



So You Adopted a Rabbit...

Congratulations on your new pet rabbit! Rabbits are fantastic pets and wonderful companions. While they may seem like an easier pet than a dog or cat, rabbits are still deserving of just as much time and consideration as their larger mammalian friends.

Where should your pet rabbit live?

Pet rabbits thrive in indoor conditions, protected from extreme temperatures. Ideally, they should have a lot of room to hop around and stretch their legs. Some owners use a puppy pen instead of a cage to give their bunnies space to hop and roam. They do best on carpeted surfaces, as tile and cement are very slippery for them. Some rabbit owners even let their rabbits out loose in the home. Since rabbits are prey animals, they will very much appreciate having hiding spaces in their enclosure. Rabbits are very curious creatures and can get into trouble if left to their own devices! Rabbit-proofing cupboards, electric cords, and houseplants will help keep your bunny and your possessions safe. You can litterbox train your bunny by offering a litterbox lined with newspapers and hay.

What should your pet rabbit eat?

Rabbits, contrary to Bugs Bunny, do NOT live off of carrots alone! Rabbits need a diet mostly consisting of hay and fresh leafy greens. Fresh hay should be available at all times for your rabbit to munch on. In addition to providing vital nutrition, it can act as an enrichment activity to occupy their time instead of chewing on your furniture or other inappropriate objects. Preferably, multiple kinds of hay such as timothy, oat, barley, and meadow should be offered. Fresh leafy greens are also important and can come from lettuces such as kale and radicchio. Small amounts of fruits and vegetables may be offered as treats. Blueberries, apples, and carrots are wonderful snacks in moderation. Rabbit pellet food can be added to supplement their diet.

What should your pet rabbit NOT eat?

Light-colored leafy greens like cabbage and iceberg lettuce are NOT good options for your bunny. Other foods to avoid giving your bunny include cauliflower, peas, apple

seeds, corn, tomato leaves, onions, and root vegetables such as potatoes and turnips. These can upset their delicate digestive systems and even have lethal consequences. Consult your veterinarian if you have any questions regarding appropriate and inappropriate dietary options for your rabbit.

What should you do with your pet rabbit?

Rabbits are very social creatures and they require that you spend plenty of time with them! As creatures of prey, they are instinctually fearful of quick movements and loud sounds. Therefore, do not be surprised if it takes a little bit of time to build a relationship with your bunny. You can let your rabbit out of their enclosure for exercise and give them sticks or balls to play with (bird toys are also often a great option!). Once your bunny is comfortable around you, they can be very affectionate. Rabbits may enjoy sitting in their owner's lap or licking and nuzzling their owners, but they also may exhibit more stand-offish behavior. Each rabbit will have a unique personality, and getting to know your rabbit is the joy of pet ownership!

What is your pet rabbit trying to tell you?

Rabbit body language is very unique. The following are some important "tell-tale signs" to keep you in tune with what your rabbit is trying to tell you:

- Bulging eyes and ears pressed back against their shoulders is a rabbit saying that it is scared.
- Thumping their feet can be another sign of fear.
- An alert and interested rabbit will have their ears forward and erect.
- Binkies, or little "wiggle-hops," and full body flops indicate a rabbit is relaxed and happy.
- Content rabbits may also "purr" by rubbing their teeth together.

Can you hug your rabbit?

Yes. Well, maybe. Rabbits have very delicate spines and if they are not comfortable with being picked up, they may injure themselves. If you are picking up a rabbit, it is very important to keep their back from bending upward. It is best to lift the rabbit from directly in front of you with one hand under their chest and the other bracing their lower back. Lift quickly and hold the rabbit against you. If the bunny is content and not flailing, please hug your bunny! Note that not all rabbits like being held, so listen to your rabbit's body language to determine whether it wants to be picked up or not.

How do you keep your rabbit healthy?

Grooming your bunny is important. You should comb or brush your rabbit (they shed a lot!) and trim their toenails. Just like dogs and cats, rabbits are fastidious groomers and

will keep themselves clean as long as their living space is kept clean. Please do NOT give your rabbit a bath! Instead, spot clean them with a damp cloth. If necessary, flea treatments designed for cats are generally safe to use on bunnies. If your bunny is uncharacteristically lethargic or is showing any signs of ill-health, please reach out to your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Congratulations on your new rabbit companion! Good luck!