

Q. Then, of the existing food products, you have mentioned the rabbit as being the principal article of winter food. Over what portion of the country, roughly speaking, are they the principal food of the Indians? A. Principally in the woods. We have three species of rabbits or hares native to Canada—I might say four. The principal one is the ordinary bush rabbit which is brown in summer and white in winter; the prairie rabbit I referred to the other day, and further north the Arctic hare. The southern parts of the Dominion have been invaded by the gray American rabbit from Wisconsin and Michigan, supposed by many people in the west to be the English rabbit; but such is not the case. It is an American rabbit working its way eastward. We have, therefore, four native species within our borders. The common or American hare (*Lepus Americanus*) is extremely abundant most years. It is afflicted with disease periodically—once in about seven years the Indians say, and in these years the Indians are reduced to great distress, the bush Indians depending in the winter time on this food for their existence, so that when the rabbits are killed off with disease, the Indians are nearer starvation than at any other time. They do get some fish through the ice. They cut a row of holes through the ice and by means of a pole stretch nets by passing them from one hole to another under the ice, and in that way catch some fish. They also get a few by angling with hooks and lines through holes in the ice. Occasionally they kill a deer or a bear, which serves them for a week or more, but withal the rabbit is their great standby.

Q. Do you regard it as one of their principal food products? A. Yes. The staple food of the wood Indian tribes may be stated as rabbits in winter, and fish in summer.

Q. What is the southern limit of the Arctic rabbit? A. I fancy it would be near the verge of the forests. I have never seen them in the wooded region. Perhaps they do come into the wooded regions, but I think somewhere about the northern limit of the wooded country would be the southern limit of the Arctic hare.

*By the Honorable Mr. Kaulbach:*

Q. Which is the most prolific variety or species of the hare? A. They are all prolific enough. It is hard to say which is the most so, but I should say the more southern species would be the most prolific. They breed three or four times during the season.

*By the Chairman:*

Q. How many at a litter? A. I should say four on the average probably.

Q. When do they reach maturity so as to propagate again? A. I should think within one year at all events.

Q. Which species of the rabbits you have mentioned would be the best adapted to propagate in districts where none are now found? A. We would have to confine ourselves to those suitable to the climate. I should think that the more southern one, even if it were most advantageous otherwise, would not stand the climate in the north. In the prairie region perhaps we could take the native prairie hare, and in the wooded region take the wood rabbit. I do not know that any attempt has been made to domesticate them, but by proper game laws and with paid officers to protect them much might perhaps be done to increase their numbers.

Q. What season would you designate as the proper close season for the prairie rabbit? A. I should say the whole summer would be the proper close season, as it is their breeding time, and at that time of the year the Indians can get something else to live upon.

*By the Honorable Mr. Almon:*

Q. Do you know as a fact or have you heard it stated that the English rabbit has two uteri, and that that accounts for their propagating so rapidly? A. I cannot say from personal examination.

Q. It is said that the English rabbit has two wombs, and that therefore she may have brought forth from one womb while the undeveloped foetus may be in the other, and that is the reason they are so prolific? A. Possibly, but reasoning from analogy it would be more likely that the young would develop simultaneously in both.