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everything, using particularly their sense of smell. He recounts that they detested some people but were immediately attracted to a miller who visited. Presumably they were drawn to him by the pleasant smell of wheat and flour on his clothes.

### Other hand-reared hares

Another person who kept a doe for more than two years recorded that he found her to be most active after dark and very sensitive to changes in atmospheric pressure (changeable weather).

W.B. Yeats in his poem *Two Songs of a Fool* wrote 'A speckled cat and a tame hare eat at my hearthstone and sleep there.' There are other accounts of young hares being fostered on to cats feeding kittens, and of older hares living quite happily alongside pet dogs and even being taught to do tricks. J.J. Manley, author of *Notes on Game and Game Shooting* (1881), commented that 'many of us have seen performing hares in the London streets,' although he himself had not been able to tame one.

It is generally agreed today that young hares are difficult to rear, even when they are artificially fed on a milk substitute such as cat's milk replacement. If they do survive, they usually prove to be very highly strung. A single hare is much more likely to be tamed than when two or three are reared together.



#### Top left

Leverets found in fields or moors are seldom 'abandoned' and should not be touched or moved. The mother hare will not be far away and will return to feed them once a day after dark. Just occasionally, situations occur in which it is known for certain that they are orphans. Such was the case with these three leverets which were bottle-reared by the author. Sadly only one made it to weaning and release. They are notoriously difficult animals to rear in captivity



### **Commercial breeding of Brown hares in captivity**

The Brown hare has never been domesticated and because they are so highly strung, their behaviour in captivity is significantly different to that in the wild. Captive breeding is technically possible but because of the very nature of the animal it would be extremely difficult for it to be viable as an economic, large scale commercial venture. Only two or three litters of up to four are normally produced each year and heavy losses are likely through stress, disease, reproductive problems and high death rates in leverets prior to weaning.

Above  
Hare's only feed their young once a day, usually at dusk or after dark. This remarkable photograph by Chris Knights shows four well-grown Brown hare leverets suckling

## THE HARE

There is a report (1963) of five farms in the Ukraine having been established to breed hares for export to western Europe although it doesn't say under what conditions they were kept. Brown hare breeding ventures have also been established in northern Italy and France as well as in some other Eastern European countries. These however were small enterprises and the hares were not grown to the weights required for meat production but kept for either research projects or for reintroduction to the wild.

Many young ones are sold to stock hunting or game parks several weeks before the hunting season begins, allowing them the time to become acclimatised, familiar with their environment in the wild and to develop natural behavioural patterns.

In both Italy and England, in the 1800s, Brown hares were bred in warrens for sporting purposes. These warrens were enclosed areas covering several acres so the hares were free range and able to live in semi-natural conditions.

*Below and opposite page  
Courtship interaction between  
male and female Brown hares*





## THE HARE

Europe is the major market for hare meat and the big demand is met by imports from Argentina and Chile to supplement local supplies. This South American meat comes from shot wild hares that have been processed, vacuum packed and frozen.

There is also a small world market for hare pelts to supply hat and clothes-wear manufacturers, particularly those making trimmings and Akubra-style hats.

*Below*

Temporarily oblivious to the agenda of predators and hunters, two hares engage in the perennial courtship battle

