

Bunny

Virginia Beach Animal Care & Adoption Center

Basics



Rabbits:



- ◇ Are very social animals and should live indoors as a member of the family. Provide lots of space to play and a safe place to sleep.
- ◇ Are NOT good “starter” or “entry level” pets because they scare easily and are fragile. Since they scare easily and don’t care for sudden noises, they are not recommended as pets for young children. If they feel that their boundaries are not respected, they can lunge and bite, which could result in injury to the child and/or rabbit.
- ◇ Need specialized veterinary care. Not all veterinarians are knowledgeable about rabbit care. In the veterinary world, rabbits are considered “exotic,” therefore you must seek out a veterinarian that specializes in exotics or small companion animals. This can be expensive.
- ◇ Should be spayed or neutered to reduce hormone – driven behaviors, reduce accidental litters and reduce the chance of cancer. VBACAC will spay or neuter your adopted rabbit upon request at the time of adoption for an additional small fee.
- ◇ Generally do not like being picked up. They are prey animals and will often bite or scratch to get away. Some rabbits will tolerate handling, however most do not like to be picked up and carried.
- ◇ Can live 10 years or more! Pet ownership is a serious commitment and is for the life of the pet.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Do's and Don't's of Rabbit Care

DO	DON'T
<p>Give your rabbit plenty of space to run around in your bunny-proofed home!</p>	<p>DON'T—House or exercise your rabbit outside. Outside housing increases the change of disease and shortens the rabbit's lifespan.</p>
<p>To properly handle a rabbit, squat down, kneel or sit on the floor and place one hand under the rib cage and one under the rabbit's bottom. Bring him directly to your chest and hold in a way to discourage jumping.</p>	<p>NEVER pick up a rabbit by the ears or scruff. Both can cause nerve damage and tear the skin away from underlying muscle.</p>
<p>You can "spot clean" messy areas of your rabbit gently with soap and water. Be sure to dry thoroughly and seek out a veterinarian to determine why you are seeing soiled areas that are not being groomed by the rabbit naturally.</p>	<p>Do not bathe your rabbit. It can cause shock or hypothermia as well as it can lead to respiratory, skin or ear infections. Rabbits self-groom similar to cats.</p>
<p>Hold your rabbit with his head higher than the rest of his/her body while trimming nails or doing home health checks.</p>	<p>Don't force a rabbit onto their back. Doing so causes "tonic immobility" which is a rabbit's defense mechanism when they are in fear for their life. This is called "trancing." Tranced rabbits show physiological responses similar to PTSD.</p>
<p>Transport your rabbit in a safe carrier or stroller.</p>	<p>Don't put a collar or leash on a rabbit or restrict their head or neck movement. Doing so can cause injury to the rabbit.</p>
<p>Always provide solid non-slip flooring to encourage exercise and promote proper extension of joints.</p>	<p>Don't house your rabbit on flooring that is made of wire. Rabbits don't have pads on their feet and wire/hard floors can cause foot sores and pain which can lead to the rabbit not eating due to the pain.</p>



Rabbit Daily Diet

Unlimited Hay:

Hay is the most important thing a rabbit should eat. Never limit the amount of hay. Timothy Hay is the best all-around hay to offer. Decrease pellets to encourage hay eating. Never feed hay that is mildewed or moldy. Store in a dry and ventilated area.

Pellets:

Healthy pellets should have Timothy Hay as the first ingredient. Always measure the pellets. Give 1/4 cup for an adult rabbit. Pregnant, nursing, young (under a year) and elderly rabbits may need additional pellets. Seek veterinarian guidance.

Filtered Water:

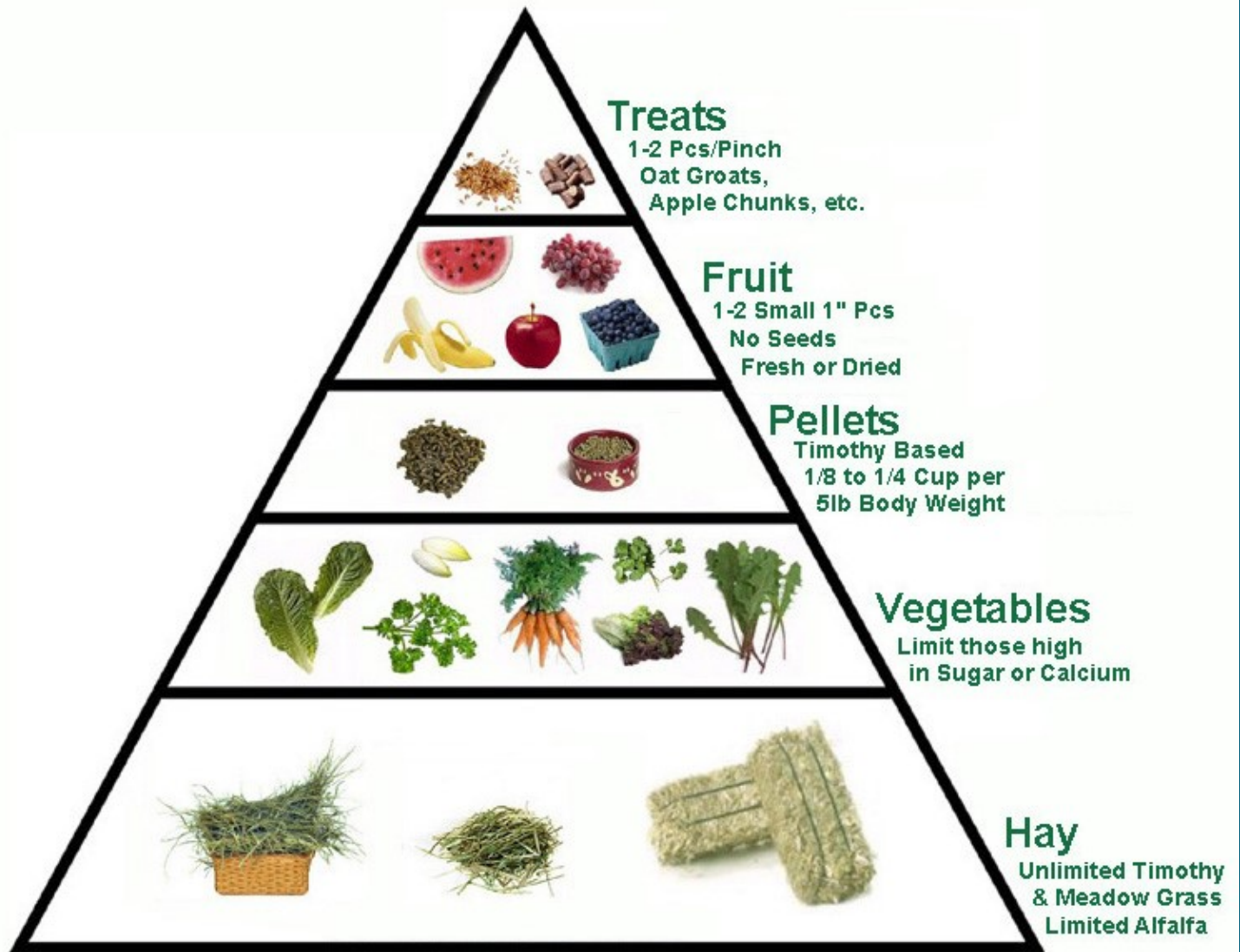
Filtered water has less chlorine smell and is preferable to rabbits. Give fresh water everyday and wash bowl at a minimum of every three days. Give water from a bowl rather than a bottle.

Fresh leafy greens:

Offer a consistent mix of 3 leafy greens for a variety of nutrients. Clean before serving. Refer to the food pyramid on the following page for more guidance.

Healthy Treats: Limit treats to very small amounts of fresh fruit (less than a teaspoon) or fresh banana, strawberry, apple, carrot or 1-2 blueberries.

Rabbit Food Pyramid



Litter Boxes

- ◆ Use a cat sized litter box that is big enough for the rabbit to sit in.



- ◆ Place an absorbent layer in the bottom of the litter box. Acceptable materials are newspaper, CareFresh, Yesterday's News by Purina, Eco-Straw by Oxbow or equine pelletized bedding. **NEVER use:** cedar or pine shavings, clumping or clay cat litter, corn cob or silica-gel crystals.



- ◆ Top the absorbent layer with plenty of fresh Timothy Hay. Because rabbits are grazing herbivores, rabbits will typically eat and poop at the same time. This is normal and rabbits will typically use one side of the litterbox as their “kitchen” and one side as their “toilet.”



Exercise

Rabbits need exercise! Make exercise fun and change things up occasionally to challenge them. Offer toys to encourage activity (if you don't give them something to do, they'll find something themselves)! Toys that require problem solving or foraging will fulfill natural behaviors. Make it interactive. Rabbits are curious and SOCIAL creatures who love exploring.

Rabbit Proofing

Make rooms safe for your rabbit and protect your possessions.

- ◆ Move house plants because they can be poisonous.
- ◆ Wrap cords with protectors or keep them out of rabbit's reach.
- ◆ Tile floors or rugs with short piles are best to prevent chewing and possible intestinal blockages.
- ◆ Use wall protectors to discourage wall/baseboard chewing.
- ◆ Block off access under recliners and rocking chairs to prevent injury.



Teeth & Poop

Rabbits teeth never stop growing! Because they never stop growing, dental issues will only get worse if not addressed. *Problems will not go away on their own.*



Look for signs of teeth issues which may include: eating less, eating at a slower speed or not eating at all; choosing to eat only certain foods (easier to eat, softer); appears eager to eat but drops food or doesn't eat; poops are smaller, fewer or not pooping at all; seems to be chewing differently; wetness under chip/edge of mouth; lethargy and/or not acting normal.

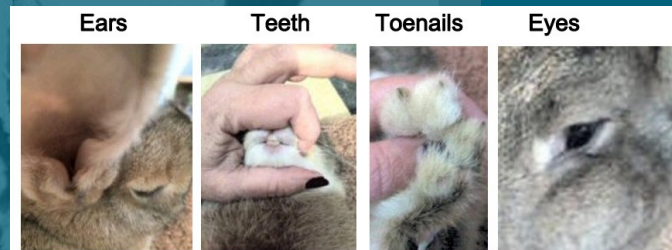


Rabbits have 2 different types of poop!

A fecal pellet has no further use to a rabbit and cecal pellets are re-ingested for further processing of food and absorption of vital nutrients. Cecals have a strong odor but are usually eaten as soon as they are produced.

Health Checks

- ◆ Daily checks: Look and feel for lumps, bumps, wet chin and matted fur. Look for clear eyes and ears. Report any yellow staining, parasites, weight changes or breathing problems to your veterinarian.
- ◆ Weekly checks: Look for earwax build up or lumps. Check feet, genitals and teeth for issues.
- ◆ Every 2 months: Clip toenails, check and clean scent glands, check for teeth evenness and check genitals.
- ◆ Yearly: Schedule a wellness check with your rabbit's veterinarian!



Resources

Information in this guide was gleaned from the Georgia House Rabbit Society website. <https://www.houserabbitga.com/> and the San Diego House Rabbit Society www.sandiegorabbits.org

Resources are available for more information on proper rabbit care. Suggestions include but are not limited to:

Georgia House Rabbit Society <https://www.houserabbitga.com/>

The House Rabbit Handbook (newest edition)

House Rabbit Society www.rabbit.org

San Diego House Rabbit Society <https://www.sandiegorabbits.org/>



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