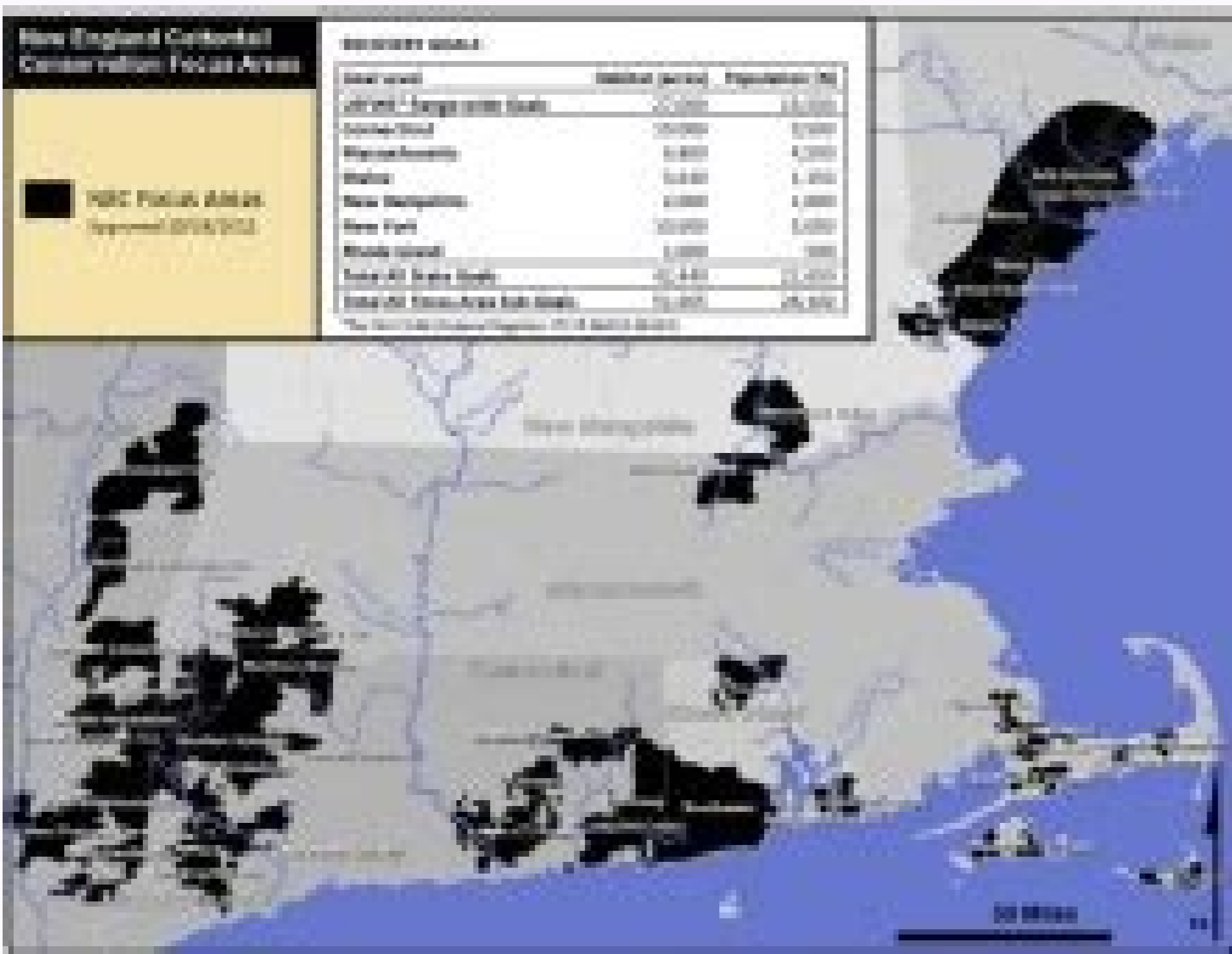


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Cottontail store. Cottontail rabbit age size chart. Cottontail pet shop. Cottontail bunny age chart. Cottontail age chart.

New England cottontails breed in brushy young forest habitat. Gradually increasing day length in spring spurs the onset of reproduction. Males chase each other to establish dominance. In encounters between the sexes, a female may at first face off in a threat posture and strike out at a male with her forepaws. As courtship proceeds, the two sexes may jump over one another, or one rabbit may leap into the air while the other darts beneath it. Breeding occurs from late March into August and September; during that span, a healthy female may produce several litters of young. Before giving birth, a mother cottontail makes a nest by digging a depression in the ground about 5 inches wide and 4 inches deep. She lines the depression with grass and fur from her body, then adds a covering of twigs and leaves. Nests are built at night, in brush or among dense vegetation on the forest floor. After a roughly four-week gestation period, the mother gives birth in the nest. A typical litter has five or six young. Cottontails are born with their eyes shut. At intervals, the mother goes off to feed and then sneaks back to the nest to nurse her babies. The young develop very quickly and go off on their own about two weeks after birth. Females can breed and become pregnant again soon after delivering a litter. How Long Do Rabbits Live? Rabbits are short-lived; probably none die of old age. Research conducted on eastern cottontails suggests that only about 25 percent of individuals survive for two years, with the average lifespan about 15 months. Mortality rates and lifespans for New England cottontails are probably similar. Barred owls and other predators are less able to catch cottontails that live in dense young forest and shrubland habitats. Cottontails are an important food source for many predators. Coyotes, foxes, bobcats, fishers, weasels, hawks, and owls all kill and eat rabbits. In recent years, populations of coyotes and red foxes have increased throughout the New England cottontail's range. These adaptable predators can live in areas where development has fragmented the landscape. Biologists studying New England cottontails in southern New Hampshire found that predation by coyotes and red foxes was the most common cause of death among the radio-equipped rabbits they monitored. Living in extensive areas of thick young forest and shrubland habitat makes it less likely that a cottontail will become a predator's meal – and more likely that a population of New England cottontails will persist in a given area over the years. It's always a neat experience to discover a cottontail rabbit when out in nature. There's a lot to learn about this unique species including its place in the natural life cycle of the wilderness. What are Cottontail Rabbits? Cottontail rabbits are one of the most common species of wild rabbits. Their characteristically white tail earned them their name while their darker body fur is meant to keep them hidden from the constant threat of nearby predators. These rabbits deserve our respect and should be kept in the wild where they belong. Origin and History If you think of rabbits, you will probably think of white fluffy tails, perhaps shaped like a cotton ball. While not completely unique to the species of cottontail rabbits, this is where they got their name from. Cottontail rabbits were first classified as a species in the 19th century but since then more research has been done to better categorize them as well as their many subspecies. Within the species of cottontail rabbits, there are more subgroups. This includes the Eastern cottontail, or *Sylvilagus floridanus*, which can be found throughout Eastern North America. In North America, it is the most common rabbit species. There is also the New England cottontail, or *Sylvilagus transitionalis*, which derives its name from the region you will most likely find it in the United States. **Searching for a different breed? Check out our Flemish Giant Rabbit guide here!** Cottontail Rabbit Characteristics Size, weight, height Baby cottontail rabbits weigh a mere 30 grams when they are born, but by the time they reach adulthood, they will be between 1.8 and 3.3 pounds. For size, cottontail rabbits can reach between 13 to 16 inches long. Their tail can grow to be up to 3 inches long. As a general rule, female rabbits are larger than male rabbits. Lifespan The average lifespan of a cottontail rabbit is two years if it can reach the age of adulthood. Due to their size and inability to defend themselves, many young rabbits are taken by prey when they are mere months old. Temperament/Behavior Cottontail rabbits spend the majority of their life trying to hide from swooping predators. As a result, their behavior has adapted to provide the best possible defenses. While they normally move about by hopping, cottontail rabbits will quickly run away if they sense the slightest hint of danger. And, they won't just run straight as they have adapted to utilize zig-zag maneuvering for the best possible defense. Color/Variety Cottontail rabbits will have darker fur on their back and whiter fur on their abdomens. You can see hues of light brown and reddish-brown on their backs with tufts of white or grey fur on their stomachs. As for their faces, cottontail rabbits often have white-colored fur that rims their eyes, which can appear to be quite large. Fur/Coat Cottontail rabbits are prey, so they need as much help with camouflaging colors as possible to avoid becoming someone else's dinner. Camouflage colors include grey, brown, and reddish-brown. While the fur of cottontail rabbits will be shorter and sparser in the summer, come early fall, their skin will start to become bushier and longer. For winter, their fur will even transition to a grayer color to better blend in with the changing landscape. Spring, then, brings a natural molting as their fur becomes thinner to compensate for warming temperatures. Habits While rabbit litters depend on their mothers for food and nurturing, by the time they are 8 weeks old, they are considered independent. Cottontails are solitary animals. They might live near each other but can often maintain their home range of a few acres in size. However, female rabbits will often live a bit closer to each other. Intelligence You might not realize it, but rabbits have their own language for communication. Their large hind feet are instrumental in communicating their thoughts or actions to other rabbits. When in danger, cottontail rabbits will make a loud screech. This quickly alerts other rabbits that something bad is happening. There are also a number of throat sounds and hissing noises that cottontail rabbits can make. All have their uses and different meanings. Food/Diet Cottontail rabbits are herbivores but their diet changes to compensate for what is available throughout the different seasons. In spring and summer, cottontails will consume mostly grass, clover, and wheat, as it is more plentiful during this time. In fall, cottontail rabbits will happily eat apples and corn that has fallen to the ground. Meanwhile, in winter when fresh food is harder to find, cottontails will resort to twigs and buds as well as new sprouts. While other animals of the rodent variety will sit on their hind legs to eat, cottontails remain on all four legs and eat with their mouths to the ground. However, they don't like dirty food and will actually use their paws to turn the piece of food around to find a spot that doesn't have dirt or sand on it. If, however, a cottontail is trying to reach a leaf or taller plant, it will use its front paws to reach up and pull the object down. Breeding Rabbits do indeed multiply, especially when left to their own devices in the wild. Mating season for cottontail rabbits begins in the spring, but can sometimes start as early as February, depending on the weather. Cottontail rabbits do not mate for life, so one male rabbit can mate with multiple females. These pairings can change daily, or rather nightly, as it is usually around dusk or dawn when pairing off occurs. Whether it is dusk or dawn, cottontail rabbits will show they have an interest in another rabbit by playing, chasing, running, and even fighting. Once a pair has shown proper interest, the act itself does not take very long. Once a female rabbit, or doe, becomes pregnant, gestation takes about 28 days. Once a doe has given birth she does not have to wait long to become pregnant again. As a result, does have between three and six litters per year. After birth, the baby rabbits are placed in a nest that has been prepared by the mother. It will be a small indent in the earth lined with rabbit fur, leaves, and grass. At birth, cottontail rabbits are blind, furlless and extremely tiny. However, by the age of two weeks, they will grow immensely and be able to forage on their own nearby. Because of the risks of predators, most cottontails do not survive beyond the age of five months. Habitat Cottontails are definitely considered prey rather than predators. As a result, they live in areas that provide lots of ground cover to hide in. Meadows with long grasses or forests with ground bushes are preferred. While cottontails may live on the periphery of marshes, they prefer dry ground rather than wet ground. When it comes to burrows, cottontail rabbits don't usually dig their own burrows, preferring instead to find shelter under bushes or fallen trees. However, if they come upon abandoned burrows,

they will take up residence there. Related Questions Are cottontail rabbits dangerous? Cottontail rabbits are wild and therefore unpredictable. They have been raised to fear the unknown and view anything larger than them as a predator, including humans. If you get too close to a cottontail rabbit, they can lash out to protect themselves and especially their young. Therefore, yes, cottontail rabbits are dangerous because they are wild animals and should remain so. Where does the cottontail rabbit live? You can find cottontail rabbits mainly in the eastern parts of North America. As far north as Eastern Canada and as far south as Central Mexico, you can find cottontail rabbits. Their preferred habitat includes meadows and fields, and other places where they have enough ground cover to hide from predators. What does a wild cottontail rabbit eat? Like most rabbits, cottontails are herbivores. Most of their diet is made of plants including grass, clover, and wheat, depending on where they live. During winter, when the grass is sparse or hard to find, cottontail rabbits will eat twigs and new plant sprouts. In the fall they have a more varied diet that includes fallen apples and ears of corn. Interestingly, rabbits can sense when they are missing key nutrients. In this case, they might eat their own fecal pellets to ensure no nutrients were left behind. Do cottontail rabbits make good pets? No, cottontail rabbits do not make good pets. There are plenty of domesticated rabbits that have been bred for the express purpose of being pets. Cottontails are not one of them. They are wild and you should never try to trap one for the purpose of becoming a pet. Conclusion If you've seen a rabbit in the wild, particularly in the Eastern United States, chances are it was a cottontail rabbit. While these rabbits do their best to blend in with their surroundings, they are prey and their predators are good at finding them. While cottontail rabbits may look cute, remember to leave them alone in the wild. This is where they belong. If you are considering a rabbit for a pet, there are plenty of other domesticated breeds to consider.

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