

Rabbit Care Sheet



Biological Facts

- European rabbit: *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
- Life span: 8-12 years
- Adult weight: 1-10 lb
- Sexual maturity for males: 5-7 months; females: 4-6 months
- Gestation: 29-35 days
- Litter size: 4-10 offspring

Behavior

- Highly social; make better pets if socialized with humans when young
- Can be litter trained
- Fast and curious and need supervision while outside their cage environment
- Chew everything, including electrical cords
- Must “rabbit proof” all areas in the rabbit’s environment to prevent injuries and escape.

Diet

- Young rabbits up to 6 months of age: quality alfalfa-based pellets - ¼ to ½ cups per day – and unlimited amounts of alfalfa and grass hay, such as oat, timothy, or brome
- Adults over 6 months of age: quality timothy hay-based pellets- ¼ to ½ cups per day - and unlimited amounts of grass hay
- Greens, such as kale, parsley, endive, romaine lettuce, collard and mustard greens; up to 1 cup per 4 lb of body weight per day
- Supplement with small amounts of apples, pears, peaches, carrots or green bell peppers as treats
- Limit or avoid high-sugar, high-carbohydrate treats like bananas, raisins, and yogurt drops
- Fresh water daily

Environment

- Large cage, wire or solid bottom, preferably indoors
- Place the cage in a quiet location and maintain a temperature of 50°F to 75°F (10°C to 24°C).
- To prevent heat stress, avoid temperatures exceeding 85°F (29.5°C).
- “Rabbit proofing” involves making a room escape-proof, covering electrical cords with conduit to prevent shock, and removing lead paint, toxic plants, and other hazards
- Supervised “rabbit-proofed” environment large enough to explore and get exercise

- Litter box with pelleted or shredded recycled newspaper or aspen shavings (Avoid shavings made of pine or cedar shavings, which can irritate the respiratory tract). The litter box should be cleaned daily.
- Nest box made from untreated baskets or boxes (can be filled with hay or other bedding) to provide a sense of safety and security
- Untreated wooden toys, cardboard boxes, paper towel rolls, or paper bags to prevent boredom and provide environmental enrichment

Preventive Care

- Complete physical examination every 6 to 12 months
- Consult a veterinarian with experience treating exotic companion mammals if you have any questions or concerns about your rabbit's health
- Annual fecal examination for parasites
- Spaying and neutering as early as possible at sexual maturity to help prevent uterine cancer later in life in females and urine marking behavior in males
- Regular dental examinations to check for dental spurs, overgrown teeth, and other problems
- Routine blood tests for adults, as recommended by your veterinarian

Common Medical Disorders

- Abscesses
- Bacterial or viral infections
- Dental problems
- Gastrointestinal stasis
- Head tilt
- Heat-induced trauma
- Parasites
- Respiratory distress