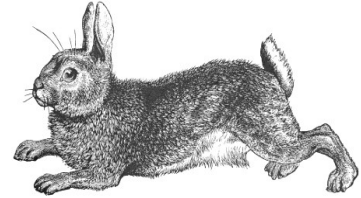


Desert Cottontails

The desert cottontail is a type of rabbit that lives in the dry, dusty areas of New Mexico, Arizona, and Western Texas. They can also live as far north as Montana and as far west as California. This type of cottontail is similar to other rabbit species because it has an easily-noticed white fluffy tail, but it has larger ears that usually stand straight up. They have the potential to weigh up to 3.3 pounds (1.5 kg) and grow to 20 inches (51 cm) in length.



Desert cottontails tend to be most active during the morning and late afternoon hours. During the day they avoid the hot desert sun, and seek shelter to keep themselves cool. Desert cottontails will eat almost any type of plant, and sometimes they'll munch on small bugs as well. Because the desert plants they eat usually contain moisture, desert cottontails rarely need to drink water.

The cottontail has many predators, including bobcats, mountain lions, owls, eagles, rattlesnakes, and coyotes. Sometimes they are able to outsmart the large predators by running very fast and diving into small holes where bigger animals cannot go. They usually run in a zigzag pattern so they're harder to catch. Cottontails are one of the few species of rabbits that are also able to climb trees when they're trying to escape a predator.

When she is ready to have babies, a female cottontail will make a nest of grass and fur. They can have as many as ten baby cottontails at one time! And sometimes they can have four litters in a single year. Baby desert cottontails stay with their mother for three weeks before they go out on their own.

Desert Cottontails

1. Where do desert cottontails live?

2. Why don't desert cottontails need to drink a lot of water?

3. Would you be most likely to see a desert cottontail at 7am, noon, 2pm, or midnight? Why?

4. List three ways a desert cottontail escapes predators.

5. According to the information in passage, how many babies can a female cottontail have in one year?

Desert Cottontails – ANSWER KEY

1. Where do desert cottontails live?

The desert cottontail is a type of rabbit that lives in the dry dusty areas of New Mexico, Arizona, and Western Texas. They can also live as far north as Montana, and as far west as California.

2. Why don't desert cottontails need to drink a lot of water?

Desert cottontails don't need to drink a lot of water because the plants they eat contain water (moisture).

3. Would you be most likely to see a desert cottontail at 7am, noon, 2pm, or midnight? Why?

You would most likely see a desert cottontail at 7am because they are most active in the early morning or evening hours.

4. List three ways a desert cottontail escapes predators.

A cottontail escapes predators by running in a zigzag pattern, going in small holes that large animals can't fit into, and climbing trees.

5. According to the information in passage, how many babies can a female cottontail have in one year?

According to the information in the article, a female cottontail can have up to 40 babies each year. (4 litters x 10 babies per litter = 40 babies)