

Bunny Proofing Your Home

Bunnies are curious, mischevious creatures. They are explorers and they can easily get themselves into trouble--and it's your job to make sure that they don't hurt themselves or your belongings. A great first step is to get down on the floor and take a look around from a rabbits-eye view. Here are some important things to look for.

Wires

Rabbits love to chew on wires – electric, phone, cable and computer wires. You must protect your possessions as well as your rabbit's life. You can purchase plastic tubing which, when slit open, can be slipped over most wires and taped in a few places. Bunny doesn't find this as enticing. Some wires can be taped up higher on the wall or tucked under the rug. Check hidden places where the rabbit could climb up and reach those wires. He might find wires that you can't see as well, such as behind the washer or dryer, behind the TV or behind or under the bed.

Corners

Some rabbits will chew on the corners of the walls or wood trim on windows and baseboards. This is one reason you must watch your rabbit while he is free in the house. If he finds an irresistible spot, you can purchase hard plastic corners at the hardware store. These were meant for the edges of wallpaper. Sheet rock is not good for them.

Wood

For items like chair legs, coffee tables, kitchen cabinets and doorframes, a product called "Bitter Apple" can be purchased at most pet stores. It is applied to the wood and serves as a deterrent to chewing. They must have their own piece of wood to chew on. If they continue to chew on your wood, clap your hands loudly to make them stop then give them their own wood to chew on. (NO CEDAR)

Houseplants

Some houseplants are toxic to bunnies, and they'll eat them even though they are poisonous.

Rabbit Diet

- **Unlimited timothy hay** (this is critical for the health of your rabbit!)
- **Unlimited fresh water**, preferably in a heavy crock or bowl (rabbits suck water and may not get enough from a hanging water bottle). Fresh water should be provided daily. Dump out water that is left in bottles or bowls and refill daily. Rabbits use more water from bowls than bottles because it is easier to drink. Use a heavy ceramic dish that can not be easily overturned. You may want to use a bottle as a backup, in case the bowl does get overturned. Water containers should be washed thoroughly with soap and water every couple of days, or run through the dishwasher. Scum build up in the bowl is not good for your rabbit. If you wouldn't drink out of it, neither should your rabbit.
- **Limited pellets** (typically approximately 1/8 cup per 5LBs rabbit). Several companies make rabbit pellet food and you should be able to find it in your local pet store or online. Look for timothy-based pellets that are at least 18% fiber. Also, don't buy more than a 6-week supply at a time, because pellets can go stale. Rabbits should NOT be fed primarily on commercially produced pellets. Commercial breeders who are raising rabbits for the table do pellet feeding. Rabbit's digestive systems evolved to allow them to survive on a marginal diet; alfalfa pellets are far too rich and refined to provide a balanced diet.
- **Fresh veggies**. See video below for great advice on feeding veggies to your rabbit, and consult our safe veggies and treats list (below). Select a minimum of three types of vegetables daily. A variety is necessary to provide adequate nutrients.
- **Limited treats**, like fruit. Again, see the safe veggies and treats list for more information.

Outfitting Bun's Housing

There are several items that will need to be included when outfitting your rabbit's housing.

Cover wire floors! Rabbits were not designed to live on wire floors, a house rabbit does not need a wire floor. Wire floors cause sores to develop on rabbits' feet. All cages with wire floors must have a piece of plexi-glass or a piece of plywood that the rabbit can sit on. When using grass hay, the ENTIRE wire floor should be covered. Carpet squares are good for some rabbits. If they chew on the carpet, you must remove it immediately or risk the rabbit getting an intestinal blockage.

Solid Flooring: Wire or wire-like flooring is not comfortable for your rabbit or good for their feet. This type of flooring can cause sore hocks which in turn can result in serious infections. Plywood covered with linoleum would be a suitable solution.

Floor Covering: Rabbits do not feel safe on slippery surfaces and could end up with serious injuries. All floor coverings should be washable and prevent slipping. Some suggestions would be carpet samples (provided they do not eat them), towels, cotton throw rugs, and sea grass mats.

Ramps: Multi-level condos often contain ramps to enable a rabbit to access other levels. Be sure that these ramps are covered with a nonskid, rabbit safe material or are equipped with wood slats to help provide traction.

Food & Water: Water and food bowls should be made of heavy, crockery or your rabbit will mistake them for toys and toss them around their housing. A space also needs to be provided for Timothy hay, which a rabbit should have access to at all times. A couple of different options would be to stuff the hay inside an empty tissue box (remove plastic) or in an all natural basket that has not been painted, stained or varnished. Craft stores, garage sales, and second hand stores are a great place to find baskets in a variety of shapes and sizes! More info on [Food & Water](#).

Litter Box: It is important that your rabbit's litter box is an adequate size to prevent accidents. Fill with 1/2" of *non-clay, non-clumping and rabbit-safe* litter. You can use:

- All-natural wood stove pellets
- Crown Animal Bedding
- Carefresh Animal Bedding
- Corn Cob litter.

Their litter box should be emptied regularly to avoid odors which are harmful to your rabbit's respiratory system.

Hiding Box: Everyone, from time to time, needs a place to get away from it all; your rabbit is no different. They should have a hiding box available to them in their housing. Cardboard boxes work great for this and can be filled with Timothy Hay for your rabbit's comfort and enjoyment!

Toys: Your rabbit will also need toys to play with. Empty paper towel and toilet paper rolls work great, hard plastic baby toys and old telephone books are just a few items you can add to your rabbit's housing.

Cleaning: Your rabbit's housing should be completely cleaned once a week at least. Use a 1:1 solution of warm water and white vinegar with just a little dish soap for cleaning. Do not use pine scented, pine oil based or commercial cleaners.

Time out of the house: Appropriate housing does not eliminate the the need for bun to have exercise time outside of his/her housing. Rabbits should be allowed at least several hours outside of their housing to run, jump, explore and interact with their family daily.

How to handle a bunny safely

Bunnies are very delicate animals--they are much more delicate than dogs and cats. This is one reason why rabbits don't make good pets for young children.

The most important thing to remember when handling a rabbit is to protect their spines. When you pick up a rabbit, its automatic response can be to kick its hind legs. A rabbit's hind legs are very powerful, and a rabbit can easily kick hard enough to break its own back. This is why it's critically important to support both the front and hind end of your rabbit, and to be both gentle and firm when handling your rabbit.

When you are holding your rabbit, make sure to hold it close to your body, and always support its hindquarters. If your rabbit starts to squirm, do NOT let go. Instead, hold firmly to your rabbit. This can be difficult if your rabbit struggles enough to start scratching you, which is why you should always wear long sleeves when handling your rabbit (especially as you and your rabbit get used to one another). Try bouncing your whole body up and down gently to distract your rabbit. This can stop the squirming long enough for you to safely place your rabbit back down.

Holiday Hazards: Keeping your bunny safe during human celebrations!

Cold Weather:

Though rabbits can take the cold better than they can the heat, cold, wet and windy weather make it dangerous for an outside bunny, who can get frost bite on his/her ears and even die from exposure.

If you don't have a heated, weather-proof shelter for your furry friends, please bring them into a safe part of your house for the winter. It's the perfect time to reconnect with your rabbits and remember how much fun they can be as members of your family. Isn't that why you adopted them in the first place?

Read [more](#) cold weather tips for your cats and dogs

Decorations & Food:

Bag the boughs of holly and live mistletoe. Holly, mistletoe, poinsettias, lilies, laurel, and Christmas Rose are all on the POISON list for rabbits (and other animals). Opt for artificial plants made from silk or plastic and keep them out of your pet's reach if they are "chewers".

- Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers that can cause stomach upset. Stagnant tree water is a breeding ground for bacteria, and your pet could end up with nausea or diarrhea should he/she imbibe.
- Shiny icicle decorations can cause a deadly blockage if ingested, and broken glass ornaments can require immediate surgery if eaten.
- Keep electrical cords hidden, especially if you have a pet that likes to chew.
- Never leave lit candles unattended and keep them out of reach from any pets. Better yet, use electric lights and candles.

There are a lot of cookies and candy around this time of year. Please avoid giving your rabbits/pets even a bite of these sweets. Food too high in sugar can lead to digestive upset and gastrointestinal stasis, and it can contribute to excess weight. And food too rich in carbohydrates may contribute to a

fatal case of enterotoxaemia, a toxic overgrowth of "bad" bacteria in the intestinal tract. In addition, keep in mind that chocolate is poisonous and should never be fed to your rabbit. Remember, rabbits have a sweet tooth and it's up to their human parents to give them healthy choices.

Rabbits have a delicate digestion system and are incapable of vomiting. Please keep your pets safe and you'll all have a happier holiday.

If you suspect that your animal companion has eaten a potentially toxic substance, call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's Emergency Hotline at: (888) 426-4435 for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more poison prevention tips, please visit ASPCA online.

Stress:

With extended family visiting and celebrating with friends, your pet can become stressed from all the noise and rush. Please keep your pets in a safe and quiet room if they are not used to the noise and activity.