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Everything You Need to Take Care of a Rabbit



A bunny next to a bunny tunnel

One of the most harmful stereotypes about rabbits is that they're low-maintenance pets. Along with that stereotype, comes the assumption that you don't need very much to take care of them, and you can get by with just a cage, water bottle, and pellets. While rabbit ownership doesn't have to be expensive, the list of essentials might be a little longer than most people would guess.

Hay

If you were only going to buy one thing for your rabbit, it should be hay. [Hay should make up 80 percent](#) of your bunny's diet and is essential for keeping their little digestive systems moving and preventing illness and death. Rabbits should have unlimited access to grass hay 24/7.

A Litter Box

Bunnies can be litter box trained just like a cat, and many available for adoption at rabbit rescues are already litter box trained. You'll want to get a large, flat litter box that's at least 21 by 17 inches and stay away from any small, corner litter boxes. The bigger the litter box, the less likely your bunny is to accidentally pee over the side, and the more hay you can put in it. One of my bunnies even likes to take naps in his litter box. Many bunnies can also be taught to use a covered litter box, though initial

litter training may be easier without a lid.

Litter

Litter is optional as unlike cats, bunnies don't bury their waste, but it does minimize odor and absorb moisture. You can use paper-based litter like CareFresh or Yesterday's News, wood stove pellets from a home-improvement store, pelleted horse bedding, or plant-based litter. If you have a paper shredder, you can save a little money by shredding unwanted paper and newspapers. Stay away from any clay-based or clumping cat litters, wood shavings, or litters that contain wheat or corn as they can be [harmful to your bun's health](#).

A Hidey House

Giving your bunny a safe spot to hide is a great way to help them feel comfortable in a new home and gain their trust. Just the knowledge that they have a place they can hide in in case of "danger" (i.e. their human sneezing) will help your bunny feel more relaxed. A hidey house can be as simple as a cardboard box with two holes cut in the side (rabbits prefer hidey houses with both an entrance and an exit), or you can buy your bun a hidey house, tunnel, or covered pet bed from a pet store. If your bunny is free roam, spaces under furniture can double as a hidey house. My bunnies' favorite hiding spot is under the bed.

Water and Food Bowls

Rabbits almost always prefer a water bowl to a water bottle. A rabbit can drink as much as [a large dog](#), so having to drink one drop at a time from a water bottle can leave them dehydrated. [Water bottles also force your bunny to tilt their head up at an unnatural position](#), making drinking uncomfortable. While water bowls can be a pain sometimes when your bunny kicks hay or throws their toys into them, water bottles are at high risk of bacteria build-up and having the nozzle clogged, and they're much harder to clean.

You'll want to provide a water bowl that's too heavy for your bunny to pick up and tip over, because the little stinkers *love* to do this. A ceramic bowl or large, heavy dog bowl both work well. You can also provide a food bowl if you want, but your bunny will be just as happy eating their pellets and greens off the floor.

Bunny Proofing Supplies

Even if you're keeping your bunny in an x-pen, you'll still want to have a bunny-proofed space for them to exercise in and explore. Bunnies love to chew cords, which is both expensive and annoying for you, and dangerous for your little bun. You can DIY cord protectors with an old hose, get split-wire conduit tubing from a home-improvement store, use PVC pipes, or throw down a little extra cash and buy cord protectors marketed for pets.

If your rabbit is in a space with base boards, you might also need to protect them from nibbles. Some rabbits, especially older ones, will have zero interest in base boards, so you can wait to bunny proof them until after you've had a chance to observe your bunny's behavior. If you're getting a baby bunny, you'll likely want to bunny proof your base boards right away. You can do this very cheaply by rimming the room with cardboard, which will also double as a fun chew toy for your bun, or you can use C&C grids. C&C grids are also great for preventing your bunny from going behind the TV or under off-limits furniture, or from ripping up your wallpaper.

You may also need old rugs, floor tiles, or office chair mats to prevent your bunny from digging up the carpet (they especially love to dig in corners and under furniture); wall corner guards if your bun shows interest in chewing your walls (rare); a kick plate if your rabbit decides your door is tasty; or baby gates to keep your bunny out of certain rooms.

An X-Pen or Puppy Pen

If you can't free roam, we always recommend getting your rabbit a large x-pen. Not only are x-pens better for your bunny than a cage, they're also better for your wallet. You can get a great x-pen for \$30 to \$40 off of Amazon, Chewy, or online at Petco, but hutches and cages are typically over \$100. If you're free roaming, having an x-pen for litter box training or to keep your bunny from hiding under furniture when they're sick or recovering from surgery is always handy.

Rabbits need a minimum of [24 square feet](#) to exercise in, but bigger is always better. You can make your x-pen go further by using the wall as an extra fence side or by tying x-pens together, and you can even DIY your own x-pen with C&C grids. A domestic rabbit can jump over three feet, so you'll want to make sure your pen is too tall for their bounce power. You'll also need to ensure the spaces between the bars are too small for your bunny to fit their head through as they have collapsible skeletons and will be able to squeeze their way out of the pen. Generally, you'll want less than a 3-inch gap between the bars.

Toys

Like rodents, rabbits' teeth are constantly growing, so they need to chew to keep their teeth under control. Unlimited hay plays a big role in wearing down your bun's teeth, but chew toys are important too. They also help keep your bunny's attention away from your base boards, prevent boredom, and keep your rabbit happy and stimulated. You don't even have to spend any money on toys: cardboard boxes, empty toilet paper tubes, pinecones ([you'll need to wash these before giving them to your bunny](#)), and pesticide free, [bunny-safe sticks](#) (willow is most bunnies' favorite) will keep your bun as healthy and happy as store-bought toys.

If you want to spoil your bunny, specialized bunny stores often have a wonderful selection of bunny toys, and you can get a few good ones from pet stores as well. Most bunnies are unenthusiastic about wooden carrot toys, orange or not, and [snak shacks](#) or other toys with added starches and sugars are very bad for your bun.

Many bunnies also love baby toys they can pick up and throw, like stacking cups or key rings; balls they can nose around and chase; and some even like snuggling with stuffed animals.

A Carrier

You'll need a carrier to bring your rabbit home and for trips to the vet. A small dog or cat kennel works fine, but a carrier that opens at the top will make it easier to get your bunny in and out. Hard-sided carriers are also preferable, as your bunny may chew on and ruin a fabric carrier. If your carrier doesn't come with a soft lining, make sure to add a blanket or newspaper at the bottom to keep your bun from slipping and sliding. Lastly, you'll want to make sure your carrier is just big enough for your bunny to turn around and lie down comfortably in. Carriers that are too large can be [dangerous to your bunny](#) if you stop suddenly.

A Blanket

Blankets are obviously important for helping your bun stay warm, and a folded blanket can double as a bed. If your bunny chews their blankets, you'll want to provide fleece as the fibers are small enough to pass through a rabbit's digestive tract. If your bunny doesn't chew their blankets, you can give them any kind of blanket, or even a towel. Blankets can also be used to line the floor of their areas to give them some traction for running.

An Area Rug

If your bunny doesn't have a carpeted space they can run on, you'll want to provide some kind of area rug or mat. Unlike dogs or cats, rabbits don't have paw pads so will slip around on hardwood, keeping them from doing their joyful zoomies and binkies. Some bunnies will want to chew a shag rug or any kind of rug with tufts they can tug on, so woven rugs are usually a safer bet. If your bunny's litter box habits aren't perfect yet, you may also want to use several small mats placed close together that will easily fit in the washing machine. Blankets, towels, and sheets are good options as well.

Grooming Supplies

In the wild, rabbits wear their nails down by digging, but house bunnies will need their nails clipped every [three to four weeks](#) to prevent nail breakage and injury, and a bunny with short nails is much less likely to scratch up your floor. Any nail clippers meant for cats will work.

You'll also need a brush to help your bun during molting season, or to prevent mats if you have an angora, Jersey wooly, or lionhead. Rabbits lick themselves constantly, and unlike cats, can't cough up fur balls, so they may be at risk of developing blockages during a heavy molt or if they have long hair.

The hairbuster is one of the best brushes for rabbits as it's much better at catching a bunny's fine fur than brushes designed for dogs and cats. You can also [DIY a hairbuster](#) using a flea comb and rubber bands. However, the hairbuster can pull a little too much on very fluffy rabbits like the Jersey wooly or angora, so for these buns, you may want to use a slicker brush or regular flea comb.

Other handy grooming tools are quiet cat or dog shears (great for fluffy bunnies in the summer), lint rollers for quickly removing loose fur, and scissors for [cutting out mats](#).

Medical Supplies

The first thing you should do if your rabbit gets injured, sick, or stops eating is take them to the vet. Rabbits are far more delicate than dogs or cats, and can die if they even go 24 hours without eating, so getting them to the vet quickly can save their life. However, having an at-home care kit is useful for nursing your bunny back to health after the vet visit, or for stabilizing your rabbit if you're in an area without a 24-hour clinic that sees rabbits. You will need:

1. A 10-cc veterinary-grade feeding syringe (these are far easier to get into your rabbit's mouth than a baby syringe)
2. 1 mL dosing syringes
3. Critical Care or another recovery or post-surgery food replacement (you can also make your own with wet, mashed pellets and baby food)
4. Pedialyte

5. Baby gas drops (simethicone)
6. Thermometer
7. Vaseline for thermometer lubricant
8. Gauze and adherent wrap
9. Neosporin
10. Cotton pads and cotton swabs
11. Saline eye solution
12. Vetericyn spray
13. Bleed stop
14. Heating pad
15. Rubbing alcohol
16. Pet wipes
17. Hydrogen peroxide

Honorable Mentions: Pellets and Veggies

Lastly, your bunny will need a [small serving](#) of pellets, and a couple cups of [rabbit-safe](#), leafy greens every day.

While this list can look a little daunting, it's easy to find many of these items second hand (in fact, we might recommend it as rabbits can be quite destructive), and your bunny will thank you for taking the time to research everything they need.

Sophia Uhlenhoff

< **Don't "Release" Your Bunny:
You're not setting them free,
you're sentencing them to an
early death.**

**GI Stasis: The Constant Specter
of Bunny Parenthood** >

Location

Nampa, Idaho

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Contact

saveabunrabbitrescue@gmail.com
[\(208\) 971-9401](tel:(208)971-9401)