



# Bunny Basics

## Cage

Bunnies can be allowed to roam free in bunny-proofed rooms. They should be allowed a minimum of an hour of exercise out of their enclosure.

Minimum requirements:

2x3 feet for an average (4-6lb) rabbit—floor must be a solid surface  
wire dog crates or exercise pens with an area rug underneath  
are recommended

## Litter

Use a litter box large enough for the rabbit to fit in comfortably. Small cat litter boxes are recommended over corner litter boxes that can be difficult to fit into for some bunnies.

Use an organic litter. Avoid clay or clumping cat litter as a curious bunny may ingest these and become ill. A pelleted material will absorb much better than wood shavings or other small animal bedding. Gentle Touch (available at Four Corners Feed in Johnston), Yesterday's News unscented cat litter, or oak pellets available at most fireplace supply stores work very well. If a pelleted material is used, the litter could be changed every other day without noticeable smell. If using wood shavings, avoid any soft woods (Cedar and Pine should not be used—look for Aspen).

When you first bring your bunny home put some hay in the litter box to encourage your new pet to become accustomed to it. Do not worry if you see a couple of droppings outside the box when your bunny first comes home—they use their droppings to mark new territory and this behavior should subside as they become used to their new home.

Aside from the litter in the litter box, avoid using any other bedding material other than towels, blankets, rugs, or newspapers in the cage. It is confusing to the bunny and could result in the entire cage being viewed as a litter area.

## Diet

Rabbits do not need vaccinations, but diet is an important preventative medicine for rabbits. While it may be tempting to feed your bunny different foods that are less “boring”, keeping your bunny on a healthy, limited diet will avoid the most common and sometimes even fatal health issues rabbits face.

\*Unlimited timothy hay (avoid alfalfa hay—it has too much calcium and too many calories)

\*2 cups of dark, leafy greens per 4lbs of bunny

-green leaf lettuce      -red leaf lettuce      -romaine lettuce

- cilantro
- parsley
- green tops of carrots
- green tops of beets
- mustard greens
- turnip greens
- endives
- green outer leaves of cabbage
- feed spinach and kale only 1-2 times a week because of calcium content

AVOID-anything that is white in color such as iceberg lettuce

\*pellet food without any seeds or colored pieces (Timothy hay based is healthier than alfalfa based—look at ingredients)

- 1/8 cup a day                      rabbit 3lbs and under
- 1/4 cup a day                     rabbits 3lbs to 7lbs
- 2/3 cup a day                    rabbits 7lbs to 10lbs

If enough greens are fed to satisfy your bunny, pellet food is not required

\*treats—small slices of banana (a bunny favorite), apple, pear, a couple of baby carrots...any small amount of a fruit or vegetable

yogurt treats are ok, but natural foods are healthier for bunnies

### **Handling**

Be patient. Bunnies are prey animals and have different instincts than cats and dogs. They generally do not like being picked up, but they do like to be petted on their foreheads, have their ears stroked, and will even likely come up to you when you are on their level. To start a good relationship with your bunny, sit on the floor and allow your pet to come at his or her will. Offer small treats as encouragement and reward. Make sure that ANY interactions between small children and a bunny are supervised.

It is suggested to have your bunny's cage on the floor and to allow him to go back to the cage on his own if you need to confine the bunny. Bunnies who need to be picked up and lifted into a raised cage quickly learn that they should avoid you when exercising because you are associated with them being shut back in the cage. Make sure that a free-running bunny always has access to a litter box.

### **Rabbit-proofing**

Watch your bunny when first allowing him to explore to see areas that need to be bunny-proofed. Make sure that cords are tacked to the wall, blocked off, or covered in a PVC or plumbing pipe if they are on the bunny's level. Give your bunny boxes to chew on, newspapers to tear up, balls to bump around, and baby toys to toss. A busy bunny is less likely to entertain himself by digging in your carpet or chewing on your chair. Offer alternatives if your rabbit is playing with items that are inappropriate.

for bunny behavior questions, call Furry Friends Refuge at 222-0009 or e-mail [behavior@furryfriendsrefuge.org](mailto:behavior@furryfriendsrefuge.org)