PRELIMINARY DATA ON COLLECTED WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBITS (*LEPUS TOWNSENDII*) IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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ABSTRACT

White-tailed jackrabbits were collected throughout South Dakota beginning in June 2004 for analysis of age and sex ratios, reproductive potential, kidney fat, parasites, and disease. Jackrabbits were classified into three age classes based on the closure of the proximal epiphysis of the humerus using x-rays analysis. Reproductive potential was determined by assessing the length of the breeding season, average number of litters and litter size produced by females. The weights of male and female reproductive organs fluctuated on a monthly basis which may reflect reproductive activity. Monthly fluctuations in kidney fat weight were also recorded in an attempt to determine an index of body condition. All parasites and abnormalities were documented in collected jackrabbits. Information gathered will be used to identify possible reasons for cyclic fluctuations in jackrabbit populations as well as provide effective management recommendations for white-tailed jackrabbits in South Dakota.