



Rabbits

1100 W. Moana Ln., Reno, NV 89509

11301 So. Virginia St., Reno, NV 89511

Key Points

- There are two kinds of rabbits in northern Nevada.
- There are plants that attract rabbits and others they don't like. However, when hungry enough, they'll eat anything.
- Repellants, fencing and habitat modification can be effective deterrents.

Identification

A well fed jackrabbit is about as large as a house cat, weighing between 3 to 7 pounds with a body length of 17 to 21 inches. It has a grayish brown body, long black-tipped ears, relatively long front legs, and even longer hind legs. The top of its tail is black.

The desert cottontail rabbit is 12 to 15 inches long, weighs between 1-1/2 to 2-3/4 pounds, has shorter ears and has pale gray fur with yellow tints.

A good sign that rabbits are present is coarse, circular fecal droppings or pellets found scattered over an area. Jackrabbit pellets are about 1/2-inch in diameter, while cottontail pellets are closer to 1/4 inch.

Rabbits will eat almost any vegetation they can reach. Rabbit damage to trees and shrubs will occur only within two feet from the ground or snow. They will eat branch tips leaving a bite mark that is typically at a forty-five degree angle to the limb. Damage to lawns can be identified by large patches, approximately 2 feet by 2 feet or larger, where the grass has been cut to 1/4 inch in height and by the possible presence of small areas of seemingly dead lawn caused by rabbits urinating.

Fencing

A 1-inch mesh fence of poultry netting (chicken wire) works well to protect gardens or perennial flower beds from rabbit damage. Bury the bottom edge of the fence at least 6 to 10 inches below the ground to prevent rabbits from digging under it. The buried portion can be splayed outward from the protected area to better prevent digging. Use a fence two feet high against cottontails. You may need to build the fence higher to exclude rabbits when snow cover is present or predicted.

Larger areas can be protected with a double-strand electric fence or electrified plastic-net fence. Place electric wires at 3 to 4 inches and at 8 to 12 inches above the ground.

Habitat Modification and Plant Selection

Remove brambles, piles of brush, stones, or other debris to discourage cottontails, especially in suburban habitats where alternate habitats may be limited. Control vegetation along fence rows, ditch banks, or brushy areas. Keep in mind vegetation management may affect other wildlife, notably songbirds. Removing cover will probably have little effect on jackrabbits because they can use cover that is often great distances from the feeding sites.

Select plants which have shown some resistance to rabbits. Avoid plants such as euonymus, which will attract rabbits to your yard. Some trees and shrubs may need protection for as long as 10 years before they become high enough to resist rabbit damage.

Supplying alternate foods for rabbits as a method to reduce damage to desired plants is not recommended. One exception may be for short-term control until other direct methods of control can be used. Alfalfa & clover are good alternate foods for rabbits, however, rabbits are selective but will quickly switch to other foods. The availability of alternate foods may attract more rabbits and lead to further damage.

Frightening Devices

Owl or snake effigies, spinning aluminum pie pans and glass jars of water have been used to frighten rabbits. Commercial water-driven scarecrows with motion detectors are available that spray water when movement occurs near them. In general, frightening devices are limited in range to a few feet and short-lived in effect as rabbits become used to them. As with repellents, you need to move and change your device every few days for your method to be effective.

Repellents

Plantskydd, Liquid Fence, Shake Away, and Get Away are effective. Liquid Fence, Shake Away, and Get Away work with the odor sense and have to be applied often, sometimes weekly. Plantskydd works with the taste sense. It will last as much as 6 months between applications, but it is recommended that it be applied every two to six weeks. Apply repellents before damage occurs and reapply them frequently, especially after a rain, heavy dew, or sprinkler irrigation, or when new growth occurs. In all cases, follow the label directions.

In addition to packaged animal repellants, there are other products available on the market. Fish emulsion fertilizer has had good results in deterring rabbits from grazing on lawns and is a good source of nitrogen. Dr. Earth Lawn Fertilizer has shown even better results in protecting lawns from rabbits. However, neither of these products provides long term protection since lawn watering diminishes their effects.

Hair from your dogs and blood meal occasionally scattered in your yard will aid your repellants effectiveness.

Trapping and Shooting

Live traps can be effective, though handling a live rabbit creates the possible hazard of disease transmission to the trapper. Use caution when transporting & releasing; be sure to release the rabbit at least five miles from your home and in an area where the rabbit will be able to find food but not where it will harm another property or agricultural crop. Trapping and shooting are not advised because the dead rabbit will bring large scavengers and predators to your yard. Be sure to check with your local authorities before discharging a firearm in your neighborhood.