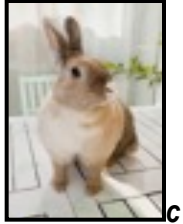


# BUNNY BASICS

## Are You Ready For A Rabbit?

[www.allaboutrabbitsrescue@gmail.com](mailto:www.allaboutrabbitsrescue@gmail.com)

Prepared by All About Rabbits Rescue, Inc.  
2/2015



A rabbit is an 8 - 12 year commitment requiring the same consideration and veterinary care as a cat or dog. Although enchanting and adorable, a pet rabbit is a HUGE responsibility! An adult should always be the primary caretaker.

Rabbits have very fragile bodies and should be picked up only if necessary by adults or children (at least 10 years old) trained in proper handling. Dropping or mishandling rabbits can cause serious or fatal injuries. Rabbits should be treated by rabbit-savvy vets. A list of rabbit-savvy vets, websites and links is provided on the back of this brochure.

Rabbits need attention and space to exercise daily. Rabbits can be litter-box trained! Rabbits are intelligent, social animals that make great pets if properly cared for by their human companions.

Websites, such as [www.myhouserabbit.com](http://www.myhouserabbit.com) or [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org) can help you decide if a rabbit is the right pet for you.

### Are you willing to ...

1. Pay for yearly vet visits, possible dental care, and emergency medical care?
2. Spay / neuter your rabbit, trim nails regularly?
3. Provide **3 hours minimum** of out time for exercise and human companionship daily?
4. Pay for hay, pellets and fresh greens (*a minimum of \$3.00 a day per rabbit*)?
5. Provide a safe indoor space large enough for exercise and comfort and an area away from predators, such as cats or dogs?
6. Rabbit-proof your home (*bunnies like to chew*)?
7. Supervise all interaction between the rabbit and young children and other pets?

### Have you considered ...

**Who will take care of the pet rabbit for the duration of its natural life or after the children are no longer interested/ when you go on vacation?**

**Does** everyone in the home approve of having the rabbit? **Does** anyone have allergies? **Does** the landlord allow rabbits?

**RABBITS AS GIFTS:** The recipient (child or adult) may **NOT** be prepared to take on an 8 - 12 year commitment.

***If you still want a pet rabbit, please read on ...***

### Nature and Personality

Rabbits are shy prey animals with different needs than cats and dogs. They always need a place of retreat such as a hidey-box, which can be purchased at **Petland Discounts**. **Childrens' loving desire to hold or carry the rabbit is exactly what frightens most rabbits. Being prey animals, most rabbits DO NOT like to be picked up.** Rabbits need to learn to trust humans. To gain your rabbit's trust, allow him to come to you. Each rabbit has its own personality and should be treated as an individual. Some large rabbits are outgoing, some are shy; the same holds true for smaller

or dwarf breeds. A mature rabbit's personality is known while a baby's personality is not known. **Smaller dwarf rabbits need just as much space and exercise as larger breed rabbits. Larger breeds may be less active, less fragile and easier to handle.** Mature rabbits are easier to litter-box train. **Understand and appreciate your rabbit more by knowing his language. (Go to [Language.rabbitspeak.com](http://Language.rabbitspeak.com).)**

### Diet

**Hay must be available 24 / 7** in generous amounts and is the single most important food. Adult rabbits need unlimited timothy hay and plain timothy hay-based pellets in quantities according to their weight. Rabbits 7 months and younger should be given unlimited alfalfa pellets and alfalfa hay. Starting at 2 - 3 months, leafy greens such as parsley, cilantro, lettuce (no iceberg) can be introduced. Adult rabbits will benefit from a daily variety of greens. Wash greens just prior to serving to ensure additional hydration. Water bowl cleaned and replenished daily. Seeds are not part of a rabbit's healthy diet. **Proper weight is very important** in order for your rabbit to be able to clean itself and avoid obesity which leads to other health problems. (See **diet at [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org)**)

### Housing

Your rabbit's home should be a minimum 3-4 times the length of your rabbit allowing your rabbit to stand up and stretch out completely. If your current cage is smaller, you can attach a pen to it for additional space. The pen also allows your rabbit to feel more part of the family, satisfying its social needs. Pens are available either on line or at various pet shops. Rabbits' delicate legs can get caught in the cage wire exit ramps. Please affix a cover (*towel*) so your rabbit can safely enter and exit a cage **by itself**. **Your cage (plus pen) can also accommodate a litter box that contains hay and is at least one and a half times the length of your rabbit. Your rabbit will enjoy sitting in his litter box while leisurely grazing on hay.**

### Handling

Pick up your rabbit **only when necessary**, holding your rabbit with two hands firmly but gently so its legs cannot

kick and he can't jump out of your hands / arms. Place one hand around the upper chest and use the other to hold his two hind legs so the rabbit cannot kick. Never hold a rabbit by the ears or scruff.

### Grooming

Rabbits are self-groomers and **DO NOT** need baths or shampooing. **NEVER** immerse your rabbit in water as it is extremely stressful and puts the rabbit at risk of respiratory problems. Rabbit skin is extremely delicate. If you find your rabbit has a "poopy butt," it may be due to improper diet (*too many treats*) **or** unclean living quarters. **Eliminate treats and / or change hay in litter box daily. If the conditions persist, contact your vet.** It is important to brush your rabbit's hair once a week, more during shedding times and to clip nails regularly.

### Safety - Proofing

To ensure your rabbit's safety, protect your rabbit from accessing house plants, electrical wires and any lead-painted moldings or walls in the home. (See **Rabbit Proofing at [Rabbit.org](http://Rabbit.org)**.)

### Spaying / Neutering

**A rabbit purchased at pet shop is NOT spayed or neutered. Spaying/neutering** reduces unwanted behaviors such as spraying, mounting and aggression. A fixed rabbit will also be better at using his litter box (see litter box at [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org)). Females can be spayed at 6 months, males at 4 months. It is imperative to have females spayed as they a 50-80% chance of developing reproductive cancer. **A rabbit adopted through most rescue groups or NYC Animal Care and Control location comes already spayed and neutered..**

### Two Rabbits Together

**\*NEVER\*** keep two unfixed rabbits together. A male and female can produce litters every 30 days. Two rabbits of the same sex are very territorial and will fight, sometimes leading to fatal injuries. Ask your vet or local rescue to help you sex your rabbits, but in the meantime, **keep rabbits separate.**

## Getting a Companion for your Rabbit

To get a bunny friend for your rabbit, please have your bunny spayed / neutered, then contact your local rabbit rescue. Similar to humans, not all rabbits like each other, and it's important to let your bunny pick its own partner. There is great joy and entertainment in seeing two rabbits groom and keep each other company. (**See *bonding at rabbit.org.***)

## Rabbit Examination

Regularly examine your rabbit by **very gently** checking for anything unusual. A bunny's bottom should be clean. The bottom of the hind feet may be calloused, but should not be raw with broken skin / blood (*sore hocks*). The eyes should be clear (*not tearing*) and the ears free of spots (*mites*).

## Fun Toys and Stimulation

Rabbits need a stimulating environment to prevent boredom and depression. Toys and hay provide entertainment for rabbits, and at the same time, keep their teeth trimmed. Untreated grass mats, cardboard boxes, toilet paper roll or paper bag stuffed with hay are good toys. Rabbits explore their world by chewing and providing different varieties of hay (*Oat, brome*) is stimulating for them.

## Purchase Items

A pen and / or cage, a large amount of hay, **plain** pellets without seeds, toys, litter box, litter, a large quantity of hay, a hidey-box to retreat to, nail trimmers. Heavy crocks for water are easier to drink from and cannot be turned over. Ask your adoption counselor for more details on tunnel toy, non-toxic wood and other chew toys.

## Medical Emergency

If a rabbit is not eating, moving or pooping, has diarrhea or holds his head tilted, it is an emergency. **Do not wait! Take your rabbit to the vet IMMEDIATELY.** GI stasis and head tilt are common rabbit ailments, but if treated right away, may be remedied. Special equipment for medical emergencies include baby gas drops (*simethicone*), pain medicine (*Metacam*), syringe, digital thermometer, heating pad or snuggle safe, styptic

powder, Vaseline. We hope that stasis never happens, but it is best to be prepared. Ask your vet, local rabbit rescue, or an experienced rabbit handler to show you trimming, handling and temp taking. Sneezing and / or a wet nose indicate an upper respiratory problem (*consult a vet*). **Online support via websites does not replace vet care, especially in an emergency.**

## Very Important Rabbit Tips

- Carrots and anything other than hay, pellets & greens are treats. Give once in a while and in **very small pieces**.
- Rabbits' bones are VERY fragile and comprise only 8-10% of their total body weight.
- Rabbits need non-skid flooring. Slippery floors compromise their joints and can cause spay legs.
- Rabbits should always be kept indoors to protect them from predators, fleas, ticks and fly strike.
- Safe room temp for a rabbit is no more than 75 degrees.
- A rabbit's normal temperature range is 101-103 degrees.
- Rabbits' teeth can grow 6 inches per year and hay helps to keep their teeth trim.
- Rabbits are social and need to be part of the family.
- Rabbits should not be left alone for more than 12 hours.
- Rabbits can be boarded at most of the vets listed here.
- Rabbits like to be stroked gently from the front of the nose to the head.
- In the wild, rabbits may travel up to 2 acres daily.
- Use only paper based litter products
- The best toy for a rabbit is a rabbit partner (all parties must be spayed and neutered).

- Mold and dehydration can be fatal – fresh water daily!
- **Never abandon your rabbit in a park or the street –it is against the law and the bunny will not survive!**

## Rabbit Websites

- **Rabbit.org**: general info, rabbit behavior
- <http://www.medirabbit.com/>: medical, health
- **Myhouserabbit.org**: general info
- **Etherbun**: medical, health, emergency help

## Internet Links

Press control and click on the links below. You can also Google any of these topics.

- **RABBIT MEDICAL HELP / CARE /DIET / GI STASIS**  
<http://www.rabbitcare.org/article-index.htm>
- **SPAY / NEUTER**  
<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/spay-neuter.html>
- **LITTER TRAINING** <http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/litter.html>
- **RABBIT PROOFING YOUR HOME**  
<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/rabbit-proofing.html>
- **GROOMING**  
<http://www.smallanimalchannel.com/rabbits/rabbit-health/rabbit-grooming-tips.aspx>
- **RABBIT.ORG SPANISH TRANSLATIONS**  
<http://www.rabbit.org/translations/spanish/index.html>

## Recommended Exotics Vets

### Who Provide Full-Service Rabbit Care

Manhattan  
**Shachar Malka, DVM**  
Humane Society of New York \*LOW COST\*  
306 East 59<sup>th</sup> St. NYC 10024  
(212) 752-4842

**Becky Campbell, DVM and Debora Levison, DVM**  
Symphony Veterinary Center  
170 West 96<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC 10025  
(212) 866-8000

**Alex Wilson, DVM, Anthony Pilny, DVM**  
The Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine  
568 Columbus Avenue, NYC 10024  
(212) 501-8750

**Catherine Quesenbury, DVM**  
Animal Medical Center NYC  
510 E. 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, NYC 10021  
(212) 838-8100 (212)329-8622

Westchester  
**Gil Stanzione, DVM**  
Dakota Veterinary Center  
381 Dobbs Ferry Road  
White Plains, NY 10607  
(914) 421-0020

**Laurie Hess, DVM**  
Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics  
709 Bedford Road  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
(914) 864-1414

Long Island  
**Jennifer Saver, DVM & Laura George, DVM**  
Catnip and Carrots Veterinary Hospital  
2056 Jericho Turnpike  
New Hyde Park, NY 11040  
(516) 877-7080

**Heidi Hoefer, DVM**  
Island Exotic Vet Care  
591 East Jericho Turnpike  
Huntington, NY 11746  
(631) 424-0300

**Jeff Rose, DVM**  
Jefferson Animal Hospital  
606 Patchogue Rd.  
Pt Jefferson Station, NY 11776  
(631) 473-0415

For RABBIT VETS in NJ, CT and other areas, please go to <http://www.rabbit.org/vets/index.html>

This brochure was prepared by All About Rabbits Rescue, Inc.  
([AllAboutRabbitsRescue@gmail.com](mailto:AllAboutRabbitsRescue@gmail.com)-347-993-2300).  
**And it's all about the rabbits!!!**