

D&S Rabbitry

Caring for your new friend

Diet

- **Hay** is essential to a rabbit's good health and should make up the majority of an adult rabbit's diet. Roughage reduces the danger of gastrointestinal problems. Non-toxic twigs also provide roughage.
- **Pellets** should make up less of the diet as it grows older. You will be given a 1 lb bag of transition food when you pick up your bunny. If you plan to feed a different type of food than what we use, slowly transition your bunny over to the new brand by gradually mixing our food with a little of the new food. We use Producer's Pride from Tractor Supply if you wish to keep your bunny on the same feed.
- **Vegetables** should be pesticide free and can include leafy greens and root vegetables. Add one vegetable to the diet at a time.
- **Water** should be kept fresh at all times. All of our bunnies drink from a bowl. If you plan to use a water bottle you should initially provide a bowl next to it until they learn to drink from the bottle.
- **Fruit** – Occasional bites of fruit can be given to adult rabbits as a treat (our rabbits go bananas for bananas!) but be careful not to give too much. **Rabbits under 7 months old should not be fed fruit.**

It is always a good idea to research a food before giving it to your bunny to ensure it is safe!



Litter Box Training: Because rabbits are very clean animals, litter box training can be done fairly easily. They tend to choose one corner of their living area as a toilet. Place the litter box in that corner. You can also position a hay rack next to it so that they can graze from inside it.

Introduce your bunny to the litter as soon as possible. Once your bunny gets the idea you can move the litter a little at a time until it is where you would like it to be. If it is taking your bunny a little longer to catch on you can try wiping up any messes and putting them in the box. With this system it normally does not take long but sometimes you need a little patience and persistence!

Grooming: A rabbit's nails should be trimmed every 3-4 weeks using nail trimmers designed for small animals. You should also periodically brush your rabbit especially when it is shedding. Rabbits groom themselves and ingest hair in the process, when they are shedding there is a risk of developing hairballs which block the digestive system. We recommend brushing with a good shedding tool (such as one used for cats) or a very fine tooth comb. Occasionally a rabbit's genital scent glands will require cleaning. These glands can omit an unpleasant odor when allowed to build up and may even become blocked. A q-tip moistened in mineral oil can be used to carefully remove the build up. As you groom, check for signs of parasites such as mites or fleas as this might require veterinary attention.

Rabbit grooming is a service that we offer here at D&S Rabbitry. Contact us for an updated service and price list. If you are interested in learning how to thoroughly groom your own rabbit you can book a lesson with us. We teach you how to groom (trim nails, brush, wipe eyes and ears, clean scent glands, and do a health check) and offer a hands on training approach. We demonstrate the method on one of our own rabbits and then allow you to practice on your own bunny with us here to help and answer questions.

Housing: Your rabbit will need a safe cage, play yard or hutch, water bottle (or bowl), feed bowl, hay rack (optional), bedding (no pine or cedar shavings) and toys. Bowls should be heavy enough that the rabbit cannot tip them over. If you desire to litter train you will need a litter box and litter. Get a cage with plenty of room for your rabbit to stretch out in. You can also choose to ‘free range’ your rabbit in the house. If you take care to litter train it, it will return to the cage to go in the litter. If you choose to allow your bunny to roam, you will need to have **all** electrical wires out of reach. A small animal play yard is a great way to keep your bunny safe while giving him extra room to play. Also be aware that rabbits may chew baseboards, carpets, books etc.

Spay or Neuter: Although not necessary, there are benefits to spaying and neutering pet bunnies. A neutered male is less likely to spray. A spayed female will not develop uterine cancer and may be less aggressive and territorial.

Entertainment: Bunnies are curious and playful. They like to keep busy by organizing their living space and chewing (which also helps with keeping their teeth trimmed). They are prey animals that like to burrow and hide. A little hidey house for them to escape to is a great addition to their living space. If it is made of wood they can also chew on it to help with their teeth. There are many toys on the market for bunnies. Things we’ve found most bunnies enjoy are willow balls, grass mats, wooden blocks that you can hang from the cage, and sticks to chew on (especially apple twigs). You can also make your own toys such as stuffing hay into an empty toilet paper roll or creating tunnels with cardboard boxes.



Bonding: Frequent, gentle handling will ensure that your bunny stays friendly. Begin by stroking the top of the bunny’s head and back avoiding the nose and chin. Take care to support the rabbits back legs when lifting as most will struggle and kick when suspended in the air. With young children you can use a bin to secure the rabbit and allow them to pet it while seated. This allows children to interact with the rabbit and get used to handling it without the risk of being scratched if the rabbit gets nervous and tries to escape. Encourage children to interact quietly with the bunny, having them sit inside a play pen while the bunny explores and allowing the bunny to approach them rather than them chasing it. You will soon discover your bunny has a unique personality! Many positive interactions ensure that your bunny will enjoy time with you as much as you do with it!



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Bethany, Connecticut

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