

Caring for your

Rabbit



life span diet

8-12 years

- Up to 8 months old, free access to pellets
- After 8 months old, restrict pellets according to body weight:
 - *2-4 lbs. | $\frac{1}{8}$ cup daily
 - *5-7 lbs. | $\frac{1}{4}$ cup daily
 - *8-10 lbs. | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup daily
 - *11-15 lbs. | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup daily
- Pellets should be greater than 18% fiber content
- Keep in a cool, dry place, sealed
- Do not overfeed pellets, do not refill your rabbit's bowl after it has consumed the above daily allotment!
- ALWAYS CHANGE DIETS, INTRODUCE NEW ITEMS SLOWLY over a period of 3-5 days. NEVER suddenly change a rabbit's diet.
- HAY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT ALL TIMES
 - Alfalfa in limited amounts is ok until a rabbit is 8 months old, but should be mixed with high quality, dust-free timothy, orchard, brome or oat hay
 - After 8 months, slowly transition your rabbit off of all alfalfa and continue to feed any other high quality grass hay.
 - Hay is best fed not in hay "cubes", but as loose long hay.
 - Keep in dry, cool place. Discard if damp or does not smell fresh
 - Hay is the most important part of your rabbits diet

fresh food

- Should be offered daily.
- Begin slowly to introduce
- Once your bunny is eating dark green, leafy foods, you can slowly introduce new items every 5 days, watching carefully for changes in stool
- Total amounts of fresh foods: approximately 1 heaping cup per 5 lbs weight
- Fresh foods can include: Carrots with tops, turnip, beet, collard and mustard greens, chard, kale in limited amounts, dandelion greens *Unsprayed are excellent, plantain, escarole, romaine, parsley, clover, radishes with tops, cabbage, dark green or red lettuces (no iceberg, please) broccoli, green peppers, peas and pods, brussel sprouts, bok choy, spinach, basil, cilantro, green, red or yellow peppers and grass are all fine.
- Fruits are considered treat foods and should only be given in small amounts. These should always, if given, be richly colored fruits (no watermelon), and given sparingly if at all.

treats

vitamins, minerals, & water

cecotropes (night stools)

These are NOT recommended. Save your money and give them nutritious foods which are better and easier on their digestive system!

- Again, not necessary or recommended unless housed outdoors or have a poor level of nutrition. Rabbits can manufacture and obtain from their high hay roughage and greens diets all the nutrients necessary
- Of course, water, fresh, supplied clean daily. Sipper bottles are ideal but need to be washed well at least one weekly in a dishwasher
- These are soft, squishy, dark glossy stools that rabbits defecate usually mostly at night and are consumed as part of the normal diet of a rabbit. They are an important part of their diet.
- Normally you will not see these stools in any sizeable amount because they should be completely consumed. IF you begin to see them, call your veterinarian.

housing

CAGE

- Minimum size for small and medium rabbits: 24"X24"X18"
- Minimum size for giant breeds: 36"X36"X24"
- The larger the better for your bunny
- Solid flooring in part of the cage is important to prevent sore hocks
- Hay provided by a hay trough on the outside of the cage is best and kept full at all times, thus preventing soiling of hay.
- Rabbits can overheat quickly, never house in a warm or humid environment.
- Below 70 degrees at all times
- Synthetic fleece substrates for the solid part of floor are acceptable, as are wood (harder to clean), carpet (unless your bunny eats it, in which case remove it) and metal.
- Bedding material should be safe if consumed: recycled newspaper, paper towels, compostable organic litters and bedding, such as: Yesterday's News, Critter Litter, Harvest Litter, Cellu-Dri or Cell-sorb litters. Pressed wood pellets for wood stoves are also acceptable if they have not been treated with preservative or chemicals.
- If your bunny is to be housed outdoors, consult your veterinarian for appropriate guidelines for how to keep your rabbit healthy and safe.
- If your bunny is to be allowed to roam in the house, please consult www.rabbit.org about how to "houseproof" your house for your rabbit, who will inadvertently place himself in danger by chewing electrical cords, baseboards, carpet, etc.

LITTER BOX

- Can be litter trained much the same way as cats. Use recycled kitty litter.
- Corner litter boxes are acceptable but may be too small for bigger rabbits.
- Place a small amount of normal stool in litter box in a closed confined space with your bunny
- Hints on how to potty train rabbits can be found on www.rabbit.org

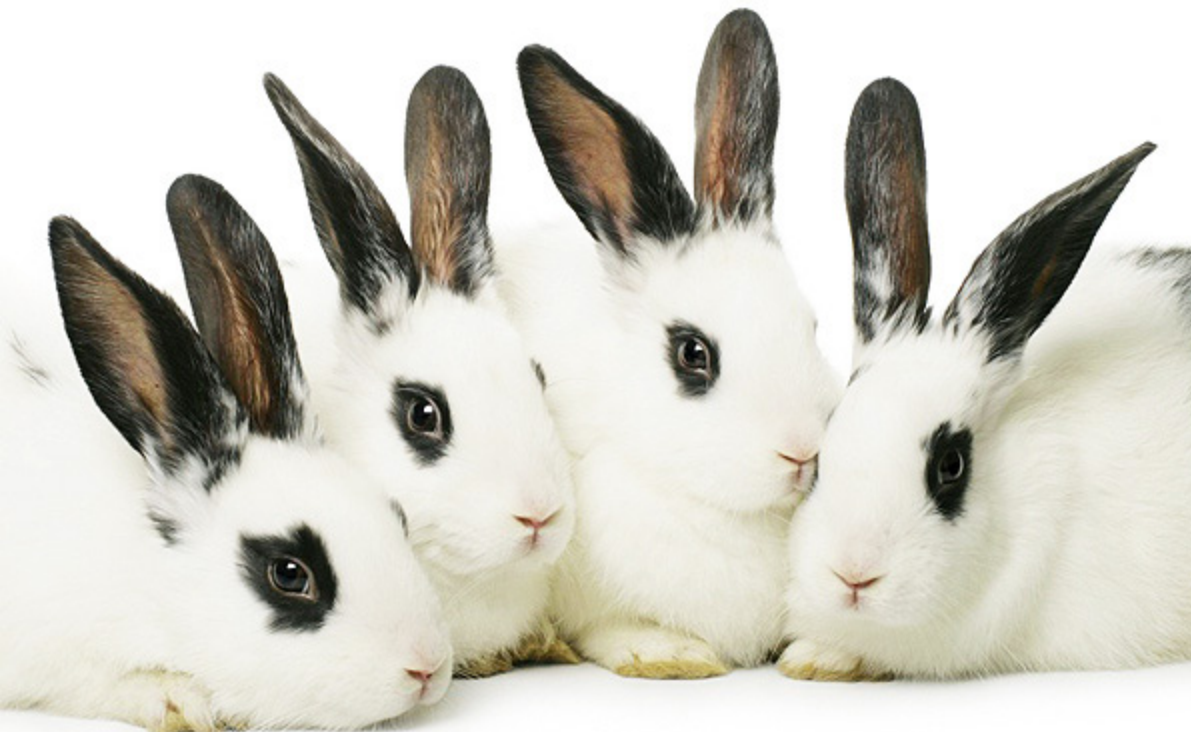


restraint

- It is never acceptable to pick up your rabbit by the ears. This is painful and inhumane.
- Rabbits backs must be supported at all times. Never leave the feet dangling as a rabbit can easily fracture their backs with a powerful back leg kick.
- The “football” hold is a safe way to transport a rabbit, with the head snugly in the crook of your arm, under the full body and the other arm supporting the head and neck.
- You may pick up a rabbit similar to a kitten by the thick scruff on the back of the neck but always support the rear end to prevent him from kicking.
- When trimming nails you may wish to sit on the floor with your rabbit firmly between your legs and on his back, stroking his back gently to allow him to relax. Alternately, gentle restraint on your lap, again close to the ground, may be effective with practice.

healthcare

- Female rabbits (does) should always be spayed if not used for breeding purposes. This is the single most important aspect of health care (along with diet) to prevent early death in rabbits. Uterine cancer is extremely common in rabbits and is a preventable disease.
- Castration of males after 5 months of age is recommended to avoid aggression, biting, and spraying urine.
- As stated previously, keeping your rabbit in a cool, non-humid environment is critical.
- Any respiratory distress, discharge from eyes or nose, or drainage is cause for immediate veterinary attention.
- Any decrease in appetite or stool production is considered a potential emergency and should be quickly addressed with your veterinarian.
- Diarrhea is considered an emergency, and liquid diarrhea can be rapidly fatal.



Did you know?

There are over 180 different rabbit breeds worldwide.