

Rabbit Care Information Packet



Congrats on your new furry friend!

Important information for adopters of Rabbits

Courtesy of House Rabbit Society

My Pet's Information

Please keep this information in a safe place!

Name: _____

Breed: _____

Age: _____

Adoption Date: _____

Vet Name: _____

Vet Contact Number: _____

Vet Address: _____

Contact List

Adoption Questions/Customer Service

(360) 692-6977, customerservice@kitsap-humane.org

Medical Records

(360) 692-6977 ext. 1209, mzarb@kitsap-humane.org

Medical Questions

(360) 692-6977 ext. 1214, jgibowski@kitsap-humane.org

Returns-by appointment

(360) 692-6977 ext. 1123

24 Hour Emergency Care

Animal Emergency and Trauma Center

320 Northwest Lindvig Wy, Poulsbo, 98370. Phone: 360-697-7771

What will you find in your adoption packet?

About Kitsap Humane Society.....3

Checklist for New Rabbit Guardian.....4

New Rabbit Shopping List5

Safe Grooming and Handling Techniques.....6-7

Vet Partnership Program.....8-9

Rabbit Proofing.....10

Chewing Behaviors.....10-11

Toys.....11-12

Dietary Information.....12-13

Living Arrangements.....13-14

Litter Training.....14-15

Medical Concerns.....16-17

The Importance of Spay and Neuter.....18

Kitsap Humane Society

Thank you for choosing to adopt from Kitsap Humane Society! We hope you will be very happy with your new companion. In this adoption packet you will find a variety of helpful hints and materials, including important documents about your new Rabbit.

We encourage you to keep these documents in a safe place along with your other important papers. When one of our Rabbits leaves the shelter to start his or her “new beginning” we feel great happiness for the Rabbit and his or her new family.

So, we again thank you for giving your Rabbit a loving home, and we hope you will encourage others to consider adopting an animal from KHS or another shelter, so they too can experience the joy of finding a new best friend.

KHS’ vision is that every adoptable companion animal has a home. For more information, visit www.kitsap-humane.org.



Checklist for New Rabbit Guardians

Housing

- Roomy kennel, six times size of adult rabbit and optional play pen.
- Front opening door is preferable for rabbit to come in and out on their own; top opening cages are nice too in that they allow humans to reach in and out. Both top and front opening door is ideal. Door must be large enough for litter box.
- Resting board to cover part of cage floor (piece of cardboard, wood, or carpet) for rabbit's comfort. Kennels with wire floors are inhumane and can cause injury to your rabbit's feet.
- Litter box fastened inside cage to reinforce litter box training.
- Heavy pellet bowl or clip-on feeder and hay rack.
- Water bottle or crock.

Running Space

- Indoors: gradually increase freedom. Bunny-proof electric cords. Place second litter box outside kennel. Let rabbit have access to kennel (leave door open with water and food inside). Clean small litter box once a day—clean kennel floor once a week or as needed.
- Outdoors: fenced patio, porch or wire playpen (with floor), daytime only; with adult supervision

Consumables (80% fresh hay, 10% pellets, 10% fresh vegetables.)

- Rabbit pellets (observe amount eaten daily).
- Fresh water.
- Fresh vegetables and fruit. Introduce gradually and give fruit in small quantities. Give plentiful vegetables.
- Hay (for fiber and nutritional value): timothy, oat, or orchard grass.
- Straw (no calories for fiber and chewing entertainment).
- Wood (pine, oak, apple) for chewing and recreation.
- Papaya enzymes/multiple enzymes (especially Prozyme for prevention of fur-block and enteritis).

Handling

- If rabbit struggles violently, either restrain the rabbit against your body OR squat down and release the rabbit (fighting may injure them!) Prevent rabbit jumping from heights.

Socializing

Demonstrate to the rabbit that you are the source of petting, treats, freedom, and anything else the rabbit likes. Pet the rabbit on the broad area on top of their nose. Try short sessions several times a day. Don't chase the rabbit unless necessary. Don't punish them. Distract or remove rabbit from chewing or digging destructively. Give them something they CAN play with. Rabbits readily develop habits — good or bad — and can be influenced by humans. (See 'Shy Rabbit' handout).



New Rabbit Shopping List

House Supplies:

- Kennel: at least 6x the size of your stretched out bunny, preferably with 2 levels and a ramp
- Water bottle or crock
- Food crock - heavy enough so your rabbit can 't throw it!
- Hay rack
- Plastic litter box
- Edible litter, such as Carefresh or Cat Country (no cedar! Or other soft woods)
- Pet carrier
- Bunny toys
- Cardboard box or tube to hide in and run through
- Collapsible fence or bunny playpen for exercise area

Food:

- Timothy or alfalfa pellets
- Unlimited grass hay: timothy, oat, orchard grass
- Fresh vegetables-at least 3 kinds each day
- Apple twigs or other untreated wood to chew on

House Protection:

A) Electrical cords:

- PVC tubing/hacksaw
- Aquarium tubing/exacta knife
- Electrical cord wrap from Radio Shack

B) Off limit rooms, bookshelves, baseboards, furniture:

- Baby gates
- Chicken wire
- Fabric covers

Cleaning Supplies:

- Spray bottle
- White vinegar
- Clean sponge
- Bucket

- Bucket
- Rubber gloves
- Old towel
- Broom and dustpan
- Vacuum

Health Care Supplies:

- House Rabbit Handbook by Marinell Harriman
- Rabbit Health in the 21st Century by Kathy Smith
- Comb
- Nail clippers/styptic powder
- Petromalt
- Papaya enzyme digestive aid

Medical Kit:

- Disinfectant: chlorhexidine or hydrogen peroxide (diluted)
- Antibiotic: Neosporin or triple antibiotic (NOT Neosporin Plus)
- Calendula lotion to sooth minor wounds
- Vaseline or corn starch for urine scald
- Simethicone: gas relief medicine for babies
- Pedialyte to rehydrate
- Saline eye wash
- Sterile bandages
- Cotton swabs
- Cotton balls
- Eye dropper or syringe for oral meds
- Tweezers and scissors
- Rectal thermometer/KY lubricant
- Rubbing alcohol to clean thermometer

Safe Grooming and Handling Techniques

Rabbits can act as if they're hardy creatures, but they are, in fact, extremely delicate—from their skin to their spines to their external systems. Care must be taken to maintain their good health.

The following basics are necessary to groom rabbits safely and to help keep them healthy. For information specifically geared towards caring for long-haired rabbits, see the *House Rabbit Journal* article, "The Well-groomed Rabbit."

FLEAS: Cat flea products are generally safe for rabbits with fleas (Always consult your local veterinarian). It's better to stick with powders and sprays only. Carbaryl is the ingredient preferred by the House Rabbit Society's veterinary advisors. One must be hesitant to treat rabbits' fleas aggressively, because the cure can be more stressful than the infestation, so flea baths and dips are **not** recommended.

A flea comb is a non-toxic device, which takes more patience, but is both physically and psychologically rewarding. Many rabbits learn to love the attention of being flea-combed, and it can be used as a supplement to or as your main flea-control program. If you want to control fleas in the environment with sprays or a flea bomb, do only one room at a time and keep your rabbits out of that room for at least 24 hours.

BATHS: Although some bunnies grow up swimming in the family pool and going on camping trips where they paddle around in the lake, most rabbits are not used to this routine and would find even an occasional bath quite stressful. NEVER—unless your vet advises it to bring down a fever—should you bathe a sick rabbit. Because seemingly healthy rabbits can have undiagnosed problems, it's best not to subject them to the stress of a bath. If your rabbit is very badly infested with fleas, there's a good chance that he is already compromised and may go into shock when bathed. Also, a thoroughly wet rabbit takes a very long time to dry, so spot cleaning the dirty area is better than an over-all bath. Normal rabbit body temperature is 102°. Since they are subject to heat stress, use a warm dryer, not hot.

MATS: Rabbit skin is delicate and highly susceptible to cuts, so mats should not be cut off with scissors. Instead, use a mat splitter or mat rake to take the mass apart. Bunny fur usually requires a finer blade than most cats and dogs.

SKIN: Scratchy, flaky skin with bald patches is usually a symptom of skin mites or an allergic reaction to fleas. Cat flea powder clears up either condition. A vet should be consulted before any treatment is given and for other skin irritations.

FEET: House rabbits who spend all of their time in homes with carpeting and linoleum periodically need to have their toenails trimmed, in the same way as dogs and cats.

Because of risk of infection, as well as humane consideration, declawing is definitely NOT recommended for rabbits. If excessive digging or scratching is a problem, then a large box of hay or straw, where bunny can pursue these activities, may help. Spayed/neutered rabbits are less likely to dig excessively.

If the padding (fur) on the feet is worn down, exposing inflamed or callused skin, then soft dry resting pads (rugs) should be provided. Exposed skin that becomes urine burned or broken is very likely to infect. Take extra care that rugs and litter boxes are kept clean and dry.

EARS: Ear wax can be lifted out with a cotton swab, being careful not to push on wax in the canal, or you can try a mild ear cleaner containing Chlorhexadine, such as Nolvasan Otic. For ear mite infestation, apply a topical medication such as Mitox. The vet may also prescribe Ivermectin.

TEETH: Bunnies with straight teeth will keep them worn down with everyday gnawing and chewing on provided toys/wood. Those with malocclusions, or crooked teeth, will need to have their teeth kept trimmed with guillotine-type clippers at your local veterinarian.

EYE DISCHARGE: Watery eyes or any eye discharge needs to be diagnosed by a vet. In addition to any medications or eye drops, the cheek needs to be kept dry and clean so the area will not become chafed nor the fur peeled off. Clean tissues will absorb mild wetness. Ophthalmic saline solution (what people use with their contact lenses) carefully poured onto the cheek will crystallize the tears so that they can be removed with a clean flea comb. A touch of prescription anesthetic powder on a finger can be applied to the area if there are painful lesions.

APPROACHING A RABBIT: The safest initial approach with rabbits is to begin by stroking the top of the head. Do not offer your hand for a bunny to sniff the way you would to a dog, because most seem to find this gesture offensive and may attack (lightning-fast lunge with a snort). Most rabbits also do not like having the tips of their noses or chins touched. Their feet also tend to be ticklish.

HYPNOSIS/TRANCING (Tonic Immobility): Often a bunny can be “hypnotized” by cradling them on their back in your arms or across your lap, tipping the head backwards until they’re “out”: which is actually Tonic Immobility. It’s helpful to do this when cleaning bunny’s sensitive areas, like the cheek, feet, and under the tail or treating injuries. If the hind feet seem to be vibrating, touching them will stop it.

However it is considered to be a fear motivated defense mechanism. TI is considered a last attempt for prey to escape being eaten by a predator. When a rabbit is in a TI state, it is playing dead. There are advantages to using this method when escape seems impossible. For example, if a fox has caught a rabbit, the rabbit might play dead. Thinking its prey is dead, the fox will stop attacking and may even let go of the rabbit or loosen its grip. In a split second, the rabbit might suddenly spring to life and escape.

Some owners say their bunnies are so relaxed in this trance mode that when they wake up, they do not run off or panic but would happily sit in their owners laps. Others say that their rabbits would suddenly spring to life and are evidently stressed. As a responsible rabbit owner you need to decide which is going to be less stressful for your rabbit: Cleaning/treating your rabbit with or without TI.

LIFTING: Bunnies should NOT be lifted by the ears or scruff!

Review: <http://rabbit.org/an-uplifting-experience/> for how to properly handle your rabbit.



Veterinarian Partnership Program



"Congratulations on your new pet! Kitsap Humane Society would like to introduce you to local veterinarians who have joined our **Veterinary Partnership Program**. Through the generous help of these participating veterinary clinics, **your newly adopted pet will be given one complimentary office visit.**

We strongly encourage you to take this opportunity to visit a local veterinarian and establish a lifelong relationship for you and your new pet. While Kitsap Humane Society strives to adopt out pets in good health, many pets come to us with unknown medical histories and can develop illnesses that may not be evident until they are in their new home environment. In partnering with local veterinarians, it is our hope that you find the ongoing support and care that your pet needs to ensure it lives a long, healthy life with you."

--Dr. Jennifer Stonequist, Director of Shelter Medicine, Kitsap Humane Society

Please note that complimentary exams may vary from clinic to clinic; please contact the participating veterinary clinic of your choice prior to your pet's visit for further explanation of coverage. Veterinary clinics are listed in alphabetical order.

Pricing is subject to change at each Veterinary Clinics discretion.

Alder Trail Animal Hospital

5757 Hwy 303 NE, Bremerton, WA 98311

Phone: 360-377-3971

Wellness exam: \$70-80

Spay: \$287

Neuter: \$257.

Pain management included.

All Creatures Animal Hospital

4241 State Hwy 3 W, Bremerton, WA 98312

Website: www.allcreatures24hr.com

Phone: 360-377-3801

Free wellness exam within 10 days after adoption. Proof of adoption must be provided.

Spay: Up to \$520 depending on individual animal needs. Includes fluids, pain-management, and anti-inflammatory medications

Neuter: Up to \$489 depending on individual animal needs. Includes fluids, pain-management, and anti-inflammatory medications

Angeles Clinic for Animals

160 Del Guzzi Drive, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Phone: 360-452-7686

One complimentary office visit. Offer must be used within 14 days of adoption. Proof of adoption must be provided.

Spay: \$306.09

Neuter: \$233.50

Pain management/anti-inflammatory/fluids: Optional.

All Creatures Animal Hospital

4241 State Hwy 3 W, Bremerton, WA 98312

Website: www.allcreatures24hr.com

Phone: 360-377-3801

Free wellness exam within 10 days of adoption

*.If pet comes in sick or has any additional care needed, free wellness exam will not be honored. Please call for any additional questions or concerns

Brookside Veterinary Hospital, Inc.

13701 118th Avenue NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98329

Phone: 253-857-7302

One Complimentary office visit within two weeks of adoption. Proof of adoption required.

Wellness exam: \$55

Spay and Neuter: \$350- \$400 depending on animal's needs

Chimacum Valley Veterinary Hospital

820 Chimacum Road, Port Hadlock, WA 98339

Website: www.chimacumvet.com

Phone: 360-385-4488

Wellness: \$55.50

Fair Isle Animal Clinic

17312 Vashon Hwy SW, P.O. Box 67, Vashon, WA 98070

Phone: 206-463-3607

One free exam within two weeks of adoption. Proof of adoption required

Spay: \$162 / Neuter: \$ 189

Prices can vary upon surgical complications.

Family Veterinary Clinic

3217 E Mahogany Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362

Phone: 360-452-9682

One complimentary exam within one week of adoption.

Spay: \$225

Neuter: \$125

Port Townsend Veterinary Clinic

1445 F Street, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Phone: 360-379-1133

Spay: \$280-\$320

Neuter: \$180-\$200

Wellness: \$55.50

Poulsbo Animal Clinic

19494 7th Avenue NE Suite 100, Poulsbo, WA 98370

Phone: 360-779-4640

Spay: \$250-\$300

Neuter\$250-\$300

Ridgetop Animal Hospital

1193 Tahoe Lane, Silverdale, WA 98383

Phone: 360-692-7387

One free wellness exam within 30 days of adoption.

Must speak with veterinarian about spay and neuter costs.

Seattle Animal Shelter

2061 15th Ave. W. Seattle, WA 98119

Phone: 206-386-7387

Low Cost Spay/Neuter: \$90

Winslow Animal Clinic Inc.

800 Erickson Avenue NE, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Phone: 206-842-6621

One free wellness exam within ten days after adoption.

Spay: \$162, plus additional tax and fees

Neuter: \$109, plus additional tax and fees

Rabbit-Proofing Your Home

Rabbit proofing one's home involves three things:

- 1) Preventing destruction of your property;
- 2) Protecting your companion rabbit(s) from harm; and.
- 3) Providing safe and fun chewing alternatives for your rabbit.

Preventing rabbits from chewing on electrical cords is of utmost importance, since rabbits can be badly burned or electrocuted. The consequences of biting into an electric wire are too severe to risk relying on training alone. Instead, you must take action to move the cords safely out of reach. Some ways of doing this are as follow;

- Plastic tubing (similar to that used in fish tanks, or with "swamp coolers") from a hardware or aquarium store can be slit lengthwise with a blade and the wire can be tucked safely inside. A harder, black, pre-slit type of tubing is also available.
- Decorative gold and wood-grained wire-concealers that stick to the base of walls come in strips, corners, etc., so they can follow the shape of the wall. This is a more costly and time consuming method than the clear plastic tubing above, but is more permanent.
- Of course, wires can be run under or behind furniture or carpets in order to hide them.

Most houseplants are toxic. Putting them on high furniture may not keep a rabbit away. Hang them from the ceiling if you have an active bunny, but watch for falling leaves! If you are unsure which plants may be toxic visit; <http://rabbit.org/poisonous-plants/>

If a rabbit insists on chewing baseboards, edges of chairs, etc., a board can be put over the places of temptation, making them inaccessible while also providing an acceptable chewing surface. This method should be combined with training your rabbit not to chew these items.

Rabbits can't resist digging at the end of "tunnels" (any place that furniture forms a narrow path to a wall). Lay a piece of wood or hard plastic at the end of the tunnel, holding it down with the furniture on either side to protect the carpet. You can also place a tub full of hay, shredded newspaper, or a phone book, here as well for bunny to dig in to.

Upholstered furniture and beds that are several inches off the ground are wonderful places for rabbits to hide underneath. However, some will burrow up into the soft underside and make a nest. A flat cardboard box or frame of 2x4s, smaller than the area of the furniture base, will keep the rabbit out, and won't be seen from human level.

Rabbits chew to exercise their minds, not just their teeth. Provide lots of entertaining alternatives for your bun to chew on. If they enjoy chewing a hole into the back of the couch, give them a closed cardboard box filled with paper or straw, with a small hole in it to start, and let them finish the job. **Be imaginative!**

Chewing Behavior

Why does your rabbit chew things other than their meals? Chewing is a normal, natural, necessary — and highly enjoyable — activity for rabbits. Here is an outline of some considerations to help you understand the why of chewing, as well as the how to prevent destruction of your favorite furniture.

I. Psychological factors

A. Sex. Females often have a stronger urge to burrow than males, although this is not the only reason rabbits chew. The hormone/age factors below also apply to males. Both males and females can and should be spayed or neutered as soon as they are sexually mature (3 1/2 to 6 months old).

B. Hormone/age. Is she/he spayed or neutered?

If young (under 2 yrs.) & unsplayed or unneutered? Spay or neuter them.

If young & spayed or neutered, their chewing will lessen with time.

If mature (over 2 yrs.) & unsplayed or unneutered? Spay or neuter them but get a checkup first.

If mature & spayed or neutered, their behavior isn't governed by hormones.

C. Personality. Chewers are often intelligent, outgoing, affectionate individuals who like to be in charge and get lots of attention. Do they chew to get attention? Would a companion alleviate boredom? Anything that would entertain them/make them happier might lessen their chewing.

II. Environmental factors

A. Diversions: keep trying to find something harmless they enjoy doing. What kind of "burrow" (such as a cardboard box stuffed with hay), can you provide for them?

B. Protecting the environment: Besides the more traditional wire protection devices (plastic tubing), a box or wire basket can go over a group of wires. Browse a large hardware store for products to use for bunny proofing.

C. Confinement (to a kennel or room). This simply buys you time, while you bunny-proof, get them spayed or neutered, or wait for them to mature.

Discipline (clapping hands, saying "no") has a small role in stopping chewing behavior. Most people report that it's easy to make their bunnies understand them, but difficult to make them stop the behavior through the use of discipline only, especially if the bunnies are left alone for periods of time.

Since swallowing indigestible materials such as carpet presents a health hazard to your bunny, follow up excessive chewing incidents with a petroleum laxative such as Petromalt or Laxatone (but always consult your local veterinarian).

Suggested Toys for Rabbits

Toys provide:

1. Mental stimulation. Without challenging activities to occupy your rabbit when you're not home, your rabbit, especially a solitary rabbit, will get bored. This could lead to depression and/or excessive destruction. The creative use of toys can extend your rabbit's life by keeping them interested in their surroundings, by giving them the freedom to interact with those surroundings, and by allowing them to constantly learn and grow.

2. Physical exercise. Your rabbit needs safe activities to keep their body in shape as well as their mind. They need things to climb on, crawl under, hop on and around, dig into, and chew on. Without outlets for these physical needs, your rabbit may become fat, depressed, create jumping habit, chewing, and/or crawling diversions with your furniture.

3. Bunny proofing for your home. As is clear from the above descriptions, toys are not just for your rabbit, they also keep your house safe. By providing your rabbit with a selection of toys chosen to meet their age, sex, reproductive status and temperament, you have fulfilled most of the requirements of bunny proofing your home.

Some good toys to start with:

- Paper Bags and Cardboard boxes for crawling inside, scratching, and chewing.
- Cardboard concrete forms for burrowing.
- Cardboard roll from paper towels or toilet paper.
- Untreated wicker baskets or boxes full of: shredded paper, junk mail, magazines, straw, or other organic materials for digging. (No plastic or "shiny", "glossy" papers).
- Cat toys: Batta balls, and other cat toys that roll or can be tossed.
- Parrot toys that can be tossed, or hung from the top of the cage and chewed or hit, or mobiles.
- Baby toys: hard plastic (*not* teething) toys like rattles and keys, things that can be tossed, or mobiles.
- "Lazy cat lodge" (cardboard box with ramps and windows) to climb in and chew on. Also, kitty condos, tubes, tunnels, and trees.
- Nudge and roll toys like large rubber balls, empty Quaker Oat boxes and small tins.
- Rainbow slinkies.
- Toys with ramps and lookouts for climbing and viewing the world (Jungle gym type toys or Kitty Cities).
- Dried out pine cones.
- A hand towel for bunching and scooting.
- Untreated wood, twigs and logs that have been aged for at least 3 months (apple tree branches can be eaten fresh off the tree. **Stay away from:** cherry, peach, apricot, plum and redwood, which are all **poisonous**. **If your rabbit begin to ingest instead of play with the non edible toys take them away immediately.**

Dietary Recommendations

In General: A rabbit's diet should be made up of good quality pellets, fresh hay (timothy, oat, or orchard grass), water and fresh vegetables. Anything beyond that is a "treat" and should be given in limited quantities.

Pellets should be fresh, and should be relatively high in fiber (18% minimum fiber). Do not purchase more than 6 weeks worth of feed at a time, as it will become spoiled. Pellets should make up less of a rabbit's diet as they grow older, and hay should be available 24/7.

When shopping for vegetables, look for a selection of different veggies--look for both dark leafy veggies and root vegetables, and try to get different colors. Stay away from beans and rhubarb.

Hay is essential to a rabbit's good health, providing roughage which reduces the danger of hairballs and other blockages. Apple tree twigs also provide good roughage.

Babies and "teenagers"

- Birth to 3 weeks--mother's milk
- 3 to 4 weeks--mother's milk, nibbles of alfalfa and pellets
- 4 to 7 weeks--mother's milk, access to alfalfa and pellets
- 7 weeks to 7 months--unlimited pellets, unlimited hay (plus see 12 weeks below)
- 12 weeks--introduce vegetables (one at a time, quantities under 1/2 oz.)

Young adults: 7 months to 1 year

- Introduce grass and oat hays, decrease alfalfa
- Decrease pellets to 1/2 cup per 6 lbs. body weight
- Increase daily vegetables gradually
- Fruit daily ration no more than 1 oz. to 2 oz. per 6 lbs. body weight (because of calories)

Mature adults: 1 to 5 years

- Unlimited timothy hay. Oat hay/straw additionally.
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup pellets per 6 lbs. body weight (depending on metabolism and/or proportionate to veggies)
- Minimum 2 cups chopped vegetables per 6 lbs. body weight
- Fruit daily ration no more than 2 oz. (2 TBL) per 6 lbs. body weight

Senior rabbits: Over 6 years

- If sufficient weight is maintained, continue adult diet
- Frail, older rabbits may need unrestricted pellets to keep weight up. Alfalfa can be given to underweight rabbits, only if calcium levels are normal. Annual blood workups are highly recommended for geriatric rabbits.

Note: When you feed a lower quantity of pellets, you must replace the nutritional value without the calories, which is done by increasing the vegetables. Also, a variety of hay and straw must be encouraged all day long; we do this by offering fresh hay a couple of times a day.

Living Arrangements

Kennels;

- Rabbits were not designed to live on wire floors--they're hard on their feet (which have no pads on the, like cats or dogs).
- You can find cages with slatted plastic floors, which are more comfortable than wire flooring but still hard on their feet.
- Bigger is better! A kennel should be at least 4-6 times the size of your bunny--more if they are confined for a large amount of the day. You can build your rabbit a two-story "condo" with the floors connected by a ramp--they love this!
- An untrained rabbit probably should be kept in a kennel while you're not home and at night when you sleep. Rabbits are crepuscular, which means that generally they sleep during the day and during the night but are ready to play at dawn and at twilight. Be sure to let them out during the evening when you are home, and if possible, in the morning while you get ready for work.
- A kennel should be seen as the rabbit's "nest." A special place where they can feel safe and secure. Make the nest enjoyable and they will enjoy being there, even when the kennel door is open! Keep it stocked with toys and a piece of wood attached to the inside (like a baseboard), and when you put them to bed at night, a nice veggie or fruit snack.

Rabbits in the House;

- When your rabbit is better trained, and when your house (or the part that your rabbit will have access to) has been sufficiently bunny-proofed, your rabbit can be allowed free run of the home (or part of it) even when you are not home. The more room your rabbit has to run around in, the more delightful you will find them as a companion.
- Even when a rabbit has a lot of room to run around, they may still get bored. A bored rabbit is often a naughty rabbit. If you don't make every attempt to provide your rabbit with *lots* of entertainment, in the form of boxes, baskets, brooms, sticks, magazines, phone books, grass mats, etc., then they will make their own entertainment in your carpet, behind your couch or under your recliner.

Rabbits Outside;

- Always supervise your rabbit when they're outside. It takes just a few seconds for the neighbor's dog/cat to jump the fence and attack or frighten your rabbit to death or a bird of prey to snatch them up.
- Make sure that the grass has not been sprayed with pesticides or fertilizers. Check the yard for holes in the fence and poisonous plants.
- Under no circumstances should rabbits be left outside after dark. Predators are opossums, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, birds, dogs and cats. If you have an outside enclosure that you feel is very secure, a rabbit can still die of fright while a predator taunts the rabbit from outside!

Litter-Training Your Rabbit

By nature, rabbits choose one or a few places (usually corners) to deposit their urine and most of their pills (feces). Urine-training involves little more than putting a litter box where the rabbit chooses to go. Pill training requires only that you give them a place they know will not be invaded by others. Here are some suggestions to help you to train your rabbit to use the litter box.

Age; Older rabbits are easier to train than younger rabbits, especially babies. A rabbit's attention span and knack for learning increases as they grow up. If you have a baby, stick with it! And if you are deciding whether to adopt an older rabbit, or litter train your older rabbit, go for it!

Spay/Neuter; When rabbits reach the age of 4-6 months, their hormones become active and they usually begin marking their territory. By spaying or neutering your rabbit, they will be more likely to use their litter box (as well as be much healthier and happier).

Types of litter; House Rabbit Society recommends organic litters, made from alfalfa, oat, citrus or paper. (Some brands to look for: Care Fresh, CitraFresh, Cat Works, Cat Country, Critter Country) **Stay away** from litters made from softwoods, like pine or cedar shavings or chips, as these products are thought to cause **liver damage** in rabbits that use them. Another approach is to place a handful of hay in each box, or to simply use hay as litter. Obviously, you need to change the hay fairly frequently (daily), since your rabbit will be eating it.

Cleaning and Disposal; Clean litter boxes daily, to encourage your rabbit to use them. Use white vinegar to rinse boxes out--for tough stains, let pans soak. Accidents outside of the cage can be cleaned up with white vinegar or club soda. If the urine has already dried, you can try products like "Nature's Miracle" to remove the stain and odor. To dispose of organic litters, they can be used as mulch, or can be composted. Rabbit pills can be directly applied to plants as fertilizer.

The Kennel; Use a kennel large enough to contain a small litter box (along with bunny's food and water bowls, toys, etc.) and still allow enough room for the rabbit to stretch out. Place the box in the corner of the kennel that they go in. With a litter box in the kennel, when the rabbit is confined to their kennel when you're not home, kennel time is learning time.



Pills vs. Urine; All rabbits will drop pills around their cages to mark it as their own. This is not a failure to be litter-trained. It is very important for your rabbit to identify the kennel as their property so that when they leave the kennel for the bigger world of your house, they will distinguish the family's area from their own and avoid marking it. To encourage this, make the rabbit the king of their kennel. Try not to force them in or out of it--coax them. Do not do things to their kennel that they don't like, or things to them that they don't like while they're in the kennel.

The running space; Even if your goal is to let your rabbit have full run of the house, you must start small. Start with a kennel and a small running space, and when your rabbit is sufficiently well-trained in that space, gradually give them more space. But do so gradually! If you overwhelm them with too much freedom before they're ready, they will forget where their box is and will lose their good habits.

The method. Start with a box in the kennel, and one or more boxes in the rabbit's running space. If they urinate in a corner of the kennel not containing the box, move the box to that corner until they get it right. Don't be concerned if your bunny curls up in their litter box--this is natural.

Once they're using the box in the kennel, open their door and allow them into their running space. Watch them go in and out on their own. If they head to a corner where there's no box, or lifts up their tail in the characteristic fashion, cry "no" in a single, sharp burst of sound. Gently herd them back to their kennel and litter box, or into one of the boxes in the room. Be careful, however; you don't want to make the kennel or the litter box seem like a punishment.

A handful of hay in the box makes it a more welcoming place. After they first use the box, praise them and give a favorite treat.

Once they use the box in the room a couple of times, you're well on your way, as their habits will be on their way to forming. As they get better trained in the first room, you can increase their space. Don't hurry this process; and if the area becomes very big, or includes a second floor, be sure to include more litter boxes, so as not to confuse them.

Remember, as they become more confident and use fewer boxes, you can start to remove some of their early, "training" boxes.

How many litter boxes? The more, the merrier, especially if your rabbit is a bit of a slow learner, or is especially obstinate about where they want the box(es) to go. As their habits improve, you can decrease the number of litter boxes.

Special problems. Some rabbits love to kick their litter out of the box. You can get a covered litter box (with a hood) to help solve this problem. You can also try experimenting with different litters. A second problem is that rabbits often back up so far in the litter box that the urine goes over the edge. Again, a covered litter box can solve this problem. Another solution would be to get a dishpan or other type of tub with much higher sides. Still another solution would be to get a "urine guard" to place around the back of the kennel, to keep the litter from spraying outside of the kennel.

Consistency. Get your rabbit into a daily routine and try not to vary it. Rabbits are very habitual and once a routine is established, they usually prefer to stick with it.

Compromise. If your rabbit continually urinates in a spot where there is no litter box, put their box where they will use it, even if it means rearranging their kennel or moving a table in the living room. It is much easier to oblige them than to try to work against a determined bunny.

Medical Concerns for Rabbits

OVERALL HEALTH:

Spay your female bunny at age 6 months, males at 4 months. Regularly check eyes, nose, ears, teeth, weight, appetite, and droppings. Notice any behavior change. Avoid stress, heat and sudden temperature changes. Find an experienced rabbit veterinarian BEFORE a problem develops. Groom regularly.

RED URINE: Rabbits' urine varies in color from clear to yellow to brown to bright red. This is usually not a cause for alarm UNLESS there are additional signs such as sitting and straining to urinate, loss of appetite or a temperature. When you see red urine, don't panic, just keep your eyes open for other signs that might indicate a problem. The red color will usually be gone in a day or two, but can last for a much longer period of time. If you're in doubt, your veterinarian can test to see whether or not there is blood in the urine.

AMOXICILLIN DANGER: Never let a veterinarian give your rabbit amoxicillin. (It is an antibiotic and is recognizable as a pink liquid that smells like bubble gum. It has killed a large percentage of the rabbits who have received it.) All drugs in the penicillin family can be dangerous for your rabbit as they kill the "good" germs in the rabbits intestines and can cause other organs to malfunction. There are other very effective antibiotics that can be safely given to rabbits, such as Baytril. Occasionally a rabbit can't tolerate one antibiotic. For instance they may stop eating or experience diarrhea, and another antibiotic will have to be tried instead.

CEDAR & PINE SHAVINGS: These are very bad for your rabbit and other pets. There are numerous studies available that demonstrate the dangers of both pine and cedar. These softwoods can cause cancer, skin sores and respiratory diseases in all small animals (and in humans in the wood industry). Please pass the word to pet shops and others who carry this material for small animals. They don't use it for lab animals so we sure don't want it for our house rabbits. Use a plant or paper based organic litter for the litter box.

SPAY/NEUTER: The House Rabbit Society has had over 3,000 (as of March 1994) rabbits spayed or neutered with 4 reported deaths from anesthesia. Autopsies revealed other reasons for the death, (lung or kidney disease). To a knowledgeable veterinarian a rabbit neuter (male) is relatively simple and quite safe. A rabbit spay (female) can be dangerous and life threatening if improper technique or general anesthesia is used. If the female is over 18 months old it is recommended that blood tests be done to assess liver and kidney function prior to using anesthesia in an elective procedure.

Why Spay/Neuter? Up to 80% of un-spayed females will get uterine or ovarian cancer between two and 5 years of age. Preventing cancer by spaying your rabbit will give her the potential to reach her possible life span of 8 - 10 years of age. Some rabbits that we are aware of have lived to be 16 years old.

TEETH: Rabbits' teeth can be misaligned. This condition is known as a malocclusion, which means that their constantly growing teeth do not wear properly. If the misalignment is bad, the teeth will need to be clipped periodically so that the rabbit can eat. One of the rabbit's teeth must be clipped weekly, but it is usually required only once every 2-4 weeks. Your veterinarian can do this for you or show you how to clip your rabbit's teeth at home. The misalignment of the front teeth can be easily seen. The back teeth usually cannot be seen and the veterinarian may have to anesthetize your rabbit in order to check the molars. Indications that their back teeth may be a problem is a wet chin that is caused by drooling and a frequent "mouthing" motion of their jaws.

HAIRBALLS: Rabbits shed their hair every 3 months. Every second shedding is light, followed three months later by a heavy shedding. Hairballs are a secondary problem caused when the GI tract shuts down and is responsible for a large percentage of problems and deaths in rabbits. You **MUST** brush and comb your rabbit to get the hair off of them when they start to shed. Rabbits groom themselves like cats and will ingest all of the loose hair on them and their rabbit companions. They must have grass or timothy HAY available 24 hours **FREE CHOICE** (do not give the small compressed hay blocks as the fiber is too small and therefore not helpful) as well as plenty of exercise, in order to help the hair that they do ingest to pass through their systems. The hay will not eliminate the need for brushing. Rabbits who ingest carpeting and other material may also suffer from the same symptoms.

The first sign of hairballs: Droppings will be strung together with very thick strands of hair. (It is *normal* for rabbits to have feces with single strands of hair strung between them and with hair enclosed within the droppings, this shows that the roughage is doing its job. As time goes on, the droppings will become smaller with less hair (since it won't pass through the system and the rabbit's stomachs will get larger and appear to be quite fat, but when petting or rubbing his back, you'll begin to feel the bones as he loses weight on his way to starving to death.

Another idea is to give your rabbit Petromalt or Laxatone (2 brand names of a cat hairball remedy) once a week when not shedding and then daily or twice daily when they shed. Some rabbits like the taste and will lick it from the container. For other rabbits you can smear it on the top of their paw and they will (usually) lick it off. If this gives your rabbit diarrhea then don't give it to them.

Treating the first signs of hairballs is controversial. The first thing to do is to get them to eat as much roughage as they can [Hay, tree branches, blackberry vines (stickers and all), etc.].

SURGERIES: Food and water should **NOT** be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Ignore this direction if given by the front office staff and discuss this with your veterinarian if the instructions come from him/her. Rabbits cannot throw up and possible vomiting is the reason that food is removed from cats and dogs. It is harmful to the rabbit and causes a longer recovery time if food is removed. The rabbit should also be tempted to eat as soon as they are awake to assist with the recovery process.

PARASITES: Rabbits can get the common dog or cat flea. Be very careful about the products you use to treat the home and yard, as well as the products you use on your rabbit. If the yard is treated do not allow your rabbit on it for at least a week and then water it thoroughly to wash off any residual chemicals. Use a spray or "bomb" that contains "pyrethrins" and "Precor" (methoprene). Flea powders labeled for use on *kittens* that contain pyrethrins can be used.

A mite that lives on the skin dander of rabbits will cause your rabbit to scratch and if left untreated will eventually develop thick crusts on their bodies. An injectable drug called Ivermectin can be given twice, 2 weeks apart, to eliminate this problem. Rabbits can die if the ivermectin dosage is not correct, so you **MUST** see your veterinarian for this.

Ear mites cause rabbits to shake their heads frequently and scratch at their ears. If left untreated a middle ear infection could develop which can cause a problem with their balance. Ivermectin is again the preferred treatment.

An internal parasite called coccidia can infect the small intestines. Symptoms can be loss of appetite to chronic diarrhea and occasionally death. A rabbit is considered to have diarrhea if the droppings are not firm and round. If the droppings are round but squish when you pick them up, your rabbit has diarrhea.

Why You Should Spay or Neuter Your Rabbit

1. Altered rabbits are healthier and live longer than unaltered rabbits. The risk of reproductive cancers (ovarian, uterine, mammary) for an un-spayed female rabbit stands at approximately 85% is virtually eliminated by spaying your female rabbit. Your neutered male rabbit will live longer as well, given that he won't be tempted to fight with other animals (rabbits, cats, etc.) due to his sexual aggression.

2. Altered rabbits make better companions. They are calmer, more loving, and dependable once the undeniable urge to mate has been removed. In addition, rabbits are less prone to destructive behavior (chewing, digging) after surgery.

3. Avoidance of obnoxious behavior. Unneutered male rabbits spray, and both males and females are much easier to litter train, and much more reliably trained, after they have been altered.

4. Altered rabbits won't contribute to the problem of overpopulation of rabbits. Over 15 million adorable dogs, cats, and rabbits are killed in animal shelters in this country every year. In addition, unwanted rabbits are often abandoned in fields, parks, or on city streets to fend for themselves, where they suffer from starvation, sickness, and are easy prey to other animals or traffic accidents.

5. Spaying and neutering for rabbits has become a safe procedure *when performed by experienced rabbit veterinarians*. The House Rabbit Society has had over 1000 rabbits spayed or neutered with approximately .1% mortality due to anesthesia. A knowledgeable rabbit veterinarian can spay or neuter your rabbit with very little risk to a healthy rabbit. Don't allow a veterinarian with little or no experience with rabbits to spay or neuter your rabbit.

Surgery can safely be performed on a male rabbit as soon as the testicles descend (3-4 months) and for females, at 6 months. After two years, it is a good idea to have your doctor perform blood work on your rabbit if you are going to have them spayed or neutered at this time.

Make sure your rabbit is in good health prior to the surgery. Food and water should not be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Any change in diet can upset a rabbit's sensitive digestive tract and cause problems in post-operative recovery. One of the reasons some veterinarians recommend removing animals' food before surgery is the possibility that they may vomit. Rabbits cannot throw up, thus this is not a concern. After surgery, make sure the rabbit's cage is clean, and check their incision site daily for swelling or discharge. Do everything you can to get your rabbit to eat again as soon as possible after returning home. If your rabbit has not eaten for 48 hours after surgery, consult your veterinarian.

They Don't Need Much, But They Do Need You

You help when you adopt an animal, when you attend and support one of our special events, and when your generous donation arrives to support the animals at KHS. Most important, you give them all hope for a future full of love and happiness.

What is the power of your gift?

- \$30 is the average cost of an animal's care for one day at the shelter.
- \$75 will support one spay/neuter surgery.
- \$150 would give an animal in need of behavioral rehabilitation 3 hours with a trainer.
- \$210 is enough to support the care for a kitten at our shelter for one week.
- \$250 could support the cost of one medical procedure to help save an animal's life
- \$500 will pay for the medicine needed to treat a sick animal for one week.
- \$900 would cover the expenses for an animal at our shelter for one month.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution today to help homeless animals in Kitsap County!



DONATE BY MAIL:

Kitsap Humane Society
9167 Dickey Road NW
Silverdale, WA 98383

DONATE ONLINE:

www.kitsap-humane.org/financial-contributions or
using this QR code (left) with your smart phone.



All of the information in this packet and
much more can be found on our website:
www.kitsap-humane.org



Thank you again for choosing to rescue!