



DuPage County
ANIMAL SERVICES
Saving Animals. Serving People.

BEFORE YOU ADOPT A BUNNY



Please Consider...



Do you have animals that could endanger the rabbit?

Rabbits can die of fright at the mere sound of predators, or from being chased. They're easily injured.



Rabbits are not low-maintenance pets.

Preparing greens, cleaning the litter box daily, and providing the attention your pet needs all require time.



Which adult in your family will be the primary caregiver?

What will you do if you have children — or if your children lose interest?



Are you prepared for a commitment of 10+ years to the bunny?



Can you afford the care?

Rabbits can cost \$100+/month. Veterinary care, including yearly vaccinations, is expensive.



If you are renting, are you allowed to have rabbits in your house or apartment?



Do you have the room? You'll need to have space for a pen, or a room that can be sectioned off for the bunny to live in.



Is your home 'bunny-proofed' with cords, houseplants and chemicals out of reach?



Do you have a way to keep temperatures consistently under 80F?

Rabbits are cool-weather animals and temperatures in the 80s and up can be fatal.



FUN FACTS: Rabbits...

Live **8-12 years**

Can **use a litter box**

Regulate heat through their **ear veins**

Require **special veterinarians**

Make **ideal apartment pets**

Learn **their name**

TO BUY FOR YOUR BUNNY

EXERCISE PEN or **PET GATE** to block off an area of your home for bunny to live in. 30" high minimum with a cover until you're sure bunny won't jump over.

LITTER BOX for the hay and litter. The larger, the better.

LITTER can be newspaper, paper-based, or plain wood pellet litters and white vinegar to clean the litter box. *Make sure the litter is safe for rabbits!*

WHITE VINEGAR to clean litter box.

GRASS HAY timothy hay, oat blend, or orchard grass.

RABBIT PELLETS plain pellets with no nuts, seeds, or colored bits.

FRESH PRODUCE leafy greens, including Romaine lettuce, parsley, and cilantro. *See our dietary recommendations below.*

WATER/FOOD BOWLS heavy crock big bowl for water and smaller one for food.

TOP-LOADING CARRIER

TOYS TO FLING AND CHEW jingle ball toys, organic willow or apple twigs, plastic baby toys like stacking cups or keys.

HIDEAWAY untreated wooden houses or cardboard houses.

GROOMING TOOLS cat claw trimmer, rubber brush, styptic powder.

FLOORING tiles, linoleum or other solid surface are best until you know bunny won't chew carpets.

RABBIT-PROOFING cord covers and corner protectors.

Do NOT Buy: Wire cages, hutches, harnesses, yogurt drops, salt licks, seed and nut treats.

DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

A healthy **ADULT** rabbit's diet should consist mainly of unlimited water and hay, measured, high-quality pellets, and fresh vegetables.

Examples including: romaine leaves, Italian parsley, cilantro, and basil or mint to add flavor. For a healthy treat, give your bunny a small piece of carrot, apple, strawberry or blueberry.

Hay and a fresh bowl of water should be refreshed daily and available 24 hours a day.

Pellets should be fresh and relatively high in fiber. (*18% minimum fiber*).

Do not purchase more than six weeks' worth of food at a time, as it will become spoiled.

IMPORTANT:
ALL dietary changes must be made gradually.

No nuts, seeds, salt licks, or human foods!

Select at least 3 kinds of fresh, clean, leafy green vegetables daily, but stay consistent.

REMEMBER: Overweight rabbits have a tough time cleaning themselves which can lead to infection.



80% of an adult rabbit's diet should be hay

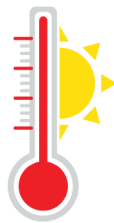
HOUSING

RABBIT PROOFING To rabbit proof a room:

- 🐰 Lift all electrical cords **out of reach or cover them** completely with cable wrap that your rabbit *cannot* chew through.
- 🐰 Remove all dangerous objects, chemicals and plants from reach.
- 🐰 Cover right angles on molding with inexpensive acrylic corner protectors.
- 🐰 Block off problem areas with Neat Idea Cube panels or Plexiglas.

TEMPERATURES OVER 80° FAHRENHEIT CAN BE DANGEROUS FOR A RABBIT

Before you adopt a rabbit, consider how you will keep her cool. Air conditioning helps keep rabbits at a safe temperature; you will also want to have bottles of frozen water available in case your a/c or electricity are not working. Ceramic tiles, extra bowls of water, and rinsed leafy greens also help keep your rabbit cool and hydrated.



Rabbits cannot pant nor perspire, but only regulate heat through their ear veins. For this reason and others, rabbits are much safer housed indoors than outdoors.

Outdoor rabbits are also significantly more likely to contract RHDV2, a highly-contagious and lethal viral disease.

Domestic rabbits do not have the survival skills to live outside. They are prey animals with minimal ability to defend themselves or avoid predators. Predators include dogs, raccoons (they open hatches), feral cats, hawks, owls, fly larvae, and more. Outdoor noises such as helicopters and sirens are terrifying and can cause a heart attack.

Most importantly, you are less likely to notice when your rabbit is ill or needs your help if she is not living in your home with you. Rabbits feel lonely and frightened if left outdoors by themselves.

EXERCISE PEN OPTION Pens can be adjusted to fit various spaces and sizes. A 30"-36" high pen with a walk-through gate makes cleaning the pen and interacting with your rabbit easier.

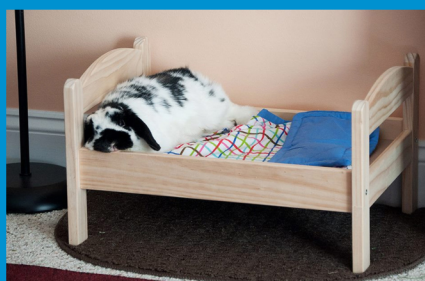
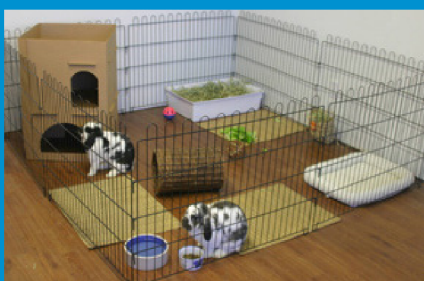
WHY AN EXERCISE PEN ENVIRONMENT? If your rabbit is not able to live in a larger indoor bunny-proofed room or area, then an exercise pen is the next best thing:

- 🐰 Provides room for bunny to **move and hop a bit**.
- 🐰 Makes it easier for human **companions to interact** with the rabbit; bunny is **less likely to "defend"** their space.
- 🐰 Has room for **large toys, cardboard boxes, tunnels, hideaways**.
- 🐰 Is much **easier to clean** than a cage, especially when the rabbit is spayed/neutered and litter box trained.

Don't Forget
Bunny still needs exercise time outside of the pen, in a rabbit-proofed area!



ALTERNATIVES TO AN EXERCISE PEN Install a chew-proof baby gate across the doorway to one room, and bunny-proof that room, or section off an area of your home.



LITTER BOX TRAINING

During the two weeks following neuter surgery, or when you first bring your adopted bunny home, you will want to confine him to a pen with linoleum or a hard plastic desk mat underneath.

Line a BIG litter box or other box made from hard plastic with a thin layer of rabbit-safe litter, then top off with grass hay (*oat blend, timothy, or orchard*).

Rabbits have better box habits and stay cleaner when there is plenty of hay on top of the litter.

Rabbits like to have a 'kitchen side' and 'bathroom side' inside the box.

REMEMBER: Never use disinfectant to clean the litter box, it can harm your rabbit, vinegar diluted with water works best

RABBIT SAFE LITTERS

Paper-based or 100% softwood pellet litters
(NO cedar or aspen shavings)



HOW TO HANDLE YOUR RABBIT

BASIC RULES OF RABBIT HANDLING

- 🐰 Do not pick up rabbits unless necessary
- 🐰 Always support the rabbit's back
- 🐰 Do NOT hold bunny upside down like a baby. This is called trancing and is VERY dangerous for your bunny.
- 🐰 Never pick up a bunny by the ears!

Whenever possible, it's best to interact with rabbits at their level, either on the floor or on a chair or couch, rather than pick them up.



If you have to pick up a rabbit, here's how to do it right.



Pet your bunny gently on the top of the head. Then slide one hand under his front legs and place one hand on his back above the tail, so that as you pick him up, you are supporting him at both ends.

Lift gently but firmly until you have bunny securely in your arms at waist (*not shoulder*) level.

RABBIT FRIENDS

Rabbits are social animals and like to live with others, but introductions can be dangerous. See the next page for tips on rabbit bonding.

Consider adopting a pair of rabbits, so they keep one another company when you are not home.



VETERINARY CARE

Rabbits don't show illness like cats and dogs, so any perceived problem should be treated as an emergency. One skipped meal could mean your rabbit is in danger. Consult a rabbit-savvy veterinarian right away if:

- lack of appetite
- lump or swellings
- lethargy
- crusty ears
- overgrown teeth
- urine-soaked fur
- straining to urinate
- head tilt
- diarrhea
- few or no fecal pellets

or any other sudden behavior change.

RABBIT BONDING

The below steps can take days to weeks. Watch the rabbits for **positive, comfortable body language** before proceeding to the next step.

- 🐰 Set up the two pens so the rabbits are living next to each other for a few days to a few weeks.
- 🐰 **Ignore any lunging, grunting, or charging.** Do not reprimand or praise the rabbits for communicating. As long as the pens remain separated, they won't be able to hurt each other, so let them communicate.
- 🐰 **Watch body language** to make sure both rabbits are comfortable. Hopefully, the rabbits will start to eat and rest near each other.
- 🐰 Swap out the **litter boxes** when they are slightly used (a little dirty, but not filthy). Rabbit A's box goes into Rabbit B's pen, Rabbit B's box goes into Rabbit A's pen. Do this daily.
- 🐰 Swap out the **rabbits**. Place Rabbit A in Rabbit B's pen and Rabbit B in Rabbit A's pen. You can do this for a few days.

ALL OF THESE STEPS SHOULD BE DONE BEFORE EVER ATTEMPTING TO PLACE THE TWO RABBITS TOGETHER.

PLACING RABBITS TOGETHER

- 🐰 Set up a **neutral space**. Use a room neither rabbit has been in before for the introductions.
- 🐰 **Have two of everything** to prevent the rabbits from fighting over supplies.
- 🐰 **Start for a short period of time.** Increase the length of time if the rabbits are comfortable near each other.
- 🐰 **Sprinkle greens** throughout the pen to provide a distraction.
- 🐰 **Watch body language**, if you see negative behavior, separate the rabbits and spend more time getting them acclimated to each other before trying again.

TOOLS TO BREAK UP A FIGHT

- **Squirt bottle**
- **Thick gloves/long sleeves and pants** - to protect your skin
- **Broom/dust pan** - to place between rabbits

IMPORTANT:
It is much harder to bond rabbits after they fight. Separate rabbits showing negative behaviors to prevent fighting.

PEN SETUP FOR BONDING

Set up the pens next to each other. Place something (a 2x4 piece of wood for example) on the floor between the pens so the rabbits cannot touch noses (and run the risk of a bite). Place all the good things closest to the other bunny – food, water, toys. Give fresh greens on that side as well. The rabbits will learn to eat together and learn good things happen when they are close together. Provide a box or place to lay on the opposite side of the pen, so they can choose to relax separately.

Ideally, provide two litter boxes in each pen, one close to the other pen and one a distance from it.



NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

- Growling/lowering head
- Biting
- Lunging
- Circling/ bunny tornado



NEUTRAL BEHAVIORS

- Chasing
- Mounting
- Nipping
- Marking
- Bowing

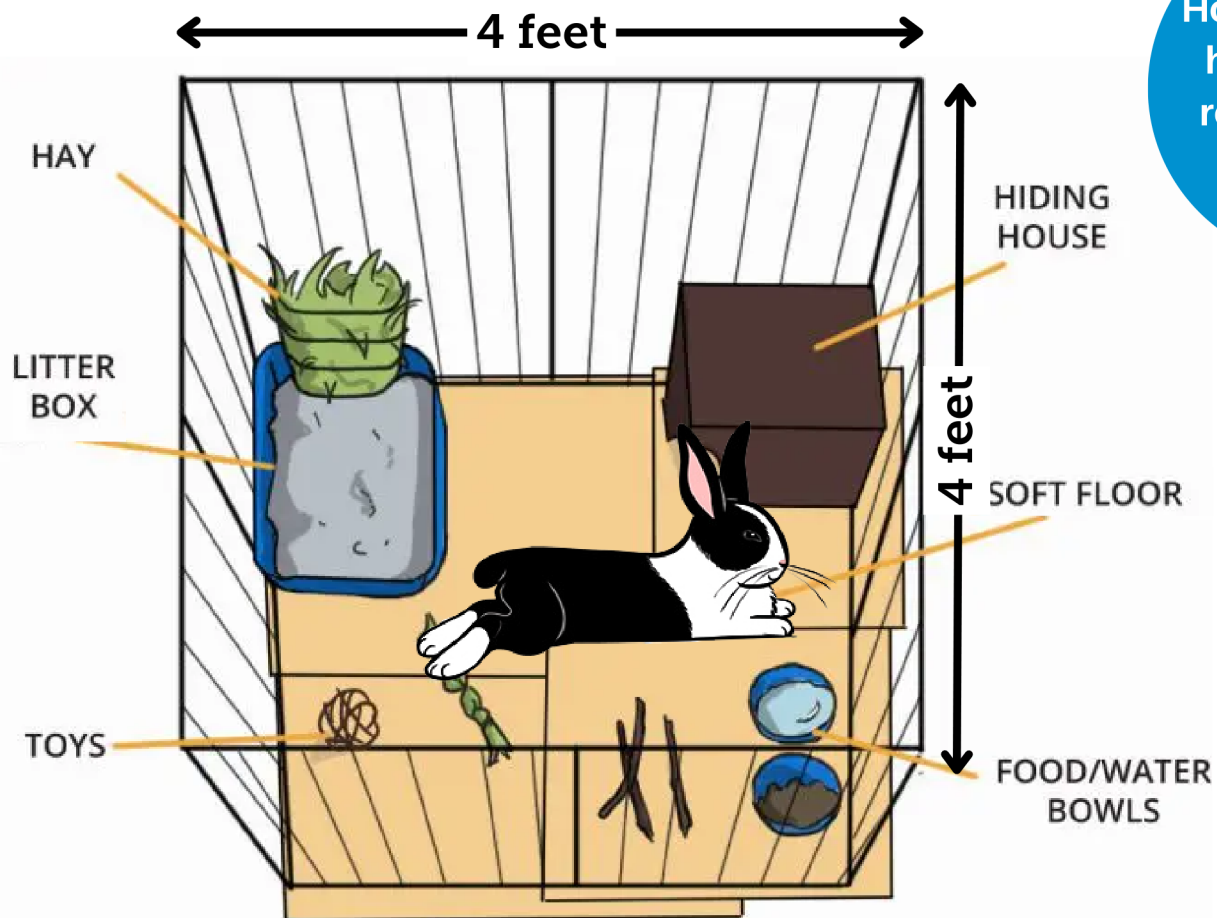
POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

- Grooming
- Mirroring
- Laying near each other



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SET UP FOR ONE RABBIT



SET UP FOR TWO RABBITS

