

FINDING WILD RABBITS

Provided by Blue Ribbon Rabbitry

From time to time, I get questions about hares (what people often refer to as “wild rabbits”). Most of the time it involves questions about how to raise the babies because the mother abandoned them or was killed.

I have compiled some basic main points:

1. Unless you actually saw the mother die with your own eyes, it is very likely she is still alive.

Rabbits and hares alike typically nurse their babies once a day. Keep in mind that in the wild especially, hares are prey animals. They are going to try to be elusive in order to not give away the location of their nest. Just because you do not see the mother does not mean she is not caring for the babies. Hares and rabbits alike do not sit in their nest. Leave them alone and everything should turn out okay.

2. If the mother did in fact die and you are completely sure of this, the only thing you can do is call animal control. *Never, ever remove wild hares (even babies) from the wild.*

If you saw a baby deer or baby raccoon alone in the wild, would you capture it and try to raise it? I hope not. The same idea applies here. Do not remove them even while waiting for animal control. Let animal control handle the entire situation. In some states, having wild animals in your possession is even against the law.

3. Wild hares carry diseases and can become panicked or even aggressive.

Wild animals in general carry diseases, some of what may be transmittable to any pets you may have or even to yourself or your family. While your concerns for the wild hares is noble, it is not worth the risk in handling them. Also, once they start to get a little older, their natural instincts kick in regardless of how much you handled them. You cannot tame them. Their wild nature is innate. They will become panicked and that may result in aggression since they are frightened.

4. If the animal in question is obviously domestic (and thus a rabbit), scratch most of what was just said.

A wild hare and a domestic rabbit of any breed have very different and distinct looks to me, but I know as a rabbit breeder I have had an unusually large amount of experience with domestic rabbits. I think though, that most people know the difference.

Sadly, from time to time people release their pet rabbits into the wild in much the same way as some people dump their dogs. It is horrible and sad, but it happens. If you see a rabbit that is very obviously domestic, catching it is not a bad idea, given the fact that domestic rabbits are not accustomed to living in the wild and will likely die if left on their own. You will still want to isolate the rabbit and handle it with protection as it could have picked up diseases. Upon capture, a visit to a veterinarian and some extra TLC will be in order.