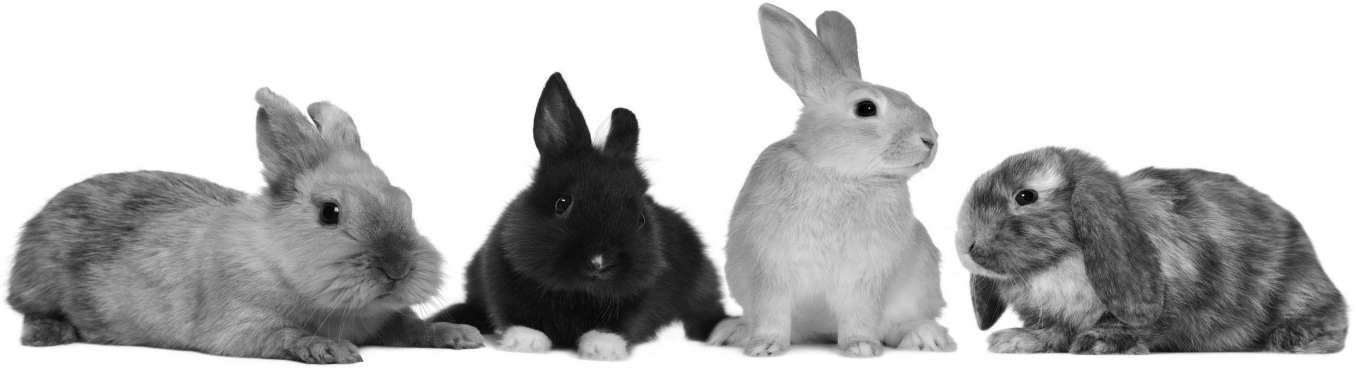


BASIC RABBIT CARE



Rabbits are very curious and cute but should not be considered a low maintenance starter pet for children.

- They are somewhat boring for the uninitiated.
- They don't come when called.
- They don't play fetch.
- Many people have allergies to them.
- They require daily care.
- They require grooming—brushing, ear cleaning and nail trimming.

Terminology

Female-Doe

Male-Buck

Baby rabbit-Kit

Housing

Although rabbits can live outdoors with proper housing, it is recommended that pet rabbits live indoors - especially in New England. They are not designed to live on wire floors, endure extreme temperatures, be available to predators, or live in isolation.

Cages should be 4 times the size of rabbit. Pet store cages are usually not big enough. More space is best!

Use of one or two rooms for daily supervised roaming is desirable, but they must be "bunny proofed" first.

Rabbits like a den box and spend a lot of time in their box resting. The ideal bedding would be grass hay.

Diet

Water should be available at all times.

Good quality pellets.

Fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat).

Fresh vegetables.

Fruit may be given as a daily snack, not as primary food.

A salt lick should be available.

A veterinarian or the recommended web resources can suggest specific fruits or vegetables to offer.

Behavior

Rabbits can be destructive: Digging and chewing are natural behaviors.

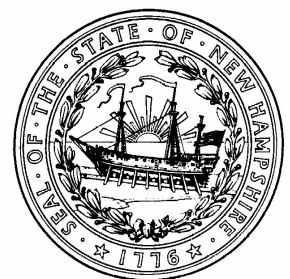
Rabbits can be litter box trained. Dusty, clumping litter, and wood shavings should be avoided. Rabbits should not be disciplined or punished. This only creates fear and defensive biting and scratching.

They are naturally fearful of being picked-up and/or held so they must be acclimated to this. A scared rabbit may squeal or growl.

Rabbits are naturally shy of strangers.

Rabbits are coprophagic - they eat special moist pellets (cecotrophs) directly from their anus for the nutrients and intestinal bacteria. This is quick and normal and often goes unnoticed.

**Recommendations from
The Governor's Commission
on the Humane Treatment of Animals**



Veterinary Care

Rabbits should be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian experienced with rabbit surgeries. Spaying or neutering prevents unwanted litters, spraying in males and uterine cancer in females.

Rabbits should have annual check-ups.

If the rabbit stops eating or moving his bowels for 12 hours or longer or has watery diarrhea, the rabbit should be brought to a veterinarian. Other signs of illness include runny nose and eyes, dark red urine, lethargy, fur loss and red, swollen skin.

Possible Signs of Illness, Negligence or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of Animal

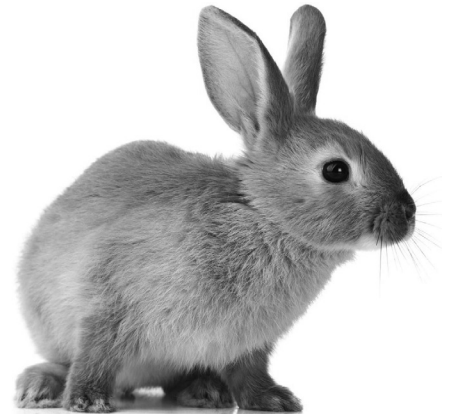
Thin; fur in poor condition; sores from scratching; portions of ears missing because of frostbite or because they were bitten off from overcrowding.

Housing Conditions

Overcrowded conditions; must be sufficient space to permit all rabbits (including smaller ones) access to food and water.

Behavior

Dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings, no appetite.



Reporting Animal Cruelty

Suspected animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the cruel action or neglect occurred. Caller should leave name and contact information for a follow-up response.

Additional Resources

House Rabbit Society

www.rabbit.org

Humane Society of the United States

www.humanesociety.org/animals/rabbits

ASPCA

www.neacha.org/brochures/rabbit_edu.pdf



For more information about animal cruelty, visit

www.nh.gov/humane