HARE FACT FILES

Raising Hare

ABOUT THE BOOK

One winter's day, Chloe Dalton went for a countryside walk and discovered a newborn baby hare – no bigger than her hand – chased by a dog and separated from its mother.

Worried for its safety, Chloe took the tiny hare home and learned how to feed and care for it . . . and an extraordinary friendship began.

This is the true tale of how Chloe and the hare, with its drumming paws and distinctive charm, lived alongside each other until the time came for it to return to the wild.

But when the hare is finally ready to jump over the garden wall, will Chloe ever see it again?





CHLOE DALTON

Illustrated by Denise Nestor

Hare Fact File: Anatomy of a hare

Skull
• A hare's skull is full of holes that look like delicate lace
• These holes make it lighter and absorb shocks from the impact of running

Ears
• Blunt edges, black tips
• Less than 0.5 cm at birth
• Grow to 14 cm
• Each ear can move independently
• When they are bent forward, they are longer than the hare's forehead

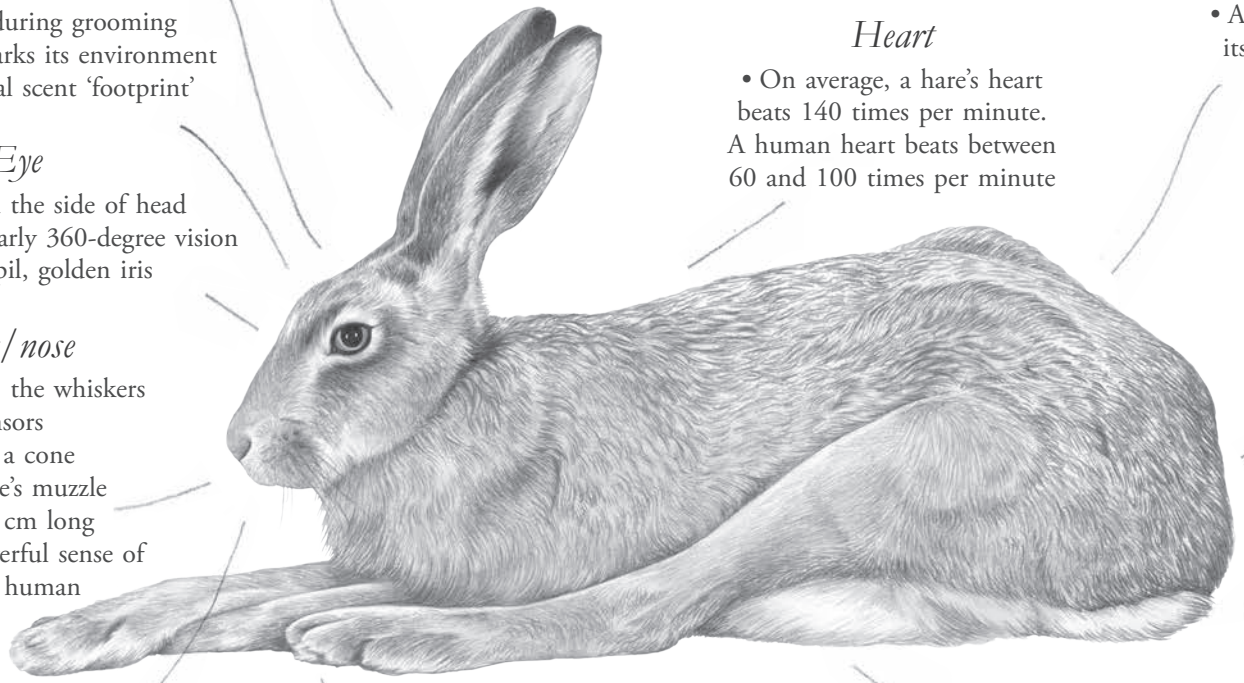
Weight
• Approx. 80 g at birth, up to 5 kg when fully grown

Head-to-body length
• Up to 63 cm

Head
• Glands on the head transfer scents to body and feet during grooming
• The hare then marks its environment with an individual scent 'footprint'

Fur
• Each individual strand of hair is made up of bands of black, brown and cream
• A hare moults – changes its fur – twice a year, in February and July

Heart
• On average, a hare's heart beats 140 times per minute. A human heart beats between 60 and 100 times per minute



Eye
• Mounted on the side of head
• Two eyes give nearly 360-degree vision
• Black pupil, golden iris

Haunch
• Roughly a quarter of a hare's body mass is made up of muscle
• A hare relies on its powerful legs to carry it away from danger

Whiskers/nose
• Called 'vibrissae', the whiskers act as sensors
• Shaped in a cone around the hare's muzzle
• Grow to 11 cm long
• Much more powerful sense of smell than a human

Tail
• Black fur on top, white fur below

Teeth
• A hare's teeth grow continuously. Gnawing at wood stops them getting too long
• Hares are herbivorous, meaning they eat grasses, twigs and plants

Hind paw
• Less than 0.5 cm at birth
• Grows to approx. 15 cm
• Sole covered in fur

Stomach
• A hare uses 'countershading': its body is pale close to the ground and dark where it meets the sky. This is why a hare's stomach is white: it helps to avoid casting a shadow

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How Can You Tell the Difference Between a Hare and a Wild Rabbit?

Wild Rabbits

- Are born underground with no fur and their eyes shut
- Live underground in large families
- Run showing the white of their tails
- Run into their burrows when they are frightened
- Have grey fur
- Have rounded heads and short ears
- Have black/brown eyes
- Were domesticated by humans thousands of years ago, for food and then to be kept as pets

Illustrations © Denise Nestor

Hares

- Are born above ground with a full coat of fur and their eyes open
- Have much longer ears, legs and bodies than rabbits
- Can run much faster than rabbits
- Run holding their tails pointing down so you can't see any white fur
- Crouch down like a stone when they are frightened, then run away at high speed
- Rest during the day in a nest called a 'form', partially concealed with their back showing. Hares seldom sleep next to each other during the daytime, except during the breeding season, but during their active hours they often gather in large groups
- Have brown fur



- Have long heads and ears
- Have amber-coloured eyes
- Are twice the size of rabbits
- Have never been domesticated, and should never be kept as pets

A Brown Hare's World

Dangers

- Farm machinery can crush young leverets
- Dogs off the lead can pick up and hurt leverets
- Hares suffer from an illegal sport called 'hare coursing', where people chase hares with greyhounds, lurchers or deerhounds and bet on the outcome
- Animals that prey on hares include foxes, eagles, hawks, crows, rooks and ravens, domestic cats, badgers, ferrets, stoats, weasels, martens, otters and wolverines

Illustrations © Denise Nestor

- Wet and cold weather can kill hares, and they are affected by climate change which means that leverets are born earlier in the year and face unpredictable weather

Preferred environment

- Living in open landscape with scattered shelter
- Being left in peace during the day
- Warm weather that keeps their fur dry and clean

Things hares appear to dislike

- Very wet and cold weather
- Dogs off their leads
- Fences or walls that break up their home range
- Being kept in cages. Hares are so wild that they will sometimes break their own neck and die if they are kept in a cage

Did you know?

- Hares are called leverets until they are one year old
- At one month old, a leveret already weighs eight times its birth weight. It usually takes a human nine years to reach eight times their newborn weight
- An adult hare can jump two metres up into the air and three metres across the ground. The human high jump world record is 2.45 metres
- A hare can swim over half a mile in open water
- A hare can run up to fifty miles per hour. In terms of body lengths per second, a hare can run faster than a cheetah
- A female hare can become pregnant while she is already pregnant – this is called 'superfetation' – and she can carry two separate pregnancies at the same time

Illustrations © Denise Nestor

- A female hare gives birth to, on average, eight leverets per year
- The average hare lives for three to four years
- Rabbits and hares are different species that can never interbreed – though they both belong to the 'Lagomorph' family
- There are at least thirty species of hare around the world. Each one is adapted to its environment. For example, the fur of hares that live in snowy conditions – like the mountain hare and the snowshoe hare – turns white in winter
- Hares that live in desert conditions use their ears as cooling mechanisms
- Hares have a strong sense of smell. A male hare can cross a path taken by a female hare many minutes earlier and still tell in which direction she went

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Why hares should never be kept as pets

- **Domesticated animals** – like sheep, cows, chickens, cats and dogs – have been bred by humans for thousands of years. Their nature has changed because of this, and they are used to living in captivity
- **Wild animals** – like the hare – have never been domesticated. This means that, by their very nature, they are not suitable for keeping as pets

What to do if you find a leveret alone in a field

- Leave it! Its mother will be watching it from close by

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