

Rabbit Care Guide



Housing & Supplies:

- **Cage:** Rabbit cages are too small. Rabbits can become aggressive when housed in small spaces. An inexpensive solution is a puppy exercise pen.
- **Puppy Exercise Pen:** An exercise pen consists of 8 panels that are 2 ft wide. They are sold in different heights, 24"-48" tall. **We find that 30" is the minimum height to securely contain a bunny.** Rabbits are excellent jumpers! Pens can be set up 4 ft by 4 ft for 16 sq ft of living space or 2 ft by 6 ft for 12 sq ft of living space. If desired, a sheet over the top of the pen secured with binder clips makes a nice roof. A shower curtain liner and/or cardboard under fleece fabric make for a nice floor.
- **Water & Food Crock:** We recommend water crocks because rabbits tend to drink more out of a crock than a bottle. A 6" diameter ceramic dog water bowl is heavy enough that your bunny won't throw it. A small dish works fine for their pellets.
- **Plastic litter box:** We use rectangular cat litter boxes. Make sure it's big enough for your rabbit to get his whole body in. Big = Success!
- **Litter:** All litter is unhealthy for bunnies to digest. Ensure the litter is completely covered with a thick layer of hay to prevent litter nibbling. We **ONLY** recommend newspaper, Feline Pine Non-Clumping Wood Litter, Nature's Logic Non-Clumping Wood Litter, Integrity Pine, wood stove pellets (without fuel/additives), or Mallard Creek Mega-Zorb pellets. Never use clumping, clay, corn cob or sWheat Scoop litters.
- **Pet carrier:** A cardboard carrier will work temporarily. We suggest that you upgrade to a plastic top-opening carrier at some point.

ITEMS NOT TO BUY - Most of the items are in the rabbit aisle of a pet store!

- Harness--they can cause a broken back.
- Salt licks, vitamins, food with seeds & nuts or treats with seeds & nuts
- Corner litter pans
- Clumping litters or clay litters
- Shredded, aromatic wood litter that hasn't been kiln dried (fresh cedar or pine shavings).

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS & BUNNY PROOFING

Your bunny should be out and about when you are home. Their pen is to keep them safe when you are away or asleep.

Choosing a location for their pen: A room inside your home, such as a family room, where the family hangs out is ideal. Rabbits enjoy companionship. They'll follow you from room to room when given the chance. Home offices, foyers or dining rooms can be a good choice too. Bedrooms are often too isolated and located upstairs where it is warmer. Kitchens are not a good location given rabbit's sensitivity to spices and sizzling noises from the stove. Rabbits like cooler temperatures, so keep this in mind when choosing the location too. Garages do not meet a rabbit's needs.

Flooring: Rabbits have fur on the bottom of their feet and need traction from carpeting to run, jump and play. Many rabbits will not hop on tile, hardwood or linoleum. The HOT LAVA syndrome! Watching a bunny run, leap and jump is one of the joys of sharing your life with a bunny. So having a large area rug and runners to get from room to room helps a rabbit to get around and be a part of your family.

Exercise: When you are home, you'll want to have your bunny out to interact with you and to get much needed exercise, so you'll need to "bunny proof" any room(s) to which he'll have access. Bunnies love to chew, so they need to be supervised when out. And this means that all cords need to be hidden, moved, and/or protected from inquiring teeth. And valuable items should be moved out of reach.

Useful links:

Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1-GN3qErFc>

Article, <http://bunnyproof.com/>

TOYS - Stimulate your rabbits mind for a happy and healthy pet!

A good assortment of toys will keep him happy and entertained and will also deter him from nibbling on your furniture. Unfortunately, many toys from the rabbit aisle in pet stores do not work. They are too small and get ignored.

We sell chew toys from The Binky Bunny <https://store.binkybunny.com/> The large wicker tent is a hideaway and a chew toy in one. In general bunnies prefer baskets to balls. Often with balls they dismantle them in minutes and do not eat them. We sell an assortment of baskets, bowls and seagrass mats that work. Be creative and make or collect items. Organic apple branches and willow branches are a favorite too. *(All toys shown are from the Binky Bunny store).*

Useful links:

<https://bunnyproof.com/free-bunny-toys-toilet-roll-tubes.html>

<http://rabbit.org/faq-toys>



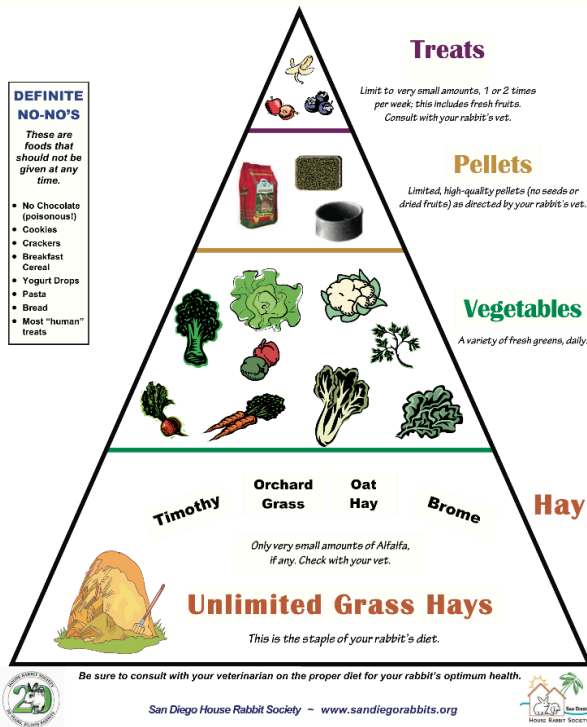
FEEDING - Keep your rabbit at a healthy weight for a long and happy life.

Feed them bunny food, not people food, and keep the treats to a minimum. Rabbits cannot vomit so it's important to verify if the food you are serving is safe and fresh. Anything moldy or slimy can be deadly for a bunny! And, of course, organic produce is best. **Carrots and fruits are treats and should be given sparingly.**

Diet for an adult rabbit (based on 5 lbs. of body weight):

- Fresh water daily-- in a clean bowl.
- Unlimited grass hay: Orchard grass or Timothy hay.
- 1 ½ cups of mixed dark leafy greens morning & night.
- 1- 1 ½ TBS timothy pellets morning & night. (Think of pellets as vitamins!)

Rabbit Food Pyramid



Leafy Greens

- Romaine lettuce
- Spring greens (without spinach)
- Red and green leaf lettuce (not iceberg)
- Turnip tops
- Dandelion greens
- Beet tops
- Mint (any variety)
- Basil (any variety)
- Wheatgrass
- Cilantro
- Parsley
- Fennel (the leafy tops as well as the base)
- Dill leaves
- Carrot tops
- Kale (all types)

Non-leafy vegetables (limited to 10% of the diet)

- Carrots
- ~~Broccoli & broccolini (leaves and stems)~~ (too gas inducing)
- Edible flowers (roses, nasturtiums, pansies, hibiscus)
- Celery (cut into 1 inch pieces)
- Bell peppers (any color)
- Chinese pea pods (the flat kind without large peas)
- ~~Brussel sprouts~~ (too gas inducing)
- ~~Cabbage (any type)~~ (too gas inducing)
- Summer squash

Fruits (fed in moderation due to sugar content ~1/2 tablespoon per day):

- Apple (any variety without stem or seeds)
- Banana (remove peel, one thin slice about the size of a nickel (or quarter))
- Blackberries & raspberries (and leaves – excellent astringent properties)
- Blueberries
- Grapes
- Melon
- Pineapple (peeled)
- Strawberries (and leaves)

Not all veggies are safe for bunnies. If you do not see an item on our list, verify before you serve to your bunny. *Useful links:*

Basil's Garden for Bunnies, <https://vgr1.com/Basil's-Garden/>

Wabbitwiki, <http://wabbitwiki.com/wiki/Vegetables>

LITTER BOX - Now that you have a rabbit, you'll want to know what's in the box!!!

The digestive tract of a rabbit is their Achilles' heel. It's important to know what goes in and what comes out. By cleaning litter pans daily, you'll be able to spot problems sooner. And rabbits love when you provide them with a new litter box too. Such an easy way to make them happy.

Normal rabbit urine ranges from pale yellow to dark orange depending on diet. Sludgy urine can be a problem of too much calcium in the diet. Rabbits have 2 types of poop. One is round and large and has a hay-like consistency. Another is like a tiny, shiny grape cluster called cecotropes. Rabbits can ferment their own vitamin B. This grape cluster, cecotrope, is important for their health. The rabbits ingest their own cecotropes to keep vitamin B in their system. If a rabbit's diet is too rich, rabbits can overproduce cecotropes. Excessive cecotropes are messy and smelly. If you see this, cut back on fruits and treats.

Rabbit litters are not safe to ingest. By placing a thick layer of hay over the litter, rabbits are less likely to nibble on the litter. Either line the bottom of a litter pan with sections of newspaper or a scant layer of wood stove pellet or yesterday's news. Add a generous 2-3" layer of hay on top.

At night if needed, you can top the litter pan with fresh hay. Dump the contents into a green bin, spray with a solution of vinegar & water, wipe with a paper towel and start again. Good for the environment and your bunny!

CLEANING - Provide a clean, safe home for your bunny.

The safest cleaning solution you can use is household kitchen white vinegar diluted with water.

Cleaning Supplies:

- White vinegar diluted with water (1 part vinegar to 3-4 parts water)
- Spray bottle

Put the mixture in a spray bottle for ease of use in cleaning the litter box. If the litter box has build up, you can soak the litter box with undiluted vinegar for 5-10 minutes to magically dissolve stains. Be aware that most cleansers and disinfectants are toxic for your rabbit.

HANDLING YOUR BUNNY –

The vast majority of rabbits don't like to be picked up or held. When they get picked up, their instinct tells them that they are about to be eaten, and they get understandably frightened. Therefore, we recommend that you interact with your bunny on his level (on the floor!). For the occasions when you do pick him up, always crouch down on the ground so if the bunny wiggles away they are not falling and getting hurt. Useful video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlXdvtNwAPk>

GROOMING - Rabbits should never get a bath!

- Comb your bunny at least once a week. If he's got long fur or if he's shedding, you should comb him more often. We highly recommend the Hair Buster Comb.
- Trim his nails ~every 8 weeks.



- Check and/or clean his anal glands ~every eight weeks or as needed.
- Bunnies don't need baths! If your rabbit has a dirty butt, spot clean by dripping water on the area and letting it soak until you can lift off the feces. See your vet to determine the cause.
- Periodically check his ears and fur for mites and fleas. If you find some, ask your vet how to treat the condition. Frontline should NEVER be used on a rabbit. Be very careful!

HEALTH ISSUES - A good bunny guardian must be a Bunny Detective!

- Rabbits are fragile pets, and signs of ill health are subtle. You need to be attentive and pay attention to little changes in behavior. Rabbits are prey animals and hide illness. **As soon as you detect a problem, it's an emergency.**
- If your bunny skips a meal, try to give him a bit of banana or another treat to see if he'll eat it. **If he doesn't eat his favorite treat within an hour, take him to a rabbit savvy vet immediately!**
- If he'll eat a treat but is still not interested in his usual food, watch him carefully over the next few hours, keep him warm if he feels cold, and if you can't hear any noises from the tummy, put him in a carrier on top of the dryer. Turn it on (with the heat off), and the jiggling might shake loose any gas he might have. GI Stasis and Bloat can kill a rabbit within hours. Do not leave a sick bunny!
- Sneezing, weepy eyes or nose, lethargic behavior, or **ANY sudden change in behavior are signs of ill health.** Make a detailed list and consult your vet as soon as possible.
- Ideally, poops should be large, round, and relatively dry. If your bunny's poops start decreasing in size or lose their shape, consult your vet. Diarrhea should be considered an emergency.

SPAY/NEUTER - Share the news: fixed rabbits live longer and healthier lives!

All rabbits should be neutered as soon as age permits. Females have an 80% chance of reproductive cancer by the age of 4 if they are not fixed. And males spray urine to mark their territory. Fixed rabbits use a litter box and are happier, healthier pets.

CHOOSING A VETERINARIAN –

Not all veterinarians who are willing to see rabbits are knowledgeable about rabbit care, so you should make an effort to find the right vet for your bunny before he gets sick.

For General care we recommend:

VCA Bay Area Animal Hospital, Oakland

<http://www.vcahospitals.com/bay-area>

4501 Shattuck Ave

Oakland, CA 94609



510-654-8375



The OAKLAND hospital has several rabbit including weekends. This is an excellent choice.

savvy vets on duty. This clinic has long hours,

Dr Bynum, Dr Swartzwelder, Dr Arntz

Dr Adams, Walnut Creek

<http://www.mullerveterinaryhospital.com/>

2735 North Main Street

Walnut Creek, CA 94597

925-934-8042

Dr Sip Exotics Veterinary House Calls

<https://drsipvet.com>

510-519-1040

Dr Linda J. Siperstein (Dr Sip) is excellent.

Happy Valley Pet Hospital, Campbell

<https://happyvalleypethospital.com/pocket-pet-rabbit-vet-campbell-los-gatos-saratoga>

3265 S Winchester Blvd.

Campbell, CA 95008

(408) 796-7057

Oasis Veterinary Hospital, Martinez

<http://oasisveterinaryhospital.com/>

6635 Alhambra Ave, Suite 100

Martinez, CA 94520

Phone: Phone: 925.954.8087

For Emergency care, we recommend:

Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG)

<https://veterinaryemergencygroup.com/locations/san-jose-ca/>

725 Ridder Park Dr, Suite 85

San Jose, CA 95131

All vets on duty accept rabbits for emergency care

408-834-8180

Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG)

<https://veterinaryemergencygroup.com/locations/san-ramon-ca/>

2431 San Ramon Valley Road

San Ramon, CA 94583

All vets on duty accept rabbits for emergency care

925-718-7771

PETS Referral Center, Berkeley

<http://www.petsreferralcenter.com>

1048 University Ave
Berkeley, CA 94710
510-548-6684

Pet Emergency & Specialty Center of Marin 

<https://pescm.com/>
901 Francisco Blvd E
San Rafael, CA 94901
415-456-7372

Companion Exotic Animal Medicine and Surgery  **Service**

<https://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/hospital/small-animal/cape>
UC Davis Health Science District VMTH
1 Garrod Drive
Davis, California 95616
530-752-1393

For consultation we recommend, Chabot Veterinary Clinic, Hayward

*This practice is currently not accepting new rabbit patients but may take referrals from other vets.
20877 Foothill Blvd, Hayward, CA 94541, 510-538-2330
Dr. Neely, Dr. Ceja, Dr. Link

ONLINE EDUCATIONAL and MEDICAL RESOURCES

Ontario Rescue Education Organization <http://ontariorabbits.org/>
House Rabbit Society <http://www.rabbit.org/>
MediRabbit, <http://www.medirabbit.com>

Pet Insurance

Nationwide is currently the only insurance provider that offers pet insurance for rabbits.
<https://www.nationwide.com/personal/insurance/pet/>
For California residents, call 1-800-874-0651

THINKING ABOUT A SECOND RABBIT?

Rabbits are highly social and live longer and healthier lives with a friend. Rabbits need to be involved in the process and pick their own friends.