



HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY

Bunny Care Fact Sheet

A rabbit can be a wonderful companion animal if given a chance to interact with you and your family. There's a lot to learn about these intriguing creatures if you are a first-time rabbit adopter. This will get you started. For more information, go to www.rabbit.org, a great site about rabbit care. Or call the Humane Society of Broward County at (954) 266-6875.

Housing:

1. INDOORS!

Subjecting a rabbit to Florida weather, insects and predators makes for an unhappy bunny.

2. ROOMY CAGE

At least four times the size of your rabbit in the stretched out position. Better yet, build or buy your rabbit a two-story "condo" with the floors connected by a ramp. They love this! A rabbit should not spend most of his time caged in small quarters. After all, would you cage your cat?

3. NO WIRE FLOORS

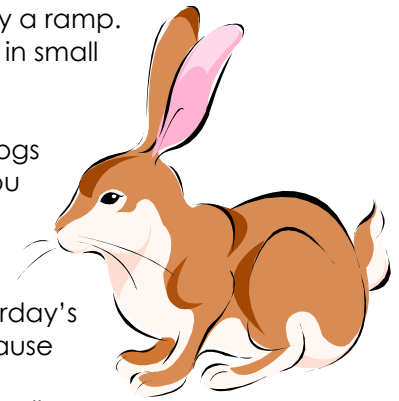
They are hard on a rabbit's feet. Rabbits don't have pads like dogs or cats. Use a cage with slatted plastic floors or a solid floor. If you must use a cage with a wire floor, you need to provide your rabbit with a resting board or grass mat for her to sit on.

4. LITTER BOX

Fasten a litter box to the corner of the cage. Use litters like Yesterday's News or Carefresh that don't produce dust particles that can cause lung infection in rabbits. Never use cedar products as litter or bedding—it can cause respiratory problems. (This is true for all small creatures, including hamsters and gerbils.) A litter-trained rabbit can run the house like a cat IF you bunny proof!

5. EXERCISE & BUNNY PROOFING

Once your rabbit uses the litter box consistently, you can give her supervised freedom. Place one or more litter boxes in the corners of the room you let her run in. It's great exercise for a rabbit, and it allows her to escape the loneliness and boredom so many rabbits suffer left in a small cage for long periods of time. Because bunnies love to chew, be sure to bunny-proof the room first: encase exposed electrical cords in vinyl tubing so the rabbit cannot reach them. Just slit the tubing lengthwise and push the cord inside!



Diet:

1. FRESH WATER

Give your rabbit access to fresh water at all times. He will drink more from a bowl than he will from a water bottle.

2. TIMOTHY HAY

Your rabbit should have this 24 hours a day! Fresh timothy hay provides digestive fiber, chewing recreation, and it is the only thing that keeps a rabbit's ever-growing teeth short. It is most economical to buy timothy hay by the bale and store it on a covered patio or in a garage. If you keep it protected from direct sunlight or moisture, it'll last months.

3. PELLETS

Rabbits only need about ¼ cup of high-quality rabbit pellets per 5 pounds of bunny weight daily. More will only contribute to obesity. Only rabbits under 6 months should be free-fed pellets (they can eat as many as they like).

4. SALAD GREENS

Give your bunny a daily dose of raw foods like romaine, kale, spinach, parsley, carrot tops, basil, and cilantro. They also like occasional treats of root vegetables and fruits.

Toys:

1. MENTAL STIMULATION

Keep your rabbit interested in his surroundings by allowing him to learn! If you give him attention, safe things to chew on, and toys for mental stimulation, he'll be less likely to chew on things he shouldn't. Watching a rabbit toss, shake, flip, fling, roll, and retrieve his toys is very entertaining!

2. PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Your rabbit needs safe activities to keep her body in shape as well as her mind. She needs things to climb on, crawl under, hop on and around, dig into, and chew on. Without outlets for these physical needs, your rabbit may become fat or depressed.

3. FAVORITES

Toilet paper rolls; untreated wicker baskets or cardboard boxes full of shredded paper, junk mail, magazines, straw, or other organic materials for digging; Yellow Pages for shredding; cat toys that roll or can be tossed; parrot toys that can be tossed or hung from the top of the cage and chewed or hit; baby toys made of hard plastic like rattles and keys to be tossed; nudge and roll toys like large rubber balls, empty Quaker Oat boxes, and small tins; plastic rainbow Slinkies; a straw whisk broom; a hand towel for bunching and scooting; untreated wood, twigs and logs that have been aged for at least 3 months; things to jump up on (they like to be in high places); etc.

Handling:

1. CAREFUL!

Rabbits require careful handling! A small child's inadvertent roughness can damage a rabbit's delicate skeleton.

2. DESENSITIZE

Rabbits are ground-dwelling animals and usually become frightened when lifted in the air. If your rabbit doesn't like to be held, desensitize her slowly and carefully. With time and gentle handling, she may come to trust her human companion and relax more readily when held. It is always best to sit on the floor at your rabbit's level and pet her or let her hop into your lap.

Grooming:

1. BRUSH WEEKLY

Rabbits insist on being clean & tidy and will lick themselves like cats. They can get hairballs if they ingest too much hair. Unlike cats however, rabbits cannot vomit. If hairballs are allowed to form, they can become gigantic masses of tangled hair & food and will block the stomach exit, causing the rabbit to starve while his stomach appears very fat. Brushing (and access to lots of timothy hay) helps remove the excess hair, and most rabbits love the attention!

2. TO BATHE OR NOT TO BATHE?

Not only is a bath unnecessary for these fastidious groomers, baths can be extremely stressful to a rabbit! Rabbits typically don't like to be wet, their skin is very sensitive, and all that fur takes a loooong time to dry!

Other Animals:

1. CATS & DOGS

House rabbits and indoor cats can get along fine, as do rabbits and well-mannered dogs. Dogs should be trained to respond to commands before being trusted with a free-roaming rabbit.

2. OTHER RABBITS

Adding a second rabbit is easiest if the rabbits are neutered adults of opposite sexes (not to say they can't be of the same sex), and they are introduced for short periods in an area unfamiliar to both rabbits. Better yet, adopt a bonded pair!