

RABBIT CARE GUIDE

Everything you need to know



Is a Rabbit Right For You?

Rabbits can make excellent pets, and are really rewarding to keep and interact with. It's important to note their lifespan, and the commitment required when welcoming a rabbit or two to your home. With the right care, your rabbit can live 10+ years which is particularly important to note when it comes to getting them as children's pets. If your child loses interest, or moves out for college, will you be happy to take over their care and make sure their needs are met?

Remember, Rabbits are Prey Animals

It's hard to imagine just how much personality and love these little creatures have until you experience it first hand. They are incredibly smart and each rabbit has their own individual personality. Rabbits are prey animals, so most don't like being picked up or cuddled for long periods of time. They are happiest with attention at their own level, and will come to you for head rubs, attention and treats! If you are looking for a pet to pick up and cuddle a lot, a rabbit may not be the best fit.

Can you provide the space they need?

Housing & Space: What Rabbits Really Need

Rabbits aren't cage pets—they're roamers and foragers. Aim to give them a roomy, safe area where they can hop, stretch out fully, and do zoomies. A pen or dedicated room works best. As a rule of thumb, their daily living space should be at least three to four hops long and wide enough for a full body flop, plus extra for litter, hay, water, and hideaways. Add soft flooring for traction, a roomy litter box beside unlimited hay, and multiple hidey spots. Make the area escape-proof and bunny-proof: cover cords, block tight gaps, and remove toxic plants. Give them several hours of supervised free-roam time every day, with tunnels and platforms to explore. Bonded pairs need more room, so size up. If outdoors, use a predator-proof hutch attached to a large, covered run with shade and weather protection, and bring them inside during extreme temps.

Indoor or Outdoor

Creating a Rabbit-Friendly Home

Think in zones: a comfy rest zone, a toilet + hay zone, and a play zone. The enclosure should be tall enough that your rabbit can stand on hind legs without ears touching the top and long enough for three full hops. Solid, non-slip flooring is key—avoid wire bottoms. Place the litter box in a corner and tuck hay right next to it to encourage good habits. Include a hideout and chew stations or toys to protect your furniture and their teeth. Keep the setup in a quiet area with steady temperatures and good airflow, away from loud speakers and drafts. Rotate toys and rearrange the layout weekly to keep things interesting.

Indoor vs Outdoor Setups

Indoor: An exercise pen, large cage, or rabbit-proofed room is ideal. Offer daily free-roam time and enrich with tunnels, shelves, and scatter-fed hay. Keep water in a sturdy bowl or bottle and refresh often. Place rugs or runners along favourite zoomie paths.

Outdoor: Only if you can provide a secure, weather-safe setup. Use a raised, insulated sleeping area attached to a spacious, covered run with a solid floor or buried wire skirt to deter digging predators. Provide shade, ventilation, and dry bedding. Take extra care to provide the right assistance to them in extreme temperatures - Extra ventilation and shade in hotter months, and straw beds in a dry, draught free area during the winter.

Minimum Space Tips: Think bigger than a cage space for hopping, stretching, and standing tall, plus extra for essentials. More space = happier, healthier buns.



Feeding your Rabbit

Your rabbits diet is one of the most important things to get right. Hay is the main component, to keep their gut healthy and their teeth trimmed. Rabbits need access to hay 24/7, along with a small amount of suitable pellets, and some fresh vegetables/herbs.

- Meadow or Timothy Hay
- Good Quality Pellet Food (Burgess Excel, or Science Selective)
- Rabbit Safe Herbs or Vegetables, in Limited Amounts.
- Treats in Moderation (Science Selective or Burgess Excel brands)
- Forage - Dried Herbs etc

I feed Red Mills pellets to my rabbits, and all of my babies leave here with a bag of change over food as the 20kg Red Mills bags aren't the most suitable for one rabbit with the expiry date and storage etc. It's important that their hay is of good quality, not chopped or dusty. For pellet food, avoid muesli mixes or anything with more than just plain pellets in the bag. It's important to avoid selective eating. Fresh herbs and vegetables can be given daily or a few times a week. My rabbits love Pak Choi, Parsley, Coriander, Baby Spinach and Carrots of course! Some vegetables aren't safe for feeding so be sure to research what's suitable, and always introduce new foods in small amounts.

Your rabbits diet should be 80% hay based, so getting the right hay is important! Make sure it is green, dust free and ideally long strand.



One Rabbit or Two?



Online, you will find mixed information on keeping rabbits together, or taking a pair home at the same time. It is amazing to see a bonded pair interact with each other, but they don't make it easy! Both rabbits will need to be neutered in order to live in harmony long term. Very young rabbits can have a 'baby bond' but hormone surges when they reach sexual maturity can cause nasty fights, even between same sex siblings. If I home two babies together, I always recommend having the space to separate them prior to neutering if needs be. This isn't always the case, but being prepared to keep an eye on their behaviour and intervene when required is important. If fights do occur, the rabbits will need to live near each other, and be re-bonded 6 weeks post neutering. If this sounds daunting but you'd still like two rabbits, I recommend starting with one first. They can usually be neutered 3 months after taking them home, and then you can look into adding a friend of the opposite sex. Lots of families have gotten 2 bunnies from me this way, and it works really well!

Keeping your Rabbit Healthy - Vet Visits

Rabbits are considered 'exotic pets' here in Ireland, and not every vet is rabbit savvy! It's important to find a vet that has experience with rabbits, as their care can be complex. Your rabbit will need yearly vaccinations to protect them from Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic disease, **even if they live indoors**. Your rabbit will leave here with their vaccinations done for the first year, but they will require a yearly booster. Nobivac Myxo RHD plus is the vaccination they need.

I highly recommend neutering your rabbit as soon as they are old enough. Neutering or spaying is beneficial in many ways - it eliminates hormone related behaviours (mounting & spraying in bucks, phantom pregnancies, territorial aggression and spraying in does), and also prevents reproductive cancers. Finding a vet that has experience with neutering rabbits is essential - please note your rabbit should never be fasting before surgery like other animals. Their gut needs to be moving constantly and fasting can cause GI stasis, a life threatening condition for your bunny.

Your bunny will need his/her nails trimmed regularly. You can do this yourself, or bring them to the vet to have it done.

BUNNY SHOPPING LIST

Everything you need to prepare!



- **Enclosure** - 120cm wide or bigger. A large pen or cage for indoors, or a predator proof hutch & run for outdoors. If outdoors, I suggest placing their enclosure on concrete or paving slabs, and adding Perspex or a similar covering to protect from wind & rain.
- **Hay** - Good quality Meadow or Timothy Hay. I buy mine from Furry Dubs online, in a 6kg bag. My rabbits love it!
- **Bedding** - I use wood shavings, and straw for any outdoor rabbits during the winter months. You can also use wood pellets for their litter tray, or washable mats instead of 'natural' bedding.
- **Food** - Burgess Excel Junior or Science Selective Junior for while they are a baby. As dwarf rabbits, they can stay on the Burgess Excel Junior for life as it is formulated for dwarf rabbits also.
- **Treats** - These are useful for bonding with your rabbit, but should be fed in moderation! Again the above brands have great healthy treats, or dried herbs are another alternative.
- **Food Bowl & Water Bottle** - A ceramic food bowl is best to avoid tipping, your rabbit will pick up and throw a plastic bowl! My babies are used to drinking from water bottles, but you can offer a bowl also.
- **Litter Tray** - I recommend a deep, rectangular litter tray. Fill with wood pellets and place hay in or alongside it to encourage good toileting habits.
- **Pet Carrier** - You will need a pet carrier to collect your rabbit, and for vet visits. Plastic ones are best, often marketed for cats!
- **Hides** - A decent hide or 'safe space' is a great way of providing your bunny, a prey animal, with a cosy corner to retreat to. This can be wooden or cardboard, which you can replace or remove as needed. Tunnels are also a great option and good for playtime too.
- **Enrichment** - Rabbits are very active and the more enrichment you can provide, the happier your rabbit. Wooden or rope style toys are excellent boredom breakers. I use a mixture of regular and hanging toys - Some marketed as 'bird toys' are suitable also. I can send recommendations, just ask!
- **Grooming Essentials** - You will need a nail clippers, and a decent brush for your bunny. They do moult fairly heavily twice a year, and regular brushing is good for bonding and to get them used to the brush.