



# Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects Black-tailed Jackrabbit

*Lepus californicus*

**Common name** • Black-tailed Jackrabbit  
**Scientific name** • *Lepus californicus*  
**Federal status** • None  
**State status** • Endangered

## Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. Please contact the Department of Conservation if habitat management information is needed. Because every project and location differ, following the recommendations in this document does not guarantee impacts will not occur to the species and additional information may be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations in this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

## Ecology

Black-tailed Jackrabbits reside in the open plains of North America. Few remain in Missouri and they might be found in pastures, hay fields and cultivated areas, especially before crops grow more than 2 feet tall. Jackrabbits breed year-round, although most breeding occurs from late winter to mid-summer. Pregnancy lasts 41-47 days, at which time two-four young are born. Females may have as many as four litters per year. Young become independent when they are 3-4 weeks old. Jackrabbits eat only vegetation. During summer, they prefer herbaceous plants and grasses; the winter diet consists of dried grasses, buds, twigs, roots and bark.

## Reasons for Decline

It is likely that Black-tailed Jackrabbits are suffering from the loss of native tallgrass prairies in Missouri. The trend toward extensive cultivation has caused a decrease in Black-tailed Jackrabbit habitat that is reflected in their declining populations. In addition, humans have historically affected their populations by poisoning, shooting and trapping rabbits when they are observed near cropland.

## Specific Recommendations

Black-tailed Jackrabbits need large expanses of grassland with open vistas.

- Avoid destroying native grassland habitat. Replant native warm-season grasses and forbs following ground-disturbing activities.
- Avoid the use of non-native plants such as tall fescue.
- When damage to crops is extensive, build rabbit fences that are made of woven wire or poultry netting, with the bottom turned out and buried at least 6 inches deep and 3 feet high.
- Loosely wrap young orchard trees with trunk protectors made of plastic, cardboard, paper, aluminum or poultry netting.
- Removal of woody vegetation in grassland habitats would benefit Jackrabbits by opening up vistas.

## General Recommendations

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or the [Missouri Department of Transportation Environmental Studies webpage](#) for additional information on recommendations.

## Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in rivers and streams, contact:

For species information:

[Missouri Department of Conservation](#)  
Science Branch  
P.O. Box 180  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573-751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act Coordination:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)  
Ecological Services  
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A  
Columbia, MO 65203-0007  
Telephone: 573-234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

[Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)

Water Protection Program  
P. O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573-751-1300, 800-361-4827

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816-389-3990

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

EPA Region 7 Water Division  
11201 Renner Boulevard  
Lenexa, KS 66219  
Telephone: 913-551-7977

**Disclaimer**

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors, and others to provide guidance to those who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or Local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.