

SNOWSHOE HARE LACTATING IN MID-OCTOBER

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On 14 October 1989 Vittorio Pasquarelli and I bagged a Snowshoe Hare just west of Narcisse, Manitoba (50°42'N, 97°33'W). Hare populations crashed there in spring 1981 and were just beginning to recover. Upon observation, the hare was found to have recently been suckled. A necropsy revealed that its mammary glands were active. A lactating snowshoe Hare in mid-October was a surprise to me. In handling over 300 hares during late September 1971-1989 on Long Point, some 250 km to the north, I never noticed this condition.

Young Snowshoe Hares typically are weaned at 2 to 3 weeks, however, the last brood may suckle up to 6 weeks (L.B. Keith, pers comm.). Criddle recorded Snowshoe Hare embryos in September of 1927 and 1934, while Keith *et al.* listed

mid-August conception dates.^{1,2} Keith has an update paper which includes August conception dates for Alberta and Newfoundland (in press).

Snowshoe Hares have a 34-37 day gestation period. During the breeding season they typically conceive the same day they give birth. The first spring breeding occurs near the end of March. In order for a female hare to be lactating in mid-October she would likely have gone through five breeding cycles that season.

¹ CRIDDLE, STUART. 1938. A study of the Snowshoe Rabbit. *Can. Field-Nat.* 11(3):31-40.

² KEITH, L.B., O.J. RONGSTAD and E.C. MESLOW. 1966. Regional differences in reproductive traits of the Snowshoe Hare. *Can. J. Zool.* 44:953-961.



Snowshoe Hare

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