

Jackrabbit Run

Greyhounds to the Rescue

Behold the black-tailed jackrabbit, supremely adapted to prairie life. In scorching summer heat, the jackrabbit's long ears act like radiators to keep it cool. Able to extract all the water it needs from leaves and bark, it can do without drinking water.

When threatened by its many formidable predators—including coyotes, eagles, owls, hawks, rattlesnakes, and, at one time, wolves—it attempts to escape notice by sitting motionless. When it needs to, it can leap 25 feet in a single bound and reach speeds of 40 mph.

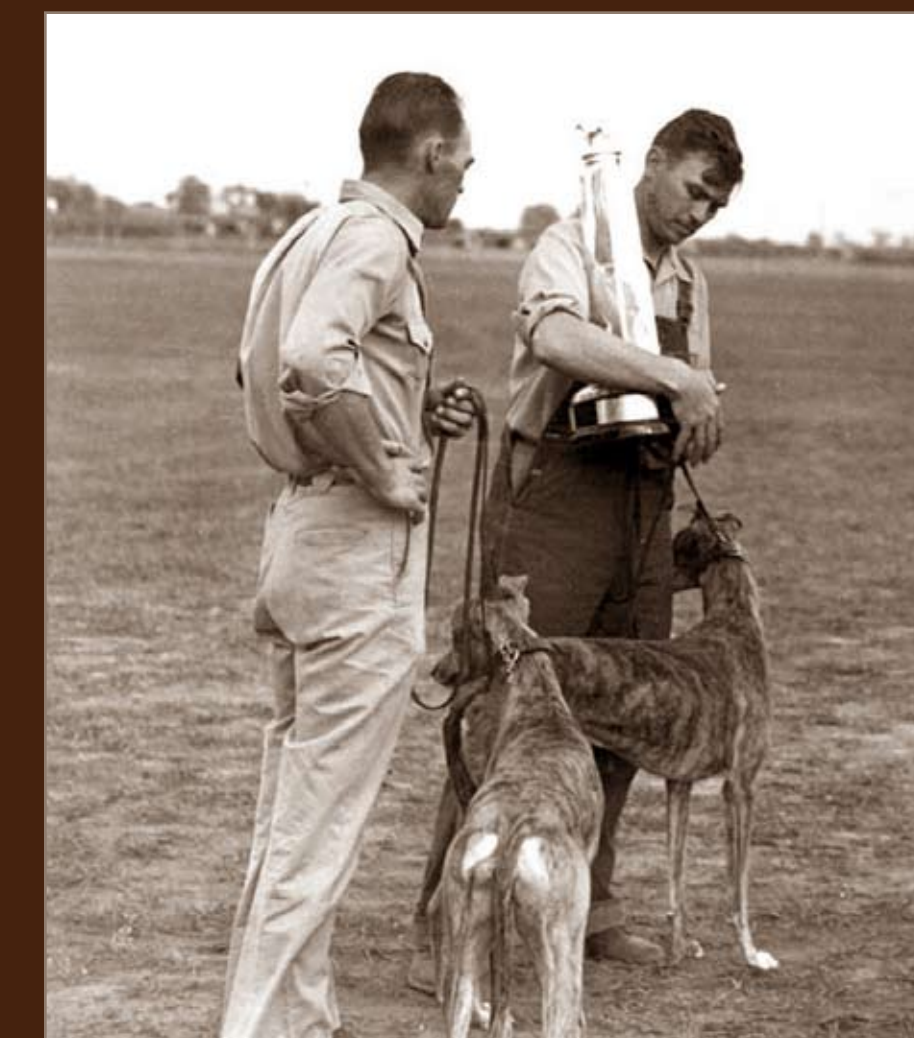
As settlers moved into Kansas, they inadvertently set the stage for conflict with jackrabbits, replacing prairie habitat with crops and killing off predators that kept jackrabbit populations in check. To control jackrabbits, farmers imported greyhounds from the British Isles. The fastest dogs on earth, greyhounds were perfect for the task and became a common sight on prairie farms.



Black-tailed Jackrabbit
USFWS



Black-tailed Jackrabbit/USFWS



Coursing Match Winners (Dickinson County)/
Kansas State Historical Society



Coursing Greyhounds (Dickinson County)/
Kansas State Historical Society

Not a Rabbit After All

Black-tailed jackrabbits are actually hares. Unlike rabbits, hares don't make underground burrows, and their babies are born fully furred, with eyes wide open. Larger than most rabbits, adult black-tailed jackrabbits grow to over two feet long and weigh up to ten pounds.

Birthplace of American Coursing

With their new, fleet-footed greyhounds in hand, settlers soon discovered the sport of coursing, in which greyhounds chased a live rabbit in an enclosed field. In 1886, the American Coursing Club in Cheyenne Bottoms hosted the nation's first regulated greyhound coursing match.

Motion and Change

"Out in Kansas we have [a] rare sport hunting jack-rabbits. Eastern boys can hardly guess how much excitement there is in it ... We hunt them on horseback, with greyhounds. All the settlers in our section keep one or more greyhounds on purpose to hunt jack-rabbits." --The Boys' Book of Sports and Outdoor Life, 1886, Maurice Thompson, ed..



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