

CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT

FOOD & WATER

FOOD

Hay isn't just for horses

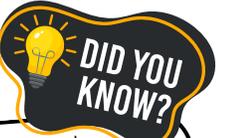
Rabbits are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants. **Grass hay** should be the **staple** of your rabbit's diet. You can feed unlimited amounts of hay such as Timothy hay, orchard grass and oat hay. Avoid alfalfa hay because it's too rich for adult rabbits.



I'll have a salad, please

Your rabbit also needs fresh, leafy green vegetables in their diet every day.

Lastly, you should also supplement their diet with high-fibre, Timothy hay-based pellets from the pet store.



Rabbits have continuously growing teeth. Their front teeth can grow 3 mm a week! Because of this, they must eat abrasive foods like hay to help them wear their teeth down. It's really important to follow a proper diet!

SO HOW MUCH SHOULD I FEED MY RABBIT EACH DAY?

Hay At any given time, your rabbit should have access to a pile of fresh hay at least twice as big as they are.

Fresh vegetables About 1/2 to 1 cup per 2 lbs of body weight. Rotate your vegetable offerings to ensure your rabbit gets a good balance of vitamins and nutrients.

Pellets For rabbits under 5 lbs, about 1/8 cup. For rabbits over 5 lbs, about 1/4 cup.

RECOMMENDED VEGETABLES

Introduce new foods gradually to avoid upsetting your rabbit's digestive system.



Parsley

Spinach

Beet greens



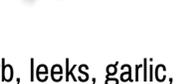
Radicchio

Arugula



Carrot tops

Kale



Red or green leaf lettuce

Romaine lettuce

Spring greens

Turnip greens

Dandelion greens

Mint

Basil



Mustard greens

Watercress

Cilantro

Radicchio

Bok choy

Dill leaves

Yu choy



DO NOT FEED !!!

Iceberg lettuce, onions, rhubarb, leeks, garlic, potatoes, corn and corn husks, and tomato leaves. Do not feed your rabbit human food.



DON'T RABBITS LIKE CARROTS?

They do. But carrots, along with fresh and dried fruits, have a lot of sugar and should only be fed as treats in small portions.



WATER

Your rabbit should always have access to clean water. You can use a water bottle or a low-walled, heavy ceramic bowl to prevent tipping. Change the water daily and wash out the bowl regularly.



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HOME ENVIRONMENT



Your rabbit needs a comfortable environment that is well ventilated and includes protection from heat, cold and damp. Rabbits do best when they are kept indoors in an area of the home where people hang out.

Generally, cages available at pet stores are not big enough but you can get creative with exercise pens (x-pens) and wire storage cubes. Online stores like Amazon sell lots of do-it-yourself small animal playpens that are more affordable. **If you do use a cage, it should be at least 4 times the size of your rabbit** when they are entirely stretched out and they need ample time out of the cage.

Their living space should include:

- A variety of places to rest and hang out (e.g., bare floor, beds, towels/blankets, tile)
- Areas for your rabbit to hide
- Litter box (yes, you can litter train a rabbit!)
- Opportunities to dig, chew and explore



HABITAT OPTIONS

Free run in your home



X-pen + wire storage cubes



CAGE VERSUS X-PEN



35" x 17" cage
Costs around \$90
Provides 4.2 ft² floor space



48" x 48" x-pen
Costs around \$80
Provides 16 ft² floor space

RABBIT PROOFING

Rabbits love to chew things. Be sure to "bunny-proof" your home by moving household plants out of reach and blocking off access to electrical cords and other unsafe items. You can buy cord wraps and organizers to keep your cables and wires safe.

CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT

LITTER BOX TRAINING

Yes, you can train your rabbit to use a litter box! This will make clean up much easier on you.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Litter pan (without a lid and at least twice the size of your rabbit)
- Hay
- Litter (pine or recycled paper pellets, torn newspaper, or aspen shavings)

Do not use clay, clumping or crystal-based litters, corn cob, sWheat Scoop brand litter, or pine or cedar shavings – these are not safe for your rabbit to chew or digest.

STEP 1

Fill the litter box with two to three inches of the litter.

STEP 2

Add a bundle of hay at one end of the litter box. Why? Rabbits like to graze while doing their business!

STEP 3

While training, keep your rabbit in a smaller space to help them learn to use one spot consistently. Place the litter box in a corner of your rabbit's housing area. If your rabbit already has a designated pee spot, place the litter box there.

PRO TIPS: Place a bit of the litter or shavings that are already soaked in pee inside the box. If they start to pee in another area, either move the box or set up a second box.

GIVE IT SOME TIME

Be patient and make adjustments as needed. Never punish your rabbit for not using the litter box. When you feel your rabbit is consistently using the litter box, open up their living area again.

CLEANING

Remove soiled hay, top up litter and add new hay daily. Every other day or so, give the litter box a clean with warm water and white vinegar and replace the litter.



My rabbit is litter box trained but sometimes still poops outside of the litter box. Is there anything I can do?

This is normal and may be a territorial thing. It's easy to pick up poops and throw them out or place them in the litter box. If a well-trained rabbit starts peeing outside of the litter box consistently, consult a veterinarian.





CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT

HEALTH PARASITES



FLEAS

Fleas are tiny (1 to 3 mm) blood-sucking insects. They multiply quickly and can make your pet sick if left untreated. Fleas will bite people too!

How do I know if my rabbit has fleas?

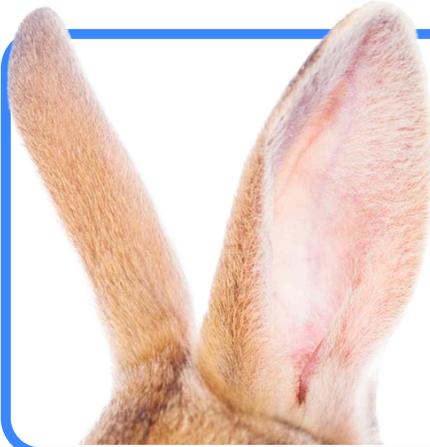
Your rabbit will be itchy, and you might notice them scratch more than usual. Check your rabbit's belly and hind end where you might see fleas crawling. Gently pull apart the fur to expose the skin and check for what looks like pepper or coffee grinds – this is actually bits of dried blood!

How do I treat fleas?

Reach out to a veterinarian. There are some topical treatments specific to cats that are safe for your rabbit, but check with a veterinarian before treating your rabbit with anything.

WARNING!

DO NOT USE flea collars on rabbits and never bathe them with a flea dip or shampoo.



EAR MITES & EAR INFECTIONS

Ear mites are teeny-tiny creatures that live inside your pet's ears. They are common and contagious. If one pet has ear mites, it's likely they all do.

How to detect if your rabbit has ear mites?

Your rabbit may rub their ears against things and shake their heads. You may see a brown, waxy or crusty buildup in their ear. This could be ear mites or a bacterial or yeast infection. Ear mites and infections can be diagnosed and treated with medication prescribed by a veterinarian.

FLYSTRIKE

Flystrike is also known as myiasis. This occurs when flies lay their eggs on your rabbit and the eggs hatch into maggots. The maggots will start feeding on your rabbit's flesh.

How can you tell if your rabbit has flystrike?

If your rabbit has any wounds or soiled and wet fur, check the area for signs of eggs and maggots. If you suspect your rabbit has flystrike, contact a veterinarian right away as it's a serious condition and must be treated immediately. This shouldn't happen if your rabbit is young, healthy and their **environment is kept clean and tidy**, so be preventative and:

- Clean the litter box daily and keep your rabbit's environment clean and dry
- If your rabbit is having troubles grooming around their tail and genital areas, help keep them clean and dry
- When in doubt, take your rabbit to a veterinarian



CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT HEALTH



A HEALTHY BUNNY

- Eyes are clean and bright
- Ears are clean with no discharge or unpleasant odour
- Feet are free of injuries or abrasions
- Bottoms are clean and dry, and there is no sign of flystrike
- Not too fat or too thin, with no lumps or bumps

Consult a veterinarian if you observe any issues or notice a difference in your rabbit's normal behaviour.

GROOMING

FUR

Rabbits love being clean and tidy, and like cats, they will groom themselves but they **shed all the time** and **every three months** have a **BIG SHED**.

Brush your rabbit at least once a week and daily during big sheds. You can also gently pluck the loose fur from their body.

Long-haired rabbits will require more work to help fur from matting.

NAILS

Your rabbit's nails need to be trimmed about once a month.



IDENTIFICATION

If your pet were to get lost, identification (ID) will help get your loved one home to you faster. Since rabbits can't wear a collar and ID tag, you can get your rabbit microchipped!



MYTH BUSTING

Does a microchip act like a tracker or global positioning device (GPS)?

ANSWER: NO! Microchips use radio frequency and are only activated when scanned by a special device. They only provide information stored in the microchip – your contact information to help get your rabbit back to you!

TOXIC PLANTS



Rabbits like to nibble on things and love their greens, but be careful: many common plants are harmful to rabbits and can make them sick.

Some common plants and flowers include: daffodils, irises, lilies, nightshade and hyacinth. It's safest to keep your rabbit away from all house plants. If you have concerns, check online for a more detailed list at www.rabbit.org/health/poisonousplants.



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TOO MANY RABBITS!



Every year, thousands of rabbits enter shelters and rescues across B.C. *Make adoption your first option if you love rabbits.*

PREVENT UNWANTED LITTERS

They don't say "breed like rabbits" for no reason! Rabbits can multiply quickly and can start breeding when they are still babies! Separate males and females at 10 weeks old. Most vets will spay/neuter rabbits at about six months of age. Need help finding a veterinary clinic that takes rabbit patients? Visit www.rabbit.org/veterinarians.



SPAY/NEUTER

BENEFITS

- Will almost eliminate chances for reproductive cancers (unspayed female rabbits have an 85% chance of developing reproductive cancer at some point in their life)
- Neutered male rabbits are less likely to spray urine
- Easier to litter train
- Less prone to destructive (chewing and digging) and aggressive (biting, lunging, circling and growling) behaviours

GET YOUR RABBIT FIXED BY SIX MONTHS OLD

It's irresponsible to breed your rabbit. A pregnant rabbit needs support from a veterinarian throughout the pregnancy. When your rabbit gives birth, you need to be able to access an emergency clinic if anything goes wrong. After kits are born, mom and kits need proper monitoring.

MEDICAL CARE



It's recommended that your rabbit have a check-up once a year with a veterinarian. If not, watch out for lumps and bumps, dull or oily fur, changes to your rabbit's eating and washroom habits, and other changes in their behaviour and routines. If you notice something different, contact a veterinarian.

RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE (RHD)

RHD is a highly infectious and lethal virus that only infects rabbits. Most infected rabbits will die. The virus can persist in the environment for several weeks and may survive both heat and freezing.

How does it spread?

RHD virus spreads easily between rabbits through direct contact with bedding, food and water, feces and bodily fluids. It can also spread through contaminated materials such as food, bedding, water, surfaces, human clothing/hands and shoes.

What are the symptoms?

The virus causes bleeding and attacks the liver and other organs. Most infected rabbits die suddenly, but can show signs of lethargy, lack of co-ordination, behavioural changes or trouble breathing before death. There is often bleeding from the nose at the time of death. Once infected, signs of illness usually occur within 1 to 9 days.

Talk to your veterinarian to protect your rabbit and get a vaccination for RHD.



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CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT

EXERCISE & PLAY

Rabbits are smart and curious, so it's important to keep your rabbit entertained. When you're not at home, you can keep them busy with safe toys and things to chew. Make it interesting by providing opportunities to run, dig, chew, hide, stretch and chill out.

TOYS & GAMES

There are a number of safe toys and chews for rabbits including tunnels, cardboard, baby toys (e.g., plastic keys they can toss and push, stackable cups they can knock down and roll around), straw chew mats and balls, apple or willow tree branches, boxes filled with shredded paper and hay to dig, and more. You can even teach your bunny agility courses!



New toys?
Remember to monitor
your bun to make sure
they stay safe!



SOME BUNNY TO LOVE

Rabbits love company. If you're adopting a rabbit, considering getting a same-sex pair so they can keep each other company when you are not around.



FIRST ADOPTION OPTION

Interested in adding a rabbit to your family? Make adoption your first option! BC SPCA Community Animal Centres and rescues almost always have rabbits available for adoption.

Benefits of adoption from the BC SPCA:

- Spay/neuter surgery included
- In-Centre physical exam performed by staff
- Microchip for identification
- Medical treatment by a veterinarian, if required, while in care



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