**Introduced Animals - European Rabbit**

The first rabbits, numbering just five, arrived in Australia with the [First Fleet](https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/first-fleet/the-first-fleet.html) in 1788.

Initially, they were bred in confined enclosures for food and appear to have had no noticeable impact on the local environment.

**Description:**

* small mammal with long, muscular hind legs and shorter front legs.
* long upright ears,

European Rabbit

* large protruding eyes,
* soft, greyish-brown fur
* short fluffy tails
* adult rabbit weighs 0.8 to 2.3kg and is about 40 cm in length.

**Behaviour:**

* hop using a galloping gait, where the back paws land together forward and outside of the front paws.

**Food:**

* a hungry, greedy feeder,
* grazing on a variety of grasses and shrubs
* sometimes eats the entire plant, including the roots and seeds.
* may also strip the bark off trees and shrubs.
* Except in very dry conditions, the rabbit gets all the moisture it needs from its food.

**Habitat:**

* can be found in many different areas of Australia, ranging from deserts to coastal plains.
* Their distribution is only restricted by this their ability to find soils suitable for digging their underground in burrows.
* There are about 200 million rabbits in Australia today.

**Breeding:**

* In just 18 months, two rabbits can produce as many as 180 additional rabbits.
* A rabbit can live for up to 9 years.

**Effects on wildlife and habitat**

* their destructive behaviour on plants prevents the regeneration of vegetation.
* have been declared the number one pest in Australia because of the severe damage they are causing to the Australian ecosystem.
* overgraze the land to the point that native plants die, leading to the wide-scale extinction of native plants. They are the single most significant cause of the extinction of numerous native plants and animals
* The loss of native plants contribute to the decline and in some case the extinction of [native animals](https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/animals/australian-animals.html) such as the [bilby](https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/animals/bilby.html) and the [bandicoot](https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/animals/bandicoot.html).
* Loss of vegetation results in soil erosion.
* Rabbits also eat pastures put down by farmers for their sheep and cattle flocks and drink from water supplies set aside for livestock.
* During droughts, when food is scarce, rabbits dig up and eat the roots and tubers of plants, thereby killing them.
* Rabbits threaten native burrowing animals, such as the [bilby](https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/animals/bilby.html) and the burrowing bettong, by evicting them from their burrows and moving in.

<https://trishansoz.com/trishansoz/animals/rabbit-australian.html> Retrieved February 2023

Resources: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/rabbit.pdf>

Australian Government: Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities