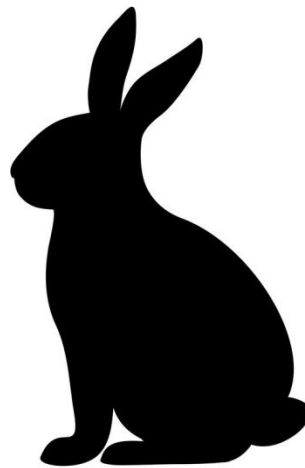


# FORT WAYNE ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL

## RABBIT FOSTER MANUAL



**Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control**  
HELPING PEOPLE . HELPING ANIMALS



# Contacts

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260-427-2579

Typically in office Tues.-Fri. 8am-6pm

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260-427-5549

Typically in office Mon.10am-6pm, Tues.-Thurs.10am-2pm and Fri. 10am-6pm

For basic foster questions please email us at [Foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:Foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org)

We have a closed group Facebook page specifically for our foster families to see what animals are in need of loving foster homes. You are welcome to post questions to this page but please realize that it is not checked regularly after hours or on the weekends. If you have an emergency please follow the emergency protocol below.

## Emergency Protocol

- Contact the volunteer/foster department during regular business hours: Mondays 10am-6pm and Tuesday-Friday 8am-6pm.
- If after hours call **260-449-3000**. An animal control officer will be available to assist you.

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## **Section 1: Introduction**

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering for Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control. By opening up your home to foster, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and care these animals desperately need.

Once you have completed your foster profile, our volunteer/foster coordinator will get in touch with you to schedule a training, answer questions you may have and add you to our Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control foster Facebook page where you can see all animals who are awaiting loving foster homes.

We also have a great group of volunteer mentors that are admins on our foster Facebook page as well that are equipped to answer many questions about fostering. They triage questions and contact the volunteer/foster coordinator accordingly.

Fosters are asked to provide care for the animals and provide transportation to and from shelter appointments as needed. Although fostering can be a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience!

## **Section 2: Frequently asked questions**

### **What do foster families need to provide?**

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for foster animals.
- Transportation to and from the shelter for all appointments
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the foster animals about positive relationships

### **How much time do I need to spend with the small animal?**

As much time as you can. The more time you spend with your foster animal, the more socialized they will be to people.

### **Can I foster small animals even if I have a full-time job?**

Yes. The volunteer/foster coordinator will match you with the foster animal appropriate for your schedule. We will need you to be available, however, to take the foster animals to all shelter appointments, including nonscheduled ones if they get sick.

### **How long will the small animals need to be in foster care?**

Time frames are determined on a case by case basis. You will know what our plan is when you take an animal to foster.

### **Will I need to give medicine to the small animal fosters?**

While we do our best to ensure that we are sending out healthy animals to foster care, most illnesses have incubation periods, meaning that if the animal picked up something at the shelter, symptoms can arise after you take them home. So, some animals do not require any medicine, while others do. If your foster animal needs medication, we can show you how to administer it before you take them home.

### **Can I let my foster animals interact with my personal pets?**

No, animals are susceptible to illness and can carry or catch dangerous ailments easily. For this reason, we require that foster parents isolate foster animals with their own supplies in an area that is separated from your personal pets. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering for Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

**Will any of my foster animals die?**

Sadly, it is possible for them to become ill and pass away while in a foster home. This may be the hardest thing about fostering. Keeping in close contact with the volunteer/foster coordinator will hopefully help catch any issues early on.

**Who will take care of my foster animals if I need to go out of town?**

If you have travel plans while you are fostering for Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control, you will need to contact the volunteer/foster coordinator and make arrangements to return your fosters to the shelter for the duration of the time that you are gone. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we can make alternate arrangements for your fosters. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of two weeks' notice.

You cannot leave your foster animals with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have specific training for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that training or signed the release waivers for the foster program.

**What if a foster animal bites me?**

If you are having any behavior issues with your foster please let us know right away. We may be able to offer some suggestions or remove the animal from your home if necessary.

**What if I want to adopt one of my fosters or know someone who does?**

If you would like to adopt your foster, or find someone who wants to adopt your foster, we will need a completed adoption profile from the potential adopter (with foster's name and animal number) and the full adoption process will be followed. Please contact the volunteer/foster coordinator right away with this information because once the rabbit is up for adoption, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, including the foster parent.

**Will it be difficult for me to say goodbye to my foster?**

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering. Keep in mind that by fostering these vulnerable pets, you are playing a crucial role in helping to save lives.

**Section 3: Rabbit Proofing**

It is very important that rabbits have a place where they feel secure and safe. Choose a room in your home that will be the primary room the rabbit will reside in. This room should be able to withstand accidents and other messes the animal may make. You may choose a bathroom or spare bedroom but be sure there are no small hiding spots that the animal can get in. If you use a room with carpet you may want to consider putting down some linoleum which can be placed over the carpet which makes cleaning/disinfecting very easy.

\*Remember that all foster animals must be kept indoors –housing them in hutches/garages is not permitted.

**Supplies you'll need**

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control will provide you with any supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster animals. Here's what you'll need to care for your fosters:

- A large spacious cage with a solid bottom, no aquariums please
- Water bottle
- Food pellets
- Timothy hay
- Bed shavings
- Food dish

- Litterbox
- Recycled newspaper litter for litterbox
- Hiding house (Igloo)
- Carrier for travel

Additional supplies helpful to have on hand for fosters:

- Extra water bottle
- Toys
- Extra cage/portable playpen if housing multiples
- Brushes/combs
- Fresh fruit/veggies

### **Foster proofing your space**

Foster rabbits are tiny and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to rabbit proof your space. Here are some tips:

- Be sure there are no cords they can chew on
- Put away anything the animal could become tangled up in
- Block any holes/gaps that they could get stuck in
- Tie up cords from blinds
- Be sure that toilet lids stay closed

### **Section 4: Caring for your foster Rabbit**

Rabbits are very smart and social animals. When given plenty of attention they make very good pets. Given appropriate care rabbits can live up to ten years. Regular exercise out of their cage is essential for rabbits. Rabbits like playing with a variety of chew toys such as untreated wicker baskets, untreated wood blocks and cardboard boxes. Children must always be supervised when handling rabbits as they may try to hold too tightly or allow the rabbit to jump or fall. Rabbits are easily injured if not handled gently.

### **Feeding and watering**

Please make sure you have rabbit food pellets available at all times along with timothy hay. You may also provide fresh fruits and/or vegetables. See the chart below on appropriate fruits/vegetables your rabbit may have.

Please make sure there is always fresh water available to your rabbit.

### **Weighing**

Please weigh adult rabbits every few days to make sure you are monitoring any significant loss/gain. If you are caring for babies it is very important you weight them every day. Weight loss can be an indicator that something more serious is happening.

### **Confinement and Cage Setup**

It is important that your fosters stay confined to their foster area at all times unless they are under close supervision for some free time.

The ideal cage set up would 3 to 4 feet (the larger the better) with a solid bottom (no wire bottoms and no aquariums please). Rabbits must be housed indoors with a temp between 60 and 80 degrees. You will line the bottom of the cage with bedding, have a hiding house available, food bowl with food, a water bottle filled with water, and timothy hay available.

### **Housing multiple rabbits together**

Typically we will only send one adult rabbit out at a time to a foster home. Occasionally we will need to send out litter mates to the same foster home however we will try our best to make sure they are getting along well before they leave the shelter.

### **Grooming**

Brush your rabbit regularly to keep their coat clean and free of tangles and loose hair. Long haired rabbits need brushed daily to prevent matting of the hair. Please do not bathe your rabbits.

### **Litter Box Training**

Rabbits usually take well to litter training, although some flexibility may be required by the owner. Rabbits naturally pick one or more toilet areas, and owners can take advantage of this in litter training. Check out <https://www.thesprucepets.com/rabbits-as-pets-1237195> for more information on litter box training your foster.

### **Appropriate Vegetables for Rabbits**

Recommended vegetables: 1-2 cups daily for an adult of a rabbits diet should be from fresh, green, leafy veggies.

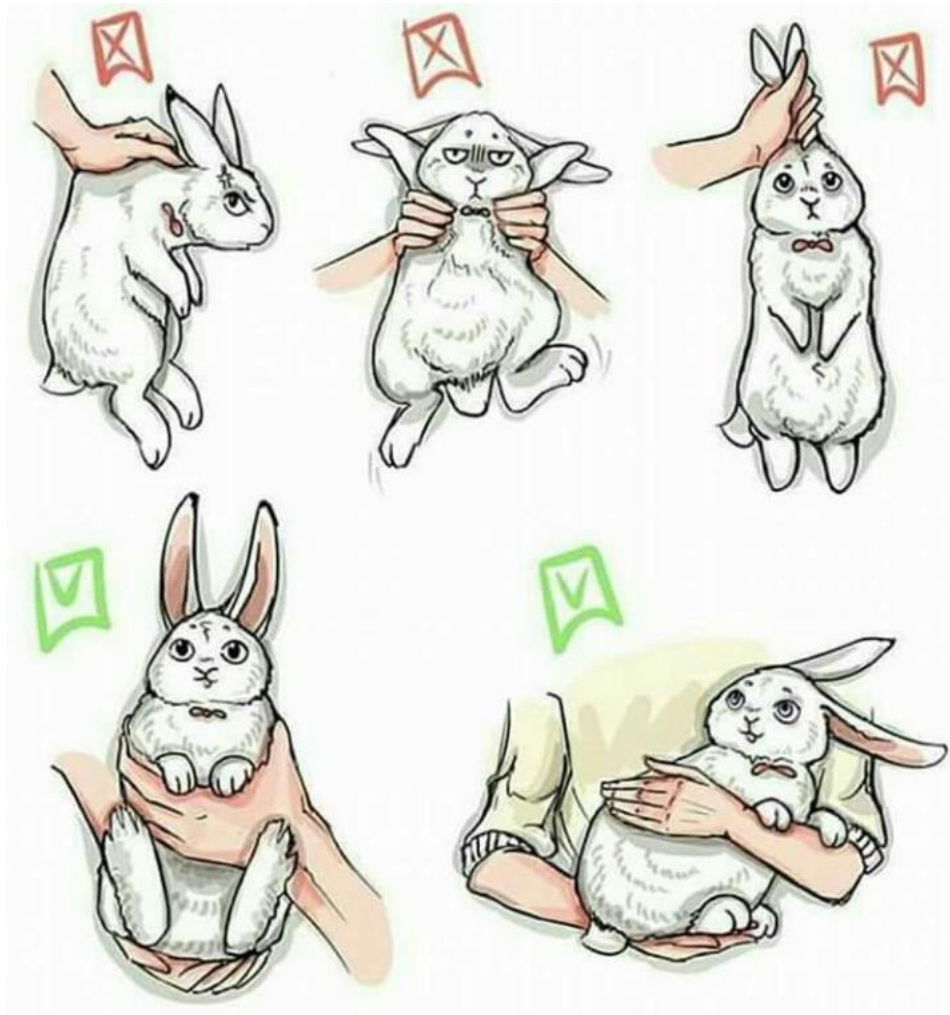
- Arugula
- Carrot tops
- Kale
- Turnip greens
- Dandelion greens
- Parsley
- Mustard greens
- Beet greens
- Radish tops
- Carrots
- Broccoli (leaves and stems)
- Celery
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Summer squash
- Zucchini squash

\*Please do not feed anything that is old/spoiled.

### **Section 5: Handling**

Rabbits can be nervous when handled. It is very important to always great them gently and ensure they are fully supported. By training rabbits to being handled it will allow for a better relationship between them and their caregiver. Training for handling should be done by ensuring all handling is low stress and a pleasant experience. By using treats and food it can help condition the animals to enjoying handling.

When picking up rabbits you should place your hands quickly and firmly around their body. Make sure you have a firm grip on them before picking them up. When picking up be sure that both the body and the rear legs are supported. Rabbits should be held close to your body with all limbs supported.



### **Section 6: Cleaning**

Once you've returned your fosters to Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control for adoption, you must sanitize your fostering room or area before you can take home new fosters. Remove anything the fosters touched and clean it with a weak bleach solution, consisting of one part bleach to 32 parts cold water (see below).

If you have items that can be washed in the dishwasher, please do so since the heat will disinfect those items. Plastic or metal items that need to be sterilized, such as litter boxes or plastic toys, should be soaked in the bleach solution for 10 minutes and then rinsed off. Throw away any toys that cannot be sterilized. Being conscientious about sterilization will help ensure that your next foster will not catch any illnesses from the previous foster.

### **Daily Cleaning Protocols:**

- Soiled bedding should be scooped out and replaced with new bedding
- Empty dirty litter pans and replace litter
- Provide fresh water, food pellets, hay and fruits/veggies
- Guinea pigs will require a full change of bedding at least once a week



## **Deep Cleaning Protocols should be utilized as needed and after your foster is returned to FWACC**

- Remove ALL items from cage.
- Throw away all disposable items. When available, use metal/ceramic bowls instead of plastic. Plastic is porous and can harbor bacteria.
- Clean out all bedding, litter, debris from the cage.
- Thoroughly spray all surfaces with bleach solution.
- (Bleach solution is 1:10 ratio; 32oz Spray Bottle = 3oz of bleach + 30oz of water)
- Let the chemical sit for **10 minutes** while it disinfects the kennel.
- Dampen towel with more bleach solution and wipe down the cage while making sure to clean any nooks, crannies, and surfaces as thoroughly as possible.
- Make sure the cage is **completely dry** before setting back up with all fresh items.

### **Bleach Rules**

Make a new batch of bleach solution for each use. Bleach rapidly degrades in the presence of light and when mixed with water.

Let it sit on the surface for 10 minutes. Enough solution should be applied to ensure it does not evaporate within 10 minutes.

Discard any remaining solution.

## **Section 7: Medical and Emergency Protocols**

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control provides all medical care for our foster animals through our shelter veterinarian. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster animals.

If your foster needs to see the shelter veterinarian, please notify the volunteer/foster coordinator by email or phone. The volunteer/foster coordinator will schedule the appointment and notify you of the date/time.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the volunteer/foster coordinator.

### **Signs of illness and what to do next**

Rabbits do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if a foster is ill will require diligent observation of daily activity and appetite levels. Signs to watch out for are: repeatedly sneezing, crusty eyes, dirty ears, diarrhea, hair loss, weight loss or a change in behavior. If you have any questions about the health of your foster, please contact the volunteer/foster coordinator, who will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

### **Criteria for emergencies**

Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Signs of extreme dehydration
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Any trauma

- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

If a foster displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, start the emergency protocol.

### **Emergency protocol**

- Contact the volunteer/foster department during regular business hours.
- If after hours call **260-449-3000**. An animal control officer will be available to assist you.

### **Euthanasia**

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control never sends an animal out to foster care intending the end result to be euthanasia. Through the use of foster homes we find out information that we would otherwise never know. Although most of the information we gain is very positive there are times when serious issues occur once the animal is in foster care.

The decision to euthanize an animal is not taken lightly and is used only when we have exhausted all reasonable alternatives. Some animals may display behavior patterns or have physical conditions that make it difficult, with limited resources, to care for them at the shelter or in a home environment. There are also times that an animal may show behaviors that could make them potentially dangerous to people or other animals. Euthanasia by injection, performed by certified euthanasia technicians, is currently recommended as the most humane method for all companion animals and is the only method used by Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control.

Euthanasia is an emotional issue for everyone involved. Please know that we will be open and honest when talking about this sensitive topic should it arise with one of the animals you are fostering.

### **Section 8: Scheduling appointments for your fosters**

Please note that all appointments, including your pickup and drop-off appointments, should be scheduled in advance. If you cannot make an appointment, please notify the volunteer/foster department immediately to reschedule as appointment times fill up quickly.

### **Picking up and returning your fosters**

To pick up and return your fosters, simply schedule an appointment with the volunteer/foster coordinator. This is typically done straight through our foster Facebook page when you comment on the status of a group waiting for foster. Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control does have the right to assist foster families in selecting fosters that are best suited for their lifestyle and experience.

### **Scheduling vet appointments for your fosters**

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control provides all medical care for our foster animals through our shelter veterinarian. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for fosters.

If your foster needs to see the shelter veterinarian, please notify the volunteer/foster coordinator by email or phone. The volunteer/foster coordinator will schedule the appointment and notify you of the date/time.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the volunteer/foster coordinator.

### **Picking up supplies**

If you need additional supplies for your fosters please help yourself to our foster supply pantry. If you do not see what you are looking for please find volunteer/foster department staff as they can assist you.

### **Scheduling your fosters to return to the shelter for adoption**

Many of our rabbits are spayed and neutered before they are made available for adoption. The volunteer/foster coordinator will be in touch when your fosters are able to return to the shelter for their spay/neuter surgery or adoption. This will be scheduled in advance to make sure we have room for your fosters upon returning.

## **Section 9: Helping your foster guinea pigs get adopted**

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### **How can I help my fosters find great homes?**

We welcome any quality photos that you take of your fosters in your home; we can use the photos to create a kennel card. You may market your fosters through word of mouth, social media, etc.

#### **What if I know someone who's interested in adopting my foster?**

If you would like to adopt your foster, or find someone who wants to adopt your foster, we will need a completed adoption profile from the potential adopter (with foster's name and animal number) and the full adoption process will be followed. Please contact the volunteer/foster coordinator right away with this information because once the rabbit is up for adoption, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, including the foster parent.

## **Section 10: Breaks**

We understand bringing your rabbit back may be an emotional time for many fosters. A one to two week break between foster assignments is generally enforced for reasons of sanitation and mental health.

Volunteering in the animal welfare field often times put you at a greater risk of developing compassion fatigue. When your emotions build up you may feel exhausted, angry, sad, etc. A combination of these symptoms can lead to burnout and is often responsible for the loss of many talented foster volunteers. In order to maintain your emotional and physical health, take frequent breaks and reach out if you are struggling with anything, we are here to help!

Thanks again for opening your home for guinea pigs in need. Please reach out to the volunteer/foster department for any additional questions/concerns.



## BACKGROUND

**SIZE:** 2 to 20+ pounds, depending on breed

**LIFESPAN:** 7 to 10+ years

**COST PER YEAR:** \$730

**GOOD WITH KIDS?:** Because rabbits are physically delicate and require specialized veterinary care, they are not appropriate for families with young children.

**FUN FACT:** Rabbits can be trained to use a litterbox and will come when called—yours may even play tag with you!

**WHERE TO GET A RABBIT:** There are many rabbits available for adoption at shelters and small-animal rescue groups. Call your local shelter and visit websites like [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com) and [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org).

## FOOD

- The most important component of your rabbit's diet is grass hay, such as timothy, which keeps the intestinal tract healthy. Unlimited hay should always be available.
- You may wish to supplement with good-quality rabbit pellets (18% fiber). Until your pet is fully grown at around 6 months, he can have unlimited pellets; after that, limit pellets to 1/8-1/4 cup per 6 pounds of bunny. Frail, older bunnies may need more to keep weight up; ask your veterinarian.
- Feed your pet fresh, leafy greens daily, such as dark lettuces, collard greens, turnip greens and carrot tops. We suggest a minimum of 2 cups per 6 pounds of rabbit.
- Clean, fresh water, dispensed in a bottle or sturdy bowl, should be available 24/7.

## CAGE & ENVIRONMENT

- Where's the only place for your rabbit's cage? **INDOORS!** Rabbits are highly social, and do best when they have plenty of interaction with family members. Outdoors, they face the threat of attacks from other animals and inclement weather.
- Rabbits should not be housed with other rabbits unless all are spayed/neutered and have been carefully introduced on neutral territory.
- The minimum recommended cage length for one rabbit is 3 to 4 feet, but bigger is always better!
- We recommend a solid-bottom metal cage, large dog crate or puppy exercise pen. Wire-bottom cages can ulcerate a rabbit's feet. If you do use a wire cage, cover the bottom with wood, towels or carpeting.

## BEHAVIOR & HANDLING

- Rabbits are prey animals and timid by nature, so be patient if your pet seems shy at first. Hand-feeding treats is a nice way to get acquainted.
- Pick up your rabbit by supporting his forequarters with one hand and his hindquarters with the other. Handle with care—an accidental drop can result in broken legs and back!
- **NEVER** pick up a rabbit by the ears or scruff—this can cause very serious injury.

## LITTER TRAINING

- Clean by nature, most rabbits will choose one corner of the cage as a bathroom. As soon as your rabbit's choice is clear, put a newspaper-lined litter box in that corner; cover the bottom with hay or pelleted litter.
- Never use pine or cedar shavings as litter, as the fumes can make your pet sick. Clay cat litter can cause respiratory or gastrointestinal problems.

## EXERCISE & TOYS

- Your rabbit needs exercise out of his cage in a safe area—indoors or outdoors—for several hours **EVERY** day. Your pet is designed for running & jumping!
- Rabbit-proof an indoor area by covering all electrical wires, phone, computer and TV cables, and anything else your rabbit is likely to chew, such as houseplants.
- Outdoor play areas should be fully enclosed by a fence. Never leave your pet unsupervised outdoors—even for a few minutes. Rabbits can quickly dig under fences.
- Your pet needs toys to satisfy his natural urges to dig and chew. Safe chew toys include cardboard boxes, an old telephone directory and commercially made chew sticks. Your bunny would love a digging box, such as a cardboard box filled halfway with soil or shredded paper.

## DAILY CARE

- Rabbits can be messy, so clean your pet's cage once or twice weekly. Put your pet in a safe room or alternate cage when you sweep out the cage and scrub it with warm, soapy water.
- Change your rabbit's litter box daily.
- Brush your pet regularly with a soft brush to remove excess hair.

## SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Bring your bunny to the veterinarian annually for check-ups. Don't wait for your yearly veterinarian visit if you think your pet is sick! If your rabbit stops eating or moving his bowels for 6 hours or longer, or has watery diarrhea, seek help immediately. Other signs that something isn't right include runny nose & eyes, dark red urine, lethargy and fur loss.
- Rabbits should be spayed or neutered by a veterinarian experienced with rabbit surgeries. This prevents unwanted litters, spraying in males and uterine cancer in females. Visit [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org) for a list of veterinarians.

IF YOU THINK THAT YOUR PET MAY HAVE INGESTED A POTENTIALLY POISONOUS SUBSTANCE, CALL THE ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER AT (888) 426-4435

A \$65 consultation fee may be applied to your credit card

## RABBIT SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Solid-bottom cage or large dog crate
- ✓ Carrier
- ✓ Litter box with hay or pelleted litter
- ✓ Grass hay and hay rack
- ✓ Good-quality rabbit pellets
- ✓ Sturdy ceramic or metal food bowl
- ✓ Ceramic water bowl or water bottle that attaches to cage
- ✓ Grooming brush
- ✓ Digging box and safe chew toys



The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®

**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**  
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# Caring for Your RABBIT

This care guide from Oxbow Animal Health will teach you everything you need to know about keeping your pet rabbit healthy and happy.



## FEEDING YOUR RABBIT

Your rabbit is a herbivore, which means he eats only plant material.

Grass hay should be the high-fiber cornerstone of every rabbit's diet. The fiber in hay helps meet the important digestive health needs of herbivores such as rabbits. A daily recommended amount of a uniform, fortified food provides essential vitamins and minerals not found in hay. Fresh greens are also an important component of a rabbit's diet, and healthy treats can be beneficial when given in moderation.



## HAY

Your rabbit should have unlimited access to a variety of quality grass hays. Among many benefits, hay helps prevent obesity, dental disease, diarrhea, and boredom. Since replacing the hay in your rabbit's habitat can encourage picky eating, we recommend changing it only when soiled.

Young (less than a year old), pregnant, nursing or ill animals can benefit from eating alfalfa hay in addition to grass hay because of the higher nutritional elements. Otherwise, alfalfa should only be given occasionally as a treat.

### Hay Selection

**Keep in mind:** Grass hay should make up the majority of your pet's daily diet. Offer a variety of hay to your rabbit to promote optimum health. Since hay is a natural product, each bag will look and feel different. Use our Taste & Texture Guide located on every hay package to determine your pet's taste and texture preferences.

We have many all-natural, farm-fresh hays to choose from including Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay, and Organic Meadow Hay. Also, check out our Harvest Stacks line of compressed hays for extra enrichment.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Your rabbit's teeth never stop growing. Hay is essential because it stimulates normal chewing and dental wear patterns, helping decrease the risk of dental disease.

## FORTIFIED FOOD

Providing a daily recommended amount of a high-fiber, age-appropriate fortified food will help ensure that your pet receives essential vitamins and minerals not found in hay.



### Pellet Selection

Always choose an age-appropriate pellet formulated specifically for rabbits. Our Essentials Young Rabbit Food is ideal for rabbits under one year of age. For adult rabbits, choose from one of Oxbow's three premium adult rabbit formulas.

### AVOID:

Mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, and fruit because rabbits have a tendency to select those tempting morsels over the healthy pellets



## GREENS

Fresh greens are an important part of your pet's daily diet. Greens contribute to hydration and provide important vitamins and minerals, as well as enrichment. For a complete list of appropriate greens, visit the House Rabbit Society's website at [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org).

### OFFER:

Romaine, bib, and red leaf lettuce



### AVOID:

Leeks, chives, and onions

## TREATS

Treats (including fruits and veggies) are great for encouraging interaction between you and your pet, but they should only be given after basic daily foods have been eaten. Offering too many treats can cause your rabbit to refuse his healthy, essential foods. It's important to remember that not all treats are created equal! All Oxbow treat varieties are designed to be as wholesome as they are delicious.





## ? DID YOU KNOW?

*With proper nutrition and care, rabbits may live ten or more years.*

## HOUSING YOUR RABBIT

**As animals of prey by nature, all rabbits need a safe place to spend time and escape potential environmental stressors.**

Choose a well-constructed habitat with a solid floor and set it up near household activities, but away from drafts. Your rabbit's habitat should be outfitted with environmental essentials such as a space to hide (Timothy CLUB Bungalow or Tunnel), a litter box lined with litter, some toys, grass hay, a food bowl, and two sources of fresh, clean water.

The confines of a habitat do not allow enough space for a pet's exercise needs. All animals benefit from activity and love to move and explore; a play yard allows you to create a safe, secure, exercise area for your pet.



**Rabbits are INQUISITIVE & CURIOUS by nature.**



## YOUR RABBIT'S HEALTH

*You should visit a qualified exotics veterinarian at least once a year for check-ups on your rabbit's diet, behavior, and health.*

Be prepared for your pet's visits by making a list of any questions or concerns you may have ahead of time. Ask your veterinarian to recommend an appropriate age to have your rabbit spayed or neutered; this will increase the chances of a longer, healthier life for your pet. Many rabbit health problems are preventable with proper diet and care.

### REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR VET:

- Loose, soft, or lack of stool
- Small, dry, or infrequent stools
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)
- Overgrown front teeth
- Observed difficulty with chewing
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking



## RABBIT BEHAVIOR

*Rabbits don't usually like to be picked up or carried.*

The best way to interact with your rabbit is to get down to his level and play with him on the floor. Be sure you are always with your rabbit when he is out for playtime; rabbits are curious by nature and could get into trouble if left alone.

Some rabbit behaviors can seem rather strange. For example, you may see your rabbit eat its own poop. This is a normal, healthy behavior that provides essential vitamins and nutrients.

## SUPPLIES FOR YOUR RABBIT

- ☐ **Fortified age-specific food:** Oxbow Essentials Young Rabbit Food for rabbits under one year of age or one of Oxbow's three premium formulas for adults
- ☐ Two or more varieties of **Oxbow's farm-fresh hays**
- ☐ **Oxbow treats** for healthy bonding and enrichment
- ☐ **Water bottle** and heavy **water dish**
- ☐ Heavy **food bowl**
- ☐ **Large play yard** for safe exercise outside the habitat
- ☐ **Large habitat** with solid, non-slip flooring
- ☐ **Hiding space** such as Oxbow's Timothy CLUB Bungalow or Tunnel
- ☐ **Litter box**
- ☐ **Litter and bedding material** such as Oxbow's Eco-Straw and Pure Comfort Bedding

For more information about rabbit nutrition and behaviors, visit [www.oxbowanimalhealth.com](http://www.oxbowanimalhealth.com).



**Oxbow Animal Health**  
Murdock, Nebraska

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### Join the CONVERSATION

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# Understanding rabbit behaviour

YOUR RABBIT'S BODY LANGUAGE CAN HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY ARE FEELING

## A happy rabbit

These rabbits are relaxed and happy.

Rabbits 1-3 show ears close together, facing slightly backwards and pointing outwards. Eyes may be partially closed.

1



Rabbit is lying down, with a relaxed body posture and legs tucked under the body.

2



Rabbit is lying down, with front paws pointing forward and rear legs stuck out sideways. Body is relaxed and extended.

3



Rabbit is lying down with a fully extended, relaxed body. Back legs are stretched out behind the body and the front paws are pointing forward.

4



Rabbit jumps into the air with all four paws off the ground and twists in mid-air before landing.

## A worried rabbit

These rabbits are telling you that they are uncomfortable and don't want you near them.

1

Rabbit is in a crouched position, muscles are tense, head held flat to the ground, ears wide apart and flattened against the back, pupils dilated.



2

Rabbits who are worried or anxious may hide.



## An angry or very unhappy rabbit

These rabbits are not happy and want you to stay away or go away.

1



Rabbit turns and moves away flicking the back feet. Ears may be held against the back.

2

Rabbit is sitting up on back legs with front paws raised displaying boxing behaviour. Ears pointed upwards and facing outwards, rabbit may be growling.



3

Rabbit is standing tense, with back legs thumping on the ground. Tail raised, ears pointing upwards and slightly turned outwards, facial muscles are tense and pupils dilated.



4



Rabbit is standing tense with body down and weight towards the back, head tilted upwards, mouth open and teeth visible. Ears held back and lowered, tail raised, pupils dilated.

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