The Bunny Bunch

A Non Profit
No Kill Rescue Group

- Rabbit Adoptions
- Spay/Neuter Referrals
- Education & Placement

# Bunny Basics

## DIET

Fresh water and a combination of pellets, timothy or oat hay, and fresh vegetables are required daily to maintain a heathy diet for a bunny. Timothy or oat hay should be given to the bunny everyday in unlimited amounts. These types of hay have the required amount of nutritional and fiber content. Alfalfa hay should only be fed to bunnies under one year of age. This type of hay has a very high fat content and is unhealthy for an adult rabbit. Over long periods of time it may cause a rabbit to be overweight and can also cause kidney disease.

An assortment of vegetables should also be given to your rabbit on a daily basis. Some vegetables that you can give them include: broccoli, carrots and carrot tops, parsley, cilantro, mustard greens, collard greens and green peppers. Avoid lettuce, cabbage, kale , celery, spinach, corn, which can be harmful for various reasons. Certain fruits can also be fed to your bunny in limited amounts as a treat. Apples after they have been cored are a favorite for most. Bananas are fattening and cause some health risks, therefore should be avoided.

Pellets should be free fed to bunnies under 8 months old. After that they start to gain weight at a rapid rate. You should then start feeding them 1/8 cup daily for 2-4 pound bunnies to 1/2 cup daily for 8-10 pound bunnies. Always check the nutritional content of the pellets you are feeding your bunny for high levels of fiber and protein. It should read between (16-18%).

## HOUSING

Bunnies are playful and love to run around and have fun. They need time out of the cage for daily exercise and playtime. However you should not leave a bunny unspervised unless you have "bunny proofed" an area for them to roam. Electical cords should be out fo reach or covered with a tough plastic casing ( you can buy the casing at a local hardware store.) A rabbit will chew and can risk being electricuted.

When purchasing a cage make sure that it is very spacious. Your bunny should be able to stretch out in all directions including on it's hind legs when standing up. Keep in mind that if you have a baby bunny it will usually grow quite a bit larger so you would want to buy a cage to accomodate the change. Unless you are planning to purchase a second cage when it has grown. If the cage has a wire mesh flooring make sure that you place a resting board made of wood or cardboard for the bunny to sit. These type of floors are very hard on the rabbits feet. Cleaning the litter boxes and cage regularly is very important. Not doing so may cause illnesses such as repiratory problems for the rabbit.

Bunnies should be kept in the least humid area of the house with temperatures from 60-70%. This is also the reason we encourage keeping your bunny as a house rabbit. Heat above this temperature can be fatal as they can only cool themselves via their ears.

## LITTER TRAINING

Bunnies can be litter trained! Place a litter box in the corner of the cage and some of the droppings into it. Your bunny may choose which corner it wants it in. Once he/she starts using it regularly you can place a second one outside of the cage in an area that you have chosen for your bunny to play. Then put her/him in it every 15 minutes until they get the idea. Never use the litter box as a punishment. Encouragement always goes along way with a bunny. You may want to choose a smaller area until it gets used to the litterbox. Never use cat litter or wood shavings such as cedar because it causes respiratory and digestive tract diseases and liver damage. Litters that can be used are ones made of natural products such as recycled newspaperand corncob litters. Spay or neutered rabbits are also more likely to use a litter box as he/she will not want to "mark it's territory" like one that isn't.

## BEHAVIOR

Bunnies love to chew! Their teeth grow continuously throughout their life so they must chew on hard objects to wear them down. Provide them with plenty of things to chew on. This will also keep them occupied and deter them from chewing on your furniture. Bunny safe wooden chew blocks, untreated straw or wicker baskets that you can fill with hay, empty cardboard toilet or paper towel rolls and pesticide free apple tree branches are all good choices as chewing objects.

If they continue to chew on your furniture you can clap your hands or very firmly say "NO". Then hand the bunny something it can chew. Never hit your bunny as a punishment.

No matter how well the bunny may be trained, always make sure that they are supervised during their play and exercise time out of the cage. This will assure absolute safety for your bunny.

## MEDICAL ISSUES

**Handling**: You must always support the bunny's hind legs when you pick him/her up to prevent serious spinal injuries. They can also break their backs if they kick out their back legs in resistance. For the same reason never pick up a rabbit by it's ears. This is also very painful.

**Choosing a Vet**: Call the Bunny Bunch 909-465-0952 for referrals.

**Spay/Neutering**: A female bunny must be spayed. If they are not spayed they have an 85% chance of contracting uterine cancer within 2-3 years which is the leading cause of death. Spay her after 6 months of age. A female bunny is also capable of having one litter per month with up to 22 babies. Male bunnies should neutered anytime after 5 months of age to prevent aggressive behavior such as biting and spraying. If you have an unaltered adult bunny you can also have this procedure done although it easier for the rabbit at a younger age.

**Nail Trimming:** Use large human toe nail-sized clippers or ones that are purchased at a pet store. Place the bunny on a covered table, and then hold her body down slightly and grasp a paw. Clip the nail sideways rather than top to bottom. Do not over-trim or cut into the blood vessel that runs through each nail. If you feel uncomfortable doing this contact us at 909- 465-0952 and we will give your bunny a manicure for a small donation.

**Furballs**: Bunnies shed a couple of times a year. They should be brushed every couple of days when they are not shedding and everyday when they are. Long haired breeds should be groomed everyday. This will help to prevent ingestion of fur which leads to furballs. Unlike cats, rabbits are unable to digest or push a hairball through their system. Droppings that are strung together are the first sign of a furball. Make sure that your bunny gets lots of timothy or oat hay, vegetables, and 1/2 inch of Petromalt or Laxatone twice daily to prevent this while it is going through it's shedding. Regular checkups should also be made the vet can check the bunny's abdomen for signs of blockage.

**Giving Your Bunny Away**: If you are unable to keep your bunny, never set them free in the wild. THEY WILL NOT SURVIVE! They will die of starvation, exposure or predation.

**P.O. BOX 2583 CHINO, CALIFORNIA 91708 TEL.909-465-0952**