

BASIC RABBIT CARE GUIDE

Congratulations on adopting a rabbit into your household! Rabbits make excellent pets. With good care, s/he will live 6-12 years.

Do's and Don'ts

~DO~


-  Pay attention to your rabbit. She is a social animal and gets lonely without company. With frequent handling, your rabbit will look forward to petting and play time.
-  Make certain that she is fed properly and has fresh water daily. Keep in mind that the bunny relies on YOU for these essentials.
-  Keep food dishes and litter box clean. Be sure to rinse off soap residues when washing equipment.
-  Keep her away from other animals, especially strange dogs. Cats and dogs are natural predators. Rabbits CAN be raised with other pets, including dogs and cats, but only if properly introduced and supervised through the early stages.
-  Keep their housing clean. Like other pets, a clean, fresh and well-ventilated environment prevents disease, ensures long life and gives your pet a pleasant disposition.
-  Spay or Neuter your rabbit. Help us to prevent pet overpopulation. Spay or neuter can prevent some health problems in later life and keep sexual behavior in check through the breeding years.
-  Keep your rabbit out of cold drafts. Rabbits are susceptible to colds, known as snuffles. Otherwise they are tolerant to cool weather.
-  Keep your rabbit shaded and well ventilated during the hot summer months. Provide refrigerated water and avoid high calorie treats.
-  Keep the phone number of your veterinarian handy for emergencies. Find a vet experienced with rabbits. Get a checkup for your rabbit soon after adopting them and annually thereafter.
-  Give them toys to play with. Baby toys that make noise are favorites.
-  Exercise the bunny daily. Keeping him in a cage all of the time can cause him to get overweight and listless. The more you handle your rabbit and play with it, the friendlier and more entertaining it will be.
-  Rabbits are not fond of being carried. When you must handle your rabbit, support their feet or even cradle them in your arms. Long sleeves are suggested when you first get to know your rabbit. Rabbits can be leash trained.
-  Keep their nails trimmed. Rabbits are very good about keeping themselves clean. If you keep the hutch and litter box clean your rabbit should not require any other grooming.

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 Long-haired rabbits must be brushed. Fuzzy lops once to twice a week. Angora rabbits must be brushed daily.

~DO NOT~

-  Pick a rabbit up by the ears, ever! This can seriously harm the animal.
-  Pick the rabbit up by the feet. If the rabbit struggles, it can break a leg.
-  Wash the rabbit with human soaps. Rabbits clean themselves like cats, so most of the time washing is not necessary.
-  Get a rabbit rabies or other shots. There are generally no recommended vaccinations for rabbits. However, always rely on the discretion of a qualified veterinarian for health advice.
-  Feed your rabbit too many treats. Fresh veggies, not exceeding 10% of their diet, will keep your rabbit healthy and very happy. You will quickly discover your bunnies' favorites.

HOUSING

This is a matter of personal choice. Your rabbit can be kept in a cage and exercised daily or allowed to roam the house like a dog or cat. Some people prefer to have their rabbit in an outdoor hutch. If you decide to keep your bunny in a cage, we recommend that it is at least one square foot per pound of bunny. You might want to measure the length of rabbit before selecting a cage (height) and allow plenty of room for the rabbit to stretch. Keep in mind that it is unkind to squeeze the animal in a tiny cage; you want to make certain that she is comfortable, especially if she is left alone for long periods of time during the day and if she is in the cage at night. We also recommend that you have a feeder and water bottle attached to the cage since this will free up more space for your bunny.

If you prefer to have a house rabbit, we advise that you litter train him. Rabbits tend to choose one spot for toileting; this is where you want to place the litter box. You may want to start training him in a cage before you allow him to roam for extended periods of time. Simply place any stray pellets in the box. If he sprays outside of the box, spray him with room temperature water and put him in the cage with the box. Until he is accustomed to going in the box, you might want to place him in the box every 15 minutes or so and reward him with a small treat as well. You also may want to put treats in the litter box to encourage him to use it. Reward him for good effort! You might wish to keep in mind that some rabbits mark their territory like cats do. Often spaying / neutering will solve this problem.

BUNNY PROOFING

Rabbits are natural chewers. Given proper amounts of hay and chew toys to wear down their teeth, this is not usually a problem. Some rabbits may chew on electrical wires, carpet, paper or soft wood. Electrical wires are especially dangerous; keep them out of reach. You may encase

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wires in plastic tubing or coat them with Tabasco sauce. You may also choose to limit your rabbits' range by keeping doors shut or using baby gates.

If you wish to keep him away from certain areas, put apple bitter on the spot. It is also a good idea to place your breakables out of your pet's reach. Keep in mind that bunnies can hop onto furniture and climb to an extent.

TOXIC PLANTS

Bunny proofing includes keeping your rabbit away from houseplants, ornamental garden plants, and from things you already know that are poisonous to humans.

If you suspect your rabbit has ingested an unsafe plant, please call your vet or the National Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-426-4435 (credit card charge).

For a full list of Toxic Plants, go to:

<http://www.adoptarabbit.com/articles/toxic.html>

TOYS

Toys are important to keep your rabbit entertained. We suggest:

Baby Toys

Plastic Key Rings, Pacifiers, Plastic Cups, Rattles.

All thick plastic, no sharp edges, no liquid filled

Cat Toys

Jingle Balls, Springy Scratching Post

No catnip

Other

Spring Toys (Slinky), Plastic Golf Balls, Plastic Bowls. Anything that will roll, make noise, and can be picked up by their teeth will do.

FOOD

Timothy Hay is essential. It provides necessary long fiber and wears their teeth. Always keep plenty of fresh hay available. Complete their diet with an alfalfa-based rabbit feed.

VEGETABLES:

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Alfalfa, Basil, Beet, Carrot, Turnip and Mustard greens, Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems), Brussels sprouts, Clover, Green peppers, Parsley, Radishes and their greens, Raspberry leaves, Romaine lettuce (no iceberg or light colored leaf, no cabbage) Spinach (small amounts), Wheat grass.

Add one vegetable to the diet at a time. Eliminate if it causes soft stools or diarrhea.

FRUIT

Apple (remove stem and seeds), Blueberries, Melon, Orange (including peel), Papaya, Peach, Pear, Pineapple, Plums, Raspberries, Strawberries

Sugary fruits such as bananas, grapes or raisins should be used sparingly, as occasional treats. Bunnies have a sweet tooth and if left to their own devices will devour sugary foods to the exclusion of healthy ones.

Keep your rabbit in mind as you prepare your own meals. Buy the bunched carrots, radishes and such. Most of what you throw away, leaves, stems, peels (no potatoes) etc. will be a very welcome addition to your pet's diet.

SHOPPING

Feed and Hay -

For small quantities, we have lower prices and higher quality feed than the pet stores...

Double D Ranch

8559 Fredonia Stockton Road (Route 73)

Fredonia, NY 14063

716-672-5678

Since we operate out of our home, you must call first, preferably the day before. We DO ship to rabbit owners outside of the SWNY area.

For larger quantities we strongly recommend Blue Seal "Bunny 16" available through feed stores throughout the Northeastern US. To find a local distributor, consult the Blue Seal website. <http://www.bluseal.com/> You may want to call the closest distributor to ask if there is a retailer closer to you.

Water Bottles - Wal-Mart is best unless you need large quantities.

Litter - We generally use Hartz Ph5 available at Family Dollar or Dollar General. Wal-Mart is good too. We do not suggest scoopable litter.

VETERINARIAN

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Remember that contacting and getting to know your vet is important for the well being of your rabbit. They are a wonderful source of information. Make certain that s/he specializes in the care of small animals.

Here is the vet that we use:

Doctor Orozco
Camboro Veterinary Hospital
5989 Rt 6N (just off I-79 Edinboro exit)
Edinboro, PA 16412
814-734-1628

HELPFUL LINKS

House Rabbit Society

An all-volunteer, non-profit organization that rescues rabbits and educates the public on rabbit care and behavior.

<http://www.rabbit.org>

American Rabbit Breeders' Association

A useful resource, especially if interested in showing or breeding.

<http://www.nmia.com/~arba/>

We're All Ears

An MSN community with useful information concerning house rabbit care. Ask questions or chat.

http://communities.msn.com/WereAllEars/_whatsnew.msnw

Double 'D' Ranch Animal Shelter

Our interactive MSN community that compiles the knowledge and experience we have accumulated. It also shows that we now take in Hamsters and Guinea Pigs as well as rabbits.

<http://groups.msn.com/DoubleDRanchAnimalShelter>

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