

Rabbit Care



Background

Size: 2 to 20+ pounds, depending on breed

Lifespan: 7 to 10+ years

Cost per year: \$730

Good with kids?: Because rabbits are physically delicate and require specialized veterinary care, they are not appropriate for families with young children.

Fun fact: Rabbits can be trained to use a litterbox and will come when called—yours may even play tag with you!

Food

- The most important component of your rabbit's diet is grass hay, such as timothy, which keeps the intestinal tract healthy. Unlimited hay should always be available.
- You may wish to supplement with good-quality rabbit pellets (18% fiber). Until your pet is fully grown at around 6 months, he can have unlimited pellets; after that, limit pellets to 1/8-1/4 cup per 6 pounds of bunny. Frail, older bunnies may need more to keep weight up; ask your veterinarian.
- Feed your pet fresh, leafy greens daily, such as dark lettuces, collard greens, turnip greens and carrot tops. We suggest a minimum of 2 cups per 6 pounds of rabbit.
- Clean, fresh water, dispensed in a bottle or sturdy bowl, should be available 24/7.

Cage & Environment

- Where's the only place for your rabbit's cage? **INDOORS!** Rabbits are highly social, and do best when they have plenty of interaction with family members. Outdoors, they face the threat of attacks from other animals and inclement weather.
- Rabbits should not be housed with other rabbits unless all are spayed/neutered and have been carefully introduced on neutral territory.
- The minimum recommended cage length for one rabbit is 3 to 4 feet, but bigger is always better!
- We recommend a solid-bottom metal cage, large dog crate or puppy exercise pen. Wire-bottom cages can ulcerate a rabbit's feet. If you do use a wire cage, cover the bottom with wood, towels or carpeting.

Behavior & Handling

- Rabbits are prey animals and timid by nature, so be patient if your pet seems shy at first. Hand-feeding treats is a nice way to get acquainted.
- Pick up your rabbit by supporting his forequarters with one hand and his hindquarters with the other. Handle with care—an accidental drop can result in broken legs and back!
- NEVER pick up a rabbit by the ears or scruff—this can cause very serious injury.

Litter Training

- Clean by nature, most rabbits will choose one corner of the cage as a bathroom. As soon as your rabbit's choice is clear, put a newspaper-lined litter box in that corner; cover the bottom with hay or pelleted litter.
- Never use pine or cedar shavings as litter, as the fumes can make your pet sick. Clay cat litter can cause respiratory or gastrointestinal problems.

Exercise & Toys

- Your rabbit needs exercise out of his cage in a safe area—indoors or outdoors—for several hours EVERY day. Your pet is designed for running & jumping!
- Rabbit-proof an indoor area by covering all electrical wires, phone, computer and TV cables, and anything else your rabbit is likely to chew, such as houseplants.
- Outdoor play areas should be fully enclosed by a fence. Never leave your pet unsupervised outdoors—even for a few minutes. Rabbits can quickly dig under fences.
- Your pet needs toys to satisfy his natural urges to dig and chew. Safe chew toys include cardboard boxes, an old telephone directory and commercially made chew sticks. Your bunny would love a digging box, such as a cardboard box filled halfway with soil or shredded paper.

Daily Care

- Rabbits can be messy, so clean your pet's cage once or twice weekly. Put your pet in a safe room or alternate cage when you sweep out the cage and scrub it with warm, soapy water.
- Change your rabbit's litter box daily.
- Brush your pet regularly with a soft brush to remove excess hair.

Signs of Illness

- Bring your bunny to the veterinarian annually for check-ups. Don't wait for your yearly veterinarian visit if you think your pet is sick! If your rabbit stops eating or moving his bowels for 6 hours or longer, or has watery diarrhea, seek help immediately. Other signs that something isn't right include runny nose & eyes, dark red urine, lethargy and fur loss.
- Rabbits should be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian experienced with rabbit surgeries. This prevents unwanted litters, spraying in males and uterine cancer in females. Visit www.rabbit.org for a list of veterinarians.

Rabbit Supply Checklist

- Solid-bottom cage or large dog crate
- Carrier
- Litter box with hay or pelleted litter
- Grass hay and hay rack
- Good-quality rabbit pellets
- Sturdy ceramic or metal food bowl
- Ceramic water bowl or water bottle that attaches to cage
- Grooming brush
- Digging box and safe chew toys