



# Flemish Giant Rabbit

*Oryctolagus cuniculus*

**Range:** Domestic species, not found in the wild.

**Diet:** Flemish giant rabbits are herbivores and grasses, hays, and vegetables.

**Lifespan:** 8-10 years

**Description:** Flemish giant rabbits are the largest breed of rabbit. They can weigh up to 15 pounds and reach a length of 2.5 feet. Males have a broader head than females while females have a dewlap (a fold of skin under the chin that they use to keep their young warm). Flemish giants come in seven colors: black, blue, fawn, light gray, steel gray, sandy, and white. They have large ears that allow them to hear very well and they have good eyesight.

**Breed Origin:** They were originally raised for meat and fur, and the breed already existed in Belgium by the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Breeding:** Flemish giant rabbits have a gestation period of 28-31 days with a litter between 5-12 young. Baby rabbits are born blind, with no fur, and closed ears. A female is called a doe, while a male is called a buck. Babies are referred to as a kit or bunny. (A baby hare is called a leveret.)

**Behavior/Adaptations:** Rabbits have eyes placed on the side of their head, which allows them to see movement behind them. Their large ears also capture much more sound than our human-sized ears. Since they cannot sweat to cool off like humans can, rabbits cool off by releasing body heat through their ears.

**Predators:** They are domestic, but could predators can still include humans, wild and domestic dogs/cats, and birds of prey.

**Conservation:** N/A

**The Zoo's Flemish Giant Rabbit:** Beatrix and Lorraine are females and were born in 2015.

## Interesting Facts:

- A group of rabbits is called a warren.
- Rabbits are in the lagomorph family, not the rodent family. Lagomorphs include rabbits, hares and pikas.
- The Flemish giant rabbit is the second oldest breed of rabbit in the United States; the oldest is the Belgian Hare.

Information taken from the following sources:

<http://www.marylandzoo.org/animals-conservation/mammals/flemish-giant-rabbit/>

[http://brandywinezoovolunteers.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/7/9/26793551/2016\\_flemish\\_giant\\_rabbit\\_new.pdf](http://brandywinezoovolunteers.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/7/9/26793551/2016_flemish_giant_rabbit_new.pdf)



# Black-tailed Prairie Dog

*Cynomys ludovicianus*

**Range:** Central-Western North America including Saskatchewan, Montana, Wyoming, Texas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

**Habitat:** Prairie dogs are native to grassland areas including short-grass prairie, mixed-grass prairie, desert grassland, and sagebrush steppe.

**Diet:** Prairie dogs eat mainly grasses, sedges, flowering plants, roots, seeds, and occasionally insects.

**Lifespan:** They can live up to 3 to 4 years old.

**Description:** Black-tailed prairie dogs are stout with a tan body and, like their name suggests, have a black tip on the end of their tail. Being a part of the rodent family, prairie dogs are related to squirrels, mice, rats, etc. and have large incisor teeth that continuously grow.

**Breeding:** Prairie dogs are polygynous, which means that a male will have several other female partners. Mating season is in the spring where females are usually only receptive one day of the whole year. After a gestation period of around 33-38 days, a female will give birth to a litter of one to eight pups that are blind, hairless, and helpless. After about six weeks, the babies will be old enough to come out of the burrows.

**Behavior/Adaptations:** Black-tailed prairie dogs live in large colonies (called towns) that can consist from 100 to millions of individuals. Each colony can be broken down into "wards" and wards are broken down into families called "coteries" made up of several related females and one or two males. They dig a network of burrows for shelter and protection against predators. They are diurnal animals that get their "dog" name from the dog-like yip they make to warn other prairie dogs that a predator is nearby.

**Predators:** Coyotes, bobcats, badgers, black-footed ferrets, golden eagles, and prairie falcons.

**Conservation:** Although they are not listed and considered to be very widespread, their current population of about 10-20 million is only a fraction of their historic population which was estimated to be near 1 billion at one point. Prairie dogs have lost a lot of habitat to farming and ranching, and are often considered a pest and killed for affecting crops.

## Interesting Facts:

- Unlike other prairie dogs, black-tailed prairie dogs don't hibernate. When it gets extremely cold, they will stay under ground for longer periods of time.
- A prairie dog town found in Texas in 1900 was the size of the state of Maryland. It was estimated to have 400 million prairie dogs in its tunnels.
- Coteries are usually about 1 acre and can have up to 70 separate burrow entrances.

Information taken from the following sources:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/prairie-dog/>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/98/burrow/pdog.html>

<http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/prairie-dog>



# North American Porcupine

*Erethizon dorsatum*

**Range:** Northern Great Lakes region, much of Canada and Alaska, throughout the western and northeastern parts of the United States.

**Habitat:** North American porcupines will live in coniferous, deciduous, and mixed forests. Out west, it will live in scrubby areas.

**Diet:** Being an herbivore, the porcupine eats plant matter including leaves, twigs, bark, skunk cabbage, and clover.

**Lifespan:** North American porcupines can live to 7-10 years old in the wild.

**Description:** The porcupine is a rodent, meaning that they have a pair of incisors on their upper and lower jaws that continuously grow. Thus, porcupines must gnaw on bark or wood to keep their teeth short. North American porcupines are usually a dark brown or black in color with white highlights. They are stout in body type with short legs, small head, and a short tail. Their backs are covered in quills that remain flat against the body unless threatened by another animal.

**Breeding:** Porcupines mate in late summer and early fall and males will fight each other over females. To impress females, the males will perform a dance and urinate over the head of the female. Seven months after mating, females will give birth to a single baby whose quills are very soft (they harden about an hour after they are born). The baby will stay with the mother for the first 6 months of its life.

**Behavior/Adaptations:** Porcupines have about 30,000 quills on their body. Porcupines will use their quills for protection against predators. While some people believe that they shoot their quills out, instead, they will turn their back on approaching predators, raise their quills, and use their tail to defend itself from its attacker. The quills have barbs that become embedded in an animal that gets too close to the porcupine. Body heat makes the barbs expand, causing them to become even more embedded. Porcupines spend much of their lives in trees and are good climbers. They make their dens in caves, decaying logs and trees. They don't hibernate, but may spend time in their den during bad or extreme weather.

**Predators:** Bobcats, wolves, and coyotes will hunt and eat porcupines when they can, however fishers are the best at hunting and killing porcupines.

**Conservation:** North American porcupines are considered common.

**The Zoo's North American Porcupine:** Spike is a male and was born in 2009.

## Interesting Facts:

- Porcupines don't have fur on the bottom of their feet, which makes them good climbers.
- Porcupines are good swimmers and their hollow quills help keep them afloat.
- The North American porcupine's Latin name translates to "quill pig."

Information taken from the following sources:

[http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/Erethizon\\_dorsatum/](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/Erethizon_dorsatum/)

<http://www.zoo.org/page.aspx?pid=1894#.UhfMONKsiCc>

<http://www.nhptv.org/natureworks/porcupine.htm>



# Red Fox (Silver Phase)

*Vulpes vulpes*

**Range:** Red foxes are found throughout much of the northern hemisphere from the Arctic Circle to Central America, the steppes of central Asia, and northern Africa. Red foxes have also been introduced to Australia and the Falkland Islands. This species has the widest distribution of any canid.

**Habitat:** They utilize a wide range of habitats including forest, tundra, prairie, desert, mountains, farmlands, and urban areas. They prefer mixed vegetation communities such as edge habitats and mixed scrub and woodland. They are found from sea level to 4500 meters in elevation.

**Diet:** While most of their diet consists of eating other animals such as rodents, eastern cottontail rabbits, and insects, they also eat fruits and berries, making them omnivorous. They may

also eat carrion. Red foxes have a distinct way of hunting mice; they stand motionless while they listen and watch intently for a mouse. It then leaps high and brings its forelimbs straight down forcibly to pin the mouse to the ground.

**Lifespan:** In the wild, their lifespan in the wild is about 3-6 years old and in captivity they can live up to be 10-12 years old.

**Description:** Coloration of red foxes ranges from a pale yellowish-red to deep reddish brown on the upper parts and white, ashy, or slatey on the underside. The lower part of the legs is usually black and the tail usually has a white or black tip. Two color variants commonly occur. Cross foxes have reddish brown fur with a black stripe down the back and another across the shoulders. Silver foxes range from strong silver to nearly black and are the most prized by fur bearers. These variants are about 25% and 10% of red fox individuals, respectively. Red foxes are the largest of the *Vulpes* species. Males are slightly larger than females. Populations in southern deserts and in North America are smaller than European populations. Body mass and length among populations also varies with latitude—animals in the north are typically larger than those in more southern areas.

**Breeding:** Red fox mating behavior varies substantially. Often males and females are monogamous, but there are also males that have multiple female mates, as well as male/female pairs that use non-breeding female helpers in raising their young. Females mated to the same male fox may share a den. Red fox groups always have only one breeding male, but that male may also seek mating outside of the group. Breeding season begins in December or January in the south, January to February in central regions, and February to April in the north. After a gestation period of 49-55 days, females will give birth to 1-9 offspring.

**Behavior/Adaptations:** Red foxes are solitary animals and do not form packs like wolves. During some parts of the year, adjacent ranges may overlap somewhat, but parts may be regularly defended. In other words, the red fox is partly territorial. Ranges are occupied by an adult male and one or two adult females with their associated young. Individuals and family groups have earthen dens and often other emergency burrows in the home range. Dens of other animals, such as rabbits or marmots, are often taken over by foxes. Larger dens may be dug during the winter and during birth and rearing of the young. The same den is often used over a number of generations. Pathways throughout the home range connect the main den with other resting sites, favored hunting grounds and food storage areas. Red foxes are terrestrial and either nocturnal or crepuscular. Top speed is

about 48 km/h and they can jump as high as 2 meters. In the autumn following birth, the pups of the litter will disperse to their own territories as nearby as 10km and as far away as 400km. Animals will remain in the same home range for life.

**Predators:** Eagles, coyotes, gray wolves, bears, cougars, and humans.

**Conservation:** They are considered a species of least concern.

**The Zoo's Red Foxes:** Gitche and Gumees are brothers and were born in 2009.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Female foxes are called vixens.
- Red foxes can hear low-frequency sounds and rodents burrowing under the soil or snow.
- Red foxes smell similar to a skunk. They use their scent glands and urine to mark their territory.

Information taken from the following sources:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/interactives-extras/animal-guides/animal-guide-red-fox/2212/>

<http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Library/Mammals/Red-Fox.aspx>