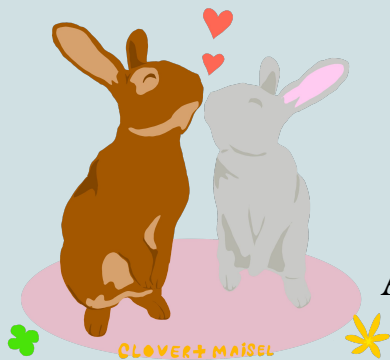




Bunnies 101

An everything guide to all things bunnies by
Avalon Microsanctuary



Reviewing:

- Diet recommendations
- Enclosure recommendations/safety
 - Veterinary care
 - Grooming practices
- Safe vs unsafe toys and treats



Diet Recommendations



- Rabbits have very sensitive digestive systems and require a balanced diet to thrive. It is a large part of keeping them healthy and happy.
- The largest part of a rabbits diet should be **fiber in the form of hay**. About 80 percent or so of their diet should be hay! They constantly eat throughout the day and the fiber helps keep their GI tract moving well. **Timothy, orchard, or oat hay are best.**

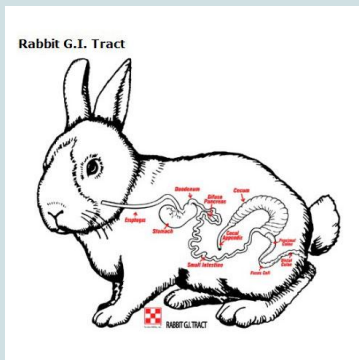


Photo via: Purina mills

- The other 10-20 percent of their diet should be a high quality pellet with no fillers/additions.





Picking an appropriate pellet



YES:

- Healthy pellets may look plain, and that's ok. Mixes can contain harmful ingredients.
- Should be hay based with minimal fillers
- **Brands we love:**
 - Oxbow
 - Sherwood
 - Small Pet Select





Picking an appropriate pellet



NO:

- Pellets marketed as a “fiesta” mix
- Pellets containing seeds/nuts/corn/carrot/pea flakes/dried fruit pieces
- Pellets containing food dye
- These are often marketed to rabbits and are not appropriate
- Rabbits cannot digest seeds/nuts
- Fruits are too sugary and can cause GI dysbiosis





Healthier Ways to Enrich Mealtime



- Herbal forage blend sprinkled into hay/pellets
- Herbs and florals can provide medicinal benefits as well as unique flavors and textures
- Small amounts of healthy greens/fresh herbs
- Forage/feeding mats/puzzles
- Etsy has a lot of vendors for these items
- **Small Pet Select** is also a wonderful brand!

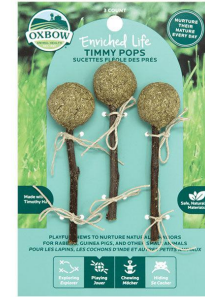




Treats: Yes or No?



- Hay based treats and biscuits can be a fun treat for your bun!
- **Oxbow** and **Small Pet Select** currently sells a lot of good hay based treats and biscuits.
- We prefer to use herb/veggie based biscuits and treats rather than fruit based due to the sugar content.



There are many good brands and small businesses that make hay based biscuits or toys for rabbits. As you can see, you can tell there are no excessive fillers in these treats.



Treats: Yes or No?



- Just like pellets, very unhealthy treats are marketed to bunnies
- Absolutely no dairy or yogurt should be given, or seeds/ nuts/ dried fruits
- They cannot digest these things well, and they can be harmful
- No edible hides should be given due to excessive chemicals
- Avoid dyed treats

!! No!!



!! No!!



!! No!!





Fresh Foods to Feed



For a more in depth list of safe vs unsafe foods please visit this [link](#):

Yes:

- Cilantro, Parsley, Basil, Mint, Clover, Dandelion Greens
- Romaine, Green/red leaf lettuces, wheatgrass
- Carrot tops

No:

- Cruciferous veggies
- Broccoli, kale, cabbages
- Bell Peppers
- Celery
- Large pieces of carrot
- Bok choy
- Squash, pumpkin, zucchini etc



Enclosure Recommendations/Safety



- Minimum floor space for a single bunny should be 4x4 (standard exercise pen sized).
- Duos should optimally have 1.5-2x the floor space of a single as minimum standard.





Enclosure Recommendations/Safety

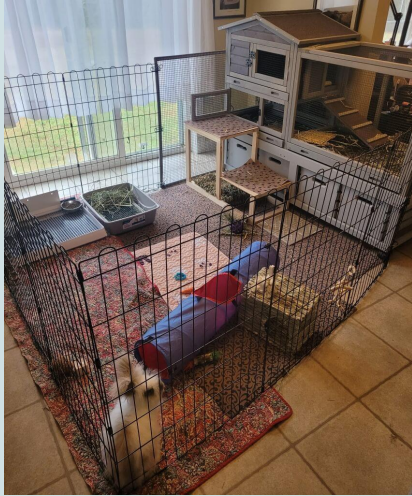


- Exercise pens or tall grid cages are our enclosures of choice.
- Rabbits can/should free roam too with these enclosures available as a home base.
- Some rabbits can be entirely free roam.
- Offering a plethora of toys/hides will keep your bunny happy and out of trouble.

Water Bowls vs Bottles

- We definitely advocate for the use of large sturdy water bowls over traditional bottle drinkers.
- Rabbits drink a lot, and they can hydrate themselves much better with bowls.
- Bowls should be cleaned with soap and water often to prevent bacterial buildup, not just simply be rinsed out.

A few great enclosure examples...





Enclosure Recommendations/Safety



- Hutches/small cages **do not** provide enough space for rabbits on their own, if you do decide to utilize a hutch or small cage as a “home base” indoors, make sure the door is always open.
- Be aware that the ramps in hutches can possibly cause back injuries or be harder to use for older/larger buns

INAPPROPRIATE HOUSING



THIS IS NOT OKAY!!!!



Small Animal Cages

Hutches

Wire bottom Cages

Outdoor Living





Outdoor Time?



- As a rescue, we will never condone the outdoor living of rabbits. They face many more risks (predators, severe weather, viruses, infections, parasites, primal fear) than indoor only rabbits, and live shorter and more stressful lives.
- Bunnies can enjoy supervised outdoor time in an appropriate environment.
- Letting them play in an exercise pen in a pesticide free, fenced yard... always under supervision, can be ok and fun for the bunny.
- Make sure your bunny does not have access to any unknown plants that could be toxic.





Litter Boxes/ Training



- Wire bottomed cages or grate litter boxes can promote foot injuries/sore hocks
- Large litter boxes will help promote their usage. Also having hay present in a bag/box near or above the litter box will encourage use, as they pee and poop while they eat since their digestion runs 24/7





Litter Boxes/ Training



- Spayed/neutered bunnies always litter train best. It makes a serious difference.
- Offer multiple litter boxes if you have multiple bunnies.
- Cleaning them daily prevents odor.
- There are many options for litter material, and the optimal material can vary between rabbit.
- **Dye free/scent free paper shreds/pellets** are a great choice
- **Aspen wood shavings** can also be a good choice.
- Avoid cat litter, as ingestion can cause serious health issues.
- Avoid cedar or pine pellets (the aromatic oils are toxic to the liver).
- Only use pee pads in bunnies that you know will not eat them.





Safe toys/hides



- Cardboard boxes (with no packing tape) are a great hide and safe thing for buns to chew on
- Cat tunnels/ground level condos are a bunny favorite
- Woven hay houses are also an amazing hide / treat for buns
- Be careful with painted wood hides if they are chewers, as paint ingestion can cause health issues





Safe toys/hides



- Bunnies love stacking cups and pet puzzles for pellets
- Apple/willow sticks are a wonderful fresh snack and entertainment for bunnies
- Cardboard toilet paper rolls are super fun for buns to play with
- Hay/grass mats can provide fun enrichment and be a good snack as well
- **Avoid dyed toys or chews**
- **Avoid too many plastic toys if your bunny shows interest in chewing on them to avoid accidental ingestion**





Bunny Grooming/ Check ins



- Normally, rabbits should have their nails trimmed every 4-6 weeks depending on activity
- Overgrown nails can cause pain/discomfort when walking
- Lop eared bunnies should have their ears cleaned at least once a week with a pet ear cleaner (TrizEDTA is a good brand) and q tips to **prevent infection and wax buildup**
- Fluffy fur should be brushed once or twice daily to prevent matting

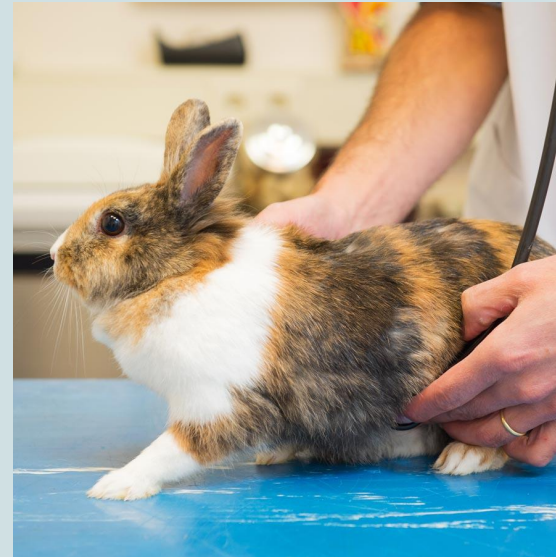




Basic Veterinary Care



- Rabbits are prey animals. They can be very sensitive and hide their illness/pain until it is severe.
- Rabbits not eating or not eating as much should be considered an emergency. This is a very common sign of illness.
- Rabbits stop eating for dozens of reasons, from pain to GI stasis to infection. Never assume you know what is going on.





Basic Veterinary Care



- Rabbits should be kept up to date on their yearly RHDV2 vaccine, **even if kept indoors only**. The virus can be tracked inside on shoes/clothes.
- Rabbits should be tested for *E.cuniculi* and *Pasteurella* if possible, to know if they are carriers before symptoms or flare ups arise.
- Learn more about [E.cuniculi](#) infection in rabbits





Basic Veterinary Care



What is an emergency for rabbits?

- Not eating/drinking
 - Cold to touch
 - Open wounds/bleeding
 - Obvious pain/discomfort
 - Toxic material ingestion
 - Severe upper respiratory/breathing effort
 - Seizures
 - Limpness
- Avoid unnecessary death, bring your bunny to the vet at the first sign that something is wrong

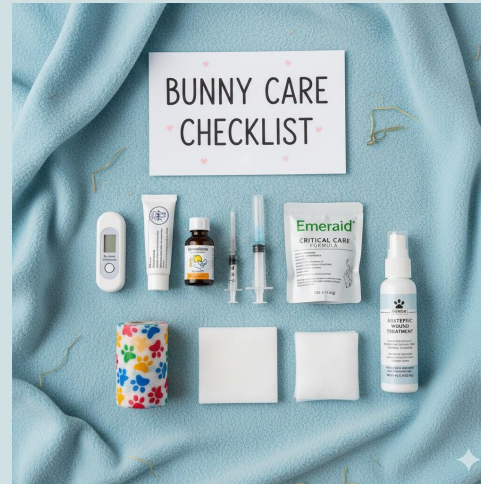


Basic Veterinary Care



Be Prepared

- Have an established exam with a good **exotic vet** near you
- Have money (1,500-2,000 dollars) set aside for emergencies. They can be very expensive sometimes.
- Have supplies at home for at home care



Things to have on hand

- Oral syringes
- Emeraid/critical care for syringe feeding
- Simethicone dye free infant gas drops
- Oral thermometer + lubricating jelly for taking rectal temperature
- **Normal temp range is 100-103 F.**