

Post Oak Rabbitry

New Bunny Care



The Scoop on Your Bunny

What your bunny is used to and what to expect

Your bunny was born and raised here at Post Oak Rabbitry. All our bunnies are born and raised in an outdoor environment 365 days a year. They are both used to the cold and the heat. Rabbits are very tolerant to the cold; in fact, they love the winter months a lot more than the hotter summer months.

During the summer our bunnies are provided a rechargeable fan in their cage to keep them cool. We also purchase tiles from local hardware stores to provide our bunnies. These are used not only as a cooling stone, but as a resting pad on the wire cage bottom of their runs.

Bunnies cannot tolerate the summer heat when feel like temps are over 95 degrees. At this time, our rabbits do come inside to avoid these major heat waves.

But can your bunny be inside 24/7? Absolutely! Just because they are used to being outdoors now, doesn't mean they cannot be indoors. When transitioning them indoors just provide them extra time for litter box training and make sure to bunny proof your home so they cannot destroy your carpet and/or furniture.

Our rabbits are used to food being provided to them at their leisure. We do not limit their food intake. We fill their bowls to the brim and let them graze as they please. Rabbit's diets are 75% hay, this is their main food source and should always be provided to them.

We provide our bunnies with orchard grass hay, and our nursing mamas alfalfa mixed in. Most bunny owners feed their rabbits timothy; this of course is a great hay choice as well but can be a tad more costly than buying orchard grass in bulk. Our bunnies are also used to having a small amount (1tbsp) of plain oats mixed into their food occasionally, as a nutritious treat. Your new rabbit will only be used to drinking water out of a bowl. If you are planning on switching to a bottle, make sure to provide both at first to make sure they stay hydrated, and monitor if the bottles water is going down. As far as litter, they are currently use to pine shavings.

Acclimating Your New Bunny at Home

Rabbits are prey animals, so transitioning into a new environment can be a very frightening experience. Their instincts are to flee to avoid being hurt/eaten. When settling a rabbit into a new environment, you must be patient and provide them with a home base to feel secure.

Their home base should include everything they are currently familiar with until they are more acclimated with their new environment. This should include their water bowl (Our bunnies are used to a bowl not a bottle), their food, some wood shavings for their litter area, and an abundance of hay.

Rabbits are sensitive to loud noises, try and set their home away from big distractions to make this transition as least stressful as possible, whether this be outdoors or indoors. If there are small kids or other pets in the home, avoid too much activity with the new bunny for the first few days until he/she is acclimated with the new environment.

When acclimating a new bunny with an existing household rabbit, remember there is a time for bonding them. When setting up their home base, keep it next to the existing bunny but not integrating them together right away. Letting them in together right away can and will cause fighting among rabbits for dominance.

Lastly routine is important with rabbits. Because rabbits are mainly active in the mornings and evenings, they are used to being fed and given water twice a day, both morning and nighttime. When getting them acclimated, try and maintain this schedule to keep them on their normal routine.



Feeding Your Rabbit

What they can and cannot eat

Your bunny is currently eating Producers Pride pellets which can be found at Tractor Supply and Co. Post Oak Rabbitry sends home a small baggie of this food home with every bunny to ensure they are either slowly transitioned to a new food or kept on the same diet. Post Oak also sends bunnies home with a small amount of hay to cover them until you can purchase your own. These bunnies have also been eating pain oats occasionally and can be given more as a treat at the new owner’s leisure. Our babies go home at the age of 8 weeks, if you are getting a baby, they have not yet had any veggies in our care. We recommend not giving baby bunnies veggies until the minimum age of 3 months (12 weeks). Although the recommended age to start introducing them is 5 months upon a rabbit’s maturity. Please make sure to check what veggies are and are not safe for your bunny before introducing any into your bunnies diet. If you are purchasing an older bunny, they most likely have already been eating veggies here with us. The current fresh veggies that are fed to our bunnies are: Spinach, Romaine hearts, broccoli, celery leaves (stalks can be given as well but making sure they are chopped up fine), carrots, and some small squash. We also give our bunnies fruit to include but not limited to strawberries, grapes, and banana. Banana is our bunnies favorite and least expensive treat. Because it is high in sugar, we only give about an inch of a slice at a time to our buns.

Some fruits and veggies that **cannot** be given to a bunny are listed below: Iceberg lettuce, kale, potatoes of any kind, artichoke, eggplant, cauliflower, bean, pea, garlic, chard, sprouts, beetroot, rosemary, sage, chives, avocado, plum, rhubarb, avocado, coconut, dates, nuts, sunflower seeds. A high amount of fruits and veggies in a bunny’s diet can cause for dietary upset, so just make sure you are still providing them with a high amount of hay. We usually feed veggies or grass to our bunnies two-three times per week and pellets the remaining parts of the week. Bunnies have over 17,000 taste buds in their mouth, chewing over 120 times per minute. Their teeth are long and sharp. Never hand feed a rabbit smaller food, as they can and will mistake a finger for part of their food smelling your hand. Bunnies require wood chews to keep their teeth filed down. These can be purchased at any pet store or co-op. You can also provide them with hay mats that provide a food and chew source for them. During the summer months we also provide our adult rabbits with salt blocks. They are usually small and round and can hook onto the wire part of their cage. These can also be purchased at a co-op and come in many flavors. If you plan to keep your rabbit indoors, this is not needed. You may also notice a rabbit having long more loose poops at times. This is completely normal and called cecotropes. After digesting a meal, bunnies will eat these cecotropes (poop) and process the food a second time.

Medication and Remedies to have on Hand

The what if and just in case

Although your bunny is being sent home in good health, it is smart to purchase a few necessities for the chance they need them. As a rabbitry owner and having handled many bunnies, we have seen and handled a lot. There are three items we will always keep on-hand that is all inexpensive and can all be purchased from chewy.



HomeoPet Digestive Upset is used for our bunnies when they have loose stools or are not eating the best. Although we thankfully have never encountered GI Status here at our rabbitry, this is a great preventative when a bunny starts to show signs of dietary upset.



HomeoPet Worm Clear is a great product we give to all our bunnies during the summer months as a preventative. We also give this to new bunnies entering our rabbitry to make sure they are clear of any intestinal parasites.



Lastly, Vetericyn Plus is a lifesaver to have around. Whether it is a bot fly wound, another rabbit’s bite, or any sort of cut/open wound, this stuff is amazing. I highly recommend having this around when you have any sort of small animal or livestock in your presence. You never know when you may need it to help heal your furry friend.



Rabbits Appearances and Behaviors

47 varieties of rabbits are recognized by the ARBA

The American Rabbit Breeders Association recognizes 47 different breeds of rabbits each varying in size and shape. The difference in weight ranges from 2lbs up to a record weight of 50lbs which is the continental giant. Here at Post Oak Rabbitry, we have handled and breed Holland Lops, Lionheads, Mini-Rex, New Zealand's, Flemish Giant, and some mixes along the way. We primarily handle and breed Holland Lops, Lionheads, and Mini-Rex which are all very friendly docile breeds.

Rabbits are social, affectionate, creatures which thrive off attention from others. There is a myth that rabbits will become lonely and die without a companionship. This is untrue to an extent. Rabbits do not need attention for another rabbit to survive, but

attention daily in general. Owners must be willing to spend time with their companion and show them the love and affection needed.

Like people, rabbits each have their own unique personality. Some are shy, others more playful and loving. It has been our experience that males tend to be more forthcoming and loving creatures than females. This does not mean females are not friendly, but sometimes will take more work to open up to you.

If you plan to bring in multiple rabbits, the best pair is always two females. Males will fight and assert dominance over one another if not fixed, and of course a male and female would both need to be altered to live in harmony together without having an abundance of litters.



Our babies are separated from their mom at the age of 6 weeks and continue to stay in our care together until the age of 8 weeks.

Behaviors

How rabbits act and react

Rabbits are crepuscular animals and are more active during the day taking back after their owner's behaviors. They are naturally clean creatures and clean themselves not requiring baths. Baths can stress a rabbit out and should never be submerged in water.

Their fur may be brushed but not washed. If you must wash them, used a warm washcloth or cotton balls/pads to prevent the bunny from being soaked.

Rabbits cannot trim their own nails so make sure you keep them trimmed down as well to prevent overgrowth.

Signs your rabbit is happy and healthy; they will be alert and social. They will continue to eat and drink regularly with their eyes, ears, and nose free of discharge. Healthy skin and fur will consist of non-itchy bald patches. Your bunny will however molt throughout the year, gaining a new coat under their old as they shed. At this time black bunnies will turn brown in color until all their old fur is gone.

Happy rabbits will binky as they hop around. This is a giant jump sideways. It will look very funny at first, but you will soon learn this will show when they are their happiest.

Rabbits will also thump as a main way of communicating.

A rabbit thumps for many reasons. Once being a sense of danger and fear. Others can be out of annoyance, signs of readiness, or as a warning to others.

Rabbits have strong muscular back legs but also very delicate skeletons. When handling a rabbit be sure to support their body fully holding your hand under their bottom and never pick a bunny up by their ears or back.

If housing your rabbit indoors, be sure to bunny-proof your home or area the rabbit will be staying. They love to chew so make sure all wires and furniture are out of reach. Rabbits can also be litter trained.

Because of their constant need to chew, wood sticks should be provided. You must be careful when choosing wood for them however as they cannot have wood from apricot, cherry, plum, avocado, or peach trees.



Our beautiful magpie doe: Country Farms Jasmine

Growing up Rabbit

The growing stages of a bunny

Bunnies have an average lifespan of 8-10 years with the proper care. There are many stages of the rabbit's life from newborn to senior.

The gestation period is between 28-35 days of a pregnant doe. When a doe has her litter, they are tiny and hairless. These babies eyes are sealed shut and will not begin to open until between 10-12 days old. Once their eyes are open around day 12, they will begin to wonder around out of their nest box.

The first month of a kits life they will rely on their mother's milk alone. They will rely on each other's warmth and mothers' fur to stay warm and protected.

At month two they will begin to eat their mother's hard food along with continuing to drink her milk. At the age of 6 weeks, we separate mom from her babies, and they are solely eating pellets and hay at this time. We wait two more weeks before letting the babies separate from their siblings to go to their new homes.

At three months of age, they are at sexual maturity. Because of this, any babies remaining in our care are then separated out from their opposing sex siblings.

Males reach sexual maturity sooner than females. Males usually around 3-4 months, and females 5-6 months. If you plan to breed you would need to wait till the age of maturity in females. If you are not planning to breed and plan to have your bunny altered, this is also the time vets recommend fixing your bunny.

During the age of 6 month to one year your rabbit is

reaching its full size. Unless your rabbit is a giant breed which can take up to 18 months to reach their full size.

At the age of 1-3 years, rabbits are at their most active peak. They are keener to bond with other rabbits and enjoy playtime. Their brains should be stimulated with toys and activities to keep them occupied at this time.



At the age of 4-5 bunnies begin to become less active and at this time should no longer be bred either.

In their senior years, rabbits can develop issues such as arthritis. Many unaltered females will also develop uterine cancer. Many rabbits living past the age of 7 years are going to be prone to many health issues and provided a senior diet at this point.



Housing Your Rabbit

The where and the how on keeping them

Rabbits can be kept indoor or outdoors and this is a personal decision you must make. Although rabbits can be litter trained, it will require a lot of patience and upkeep to start. People believe because rabbits are prey animals they do not belong outdoors. This is not the case but should be kept safe from other species which may get to them in the outdoors.

If kept outdoors, rabbits should be kept in a hutch a minimum of 2 feet off the ground to keep wildlife and pests out of their cage. You should also have a wire mesh bottom cage to not only keep the animal safe but let droppings fall below. Solid wood hutches which have no breathable bottom can hold bacteria and cause mites if not cleaned regularly.

With a wire bottom, be sure to add in a plastic or tile rest area of your bunnies feet as well.

If you are keeping your bunny indoors, they should be kept in a cage that is a minimum of 2 feet by 3 feet in size. They should also be provided an area to free roam or run around when you are home to supervise.

When choosing a sub-straight, you can use soft animal bedding, pelleted litter, or pine shavings. Cedar is not an ideal bedding as the oils can be toxic to your bunny.

No matter the type of sub straight, just remember that bunny’s poop... A lot. So be sure to find one that not only meets your bunnies needs but your financial needs.



The breed of your new bunny can also affect the cost of upkeep. Keep this in mind when choosing the best breed for you.

Upkeep Costs

Rabbits may be tiny creatures, but their upkeep can be huge. Here at Post Oak we can attest that sometimes bulk is better. We do not shop PetSmart or Petco for the sole reason of cost. Buying supplies in a larger non-small animal quantity will save you a ton in the long run. What you would spend on a small

bag of bedding at a pet store you can purchase 4 bags of wood savings at Tractor Supply.

Same goes for their food, we recommend 50lb bags of feed for \$20 vs the small 6lb bags in the rabbit section for \$15. Buying from local co-ops and Tractor Supply stores will be a life saver.

Whether you have one bunny or ten, they are going to need and eat a lot of hay. You can get two string bales of hay for an average of \$10 which for a single bun owner will last you 6 months.

Bunnies will also require toys and chews to keep them stimulated and occupied. I suggest buying them after holidays or past seasons when they are on sale or finding a local small business who make their own.

Also remember rabbits are considered exotic animals, not every vet will see these creatures and the vets who do will not be cheap. This is another reason we recommend keeping the medications listed above

on hand for the smaller emergencies, you may face.

Lastly please consider the breed you are purchasing. Some breeds will require more than others.

Lionheads which we breed here are going to require more grooming help from their human than a mini rex or lop will. This is due to the matts they can accumulate in their manes.

Lops can also be prone to ear problems due to the dirt they can accumulate in their ears. Although we personally have not encountered such issue, it is an issue to be more mindful of.





Our Holland Lop Harlequin Doe with slight ear control: Pebbles
What is ear control? When the ears do not fully lop at all times, and sometimes partially stick up on one or both sides.

Common Health Issues

Health cons in rabbits

Rabbits are prone to certain medical issues such as digestive upset, blockages, and diarrhea. If significant GI stasis can set in. GI stasis must be treated by a veterinarian professional.

GI statis is when the digestive system of a rabbit slows down or stops. You can tell based upon a rabbits fecal mater or lack there of along with loss of appetite.

Another main heath concern in rabbits you may face is eye problems or corneal ulcers. This is another issue we have yet to face in our rabbitry but is a know issue with the species.

Lastly rabbits can be prone to skin issues such as mites and fleas.

Other issues such as teeth overgrowth and respiratory issues can mostly be prevented throughout their lifetime with the proper care.

Once again, providing proper chew toys can help with their dental issues preventing the overgrowth which would result in needing to be grinded down by a medical professional.

The closest vets that will see rabbits in the Spotsylvania area is Spotsylvania Animal Hospital and Tidewater. We however choose to travel for our rabbitry needs to Autumn Trails Veterinary center which is located in Charlottesville Virginia. The vet there is a prior breeder and is very knowledgeable in the study of rabbits.

Rabbit Terminology

The basics

For a quick overview, your new bunny in the rabbit would is not considered a male or female. They are rather considered a buck or a doe. A buck is a male and a doe is a female.

A baby bunny is considered a kit, while an older more mature rabbit is referred to as a coney.

A group of rabbits is considered a colony. Many rabbit owners also consider their heard a fluffle.



A nest is a group of kits. Pictured above is our first litter ever here at Post Oak belonging to Pebbles and Wilber.

In Conclusion

Livestock or pet, your going to love your new bunny



----- GENA SHIFFLETT

Did we scare you off? I hope not! Bunnies are the easiest most sociable creatures you can own if you know how to care for them properly.

Most importantly everyone has their own way of doing so. You can read 1000x articles on rabbit care and a lot are going to contradict each other.

This is okay because we are always here to answer any questions you may have.

Most of the time you must face these issues once to fully understand them. There will be a lot of trial and error.

Do you remember your first pet? I bet you didn't know much before bringing them into your life either. It will be okay. I cannot stress enough how loving these creatures are. They will become bonded with you as their owner and rely on you daily.

If for whatever reason rabbits are not for you, we understand. We just ask they do not go to a shelter, but you

contact us to help.

These babies are our passion. Our bunnies are our pets first and foremost and we love each of them dearly for their own unique personalities.

We also love to hear from you and see how our past bunnies are doing. So please reach out often and send photos along the way, so we can track these babies throughout their lifetime.

Most importantly, have fun with your new bun!

Much Love, Gena Shifflett