

Handling your pet rabbit:

Rabbits have very strong back muscles and a very weak spine. If scared, they can kick with enough force to break their own backs. When carrying a rabbit, always support both the head and the rear. Most rabbits will relax when carried like a football with their back end in the palm of your hand, their head hidden in your elbow and your other arm over the top along the spine, reassuring them.



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BASIC CARE OF THE PET RABBIT

Some common signs of illness:

- ☹ Loss of appetite
- ☹ Dull or poorly groomed hair coat
- ☹ Discharge from the eyes or nose
- ☹ Change in stool appearance
- ☹ Coughing or sneezing
- ☹ Constant scratching

☺ An annual checkup can help detect illness early and help prolong the life of your rabbit.

Rabbits have an average lifespan of 7 to 9 years.

Spaying and Neutering:

Older non-spayed female rabbits have a high incidence of uterine and mammary cancer. Spaying your female rabbit at 4-5 months of age will prevent these cancers.

Neutering male rabbits will help decrease some of the natural moody behaviors that come with the onset of puberty (4-5 months of age).



A proper diet is essential:

- ☺ Fresh water and timothy hay should be available at all times. We carry Oxbow® timothy hay which is fresh and high quality.
- ☺ Young (under 5 months), pregnant or nursing rabbits can eat alfalfa hay, but alfalfa is too rich for older rabbits and make them become overweight.
- ☺ Pellets can be given in small amounts (1-2 tablespoons), but do not allow free access to pellets (often made of an alfalfa base) because they may become overweight. Find pellets made of a timothy hay base whenever possible. We carry Oxbow Bunny Basics T® which is timothy based and nutritionally balanced.
- ☺ Offer a small salad of mixed greens twice daily.

What kind of mixed greens, fruits, veggies can be fed?

A general rule is to choose dark, leafy greens and vegetables. Fruits should be offered as small treats.

<u>Suggestions:</u>	Broccoli	Kale	Mustard greens
	Dandelion greens	Parsley	Endive
	Escarole	Romaine	Apples
	Carrots	Collards	Bok choy
	Spinach	Green beans	Turnip greens
	Basil		



The proper environment can affect health and well being:

Solid, non-chewable floors work best (tile, linoleum, wood). Avoid wire bottom cages as rabbits can develop sores on their feet if offered only wire to stand on. If you have a wire cage, place a large flat, untreated wood board that is slightly larger than the rabbit for them to stand on.

Happy rabbits like to be clean and they will train readily to a litter box. Do not use clay cat litters, as rabbits will often eat it. Bedding choices for inside the litter box include: Carefresh®, Yesterday's News®, or even newspaper. Avoid scented beddings, such as cedar or aspen as they are very harsh on the rabbit's respiratory system. Litter boxes can be made of plastic or ceramic and should be cleaned daily.

Avoid putting towels in the cage as rabbits will often chew on them or get caught in the strings which can be very dangerous. Moody or unhappy rabbits will often show their displeasure by making a mess of their environment or messing outside the litter box.



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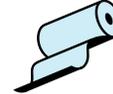
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Toys provide enrichment and prevent boredom:

Good choices are things that are edible, as rabbits love to destroy their toys as they play. Phone books, empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls stuffed with hay, and untreated branches make good toys.

(empty rolls)



(phone books)



(untreated)



Grooming is important for all rabbits but especially thick furred or long haired rabbits:

Most rabbits enjoy being brushed daily. A soft-bristled brush works best.

Nails can be trimmed once every 4 to 6 weeks. Human toenail clippers or small cat clippers work well. Avoid the guillotine style clippers as they can dull quickly and will bend the nail before cutting it. We can demonstrate proper holding and trimming methods for you.

If you need to bathe your rabbit, use a shampoo meant for puppies or kittens. DVM Tearless® brand is very gentle and therefore a good choice for rabbits. Baby wipes work well in between baths for quick clean-ups. Be sure to thoroughly dry your rabbit to prevent drafts and colds. Most rabbits will allow themselves to be toweled dry.



Always dry completely!