

Rabbit Secrets



A Comprehensive Owners Guide by Maitland Sinclair

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Introduction



Pet rabbits are quickly becoming as popular as dogs and cats. Although rabbits once used to be considered a child's pet, more and more adults—with and without children—are discovering the joys of having a pet bunny.

With time, patience and plenty of love, a bunny can easily become your best friend. Rabbits are an infusion of enthusiasm, personality and spirit, and one is immediately available at your local animal shelter or rabbit rescue! And once you adopt a rabbit, you're likely to become hooked on bunnies for life.

There's nothing quite like sharing your home and your heart with a rabbit, and it's a joy more and more people are discovering. Rabbits are quiet, clean animals, and thousands upon thousands are in need of a permanent home.

Rabbits are also highly intelligent, inquisitive, fun, adorable animals, each with their own unique traits and personality. Rabbits have emotions just like people. They'll "binky," or flop, when they're happy. Rabbits can be depressed or afraid, and they always know when it's time for a treat. It's easy to fall in love with a bunny, and after you have a bunny companion (or two, or three), you'll wonder how you ever lived without knowing the special joy they provide.

Bringing a bunny home requires a serious commitment and a certain level of knowledge to ensure everyone has a safe, happy, healthy life together. The following book will give you a solid foundation about house rabbits—you'll learn everything from proper diet to pertinent health issues—and what to expect if you decide to adopt one. There are a plethora of helpful links to give you even further insight into the wonderful world of rabbits.

The key to being a good bunny mom or dad is to arm yourself with knowledge before you bring your first bunny home. But take heart – there's even more to learn AFTER you have a bunny – and we'll be sure to cover every last bit of it!

Welcome to the wonderful world of bunnies!

A VERY IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE TONE OF THIS BOOK

As you read through this book, you may say to yourself, “My goodness, I didn’t know so many things could pose a danger to a bunny’s life!” The thing is that the very qualities that make bunnies so cute also make them vulnerable – they are delicate little creatures that need protecting!



The majority of this book is oriented to teaching you how to protect your bunny. At first all the possible pitfalls may seem overwhelming. Rest assured they are easily mastered with only a little study.

Sharing your home with a bunny can be a wonderful, life-enriching experience when one is willing to adopt the role of a loving protector. This is the spirit in which we write.

Where to Get a Bunny



Now that you've decided to bring a bunny (or two) into your home, you have to decide where to find the perfect bunny for your family. There are thousands of homeless bunnies in animal shelters and rabbit rescues across the country— indeed around the world—just waiting for a permanent home and someone to love them. Many at high-kill shelters are living on borrowed time. It's a heart-breaking fact that more than one million healthy, happy, vibrant bunnies that would make loving, darling companions are put to sleep every year.

Why adopt from an animal shelter or a rescue? It's simple. You'll be saving a life. There are many reasons rabbits are surrendered. Just like dogs and cats, some bunnies have been abused and mistreated. These bunnies need patience and understanding to help them learn to trust humans and believe in the good in life again. But anyone who's dealt with an abused animal knows there is no greater feeling than helping to restore trust and vibrancy to a little critter with a loving heart.

Why are there so many bunnies available in shelters? Well, often the novelty of a pet rabbit wears off because the owners weren't properly informed or educated before bringing her into their home. Many so-called Easter bunnies are dumped after the

excitement wears off and reality sets in. Check your local shelter in early summer and you'll likely see an influx in rabbits, most of which are after-Easter dumps.

Most of the bunnies in shelters are between the age of six months and one year—the dreaded teenage years for bunnies, the peak of sexual maturity. There is nothing wrong with these bunnies at all; they're just normal teenagers with racing hormones that will calm down quickly in a matter of months. Other shelter bunnies have aggression problems that can be easily cured by spaying or neutering.

Regardless of why their owners surrendered them, shelter bunnies deserve a second chance at life. Please consider adopting a shelter or rescue rabbit before going to a pet store or a breeder.

Besides the fact that you'll be saving a precious life, there are other reasons to adopt from a shelter or rabbit rescue. For example, though you will not always know a shelter bunny's exact age (there is no scientific means of determining a bunny's age) or history, you WILL have a very good idea of her temperament and the diet that works best for her if you adopt. Rescuers and shelters usually allow you to call and ask for any advice or help you may need long after adopting your bunny. The motive of the shelter is to see the bunnies well cared for – as compared to the pet store that simply wants to sell you products.

For adoptable rabbits around the United States, check out

- § www.petfinder.org (US and Canada)
- § www.rabbit.org (US)
- § <http://www.pets911.com/index.php>
- § <http://www.bunnymagic.org/adoptables.htm>

§ <http://www.hopperhome.com/hopperhome-adopt1.htm>

You can, of course, also find rabbits at pet stores and with rabbit breeders. However, most rabbit experts and activists believe it's best to steer clear of these because both pet stores and breeders are adding to the homeless rabbit problem.

Despite this, many people will still buy their bunnies at pet stores and through breeders ... so if you DO decide to go this route, you should be aware of several things:

SHOULD YOU BUY YOUR BUNNY FROM A PET STORE?

It has been reported that approximately 80 percent of the bunnies brought home from a pet store die of health problems within the first week.
Be sure to review these facts before buying:

Weaning Age: A baby bunny should not be separated from her mother until she is at least eight weeks old. Many pet stores sell baby bunnies that have been taken from their mothers too soon. Early separation can lead to serious health problems.

Breeding Location: Just as there are “puppy mills” in which dogs are grossly over-bred, there are “bunny mills” in which rabbits suffer the same fate. Many times these rabbits do not receive the proper medical attention, nor are they taken care of properly. If you decide to purchase from a pet store, talk to a sales associate or a manager and find out where the rabbits were bred.

Gender: At least half of all bunnies sexed at pet stores have been incorrectly identified. That means there's a 50/50 chance your little boy is really a little girl. (And she could be pregnant too!)

Diet: If you do purchase from a pet store, read about the proper diet and care for rabbits first. Generally a sales associate at the pet store is going to steer you toward buying products rather than what is necessary for your bunny to live a happy, healthy life.

For a bunny lover, going into a pet store and seeing baby bunnies can be a heart-wrenching experience. Most bunnies lovers have to face the dilemma of purchasing from a pet store—helping to save a small bunny living in sometimes inadequate conditions—or

adopting a shelter bunny that is in danger of being put to sleep. Most believe that taking a stand against buying pet store bunnies will one day convince pet stores to stop selling rabbits.

Your third option for finding a rabbit is going to a breeder. There are many rabbit breeders, and you'll want to make sure you find a reputable one. Again, many rabbit activists put part of the blame for the overpopulation problem on breeders.

If you're going to purchase a rabbit from a breeder, make sure the area where the bunnies are kept is clean. Clean living space is a reasonably good clue that the rabbits are likely well cared for and healthy.

Breeders usually do not offer a health guarantee on rabbits, but ask if the breeder will accept phone calls should you have any questions or concerns after bringing the bunny home. You'll also want to make sure both of the bunny's parents were healthy, and ask the breeder about the bunny's health.

If you buy a bunny from a breeder or a pet store, here are some tips to help you identify if the rabbit is healthy:

- Look for clear eyes with no discharge in the corners.
- Make sure there is no nasal discharge either. The nose can be wet but not dripping, and the fur around the nose should be dry.
- The rabbit should be breathing normally, with no panting unless the environment is hot.
- Is there urine in the cage? Does it smell?
- Does the rabbit's poop look normal? Are they firm-looking or loose?

- Are other bunnies in the enclosure with the rabbit you want to take home healthy?

If another rabbit is sick, your pet could become ill once you take her home.

If You're Trying To Find A Home For A Bunny You Can No Longer Care For:

Hopefully you'll never be in this position ... but in the event you need to find a home for your bunny, please keep this in mind ...

Putting an ad in the paper advertising "Free to a good home" might not be as good an idea as it seems at first because many people feed bunnies to their pet snakes, and there are still others who want rabbits to conduct experiments. If you do put an ad in the paper, make sure you screen all potential adopters. Set an adoption fee, and ask for references.

You may also want to contact your local House Rabbit Society or rabbit rescue and ask if they take surrendered bunnies. If they don't, they should be able to direct you to a group or shelter that does.

If you decide to take your bunny to an animal shelter, please try to find a no-kill shelter or a low-kill shelter. This isn't always possible. However, please try to make the high-kill shelter your last resort because your bunny will only have a limited amount of time to find a home before being put to sleep.

Now that you know where to get your bunny, let me leave you with a few additional considerations before you bring her home.

First, a word on allergies. If you are allergic to cats or dogs, you MAY OR MAY NOT be allergic to rabbits. Some people who are allergic to long-haired dogs are perfectly fine with rabbits and vice-versa. It's probably best to discuss your allergy concerns with your doctor before you decide to adopt a bunny—for both your sake and the bunny's.

An important consideration is that bunnies need to have unlimited access to HAY, and some people are allergic to hay. You should also ask your doctor about having hay in your house.

If you determine you are allergic to hay, there are some steps you can take that may solve the problem. Ultra grass is a grass hay that isn't as mature as most of the hay

on the market so it has less pollen. Some allergy sufferers can tolerate it. Keep hay stored outside of the living and sleeping areas of your home, like in a basement or garage.

Keeping hay in a box so it doesn't scatter helps too.

Finally, if you have children, before getting a bunny it's important to evaluate exactly what role they will be capable of playing with your new pet – and to be aware of their limitations. We have devoted the next section entirely to this important topic.

Rabbits and Children



Inevitably, every Easter thousands of children will beg their parents for a “real” Easter bunny. Sadly, after the novelty of having a cute, cuddly rabbit wears off, the majority of those Easter presents will be dumped in the wild, left to fend for themselves—facing almost inevitable death from illness or predators—or left at a shelter. In fact, the majority of bunnies born every year never celebrate their first birthday. Approximately **one million** bunnies are euthanized every year, and hundreds of thousands more perish after being abandoned in the wild.

Bunnies CAN be a good pet for your child and add value to his or her life, but really ONLY under the following circumstances:

- § You are prepared to take the time and have the patience to teach your child how to properly treat and care for a bunny.
- § You are willing to take care of the bunny if your child tires of her (or when your child goes away to college).
- § You, as a parent, are willing to assume the MAIN responsibility of rabbit caregiver. In essence, the bunny is yours – your child gets the love and fun, but you are willing to do the hard work. Of course you can assign some responsibilities to your child, but the point is, don't fall into the trap of expecting your child to be able to regularly provide for the bunny's needs. It's great if they can – but most don't!
- § You recognize and accept that adopting a bunny is a 10+ year commitment to not only feed and water your pet, but to ensure she gets enough love and attention. Bunnies need a lot of attention – something to carefully consider if you are short on time.
- § You are willing to educate yourself on the delights of having a house rabbit so you can give your bunny the best life possible.
- § You AND the other adults in your household are excited to invite a bunny into your lives.

If your situation doesn't permit you to take on the responsibilities above, it's probably better to get you child a stuffed bunny instead.

If you DO bring a bunny into a home with children, there are several very important things you must do to protect your pet. While bunnies ARE very lovable and kissable pets, contrary to popular belief, most bunnies don't like to be picked up or held.

A special few bunnies are extremely mellow and don't mind being held, but this often is not the norm.

Also, bunnies are very delicate animals, and it's not uncommon for children and rabbits to have accidents. If a child hugs, squeezes or holds a bunny too tightly she can easily break the bunny's back. A child can also accidentally step on or sit on a bunny, either breaking the bunny's back, leaving her paralyzed, or killing her.

However, if the bunny is yours, and you are prepared to take responsibility for her no matter what, you'll find that having a bunny or two in your home with children can be a rewarding, fun, educational experience for everyone involved.

IMPORTANT BUNNY LINK FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

The House Rabbit Society article <http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/children.html> is a great resource for valuable tips on how to educate your children on living with a bunny. A must read!

There are also a number of very popular myths about house rabbits that you should know about ... the following article dispels them: <http://www.rabbit.org/adopt-a-rabbit-month/MythFlyer2003.pdf>. You'll need to have Adobe Acrobat to view this article. To download a free copy, go to: <http://www.adobe.com>.

Many believe New Zealand bunnies, the same rabbits, sadly, that are used for meat, are one of the best first bunnies for children because of their gentle nature. However, rabbits of all breeds have very individual personality differences – so it's better for you to spend time at the shelter interacting with a number of different bunnies. You might even consider a few trips before making the decision to bring one home.

Indoor Living



Now that rabbits are becoming more common in households, there is the obvious debate of how a rabbit should be treated, and more specifically, where the bunny should be housed. Most rabbit lovers insist the only way to properly house a rabbit is indoors because the outdoors, (as we'll discuss next, poses too many problems and hazards.

Rabbits are extremely social animals, and just like humans, they can become depressed if they don't get enough attention. Having an indoor bunny is the most popular *and* safest way to care for a rabbit, and it's the best way to make your bunny a real part of your family.

Any family with a rabbit knows the extreme importance of bunny-proofing their home. Bunnies love to chew, and they're particularly fond of phone cords, computer wires and Internet cables. Rabbits also love to chew the buttons off of remote controls, and phones. So, if you mind having half-chewed buttons, make sure to keep the remote and phone out of your bunny's reach. Ask any bunny owner, and they'll probably tell you, no matter how clever they were or how perfectly they bunny-proofed, Thumper got

to a phone cord once or twice in her life. Not only can it be frustrating to have the phone line go dead in the middle of a conversation (and it takes a minute to figure out why), but it's dangerous for the bunny to chew live wires.

There's a simple fix though. To protect both your rabbit and the wires in your house, you can purchase plastic tubing from Home Depot or Lowe's. You can also get spiral cable wrap from Radio Shack. Or you can simply make sure all wires are out of reach from your bunny.

Rabbits also love to chew baseboards and the edges of doorways. You can try spraying bitter apple—which you can buy at any pet store—on the enticing areas, but you'll probably find that doesn't really deter your bunny. Most bunnies aren't bothered by the taste. If you do try the bitter apple first and find this to be the case, you can use Ivory soap instead. Simply take a bar of Ivory soap and rub it along the areas your bunny likes to chew. Bunnies do not like the taste. Make sure you use only Ivory; it is the only soap safe enough to not harm your bunny. The one thing to remember if you use Ivory is to reapply every few weeks. You might also want to get plastic protectors that cover the baseboards and corners—you can purchase these at any home improvement store for relatively low cost.

Bunnies love to chew wood, so you might find they want to gnaw at your table legs, chairs or bookshelves. You can use Ivory on these as well. (Do you think the makers of Ivory had this in mind when they went into production?)

Many bunnies will also love chewing on your rugs. If your bunny is going to have free run of the house, you really don't have many options to avoid this. However, this is by no means a reason not to allow your bunny run time or to allow her free range. The

key to ending bunny destruction is to make sure your pet has plenty of toys and entertainment. The more they have to do, the less destructive they will be.

You'll also need to cover all of your unused electrical outlets with childproof covers you can purchase at most home improvement stores. Bunnies are extremely curious. You never know what they can get themselves into, so it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Bunnies love to hide under beds and couches that are high enough for them to crawl under, and this will lead to adventure too. The bunnies will dig their way into the underside of the bed or couch, curl up and go to sleep. At first, you might think it's cute and a nice little hideaway for your pet. The bad news is when bunnies snuggle in out-of-the-way places they also tend to pee and poop.

To keep your bunny from burrowing behind furniture, you can simply put a board around the base. Some have also recommended a flat cardboard box. However, bunnies love to chew cardboard, and they'll probably eventually chew their way through.

Finally, you need to keep your house plants out of reach of your pet. Most are poisonous to bunnies. Also, be careful if you hang plants from the ceiling. If the leaves fall, you'll need to make sure they are well out of the bunny's reach.

For a list of plants which are poisonous to rabbits, visit the Oregon Chapter of the House Rabbit Society at <http://www.adoptarabbit.com/articles/toxic.htm>.

What happens if your bunny eats a poisonous plant? You can call the ASPCA's National Animal Control Poison Agency at 1-888-426-4435. The poison control center will require you pay a fee on your credit card for their services. (Please note that we make no money from mentioning this agency. It is not an advertisement – just a good resource.)

If you plan to allow your bunny free range, or even if you allow her only free run time, you'll want to provide a litter box or two available to her. Be forewarned, however, that bunnies do have accidents, and your bunny may take a liking to a particular area of your home. If it's possible, put the litter box there.

If you have multiple bunnies who are given free run time in the house, beware of the infamous bunny poop wars. Bunnies like to mark their territory, and they'll leave a trail of pellets if they know another bunny has been in their area. (This should stop over time, however, if you litter train your bunnies – more on that in a later section.)

Finally, if you wish to transition an outdoor bunny to your house, it's as simple as bringing her inside. When a bunny is confined alone outdoors, she is unable to show her true personality. When you bring her in the house, you'll discover how much fun she is and how easily she adapts to her new, cozier surroundings.

Even if you plan to let your bunnies roam freely, most bunny experts believe every indoor bunny should have a pen or cage. Having their own home helps keep your bunny safe when you are away and gives them a safe place to hide if they feel threatened in any way. Please see the section [Cage and Environment](#) for more details.

Outdoor Living



For many rabbit lovers, outdoor living is a topic highly in debate. In fact, many rabbit rescue organizations will not adopt bunnies to homes where they will live outdoors. There are many reasons outdoor living is not a good idea. House rabbits that live indoors have a lifespan of 12 years, sometimes longer, while the average for an outdoor domesticated rabbit is a mere two to three years.

Domesticated rabbits are not like wild rabbits, and they are not made for the outdoors. Rabbits get frightened easily, and even a predator animal coming near her hutch can literally scare her to death or cause her to have such a violent reaction of thrashing that she breaks her back. There are also the dangers of flies, maggots and other insects. (More about this in the Health Section.)

Hutches are not 100 percent safe for a bunny. Predators—such as raccoons, coyotes, dogs and others—can still bend, break or even open the hutch doors to get to your bunny. There are also human predators—like children who want to let the bunny loose as a joke. These bunnies often become food for snakes, or become frightened and wander off. Domesticated rabbits are unable to survive in the wild. There's no telling whether someone will steal your bunny from her hutch and what fate she will face.

If your bunny lives outside, you'll have to take precautions to maintain the appropriate temperature in her hutch during both the winter and the summer because both extreme cold and extreme heat can send rabbits into shock. Approximately 55 degrees Fahrenheit is the ideal temperature for bunnies. In winter especially, please be sure you provide a warm space where your bunny can huddle to keep warm and stay protected from the elements. For example, you can give her a cardboard box or a travel carrier filled with clean straw—changed daily—to help her stay warm.

Finally, if your bunny has to be outdoors in winter, make sure you change her water frequently. Water freezes quickly in winter, and your bunny needs constant access to fresh drinking water.

In the summer, you'll need to be extremely careful of overheating. Temperatures over 80 degrees can be harmful to your rabbit. Move your rabbit's hutch to some shade. You can freeze two-liter soda bottles filled with water and put them in her hutch so that she can lie next to them to maintain the appropriate body temperature. In very high temperatures, you'll need to change the bottle frequently and monitor your bunny closely. In warmer parts of the U.S. people with outdoor rabbits arrange misters, which must be cleaned thoroughly frequently to avoid harmful mold growth, and fans in addition to the frozen soda bottles to keep their pets cool.

Another consideration is extreme temperature CHANGE. Rabbit physiology doesn't adjust quickly from very cold to warm, or from very warm to cold. So, for example, if you want to transition your bunny from outdoors to indoors during the winter, take her first into the garage or the basement, and allow her to get used to the slightly warmer temperatures before moving her inside.

Because bunnies are very social animals, a solitary bunny living in an outdoor hutch generally doesn't have the same kind of life as an indoor bunny. Outdoor rabbits don't get as much attention, and this sometimes leaves them feeling depressed ('bunny blues').

Outdoor bunnies are also more difficult to monitor for signs of health difficulties – such as changes in their sleep, activity, and eating times and frequencies.

If your bunny must live outdoors, you're probably better off with two or more. Outdoor rabbits do much better with a companion to combat loneliness and depression.

The following articles emphasize the dangers of outdoor living:

- § <http://www.tagyerit.com/hopline/cold.htm>
- § <http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/outdoors.html>
- § <http://www.rabbitrescue.com/outdoordangers.html>
- § <http://www.allearssac.org/indoors.html>
- § <http://www.mybunny.org/info/housebunny.htm>
- § http://www.hopperhome.com/hutch_crutch.htm
- § <http://www.vrra.org/r101-outdoor.htm>

A less dangerous alternative if you can't have your bunny in the house is to set her up in the garage or the basement, provided both have strong doors and sturdy locks. Because most garages and basements have limited lighting and bunny's can become depressed in prolonged darkness, you may need to bring in an extra lamp or two. Of course, no matter where your bunny lives, make sure you spent lots of time with her, and make her surroundings comfortable and fun.

Another indoor/outdoor issue has to do with just letting bunnies to run around outdoors only during the spring and summer months. While this eliminates the danger of extreme cold, it unfortunately does not remove the danger of predators and fright. Bunnies really CAN become “scared to death.” And there are also harmful bacteria and poisonous plants your bunny can get her teeth on, not to mention accidentally chewing on yard tools, tripping on sprinklers, toys or becoming entrapped in vines.

A less often quoted reason for not allowing your bunny alone outside in the yard is that they LOVE to dig. They’ll begin to dig holes in your yard, and eventually those holes will either lead to your bunny’s escape or your inability to catch her again when it’s time to go outside.

However, many people do take their bunnies outside, supervised, and allow them to run around in the grass and play. The House Rabbit Society suggests if you want to allow your bunny some outside time that you should set up a pen with four sides, a bottom and a top, so predators cannot get to your bunny and your bunny can’t dig her way out.

Some bunny owners have gone all out in making sure their yard is safe for their pets, including having walls built around the yard to make it impossible for the bunnies to dig out and places for the bunnies to hide when they get tired or want to be alone. If you do decide to let your bunny run around, make sure you do not have your grass sprayed with pesticides, and ask your neighbors if their’s has been sprayed with pesticides.

Of course, there are benefits to allowing your bunny to run around outside while she IS supervised. The vitamin D from the sun is good for rabbits, and most bunnies love to lie down and munch on the grass, clover and dandelions in the yard.

Some people have even built their bunnies outdoor, daytime runs for the mild-weather months. You can read a great article that will give you step by step instructions for building your bunny her own daytime outdoor rabbit run at <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/1/rabbit-run.html>.

Some rabbit owners will also swear their bunnies absolutely love to play in the snow. This is fine provided you supervise your bunny and make sure she doesn't stay outside in the cold too long.

Leashes and Harnesses



Using a leash or harness on a bunny is another highly debated subject among long-time bunny owners and experts, and for good reason. There have been many accidental deaths as a result of a bunny on a leash or a harness. Because rabbits are prey animals, they feel very confined and trapped when on a leash. If they become scared—which is very easy with all the new sounds and sights outside—they can easily break their necks, their backs or be frightened to death. You never know when a dog might walk around the corner, scaring your rabbit and causing her to bolt. Leashes that go around the neck are particularly dangerous because they can suffocate your bunny if she pulls too hard.

You'll also want to consider the other dangers of taking your bunny for a walk wearing a harness. Bunnies can contract diseases from other animals, and you never know what they're going to sniff or get into when they're outside. You also have to be careful of pesticides because you never know which lawns and plants have been sprayed and which haven't. Pesticides can kill your bunny.

If you do decide to use a leash or a harness, you should remember that walking a bunny is nothing like walking a dog. Bunnies generally don't like to be followed, so

being behind her when you walk might make her nervous. If she gets too scared, be sure to take her inside right away.

In the end, it is ultimately your decision if you put your bunny on a harness or leash. However, you should be fully aware of the dangers and realize many rabbit experts vehemently oppose putting a rabbit on a harness or leash for any reason.

A safe alternative to a leash or harness is to buy or create an exercise pen outdoors for your bunny, as discussed previously.

Cage and Environment

It's important you know where your bunny is going to live before you bring her home. Will she have free run of your house 24 hours a day? If she is going to have free run, you'll want to make sure that area is completely bunny-proofed – see previous section. You may wait to give her free run until she is litter trained and adapted to her new home. Will she need to be confined part of the day? If your bunny is going to be confined, you need to decide how you want to house her, whether you want to confine her to a particular room in the house or give her a cage.

Before we look at the different housing options, you should understand that the more room your bunny has when she's confined, the better. You might think because your bunny is a dwarf that she doesn't need as much room as a larger bunny. Not true. Dwarfs have a lot of energy, so they need plenty of room to move, roam and run. The cages you see at pet stores claiming to be for guinea pigs and dwarf rabbits are definitely too small for any rabbit, no matter what size.

Your bunny's housing will need plenty of room for a full-size litter box (consider having two boxes if you have two bunnies,) her hay box, her food bowl and either a water bowl or a water bottle. In addition, you'll want to make sure your bunny has plenty of entertainment so she doesn't get bored when she's confined. (For an idea of the kind of toys bunnies love, read the section "Exercise and Entertainment.") You want her to have plenty of room—not just enough room to turn around. Make sure her cage is *at least* four times her size.

There are many fun cage options your bunny will love: NIC condos and exercise pens are the most popular housing for bunnies that don't have free range privileges. Other options include large dog carriers, cages designed specifically for rabbits and hutches.

NIC Condos. NIC stands for Neat Idea Cubes. Neat Idea Cubes are wire flats you can put together to make large cubes and bunny condos. It's a wonderful alternative to a cage, and it's much cheaper. For a picture of a bunny condo made from NIC cubes, check out <http://www.rabbit.org/rabbit-center/retail/cubasetL.jpg>.

NIC condos are very easy to put together, but it is a time-consuming process. (Let your bunny watch you. She'll love to sniff and investigate what you're doing.) If you want to make a condo for your bunny, you first determine how big you want it to be. How many floors? Let's say you decide to make a four-floor condo for your bunny. Here's what you'll need to get started:

- § You'll need six packages of Neat Idea Cubes (assuming they come eight in a package) because you'll need at least 47 pieces to build the condo. You can get the Neat Idea Cubes from places like Target, Wal-Mart, Costco, and you can check with Home Depot and Lowe's.
- § At least one package of cable ties.
- § A pair of scissors

Here are several articles with step-by-step instructions on making your very own NIC condo:

- § <http://www.valeehill.com/condo.html>
- § <http://www.wisconsinhrs.org/Articles/Project%20NIC%20Bunny%20Condo.htm>
- § <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/articles/NIC.shtml>

§ <http://homepage.mac.com/mattocks/morfz/nic.html>

§ <http://www.bluebunnies.org/housing2.htm>

Exercise pens are also another popular housing option for bunnies, and they're easily transportable if you want to move the pen from room to room. You'll want to keep all of the same items in your bunny's pen as you would in her condo. You can purchase exercise pens from your local pet store or online. To see what a bunny pen looks like, go to: <http://www.bunnybunchboutique.com/living.html>.

Large dog carriers are another alternative for your bunny. Dog carriers obviously do not offer as much room as a condo or an exercise pen, but they are an option if you have limited space. You can easily attach a water bottle to the front door, and a small to medium-size litter box will fit in the corner of the carrier. Keep plenty in the carrier for your bunny to do when she's confined.

Dog carriers are easy to transport from room to room, and they are also easy to clean. You simply need a brush and scoop, and you'll be able to pick up the dropped hay and deposits that were left on the carrier floor instead of the litter box.

Bunny cages are now probably the least popular way—along with hutches—to house today's house bunnies. Hutches are generally used to house buns who live outdoors while cages are used for indoor bunnies.

There are some things you'll want to look out for when you're shopping for a cage. First, the absolute minimum size you want to consider is 30" wide, 36" long and 18" high. You need to make sure your bunny can lay completely stretched out in her cage after all of her necessities and toys have been put in.

It's also important that your bunny's cage does not have wire flooring. Your bunny's feet were not made to stand on wire, and they can develop painful sore hocks. (Rabbits' feet are not padded like a dog's feet.) If you must have a cage that has wire flooring, be sure to provide your bunny with a rug or a mat so she has somewhere comfortable to sit and stand.

What do you use for bedding? Actually, contrary to popular belief, most people don't use bedding. Instead, they give their bunnies a bunny bed, a mat or someplace soft to lie on in their cage. If you do decide you want to use some type of bedding, be absolutely certain you **DO NOT** use cedar or pine shavings. Both are proven to cause respiratory and liver damage. Instead, line your bunny's cage with newspaper. This is a much safer—and even cleaner—alternative.

Rabbits are naturally clean animals, and they generally don't tend to soil their surroundings. Thus, they tend to be very good at using their litter boxes. You can keep your bunny's cage fresh smelling by changing the litter box every day.

You'll also want to clean the actual litter box after emptying it. You don't have to do this every day, only as needed – you'll be able to tell. To clean the litter box and keep it fresh smelling, use a spray bottle of white vinegar. White vinegar won't harm your bunny, and it will leave her cage smelling delightfully clean.

You might notice your bunny has begun chewing on her cage. This could be for a number of reasons. First, she may be bored from having nothing to chew in her cage, so her only alternative is to chew the wires. She may also be showing you she wants to come out and run around. It could also be something totally unrelated, especially if your bunny is a rescue and you know little about her past. It's important to give your bunny an

alternative or two to cage wires for chewing. Prolonged wire chewing can lead to problems that can adversely affect your rabbit's health.

The key to keeping your bunny happy while she is confined is to make her surroundings as comfortable and as fun as possible. The next section will tell you how to make sure your bunny is content—both in her house and while she has free run.

To get a better idea of the many housing options available for your bun, check out the following links:

- § <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/adoption/Cages/cage.html>
- § <http://www.leithpetwerks.com/>
- § <http://www.kwcages.com/condo.html>

Exercise and Entertainment



Rabbits are inquisitive, intelligent, fun-loving creatures that need plenty to keep them busy. Keeping your bunny entertained will reduce destructive chewing and nipping. If you have a penned or caged bunny, she should get at least four hours of run time a day. If you can't allow your bunny free range in the house or a rabbit-proofed room, exercise will help her adapt nicely to the cage or pen.

Your bunny needs exercise to socialize with you and to stay healthy. Giving her the opportunity to roam allows her to stretch her legs. Your rabbit should get at least 15 minutes of exercise outside of her housing at least twice a day. Thirty minutes to an hour is ideal when possible.

There are plenty of ways to keep your bunny entertained and happy. And, you'll be surprised at how happy and entertained YOU are when your bunny is playing and enjoying herself.

First things first. How do you know when your bunny is happy? Bunnies love to show it! If your bunny flops on her side and just lies there with her eyes closed, you'll

know all is right with her world. She might scare you the first time she does this, and it's not uncommon for a new bunny owner to think something is wrong. Don't worry. Your bunny is just telling you she's happy. It's the happy flop.



The Happy Bunny Flop

Then there's the binky. If your bunny binkies, you know she's on top of the world. Binkies are crazy happy dances. Your bunny will hop in the air, twirl her head and spin around then maybe start running at top speed. Any bunny owner will attest to the great joy it brings to see their bun or buns do the binky dance.

Sometimes bunnies can be taught tricks. Some owners train their rabbits to ring a bell if they want a treat. If you do this, be prepared to hear the bell ringing constantly! Bunnies can be trained to do tricks by encouraging a natural behavior. For example, if you want a rabbit to learn to sit up on command, hold up a treat. It may take awhile, but the rabbit will learn to sit up on command.

Long-time bunny owners say the best trick that bunnies know is how to how to train you! They quickly learn how to get your attention to get whatever they want! There is no such thing as a dumb bunny.

New bunny owners usually want to go out and buy a load of toys for their new pet, but the experts say it's a good idea to start with some basic toys and then observe your bunny to see which ones she likes best. Some bunnies like to push things around. Others like to throw things around. Almost all of them love to burrow. Discover your bunny's favorite pastime and buy more toys that allow him to do his favorite thing.

Bunnies absolutely love to chew. Phone books are popular with bunnies who love to shred the pages, so make sure you keep all of your old phone books. You might even ask your friends and family for theirs. A bunny can go through a phone book pretty quickly. Most inks today are made from soybeans, but if you are worried about toxicity, verify the ink is safe with your phone company.

Toilet paper and paper towel rolls are also safe and popular chew toys for bunnies. To make it even more fun, you can take a roll and stuff hay inside for your pet to dig out. Baskets of willow, yucca, and soft wood like pine can serve both as a hideaway as well as a chew toy for rabbits. Make sure any wood-type products are UNTREATED.

Boxes and paper bags are also a great source of entertainment for bunnies. You can fill the paper bag with hay, or just put an open paper bag on the floor for the bunnies to crawl into and dig. You'll be surprised at how long they can entertain themselves by playing with the bag.

Cardboard boxes are also an incredibly easy source of entertainment. Take a fairly large box and cut several doorways and windows into it. (Bunnies always prefer to have at least two entrances.) Your bunny will love to go in and dig, chew (making the doorways or windows bigger) and hide away. It's also a great place to put your bunny's

hay—which she can eat as well as dig in. You can also securely tape a bunch of cardboard boxes together so the bunnies can run through them and play.

Use your imagination and creativity, and you'll find there are endless ways to turn everyday cardboard boxes into a playground for your bunnies.

Empty pasta and cracker boxes make great things to chew on, or you can fill them with hay for your bunny to dig out. If you do use something like an empty spaghetti box and it has a hole in the middle with plastic covered over it, make sure you rip off the plastic and rip the hole apart. Your curious bunny might just stick her head in the hole and get it stuck; it's been known to happen more than once.

Bunnies probably love digging as much as they love chewing. Bunnies are diggers by nature, so allowing them a safe way to dig will help keep them happy and away from digging things they shouldn't.

So, if you have an old towel, blanket or sheet for your bunny, you can just put it on the floor, and watch them go. Some bunnies will dig, bunch up, then smooth out the blanket for hours. You can also nudge the blanket somewhere, allowing your bunny to dig it out. It's important that you don't leave your bunny alone with the blanket or towel because there is the possibility she could chew a hole in it, poke her head through and suffocate. Be sure to cut off loose threads that could harm your bunny.

Another great homemade toy is to take a cardboard box or an untreated wicker basket and fill it with shredded newspaper, straw or a pile of magazines, and let bunny dig away.

Baby toys—such as plastic keys and rattles—are also popular with bunnies, who love to throw them around. You just want to make sure you don't get teething rings.

Because bunnies like to toss things, you might notice if you leave your house keys lying around, your bunny will pick them up and toss them to the side. Bunnies also love throwing remote controls from couches and chairs.

Here's another interesting idea for a bunny toy: dog trainers have often suggested keeping a dog away from somewhere they're not supposed to be that owners should take an empty soda can, drop a few coins inside and tape the top. They rattle the can when the dog misbehaves. This works not only to deter dogs, but it's also a great bunny toy. Your bunny might be like others and love to toss the can aside, enjoying the sound of the coins clicking together.

For store-bought tossing toys, you can try some of the cat toys and even parrot toys found in pet stores. Bunnies love to climb, so you can put boxes together for them to climb on or even purchase a cat condo.

Some bunnies also enjoy playing with the popular plastic slinkies. They'll pick them up in their mouths and let them roll around. However, there are some bunnies that are afraid of slinkies and will run the other way at the sight of one. If your bunny is afraid of the slinky at first, just leave it for her to examine.

If you leave a straw broom within bunny's reach, you'll probably notice teeth marks in the wooden handle and missing pieces of the whisk. You might want to get your bunny a broom of her own, so you don't discover a half-chewed broom next time you go to use yours.

Other great ideas for entertaining bunny:

- § Give her pinecones (make sure they're dried out.)
- § Buy a rubber ball and watch her nudge it around the room.

- § Cardboard tubes (make sure they are big enough so your bunny doesn't get stuck.)
- § You can give her the kitty balls with bells inside. If you get her these, make sure she doesn't chew the plastic and swallow the little ball.
- § Because bunnies love to climb, you might want to consider getting a kitty condo or even a child's jungle gym from a toy store.

There are plenty of ways to keep your bunny entertained and happy both in and out of her cage or pen. You can also find great bunny toys for purchase at:

- § <http://www.busybunny.com/>
- § <http://www.bunnyluv.com/>
- § <http://www.bunnybytes.com/>
- § <http://www.busypettoys.com/rabbits.htm>

Having Multiple Rabbits



You've adopted Thumper and are completely thrilled with her. She makes you laugh when she binkies. She cozies up to you when you're lying on the floor reading, and you love being a bunny mom or dad. But you wonder, is she lonely when you're not at home with her? If your bunny is going to be alone for eight hours or more a day, you should give serious consideration to adopting a friend for her.

It's a simple fact that some rabbits have the perfect personality for bonding with another rabbit, and some bunnies just have to be single buns. A single bunny, that is spoiled, and lavished with love and attention, can be just as happy as a bunny that is bonded with another bunny (who are *both* spoiled and lavished with attention by their devoted bunny owners.) Many bunny experts will argue, however, that all bunnies are happiest when they have both a bunny and a human companion.

It is extremely important that before you get your bunny a companion you have her spayed or him neutered. Both rabbits should be altered, and it's best to wait until two weeks after the operation to introduce your rabbit to a new friend. This time period will allow your bunny to fully recover from her surgery. If you have a male bunny, it will also

give his body time to be rid of its hormones. For up to two weeks after neutering, males are still able to impregnate fertile females.

Or you might want two bunnies right from the start. You can find many already bonded pairs at shelters and rescues – you won't have to worry about the process of helping them bond. You may find bonded trios for adoption as well.

As with most things in life, there are trade offs to owning a bonded pair of bunnies. Two bunnies are ideal if you work outside the home and will not be home for long periods of time. Your bonded rabbits may not show you as much attention as you would prefer. However, if you are retired or work from home, you may want your bunny to bond only to you.

But let's start our discussion on multiple rabbits by dispelling some myths. While it is true same sex pairs generally don't tend to get along very well upon first meeting, that doesn't mean it is impossible to bond two girls or two boys. It is possible if you have patience and understanding of the bonding process. It's also possible to bond a tiny dwarf bunny with a larger rabbit. The size is not the dominant factor.

Experts do say that boy-girl pairs are often the most successful. Two females, especially if they are littermates, can be bonded as well. The least successful match is two males. Males are territorial. When they go through that hormone surge as teenaged bunnies, they end up fighting.

Consider personality types when considering a friend for your bunny. If your rabbit is submissive, choose a more dominant bunny. If your bunny has to rule the roost, provide a "date" with a more submissive rabbit.

Before you can even begin the bonding process, you first must find a suitable companion for your bunny. Ideally you should take your bunny to an animal shelter or local rabbit rescue where your bunny can go on “dates” with several single bunnies. It’s not uncommon for domesticated rabbits to not know how to socialize with other rabbits. They’ve either been in a cage alone their whole lives or surrounded by humans. It takes time for them to understand how to relate to each other.

What can you expect from these “dates?” Well, if you’re lucky, your bunny might discover love at first sight. You can be sure the two are in love when they nuzzle nose-to-nose or begin to groom each other.

Not all bunny dates are love at first sight, so it’s important to have an idea of what to expect. First, you shouldn’t be surprised if one bunny mounts the other bunny. This is more of a sign of dominance than anything else. It’s the bunny saying, “I want to be top dog.” So, don’t be surprised if your little girl mounts the boy she’s meeting. She’s just setting some ground rules for what she expects from him.

If the boy mounts the girl and she doesn’t react, that’s a good sign that the bonding should go fairly smoothly. If she runs away when he tries to mount her, don’t worry. The way to know you’re going to have to take time and have patience with the bonding is if the girl turns around and tries to attack or becomes in any way aggressive when the boy tries to mount her.

Another common reaction upon first introductions is the chase. One bunny chases the other. This is perfectly fine if the chased bunny doesn’t turn around and fight back. If the chased bunny does fight back, separate the two bunnies and realize the bonding process is going to have to move more slowly than you had hoped for.

In fact, don't be surprised if there are fights during the bonding process. It's not the end. It just means you should be prepared to take things slow. There's bound to be some scrapes between bunnies, and this is normal. You can stop a fight by yelling "no" or by making a loud noise.

It's also a good idea to have a spray bottle filled with water on hand during each introduction. If the bunnies start fighting, spray them on the nose. The bunnies will generally stop to clean themselves off, giving both of them—and you—a break from the stress of them getting to know each other.

Make sure you always intervene in a fight before it gets too serious. Bunnies can injure each other seriously enough to require veterinary care. After you separate the bunnies, confine them to different spaces. You can put their cages, pens or condos side by side, so they can see each other but not get to each other. In fact, during the whole bonding process, be sure to keep them in their spaces side by side.

Bunnies are very territorial animals. You need to be aware of this before you bring another bunny home. Make sure you always introduce two bunnies in neutral territory. Never, ever introduce a new bunny in your present bunny's cage or an area where her scent is. Instead, introduce the bunnies in the bathtub or in a room where your bunny has never been or rarely goes.

A great way to get your bunnies to start to bond is to take them for a drive in the car. You can put your bunnies together in their carrier—or even a tight fitting box (minus the lid)—and just go for a long drive. Before long, you'll notice your two bunnies have huddled together for safety and comfort in this unknown situation. Some bunny experts suggest taking 20-minute drives every other day, but the length is up to you. Some

bunnies have become bonded after four or five hours in the backseat of the car. If you do take your bunnies for a long drive, make sure they have plenty of fresh hay and access to water.

Many people have more than two bunnies in their homes: perhaps two or three bonded PAIRS of rabbits. In these situations, it's often more than one can hope for to ask EVERYONE to bond together. Instead, expect small "tribes" that may define distinct territories and fight for them when challenged. Again, you'll need to supervise this closely.

When you have a pair of bonded bunnies, you and one half of the pair will inevitably have to face the loss of the other half. While losing a bunny will be a very difficult tragedy for you, you'll find that it is just as hard—if not harder—on the remaining mate.

If at all possible, when one bunny in a bonded pair passes on, allow his mate to spend a few hours with the body. This will allow the mate to walk around the bunny, sniff and begin to understand that she is no longer there. In the end, your bunny will be able to mourn her partner's death more quickly.

However, this isn't always possible, and your bunny will likely become confused, hopping around aimlessly, looking for her mate, waiting for him to come home. It will take time for her to realize her mate isn't coming home.

Don't be surprised if your bunny shows anger at you. Bunnies show their grief in a variety of ways, including aggressiveness toward their owner, chewing carpet or other destructive behavior. They may also change their eating or drinking habits. This is a

particularly important time to supervise your bunny's food and water intake to avoid stasis.

Bunnies, like humans, become depressed when faced with loss. Watching a bunny grieve and look for her mate is heartbreaking, but it's important you spend a lot of time with the remaining bunny and shower her with lots of love and affection. She's confused, sad and angry, and you probably feel just as bad as she does. A new bond will be born during your grieving process together.

You'll also want to consider getting a new bunny for the remaining bunny. One way to find out if the time is right for your bunny to find a new mate is to take her on a few "dates" at a shelter or a rescue. You'll be able to gauge by her responses whether she is ready and willing to accept a new mate. If she greets all potential new friends with hostility then you'll know now probably isn't the right time because your bunny is still grieving and still thinks her friend is going to come home.

Bunnies and other animals

Can your bunny or bunnies get along with other animals? The answer is a resounding "yes," depending on your bunny's personality. Bunnies have become friends with guinea pigs, dogs, cats and even birds. Some families have birds that will fly down and eat greens with the family bunnies. The key is to know how to effectively introduce your bunny to a new friend of a different species.

Bunnies and guinea pigs can become the best of friends. In fact, you might be surprised to discover some single rabbits match up quite well with the single guinea pig at animal shelters.

Bunnies and guinea pigs are very much alike, so perhaps that's one reason they tend to get along so well. They share a very similar diet, with the exception that the guinea pig requires a Vitamin C supplement. He is unable to manufacture Vitamin C himself. To ensure the guinea pig gets the proper Vitamin C allowance, you can give him oranges. It's fine for your bunny to share her friend's oranges, but be careful she doesn't eat too much. For a more comprehensive guide to guinea pig care, please see <http://www.GuineaPigSecrets.com>.

You'll need to introduce your bunny to the guinea pig just as you would to another bunny. While most bunnies and guinea pigs tend to get along, there is no guarantee your bunny will like your guinea pig and vice-versa. Test the waters first.

Also, before introducing the bunny and guinea pig, make sure you get an all-clear from your vet. Both bunnies and guinea pigs are prone to certain diseases—such as pasteurella—which they can pass on to one another.

Bunnies and dogs can live together in harmony in some instances, but only if they are supervised. You should **NEVER** leave a bunny and a dog together unattended, no matter how sure you are the dog would never hurt the bunny. Accidents happen, and your excited, loving dog could want to play with the bunny but hurt her instead. To be safe, it's always best to supervise your bunny and dog. If you have to leave the room, take your bunny with you or put her in her pen or cage.

There's no set formula for what breed of dog will get along with a bunny. It all depends on the individual personality and temperament of the dog. For example, dachshunds are known as hunting dogs, yet some have gotten along impeccably well with the family's house bunny. Just remember, it all depends on the temperament of the dog.

Never allow your dog to chase your bunny. Your dog may be playing, but bunnies are prey animals. Your bunny isn't going to know your dog is just playing and may become so frightened that she has a heart attack and dies.

When you first bring a dog home, your bunny is going to be noticeably and understandably upset. By nature, dogs are a rabbit's enemy, and you've just brought the enemy home. Your bunny may get angry at you. Give her time to get used to having the dog and the dog's scent in the house.

A great way to introduce your bunny to your dog for the first time is to make sure your dog is on his leash, lying next to you. Give your bunny free run, allowing her to explore. Always make sure she can get back into her cage, and if she's a free range bun, make sure she has a place to run to hide if she needs to feel safe.

If your dog gets up or becomes excited, tell him "no." Let the bunny hop and explore for five to 10 minutes then praise your dog and give him a treat for behaving so well around the bunny. Do this several times a day. You can gradually increase the time over a period of days.

If at any time your dog becomes aggressive, immediately stop the introduction session and wait until the next day to try again. After a week or several weeks, if this process seems to be going well, you can try introducing the two with the dog off of the

leash. Just make sure you will be able to grab hold of the dog quickly if he begins to act out.

Many dogs and bunnies have been known to get along splendidly. Just remember to never leave them together unattended, no matter how much you trust either of them. It's always better to play it safe than sorry, especially for the sake and the safety of your beloved bunny.

Bunnies and cats can often bond. This may come as a surprise since cats, like dogs, are predators of bunnies in the wild. If you have noticed your cat has a hunting instinct, then it may be wise not to attempt introducing her to your bunny.

It's typically easier for an adult cat and a bunny to bond rather than a kitten and a bunny, simply because of age and maturity. Always make sure to supervise your bunny and cat. The introductory procedure is similar to that with your dog, but since it's more difficult to train a cat to respond to verbal commands, you should retain leash control much longer.



Noises and Actions

Rabbits are generally quiet animals, but they are not silent. They make plenty of noises—from growling to screaming—to communicate how they feel.

Growling—If your rabbit growls or grunts at you, she's not happy about something. Maybe she's angry that you're poking your hand into her cage and she

doesn't want you in her territory. Growling can be a sign of anger, fear, uncertainty and stress. The better you get to know the bunny, the more you'll discover what her different growls mean.

Screaming—You never want to hear your bunny scream. A bunny scream is usually shrill. It's a heart-breaking sound, and it generally signifies your bunny is either hurt or dying. You'll want to get her help immediately.

Crying—Your bunny may cry sometimes. Sometimes a bunny will let out a little cry or whimper and thump their back feet.

Licking—If your bunny licks your face or your hands, be happy. She's telling you "I love you."

Flopping—Your bunny is on top of the world. She is so happy, she can think of no better way to show her happiness than flopping over, eyes closed, taking some time to relax.

Binkyng—You've got one happy bunny on your hands. She's gyrating, dancing, hopping high in the air and shooting across the room at lightening speed. She's so happy she's a bunny and living with you.

Thumping—Your bunny will thump her back legs for a number of reasons including fear, anger and warning you to danger lurking.

The Bunny 500—It's 6 a.m., and the Bunny 500 has taken off again. Your bunny or bunnies are in their room, when all of a sudden, zoom! They race around the room over and over again at top bunny speed, until they're ready to just chill out, munch on some hay, chew the phone book or flop down for a much-needed nap.

Chinning—Your bunny is rubbing her chin all over the furniture, the book your reading and you. This is just her way of marking her territory. She’s saying, “Hey, this is mine.”

Aggression

Rabbits are just like people. They have individual personalities and individual levels of aggression. Aggression can be the result of any number of things in rabbits, including hormones, fear, territory, stress and a past you may not know about.

Your bunny may well have been hit or treated badly in the past, and because of it she’s afraid of people. She may not be used to people because she spent her life alone in a hutch. Or, her previous owners might have done something to scare her and teach her it’s not safe to trust people. That fear is shown in aggression.

The good news about aggression is—no matter what is causing it—it’s a behavior pattern, and you can help your bunny to change it. Your bunny has learned this behavior and simply cannot change on her own.

Aggressive rabbits tend to be taken to the shelter and euthanized most often simply because the owner doesn’t know how to deal with their bunny’s issues. The great news is aggressive bunnies can be changed, and formerly problem buns have gone on to become some of the sweetest, most loving, affectionate bunnies you’ll ever meet. It just takes understanding, patience and love.

It’s easy to get angry when you’re dealing with an aggressive bunny, but you must always remember that expressing that anger will get you nowhere. You need to be patient and loving, showing your bunny she is safe. Also, it’s extremely important you **NEVER** hit a bunny; do not even tap her on the nose or the behind. Bunnies don’t

understand hitting, and you'll only do more harm than good, making your bunny defensive and more aggressive.

If your bunny is between six months and a year old, you'll need to be prepared for aggression. In essence, this is the time your bunny is going through her "teenager stage." And, sadly, this is the age when the majority of rabbits are set loose or taken to shelters. It's a sad, disturbing fact that many house rabbits never make it to their first birthday. She's exactly like a normal teenager, and you're at your wits end. What do you do? Have you had her spayed? Hormones will drive a bunny mad, just as they will with human teenagers.

Have your bunnies spayed or neutered when they reach six months of age. If you have them fixed too early, they may still display signs of aggression including growling, chasing you, pouncing at you, circling your feet and nipping or biting your ankles. Your bunny may also display these aggressive signs when she becomes sexually mature. Don't be alarmed. It's just a natural part of a bunny's life.

Even after your bunny is spayed, it may take her several months to a year to get over her aggressive stage. That's the good news. It's only a phase as your bunny takes a journey to maturity.

Does your bunny lunge at you, growling, when you open her cage door to feed her or clean her litter box? It should come as no big surprise since bunnies are territorial, and she's naturally protecting her territory. To make things easier and make her less aggressive, clean her cage and litter box during her run time. Put the food bowl down quickly when you feed her, but be aware she'll probably still growl.

Your bunny may also fight, kick and growl angrily when you try to reach into her cage or pen to pick her up for run time. This is easy to remedy. Instead of trying to pick up your bunny, simply leave the cage door open or make it so she can run through an opening in the pen. This will allow her to feel the freedom to come out when she wants. It might take her awhile to wander out, but don't worry, she will. And it will be a much more pleasant experience than watching two big hands scoop down over her.

Sometimes giving your bunny more space will cut down on the aggressive behavior. Bunnies that are limited to a cage most of the day tend to exhibit more aggressive behavior than pets kept in a pen or allowed their own room to roam in. Often changing the bunny's living environment – providing a bigger cage or a pen – will help tremendously with aggressive behavior.

Maybe your bunny nips or bites every time you put your hand down for her to sniff or when you go near her to touch her. The reason for this is simple. Bunnies have pretty bad up-close vision so they're responding to the motion of your hand. You probably just surprised or scared her, and that was her immediate reaction.

To remedy this kind of aggressive behavior, you'll need to do two things. First, always make sure you reach for her with your hand above her head. Secondly, if she still lunges at you, gently put your hand on her head and lower it to the ground, much like one bunny would do to another to show her dominance.

If Thumper likes to be held, you'll know it. Her teeth will chatter in a happy purr. However, if you hear this kind of chattering from way across the room, you need to do some investigating. Chattering that loud is generally a sign of pain, and you should get your bunny to the vet as soon as possible. And, if Thumper is tired of being held, you'll

know it, too. Many a bunny owner has been happily hugging or holding his bunny when all of a sudden the dreaded nip comes. If you're holding your bunny and she wants down, she'll likely either nip you or bite you. All she's doing is saying, "Okay, I've had enough. Let me down now."

If your bunny bites you, you'll feel the sting. You might even yelp out in pain, but you'll be fine. A bunny has never seriously injured or killed anyone. Just wash off the wound and go on your way. Most bunnies don't bite that often, and if they do, there's generally a reason. They don't want to be bothered. They want to be put down. You're annoying them. There are a plethora of reasons your bunny may show aggression to you, including pain and illness.

A great way to deter your bunny—or at least show her she's hurting you when she nips or bites—is to let out a little yelp. No matter how much of a surprise it is or how much it stings, try not to yelp too loud. Loud squealing might scare your bunny even more, causing her to become more aggressive. After a few times of this tame yelp, she should get the idea.

When your bunny is aggressive to you, do not show her anger or frustration. Wait a few moments, and then show her lots of affection instead. According to the House Rabbit Society, your bunny thinks in patterns. Over time, she will learn that when she approaches you that you are going to respond with affection, happiness and friendly words. Of course, protect yourself physically until it's clear this is the case!

Another way to allow your bunny to get to know you is to lie on the floor and watch TV. Ignore your bunny. Or, sit in the middle of the floor and do something. Read a book, cut coupons, do anything as long as you're ignoring your bunny. Before you know

it, she's going to come hopping over to investigate you and what's going on. Keep ignoring her when she comes over. Let her hop on you, sniff you and explore. If you look up or go to pet her, she might run away. Let her get used to you and your scent before you start reaching out to her.

Don't expect your bunny to lose her aggressiveness overnight. In fact, you can expect to work with her for several weeks or months. Patience, love, and affection almost always do the trick. Your bunny needs time to learn to trust you. After all, you don't know what she has gone through in the past. Sadly, many bunnies have suffered at the hands of abuse.

Give your bunny patience and love, and allow her to blossom into the wonderful individual personality that fear—and maybe even suffering—hasn't allowed her to do until you came along. You'll be rewarded with more love and affection than you ever could have imagined.

Handling & Petting Your Bunny



Never pick your bunny up by her ears or the scruff of her neck. It's both painful and dangerous to your bunny. Again, because they are prey animals, most bunnies don't like to be picked up, so if you want to train your bunny to enjoy this you'll need to associate being picked up with good things, like coming out of her pen for run time. If the only time you ever pick up your bunny is for unpleasant experiences like trips to the vet and nail trimmings, she's never going to like being picked up. Bunnies are intelligent animals, and they know what's coming.

The best way to pick up a bunny is from behind. With one of your hands petting your bunny, place the other hand on your bunny's bum then move your other hand under your bunny's torso. Lift gently and hold closely to you, ensuring you always give your bunny plenty of support on her legs. Don't let her legs dangle.

Lifting an unwilling bunny can be a challenge, but be patient and make sure to read <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/3-11/lift.html>, a wonderful article with pictures showing you step-by-step how to pick up your bunny.

If you need to trim your bunny's nails, calm her down before giving her medicine or allow the vet to examine her, you can sit with your knees together and lie her down on her back. You'll notice she becomes quiet and begins to relax. This is called "trancing."

You can enjoy bonding with your bunny when you put her in a trance. At first, she may only allow herself to be in this lying down position for a few seconds before she starts wiggling to get away. That's fine. Just let her go. Practice every day for a few seconds or a few minutes, if you want. It's a great bonding process and a wonderful way to get your bunny to relax.

It is important to realize not all bunnies like being tranced. If your bunny doesn't like it don't force her to do it, or you'll just needlessly stress her out.

While not all bunnies like to be picked up, bunnies generally LOVE being petted. Remember to be gentle when you pet your bunny. Pet her above the nose, and she'll put her head down as she does when her mate grooms her. Give her a gentle ear rub. Petting your bunny is a good way to bond to her. You can also kiss her nose and head. Most bunnies don't mind being kissed.

You can definitely bond to your bunny. Because your bunny doesn't like to be held, you'll want to get her to come to you. There's a simple trick to accomplish this. Ignore her. Just sit on the floor, and do something else. Lie on your stomach and watch TV. You'll be surprised at how quickly your bunny will come over, hop up and down your back and investigate. If you don't want to watch TV, read a book, clip coupons or do anything, but remember to ignore your bunny. She'll become interested, hop over and start investigating.

Will your bunny remember you if you go on vacation or leave her with a pet sitter for a short period? Definitely. She might not be too happy with you when you return, and you'll probably have to work to show her you're sorry for leaving her behind.

Anatomy & Classification of Rabbits

Rabbits are not rodents; they are lagomorphs. Bunnies are adorable, sweet animals, but they have extremely complex bodies, which is why you have to be so observant of their behavior and eating patterns. (Read more in the Health Section.) Your bunny's average temperature is between 101 and 103 degrees Fahrenheit.

Ears—If you touch your rabbit's ears in the summer, you might notice they are hot or warm. Rabbits' ears warm to help their bodies stay cool. Your bunny hears at a lower pitch than you do, and her ears are designed with the ability to hear sounds from two directions at the same time.

Eyes—A bunny has excellent vision from the side and above. Because their eyes are on the side of their faces, when they look straight ahead they have a blind spot. Even so, bunnies can amazingly see almost 360 degrees around.

Fur—You might notice your bunny hopping around—"chinning" everything from the furniture to the floor to you. She has scent glands in her chin, so she is leaving her scent everywhere. If you've ever redecorated a room or brought a new piece of furniture home, you've probably noticed your bunny went around chinning everything again. This is normal because she wants to mark her territory.

Your bunny's whiskers help her determine if she can fit through a certain hole or entrance. This is simply because her whiskers are as long as the width of her body, allowing her to measure distances.

Rabbits are extremely clean animals, and they will clean themselves many times a day. You usually don't need to bathe a rabbit. However, you may want to for one reason

or another, like removing diarrhea from your rabbit's bum or when they are shedding heavily. Discuss this with your bunny-savvy vet, and have him give you an acceptable shampoo. Never use dog or people shampoo on your bunny because they are toxic to rabbits. Most cat shampoos are acceptable, since cats lick themselves to groom like rabbits. Be sure to rinse the shampoo completely.

Some vets will tell you that bathing your rabbit is too stressful on her, but most say it depends on your rabbit's personality. Some rabbits are terrified of water, and others are not. You can see if your rabbit will tolerate water by putting her in a basin and running a little bit of water over her feet. If she doesn't try to escape or acting scared, try a little more. Stop immediately if your rabbit gets frightened. Rabbits have been known to die from shock after being bathed.

Rabbits shed their fur, which is why it's so important to groom them. You'll want to brush and comb them at least once a week when they are not shedding, and daily during the shedding period. Rabbits shed every three months—some sheds are lighter than others, and you might notice your bunny has some bald spots during shedding. This is nothing to worry about because the fur will grow back in time.

Some rabbits love to be brushed, and others do not. Some owners have found that grooming gloves or even a slightly damp paper towel works better than a brush or comb and is much easier for a bunny to tolerate.

During your bunny's shedding periods, you'll want to make sure you give her Petromalt or Laxatone—both preventative medications that can help her digest fur balls—on a daily basis. You can generally find both at your local pet store. As always,

make sure your bunny also has constant access to hay to help her intestines flow smoothly.

You may also notice your bunny is pulling her own fur out. There are several reasons she may do this. Pregnant rabbits pull their fur out to make nests for their babies. Your bunny may also have dry skin or a fungal infection. If you notice your bunny is pulling her fur out, you'll want to consult with your vet as soon as possible.

You can learn more about fur loss by reading the following article:

<http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/furloss.html>.

Legs—Rabbits have powerful legs. If they become extremely frightened, they can kick so hard they break their backs. Bunnies also use their back legs to “thump.” Thumping can mean your bunny is angry or scared or wants your attention for some reason. The more you get to know your bunny, the more you'll be able to tell what her thumps mean.

Make sure when you pick up your bunny you always do so properly – one hand beneath her torso and another supporting her bum. You want to give your bunny proper support when you're holding her, or you can risk injury. If she's not properly supported, she'll probably squirm, kick and feel unsafe and unhappy.

Finally, rabbits do not have padded feet like dogs, which is why it's so important they don't have cages with wire bottoms.

Mouth—Despite what you may have heard, bunnies don't have the capability to distinguish between safe and poisonous plants. Their mouths are not equipped to tell the difference. You might be surprised to know that bunnies have more than 8,000 taste buds.

So, if you notice your bunny dive bombs for the parsley but turns her nose up at kale, you know why. Her taste buds can distinguish between favorite foods and foods she dislikes.

It's even possible to give your bunny the Heimlich Maneuver if she's choking. To learn how, read <http://www.heimlichinstitute.org/pets.html>.

Nose—One of the cutest things about a bunny is the way she twitches her nose. In fact, a bunny twitches her nose between 20 and 120 times a minute. When a rabbit twitches her nose, she is able to smell more because her nose is exposing even more sensory pads.

While people have between five and six million smell receptors, bunnies have more than 100 million. Bunnies use their nose to sniff out their territory, to investigate other bunnies when they meet and to identify who you are.

Reproduction—You might have seen the commercials where one bunny multiplies into hundreds by the end of ad. It's somewhat of an exaggeration but not by much. Bunnies can reproduce and quickly. A female rabbit becomes sexually mature between three and six months of age, while a male begins to have the ability to reproduce between four to six months of age. Females can give birth to between four and six baby bunnies—every month. That is why it is so important you get your girls spayed and your boys neutered. With a million rabbits euthanized each year, you'll be helping to curb the number of homeless bunnies.

Stomach—Unlike humans, rabbits are unable to throw up. If they get a hair block, they cannot expel it. Instead they'll be at risk for stasis, a potentially life-threatening illness. Therefore, it is extremely important you make sure your bunny has access to hay 24 hours day. The hay helps your bunny's intestines flow smoothly.

Dewlap—Does your female bunny have a roll of fur under her neck? That's her dewlap, and it's designed to store fat in her body. This fat would be used if your bunny has babies. Not all female bunnies have dewlaps, while some have very noticeable ones.

While you might think dewlaps are specific only to females, many male bunnies also have dewlaps. There is no scientific reason as to why a male has a dewlap. Some have speculated an overweight male bunny will develop a dewlap, but there are just as many thin males who develop them.

Your Bunny's Diet



Everyone's seen Bugs Bunny munching on his long carrot, the green tips swaying back and forth. Many people—who do not have bunnies—think carrots are an essential part of the rabbit's diet, perhaps even the main ingredient. This is probably one of the biggest misconceptions regarding bunnies. In fact, carrots are treats and should be given sparingly to your bunny. Carrots are high in sugar, therefore you should be careful in how many pieces of carrot you allow your bunny each week.



**Contrary To Popular Belief, Carrots
Are Only OK For Bunnies In Limited Quantities
(Grapes Too!)**

The most essential part of a rabbit's diet is unlimited hay. Baby bunnies—to approximately three weeks of age—simply nurse their mother's milk. Baby bunnies in the third and fourth week of life will continue to nurse from their mother's milk and have tiny bites of both alfalfa hay and pellets. From four to seven weeks of age, baby bunnies still drink their mother's milk but they should also be allowed to hay pellets and hay.



Unlimited hay is the most essential part of a rabbit's diet.

Once a baby bunny is seven weeks old, she'll stop nursing and begin to eat unlimited pellets and unlimited hay. When she is three months old, you can begin giving your baby bunny greens. It's important that you introduce only one type of green or vegetable at a time to allow her body to adjust to the new food.

Adult rabbits should be given unlimited hay, which helps keep their digestive track flowing properly—including timothy hay, grass hay and oat hays. However, alfalfa hay is rich in calcium and should be given sparingly to bunnies over a year old. Too much calcium in your rabbit's system can cause sediment in the urine, which can cause serious urinary tract problems.

You'll probably find your bunny prefers one type of hay over another or one brand over another, and that's natural. Bunnies—which are strictly vegetarian—can be picky like people, too.

When choosing hay, look for bales that are medium to light green and that smell good – not musty. Avoid feeding your rabbit any hay with black or brown spots. Mold and toxins from the mold can make your rabbit very ill.

Here are some popular places from which you can get hay. Many people choose to purchase bales of 25 or 50 pounds, which last for a fairly long time provided they are kept in proper conditions – out of the damp, in a container with the lid sealed. If you find when you pick up your hay that it is dusty, you'll want to get new hay. You can also purchase hay from some farms or feed stores; generally, you can get a large bale for a very reasonable price.

§ <http://www.oxbowhay.com/>

§ <http://www.sweetmeadowfarm.com/>

§ <http://www.americanpetdiner.com/>

§ <http://www.alfalfaking.com/>

§ <http://www.critterstore.com/hay1.html>

In addition to unlimited hay, you'll want to consider feeding your bunny pellets. There is a debate between bunny owners and veterinarians whether pellets should or should not be included in a rabbit's diet. Some people simply have their bunnies on a diet of hay and fresh greens. Some rabbits are also restricted to hay and greens because of health conditions such as arthritis.

If you do decide to feed pellets—and just as many people, if not more, feed their bunnies pellets as those who do not—you’ll want to make sure you do so in proper quantities.

Until your bunny is a year of age, she can have unlimited pellets. And she will love it. Most bunnies absolutely love their pellets. Pellets are actually good insurance against bone disease and rickets. However, after a bunny is a year old, it is advised by many vets to limit pellets. In fact, according to the House Rabbit Society, your bunny’s servings should be as follows:

- § A quarter cup of pellets each day if your bunny weighs between five and seven pounds.
- § A half a cup of pellets each day if your bunny weighs between eight and 10 pounds.
- § Three quarters of a cup each day if your bunny weighs between 11 and 15 pounds.

Of course, things work differently for different bunnies, and you may find a dwarf bunny needs more pellets in her diet than recommended. Some owners also give their bunnies one cup of pellets per day. Talk to your vet during your bunny’s annual checkup, and ask him for his recommendations.

Make sure you **NEVER** buy pellets that also include seeds or nuts. Seeds can cause rickets and other serious health problems and should never be fed to rabbits. To be safe, avoid any pellets called “gourmet.” Buy the cheapest, plain alfalfa pellets you can find, preferably from a feed store. Pet stores will have “gourmet” pellets with added ingredients that may not be good for your bunny’s diet or digestive system. Avoid pellets

or rabbit treats that include peas or corn. These ingredients have a lot of sugar, which is not healthy for your bunny.

To get an in-depth look at the differences between brands of pellets, read <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/3-4/pellet-info.html>.

One of the hazards of feeding pellets to your bunny is weight gain. Obesity is a big health problem for rabbits. You can avoid obesity by limiting the amount of pellets and making sure your rabbit gets plenty of exercise.

Also make sure that you buy your pellets from a source that sells fresh product. Ask your vet about a reputable company that sells pellets. Feed that sits around for several months can develop organisms that may be hazardous to your bunny.

Now that your bunny is eating a limited amount of pellets each day, you'll want to ensure she has unlimited hay and gets plenty of fresh vegetables. Dark, leafy vegetables are best. Feed between two and four cups a day.

The House Rabbit Society recommends you give your bunny no more than a teaspoon of fresh fruit a day. Fruit is considered a treat because of its high sugar level. The House Rabbit Society of San Diego compiled the following list of approved vegetables and fruits for bunnies:

Alfalfa sprouts, apples (make sure the seeds and stem are gone), blueberries, radish sprouts, clover sprouts, basil, the tops of beet greens, brussel sprouts, carrots, carrot tops, celery, cilantro, clover, collard greens, dandelion greens, endive, escarole, green peppers, kale, mint, melon, mustard greens, orange (buns can eat the peels, too,) papaya, parsley, peach, pear, peppermint leaves, pineapple, plums, radicchio, radish tops,

raspberries, raspberry leaves, romaine lettuce (never feed iceberg lettuce), spinach, strawberries, watercress and wheat grass.

Veterinarians suggest limiting feeding rabbits vegetables in the cabbage family, which includes broccoli, bok choy and brussel sprouts. These veggies sometimes produce gas and indigestion. The exception to this is kale, a member of the cabbage family that bunnies seem to tolerate.

Bananas and grapes are also safe for bunnies, but they should be given as treats and sparingly because bunnies tend to ignore all other food when a piece of banana or a grape is put in front of them. You'll love to watch Thumper munch away happily on his piece of banana (there's no cuter sound than a bunny chomping on a banana), but if you give him too much, he'll never want to eat anything else. Also, veterinarians say that in extreme cases, too much fruit can be fatal to rabbits. So feed only small portions as a treat.



**Bunnies LOVE bananas and grapes ...
but be careful, if you give them too
much, they won't want to eat
anything else!**

It's important to give your bunny a variety of vegetables and fruits in addition to her normal hay and pellets. Bunnies cannot live on one food alone for health reasons, and they can get bored with food just as people can. Your bunny will have her own favorite fruits and veggies, and you can purchase them accordingly once you get to know what

she likes and what she doesn't like. Most bunnies absolutely love fresh parsley and will go crazy when you feed it to them. But monitor your bunny when you feed them vegetables. Just like some people, some rabbits do not tolerate some foods as well as others. You'll want to avoid any vegetable that causes digestive upsets, like gas or indigestion.

Other treats include papaya or sugar-free, flavored acidophilus tablets, which are available in health food stores. Not only do these treats taste great, some experts believe are good for your bunny's digestive system. Others do not. The theory behind papaya and pineapple enzymes is that the acid in the enzymes helps to break down mucus that helps to ball up hair and food in the gut. Some vets say that water and hay should be sufficient to keep these hairballs from forming and that the papaya and pineapple enzymes really don't work. They don't hurt, either, so if your bunny likes the tablets they would be safe as a treat. Ask your vet about his or her opinion about the effectiveness of pineapple and papaya enzymes. Acidophilus tablets can help with digestion by adding bacteria to their system.

Some bunny experts suggest a bite-sized Shredded Wheat or a piece of a raisin. Just remember that treats should be a very small portion.

It's a good idea to give your bunny a treat every day. Rabbits, as a prey species, won't show symptoms of illness or pain unless it is very severe. By giving your rabbit her favorite treat every morning, you can easily monitor her health. If she doesn't eat the treat, there's something wrong.

You should also adhere to the House Rabbit Society's recommendation of two to four cups of greens a day or heed your vet's advice. A bunny who eats too many greens

can risk getting wet, mushy poop, a form of diarrhea. The only thing in a bunny's diet that does not have to be given in moderation is the unlimited hay. They can eat as much hay as they want all day, every day.

Just as chocolate and caffeinated drinks can kill dogs, they can be fatal if consumed by rabbits. Always make sure to keep your chocolate bars out of bunnies reach, and don't leave your cup of coffee or soda at bunny-drinking level.

If your bunny refuses to eat her pellets because of a brand change then you should make sure she has unlimited hay and ample fresh greens. Then you should consult your vet for ideas of what to do, or to determine if she should stay on a pellet-free diet.

If you don't want to go to the store to purchase food then your bunny will obviously have a pellet-free diet. (Make sure you talk this decision over with your vet.) You can grow a garden full of bunny-acceptable vegetables and fruits, and your bunny can munch on the backyard grass (as long as the grass has **NOT** been sprayed by pesticides.) However, your bunny must have unlimited access to hay, and grass obviously doesn't grow in the wintertime unless you live in a warm climate. If you absolutely do not want to purchase any food from the store, consider going to a local farm to get your bunny high quality bales of timothy hay.

Following a proper diet is essential for the health of your rabbit. One of the causes of GI stasis, a common and very serious condition in bunnies, can be caused by poor diet and weight gain. Fat, which often develops deep inside the bunny's abdomen, can press on your rabbit's stomach and intestines, making it more difficult to digest her food. Her digestive system can even shut down.

Overweight rabbits also have problems with their urinary tract. The body fat

presses against the bladder and makes it more difficult for a bunny to empty their urinary tract when they urinate. Sediment may form causing either a urinary tract infection or a bladder stone. Both can be very serious conditions.

Your veterinarian can tell you immediately if your bunny is overweight. You can also get an idea yourself by knowing the weight range for rabbit's breed and making sure your rabbit doesn't exceed the top end of range. Just like with cats and dogs, if you easily feel your rabbit's ribs, you probably have an overweight bunny.

Another clue is an excessive amount of poop pellets. Bunnies poop as they eat, so the more they eat the more poop they produce. If you are concerned about the amount of stool your rabbit produces, cut back on pellets and feed more hay.

Discuss your rabbit's diet with your vet to make sure you know what size portions are appropriate. Common mistakes new rabbit owners make is feeding too many pellets and feeding too many foods that have carbohydrates, like crackers and even carrots. A bunny's stomach actually ferments carbohydrates, and feeding too much can actually create toxins in the stomach that are absorbed and can kill your pet. Limit carbohydrates to small pieces as a treat.

Water is tremendously important to your bunny's diet. Monitor your rabbit's water intake closely. A bunny needs $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of water each day for every two pounds they weigh. Some rabbits simply don't consume enough water. Some vets recommend making a "soup" of hay and water to get more water into your bunny's diet. Be sure to remove the soup daily to keep mold from growing on the leftover hay or in your bunny's housing.

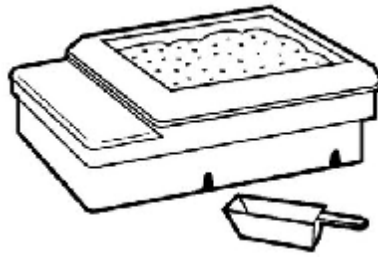
A wild rabbit's diet is somewhat different from a house bunny's diet. Wild bunnies eat a lot of grass (hay is simply dry grass) and small plants. If you've ever had a garden or known someone with a garden, you're probably well aware that wild rabbits love to get into gardens and munch away on the vegetables.

If you have wild rabbits in your back yard—or come face to face with them—you should never touch them. This is mostly to protect your own bunnies. If you touch a wild rabbit then pet your bunny, you may pass on illnesses and diseases the wild bunny has.

If you find an injured wild rabbit, you can check your local yellow pages and find a local wildlife rehabilitation center. They generally send someone out to pick up the injured animal or at least give you instructions on how to capture the rabbit and transport it safely to their facility.

If you ever find a nest of wild bunnies, never touch the bunnies or move their nest. Their mom only feeds them briefly twice a day, so it's quite normal if they are left alone. For more of what to do if you find baby bunnies, read <http://www.ohare.org/baby-wild-rabbits.htm>.

Litter Box Training



Yes, your bunny can be litter box trained. Bunnies are very clean animals, and they can learn quickly. You'll have a much easier time litter training your bunny if she is spayed or he is neutered first. It's not impossible to litter train a bunny that is not spayed or neutered, but once he or she hits sexual maturity all of those impeccable litter box habits are going to go right out of the window. Sexual maturity means it's time for your bunny to mark her territory. It's just a natural process she'll grow out of once you have her spayed and litter train her.

At this peak of sexual maturity, your bunny will also begin to spray to mark her territory. There is little you can do to stop her except keep her or him confined until spayed or neutered. There is a definite scent when your bunny sprays, so you'll know it when you smell it. To keep her litter box and cage clean and smelling fresh, simply use white vinegar.

To start you'll need several litter boxes, one for her cage and several for outside of her cage, and adequate litter.

Litter boxes are inexpensive. You can get a good, solid plastic litter box from Wal-Mart, or you can go to your local pet store. Litter boxes at pet stores tend to be more expensive than discount stores. You'll want to get a litter box big enough for your bunny. You can also get triangle litter boxes for cage corners. Choose litter boxes that don't have a very tall lip. Some bunnies don't want to hop over a tall edge to enter the litter box.

You can keep your bunny's litter box clean by changing the litter every day. You'll also want to thoroughly wash the litter box as needed. To do this, you want to fill a spray bottle with white vinegar, spray and scrub the litter box. You never want to use any type of chemicals or cleaning materials on your bunny's litter box or cage.

You'll want to make sure you use bunny-safe litter for your rabbit's litter box. Avoid any clumping kitty litter. Your bunny may be tempted to ingest the litter, and that makes clumping litter dangerous. It could cause a blockage in her stomach, leading to stasis and possible death. Also, do not use cedar or pine shavings, chemical sand, corn cob and dustless or generic clay. These types of litter are all potentially hazardous to your bunny.

Instead, you'll want to use one of the following:

- § Yesterday's News Litter. You can get the Yesterday's News Kitty Litter. It is basically the same as the Yesterday's News Rabbit Litter, except it is not as expensive.
- § Carefresh Litter. This product is available at Petsmart and online retailers..
- § Wood stove pellets. You can find wood stove pellets at fireplace stores as well as home improvement stores like Home Depot and Lowe's during the winter. If you

live in the north, you can generally find wood stove pellets year round at specialty stores. A 40-pound bag usually costs around \$4-5. Wood stove pellets look great and keep litter boxes smelling fresh.

- § Straw. Straw is good for litter boxes outside of your bunny's cage. Inside the cage, it tends to be messy and hard to clean up.
- § Paper—shredded. You can try using just shredded paper or shredded paper with hay on top. You'll need to change the litter daily. The one drawback of shredded paper is your bunny might take a liking to eating a lot of it. If this is the case, your bunny can get an intestinal blockage. If you notice your bunny is eating a lot of her paper litter, you'll want to switch litters immediately.

Rabbits have two different types of droppings: fecal pellets and cecotropes. Fecal pellets are the little poops you see in your bunny's litter box. They're various sizes depending on the bunny and are hard. Cecotropes, which aren't feces, are shiny, grapelike clusters your bunny expels then eats, helping to produce necessary nutrients. You may only see cecotropes from time to time, which is a good thing since they are pretty smelly.

If you do find cecotropes lying around, there may be a problem. Cecotropes come out of a part of the intestines that is populated heavily with bacteria. Bunnies will develop a condition called "fecal overproduction" when they get too much sugar in their diet, which creates an overabundance of cecotropes. A change in diet and an acidophilus supplement will usually solve this problem.

Another problem that affects overweight bunnies is the inability to eat cecotropes. Often they will stick to your bunny's bun, and she'll turn around and eat them. An obese rabbit can't do that and may end up missing essential fatty acids and vitamins.

Now you're ready to start the litter training process. First, be aware that bunnies generally pick where they want their litter boxes to go by simply pooping in a particular area. If possible, put the litter box in your bunny's chosen spot. You can put it there temporarily and try moving it to where you want later on. This might work, and it might not. Your bunny might be stubborn and insist on going to the bathroom where she wants to go, and that includes everywhere from your bed to the couch. In these instances, you need to not allow her on the bed or the couch until she learns to go in her litter box.

It's important you always keep your bunny's litter box clean. Bunnies are clean animals, and if their boxes aren't clean, they're likely to go outside of the box, sometimes right next to it. Keeping your bunny's litter boxes clean encourages her to go in it. You can also put some hay inside the litter box to entice her in. Bunnies love to eat while they're going to the bathroom.

When you first begin litter training, you should strongly consider keeping your bunny confined to one room or one area of the house until she understands what she's supposed to do. Make sure there are plenty of litter boxes available both in her cage and outside of it. Sometimes dropping just a few pellets of poop into the litter box will remind her that's the place to go.

Always praise your bunny when she successfully goes in the litter box. Never scold, yell or hit her if she has an accident. Also, make sure to thoroughly clean up after

accidents. If your bunny pees, take some vinegar and clean the spot thoroughly. If you leave the scent there, you will be inviting her to go back and pee there again.

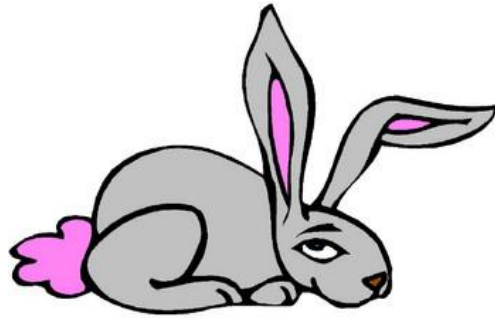
Bunnies generally learn to use their litter boxes quickly. However, there may be times when their litter box habits become sloppy. If you add a new bunny to the family, you should expect your bunny to have a lot more “accidents” while she’s marking her territory again. Don’t worry. Once everything has settled down, she’ll go back to using her litter box. Remember, bunnies also like to mark their territory when new furniture is brought home, when the room is redecorated and when there’s something new in the room. Sometimes they do this by just chinning everything, and sometimes they leave little trails of pellets.

After a period of time your bunny is still not using a litter box, add a layer of hay to the box. Although it sounds disgusting, bunnies often poop as they eat, and having their waste near their food is not unsanitary for rabbits. Having the hay that is necessary to their diet on top of the litter is a sure-fire way to teach your bunny to use the box.

If your bunny is usually great with the litter box and all of a sudden stops using it or if you’re having trouble getting your bunny to use the litter box, you should take her to the vet to be checked. She may have a urinary tract infection or some other illness causing her to act out.

If you notice your bunny’s poop is sticking to her butt, you’ll want to clean it off gently. This is referred to as “poopy butt.” Poopy butt can be a result of too many vegetables in your bunny’s diet. Consult your vet immediately. He may tell you to give your bunny less vegetables and more hay to see if that helps, or he may want to see her to determine if it’s something else.

Health



As a bunny owner, you need to be well informed of health conditions common to rabbits. Because rabbits are prey animals, they tend to hide their illnesses—often until they are too sick to be saved. Therefore, it is extremely important you always keep a close eye on your bunny’s behavior, eating habits and droppings. Any changes should raise alarm bells because, unlike dogs or cats, illnesses in bunnies tend to strike swiftly—and can be fatal.

One of the most important things to remember as a bunny owner is that education is key. But don’t expect to be perfect from the beginning. You’re not going to be. You’re going to learn over time the intricacies of rabbits. If you join a bunny chat group or talk to anyone who’s had a bunny you’ll undoubtedly hear stories from bunny owners who wish they’d just known this or known that when they had their first pet. It will take time and some mistakes to become a fully knowledgeable bunny owner. The most important thing is to keep educating yourself and give your bunny a lot of love.

It’s also important to know a rabbit’s stomach is like a horse’s, not a cat or dog. Bunnies are unable to throw up, and they need to have constant access to hay for their

intestines to flow properly. Unlike dogs and cats, rabbits do not need yearly vaccinations or shots. Instead, you'll just want to take them to the vet for an annual checkup. Of course, if your bunny is sick you'll need to take her to the vet immediately.

You should be aware that vet visits can get costly. First you must find a bunny-savvy vet, and treatment for a sick rabbit can be expensive. It's best to consider the financial obligation before adopting a bunny. Will you be able to afford to give your bunny the proper care if she gets sick? Many people don't think about the financial consequences of an illness or an injury, and many innocent bunnies are euthanized because their owners cannot afford or are not willing to foot the sometimes hefty vet bills.

If you do not have a bunny-savvy vet, simply join Etherbun on Yahoo Groups (do a search from <http://groups.yahoo.com>). Etherbun is a listserv dedicated to the health, behavior and care of house rabbits. Once you've joined, post a message with the subject: Vet In (Name of your city or town.) Etherbun is comprised of house rabbit owners and rabbit experts, and responses are generally quick, especially if you have an emergency situation. You can also find a list of vets recommended by the House Rabbit Society at <http://www.rabbit.org/care/vets.html>.

It's a good idea to interview the vet before you actually have a bunny emergency. Here are some good questions to ask:

- How often do you see rabbits? You preferably want to a vet who sees rabbits in his or her practice every day.
- Ask what kinds of problems they typically see with rabbits. They should be some of the problems discussed in this book.

- Ask what antibiotics he or she recommends for rabbits and under what circumstances they would be needed. NO antibiotic is 100 percent safe for rabbits, so the vet should be aware of that. Penicillin or **amoxicillin** is NEVER the right answer to this question. Penicillin can be lethal to bunnies.
- Quiz the vet about what preparations he or she would recommend if your rabbit needed surgery. Rabbits must eat before surgery. Fasting can shut down their digestive tract. A bunny-savvy vet knows this.

When choosing a vet, make sure you ask about their emergency service. Are they available if your bunny has an emergency on a Sunday or a holiday? Many emergency veterinary hospitals simply do not have vets on staff who are bunny-savvy, leaving a panicked bunny owner to rely on someone who is not familiar with rabbits to save their bun's life. Some vets may not be available on the weekends and holidays; however, if you go to the emergency vet who backs them up, you may find the ER vet is able to call your regular vet for a consult. It's best to find a regular vet before you're faced with an emergency situation or an illness.

You may want to attempt to take care of your sick bunny yourself, but as you'll learn, this is often impossible without the help of a rabbit-savvy vet. First your bunny will need prescribed antibiotics. Rabbits are very specialized animals, and you generally won't find medications for them at a regular pet store. However, you will find Petromalt, a gel that you can give your bunny to prevent hairballs, in pet stores and shops like Agway, and you may also be able to find glucosamine, which is often used to control pain in bunnies that have arthritis, at your local pet store.

There are some instances in which your bunny may have a slight injury that you can remedy at home. For example, if you're trimming your bunny's nails, you may cut a little too deep, causing bleeding. To stop the bleeding, simply dip your bunny's paw in flour. You'll find the bleeding has stopped in a few minutes. If not, be sure to call your vet.

Finally, for a bunny to survive an illness you need to be prepared to give her plenty of love and attention. Helping to pull a bunny through an illness can be an emotional and bonding process. You also need to be vigilant with administering medication and to watch closely to make sure your bunny eats. There are instances when you will need to syringe feed your bunny during an illness, so it's a good idea to practice this before your bunny gets sick. A sick bunny can be stubborn, and it's extremely important you are able to keep her nourished.

In this section, we'll take a closer look at the illnesses of which you should be aware. In addition, there are numerous links you can click on that will help you learn even more about each illness.

**WARNING: NEVER ALLOW YOUR VET
TO GIVE YOUR BUNNY AMOXICILLIN.**

In fact, if your vet says even one shot or dose of amoxicillin will not harm your rabbit, warning flags should be raised. You never, ever want your bunny to take amoxicillin. Amoxicillin, as well as *some* types of penicillin, are harmful to rabbits because they destroy the good bacteria in a bunny's intestines. They can also cause malfunctioning of a rabbit's organs and even lead to death.

Sometimes other antibiotics may be required to treat your bunny. No antibiotic is entirely safe for a rabbit. Watch your pet closely if she is on antibiotics to make sure she continues to eat and poop.

GI Stasis

GI stasis, or gastrointestinal stasis, is a common condition—and can easily lead to death—in bunnies. It is actually a variety of conditions that cause your bunny's stomach, and sometimes intestines as well, have become immobile. This happens for any number of reasons, including malocclusion (which we'll discuss later on in this chapter,) illness, gas, stress and a lack of adequate fiber in a bun's diet. For this reason, unlimited grass hay in your bunny's diet is extremely important.

GI stasis can refer to food or hair that is slow to empty from the stomach. Rabbits have very sensitive digestive systems that are virtually always working. If the stomach isn't emptying fast enough, the rabbit's bowels will shut down, leading to shock and death. The stomach can be blocked by hair. Your pet can become too bloated from gas or even develop digestive problems from antibiotics or other medication.

There are warning signs that will clue you in to your bunny's possible stasis. If your bunny hasn't eaten or pooped in at least 12 hours you need to immediately get him to a bunny-savvy vet. This is a classic sign of stasis, and time is of the essence in getting your bunny help.

GI stasis is known as the silent killer of bunnies, so you need to constantly be observant. Other signs that can indicate possible stasis are tiny poops, either sprinkled on the floor or in the litter box or stuck to your bunny's bum, and diarrhea.

If you hear loud gurgles from your bunny's stomach, chances are good he is suffering from a painful bout of gas, which leads to GI stasis. By the same token, if you put your ear, or a stethoscope if you have one, to your bunny's stomach and hear silence, you should also be concerned. Bunnies' stomachs generally make some quiet gurgling

noises, so silence and unusually loud noises are both bad signs, requiring immediate attention.

GI stasis means your bunny is in a potentially LIFE OR DEATH situation, so be prepared to take swift action.

What will happen once you get your bunny to the vet? The first thing you can expect the vet to do is to listen to your bunny's intestines with a stethoscope to check whether they sound normal. You may also expect X-rays to be taken so your vet can determine if there are any blockages of fur or excrement. Your bunny's intestines may become blocked if he accidentally ate something he shouldn't have—plastic, for example. Since bunnies love to chew, there's always the chance they may ingest something they shouldn't.

If your doctor has determined your bunny is indeed suffering from GI stasis, he may gently massage your bunny's stomach, in an effort to get the intestines to move again. He also may give your bunny Simethicone, an over-the-counter medication, to help relieve gas.

In extreme cases, your vet may offer you the option of a gastrotomy, which means he would cut your bunny's stomach open and remove the mass. However the survival rate for this operation is not good.

When you visit your vet—preferably in a non-emergency situation—ask him to show you how to massage your bunny's tummy. The stomach and intestines shut down when a large mass of food mixed with hair isn't passing. Hair is not digestible, so the only way to shrink the mass is by forcing fluids into the stomach to soften it up. Massage can help with this process.

Many experienced rabbit owners fight the stasis themselves by giving tummy massages, administering proper gas medication and making sure their bunnies have a healthy diet. Often a potentially bad case of stasis can be curbed by making sure your bunny has unlimited grass hay and plenty of leafy greens each day. Be aware, though, that even with exceptional care a bunny can get stasis.

To learn more about GI stasis, including how to treat your bunny, go to: <http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/ileus.html>. This is a **MUST**-read article for every bunny owner. In fact, you might want to bookmark the page or print it out and put it in a convenient place in case of an emergency.

You may also want to read the excellent article at http://www.mybunny.org/info/gi_stasis.htm.

Malocclusion

Malocclusion simply means your bunny's teeth are not aligned properly, which causes them to overgrow. Some bunnies are simply born with misaligned teeth.

Malocclusion is not uncommon in dwarf and lop bunnies.

Malocclusion is often the result of some sort of trauma to the bunny—a fight between bunnies, for instance, in which the bunny's face is injured or bitten. A bunny's teeth can also become infected by bacteria, causing malocclusion.

An adult bunny has 28 teeth: six incisors and 22 molars. A rabbit's teeth are constantly growing, and bunnies with normal teeth are able to keep them short by simply chewing and eating on things like acceptable wood, cardboard, etc. Bunnies with malocclusion, however, are unable to trim their teeth by simply just chewing. They either

need to have their teeth trimmed regularly, which usually means a visit to the vet every two to four weeks, or they need to have the teeth removed.

A bunny that has malocclusion of the incisors will often grow “tusks,” mini-versions of what you’d seen on an elephant. Tusks on some bunnies will grow inward inside the mouth rather than outward, making it more difficult to see. These tusks make it virtually impossible for the bunny to chew or function normally. Many bunny owners take their bunnies with tusks to the vet to have their teeth trimmed regularly, and some very experienced rabbit owners are even able to trim their bunnies’ teeth themselves.

There is some debate as to whether regular trimming of the incisors is too traumatic—as it is done without anesthesia—making it better for the bunny to have the problem teeth pulled. If your bunny has malocclusion, discuss the options with your rabbit-savvy vet. Every bunny is different—some are extremely calm when handled and some are so excitable it makes handling difficult—so it should be a decision carefully discussed with your vet.

Malocclusion of the incisors can also lead to molar spurs. Molar spurs mean the rim of a rabbit’s teeth—whether the rabbit has malocclusion or not—have become pointy and sharp. Molar spurs can be very painful for a rabbit because they can dig into the cheek and tongue, making it difficult—if not impossible—for the bunny to eat.

When a rabbit has molar spurs, he will be put under anesthesia (which is perfectly safe), allowing the vet to file the spurs. It is a quick process, and your bunny will be home the same day.

Signs that your bunny may have malocclusion or molar spurs include drooling and an unwillingness to eat. Dealing with dental problems is extremely important, or else your bunny is at risk for GI stasis, which can potentially be fatal.

Bunnies that have malocclusion and molar spurs live perfectly happy and normal lives as long as their teeth continue to be properly cared for, so don't be too alarmed if your bunny develops either condition.

Pasteurella (a.k.a. Snuffles)

Whether you know it or not, your bunny may already carry the bacteria that causes pasteurella, or snuffles. Many rabbits have the pasteurella bacteria but never show any symptoms or signs of illness and live completely normal lives. The bacteria can easily enter a rabbit's body through wounds and the nose, and then multiplies. Many rabbits have strong, healthy immune systems that can combat the pasteurella bacteria but some don't.

However, if your bunny does exhibit symptoms of pasteurella, you'll need to get her to the vet immediately to begin antibiotics. Signs of pasteurella include an upper respiratory infection with discharge from the bunny's nose. You may not be able to see the discharge from your bunny's nose because rabbits are very good at cleaning themselves. Check their front paws for matted fur, a result of the discharge. This clear discharge will later become filled with pus.

Pasteurella may also present itself as an eye infection or a middle ear infection that quickly turns to an inner ear infection (which can lead to heat tilt, which we discuss next.) In all cases, the pasteurella can result in abscesses in the heart, lungs and even the

mouth, all of which require proper care from a bunny-savvy vet. Other common places for abscesses include the shoulders, the mammary glands, the bum, and the face and jaw.

Rabbits can get the pasteurella bacteria from other rabbits as well as from people who are carrying it on either their skin or their clothing. Your vet will be able to determine a diagnosis of pasteurella by taking a nasal culture. If the culture comes back positive, your bunny will likely go on medication such as Baytril, a very popular antibiotic used to treat bunnies. Most rabbits recover completely from pasteurella, but some bunnies may need to take medication for the rest of their lives to control the infection.

To minimize the chance of your bunny being exposed to the pasteurella bacteria, you can take a few simple precautions:

- § Don't allow your bunny to get overheated.
- § Always wash your hands after you've been around other rabbits or cats. Make sure to use warm water and soap, and dry your hands thoroughly before you pet your own buns.
- § If you're a volunteer at an animal shelter or with a rescue organization, make sure you always change both your shoes and your clothes before you come into contact with your own bunnies again.
- § Thoroughly clean your bunny's litter boxes.

Other Respiratory Problems

Compared to other animals, bunnies don't have very big lungs. If you think about it, in the wild rabbits are sprinters rather than long-distance runners. They really don't

require much lung capacity. Because of that, any respiratory virus that your bunny picks up and quickly turn into pneumonia.

In addition to monitoring your rabbit's digestive input and output, look closely at her nose every day. Eye discharge is also a symptom of a respiratory infection in rabbits. Look in the nostrils to see if you see wetness or pus, which is a milky-white color. Catching a respiratory infection early can keep it from becoming more serious. Respiratory infections can also turn into a middle ear infection, which causes a serious condition called head tilt.

Head Tilt

If you've ever seen a bunny whose head limps to one side, you've seen a bunny with head tilt. Head tilt is caused by a number of things including inner ear infections, E. cuniculi (which we will discuss later in this section), trauma or cancer.

Most head tilt cases are a result of inner ear infections, and X-rays generally need to be taken to diagnose it. To combat the inner ear infection, your vet will likely prescribe antibiotics. If that fails, your vet may suggest ear surgery to help drain the ear. An outer ear infection—which can lead to an inner ear infection if not detected—is likely if there is a discharge from the bunny's ears.

Another cause of head tilt may be a traumatic injury to your bunny's head; i.e. if your bunny has been hit or kicked in the head, face or neck. Your bunny may also experience head tilt if she has ingested any type of toxic material, including lead paint from chewing on walls and plants poisonous to rabbits.

You'll need to have plenty of patience and love to help your bunny deal with head tilt. However, it's important to note that head tilt should by no means be a death sentence for a bunny. Many bunnies with head tilt live long, happy lives, hopping and playing as well as their healthy bunny counterparts. Some bunnies recover completely, and some recover to the point of only a slightly noticeable tilt of the head.

So, how do you take care of a bunny with head tilt? First, the head of a bunny with head tilt generally slopes to one side, and the eye facing down will generally not have the ability to close anymore. Therefore, you'll need to ask your bunny-savvy vet the best kind of eye ointment to use to keep your bunny's eyes moist.

Bunnies with head tilt also have problem keeping their balance and will fall and roll, so you'll need to make sure their surroundings are padded and comfortable. You'll also need to make sure their space—whether a cage or a pen—is smaller than normal to ensure your bunny doesn't get hurt. Many stores sell synthetic sheepskin rugs that you'll want to put beneath your bunny when she is lying down. These are excellent products, as your bunny—when she urinates—will remain clean and dry. Make sure you have plenty of rolled up towels or pillows so your bunny can lean against them, allowing her to be in a more upright position.

It's perfectly fine for you to pick up your bunny if she has head tilt. Just remember to hold her properly and closely to your body, not letting any part of her body dangle. You want her to feel secure in your arms.

Finally, you'll probably need to help your bun to eat by hand-feeding her greens and hay. In all likelihood, she will not want to eat her pellets. This is also another sign of

illness. Most healthy bunnies love and gobble up their pellets while most sick bunnies refuse them.

Of course, a bun with any type of illness is prone to not wanting to eat. If this is the case, you'll probably need to resort to syringe feeding your bunny. If you've practiced syringe feeding before the illness, you should have little trouble. If you do, simply be patient and remember your bunny can feel your stress. It's important for you to remain calm so your bunny will be calm.

E. cuniculi

E. cuniculi is simply a parasitic organism found in a variety of animals, including rabbits. Many rabbits are exposed to the parasite, and a simple blood test will determine if your bunny has been exposed to E. cuniculi. However, exposure doesn't mean your bunny will ever even show signs of the disease.

What affect does E. cuniculi have on a rabbit? Symptoms include head tilt and paralysis. However, your doctor should rule out all other possibilities, like an inner ear infection, before confirming it is E. cuniculi causing the symptoms.

To learn more about E. cuniculi, read the following articles:

- § <http://www.hrschicago.org/cuniculifr.html>
- § <http://www.uk-pet-rabbits.4t.com/about.html>
- § <http://www.vet-2-pet.com/rabbitwelfare/ecuniculi.html>
- § <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/health/vet-talk/cuniculi.html>

Fly Strike

The warm weather is a fertile time for flies, and these insects can be deadly to your bunny. Fly strike can affect any rabbit, but those particularly prone include buns

with loose stools, elder buns, disabled buns and overweight buns, all of who may have trouble cleaning themselves. If your bun has any open wounds you should also be cautious of fly strike because flies will often lay their eggs in the warm flesh of the wound, infesting your bunny. The flies will eat at the bunny's flesh, releasing a toxin that may well send the bunny into shock.

So, how do you know if your bunny has been afflicted with fly strike? Some bunnies with fly strike will have seizures, and you should also be concerned if your bunny suddenly becomes lethargic. Even if it isn't fly strike, your bunny could be battling a serious illness if he is lethargic. Lethargy is a bad sign in rabbits. If it is fly strike, the lethargy may be a result of your bunny going into shock.

You'll need to take action immediately when you notice your bunny has been infested by calling a rabbit-savvy vet. Fly strike is often a fatal disease if not treated immediately.

You should also read the following article now, just to be prepared in the event of an emergency in the future: <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/2-12/fly-strike.html>.

Fleas

Like other many animals, rabbits are prone to fleas. Fleas can be treated with a trip to the vet. It is extremely important that your bunny see a rabbit-savvy vet because flea dips can kill rabbits.

A knowledgeable vet will know the proper type of flea medication to prescribe, and many prescribe Advantage or Revolution. **You should know—and be sure to remember—Frontline should NEVER be used on rabbits.** For excellent information on fleas and why not to use Frontline, join the Etherbun list and read through the

archives. This is probably a good idea anyway, as you'll obtain a wealth of information and valuable advice from fellow bunny owners and experts.

It's important to remember that if your bunny has a bunny friend or two to keep them separated for 12-24 hours after applying topical flea treatment. Although the treated bunny can't lick between her shoulder blades, one of her friends can while grooming her.

Be sure to treat all rabbits, cats and dogs in your household at the same time. If you don't, the fleas will come right back.

For more information on harmful flea medications and effective treatments, visit:

§ <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/health/vet-talk/frontline.html>

§ http://www.rabbitresource.org/lib_flea.html

§ <http://www.allearsac.org/fleas.html>

Diarrhea

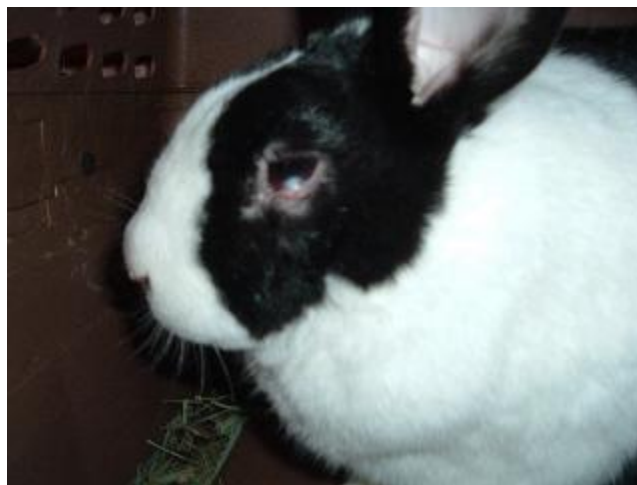
Before we discuss the impact of diarrhea in a rabbit, it's first important to point out that rabbits have two different types of droppings: fecal pellets and cecotropes. Fecal pellets are the little poops you see in your bunny's litter box. They're various sizes depending on the bunny and are hard. Cecotropes, which aren't feces, are grapelike clusters your bunny expels at night then eats, helping to produce necessary nutrients.

Diarrhea is not common in adult rabbits. In fact if your bunny has what you believe is diarrhea, you should take a sample of it and her normal pellets to a rabbit-savvy vet. Diarrhea is often a result of roundworms or tapeworms as well as a number of intestinal parasites.

Eye Problems

If your bunny has runny eyes, you'll need to make an appointment to get her checked by a bunny savvy vet. The clear tears can quickly turn to a white creamy puss if bacterial infection sets in, which can be very dangerous to your bunny. Your vet will most likely put your bunny on an antibiotic such as Baytril and also give you eye drops or cream for your bunny's eyes.

Like people and even dogs, rabbits are prone to developing glaucoma, an eye condition in which the pressure of the eyeball gets too high, eventually leading to blindness. Some veterinarians report treating glaucoma in rabbits with some new medications. However, even successful treatment just slows down the progression of the disorder. Eventually the bunny will lose vision in the eye with glaucoma. Some vets believe the disease progresses faster in rabbits than it does in other animals. A glaucoma screening is another good reason to have your bunny checked out by a veterinarian once a year.



An Example of a Common Eye Infection

Ears

As we discussed in the head tilt section, rabbits are prone to both outer and inner ear infections that require vet care. Whether you have a Dutch bunny whose ears stick straight up or your lovable bun is a lop, you'll be interested to know there's no difference in a rabbit's ears between breeds.

Some vets report that lops tend to have more ear infections than bunnies with straight up ears, primarily because the folded-over ear is more difficult to clean. Although rabbits tend to scratch their ears quite a bit, pay attention to see if your pet is scratching one ear more than the other. That may be a sign that there's an ear infection. Excessive scratching is an indicator, too. Some poor bunnies scratch so often at their infected ears that they also end up inadvertently scratching their eyes, which can lead to eye infections too.

It's important to catch ear infections before they spread to the middle ear and cause head tilt. Your vet may teach you some ear-cleaning techniques if your rabbit is susceptible to ear infections.

Preventing Hairballs

Unlike dogs and cats, rabbits are unable to throw up. That means they cannot spit up a hairball. To prevent hairballs in your pet, you should brush your bunny often, especially when they are shedding, which is typically every three months. Preventing hairballs is also one reason unlimited hay is necessary to your bunny's diet because it helps to move the hair/fur through the digestive tract.

Many people give their bunnies Petromalt or Laxatone, an ointment that is designed to help prevent hairballs. During shedding season you can give the ointment once a day then decrease to once a week when your bunny is not shedding.

Some bunnies will simply stick their noses up in the air at the Petromalt or Laxatone. A sure-fire way to get your bun to ingest the treatment is to squeeze a little bit from the bottle onto her one of her paws or her nose. Either way, she's going to want to clean it off, and the only way to clean it is to lick off the treatment.

Cankers

Rabbits can get ear cankers. Cankers are mite infestations and are very painful for rabbits. Thankfully ear cankers can be treated quickly and effectively with an ivermectin shot.

Injury

Veterinarians report treating several different kinds of rabbit injuries. Bunnies do not have good immune systems like dogs and cats. An abscessed wound can be very difficult to treat. That's why covering the wire floor of the cage is so important. Many bunny injuries are due to getting their legs or feet getting caught in cage bars.

Another common, and very unfortunate, injury is a broken back. Your bun can kick very hard and if their legs aren't held against your body when you hold them they can kick so hard that they break their spine. There is no recovery for a broken spine, so learn early the proper way to hold your pet safely.

Fear

Rabbits are prey animals by nature and they frighten easily. In fact, it is possible for a bunny to be scared to death. For example, someone may find a puppy or dog

chasing a bunny around the yard or the room amusing. The puppy or dog may be playing, but the bunny doesn't know that. He can literally die from the fright of being chased.

The worst sound you can possibly hear from a bunny is a scream. Bunnies scream when they are scared or severely injured—and this should be a warning signal to get the bunny right away.

Spaying and Neutering

First-time rabbit owners may be surprised to learn that bunnies can—and should, according to expert consensus—be spayed and neutered just like dogs and cats. There are still some people today who will debate whether spaying and neutering rabbits is actually necessary. For a variety of health and other reasons, spaying and neutering should be done on all rabbits, regardless of whether they are single-home buns or part of a bonded pair or group.

Spaying a female is necessary to prevent major health issues. Females who are unsprayed are at high risk of ovarian cancer, uterine cancer and mammarian cancer.

Spaying and neutering your rabbits will help curb their aggression. Many bunny owners have found that when their bunnies hit a certain age—between four and six months—they become more aggressive. These bunnies will begin to growl and lunge at their owners. Some bunnies will cry, and the boys will generally begin to spray. This is natural because the bunnies have become sexually mature, and their hormones—like a teenager's—are wreaking havoc.

The good news is once your bunny is spayed or neutered you'll have a much easier time of litter training him or her, and the boys' spraying will stop. After the neuter,

you may notice your male bunny is still spraying. This is normal, and it will stop once the hormones in your bunny's system begin to dissipate.

Another good reason to spay or neuter your bunny is the necessity to clean scent glands. Your bunny-savvy vet can point out these glands, which are located on either side of the genitalia. These glands get crusted over with a creamy discharge that can be very smelly.

It is extremely important you find a rabbit-savvy vet to perform the spay or neuter. Most vets prefer to wait until a rabbit is between five (for males) and six months (for females) of age to perform the surgery. However it is acceptable to have your male neutered once his testicles drop.

If your rabbit is two years or older, you'll want her/him to have a thorough checkup to ensure he or she is healthy before scheduling a spay or neuter. Once a rabbit has reached six years of age, spaying and neutering—indeed any surgery in general which requires anesthesia—becomes more of a risk.

A spay or neuter can cost anywhere from \$55 and up. Having a female altered generally costs more because spaying a rabbit is a delicate process. You'll want to ask your vet plenty of questions before to the operation to ensure he is fully qualified to perform the surgery. Ask your vet how many rabbits he has seen in the last year and how many spays or neuters he has performed. Then ask him his success rate for spays and neuters. Spaying and neutering is generally very safe if a rabbit-savvy vet is performing the surgery. According to the House Rabbit Society, if your vet states even a 90 percent surgical success rate then you want to find a different vet. If he has lost any bunnies

during a spay or neuter surgery, be sure to ask what caused the death because there may have been extenuating circumstances such as a health condition.

Make sure you feed your bunny before surgery. If your vet tells you to have her fast the night before, you should hear alarm bells. Remember, when a bunny doesn't eat for 12 hours or more she risks going into GI stasis, a potentially deadly illness. You want to make sure you discuss the care your vet and his staff will give your bunny after the surgery as well since she'll probably need to spend a night in the hospital.

When your bunny returns home after her spay or his neuter, you will need to be prepared for post-op care. To ensure a smooth recovery, vets tend to recommend the bunny being confined to their cage, pen or a small area for at least a week before letting them out for their normal run time or allowing them to go back to free range.

Nail Trimming

Your bunny will need her nails trimmed fairly often, and you have two choices when it comes to trimming nails: you can take her to the vet, though, this admittedly will get expensive, or you can trim them yourselves.

To trim your bunny's nails, you'll need a good pair of clippers. You can find specialized bunny clippers at any pet store like Petco, Pet Supplies Plus or PetSmart. In fact, they are very similar to the clippers sold to trim cat's nails, so you could also use nail clippers for cats if you want. Or, you can use a pair of old-fashioned nail clippers that you use for trimming your own nails.

Make sure when you're ready to trim your bunny's nails that you have the clippers, the flour, just in case you hit a vein, and a towel. Some bunny owners suggest the towel to wrap your bunny in, making it difficult for her to squirm and try to get away.

The more you trim your bunny's nails the more you'll discover what works best for you and your bunny.

There are several ways you can trim your rabbit's nails. First, if there is someone else with you, you can have that person securely hold your bunny—wrapped in a towel to prevent scratching while you trim the nails. You can also sit the bunny on the floor, gripping her between your legs. This makes it easy to trim the nails on the front paws, but you'll need to be creative to get the nails on the back paws.

When trimming the nails, look for the line that indicates a vein. If your bunny has dark nails you may not be able to see it. If you can see it, do not trim into the vein or beyond. If you cannot see the vein, simply trim a little bit. This way you won't accidentally hit a vein; however, you might have to trim the nails more often.

You can order an in-depth video on how to trim your bunny's nails if you find it too difficult of a task at <http://www.rabbitcare.org/video.htm>. Or, you can visit www.rabbit.org, and click on "Care" then on the link "Nail Cutting Video."

Emergency Kit

Emergencies can happen any time, and you'll probably have one—like most bunny owners—at the most inopportune of times: a holiday or a weekend when your regular rabbit-savvy vet isn't in. Even if your vet is available, you'll find it's important to have an emergency kit on hand in case of a bunny accident or illness.

You should include some, if not all, of the following items in your emergency kit:

- § Baby food or canned pumpkin to mix: Use then when your bunny refuses to eat; it's easy to get the baby food or canned pumpkin into a syringe.

- § Critical Care by Oxbow: the same as baby food and canned pumpkin, you'll use this when your bunny refuses to eat. However, Critical Care is only available through your vet's office.
- § Gas medication (Simethicone) in case of a gas emergency. Various brands are acceptable, including Gas-X. For a detailed way to administer the medication as well as for proper dosages, read <http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/ileus.html>. (The same article is included under GI stasis.)
- § Basic Neosporin (the non-pain relief type): You can use this if your bunny has a minor cut or wound.
- § Flour: This is the trick if you trim your bunny's nails a little too short and they begin to bleed. Simply dip her paw into the flour.
- § Gauze and cotton: to care for wounds.
- § Scissors: Use them to carefully trim the fur surrounding a bunny wound.
- § Syringes of various sizes
- § Saline: Use to wash out eyes in an emergency.
- § Eyedropper: Use to administer the saline.
- § Heating pad: You'll use this if your bunny goes into hypothermia.
- § Tweezers
- § Pedialyte: Helps keep your bunny hydrated during stasis and bouts of gas.
(<http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/ileus.html>)

The following links have excellent articles on Emergency Kits for bunnies; some are quite complicated and explain in explicit detail how each item in the kit should be used:

§ http://www.mybunny.org/info/emergency_kit.htm

§ <http://www.ontariorabbits.org/health/healthinfo7.htm>

§ http://www.hrss.net/aar/health/health_emkit.html

Breeds of Rabbits



You've found the perfect rabbit but you're not sure what breed she is. How do determine her breed? You can simply ask the person whom you adopted her from, or you can ask your rabbit-savvy vet. A search on the Internet of "rabbit breeds" will bring up many sites where you can scroll through pictures to find one that matches your bunny.

It is important to note there are many bunnies that are mixed breeds. When you pick the right bunny for you, you should really do so based on personality and demeanor rather than by breed. Because you've heard a couple of bad stories about dwarf bunnies being skittish, it's detrimental to assume all dwarf bunnies are skittish. Many bunny enthusiasts believe the larger bunnies are mellower than the dwarf varieties. However, just like people, rabbits are individuals and have their own personalities that cannot be judged based on their breed alone.

Despite their breed, all rabbits need the same high level of care as discussed in this book. All bunnies need unlimited hay. All need love, attention and proper care. All need to be groomed regularly, although special attention needs to be paid to rabbits with long hair like Angoras and Jersey Wooleys. All are at risk for the same health ailments.

Let's take a look at some of the popular breeds of rabbits:

- § **American** rabbits are relatively new, having made their first appearance in the United States in 1917. You can find American rabbits in both a bluish color and white. American rabbits can weigh as much as 11 pounds.
- § **Angoras** are absolutely adorable rabbits—native to Ankara, Turkey—that can be as small as five pounds and as large as 12 pounds. Angoras must be brushed regularly because of their long, lovely hair. It's absolutely essential that you groom your Angora frequently to prevent hairballs and stasis. You can even take your Angora to the groomer for a trim. Check them out at <http://animal-world.com/encyclo/critters/rabbits/angora.php>.
- § **Californians** are easy to spot with their pure white body complemented by black ears, a black nose, black feet and a black tail. This beautiful breed originated in the United States in 1928. If you adopt a Californian, you can expect her/him to weigh anywhere from eight to 10 pounds. See a Californian at http://www.centralpets.net/pages/photopages/mammals/rabbits/PHOTO_RBT1419.shtml.
- § **Checkered Giants** have a mysterious past. Popular belief is the breed was born of a Flemish Giant and a wild German rabbit. The first Checkered Giant landed in the United States in 1910. Expect a big bunny when you adopt a Checkered Giant; most weigh a minimum of 11 pounds. See a photo at <http://www.centralpets.com/pages/critterpages/mammals/rabbits/RBT1462.shtml>.

- § **Dwarf** rabbits are popular for their small size. Dwarfs tend to have a lot of energy and can come in a variety of colors from black to a reddish tint. They can be as tiny as two pounds.
- § **Dwarf Hotots** are known for their distinct, eye-catching markings. Many dwarf hotots have black or gray “eyeliner” around their eyes and black or gray at the top of their ears. Dwarf hotots were first found in Germany but didn’t make their first appearance in the United States until 1981. Dwarf hotots can weigh anywhere from two and a half to five pounds. You can see a dwarf hotot at <http://www.centralpets.com/animals/mammals/rabbits/rbt1466.html>.
- § **Dutch** rabbits are popular rabbits, having originated in Holland. They are relatively small rabbits, between three and five pounds once they are adults. You can see more photos of Dutch bunnies at <http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/6949/pics.html>.
- § **English Spot** originated in England in the 1800s and is said to be one of the oldest breeds in the world. An adult English spot will generally weigh between five and eight pounds. A picture of the English Spot can be seen at <http://www.centralpets.net/pages/critterpages/mammals/rabbits/RBT1422.shtml>.
- § **Flemish Giants** are just that: giants amongst rabbits. Flemish giants can get as big as 28 pounds, the size of a small dog. These adorable bunnies date back to early 20th century America. Check out the adorable Flemish Giants at <http://community.webshots.com/album/81670473weAjq>.
- § **Himalayans** are relatively small bunnies, weighing a little over three pounds. See a picture at <http://www.planet-pets.com/rabthima.htm>.

- § **Holland Lops** are popular because of their adorable ears that hang down to their sides, unlike most bunnies whose ears stand straight up. Like the Dutch bunny, Holland Lops come from Holland. The first Holland Lops were introduced in 1949. You can expect your Holland Lop to weigh anywhere between two to five pounds. You can see pictures of the Holland Lop at <http://www.geocities.com/hollandstandard/page1.html>.
- § **Jersey Wooleys** were introduced in the 1970s in New Jersey (thus, the name “Jersey Wooleys.”) Jersey Wooleys have long woolen fur, and they are small rabbits, approximately three pounds. You can see photos of Jersey Wooleys at <http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Mountain/7400/>.
- § **Mini-Lops** are extremely popular because of their floppy ears. These buns average five pounds, and in the United States, they date back to 1972. To see photos of Mini-Lops, visit <http://www.nmlrc.20m.com/page10.html>.
- § **Mini-Rexes** are known for their extremely soft, velvet-like fur. Mini-rexes are relatively small bunnies weighing approximately four to four-and-a-half pounds, and they were first introduced in the United States in 1988, making them a fairly new breed. See a mini-rex at <http://www.centralpets.com/animals/mammals/rabbits/rbt1441.html>.
- § **Netherland Dwarfs** are truly tiny bunnies, weighing in at approximately two pounds. These little fur balls first became popular in the United States in 1969, and you can find Netherland Dwarfs in more than 30 different colors. To see photos of the Netherland Dwarf, check out: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/4287/photos.html>

§ **New Zealand** rabbits are absolutely beautiful; many are pure white with pink eyes. The New Zealand rabbit originated in the United States in the 1920s. When you adopt a New Zealand, you can expect a full-grown rabbit of 10 to 11 pounds.

See a photo at

<http://www.centralpets.net/pages/critterpages/mammals/rabbits/RBT1436.shtml>.

§ **Silver Martens** are medium-sized rabbits, generally black and silver in color. Silver Martens are usually between seven and nine pounds. To see more photos, visit <http://animal-world.com/encyclo/critters/rabbits/smarten.php>.

Breeding

Rabbit breeding is both a popular and controversial practice today. Before you decide whether breeding is a responsibility you want to undertake, read everything you can on the subject. Also talk to your local animal shelters and rabbit rescue organizations. They can give you a good idea about why you should reconsider breeding.

If you do decide breeding is for you, you'll want to make sure you have the time and adequate finances to care for both the parents and the baby bunnies. Vet bills can be hefty, and you'll have to provide adequate shelter and food for the bunnies.

Also, do you have an understanding of the overpopulation of rabbits? A million rabbits are euthanized every year, and that number is only going to grow in the coming years. Why do you want to breed rabbits? If your answer is "just for fun," you need to seriously reconsider breeding.

You should also consider that breeding rabbits to sell essentially isn't worth the money or the effort. You're going to spend much more money on vet bills and food for

the bunnies than you will in selling them. If you absolutely *must* breed, ensure that you do so properly and with great care. Also, remember females who are not spayed have an 80 percent chance of developing ovarian cancer.

Rabbits breed very quickly. A female can have a litter of as many as nine babies *every month*. They can have as many as 200 baby bunnies in one year. In fact, females can get pregnant again as quickly as 24 hours after giving birth. You can rest assured if you put an unneutered male in the same living space as an unspayed female, he will mount her constantly. That's just what his hormones tell him to do. If you have to unaltered rabbits, they will be mating unless the female objects. If the female objects to the male's moves, there can be serious fighting and possible death for one of the rabbits.

Always house female and male rabbits separately when you're going to breed them. Make sure you bring the female to the male's living quarters. This is simply because rabbits are very territorial, and the female will likely attack the male when he is put in her space. The male, however, will be so happy for the female's presence in his area that he's not going to remember anything about being territorial.

You'll know when the two have mated because the male will thump his hind legs. At this point, you want to immediately take the female out and hold her to assure she doesn't urinate. Then, put her back in her area. Bring her back to the male in an hour or so, and begin the process again.

You'll be able to tell if the female is pregnant a few days after conception. Because hormones are wreaking havoc with her, she will become moody and aggressive. You'll also be able to feel her nipples growing. Continue to feed her unlimited hay, fresh

greens and limited pellets. The mom-to-be should be housed separately for her own health and comfort.

You should expect the babies to be born approximately 31 days after conception, so make sure you keep a calendar of the expected due date. You also want to make sure you have time to devote to the bunnies at this time. Five days before the expected birth, you'll want to put a nest box—with hay or soft rags—in the female's living area. During the female's pregnancy, you'll also notice she is pulling her fur out and lining the nest box and living area with it—this is for her babies.

Once the babies are born, their mom will clean them off. Then, you should remove them from the living area to check on their conditions and take away any babies who did not survive. You need to keep the baby bunnies away from their mom to ensure she doesn't accidentally hurt them. (They will not see their father either.) Keep the nest box with the bunnies inside, then take them to nurse from their mom in the morning and in the evening each day.

Some breeders prefer to keep the babies with their mom upon birth. It all depends on individual preference. If you happen to adopt a pregnant rabbit who gives birth to babies, you'll want to keep the mom with her babies. If this is the case, contact the House Rabbit Society or post a message to Etherbun for advice.

You'll notice the bunnies are born with their eyes closed and naked. Their fur will begin to grow immediately, but it takes time to fill out. The babies will begin opening their eyes when they are between 10 and 13 days old.

You'll want to make sure the babies continue to nurse until they are at least two months old. During the period between birth and two months, the babies will start acting

like bunnies. By the third week of their lives, they'll want to start exploring outside of the nesting box. Make sure you have a flat, comfortable surface for them to run around on. You don't want them to stand on wires because they have tiny feet that could easily get stuck, causing them injury. Refer to the "Diet" section of this book for ages the bunnies can begin eating pellets, hay and fresh vegetables and fruit.

When the babies are seven weeks old, allow them to nurse from their mother only every other day to prepare them for the weaning stage. When they are two months old, you'll want to wean them completely from their mother's milk. Breeding experts advise that keeping the mom and her babies in separate living quarters is best.

You can tell a male from a female when the male's testicles drop. However, there are other ways you can do to properly sex your bunny. To see illustrated photos of how to sex your bunny, read <http://www.cs.cf.ac.uk/Rabbits/rabsex.html>.

Start putting the babies in different living quarters when they are approximately three months old, and you can begin to decide which bunnies you are going to keep and what you are going to do with the rest. (Of course, you should have already made this decision BEFORE beginning the breeding process.)

For more information, please read the following articles on breeding rabbits:

- § <http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/breeding.html> (To Breed or Not to Breed)
- § <http://www.rabbit.org/adoption/why-not-to-breed.html>
- § <http://www.vrra.org/rabbits101.htm> (Scroll down to the "Breeding" section.)
- § <http://www.rabbitadoption.org/breed.html>
- § <http://www.mybunny.org/info/spayneuter.htm>

§ <http://www.coloradohrs.com/breeders.asp>

Showing Rabbits

Showing rabbits is both a popular and controversial hobby in which many people participate. When a breeder breeds rabbits for show, they'll go through a "culling" process upon birth of the babies. There are those bunnies that are "quality" for showing; those who will be sold as pets and those who will be euthanized because of what breeders call genetic problems. These genetic problems are often easily solved by trimming the bunny's teeth each month or having the problem teeth removed, so sadly many bunnies are killed for little reason except they do not meet standards of a show judge.

Breeders also cull rabbits who are adults for a variety of reasons including not having the proper color or markings, health problems and aggression. This is one of the many reasons showing rabbits is such a controversial hobby.

If you do decide to show rabbits, please ensure your rabbits are treated properly, and make sure they have a cage that is *at least* four times as big as they are. Many times rabbits are improperly housed in cages where they can barely turn around, and there is no room for food bowls or a water bottle. After the show is over, you're likely to see many of the rabbits for sale for a sum as paltry as one dollar. If they are not sold, there is no telling the fate of these rabbits. Also, many undoubtedly go with people intending to use them as snake food, an extremely terrifying, painful way for a rabbit to die.

If you don't want your rabbit after showing, please take her to an animal shelter where she has the chance to find a loving home. If, at the very worst, she is euthanized, at least it will be done gently and kindly, unlike being strangled by a snake or left to fend for herself in the wild.

If you want to show your rabbit, you'll need to make sure she meets the strict standards of The American Rabbit Breeders Association. The ARBA holds shows across the country throughout the year. Their website is located at <http://www.arba.net/> and includes a plethora of information on locations and dates of shows, including how to attend their annual conference. You'll find all the information—including how to put on your own rabbit show—at the ARBA.

The National 4H Club often has rabbit shows, and children are often involved in raising and showing rabbits as part of a club project. To learn more, visit <http://www.4-h.org/>.

For more information on how to show rabbits, visit

§ http://www.geocities.com/metrorabbit_2000/page4.html

§ <http://revolution.3-cities.com/~fuzzyfarm/Show-rab.htm>

How do you say rabbit/bunny in...?

French: lapin

Spanish: el conejo/el conejito

German: hasehäschen

Italian: coniglio/coniglietto

Dutch: het konijn

Portuguese: coelho/coelhinho

Russian: кролик

Norwegian: kanin

Chinese: 兔 子

Greek: kouneli/kounelaki

Cute/Popular/Fun Bunny Names

- § Bugs
- § Thumper
- § Puddles
- § Midnight
- § Riley
- § Stormie
- § Pippin
- § Noel
- § Piper
- § Holbrook
- § Willow
- § Cocoa
- § Maybelline
- § Oreo
- § Dezzi
- § Cherub
- § Romeo
- § Hershey
- § Hayley
- § Velvet
- § Tinkerbell
- § Juniper

§ Dutch
§ Tuxedo
§ Patches
§ Sadie
§ Tyler
§ Duchess
§ Harvey
§ Pumpkin
§ Angel
§ Binky
§ Hopkins
§ Snowball
§ Peanut
§ Dakota
§ Dash
§ Hopper
§ Nutmeg
§ Smokey
§ Chance
§ Satine
§ Shadow
§ Snuggles
§ Thumbelina

§ Flopsy
§ Marshmallow
§ Gatsby
§ Jade
§ Frodo
§ Arial
§ Rex
§ Mittens
§ Zuzu
§ Halo
§ Onyx
§ Sabrina
§ Belle
§ Noir
§ Bailey
§ Q-Tip
§ Nibbles
§ Daisy
§ Merry
§ Tricycle
§ Oscar
§ Zoey
§ Pepper

- § Sundance
- § Hopson
- § Ripley
- § Trance
- § Sweetpea
- § Charmin
- § Noah
- § Bunster
- § Silver
- § Bumper
- § Rascal

Did you know...

- § Rabbits are nocturnal.
- § Neither wild nor domestic rabbits hibernate.
- § A rabbit may tear apart her cage out of frustration? If your bunny isn't spayed or neutered, you should get her/him altered as soon as possible.
- § Rabbits can't throw up. They can gag, but they can't vomit.
- § Rabbits can snore.
- § Rabbits can jump 36 inches and higher. Rabbits are excellent at jumping.
- § Wild rabbits can be found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica.
- § Wild rabbits sleep in burrows.
- § A group of rabbits is called a herd.
- § Less than 10 percent of all abandoned wild baby rabbits survive.

§ You can learn more about what to do if you find an abandoned baby bunny or bunnies by reading <http://www.ntrs.org/wild.htm>.

Rabbits and Abuse

There are plenty of horror stories about domestic rabbits from poaching to unwanted bunnies being tossed from cars or simply left in parks to fend for themselves. There's no answer as to why these things happen, but there is something you can do. When you read articles (like the ones following), and if they enrage you, write a letter. The more people who express their anger and concern, the more likely change will take place.

You can also volunteer at your local animal shelter or rescue organization. Join the House Rabbit Society, and become an educational volunteer. There is plenty you can do to bring abuse of rabbits to the forefront.

The following article is one of the big stories of the past years regarding mistreatment of rabbits:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/07/29/BAG117UUIL1.DTL>

This article has a happy ending. Lucky the bunny found a home after being taken to a shelter.

Rabbit Groups

There are many online groups you can join to discuss your bunny's health, behavior and other fun stuff. Check out:

§ www.hopline.com

§ <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/>

- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/etherbun/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AngoraHouseBun/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HouseBun/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Bunny-Rabbit-Mail/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HouseRabbitDiscussion/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UK-Pet-Rabbits/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/therabbitworld/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RabbitVet/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/petbunhealth/>
- § <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Rabbits-R-Us/>

Losing A Bunny

There comes a time when we all must say goodbye to our beloved bunnies. For some, goodbye comes way too soon because of illness or accident. For others, goodbye is after many years of love and companionship. Saying goodbye is never easy, and losing a bunny can be a traumatic experience for anyone who has invited a bunny into his/her heart.

Many people have gone through the loss of a bunny—and whether it was sudden or expected—losing your little bun is hard. Many bunny owners go through the normal grieving process. You might question what you could have done differently. You might mull over everything little thing you could have changed, especially if this is your first bunny. This is just a natural process, and it will take time to heal your heart.

But, one day, when you think of your beloved bunny, the ache in your heart will be replaced with a feeling of peace and a smile, as you remember the bond and happy memories you shared. The most important thing to remember is you gave your bunny love, happiness and a beautiful life, and in return, you made a best friend.

Grieving is different for everyone, but you might find talking with other bunny lovers will help you through the process. Join Etherbun or any other bunny message board, and post a message. You'll receive an outpouring of love, understanding and an outlet to share your grief and healing.

There are also many pet loss support groups from which you can seek help. Ask your vet or look in your phone book for your local pet loss group. You might also want to check the following sites out as well:

§ <http://www.petloss.com/>

§ <http://www.in-memory-of-pets.com/>

§ <http://www.aplb.org/> (Association of Pet Loss and Bereavement)

§ <http://rainbowsbridge.com/Poem.htm>

The Rainbow Bridge poem—written by an unknown author—has brought comfort to many grieving pet owners. If you join a bunny list, and some writes “ATB” next to their name bunny’s name, it means her bunny is “at the bridge.”

Rainbow Bridge

Just this side of Heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food and water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable. All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by.

The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing: they miss someone very special to them; who had to be left behind. They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. The bright eyes are intent; the eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to break away from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster. YOU have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together....."

---Author Unknown

Conclusion

And so the journey continues...will you adopt a house rabbit after everything you've learned? If you've decided a bunny is right for you and for your family, congratulations! You are going to have an amazing time learning and bonding with these splendid animals. You really are in for a beautiful experience.

If—after reading this book—you've decided having a bunny just isn't right for you, you deserve just as many congratulations. You've taken the time to learn all you could, and you made the best decision possible—for both you and the bunny you may have adopted.

If you liked this e-book, you might also enjoy: www.GuineaPigSecrets.com – everything you really need to know about Guinea Pigs in one place! (Guinea Pigs and Rabbits usually get along well).