

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW AFTER  
ADOPTING YOUR NEW RABBIT

# RABBIT CARE 101

Your Guide to Providing a Happy, Healthy Home for Your New  
Rabbit



HOUSTON  
HUMANE  
SOCIETY



# *Congratulations!*

on adopting your new rabbit!

By choosing to welcome a rabbit into your home, you've made a wonderful decision to give a loving and deserving animal a fresh start. Rabbits can be incredibly rewarding companions, and with your commitment and care, your new furry friend will thrive!!

This journey may come with some learning curves, but the bond you'll create and the joy your rabbit will bring into your life will make it all worth it.

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a rabbit in need!

*- Houston Humane Society*



## MY RABBIT'S INFORMATION (1) :

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

FORMER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROX. AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES:

SEX:  NEUTERED MALE  SPAYED FEMALE

BREED: \_\_\_\_\_

KNOWN ALLERGIES: \_\_\_\_\_

BONDED:  NO  YES

IF YES, WHO? \_\_\_\_\_



## MY RABBIT'S INFORMATION (2) :

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

FORMER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROX. AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES:

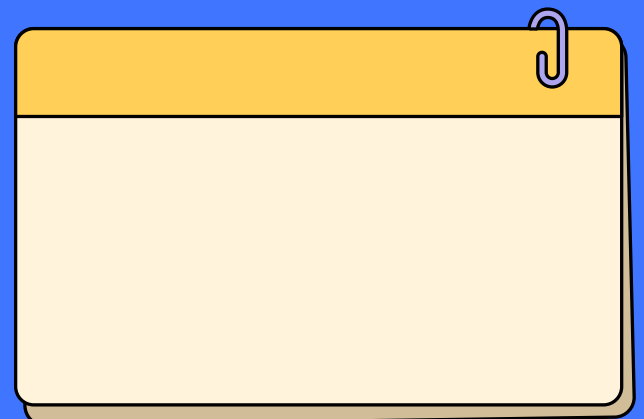
SEX:  NEUTERED MALE  SPAYED FEMALE

BREED: \_\_\_\_\_

KNOWN ALLERGIES: \_\_\_\_\_

BONDED:  NO  YES

IF YES, WHO? \_\_\_\_\_



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# HOUSING

In this section, learn to create a Cozy Home. We believe that a great set up is key to success for your new rescue, and you! We do not recommend cages/crates/hutches or outside setups. They are very expensive and far too small to play, stretch roam, or get zoomies! Outside setups can increase the chances of your rabbit getting hurt or sick, so they would be best inside with you since they are family.

## ESSENTIALS STARTER KIT:

- X-Pen (exercise pen)
- Litter box
- Timothy Hay
- Ceramic water/food bowl
- Rugs/towels or blankets
- Paper bedding  
\*unscented
- Fresh veggies
- Timothy Pellets
- Toys to chew on

Use this section to note anything else your rabbit may need

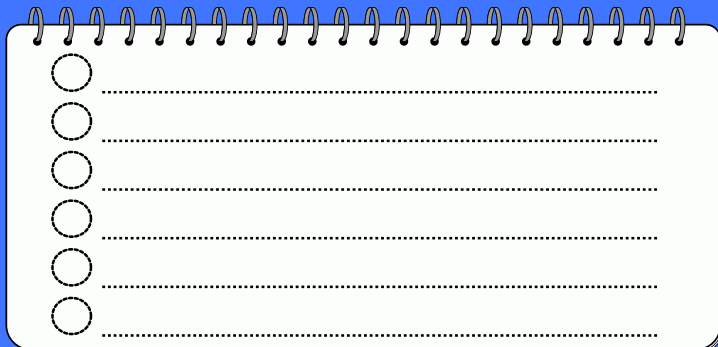


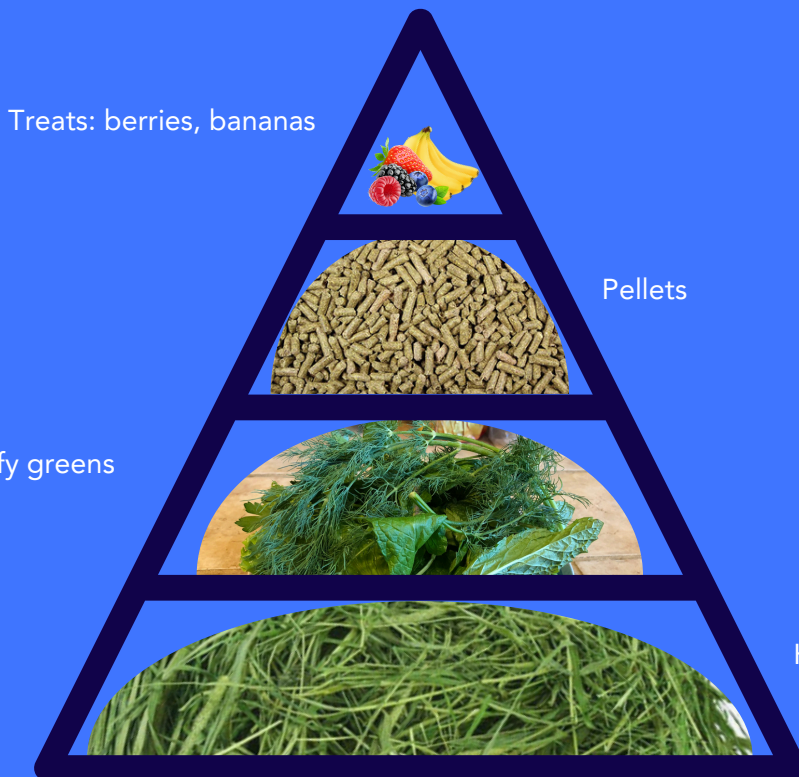
Photo by House Rabbit Resource Network, "Habitat Types & Ideas" 2024. <https://rabbitresource.org>



Photo by East Bay Rabbit Rescue, "Rabbit Setup," 2024. <https://eastbayrabbit.org/node/12>

# DIET & NUTRITION

Forget the carrots—rabbits love hay and fresh veggies! Keep their diet 80-90% hay with leafy greens for a healthy and happy rabbit!



Hay, and hay and even more HAY!

- **Fresh Vegetables:** Offer a variety of leafy greens (e.g., romaine lettuce, cilantro). Avoid iceberg lettuce, as it's too watery and provides no nutritional value.
- **Pellets:** Provide high-quality, fiber-rich rabbit pellets in moderation.
- **Fresh Water:** Always provide fresh, clean water. You can use a water bowl since they are preferred as they encourage natural drinking habits.
- **Treats:** Limit sugary fruits. Treats should be offered sparingly. Some treats that help bunny's digestive system/constantly growing teeth are treats made of timothy hay

# HOW TO HOLD YOUR RABBIT

To hold your rabbit safely, support its chest and hindquarters with both hands, ensuring its body is cradled securely. Always keep it close to your body to help it feel stable and prevent sudden movements that could lead to injury.



Photo by PDSA, "How to Handle a Rabbit Safely," 2025, <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/>

1

Place one hand under the rabbit's chest while you sit or kneel on the floor.

2

Support its hindlegs with your other hand.

3

Lift gently, keeping the rabbit close to your body.

4

Hold securely and keep it calm.

## \*\*CAN I HOLD MY RABBIT ON IT'S BACK?

**Trancing** a rabbit involves flipping it onto its back, which temporarily induces a state of immobility due to a natural response. This should be avoided because it can cause stress, anxiety, and potential harm to the rabbit, including disorientation and injury to its spine or muscles.

# EXERCISE & PLAYTIME

As mentioned before, rabbits need room to play and stretch. Rabbits don't have any paw pads so a carpet or rug would be needed in their area for traction and safety.

**Wooden Chew Sticks** – Natural, untreated wood for healthy gnawing.

**Palm bowls** - Natural and untreated

**Timothy Hay Balls or Sticks** – Hay packed into a ball shape for fun and munching.

**Wicker Baskets** – Untreated, safe for chewing and great for tossing around.

**Cardboard Tubes** – Recycled toilet paper or paper towel rolls make great chew toys. You can also stuff these with hay and a couple of pellets to increase enrichment!



Photo by @justhistoryna - 5140mama's rabbit toys - 2022.  
<https://www.tiktok.com/@justhistoryna/video/71093207269708361358>



Photo by Cobow Animal Health - "DIY Small Pet Enrichment Toys - 2023" <https://www.youtube.com>



Photo by The Bunny Lady, "DIY Rabbit Toy," 2025.  
<https://bunnylady.com/diy-rabbit-toys-with-toilet-paper-tubes/>



# GROOMING

Grooming rabbits is an essential part of their care routine to ensure their health and comfort. Regular brushing helps remove loose fur, preventing matting and reducing the risk of hairballs, which can lead to digestive issues. Long-haired breeds may require daily grooming, while short-haired rabbits typically need brushing once a week. Additionally, check their nails regularly and trim them as needed, and keep an eye on their ears and teeth to ensure they remain clean and healthy. Proper grooming promotes a strong bond between you and your rabbit while maintaining their overall well-being.



Photo by, PDSA "How To Check Your Rabbit's Teeth," 2024, <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-help-and-advice/pet-health-hub/other-veterinary-advice/how-to-check-your-rabbits-teeth>



**NO BATHS!** Rabbits are like cats, and enjoy keeping themselves very clean. Rabbits can't regulate their body temperature so they have a high risk of getting hypothermia. It's best to use an unscented wipe for spot cleanings only if absolutely necessary.



# LITTER TRAINING

Just like cats, rabbits can be litter trained!



Photo by, Wabbit Wiki "Litter Training," 2024.  
[https://wabbitwiki.com/wiki/Litter\\_training](https://wabbitwiki.com/wiki/Litter_training)

## Step 1.

Choose the Right Litter Box – Select a low-sided box so your rabbit can easily hop in and out. Use a rabbit-safe, non-clumping litter (like paper-based or hay-based).

## Step 2.

Pick the Right Spot – Rabbits usually prefer to eliminate in one area. Place the litter box in a corner of their living space or where you've noticed they've already gone.

## Step 3.

Add Hay – Place hay in the litter box. Rabbits like to munch while they potty, and this encourages them to use the box.

## Step 4.

Observe and Guide – If your rabbit goes elsewhere, gently place them in the litter box. They will eventually start to associate it with bathroom time.

## Step 5.

Clean Regularly – Keep the litter box clean to prevent any mess and encourage consistent use. Rabbits are very clean animals and prefer a tidy space. Once every other day or as needed.

## Step 6.

Positive Reinforcement – Reward your bunny with treats and praise when they use the litter box. This helps them understand they're doing the right thing!

# HEALTH CARE

Providing proper health care is key to ensuring your rabbit lives a long, happy life. Regular vet check-ups, a balanced diet, and a clean environment help prevent common health issues. By prioritizing their well-being, you'll not only keep your rabbit healthy but also strengthen your bond with them.



## VET VISITS:

Schedule regular check-ups with an exotic pet vet. Rabbits should receive vaccinations for diseases like Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) & Myxomatosis (where applicable).

*Write your rabbit savvy vet info here:*

*Vet Name:*

*Address:*

*Veterinarian:*

*Phone Number:*



## SIGNS OF ILLNESS:

Watch out for changes in behavior, eating habits, or litter box usage. If your rabbit is lethargic, has diarrhea, no bowel movements, or isn't eating, it's time to visit the vet since this can be a sign of an emergency like GI stasis.

## GI STASIS (GASTROINTESTINAL STASIS) - INTESTINAL SLOWDOWN:

*"Gastrointestinal stasis, often referred to as GI stasis, is a serious condition in rabbits that occurs when the normal movement of the gut slows down or stops completely. When this happens, food and gas build up in the stomach and intestines causing bloating and discomfort for the rabbit."*

- Know the Signs:**
- Very small or no stool
  - Loss of appetite
  - Lethargy, hunched posture
  - Pain (abdominal sensitivity or teeth chattering)
  - Low body temperature
  - Loud 'gurgling' or 'bubbling' in the abdomen



**If you notice any of these symptoms, make sure you get your rabbit seen by a rabbit savvy tech as soon as possible!**

# RABBIT CHEWING & PROOFING

Rabbits love to chew because their teeth grow continuously, and chewing helps keep them trimmed and healthy. It's a natural instinct to chew and helps to relieve boredom. Providing safe chew toys is essential for satisfying this behavior and bunny proofing your home to ensure your belongings and bunny are safe.

## Block cords and outlets

- Use furniture to block cords and outlets
- Use cord covers, wire wrap, or corrugated tubing to protect electrical cords
- Move cords out of reach

## Protect walls

- Cover walls with cardboard or plastic wall protectors
- Use plastic or decorative wood corner protectors
- Spray bitter apple or rub pure Ivory soap on surfaces to deter chewing

## Provide toys

- See page \_\_\_\_\_ for enrichment/playtime ideas
- Rabbits may chew out of boredom, so providing toys can help reduce unwanted chewing

## Cover chewing areas

- Cover favorite chewing areas with a large ceramic tile or a plastic office chair mat
- Choose low-pile carpeting

## Move valuables out of reach

- Move valuable books, magazines, and potted plants out of grazing range



Photo by, diyncrafts "85 Insanely Clever Organizing and Storage Ideas for Your Entire Home" 2022.  
<https://www.diyncrafts.com/14938/organization/85-insanely-clever-organizing-and-storage-ideas-for-your-entire-home>

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

## TEMPERATURE

Rabbits are sensitive to extreme temperatures. Keep them in a cool, well-ventilated area in summer, and ensure they are kept warm in winter (but never in direct sunlight or in drafts).



## LIGHTING

Keep them in natural light, but avoid direct sunlight exposure. Rabbits need a good balance of light for their circadian rhythms



## AIR

Rabbits can develop asthma from fumes in candles, perfumes, or aerosols. To avoid this, keep these products away from rabbits and ensure good ventilation.



# BODY LANGUAGE

Rabbits communicate differently from cats. They show comfort through body language like a relaxed posture or ear positioning, and may thump or freeze when scared. Unlike cats, **rabbits don't enjoy being held off the ground** since they are prey animals and feel safer on solid ground. To build a bond, spend time at their level on the floor, be patient, and let them approach you. This approach helps your rabbit feel safe and trust you more.

## WHERE DO RABBITS LIKE TO BE PET?

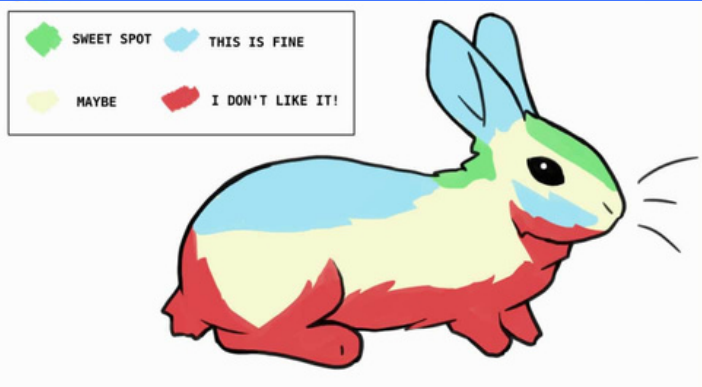


Photo by The Bunny Lady, "How to Pet Your Rabbits in A Way They'll love," 2025, <https://bunnylady.com>

*\*\*Let your companion come to YOU and remember to have a lot of patience with these babies, the benefits are worth it!*

## BONDING



Photo by, r/Rabbits "Rabbit just wants to eat the floor." 2023, [https://www.reddit.com/r/Rabbits/comments/192ynan/rabbit\\_just\\_wants\\_to\\_eat\\_the\\_floor/?rdt=39873](https://www.reddit.com/r/Rabbits/comments/192ynan/rabbit_just_wants_to_eat_the_floor/?rdt=39873)

## BUNNY BODY LANGUAGE



Photo by the-rabbit-lop, "Rabbit Body Language," 2024, [https://www.instagram.com/the\\_rabbit\\_lop/?IGD=51Gx0/](https://www.instagram.com/the_rabbit_lop/?IGD=51Gx0/)

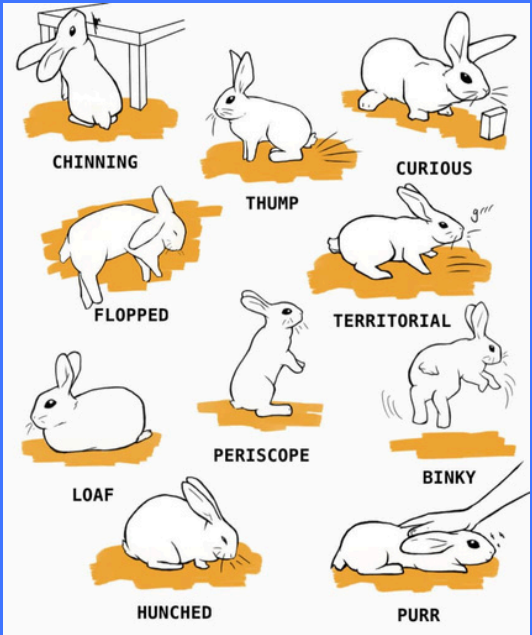


Photo by The Bunny Lady, "Rabbit Body Language," 2025, <https://bunnylady.com>

# FUN FACTS!

## Did You Know? Fascinating and Fun Facts About Bunnies That Will Surprise You

- 🍓 Love being pet on their head, since it's a sign of being comfortable, feeling loved, and being groomed
- 🍓 Rabbits can purr! If you are petting them on their head they can click their teeth together which is a sign of enjoyment and happiness <3
- 🍓 Rabbits do not have paw pads!
- 🍓 Rabbits don't really enjoy being picked up by humans and enjoy being on the ground, I know, I know!
- 🍓 Building trust is so important to you and your bunny's relationship
- 🍓 Being closer to the ground, spending time on the ground will help your bunny feel safe around you and trust you <3
- 🍓 If you lay on your stomach and your bunny trusts you, they may jump on your back and use you as a play ground <3
- 🍓 Rabbits are "crepuscular", meaning they are most active during dawn and dusk and sleep at night and throughout the day
- 🍓 One of the ways rabbits like to mark their territory is by 'chinning' toys, food, or even you!





*Thank you!*

Thank you for adopting a rabbit from the Houston Humane Society! By giving a rabbit a loving home, you're not only providing a second chance for a furry friend but also supporting the important work of the shelter in rescuing and caring for animals in need. Your kindness makes a big difference!





# SOURCES

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