# GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE

FULL ACCOUNT FOR: ***Oryctolagus cuniculus***

***Oryctolagus cuniculus*** 简体中文 正體中文 **System:** Terrestrial

| Kingdom | Phylum | Class | Order | Family |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Animalia | Chordata | Mammalia | Lagomorpha | Leporidae |

**Common name** rabbit (English), lapin (French), kaninchen (German), Europäisches Wildkaninchen (German)

**Synonym** *Lepus cuniculus* , Linnaeus, 1758

**Similar species**

**Summary** Native to southern Europe and North Africa, the rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) has been introduced to all continents, except Antarctica and Asia. In many countries, rabbits cause serious erosion of soils by overgrazing and burrowing, impacting on native species that depend on undamaged ecosystems.

view this species on IUCN Red List

**Species Description**
Grey-brown fur and white-grey belly. Adults 1000-2000 g. Two pairs of upper incisors; the second smaller incisors are behind the first, a feature that distinguishes leporids from rodents. They are smaller than adult hares.

**Uses**
Valuable to humans as a domestic and game animal, rabbits were often released onto islands in the past as a food source for marooned sailors (Berman, 2002).

**Habitat Description**
Desirable features of ideal rabbit habitat include an annual rainfall of <1000mm, a sunny aspect, light soil, and adequate cover close to feeding grounds kept closely grazed. Although rabbits can tolerate higher rainfall, they do so only on light soils and where other animals help to maintain a short sward. In wetter areas, rabbits favour dunelands, dry stony riverbeds, limestone hills with outcropping rocks, and sunny coastal slopes. They usually avoid cold and wet conditions, and are absent from alpine lands, unbroken scrub, and heavily built-up areas (Norbury and Reddiex, 2005). Although usually an animal of open country, in New Zealand rabbits have survived in low numbers on a few forested islands where the forest is low and not very dense (SPREP, 2000).

**Reproduction**
Placental. Sexual. Rabbits have an endogenous reproductive cycle mainly modulated by day length and nutrition.
18-30 young per female adult per year. Females as young as 3 months can breed.

**Nutrition**
Rabbits eat grass and other herbaceous vegetation. They need a diet of less than 40% fibre, 10-20% protein for maintenance, and 14% protein for reproduction. They can be very selective in their choice of food, practise coprophagy, and ferment food in the hind gut.

**General Impacts**
Rabbits cause severe damage to the natural environment and agricultural areas. They compete with native wildlife for food and shelter, and contribute to a decline in the numbers of many native plants and animals. They can also enhance negative impacts on native species by supporting large populations of predators such as cats and foxes. They cause extensive erosion through browsing and loss of plant cover and often destroy the habitat of many small animals. Rabbits also compete with livestock for food (Courchamp *et al*. 2003; Norbury and Reddiex, 2005).

**Management Info**
Management options include fencing, warren ripping, baiting, fumigating and biological control with myxomatosis, rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus and fleas as vectors (Moseby *et al*. 2005; Richardson *et al*. 2007). Rabbits have been eradicated from a number of islands including Enderby Island (710 ha) in the Auckland Islands group (NZ), Phillip Island (190 ha) in the Norfolk Island group and Round Island (151 ha), Mauritius. Both the Enderby Island and Round Island campaigns used brodifacoum as Talon 20P® baits. Merton (1987) gives details of the Round Island operation including bait preference and acceptance trials, and tolerance of reptiles to the anti-coagulant poison used. Details of the successful operation on Enderby and Rose Islands are available in Torr (2002).
Preventative measures: Risk Assessment models for assessing the risk that exotic vertebrates could establish in Australia have been further explored by the Western Australia Department of Agriculture & Food (DAFWA) to confirm that they reasonably predict public safety, establishment and pest risks across a full range of exotic species and risk levels.
The Risk assessment for the European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), has been assigned a VPC Threat Category of **EXTREME**.
Mammals and birds were assessed for the pest risk they pose if introduced to Australia, by calculating Vertebrate Pests Committee (VPC) Threat Categories. These categories incorporate risk of establishing populations in the wild, risk of causing public harm, and risk of becoming a pest (eg causing agricultural damage, competing with native fauna, etc). The 7-factor Australian Bird and Mammal Model was used for these assessments.
Physical: Shooting of rabbits is an inefficient method of control but unlike poisoning it does not kill predators of rabbits such as cats. Where rabbits are present with other grazing animals, removal of the latter will often result in the growth of rank vegetation unsuitable for rabbits; this can be used as a method of partial rabbit control.
Chemical: In New Zealand, poisoning has most often been carried out with compound 1080 added to carrots or oats and spread from the air. On small islands, acute poisons such as phosphorus, cyanide, strychnine and compound 1080 are all likely to kill non-target species. Second-generation anti-coagulant poisons such as brodifacoum have been used successfully against rabbits although precautions are often necessary to protect non-target species (Flux 1993).
Biological: In 1998, a virus, rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD, formerly called RCD), was introduced to New Zealand illegally. In some areas it has killed many rabbits, but whether it will continue to be effective in the long-term is doubtful. Myxomatosis, a contagious and often lethal disease specific to rabbits is sometimes suggested for rabbit control. This not only requires flea or mosquito vectors but causes considerable suffering to the animals affected. Furthermore, eradication by such means is unlikely. Atkinson (SPREP 2000) does not recommend use of either RHD or myxomatosis on Pacific islands. Flux (1993) examined the relative effectiveness of various methods of rabbit control using a sample of 607 islands distributed throughout the world. The main finding was that competition from hares was twice as effective at clearing rabbits off islands as predation by cats or from myxomatosis.

**Pathway**
In the 19th and early 20th century, Acclimatisation Societies in Australia and New Zealand brought rabbits from Great Britain in an attempt to transplant the mother country to the new colonial frontier.If put ashore for shipwrecked people they usually died out, but they persisted on some islands.Sailing ships in the 18th and 19th century sometimes carried live rabbits for food.

**Principal source:**

**Compiler:** IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group
Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

**Review:** David Berman, Department of Natural Resources, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia.

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**ALIEN RANGE**

**[10]** AUSTRALIA
**[1]** CHILE
**[1]** FRENCH POLYNESIA
**[1]** KIRIBATI
**[6]** MEXICO
**[11]** NEW ZEALAND
**[1]** REUNION
**[1]** SEYCHELLES
**[1]** UNITED STATES
**[1]** CANADA
**[1]** FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS)
**[5]** FRENCH SOUTHERN TERRITORIES
**[2]** MAURITIUS
**[1]** NEW CALEDONIA
**[1]** NORFOLK ISLAND
**[2]** SAINT HELENA
**[3]** SPAIN

**Red List assessed species 73: EX = 6; CR = 27; EN = 12; VU = 15; NT = 7; LC = 6;**

Acrocephalus familiaris **CR**
Anogramma ascensionis **CR**
Asparagus arborescens **VU**
Beta patula **CR**
Cabalus modestus **EX**
Chaeropus ecaudatus **EX**
Cicer canariense **EN**
Diomedea epomophora **VU**
Euphorbia origanoides **CR**
Genista benehoavensis **VU**
Isoplexis isabelliana **EN**
Kunkeliella subsucculenta **CR**
Lasiorhinus latifrons **LC**
Leporillus conditor **VU**
Limonium fruticans **EN**
Lotus eremiticus **CR**
Lotus pyranthus **CR**
Marattia purpurascens **NT**
Masticophis anthonyi **CR**
Mellissia begonifolia **CR**
Myrmecobius fasciatus **EN**
Onychogalea fraenata **EN**
Perameles gunnii **NT**
Pezoporus occidentalis **CR**
Philoria frosti **CR**
Polytelis alexandrae **NT**
Porzana palmeri **EX**
Pterodroma cervicalis **VU**
Pterodroma leucoptera **VU**
Puffinus creatopus **VU**
Anas laysanensis **CR**
Aptenodytes patagonicus **LC**
Bencomia exstipulata **VU**
Bowdleria rufescens **EX**
Calyptorhynchus latirostris **EN**
Charadrius sanctaehelenae **CR**
Dasyornis broadbenti **LC**
Echium handiense **CR**
Gallirallus australis **VU**
Isoplexis chalcantha **CR**
Kunkeliella psilotoclada **CR**
Lactuca palmensis **LC**
Leporillus apicalis **CR**
Lepus corsicanus **VU**
Limonium sventenii **CR**
Lotus maculatus **CR**
Macrotis leucura **EX**
Mastacomys fuscus **NT**
Medicago citrina **CR**
Micromeria glomerata **CR**
Oligosoma otagense **EN**
Onychogalea lunata **EX**
Petaurus norfolcensis **LC**
Phalacrocorax colensoi **VU**
Pittosporum tanianum **CR**
Polytelis swainsonii **VU**
Procellaria cinerea **NT**
Pterodroma feae **NT**
Puffinus auricularis **CR**
Puffinus opisthomelas **NT**

Salvia herbanica **CR**
Sideritis cystosiphon **CR**
Silene holzmannii **EN**
Sinapidendron sempervivifolium **EN**
Teline rosmarinifolia **EN**
Troglodytes tanneri **VU**
Xantusia riversiana **LC**

Sephanoides fernandensis **CR**
Silene hicesiae **VU**
Silene nocteolens **CR**
Stemmacantha cynaroides **EN**
Thalassarche melanophrys **EN**
Urosaurus clarionensis **VU**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**60** references found for **Oryctolagus cuniculus**

**Managment information**

Atkinson, I. A. E. and Atkinson, T. J. 2000. Land vertebrates as invasive species on islands served by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. In: Invasive Species in the Pacific: A Technical Review and Draft Regional Strategy. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Samoa: 19-84.

**Summary:** This report reviews available information on the adverse effects of 14 alien vertebrates considered to be ﷽significant invasive species on islands of the South Pacific and Hawaii, supplementing the authors﷽ experience with that of other workers.

Bax, N., K. Hayes., A. Marshall., D. Parry., and R. Thresher., 2002. Man-made marinas as sheltered islands for alien marine organisms: Establishment and eradication of an alien invasive marine species. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 14-18. IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.

**Summary:** Eradication case study in Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.

Bell, B.D. 2002. The eradication of alien mammals from five offshore islands, Mauritius, Indian Ocean. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 40-45. IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.

**Summary:** Eradication case study in Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.

Bell, E. & Boyle, D. 2008. Rabbits on St Helena: assessment and advice on the rabbit situation in St Helena. EU South Atlantic Invasive Species Project.

Bomford, M., 2003. Risk Assessment for the Import and Keeping of Exotic Vertebrates in Australia. Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.

**Summary:** Available from: http://www.feral.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/PC12803.pdf [Accessed August 19 2010]

Bullock., D. J., S. G. North, M. E. Dulloo, and M. Thorsen., 2002. The impact of rabbit and goat eradication on the ecology of Round Island, Mauritius. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 53-63. Veitch, C.R. and Clout, M.N.(eds). IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.

**Summary:** Eradication case study in Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.

Burbidge and Morris., 2002. Introduced mammal eradications for nature conservation on Western Australian islands: a review. In Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species: 64-70. Veitch, C.R. and Clout, M.N.(eds). IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.

**Summary:** Available from: http://www.issg.org/database/species/reference_files/vulvul/Burbidge.pdf [Accessed 12 March 2003]

Courchamp, F., Chapuis, J.-L., and Pascal, M. 2003. Mammal invaders on islands: impact, control and control impact. Biological Reviews, 78: 347-383.

**Summary:** Comprehensive review of impacts of mammals on islands using rabbits as a case study

Flux, J. E. C. 1993. Relative effect of cats, myxomatosis, traditional control, or competitors in removing rabbits from islands. New Zealand Journal of Zoology 20: 13﷽18.

Green, C. J., 2002. Restoration of tree weta (Orthoptrera: Anostostomatidae) to a modified island. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 406 - 414. IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.

**Summary:** Eradication case study In Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.

IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)., 2010. A Compilation of Information Sources for Conservation Managers.

**Summary:** This compilation of information sources can be sorted on keywords for example: Baits & Lures, Non Target Species, Eradication, Monitoring, Risk Assessment, Weeds, Herbicides etc. This compilation is at present in Excel format, this will be web-enabled as a searchable database shortly. This version of the database has been developed by the IUCN SSC ISSG as part of an Overseas Territories Environmental Programme funded project XOT603 in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment. The compilation is a work under progress, the ISSG will manage, maintain and enhance the database with current and newly published information, reports, journal articles etc.

Kirkpatrick, Win; Amanda Page and Marion Massam, August 2008, European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) risk assessment for Australia. Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia

**Summary:** Models for assessing the risk that exotic vertebrates could establish in Australia have been developed for mammals, birds (Bomford 2003; Bomford 2006, 2008), reptiles and amphibians (Bomford 2006, 2008; Bomford *et al*. 2005). These Risk Assessment models have been further explored by Western Australia Department of Agriculture & Food (DAFWA) to confirm that they reasonably predict public safety, establishment and pest risks across a full range of exotic species and risk levels. Mammals and birds were assessed for the pest risk they pose if introduced to Australia, by calculating Vertebrate Pests Committee (VPC) Threat Categories. These categories incorporate risk of establishing populations in the wild, risk of causing public harm, and risk of becoming a pest (eg causing agricultural damage, competing with native fauna, etc). The 7-factor Australian Bird and Mammal Model was used for these assessments.

Massam M, Kirkpatrick W and Page A., 2010. Assessment and prioritisation of risk for forty introduced animal species. Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, Canberra.
**Summary:** This report documents work contributing to a project commissioned by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre to validate and refine risk assessment models used in decisions to import and manage introduced vertebrate species. The intent of the project was to: a) increase predictive accuracy, scientific validation and adoption of risk assessment models for the import and keeping of exotic vertebrates, and b) reduce the risk of new vertebrate pests establishing introduced populations in Australia.
Available from: http://www.feral.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/DAFWA_RA_060510.pdf [Accessed 16 March 2011]
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Merton., D, G., Climo, V. Laboudallon, S. Robert, and C. Mander., 2002. Alien mammal eradication and quarantine on inhabited islands in the Seychelles. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 182-198. Veitch, C.R. and Clout, M.N.(eds). IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.
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Micol and Jouventin, 2002. Eradication of rats and rabbits from Saint-Paul Island. In *Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species*: 199-205. Veitch, C.R. and Clout, M.N.(eds). IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland. Switzerland and Cambridge. UK.
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**Summary:** In addition to investigating home range and habitat use the authors also investigated how many radio-collared rabbits were killed using different control methods at their home warren.
Ojeda, P *et al*., 2003. Erradicacion Del Conejo Europeo *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Linnaeus, 1758 Desde La Isla Santa Clara Archipelago De Juan Fernandez.
**Summary:** Report on Rabbit Eradication- Santa Clara (De Juan Fernandez Archipelago).
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**Summary:** Case study in Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.
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**Summary:** The SPREP review contains taxa-classified chapters on invasive and potentially invasive species from leading practitioners in the Pacific. It provides a sound baseline of knowledge on Invasive Alien Species, concentrating primarily on their distributions in the Pacific.
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**Summary:** This article presents the threats to sclerophyll forests (land clearance, grazing by cattle or deer, and fire) and the urgency to protect the remaining biodiversity of the forests.
Chapuis, J., Bouss�s, P., & Barnaud, G. 1994. Alien mammals, impact and management in the French Subantartic Islands. Biological Conservation, 67, 97-104.
**Summary:** Cet article pr�sente la situation actuelle et les impacts des populations introduites de mammif�res dans les �les subantarctiques fran�aises. Les moyens de contr�le en place ou planifi�s sont �galement pr�sent�s.
Chapuis, J.L., Barnaud, G. 1995. Restauration d��les de l�archipel de Kerguelen par �radication du lapin (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)�: m�thode d�intervention appliqu�e � l��le Verte. Rev. Ecol. (Terre Vie) 50, 377-390.
Chapuis, J.L, & Bousses, P. 1987. Relations animal-v�g�tation : cons�quences des introductions de mammif�res phytophages dans l archipel de Kerguelen. Actes du colloque sur la Recherche fran�aise dans les Terres Australes.269-278
**Summary:** L histoire des introductions de 4 mammif�res herbivores, l �volution de leurs populations, et leurs impacts sur les communaut�s v�g�tales et animales sont pr�sent�s et discut�s. Des moyens de contr�le sont envisag�s pour permettre la restauration de ces milieux.
Chekchak, T., Chapuis, J.L., Pisanu, B., & Bouss�s, P. 2000. Introduction of the rabbit flea, *Spilopsyllus cuniculi*, to a subantartic island (Kerguelen Archipelago) and its assessment as a vector of myxomatosis. Wildlife Research, 27, 91-101.
Clapp, R. B. and Wirtz, W. O. 1975. European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). Atoll Research Bulletin 186: 150�151.
CONABIO. 2008. Sistema de informaci�n sobre especies invasoras en M�xico. Especies invasoras - Mam�feros. Comisi�n Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad. Fecha de acceso.
**Summary:** English:
The species list sheet for the Mexican information system on invasive species currently provides information related to Scientific names, family, group and common names, as well as habitat, status of invasion in Mexico, pathways of introduction and links to other specialised websites. Some of the higher risk species already have a direct link to the alert page. It is important to notice that these lists are constantly being updated, please refer to the main page (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), under the section Novedades for information on updates.
Invasive species - mammals is available from: http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Especies_invasoras_-_Mam%C3%ADferos [Accessed 30 July 2008]
Spanish:
La lista de especies del Sistema de informaci�n sobre especies invasoras de m�xico cuenta actualmente con informaci�n aceca de nombre cient�fico, familia, grupo y nombre com�n, as� como h�bitat, estado de la invasi�n en M�xico, rutas de introducci�n y ligas a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una liga directa a la p�gina de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualizaci�n, por favor consulte la portada (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), en la secci�n novedades, para conocer los cambios.
Especies invasoras - Mam�feros is available from:
http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Especies_invasoras_-_Mam%C3%ADferos [Accessed 30 July 2008]
Flux, J. E. C. and Fullager, P. J. 1992. World distribution of the rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* on islands. Mammal Review 22(3�4): 151�205.
Frenot, Y., Chown, S.L., Whinam, J., Selkirk, P., Convey, P., Skotnicki, M., & Bergstrom, D. 2005. Biological invasions in the Antarctic: extent, impacts and implications. Bio. Rev, 80, 45-72.
**Summary:** Article de synth�se sur les invasions biologiques (plantes, invert�br�s et vert�br�s) en antarctique.
Available from: http://www.anta.canterbury.ac.nz/resources/non-native%20species%20in%20the%20antarctic/Talk%202%20Frenot.pdf [Accessed 4 April 2008]
Fullager, P. J. 1978. Report on the rabbits on Philip Island, Norfolk Island. CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research, Canberra.
Gargominy, O., Bouchet, P., Pascal, M., Jaffre, T. and Tourneu, J. C. 1996. Consequences des introductions d'especes animals et vegetales sur la biodiversite en Nouvelle-Caledonie. Rev. Ecol. (Terre Vie) 51: 375-401.
**Summary:** Consequences to the biodiversity of New Caledonia of the introduction of plant and animal species.
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