the ground and the farthest reached nearly 10 feet. There are even rabbit jumping competitions where owners can show off their pets' agility.

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