



## **BABY BUNNY FACTS**

The gestational period for rabbits is 28 to 36 days. The mother will usually build a nest lined with her own fur a few days before giving birth. Rabbits are not chickens, and after the initial preparation, do not sit on their nests. They also do not stay on or by the nests for prolonged periods after the babies are born. In the wild, this would attract the attention of predators. The babies burrow into the bottom of the nest where they cuddle together to stay warm until Mama wakes them up at feeding time. The mother does not lie down to nurse like a cat. Rather, she stands over the babies to nurse them. After nursing she will groom her babies and lick their bottoms to stimulate elimination.

Baby bunnies are called “kits”. Typically there are 5 to 8 kits per litter. Baby bunnies are born nearly hairless with closed ears and eyes and weighing approximately 100 gm. The eyes will open around 6 to 10 days of age. The kits will begin eating solid food around 3 weeks of age, and will be completely weaned between 6 and 7 weeks of age. They will reach puberty at 4 to 8 months of age.

Rabbits nurse their young one to two times per day, most often in the early morning hours. The mother rabbit’s milk is very rich and can sustain the babies for up to 24 hours at a time. Rabbits do not usually nurse their babies immediately after birth and often wait until the night after kindling to begin nursing. If you are unsure whether or not a rabbit is feeding her kits, check them early each morning. They should be warm and round-bellied. The best way to know for sure is to check them on a small postal or kitchen scale. If they are gaining weight, they’re being fed.

Rabbits are not as prone to cannibalism as people think. When it occurs it is usually the result of a stillborn litter. Most domestic rabbits are not that concerned about human smells on their babies and will not care if the babies are occasionally gently handled. Pregnant females should be separated from other animals when they are close to kindling to prevent them from being disturbed. The mother can conceive again within a few weeks of giving birth so it is best to keep her separated from the male at least until the kits are weaned.

Most of the above information is from the House Rabbit Society, a non-profit rabbit rescue and education group. The House Rabbit Society can be reached through their web site at [www.rabbits.org](http://www.rabbits.org).