

In the city, rabbits build more densely

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European wild rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) not only achieve high population densities in the city, their burrows are also built more densely and on a smaller external scale. That is something researchers in the Goethe University's Task Force on Ecology and Evolution have discovered in their study on wild rabbit populations in and around Frankfurt. As they report in the advance version of the *Journal of Zoology*, small burrow structures with fewer entrances and exits predominate in Frankfurt's inner city. These structures are inhabited by few animals - often only pairs or single wild rabbits. In contrast to this, the structural systems in the rural environs of Frankfurt are substantially larger and are also inhabited by larger social rabbit groups.

"The optimal habitat for a wild rabbit offers both, access to sufficient nourishment and the opportunity to establish rabbit burrows in very close proximity, or to seek out protective vegetation" explains doctoral candidate Madlen Ziege, a member of Prof. Bruno Streit's team. In rural, often agricultural used areas, with their cleared and open landscapes, these conditions are getting harder to find. Apparently, urban and suburban habitats satisfy the needs of wild rabbits far better.

In view of the fact that in some cities there is already talk of a "rabbit infestation", while in recent years the [rabbit population](#) in many rural areas of Germany has declined significantly, the scientists currently want to determine whether in the future urban populations could play a significant role as the source populations for the preservation of this wild animal species in Germany. They are therefore examining the [population genetics](#) or dynamics, their use of habitat and the state of health of rural,

urban and suburban wild rabbit populations.

More information: "From multifamily residences to studio apartments: shifts in burrow structures of European rabbits along a rural-to-urban gradient." *Journal of Zoology*, [DOI: 10.1111/jzo.12207](https://doi.org/10.1111/jzo.12207)

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