

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

EUROPEAN RABBIT

(*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

DESCRIPTION

European Rabbits...

- Can vary in colour from brown (with a reddish neck) to black, white, or patchwork coloured.
- Typically have a beige ring around the eyes.
- Weigh approximately 1-2.5 kg and measure 38-50 cm long for adults. Domestic (pet) individuals may be larger.
- Have two pairs of upper incisor teeth (the second smaller pair is behind the first pair).



Photo Credit: Public Domain

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

Download the App!



www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

PRIMARY THREAT:

European rabbits compete with many native species for food and shelter. Their intense grazing and burrowing behaviours also cause considerable soil erosion.

SPREAD

European Rabbits were originally brought to North America as a food source but are now being distributed by the pet trade. European Rabbit owners have been known to release their pet rabbit after realizing they can no longer take care of it. Once introduced, European Rabbits can spread rapidly, as females can have 18-30 young in one year. They are generalized herbivores, meaning they will eat a wide variety of vegetation, lending to their ability to adapt and spread in different locations.

European Rabbits prefer habitat types such as: fields, disturbed forests, meadows, agricultural fields, and along roadsides. Southern B.C. provides suitable habitat for this invasive species as winters are relatively mild and food is available year-round.

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



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EUROPEAN RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

European Rabbits are native throughout southwestern Europe and northwestern Africa. In B.C., there are established populations of European Rabbits on Vancouver Island, Triangle Island, the Southern Coast, and the Okanagan.



LOOK-ALIKES:

European Rabbits can be confused with two rabbit and one hare species in B.C. European rabbits are typically grey-brown with a white-grey belly. Eastern Cottontails (also non-native) have white underbellies. Nuttall's Cottontails tend to be completely grey-brown. Snowshoe Hares are brown with occasional white patches in the summer, and typically white in the winter, and they have distinctly black-tipped ears.

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do NOT release domestic rabbits of any kind.
- Contact your local animal rescue if you need to re-home your pet.
- Raise awareness to avoid further spread.
- Fence off gardens and remove any food attractants.

Removal

- European Rabbits can be hunted and trapped in B.C. Refer to Management Status on Species [Page](#) for more information.



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DID YOU KNOW?

European Rabbits have been listed on the IUCN's **World's Worst Invasive Alien Species List**. This list includes 100 invasive species selected for their serious impact on biological diversity and/or human activities, and their illustration of important issues surrounding biological invasion.

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