

After Adopting A Bunny!

When bringing bunny home

It is important to give your bunny time to adjust to their new living arrangements. It's best to give them space when first arriving in order for them to calm down from the stressful drive and get settled. Bunnies are very curious by nature but can become overwhelmed and scared easily. The next step is simply getting to know each other. Sit or lay on the floor with your new bunny with little movement so that they can sniff you and not feel threatened. Let them sniff your hands, give them treats from your hands and gently try petting them, if they hop away then it's okay to give them space. It is important to be patient with bunnies so that they can learn to trust you. They have great memories and their trust can easily be broken. For the first couple of weeks try to avoid picking them up as much as possible. Most bunnies are terrified of being picked up and this is an easy way to lose their trust. It's important to show them that your hands coming towards them doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to pick them up and scare them but that your hands are a good thing. When taking things slow your bunny will warm up to you quickly and soon will look forward to getting attention from you!

House training

Bunnies love to have free run of the home. However, it's best for most—and necessary for some—to start with a space they can call their own. This can be an exercise pen, a large dog crate, a bunny proofed room, or a very large cage or condo. To make this confined time learning time, make sure that there's a litter box in the corner of the space that your bunny chooses for a "bathroom." As soon as he uses the box consistently, you can give him some freedom. Place one or more large litter boxes in corners of the running area outside the bunny's home base. It is important for bunnies to have time outside of their area to get exercise and stimulation to avoid destructive, depressed or aggressive behavior.

Use only positive reinforcement (treats and praise)—never punishment. Bunnies have a very good memory and it is important for your bunny to love and trust you.

Bunny-Proofing

Bunny-proofing your home is part of living with a house bunny. It is natural for bunnies to chew on furniture, rugs, drapes, and, most deadly of all, electrical cords. Cords must be concealed so that the bunny cannot reach them. Exposed cords can be encased in vinyl tubing (found at hardware stores). By splitting the tubing lengthwise with a utility knife the cord can be pushed inside it.

Give your bunny enough attention, safe chewables, and toys, so that she is distracted from chewing furniture and rugs. A cardboard box make an inexpensive playbox. Young bunnies

(under a year) are more inclined to mischief and require more confinement and/or bunny-proofing than mature bunnies.

House Bunnies and Other Animals

House bunnies and indoor cats can get along fine (depending on the cats behavior), as do bunnies and well-mannered dogs. Dogs should be trained to respond to commands before being trusted with a free-running bunny, and supervision is needed to control a dog's playful impulses (this is especially true for puppies). Bunnies are social animals and are truly happiest when in pairs, they can become depressed from being lonely and can actually die because of it. Once they are bonded they will snuggle and groom each other. Adding a second bunny is easiest if the bunnies are spayed or neutered and opposite sexes, some females can get along but it is unlikely for two males to be friends unless they grew up together and are neutered right away. Ask us for tips on bonding!

Spaying and neutering is so important! It reduces hormones to help with bonding, making them calmer and more loving, less destructive and aggressive, less territorial and prone to spraying and marking with urine. It helps tremendously with litter box training. As bunnies get older they can actually become aggressive because of the hormones. Altered bunnies won't contribute to the overpopulation of bunnies. There are so many bunnies that need homes plus having babies bunnies is challenging in many ways. It is also helps them live longer and healthier lives by reducing sexual aggression and removing their chance of getting reproductive cancers which is very high particularly in females.

Major Health Problems

- **Intestinal blockages:** Because bunnies groom themselves constantly, they get hairballs just as cats do. Unlike cats, however, bunnies cannot vomit, and excessive swallowed hair may cause a fatal blockage. Bunnies can also develop a serious condition known as GI stasis which has many of the same symptoms and is much more deadly.
- If your bunny shows a decrease in appetite and in the size of droppings, get advice from a bunny veterinarian.
- **Prevention:** keep bunny brushed (less hair is swallowed); provide exercise time/space—at least 30 hours a week; give a fresh handful of hay daily; add fresh vegetables gradually to the diet.
- **Bacterial balance:** A bunny's digestive tract is inhabited by healthful bacteria. If the "good" bacteria balance is upset by stale food or a sudden change in diet, harmful bacteria can take over the digestive track and kill the bunny.
- **Prevention:** Keep all bunny food in a cool dry place and make dietary changes slowly, giving a new food in small amounts. If no abdominal gurgling or loose stool results in 24 hours, the food may be offered again. If your bunny goes outside, check for pesticides and poisonous plants.

- **Infectious bacteria:** Many bunny diseases are caused by bacteria, not viruses, and can be treated with antibiotics. If your bunny shows symptoms of a “cold,” take him to a veterinarian familiar with antibiotics that can be safely used in bunnies. Oral drugs of the Penicillin family, such as Amoxicillin, should NOT be given to a bunny, since there is risk of destroying good intestinal bacteria.

It’s Up to You

Find an experienced bunny veterinarian before a problem develops. If your bunny has been harassed by a predator, take him to a veterinarian even if no injuries are apparent. When it is over, keep your bunny cool with nearby wet towels or ice.

Regularly check eyes, nose, ears, teeth, weight, appetite, and droppings.

Danger Signs

Bunnies are prey animals and hide illness very well. It is important to monitor normal and abnormal behaviors because bunnies can die very quickly if warning signs aren’t taken seriously. Don’t waste valuable time! Call your veterinarian immediately if you see:

Diarrhea

Sudden loss of appetite with bloat and abdominal gurgling

Loss of appetite with labored breathing

Loss of appetite with runny nose

Head tilt

Incontinence (urine-soaked rear legs)

Abscesses, lumps or swellings anywhere

Any sudden behavior change

Loss of appetite is one of the biggest warning signs, bunnies love to eat constantly. If you try giving them their favorite treat and they are not interested then that means something is wrong.

The Right Diet for an adult house bunny:

Hay: 80% of diet. Ideally they should eat a pile of hay about the size of their body per day, provide unlimited amount. Hay provides fiber, calories, stimulates gut motility, and controls cecal fermentation. Hay is absolutely critical to maintaining healthy teeth and gut. Timothy, orchard

grass or oat hay is best. Alfalfa hay should only be given to pregnant/ nursing moms or baby bunnies.

High Fiber Pellet: Provides calories, protein, vitamins, minerals, and essential fatty acids. Pellets should be limited. It is easy to overfeed if not measured. Pellets lack the benefits of hay and veggies and should not be fed in isolation and some bunnies favor pellets over healthier choices. Sherwood or oxbow pellets are the best brands.

Green Veggies: Greens provide vitamins, minerals, and water. A variety of dark leafy greens is best and should be fed three different kinds of veggies per day. New veggies should be introduced gradually to make sure their belly doesn't get upset. Some prefer certain kinds more than others, it's good to have them try different kinds. Veggies that are safe for bunnies (two cups daily for every six pounds of bunny and ideally twice a day):

- Alfalfa, radish, and clover sprouts
- Asparagus
- Basil
- Beet greens
- Bell Peppers (green, red, yellow...)
- Bok Choy
- Broccoli (limited to avoid gas)
- Brussels Sprouts
- Carrot tops (organic)
- Chard
- Cilantro
- Clover
- Dandelion Greens (Pesticide Free!)
- Eggplant
- Endive
- Escarole
- Grass (only if not sprayed with pesticides or unsafe fertilizer)
- Mint
- Mustard Greens
- Okra leaves
- Parsley
- Pea pods (AKA Chinese pea pods)
- Peppermint leaves
- Pumpkin leaves
- Radicchio
- Radish tops
- Raspberry leaves
- Squash: Zucchini, Yellow, Butternut, Pumpkin
- Various lettuces

- Romaine, butter, green leaf, Boston, bibb, arugula, etc
- Avoid very light hearts
- **No iceberg**
- Watercress
- Wheat grass
- Collard greens (only once or twice a week)
- Kale (only once or twice a week)
- Turnip Greens (only once or twice a week)

Fruits and carrots should only be feed in small amounts on occasion and not be fed to an overweight bunny. NO seeds or pits:

- Apple
- Blackberries
- Blueberry
- Pineapple
- Melon
- Papaya
- Peach
- Plum
- Pears
- Raspberries
- Strawberries

Plain oats can be fed as a treat as well on occasion and for bunnies who are underweight.

Water: Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. If using a water bottle it is important to clean regularly (water dishes as well) to limit access bacteria. It is also important to check the water bottle frequently to make sure it is working properly, they break often without people realizing and bunnies will die from dehydration. I prefer to use water dishes because of this issue.

Cecals: – cecals are the very small, soft smelly berry like poop that is different than the big, hard regular poop that you see daily. Your bunny's own cecals provide essential amino acids and are a vital energy source. If your rabbit has a problem producing cecals please consult a rabbit savvy vet.

Treats: Avoid sugary treats and limit treats. Too many treats discourage the consumption of healthier foods. A diet high in sugars causes an overgrowth of harmful bacteria resulting in painful gas or GI Stasis.

Do Not Feed: Yogurt Drops, popcorn, bread, crackers, nuts, seeds, or dried fruit with added sugar.

Most healthy, adult companion rabbits benefit from cutting back on high calorie foods. Offer restricted (measured), low-calorie pellets. Substitute veggies for sugary treats. Increase hay intake and varieties of hays offered. Rabbits are designed to ingest large amounts of high fibers foods, such as hays.

Nutrient requirements change over the life cycle. Pregnancy, lactation, extreme weight loss, old age, illness, or obesity all change nutritional needs. Nutrient need varies with body size. Specific breeds such as Angoras (and other long haired breeds), Rexes, and Giant breeds all have distinct nutrient needs.

All in all bunnies are considered high matiences and research is needed to assure they have a healthy and happy life! Please feel free to ask us any questions, no question is dumb! Some of this information was gathered from House Rabbit Society and their website has a lot more information. Worth checking out!