



BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

BABY FARM ANIMAL CELEBRATION: BASHFUL BABY BUNNIES

Blissful, boisterous, beatific, baby bunnies! Did you know that a baby bunny is called a kit? The words bunny and rabbit are interchangeable names for the same animal. Typically, a doe, a female rabbit, will have between 10 and 12 kits in each litter and a doe can have 12 litters a year. A rabbit's gestation period is 31 days or about 1 month. Kits weigh just a few ounces when they are born so they are very, very small.

Kits nurse only about once a day. Rabbit milk is highly nutritious making up for the lack of nursing time. After a month, the kits are weaned off their mother's milk and start eating other things. The kits will start eating grass, leafy weeds, and even tree bark.

Most rabbits live in family groups and build borrows, sometimes called warrens, to live in. There are over 50 different breeds of rabbits that live all over the world. Some of these breeds are wild rabbits and some are considered pets and need people to help them live.



Cottontail rabbits are one of the most common rabbits in North America and they live



right here in Vermont! Antelope Jackrabbits live in Arizona and Mexico. They have huge ears which help them to not overheat during hot summers. Snowshoe Hares are from Alaska and Canada where it's snowy most of the year.

Sumatran Striped Rabbits are from Indonesia and are highly endangered! The African Hare can be found; you guessed it, in Africa! They're habitat covers over 35 African countries. Volcano Rabbits are native to volcanoes in Mexico and are one of the smallest rabbits weighing only 1.3 pounds. Rabbits cover the whole globe!

RABBITS THROUGH HISTORY

Rabbits evolved in Asia more than 40 million years ago! In the 19th century rabbit breeding became popular when people started showing their rabbits. This was the beginning of rabbits being pets.

Asian countries have a folk tale about a rabbit called the Moon Rabbit. The Moon Rabbit lives on the moon and is a companion of the moon goddess. In German folklore the Wolpertinger is a creature found in the forests of Bavaria. Wolpertingers are often described as a rabbit head and body with antlers of a deer, wings of a pheasant, and fangs.

The most common rabbit symbol in the United States is the Easter Bunny. It is believed the Easter Bunny first came to America in the 1700's with German immigrants. Osterhase is a German legend telling the story of a woman who decorated eggs and hid them for her children to find.



As soon as all the eggs were found the children saw a hare hopping away and believed it had laid the eggs for them. It became a tradition for children to make nests for the hares to lay their colored eggs in. Eventually the tradition spread across the country and the Easter Bunny was created. Today, the Easter Bunny brings much more than just colored eggs including chocolate, candies, and small gifts.

The custom of making a nest may not be practiced anymore but the Easter basket takes its place today.

The *Tale of Peter Rabbit* is a popular children's story starring a mischievous bunny. It was written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter in 1893. The story follows a misbehaving rabbit who attempts to steal vegetables from the mean Mr. McGregor's garden, chaos ensues. The story has since been animated and used in a biopic about Potter's life.

Rabbits and bunnies have a connected history with people through folklore, legends, and holidays.

