AMY BAKER

# Rabbits As Pets

## THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO RABBIT

OWNERSHIP, HOUSING, HEALTH, TRAINING, AND CARE

# Rabbits As Pets:

## The Complete Guide To Rabbit Ownership, Housing, Health, Training And Care

**By:**

**Amy Baker**

**Edited By:**

**Susan Brown**

**To my beloved Alex.**

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# Introduction

Are you thinking of getting a rabbit as a pet? Just like any other pet, rabbits come with their own unique method of care and requirements that should be taken into consideration and properly learned *prior* to getting one.

Whether you plan on getting a rabbit, you already have one, or you simply want to learn more about them, this book on **How To Raise Rabbits** will give you everything you need to know - from what to do before and after getting one, their health, handling, and much more.

Raising a rabbit shouldn't be considered lightly, but I can promise you that it will be a very rewarding experience - as much as owning a dog, cat, or any other animal!

I sincerely hope you find this book to be helpful in your journey of raising rabbits, regardless of your reasons, and that it becomes a guide you look back on throughout this experience.

After you read it, you should be well-educated on how to raise a rabbit appropriately, with all the tips and tricks from someone who has personally raised and lived with rabbits throughout his lifetime.

From this experience, I have trained many on how to raise and care for rabbits the *right* way, so I knew it was finally time to create a book on the subject that everyone can have access to, anywhere, any time.

You will learn how to feed, maintain, house, train, enrich, interpret behavior, where to buy, and all of the other care essentials in addition to some handy tips that you won't find anywhere else.

**Enjoy, and good luck with your rabbits!**

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# 1.
# Before You Get A Rabbit...

There are some things to know before you get a rabbit at all that I will outline in this chapter. As you read, you should consider your current situation very carefully, as a rabbit is not a pet for everyone - and doing so will make sure it is a pet that is right for you.

## -Things You Should Know-

The first thing you should know is the **physical care** involved with owning a rabbit. Like every animal on Earth, rabbits will poop, wee, and create a mess for you to clean up, considering it's not in the open outdoors. The housing you use for your rabbit *will* get dirty and need to be cleaned regularly for ongoing maintenance to prevent health issues, odors, and infestations.

With that in mind, there will be some levels of physical effort involved. That means you will need to bend, lift, reach, and perform other strenuous movements that could put a strain on your body. Depending on your age and physical health, this might not be an issue at all, but it's something to keep in mind.

Furthermore, if you ever need to chase after your rabbit to retrieve it, you might find yourself running after it (take this from someone with experience), and rabbits aren't slow!

This, and many other forms of physical movement, will be involved with caring for a rabbit. However, you can delight in knowing that it won't be nearly as much as the effort required for a dog or horse, for example! Rabbits are small, and therefore, their mess and requirements are not as significant as some other common pets.

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The other thing to keep in mind is the **costs to keep a rabbit**. Again, like other pets, you will need to consider your financial state before getting a rabbit. The costs will include things like housing, accessories, food, vet visits, health treatments, the rabbit itself, and other potential costs.

If you're struggling financially at the moment, it might be best to wait until you can afford to have a pet like a rabbit. Like I mentioned before, though, the costs will generally be less than that of a dog. But if you can't keep yourself happy in life with your current finances, don't get a pet until you are - because you want the pet to live a happy life, too!

The final thing I want to discuss that you should be aware of is the **myths surrounding rabbit ownership** because there are a lot, and many are simply NOT true!

I will now lay out the common myths of rabbit ownerships and why they aren't true.

### *They Are Easy Pets*

While rabbits might be easier to care for than some other pets, that doesn't make them easy to care for overall. They do require a significant amount of cleaning and exercise to keep them healthy, with lots of fresh food each day. That's something you need to keep in mind!

### *They Don't Need Vet Visits*

Like all pets, rabbits also need their vet visits - not for vaccinations, but for health checks to confirm your rabbit is healthy. Rabbits can acquire different diseases and viruses that might not be so easy for you (as an inexperienced owner) to notice.

### *Rabbits Have A Short Lifespan*

No, rabbits actually *do* require a long-term commitment, contrary to popular belief. Did you know that healthy, indoor rabbits can live anywhere from 7-10 years? This does depend on their breed, as well, but don't expect to get a

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rabbit for a short time.

### *They Are Dirty, Stinky Pets*

Rabbits are much like cats in the sense that they enjoy using a litter box (once trained to do so) to keep their mess tidy, and they also self-groom frequently. The only reason they would ever become stinky and dirty is if YOU haven't cleaned their housing for them. Remember that they aren't in the big open outdoors - their mess is confined to one space that needs to be regularly cleaned. They are very clean pets once litter-trained, spayed/neutered, and once they reach a mature age.

### *They "Only Need Carrots"*

Perhaps the silliest myth of all is that rabbits can live purely off carrots. This is not true and very important for new rabbit owners to understand! Rabbits need a combination of hay, vegetables, and pellets for healthy nutrition.

### *You Can Keep Them Outdoors All The Time*

Rabbits can contract a serious number of diseases that are spread via ticks, fleas, flies, and mosquitoes. It is best to keep them indoors as part of your family and to prevent these serious health issues from occurring (which will also save you money and headaches from vet bills if they do get sick). Let them enjoy the outdoors during the day when you can monitor them for exercising, and bring them back indoors when finished. They will need plenty of space to exercise each day.

### *They Don't Bite or Scratch You*

Wrong, rabbits will defend themselves if necessary. That includes if they are being handled inappropriately or if they aren't very comfortable with you yet, so don't always expect your rabbit not to bite or scratch you once picked up. Familiarize them with you first before attempting a lot of handling. You will also find that once they are comfortable with you, *they* will be the ones coming up to *you* for affection!

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# -Are You Ready For A Pet Rabbit & Is It Right For You?-

With all of these myths busted and things you should know, you should now consider whether you are ready for a pet rabbit and if it is the right pet for you.

Ask yourself if you can keep up with the required maintenance - **do you have enough time** for all of the care factors involved, including exercise, bonding, cleaning, vet visits, purchasing food, etc.? **Do you have enough money to raise a rabbit *correctly***? Many people will get a rabbit on a poor income and struggle to keep them healthy, and this is not ideal!

Would another pet, such as a cat or dog, be a better fit for your personality, interests, and lifestyle? These are all questions you need to ask yourself before you make the decision.

A rabbit isn't the right pet for everyone, but for those who do make a good fit to own one, they are wonderful to raise and make great pets, even for families with children!

That also leads me to my next point. **Have you discussed getting a rabbit with your family?** Talk to your partner and children to get their opinion on the matter, while keeping in mind everything new you have learned already from this book.

# -Preparing For A Pet Rabbit-

Now that you know the prerequisites involved in raising a rabbit, and you know it is right for you, you can start to prepare for your new pet rabbit.

You are already doing a wonderful job of preparing by reading this book, so

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well done! Preparation is key for anything in life, and pet rabbits are no different. You should prepare in a number of ways, including:

- Researching what rabbit breed is right for you (next chapter!)
- Buying the equipment you need for housing, enrichment, etc. online or at your local pet store
- Whether you want to rescue or buy a rabbit (more on this later)
- Setting up the home in a safe manner for your rabbit to live in
- Allocating a budget for your new rabbit - food, housing, etc.
- Ensuring there will be no allergies with getting a rabbit
- Knowing where your local vet is in the area
- Talking to your family about any changes that might occur in your routines - for example, giving the children chores or waking up earlier to clean the rabbit's enclosure before work/school
- And any other preparations or changes you might need to make depending on your lifestyle.

But enough about all of that, you will learn more about this throughout the entire book, so let's dig into the next chapter of raising rabbits - **Choosing A Rabbit!**

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# 2.
# Choosing A Rabbit

You shouldn't go out and buy the first rabbit you see without doing your research, which I'm going to help you with in this chapter of the book. You will learn about gender, breed, size, cost, difficulty, age, personality, and the number of rabbits that will determine which rabbit you get!

## -Gender-

Genders of rabbits aren't significantly important when choosing one - although there are some things you'll want to keep in mind. A male rabbit, also known as a "buck" rabbit, should be neutered to prevent him from spreading his urine everywhere with territorial marking. They might also show signs of territorial aggression, particularly if there is a female around.

Female rabbits, also known as the "doe," also show unspayed behavior, including burrowing and a desire to find a mate. They could also show signs of "false pregnancy" when they start nest building for no legitimate reason (they think they are pregnant when they are not). Spaying your female rabbit can also reduce their risk of uterine cancer significantly.

Apart from those facts, both female and male rabbits are quite affectionate in terms of temperament when they are de-sexed, tamed, socialized, and comfortable with your presence. Males sometimes tend to be more outgoing than females are, but to be quite honest, every rabbit varies with their personality. Like all animals and humans, everyone is distinct!

## -Breed-

There are many unique breeds of rabbits that make the choosing process even more fun, but also confusing. The most common pet rabbit breeds are:

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- Holland Lop
- Mini Lop
- Dwarf Lop
- French Angora Rabbit
- Dutch Rabbit
- Rex Rabbit
- Mini Rex
- Netherland Dwarf Rabbit

"Lop" refers to a rabbit's ears that are long, wide, and "flopped" down, not perked upward. It's a cute feature that many rabbit owners love!

These are the most popular choices for rabbit breeds as pets, but there are still many others. For this book, I'm going to discuss a little more about these common breeds that I recommend depending on your experience level.

**Holland Lop**

This adorable breed has a very long lifespan of about 14 years and weighs only 3-4 pounds. It's an ideal choice for city dwellers due to their small size. They are a great starter pet, and I recommend them for beginners because they are friendly, smart, and are more of a "low" maintenance choice.

**Mini Lop**

The Mini Lop is an extremely popular breed for their loving, social, small, active, and playful traits. They are great with kids, quite easy to care for, and are similar to the Holland Lop in terms of maintenance. It's hard not to fall in love with these cute lil' guys!

**Dwarf Lop**

The Dwarf Lop is very much like the Mini Lop; only their size is larger. While Mini Lops are about 3-5 pounds, Dwarf Lops weigh around 5-7 pounds. They are less suited to children and are better for adults to handle because the Mini Lop prefers more attention.

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### French Angora Rabbit

This beautiful rabbit has a long, exquisite coat that feels very smooth and silky. However, this means that it does require more grooming, and, therefore, more maintenance than some other breeds. If you're happy to keep up with their brushing, then Angoras are a great pet rabbit for everyone.

### Dutch Rabbit

These rabbits do better with older children (10+) and should be supervised during handling. They are typically nice-natured, social, characterful, and energetic with a lot of confidence. If handled and exercised properly (they love being out of their enclosure), they make wonderful pets.

### Rex Rabbit

Docile with short, soft fur, the Rex Rabbit is a gentle and relatively calm breed of rabbit with a good nature. They are quite intelligent and affectionate, with a love for good company. They do well with children and other pets if introduced/handled correctly.

### Mini Rex Rabbit

The Mini Rex is basically a smaller version of the Rex Rabbit. They are 3-5 pounds with the same "rex" coat and friendly personality. However, they can be a little more active than the Rex Rabbit is and have a more compact body shape. The Mini Rex is ideal for beginners and children.

### Netherland Dwarf Rabbit

This adorable rabbit is characterized by its short, perked ears and tiny body, weighing 1-3 pounds. They can be remarkably amusing rabbits with a tendency to be expressive. They are gentle, friendly, cute, cuddly, and occasionally timid. This breed is best for adults and only with children that can be supervised during handling.

Another fun factor to consider is which color you want to get! Many of these breeds come in several coat colors, and while you can't always find the

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perfect one, you'll be happy to know that majority of these breeds can come in white, black, chocolate, grey, ginger, and more, depending on their breed.

## -Size-

I've briefly mentioned the sizes of those common breeds, but what you should consider when choosing the breed/size of the rabbit is essentially what the breed's nature is like, if they have any breed-specific health issues, whether you have children, and how large of a space you can spare.

Choosing a smaller breed, like the Netherland Dwarf or Mini Lop, is best for children because these tend to be more friendly, gentle, and sweet. Larger rabbits are typically much more confident with their behavior, and with their size (some pet rabbit breeds can weigh over 12 pounds!), it's much more important to handle them appropriately without hurting them.

These larger breeds, like the Flemish Giant, Giant Chinchilla, and Giant Angora, are not ideal for children because they likely can't handle them at all. Large rabbit breeds also need more room and a bigger enclosure to accommodate their size comfortably, and there will be more of other costs involved (like more food, water, and substrate).

A great benefit of getting a larger rabbit breed, though, is if you have other pets in the house like larger dogs. They are less likely to harm a larger breed than a dwarf or mini breed.

With this all in mind, you should choose a rabbit size/breed based on your current situation with family, space, and other pets.

## -Difficulty To Care For-

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The common rabbit breeds I have discussed are typically suitable for beginners when keeping all of the given facts in mind (gender, spay/neuter, etc.). You should still consider the difficulty of the rabbit breed you want as a pet as a big determining factor of whether to get that breed or not.

The difficulty to care for comes down to your experience level. If you are quite experienced with rabbit raising/owning, then you should be ok to get any rabbit breed as a pet, provided that you give them the appropriate care that breed needs. For example, keeping up with the grooming requirements of a long-haired rabbit breed versus a short-haired breed.

If you are a beginner, I strongly recommend any of the lop breeds or Netherland Dwarf rabbits as these are quite gentle, friendly, and social - keeping in mind that rabbits each have their own distinct personality. So while one mini lop might be sweet and lovely, another could be totally different (energetic, distant, etc.). However, you can expect most to fall into a specific breed personality category if they are purebred.

As a beginner to rabbit raising and caring, you should only choose a rabbit breed that fits into your experience level. Choosing a rabbit that is not beginner-friendly could result in a lot of conflict between you, the rabbit, and potentially other things like your pets and family. You want to avoid returning the rabbit to where you got it from as this isn't fair on them and will only stress them out more - so make sure the breed is best suited for you!

A good way to do this to meet the rabbit before buying. You can better gauge their personality, traits, and behaviors *before* making your decision.

## -Cost-

You should only get a rabbit that fits within your budget as well as your lifestyle and experience level. Rabbits aren't the most expensive pet you can get (the cost for the rabbit itself is relatively low), but the ongoing costs are

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something you need to keep in mind!

Their food, housing, accessories, substrate, and vet bills can add up significantly. Typically, you can expect to pay anywhere from $20-$40 for a pet rabbit from the pet store, and around $5-$20 from a rescue organization. This will depend greatly on the breed and age of the rabbit.

The younger they are, the more expensive they are, and some breeds like Angora and Netherland Dwarf rabbits will cost significantly more than Mini Lops. Some rare breeds of rabbits can cost around $100+!

For their ongoing costs, it's best to set a weekly budget for them. Rabbits need plenty of fresh food (unlike dog kibble, which can sit in a sealed bag for a while) such as hay and vegetables, so in that regard, they can cost more to feed than a small dog, for example.

The best thing to consider here is YOUR financial situation before choosing any rabbit breed! Once you have a budget set, you can choose a rabbit breed that meets your needs.

## -Age-

If you're a beginner to rabbit raising, the age of your new rabbit should be as young as possible. This is because when a rabbit is young, it's the best time for them to be exposed to new people, as they are more gentle and less defensive. As they grow older and mature, they become more defensive and can easily show aggression if provoked.

Those who are experienced with rabbit raising can likely buy an older rabbit and work on their bond together - but for new people, it's best to opt for a

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young rabbit.

Rabbits can usually be sold from the age of 8 weeks. In fact, in many US states, it is illegal to sell a rabbit under 8 weeks old. The young rabbits you find for sale should be over 8 weeks old.

Rabbit lifespans vary depending on the breed but can live anywhere from 8 to 12 years if cared for properly and if they are in good health. The world record for the oldest rabbit is 18 years, in fact.

That's my advice for you - choose a young rabbit to work on your bond together from their fresh, young age that will allow them to become familiar with you straight away with less of a chance of being aggressive.

If you're experienced, I definitely recommend saving a rabbit from a shelter or adoption center!

## -Personality & Traits-

When choosing your new pet rabbit, you should keep an eye out for their personality and traits to best align with your needs. If you go visit the pet rabbits for sale in the pet store or adoption center, you should stand there and observe them in their hutch for a little while. Doing so will show you the general behavior and traits of each rabbit.

You might notice one is particularly energetic compared to the other, or picking on the other rabbits rudely. You might see a calm, gentle rabbit minding its own business.

Observing them like this can give you a pretty good indication of their traits. Here is a list of things to observe, keeping in mind whether or not you have a family with children, other pets, and some other factors:

- Activity level (how energetic are they?)

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- If they are boisterous (do they seem wildly cheerful?)
- Temperament towards others (how do they act to other animals?)
- Health (does the rabbit look in good health?)
- Behavior (do they show signs of strange behavior? Are they gentle? Timid and scared?)

But don't just observe them visually. Ask a staff member if you can hold and pet some of the rabbits, which will also help show you their nature. Then, you can also ask yourself if the rabbit can be handled without difficulty, if the rabbit enjoys being pet, and if you think it would be ok with children.

## -One, Two, Three...?-

Now that you know about rabbit age, costs, breeds, and other essential information when choosing a rabbit, it's time to decide on *how many* you're going to get!

If you are a first-time rabbit owner, I suggest only a single rabbit, just at least until you get the basics of caring, handling, and their general requirements.

Do keep in mind that rabbits are generally much happier when living in pairs or suitable groups. They can get lonely otherwise (unless you are giving them plenty of attention). They can keep each other company, even when you can't give it to them.

If you want more than one rabbit, it's always easiest if you get them together from a young age, so they can grow together and learn to cooperate with each other. Rabbits under 12 weeks of age are usually happy to be with another rabbit.

When getting two rabbits, it's best to get one neutered male and one spayed female, which usually avoids conflicts like territorial and hormonal aggression.

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So if you are new to it all, start with one and see how you go. Perhaps you can also only afford one or don't want the responsibility of two. In that case, just be sure to give the rabbit plenty of exercise, attention, and mental stimulation, which will ensure they don't get bored and depressed.

If you're experienced and can afford it, you should definitely get two rabbits, or even three, from a young age! In this case, make sure you provide them with plenty of space and suitable housing.

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# 3 Rabbits Housing and Accesories

Your rabbit is going to need somewhere comfortable and secure to live when you bring him/her home. This chapter will be all about their housing, accessories, and setting up their perfect home!

## -What Housing Do I Need For My Pet Rabbit?-

Housing for pet rabbits usually involves large hutches made out of either wood, metal, wire or a combination of the three. These are usually quite expensive, even more so than the rabbit itself!

The housing you will need will depend on your particular rabbit, how many you are going to get, and your house situation. One thing is for certain though - your rabbit NEEDS a hutch to live in, which protects and shelters your rabbit when you can't let them inside or keep an eye on them.

**Wire cages** are a more affordable choice for those on a tight budget. These are typically not as good as other hutches when protecting your rabbit. Rabbits generally prefer wooden hutches, which are cooler during the summer weather.

When it becomes hot, rabbits will need suitable shade where it is cool and comfortable for them. A metal cage left out under the sun will become hot very quickly and could cause your rabbit to struggle and overheat. Note that they are very susceptible to heat stress - they don't sweat or pant like humans or dogs do!

With these facts in mind, if you are getting a wire or metal cage, make sure

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there is plenty of shade for your rabbit to keep cool during summer. Overall, I recommend a **wooden hutch** for the long-term - the only downside to this is that occasionally, your rabbit might enjoy chewing it (we will discuss more about rabbit "chewing" later on), which can make it deteriorate faster, but there are preventative methods for this.

## What To Look For In A Hutch

When buying your first hutch for your new pet rabbit, there are a few things to keep in mind.

The first thing is that the hutch should have two specific areas (connected). This is a **sheltered** and **open** area.

The **open area** should allow light and air to pass through, with (preferably) a mesh barrier to prevent bugs and mosquitoes, which can carry harmful diseases for your rabbit.

The **sheltered area** should block weather elements like wind, rain, harsh sun, and the cold. This is where your rabbit can retreat to for more comfort. You can make it more comfortable for them by adding a substrate like wood shavings or hay.

Ensure that the hutch has a suitable place for water and food additions, too, like a food and water bowl.

Most good hutches will have a **hinged door feature** at the top or side for easy maintenance and cleaning. That's another feature you want to look for because you will be doing *a lot* of cleaning!

To make it easier on yourself, you'll want to lay **newspaper** on the base of the hutch/cage. Then, put the substrate on top, like I mentioned before. This doesn't just give your rabbit more comfort - it also helps collect their droppings and urine.

If you have the hutch or cage outdoors, it's best to keep it off the ground in an **elevated position** to prevent predators from accessing your rabbits. It's also a

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good idea to do this regardless of whether your hutch is indoors/outdoors if you have pets, like dogs and cats, that might pose a threat to your rabbit - particularly if you aren't around to monitor them.

## What Size Hutch To Get

The primary factor to consider when thinking of the size of the hutch to get is the size of your rabbit (or how big your rabbit will be in the future when he/she is at adult size) and how many rabbits you are getting.

The other factor to consider is *how much time* the rabbit will spend in their hutch overall. If you aren't going to get them out very often, you should think about purchasing a larger hutch for their comfort and happiness.

As a general guideline, always opt for a larger hutch or cage if you can. This will help give your new pet rabbits the best life possible.

## Can I Keep My Rabbit Indoors "Without" A Cage?

You should ALWAYS have a hutch or cage for your rabbit. Even if you do plan on having your rabbit outside of its cage as much as possible (which is awesome!), you should still get them their own safe place where they can sleep at night, toilet themselves, and eat their food. Cages also come in handy if you ever need to travel or take them somewhere.

Remember that a rabbit should never be completely confined to a cage. They need to run, exercise, and stretch their legs to avoid weight gain, mental health or behavioral issues, and other physical problems. They have a body made for running and jumping across large areas!

-Great Rabbit Housing Examples-

Here are some photos of great rabbit housing examples and different set-ups to give you some inspiration and ideas for your new pet rabbit.

Keep in mind that some of these hutches will be suited to particular rabbits (or a number of rabbits) and that person's lifestyle or home environment.

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*Wooden construction with a top level, lower level, and open outdoor space with barrier. Allows the rabbit to relax in the sun, rest inside, etc.*

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*Long design with top and lower level. Your rabbit could run length-ways across the base to stretch their legs. Multiple doors for easy access.*

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*A wire cage that can connect with several of the same cage for larger space. Better suited to smaller rabbits that will be out of their cage more frequently. Easy to assemble. NO sheltered area (keep in mind - you might have to add your own or consider the placement).*

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*Another cage suited to smaller rabbits or rabbits that will be out of their cage* ***frequently****. Trolley design makes it easy to access supplies beneath. Easy to assemble. NO sheltered area (keep in mind - you might have to add your own or consider the placement).*

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*A very large hutch design with plenty of space on the lower level and a sheltered top level accessible via the ladder.*

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A triangular rabbit hutch with several doors for access and a sheltered area. Great for outdoors. You can easily let the rabbit exit for playtime/exercise via the door.

In addition to these good examples of hutches, did you ever consider *making your own hutch?* If you have good building skills, you can try to make your very own wooden or wire hutch - just keep in mind the tips I've shared in this book when you make one.

# -Adding Accessories To The Cage-

Now that you've chosen or planned your rabbit hutch, it's time to consider what accessories you want to add. Yes, rabbits have some fun and practical accessories, too - just like dogs and cats!

But where do you start? Well, here is a list of accessories you can get started with, with some more optional than others

**Food/Water Bowls**

This is a must. While you can scatter hay and other food around their enclosure, it's best to place their rabbit pellets in a food bowl to keep the mess in one place - although you will still find your rabbit digging through the bowl! This is quite cute and hilarious to watch, actually.

A water bowl can be a simple, open bowl, but you might find this gets dirty very quickly (especially with the substrate surrounding the enclosure). Hay, food, wood shavings, or anything else nearby will likely end up in their water bowl after you refill it. Rabbits love hopping around and digging. During these behaviors, they will flick things into the bowl!

With that in mind, you can optionally get a water bottle, which has a dripper design that releases water when licked. If you are getting a bottle, I suggest a glass one as the plastic versions tend to leak in my experience - but the glass ones can be more expensive. Rabbits also won't chew through the glass versions!

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When choosing food/water bowls, opt for heavy designs like ceramic food bowls that won't easily fall, tip, or flip over.

### Hay Feeder/Rack

This is a shelf-style attachment for the cage/hutch that holds bunches of hay that your rabbit can chew on at their own pace. It keeps it neater and tidier instead of dispersing it throughout the entire cage.

### Litter Tray

It's always best to get your new rabbit familiar with a litter tray as soon as you start your journey together. This helps reduce the level of cleaning required significantly as your rabbit learns to contain his/her mess to just one area. There are both square/rectangle or "corner" shaped litter trays to fit in with your style of hutch.

### Salt/Mineral Licks

These are supplement "licks" that attach to the cage (positioned near their water) for your rabbit to lick when they desire. You can get salt licks that help your rabbit feel enriched, prevent boredom, and help wear down their teeth to avoid over-growth. If your rabbit is on a healthy, balanced diet, they don't *need* salt licks, but they are a great form of mental stimulation.

### Beds & Caves

If you trust your bunny not to chew it up, you can give your rabbit a bed to sleep in as they please. These are typically very small and cushioned that can give them extra comfort over hay or other bedding. If your hutch doesn't have any shelter, also consider adding "caves" for some privacy.

### Play Toys

Once you've got the essentials underway, don't forget about some fun play toys for your pet rabbit! This could include play tunnels (which often help the rabbit feel like they are burrowing through the ground), hay toys, interactive

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wobbly toys with treats, wood chew toys (which are also crucial for their teeth), and other creative toys to keep them enriched and stimulated - but I'll go into more detail about Rabbit Enrichment in chapter 5.

Not all of these accessories are absolute "must-haves" at first. The most important and essential accessories are the food/water bowls and shelter. The rest, including toys and tunnels, can be purchased afterward.

That covers the housing and accessories for rabbits! In the next chapter I will explain the food and feeding of your rabbit.

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# 4 Feeding Your Rabbit (Rabbit Diet/Nutrition)

When it comes to feeding your pet rabbit, it's a little more complicated than feeding a dog some kibble. Rabbits have a more complex diet that is crucial to their survival, health, and happiness. In this chapter, you will learn what to feed your rabbit, what it needs to include (essentials), and all about treating your rabbit.

## -What Should I Feed My Rabbit?-

In the wild, rabbits eat a lot of grass, grazing on it for around 6-8 hours a day. It's important to note that the rabbit's body is designed to adapt to this particular diet, and as such, you need to ensure you provide them with a diet that corresponds to it.

With that in mind, you should make sure you are feeding a constant supply of **grass** or **grass hay** to pet rabbits. This encourages the same "prolonged" period of chewing as they would experience in the wild, which is also crucial to keeping their teeth from over-growing. Yes, a rabbit's teeth continuously

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grow!

Furthermore, grass and hay have very high fiber contents, which is also important for the healthy digestion of a rabbit. If their fiber intake is too low, they might get digestive problems that can result in a very sick rabbit.

To help keep your rabbit stimulated, you can also scatter this grass/hay around their enclosure or backyard where your rabbit can forage for it as they would in the wild.

The fresh grass and grass hay should make up a total of about **80% of their diet**. The hays you can use include **Timothy**, **Oaten**, **Meadow**, and **Ryegrass** hays. One thing you should note is not to feed your rabbit "Lucerne" (alfalfa) or Clover hays as part of their general diet as these are too high in calcium and protein, thus leading to other health issues.

Lucerne and Clover hay can be fed only occasionally, in small amounts, as a treat.

For **10-20%** of their diet, you should be feeding them **fresh vegetables** and **leafy greens**, which might have surprised you! Rabbits only need primarily grass/hay in their diet - make sure you don't overdo it with the vegetables and greens.

Some good examples of vegetables and greens you can feed your pet rabbit are:

- Bok choy
- Spinach leaves
- Broccoli
- Celery
- Carrot tops
- Dark leaf lettuce varieties like parsley and basil,
- Brussel sprouts

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- Endive

To gauge how much to feed, you should be feeding approximately **two packed full cups** of leafy greens and vegetables **per 2.2lbs** of body weight **each day**.

While **pellets** aren't absolutely necessary if your rabbit is on a balanced hay and vegetable diet, you can include them as a supplement if you'd like. Make sure they are for "pet rabbits" and not for "commercially farmed rabbits."

If giving pellets, ensure they are high in fiber, low in protein, and don't overfeed them as this can also cause obesity and other health issues. Steer clear of pellets that have dried corn and other treat additives mixed in to avoid digestive problems in your pet rabbit. Opt for no more than 1/8th of a cup (or 0.9 ounces) of pellets each day per 2.2 pounds of bodyweight.

Many pet rabbit owners will give their rabbits a cereal or grain "muesli" mix, and while this won't harm them immediately, it's not recommended. Doing so over time can cause your rabbit to become a fussy eater when trying to feed them healthy greens and vegetables. Feeding too much can, therefore, lead to nutritional imbalances.

Finally, you should be giving your rabbit **plenty of fresh water each day**. Lapping from a dish is more of a natural method for rabbits over bottled versions and may encourage better water intake.

### -What Does Their Diet Need To Include? (Minerals, etc.)-

All animals, including rabbits, require these six essentials:

- Fats
- Carbohydrates
- Proteins

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- Water
- Minerals
- Vitamins

**Fats**

Rabbits don't have high requirements for fats. Their diet should typically include around 3% fat. You should limit the amount of fat present in your rabbit's diet to avoid obesity and other health issues caused by increased fat intake.

**Carbohydrates**

This is the primary component of plants. The types of carbohydrates in these include fiber, starches, and sugars. Rabbits require a significant amount of fiber in their diet for optimal health. This will prevent gastrointestinal disease while also helping the rabbit produce bacteria cells. Include at least 14% of fiber in your rabbit's diet (this might be more depending on the age of your rabbit).

**Proteins**

When compared to humans, rabbits use lower quality proteins. Rabbits will practice "cecotrophy," which means the rabbit will consume specific stools (feces) known as "cecotropes" that are rich in protein and bacteria cells to meet their nutritional needs. It's one of the common behaviors of rabbits that I will discuss in chapter 7.

**Water**

Water comprises over 50% of a rabbit's body mass. It is a critical nutrient that must not be neglected. Depending on the environmental and physical conditions of a rabbit, their water intake might vary. However, you should always maintain an unlimited supply of water for your rabbit to prevent dehydration and gastrointestinal stasis. While their diet does provide some

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water, it's important to keep a fresh supply readily available for them at all times. As a guide, a typical rabbit can consume about 8 teaspoons of water per pound of body weight. They have a very high water intake!

### Minerals

All animals need approximately 22 different minerals in their diet, which each has different roles/functions. In particular, calcium and phosphorus are very important minerals for your rabbit's skeletal structure. If you ever notice a white substance in your rabbit's urine, this is excess calcium and could potentially indicate too much calcium in your rabbit's diet (if left for too long, this can lead to kidney damage and urinary stones). An appropriate diet should be giving your rabbit sufficient minerals, including calcium and phosphorus.

### Vitamins

Rabbits also require several different vitamins, including A, B, C, D, E, and K. With a good quality diet, you shouldn't need to worry about supplementing your rabbit with separate vitamins. Ensuring an appropriate diet will prevent vitamin deficiencies, although if you feel you do need to supplement vitamins, I recommend talking to your vet first.

## -Giving Treats To Your Rabbit-

You can give your rabbits treats in moderation and in small amounts. A good rule of thumb for this is 1 tablespoon of treats per rabbit per day (depending on the size and activity level of your rabbit, this could be more or less).

Treats can include most fruits (strawberries, raspberries, etc.), capsicum, root vegetables like sweet potato and carrots, and I typically recommend avoiding a lot of "rabbit" treat bags you can buy from stores as these are usually too unhealthy. Opt for only natural and fresh ingredients that are safe for your rabbit to ingest. All fruits and vegetables should be organic and thoroughly washed to rid them of harmful pesticides.

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As a side note - and contrary to popular belief - you should *never* feed your rabbit too much carrot as this can lead to obesity.

Never feed your rabbit human treats, like candy, chocolate, biscuits, and other sweets. **You should also *never* feed your rabbit the following:**

- Corn
- Iceberg lettuce (contains harmful lactucarium)
- Silverbeet
- Avocado
- Breakfast cereals
- Beans
- Toxic garden plants
- Rolled oats
- Bread
- Pasta
- Cat/dog food
- Potato
- Rhubarb
- Meat
- Onions, garlic, shallots, chives
- Peanut butter

Apart from that, try to keep your rabbit's diet consistent. Avoid making any sudden changes to their diet to avoid digestive upset. If necessary, introduce new foods gradually over the course of 2-3 weeks.

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# 5.
# Rabbit Enrichment

Without enrichment, all animals - including humans - would bore themselves to death! Rabbits are no exception and require appropriate forms of enrichment to keep them mentally stimulated and happy.

### -Why Is Enrichment Important?-

The purpose of "enrichment" is to "enrich" your rabbit's life.

Enrichment is so important because, without it, rabbits would have no mental stimulation. Mental stimulation includes four main things:

- **Education** - your rabbit *learns* to do new things
- **Occupation** - your rabbit has *a job to do* to achieve something
- **Socialization** - your rabbit engages in *social activity* with other rabbits (replicating the same interactions in the wild)
- **Leisure** - your rabbit does something in his/her free time (when not eating, for example), which could include running in and out of

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tunnels.

Mental activity increases blood flow, oxygen, and even nutrients to the brain, therefore promoting optimal health. It can also promote BDNF - **brain-derived neurotrophic growth factor**, which promotes the survival of nerve cells (neurons).

So yes, enrichment is crucial to the happiness and health of your pet rabbit and needs to be included in their daily routines.

## -What Types Of Enrichment Should You Give Your Pet Rabbit?-

It's always great to replicate the same forms of enrichment your rabbit would encounter in the wild to let them experience appropriate stimulation.

Rabbits are active, social, and intelligent animals. Without enrichment, they would suffer significantly - both mentally and physically. They will become bored,

For the previously mentioned forms of stimulation - education, occupation, socialization, and leisure - you can do something for each of them.

Here are some great examples.

**Education:**

- You can set up a **puzzle feeder** for your rabbit with treats, letting them learn how to extract the food
- Set up a **complex tunnel system** and have your rabbit learn and determine which way to go to particular areas
- You can **train your rabbit** to perform various things, like how to use

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a litter box, fetch something, or even to jump.

**Occupation:**

- **Hide your rabbit's food** around the enclosure, such as underneath hay and in hiding spots, to encourage them to "forage" as a job for their food
- Create an **obstacle course** for your rabbit to reach treats.

**Socialization**:

- Adding another rabbit to the family (see the end of Chapter 2 for more information)
- Letting your rabbits engage in proper socialization with each other (let them run, play, groom each other, etc.)
- Bond personally with your rabbit with petting and playing

**Leisure**:

- Add **safe toys** to the enclosure that your rabbit can interact with
- Include **tunnels** for your rabbits
- A **large enclosure** with enough space for your rabbit to engage in typical behaviors like hopping, jumping, stretching their legs, rearing up on their hind legs, and running.
- Make a **climbing apparatus** - rabbits do enjoy being up high and might find themselves enjoying the climb.

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- Make a **digging box -** replicate the feeling of your rabbit burrowing in the wild and fill a box with digging substrate like litter or rabbit mulch (don't use sand).
- Add some **wooden logs and rocks** in the yard for playtime to help your rabbit embrace their wild, instinctive behavior and environment. This makes an excellent obstacle course!

Without enrichment, your rabbit will suffer from serious mental/behavioral and physical issues. Take some ideas from above and implement them into your rabbit's routine to keep their brain active and their mind happy!

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# 6.
# Rabbit Health

A rabbit's health is something you will have to monitor and keep optimal throughout their entire life to prevent illness and keep them happy. Now that you know what their diet needs to consists of, their housing, and some other basic care fundamentals, it's time to discuss everything about their health.

### -How To Monitor Their Health & Perform A Health Check-

Monitoring a rabbit's health is based on the signs that they show you, which comes in many different forms. When monitoring them, you should take note of the following:

- **Feces** & **urine** (color, frequency, etc.)

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- **Behavior** (alert, timid, calm, etc.)
- **Appetite** (hungry, not hungry, etc.)
- **Water intake**
- **Energy levels** (energetic, lethargic, etc.)
- **Interest in activities** (playing, running, jumping)
- **Visual** & **auditory responses**
- **Coat** & **skin condition**
- **Ears**, **teeth**, & **nails condition**

These are all very important health signs you should always monitor with your rabbit. Keeping a watchful eye on what is *normal* behavior for your rabbit will help you become aware of any changes that could indicate a health issue.

**How To Perform A Health Check**

To perform a physical health check on your rabbit, you should first make sure that your rabbit isn't already injured, sick, or pregnant, which can cause your rabbit to dislike being touched or picked up. Be cautious if this is the case.

Pick up your rabbit (or if they are more comfortable on a surface, place them on a table where you can inspect them more closely). Then, start running your hands through their coat gently and take note of any abnormalities like lumps, insects, and wounds. Also, be aware of any coat changes, fur loss, skin issues, their breathing, teeth overgrowth, ear condition (swollen? Itchy? Red?), sore hocks, and infestations.

This is the basic routine of a health check. You are essentially scanning for anything different or unusual that might tell you your rabbit is hurt or sick. If

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you notice anything strange but aren't particularly concerned about it, you can still note it down and ask your vet the next time you go for a check-up.

## -Possible Symptoms of Poor Health-

To keep on the lookout for any disease or illness in your rabbit, here are some of the possible symptoms that can indicate poor health:

### Overgrown Teeth

Rabbit teeth continually grow and require constant chewing to grind them down to an appropriate length. If your rabbit's teeth are overgrown, this can lead to intense pain for your rabbit, as well as discomfort and perhaps even weight loss (your rabbit might stop eating).

### Coat/Skin Changes

If your rabbit's coat becomes dull, loses patches of fur, appears dirty and spotted with insects, or their skin is different in any way, this might be a possible symptom of anything from malnutrition to Myxomatosis. Skin ailments can also be caused by inadequate hutch cleaning and soiled bedding.

### Not Eating/Drinking

If your rabbit is eating or drinking, this is a huge cause for concern, especially if they don't eat/drink all day. If a rabbit goes too long without eating, a lot of gas can build up inside their intestines and cause more issues. Decreased water intake and/or appetite can indicate something like malnutrition, Calicivirus, or a number of other health issues. You should contact your vet if your rabbit doesn't eat all day, as this is a life-threatening situation for them.

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## Lethargy

When an animal is lethargic, it means they are sluggish, weary, and show signs of diminished energy and motivation. Rabbits that are lethargic can sometimes be mistaken for tired after exercise, for example. There is usually a difference noticed when this behavior lasts longer than usual. Also, sometimes older rabbits are less active, which is something to keep in mind too.

## Itching

If your rabbit seems to constantly be itching himself/herself, it could indicate fleas (yes, rabbits can also get fleas, just like dogs and cats). It could also indicate "pruritus," which can be caused by the rabbit's dry skin, allergies, infections, ear parasites, or their fur. Contact your vet if your rabbit persists with severe itching and scratching.

## Strange Behavior

If you notice any signs of strange, unusual behavior in your rabbit, it's always best to call your vet just to be safe - especially if this behavior leads to other issues like decreased appetite and lethargy. The weird behavior could be anything like falling over continuously or unsteady on their legs (swaying). They might show false-pregnancy behavior if not spayed, for example, and start building a nest in their hutch. All of these strange behavioral signs are best resolved by calling your vet to clarify.

## Feces/Urine

If you notice discolored feces or urine, this may or may not be a cause for concern, but again, it's always best to check with your vet. You should also take note of the frequency that your rabbit defecates and urinates, just to make sure that everything is passing through their digestive tract correctly, and keep an eye out for loose stools (and diarrhea).

## Ears, Eyes, Nails, Feet

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If their ears become red and swollen, nails are overgrown, or their eyes appear dry, these could be signs of a health issue. For example, Myxomatosis sometimes causes sore, dry eyes, and swollen ears. Nails should be kept at an appropriate length, and their enclosure needs to have substrate cushioning to avoid your rabbit from getting "sore hocks," otherwise known as pressure sores.

## -Common Rabbit Diseases & Illnesses-

Contrary to popular belief that rabbits are easy and "always healthy" pets, rabbits are susceptible to a variety of diseases and illnesses that you can help prevent if you understand them properly and how they occur.

### Myxomatosis

This is one of the biggest rabbit killers. It is a disease spread via mosquitoes and is usually fatal. It can cause dry eyes/nose, swollen ears, swollen genitalia, and inability to eat or drink. There is no vaccination available for Myxomatosis, and as such, you need to be extremely careful with preventative cautions. You can do this by ensuring your rabbit's enclosure is mosquito-proof with good ventilation (use some mosquito netting, for example)

### Calicivirus

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Spread directly from infected rabbits and indirectly with contaminated areas or insects, Calicivirus can cause a very quick death if not prevented. The symptoms can include fever, lethargy, restlessness, and poor appetite. Fortunately, there is a yearly vaccination for this virus. You can also help prevent it by keeping your rabbit indoors with an insect-proof hutch and ensuring the yard is rabbit-proofed.

### "Snuffles"

This is also known as "Pasteurellosis" and is a bacteria that affects your rabbit's eyes and nose, hence the name "snuffles." It can cause discharge, sneezing, redness, and squinting of the eyes. It can also affect their ears, result in uterine infections, and cause abscesses. Get them to the vet as soon as possible.

### Overgrown Teeth

I mentioned this just before, but I'll mention it again because it is a very popular issue for pet rabbits. It's typically caused by an inadequate diet, which should include grass, grass, hay, and wood blocks for them to chew and wear down their teeth.

### Hairballs

Rabbits, like cats, can also get hairballs because they also self groom. However, hairballs are a danger to rabbits because, unlike cats, they cannot "vomit." The hair *must* pass through their stomach, and if it doesn't, it can cause an obstruction.

Any rabbit that is not eating and is lethargic *could* have hairballs. The best way to prevent this is by including enough fiber in their diet and preventing "gut stasis" (the digestive system slows down or stops completely). If your rabbit is long-haired, also make sure you are brushing them regularly.

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### Malnutrition

If your rabbit isn't getting the correct dietary requirements, this can also lead to malnourishment, and thus a range of other health issues that affect their digestion, urination, immune system, and more. Please refer to Chapter 4 for more information on a Rabbit's Diet and Nutrition.

### Flystrike

Rabbits can get flystrike when maggots are laid on the rabbit's fur/skin, and they burrow into the rabbit. It's often fatal, and you can prevent it the same way you prevent some of the other diseases - by insect-proofing the rabbit hutch.

### Fleas

There are safe products you can use on rabbits to prevent fleas, similar to dogs and cats. Fleas will cause your rabbit to itch a lot and can even cause a problem in the house if they are let inside. Always monitor your rabbit's health for fleas!

### Respiratory Infections

Did you know that rabbits can also get pneumonia? Rabbits can get respiratory infections similar to humans and their "common cold," too. This is usually a result of poor, inadequate living conditions and can be easily prevented with proper care.

### Uterine Tumors

If a female rabbit isn't de-sexed, they can develop uterine tumors, which cause aggressive behavior, lethargy, mammary gland cysts, and other symptoms. Spay them early, at about 4-6 months old, to prevent this.

### Abscesses

Skin abscesses are more common in male rabbits that have fought each other. These can reach large, abnormal sizes right before they burst. It's important to seek vet assistance with skin abscesses as well as other skin irritations.

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If you notice any of these health signs, do not delay and talk with your vet to help prevent discomfort, pain, and fatality in your rabbit. If you are concerned about any other relevant health issues for your pet rabbit, I strongly recommend discussing them with your local veterinarian to ease your worries and to help you prevent health issues as much as possible.

## -Helping Your Rabbit Live An Optimal Life-

There are a few other things you can do to help your rabbit live a long, happy, optimal life. These are preventative measures and are not a guarantee that your rabbit won't contract disease or illness, but can help avoid so.

### De-Sexing

Spaying your female rabbit or neutering your male rabbit will significantly reduce their risk for some illnesses and behavioral issues. It's a lot fairer on the rabbit (and you) to get your rabbit spayed/neutered before these issues present themselves, which can also save you a lot of money, time, and headaches in the future. Ultimately, both you and your rabbit will be happier with this process out of the way early.

### Vet Check-Ups

Don't neglect your regular vet check-ups and vaccinations for your rabbit.

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The vaccinations will help prevent illness and letting your vet give your rabbit a thorough examination could tell you something is wrong when you initially assumed everything was OK. Sometimes, it's difficult for an owner to tell if their rabbit is suffering from a health issue until they are examined by a professional or someone different than yourself.

## Rabbit-Proofing & Insect-Proofing

When you rabbit-proof your home and their hutch, you are doing a lot to save your rabbit from potential fatalities and injury. Their hutch should have insect mesh surrounding it, particularly at night, so that insects like flies and mosquitoes can't enter to harm or transmit diseases to your rabbit. You could try a topical **insect-biting repellent** on your rabbit, although it's best to chat with your vet about this first (in regards to dosage and suitable brands). **Citronella oil** is also used as a popular preventative method on hutches against insects. Your home should be rabbit-proofed to avoid **electrocution** (rabbits love chewing on things, so put away all wires and other potentially dangerous objects like knives and harmful materials) and the ingestion of toxic substances.

## Keeping Clean

Make sure you wash your hands with warm, soapy water when handling rabbits (before and after). You should also make sure you keep on top of their hutch cleaning schedule. If their hutch becomes overly dirty, this becomes a nasty environment for bacteria to grow, which you don't want!

## Prevent Wild Rabbit Interaction

While I'm sure you won't be letting your pet rabbit interact directly with wild rabbits, I am including it here just in case. Prevent direct, as well as indirect, contact between your domestic rabbit and wild rabbits at all costs. This also includes feeding your rabbit cut grass that might have been touched and contaminated by wild rabbits.

## Isolation

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If your rabbit ever does become sick, ill, or injured in any way, make sure you isolate them immediately from your other pets and rabbits to prevent contaminating them (and other surfaces further). Maintain a very clean schedule throughout this process, too.

At the first sign of disease or injury, check with your vet immediately and never delay!

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# 7.
# Rabbit Behavior

E very animal acts in a specific way that distinguishes them from different animals. Dogs bark, howl, and have complex body language. Cats meow, hiss, and show more feline-like behavior. Rabbits are very different from both of them and come with their own set of behavioral tendencies!

## -What Typical Behaviors Should I Be Aware Of?-

It's important to remember again that rabbits each have their own distinct personalities, so while they might appear lively and energetic, another could be lazy and laid-back.

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There are some typical behaviors to be aware of, though, that are seen throughout all rabbits. These shouldn't worry you, although they definitely might surprise you at first!

### Coprophagia

Before this word and behavior scares you off, keep in mind that rabbits *need* to do this to live. Coprophagia is the process of eating feces. Yep, pretty gross, right? Well, rabbits do this for a very good reason. It's a normal and healthy part of their diet, as well as their behavior.

In addition to a rabbit's regular poop, they also produce a special poop they defecate at nighttime, known as "cecotropes." These are a specific type of feces that are softer, stickier, and quickly consumed by the rabbit once it leaves their body. In that regard, you probably won't see them doing this if you're in bed asleep, but you might wake up to find poop in their food bowl (which is where they often like to do it).

The cecotropes are produced in the rabbit's "cecum," a part of their intestinal tract. It's the fermentation of a rabbit's ingested food. If your rabbit is ill, you might find these cecotropes on your rabbit's fur or in their cage.

These cecotropes are rich with essential nutrients the rabbit needs to ingest to live. They are packed with a higher level of protein and vitamins than their regular feces, so it's important for a rabbit to eat them for optimal health.

### Regular Chewing

The teeth of a rabbit constantly grow, unlike other common pets, and if left to grow without anything to wear them down, they can develop into a serious problem for your rabbit - including pain when chewing (and your rabbit might stop eating altogether). With this in mind, rabbits chew *a lot.* If your rabbit isn't getting enough hay in their diet, they will likely resort to chewing other things like your household items and their own hutch (although this can also indicate **boredom**).

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Your rabbit will love to munch on a lot of food to keep their teeth at an appropriate length, but it's also ideal to give them wooden chews just in case. These can be left in their hutch, and they can chew on them when bored or feeling the urge to trim their teeth down.

### Grinding Teeth

A rabbit lightly grinding their teeth can display happiness (such as when you are stroking them). However, if it's a heavier grind, it might indicate pain or discomfort.

### Sudden Bursts of Energy (Acrobatics)

Rabbits, like any other animal who wants to play, will experience moments of playfulness where they show sudden bursts of energy. In these situations, you might find your rabbit running and hopping around frantically, twisting their body mid-air, almost as if something has spooked them. Don't be too alarmed by this - they are probably just stretching their legs and getting a workout in! With this in mind, though, try not to scare or spook your rabbit with loud noises too much - they are a prey animal and don't respond well to this, plus it could hurt the bond between you two.

### Ear Flicking

A rabbit flicking around its ears is usually an invitation to play but could also mean the rabbit has itchy, uncomfortable, or painful ears.

### Thumping

It's little wonder why the name "Thumper" was given to the rabbit from the famous movie "Bambi." Rabbits will thump their hind foot on the ground, typically as a warning to other rabbits. They often do this if they feel in danger, but unneutered males will also do it to convey their urge to mate. Any rabbit that is de-sexed might thump to show their annoyance, which is yet another reason why it's a good idea to de-sex them.

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### Grooming

This behavior is comparable to cats. Rabbits will self-groom quite frequently, and this isn't a concern. In fact, if you have several rabbits that are well-bonded with each other, you might often find them grooming each other to display affection. Your rabbit might even groom you by licking your hands!

### "Chinning"

A rabbit will show this "chinning" behavior as a way to mark a surface with their scent. They rub the underside of their chin against something, like their hutch or even you.

### Head Flat on Ground

Don't get too worried if your rabbit does this. It's a typical display of submissive behavior or a request to get you (or another rabbit) to groom and stroke them.

### Lying On Their Side/Back

Your rabbit is probably very relaxed, happy, and content, either sleeping or resting.

### Standing Up

If a rabbit stands up on its hind legs, they are probably trying to get a better perspective of their surroundings. He/she could also be trying to get your attention or reach for food!

### Growling, Honking, Grunting

Honking and grunting are vocalizations that indicate a want to mate, even after spaying/neutering your rabbit. Growling is something a female rabbit might do when you interfere with her space, but she typically won't bite you.

### Ear Positioning

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Rabbits will position their ears differently according to the situation. If they are curious, their ears are probably forward and alert. If they are straight up, they are likely alarmed, trying to focus their hearing. If they are folded back, your rabbit could be frightened.

### Circling or Nudging

If a rabbit starts circling you at the feet or another rabbit, this is sometimes a display of wanting to mate or get your/their attention. A rabbit will nudge you as a way to get your attention, too.

### Mounting

Rabbits often mount other rabbits (or sometimes even your foot) to display dominance or an urge to mate.

## -What To Do If Your Rabbit is Acting Strange/Peculiar-

If there are different, unusual behaviors to those mentioned above, it may or may not indicate a health issue, but to be safe, you should contact your vet.

Sudden behavioral changes could be anything like the following:

- Increased/decreased appetite
- Lethargy
- Confusion
- Increased/decreased water intake
- Increased grooming
- Limping
- Screaming (a sign of extreme pain or fear)
- Aggression
- Panting (too hot, ill, or overweight)

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- Fur pulling (false pregnancy)
- On high alert (alarmed for no particular reason)
- More timid or skittish than usual

If your rabbit is acting strange or peculiar, keep a watchful eye on them to see if the behavior subsides or persists. You could also take a video or photo of it to show your vet if necessary.

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# 8.
# Raising Rabbits For Business

Whether it's for their fur, meat, or to sell them as pets, raising rabbits for business can be challenging and complicated if you aren't experienced. I don't recommend this at all if you are completely new to rabbit ownership, but you will learn what you need to know before starting, how to get started, and the pros and cons of this business field. This chapter will be a short summary of these points.

## -What You Need To Know Before Raising Rabbits For Business-

The first thing you need to remember is to treat it as a business - *professionally*. Many people go into the animal production business and don't take it seriously, failing to keep up a good level of hygiene and proper care requirements to meet the minimum standards.

So that does mean you will be spending a lot of time trying to make it work. Animal care and production can take up a significant amount of time, so instead of being more of a side hustle or hobby, it becomes an important business with customers that depend on you (again depending on the business field you choose to go in to).

The 4 main things you'll need to know before raising rabbits for business are:

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1. **Costs** - setting up a business requires some start-up money (hutch, bowls, enrichment, employees) and ongoing payments for things like food, housing, licenses, and more.

2. **Planning** - you need to plan a lot before getting into the business, such as figuring out where enclosures will go and how you will best adhere to environmental/animal welfare regulations. These can vary based on location, so this will also have to be researched.

3. **Time** - prepare to spend a lot of time on this business and don't start it unless you have the time to work on it properly and professionally. Time will include things like cleaning, health-checking and monitoring the rabbits, feeding, preparing for the harvesting of fur/meat, negotiating with pet stores or other customers, other labor work, etc.

4. **Management** - being the owner of the business, you'll need some good management skills to keep things running smoothly, whether it's a small or large business. This could include managing employees, tasks, schedules, marketing/sales, and more.

Animal businesses are not for those who aren't physical. It's a tough job and will require very hands-on work to get things done efficiently, so also consider your age and physical health.

# -How To Get Started-

To get started with raising rabbits for business, you first need to **decide on what business** you are getting into. These could include:

- Rabbit meat

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- Rabbit fur or "fiber"
- Selling rabbits as pets
- A combination of these

**Next**, you're going to need to **consider *which* rabbit breed** you want to focus on. For example, if you want to produce **rabbit meat**, then choose a breed that is best known for its meat-production qualities. If you are selling rabbits as **pets**, then perhaps you will focus on only one breed like the Mini Lop or maybe several.

For **rabbit fur**, different breeds have different coat types - like the Rex or Angora. Again, this could be a combination of breeds, depending on your business goals.

You'll need to do your homework and research on this to determine the best breeds for your needs!

Following this comes the previously mentioned "4 stages" of costs, planning, time, and management, so I'd suggest sitting down with your laptop or notebook to start making some plans for the business and how you can execute it.

When raising rabbits for business, the potential is definitely there to make a decent profit, but there will be a lot of work involved, which leads me to my next point...

# -The Pros & Cons of Raising Rabbits For Business-

Like all businesses and hobbies, there are pros and cons to raising rabbits for business, too. It's important to read and understand these pros and cons before getting yourself too heavily involved in the business.

## Pros

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- Can be highly profitable
- Reproduction and growth rate is quick & can therefore easily produce a profit (female rabbits can birth 2-8 kids each time)
- Require minimal space compared to other production animals like cows and sheep
- Can start off as a small side hustle and grow it as much as you want
- Rabbits are quiet and not very demanding animals
- Costs to feed rabbits in bulk is less than other livestock animals
- Overall set up and production costs are less than other livestock
- People love rabbit fiber - it's usually in consistently high demand
- The initial investment is low
- Their manure can be used as high-quality fertilizers by farmers (another way to make money off them or use it on your own garden)

**Cons**

- Takes up a lot of time, energy, and space
- Finding certain rabbit breeds that make a good profit can sometimes be difficult
- Can get messy very quickly (lots of manure, and fur if you are raising fiber rabbits)
- If one gets sick (with Snuffles, Mange, or Myxamotosis, for example), then it can spread very quickly to the others and could cause a very quick loss of production
- They are highly susceptible to diseases from mosquitoes & some other insects and can be easily killed by other predators around like dogs or foxes depending on the enclosure set up
- Not all people eat rabbit meat, and it isn't the most popular source of protein when compared to beef or chicken, for example (could be difficult finding customers)

These are the major pros and cons involved in raising rabbits for business.

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# 9.
# Where Can I Buy Pet Rabbits?

OK, so we've covered a lot of good information so far for the care, behavior, health, and even the *business* of rabbit raising. What's next?

Finding where to buy your pet rabbit, of course! There are three main options you should consider - a shelter/rescue organization, pet store, or breeder. I'll go over each of them.

## -Adopting From A Shelter or Rescue -

The best thing you can do is save a life in a world where there is a lot of

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overpopulation - not just in humans, but for dogs, cats, rabbits, and any other animal that will be euthanized if it doesn't find a home.

There are usually many shelters or rescue organizations around the have rabbits up for adoption as well as other animals. If you can find a rabbit to rescue, then I strongly urge you to do so! Start here, and if you can't find that rabbit that is perfect for you, then move onto the other options.

When adopting from the shelter or rescue, you aren't only helping the rabbit but also the shelter in creating space for new animals that need a home. Some shelters will allow free adoption, while others might request a fee to help keep things running for them (as well as the transfer of ownership details).

## -Pet Stores -

A pet store is a good place for a new, inexperienced rabbit owner to go to get some good information in addition to a young pet rabbit. Here, the staff is usually pretty experienced with how to care for a rabbit, and they will normally have everything you need to buy there - like a hutch, food, and enrichment.

However, sometimes Pet Stores can be quite expensive, so if you are on a tight budget, it might be best to either visit a shelter or breeder directly and get your own supplies elsewhere.

But if you can afford it, getting a rabbit from a pet store is totally fine. You can ask as many questions as you'd like to the staff who should be happy to help inform you on the best care practices as well as some tips to ensure everything goes smoothly.

A lot of Pet Stores will have Mini Lops and Netherland Dwarf Rabbits for sale, as these are usually the most popular breeds for new owners and families. If they don't have a particular breed you want, you can always ask if they know a breeder or if they can get one ordered in (some can also put you on a waiting list).

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# -Breeders -

If you want to visit a breeder directly to purchase your new pet rabbit, do so with *caution.* I urge this because a lot of breeders out there are either inexperienced, poor quality, or they don't appropriately treat their animals.

Do your research and ask around for a *reputable* rabbit breeder to find one that is a good match for your needs. Don't be afraid to go visit their home first and inspect what the conditions are like for the rabbits (and definitely report them if necessary!) *before* you make any payments or commitments.

The enclosures should be quite **clean,** with **plenty of room** for rabbits to feel **happy and healthy**. The opposite of this could indicate unhealthy rabbits, and that's not what you want in a new pet rabbit!

Good breeders will also give you some useful information if you are inexperienced.

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# 10.
# What A Rabbit's First Day/Week Should Look Like

If you are brand-new to rabbit ownership, you might be left scratching your head when you bring them home. What should you be doing for the first day or first week? Where do you start? Let's learn all about that in this chapter!

## -Introducing To The Family-

If you're not alone in the house and have a partner or family with kids, you should slowly and gradually introduce them to your new pet rabbit. Rabbits can get easily spooked, so it's important not to scare them or overwhelm them too much on the first day.

After you have placed them in your cage set-up, start by just sitting nearby the cage (you and some of your family) to get the rabbit familiar with your presence. Then, gradually take turns reaching in to place your hand near the rabbit without petting them. The rabbit might sniff you or lick you, but remain calm and let them get used to this interaction.

After that, you should be able to start touching and petting the rabbit gently with their permission. Remember, don't push them to their limits! Let them feel relaxed with you first before doing anything too drastic.

Finally, take turns holding the rabbit. Remember to do so very close to your body, where the rabbit can feel safer. Don't hold them outstretched away

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from you where they feel like they might fall! Keep them close and snuggled to your chest for the best experience.

If you have any other pets, like dogs or cats, be sure to keep them away at this point so your rabbit can focus on getting comfortable with one thing at a time. Plus, rabbits or dogs can react differently to rabbits (aggressive, calmly, or cautious) depending on how you have trained them or associated them with other small animals in the past. It might be best to keep them completely separate.

Always make sure the rabbit has a safe place to hide in their hutch to get away from the edges of the cage and ensure it is locked shut when you aren't around.

Over time, you will probably notice that your rabbit begins to like and favor one particular member of the family over the other. This could just be a personal preference of the rabbit, but eventually, he will learn to feel comfortable will all of you if you handle him appropriately.

## -Familiarizing With Your Set-Up-

Getting your rabbit familiar with your new set-up just takes a little time. You can put them inside the hutch and try leading them to different sections to get them familiar with where their food, water, and shelter is, but they usually figure it out on their own.

This stage shouldn't take too long, rabbits adjust fairly quickly, depending on their personality, and within no time, they will come to love their new home provided that it is safe from predators, warm in cool weather, and with their food/water nearby.

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Once they are familiar with the enclosure, you could start to get them familiar with the backyard (where they can't escape, of course) and maybe around your house, but make sure they can't injure themselves on anything and don't let them chew something they aren't supposed to. These should be exercising areas where your rabbit can stretch his/her legs, run, hop, and play.

Try not to move your rabbit's enclosure set-up around too much to avoid confusion for the first few days and to help make them more comfortable.

## -Creating A Safe Environment For Your Rabbit-

Creating a safe environment for your rabbit comes down to three major things:

- Human items like electrical wires and knives
- Exterior animals like foxes, mosquitoes, dogs, and cats
- Cleanliness of their surroundings

These three key things are what will help make a safe environment. Human items should be put away or out of reach of the rabbit when they are exercising outside of their enclosure. Likewise, don't let simple things go over your head, like electrical wires, which can cause electrocution. Hide them away or keep a watchful eye on your rabbit to prevent them from chewing things they shouldn't.

Keep dogs and cats away from your rabbit if you know for certain they want to harm or play too rough with your rabbit. There are some other pets out there that can get along fine with them, but the natural instinct of cats and dogs is to chase after small things, which is precisely what rabbits are. If the enclosure is outside, make sure that foxes or other predators can't enter it or set up a safety alarm system to help deter them away.

And finally, the level of cleanliness of the rabbit's surroundings is what will also help keep them safe from illness. Maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule and ensure your rabbit isn't living in filth.

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# -Best Tips For Adjusting To Your Home-

When it comes to adjusting your pet rabbit to your home, following the previous practices will give you a good start, but here are some more tips to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible for everyone.

- Make sure your whole family is **aware** of the new pet and instruct them on how to appropriately handle and care for the rabbit. You could even ask them to read this short book guide!

- **Don't overwhelm** your rabbit in any situation, or you risk losing the bond you're trying to build. Take it slow and gradually ease them into new things.

- Consider other things you would normally do at home and how it **might affect** your rabbit's new transition. For example, using the loud vacuum cleaner or playing a loud movie on the TV might terrify your rabbit, especially at first! These are also things you need to ***gradually*** introduce to your rabbit. Keep the first week calm and quiet.

- Don't let your rabbit venture out of their enclosure until they are showing signs of calm and relaxed behavior, such as eating and being curious. Keep exercise/playtime outside of their enclosure **short** to not overwhelm, scare, or confuse your rabbit until they get comfortable in their surroundings. Also, be sure to **monitor** them during this time, so you don't lose sight of them!

- Start keeping to a **routine** or **schedule** for your new rabbit (for cleaning the enclosure, feeding, playtime, bonding, etc.). This also includes keeping your rabbit's primary enclosure in a permanent location.

- Don't handle your rabbit **too often** as he/she adjusts to their new home. Keep your distance and practice plenty of patience with your

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rabbit. Remember that unlike a dog, this is a "prey" animal that can be easily scared. It takes a while to build trust with them.

- Be as **patient** as possible. I'm stressing this a lot because every rabbit is different! It could take as quick as a day for your rabbit to feel totally comfortable with you and their surroundings, or it could take a few days or a few weeks. If you're not patient, you won't have a very happy pet rabbit.

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# 11.
# Ongoing Care For Your Pet Rabbit

Once your rabbit has become comfortable with you and their new environment/home, the work (or as I like to call it, "fun") doesn't stop there! You need to provide ongoing care for your pet rabbit to ensure they are happy and healthy.

## -How To Handle & Carry Your Pet Rabbit Properly-

Handling a pet rabbit should only be done by an adult or a mature child who can safely listen to instructions (and with supervision). Never pick up a rabbit with their limbs, ears, or tail, and always use two hands to hold them. You want them to enjoy this experience, not become terrified of it.

Never automatically assume that any rabbit wants to be held and only do so if they are in a calm, relaxed state. Use both hands to **gently grasp** the rabbit from the surface around their **chest/stomach area**, just **behind their front legs**. Once lifted from the surface, **bring them close to your chest** to help them feel more safe and comfortable.

As you do this, use your non-dominant hand to **create a "surface"** for your rabbit to rest on against your chest, and your dominant hand to start gently petting their back. This dominant hand should be ready to hold onto your rabbit to steady them as you walk around. The other hand acts as a base for your rabbit to be placed on.

This is how you properly handle, pick-up, and carry a pet rabbit. Never use quick, erratic movements, but remain calm and be slow. Being too fast or sudden will spook your rabbit

## -Grooming Your Rabbit-

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Depending on the breed of rabbit and their coat length, grooming might be a regular or an occasional requirement. Rabbits are excellent self groomers, but those with long coats like French Angora rabbits will need some assistance in preventing matting.

"Mats" of fur are not comfortable for any animal, and if your rabbit gets them, it's *even more* difficult to get rid of them. So, to prevent any from occurring in the first place, keep on top of a good brushing routine.

Most pet stores will have small brushes that are used for cats and/or rabbits. However, depending on the breed of rabbit and their coat type, the pet store staff might suggest a particular brush.

**Combs** are useful for getting out mats, as well as small grooming scissors. **Slicker brushes** are great for grabbing onto loose fur (but shouldn't be used forcefully), and something like a "**furminator**" does a wonderful job of de-shedding an animal.

These should all be small enough and appropriate for your rabbit (they are usually for "small animals," including rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, etc.).

The main goal of brushing a rabbit is to prevent excess fur from building up - not only to prevent matting but also to prevent your rabbit from ingesting too much fur and causing gastrointestinal blocks.

Grooming may also involve cleaning your rabbit's eyes (keeping their eyes free of excess hair and food, for example) as well as their ears. Mini lops can get a lot of built-up wax inside, but all rabbits are prone to this, in addition to debris like food and hay. You can clean their ears out gently to prevent ear infections and inflammation by using moistened cotton balls and safe ear cleaner (this can also be purchased from a pet store or online).

If your rabbit has longer fur, it might be a good idea to use a small flea comb to comb back their fur away from the eye area to avoid irritation there.

It's also important to regularly check your rabbit's "bottom" side for any excess urine or feces that may have become trapped there. You should keep this area as clean as possible to prevent disease or illness. Wipe them off

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gently and keep them dry. One good way to prevent this is by keeping their litter box or enclosure clean and free of droppings as often as possible with a regular cleaning routine.

And finally, a rabbit's nails may also need to be trimmed to prevent torn nails, snags, and any possible infection. This can be done on a monthly basis, depending on the nail growth rate of your rabbit. You can also purchase "small-animal" nail trimmers to do this.

So while rabbits are excellent at self-grooming, they are still going to require other regular grooming procedures to keep them healthy. You may be wondering, would a wild rabbit need this?

In the wild, a wild rabbit constantly uses their nails to forage for good and to dig burrows, hence why they would never need their nails trimmed. They do it themselves naturally!

Mankind has domesticated many of the pet rabbit breeds you see today, like the Angora. These would not typically survive in the wild, hence why they require a unique level of care as pets.

## -Interpreting Body Language For Handling-

In chapter 7, we discussed various types of body language that rabbits have. But when it comes to handling, it's even more important to watch and understand these ways that they communicate through their posture, ears, movements, and more.

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If you're about to handle or pick up your rabbit, watch for their aggressive signs like going to bite you. If they are running away feeling very scared, don't pressure them into being handled. Give them time and come back later if necessary. You don't want to harm the bond you have worked so hard to build! You could also try leaving your hand in the enclosure and waiting for them to come to you instead.

If they show interest in your hand, they might sniff you or even lick you once they realize who you are and that you aren't a threat. Remain slow and steady with your movements to reciprocate this gesture of trust. Take it one step at a time - if they are still appearing nervous or scared, leave and come back later to try again.

If your rabbit is showing strange signs compared to their usual behavior when handling, there could be an underlying health issue you may need to look into. That, or that could just be having an off day!

## -Bonding With Your Rabbit-

We've lightly touched on how to bond with your rabbit throughout this book. You know to be patient, respect their boundaries, how to handle them, and not to spook them. But how do you really *bond* with your rabbit?

A bond between you and your rabbit is founded by these three things:

1. **Trust** - the rabbit trusts you and knows how you behave.
2. **Affection** - the rabbit shows you affection and gestures of love.
3. **Companionship** - the rabbit thinks of you as a true companion.

This goes both ways, though. You need to reciprocate this just as much as your rabbit is willing to do for you.

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### Trust

When a rabbit trusts you, they understand you and what you're all about. They know you feed them, how you gently handle them, and they trust that you aren't a predator trying to eat them, for example. Trust is, first and foremost, the essential part of any bond - even in humans together.

### Affection

Once trust is established, your rabbit will begin to show you affection and gestures of love. A rabbit showing affection could be requesting for you to pet them, nudging and licking your hand, sleeping on your lap on the sofa, exposing their belly for a rub, and more.

### Companionship

Now your rabbit thinks of you as a true companion, and just like rabbits bond with each other, they have bonded with you too. At this point, your rabbit feels totally relaxed with you.

You can see this level of bonding in a lot of rabbit owners who share photos and videos of their rabbits sprawled out on the sofa, for example, with them by their side.

You know that a rabbit fully trusts and has a unique bond with someone when you see how relaxed and happy they are with them. That is the true meaning of friendship and trust.

## -Exercising Your Rabbit-

Your new friend also needs a good amount of exercise for optimal health. If you have a lazy rabbit, then you might need to cut back on some food. But most rabbits will generally love exercising, which can include various things.

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The best way for a rabbit to get some exercise is by running and hopping around the backyard! This stretches their legs and allows them to use what their body was made for - running fast and in an agile way. You will love to watch them run, jump, twist mid-air, dash between objects, and more - it's incredible to watch just how fast they can be!

Once your rabbit has become familiar with their new home, and you have a safe exercising area for them, you can let them in there to burn some of this energy. To encourage them to run and play, I recommend setting up some tunnels for them to dash in and out of. This can also help make them feel safer in the new environment, as a method of getting away should the need arise.

If you don't let your rabbit out of the enclosure, you will find that they try to burn this energy in there instead. They will dart around the enclosure, and in the process, kick up the hay substrate and food intentionally. This can sometimes make it harder to clean (or make the enclosure dirty quicker), but that's why it's important to let them out as much as possible once they are feeling happy in their new home!

Two rabbits together might also find themselves playing with and chasing each other for fun. I've also seen a lot of rabbit owners actually run around and play with their rabbit themselves to exercise them, which is also a joy to do (just be mindful of where you step!). This could take some time to build-up, though, until they completely trust you.

Exercising your rabbit will prevent obesity, boredom, and it will keep them happy overall.

## -Training Your Rabbit-

Yes, you can, in fact, train a rabbit to do various things. One of the most important things you will want to train your rabbit is how to use a litter box. I also briefly mentioned this before.

Training a rabbit to use a litter box in the corner of their enclosure will help

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keep their mess tidy and the hutch much cleaner. This is actually one of the easiest things to train a rabbit because they do enjoy being clean. Once you teach them this, they pick things up pretty quickly and will keep their droppings and urine contained in the one area. This makes it so much easier for you to clean their hutch and may even reduce the amount of cleaning required. Instead of doing the entire enclosure, you will only need to do it occasionally (and empty out the litter box regularly).

Another general part of training will be to get them familiar with your schedule. So when you wake up before work, perhaps you feed them or let them out to play. Sticking to a consistent routine will make things easier on the both of you - trust me!

Other things you can train a rabbit include:

- **Come to me** - your rabbit will learn to come to you when called
- **Jump** - train them to jump up onto the sofa, for example, or an obstacle
- **Sit up** - you can train your rabbit to sit up on their hind legs (they often do this anyway, but you can make a command for it)
- **Go in** - your rabbit can learn when its time to return to their cage or go inside a travel carrier with this command.

Remember that training takes time and patience to accomplish. You might not get it the first day or even the first week. The key is to persist and remain consistent if you want to see results with your training, just like with any other pet.

If one approach to the training isn't working, you could always try a new approach (not every animal can be trained in the exact same way!).

## -Preventing Biting During Handling-

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A common fear among new pet rabbit owners is biting. "Will he bite me?" and "How will I know if he is going to bite me?" and "why did he bite me?" are all very common questions!

Let's answer the first one.

**"Will he bite me?"**

Always remember that a rabbit *can* and *will* bite you if it feels the need to. If it feels threatened, scared, or provoked, it could resort to biting as a defensive behavior. Most of the time, rabbit biting occurs is when the owner isn't giving their rabbit enough patience, space, or time to calm down before handling. If your rabbit indicates this, then don't try handling them.

**"How will I know if he is going to bite me?"**

Because of their small size and face, it can sometimes be difficult to tell if a rabbit is going to bite you. However, they will generally show other clearer signs like anxiety, nervousness, spooked behavior (panicking, for example), and not wanting to be handled. Respect their boundaries.

**"Why did he bite me?"**

There are a number of reasons why a rabbit may have bitten you. Did you pressure them into being handled? Do they know who you are? Do they trust you? Have you ever mishandled them before? Have they had a previously traumatizing experience with humans? Are they de-sexed? Are they sick? All of these can factor into whether or not a rabbit bit you.

De-sexing rabbits is one of the top ways you can also help prevent hormonal aggression in rabbits, as we discussed previously. If a rabbit is sick, they might act defensively to protect themselves further.

Whatever the reason is, it's important to always respect their boundaries and to be patient with them.

# -Turning A Shy Rabbit Into A Friend-

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If you've got yourself a shy rabbit, they might prove to be more challenging to create a bond with. Nevertheless, you can still form a bond, provided that you are more patient and respectful.

Start by reducing the amount of handling you do with the rabbit. Once you are set up at home, let the rabbit be alone for a week or two while they get comfortable in their surroundings.

Once your rabbit seems happy in their new home (coming out of their shelter more, looking curious, etc.), then you can try to introduce yourself more appropriately. Follow the hand method I talked about previously - let your rabbit get familiar with the presence of that in the cage.

You'll also want to move onto a "whole body" (more than just a "hand") experience when you need to exercise or give your rabbit playtime. So once you do finally let them out to explore the yard or house, make sure you keep the space confined to one area you can monitor closely.

A good way to do this (to keep them close by and to get more comfortable with you) is to set up an exercise pen if you want. This gives the rabbit more room than your hutch to exercise while also allowing you to remain nearby for bonding.

Next, simply sit down on the floor and let your rabbit wander and inspect the surroundings, including you. Don't alarm your rabbit if he/she comes over to sniff you. Let the rabbit do what it is most comfortable with. During this time, if it is the start of your bonding sessions, don't reach out towards the rabbit at all. Simply sit and remain still so your rabbit can learn that you aren't a threat to them.

This can take a significant amount of time before your rabbit even shows any interest in you, so you might want to get comfortable with a book or your

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phone. Keep a calm, relaxed state, and don't yell out to your kids to do the dishes or anything like that. Set aside some dedicated time between you and your new pet rabbit without other distractions, noises, or interruptions.

The whole idea of this is to let the rabbit feel *safe* in your presence - to build that level of trust that takes you from stranger and potential predator to a safe companion to be with.

You should resist the urge to pet or handle your rabbit because shy rabbits often think of hands as a threat. In this process, you are *near* them, but you aren't a threat, so they can learn to feel comfortable with you.

If your rabbit is extremely shy, they might stay in a corner and not do very much. That's OK, but still, make sure you don't make any moves to worry them. You could do this for 20-30 minutes each time. You are almost certainly going to need to repeat this exercise.

Other rabbits that are a little more confident might find themselves hopping over your legs or coming over to sniff you, which shows they are feeling more relaxed. You will notice the different stages as your rabbit progresses toward a level of trust with you.

If you rescued a rabbit from a shelter that previously had a poor experience with their owner, you might find yourself struggling to gain their trust - but keep consistent, it's just going to take a bit longer.

Once your rabbit's trust is earned, the relationship will be magnificent. He/she will want to smother you with affection, play with you, and feel delighted to be in your presence all the time

## -How To Travel With A Pet Rabbit-

Traveling with a pet rabbit will require a travel carrier cage to make it easier for transport purposes. A hutch won't exactly be easy to carry to and from

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your house. A smaller, portable carrier is ideal for vet check-ups, for example, or if you are moving houses.

When traveling with your pet rabbit, it's important to keep them as calm and comfortable as possible. This could include covering their carrier with a thin blanket to block out light, so they can't see what's going on around them.

Try to plan ahead and make the transition as smooth as possible - remain calm and gentle, but be quick and decisive. Don't keep them in this stressful state for too long. Alternatively, you could teach your rabbit to desensitize to these new experiences, so they feel more comfortable each time they travel away from home.

Each rabbit is different, and some might react better to traveling than others. If you have a shy rabbit, try to limit the amount of stress as much as you can - ensure you have a local vet that is nearby (preferably within 10-20 minutes), so the trip there and back is shorter. Make sure the vet is a nice, gentle person who handles rabbits appropriately and carefully to ensure it is a positive experience.

Traveling with your pet often isn't usually something you will do compared to a dog, for example, unless it is for the vet. Other reasons why you might travel with a rabbit is to take them to a professional groomer or if you **show** rabbits for competitions.

Confident rabbits who trust their owners are sometimes taken to many places with their owner, such as a friend's house or the classroom at school. If doing so, always make sure the environment is safe for your rabbit - make sure no predators are around that could harm them and make it as comfortable as possible.

If you are planning longer travel trips, you will probably need to take something larger than a travel carrier, such as a smaller version of their main

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hutch at home that can comfortably fit their food/water bowls and shelter. This way, you could even take your rabbit with you on vacation to the holiday house if they are comfortable with it.

Furthermore, you'll need to remember to take enough fresh food with you during this trip, and depending on how long the trip is, you might need to purchase more fresh food along the way

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# 12.
# What's Next?

We're nearing the end of this guide for raising rabbits, but we aren't quite finished yet. You might be wondering, "what's next?" after you have learned all of the basic care requirements for a rabbit and some helpful tips and information for along the way. Here are my suggestions.

## -Getting A Second Rabbit: Yes or No?-

If you only brought home one pet rabbit in the beginning, you might now be questioning whether or not to get a second rabbit. Well, the answer definitely depends on a few things.

### Is Your Rabbit Young?

Older rabbits are usually at an age where they won't tolerate newcomers. But if your current rabbit is young, you might be in luck. Younger rabbits are usually much more welcoming to new rabbits compared to a mature rabbit. If you also think your rabbit is quite friendly and social, you might be OK to get another rabbit - you will never know for certain.

If you are loving your new pet rabbit, you should make the decision to get a second rabbit (or not) as soon as possible to introduce them together at a young age. Remember that rabbits are social animals, and they are usually OK with each other, but it mostly depends on their personality and whether they are de-sexed or not (this can have a significant impact on their behavior).

### Can You Afford It?

The next question you should ask yourself is, can you afford to care for two rabbits? Think about your current rabbit's costs - food, vet bills, housing, etc.

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and think about doubling it. The housing you won't necessarily need to worry about if you already have housing set-up *unless* you need to purchase a larger hutch to comfortably accommodate two rabbits. If you can't afford it, don't get a second rabbit!

### Can You Keep Up?

With another rabbit comes more mess to clean up. That's double the poops, soiled substrate, and overall mess inside the enclosure. It also means you are taking two rabbits out to exercise instead of one, so it's another rabbit you will need to supervise and care for to meet their optimal care requirements. In addition to this, think about the extra *time* you might be spending on these rabbits if there are two. Do you have enough time?

### Do You Have The Space?

If you have a small hutch that just meets the needs of one rabbit, you will need to expand this for a second rabbit to live in there comfortably. A larger hutch is another added expense to the list of getting a second rabbit.

## -Training Your Rabbit To Do Tricks-

Did you know that you can train your rabbit to do tricks? Many inexperienced rabbit owners don't believe a rabbit can learn to do anything, but in fact, they are quite intelligent. You can train them to not only use the litter box but also to "jump," "come," "sit up," and "go in," as I previously mentioned before.

Teaching these tricks is similar to how you would train a dog. It requires positive reinforcement and a reward that satisfies the rabbit for performing the desired behavior, so you could use a treat like their favorite fruit or

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vegetable.

Rabbits will need to be given some guidance by you, but once they understand that performing the desired behavior rewards them with praise treats, they can quickly learn to keep up these good habits, such as using the litter box and going inside their hutch after playtime.

To train your rabbit to do tricks, you should follow these simple steps:

1. Select a **treat** that your rabbit loves. This could be some strawberry or carrot, for example.

2. Choose the **command** you want to associate with the behavior. For example, "come" to call your rabbit to you, or "go in" to return to their hutch.

3. As you are **guiding** your rabbit to perform the trick, use your command word, and treat your rabbit as they progress through the behavior. You might be guiding them inside their cage, and once they reach it, you can treat them and use the command word.

4. Over time, this will teach your rabbit to **associate the word with the action**, and that they get positive rewards each time they do it correctly. Some rabbits will get it quicker than others, so it's important to be **patient** and very **consistent** with the training.

It's that simple to teach your rabbit a trick! Well, I say simple, but if you are new to it, this could take some time (and patience) to get familiar with. If you ever want to see visual guidance, there are some great rabbit training videos on YouTube that can help show you how to guide your rabbit the correct way.

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## -Educating Yourself On Rabbits-

If there's something you're looking to do after having a pet rabbit for a while, why not educate yourself further on rabbits? This way, you can help them live their best life in a way that is most natural and healthy for them.

Educating yourself on rabbits might include taking an online Rabbit course, borrowing/purchasing rabbit books (including breed-specific books), going to a pet shop and asking questions, researching online, and even reading this book is helping to improve your education on rabbits!

The more you learn about rabbits, particularly your breed of rabbit, the more you can understand their behavior and care requirements to give them the best life possible! It can also help you avoid expensive vet bills by preventing injury and illness as you learn more about how to keep them healthy.

Who knows, after you educate yourself more on rabbits, you might eventually want to start a business with rabbits (you can take a look at Chapter 8 for more information on this). This could be to breed and sell them as pets, or you could even start educating other people on rabbits to share the knowledge!

## -Getting Involved With Forums, Charities, Volunteering...-

Another way you can educate yourself on rabbits while also helping out the general rabbit community is by getting involved with forums, charities, and volunteering.

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## Forums

Online rabbit forums are places you can go to post questions about rabbits and other fun stuff like hilarious rabbit photos or awesome trick performance, for example. On some forums, you can also find breeders and people trying to find a home for their rabbit.

Forums are also a great place to connect with other rabbit owners who may have useful tips to share, and they could also have answers to some of your questions that I might have missed in this book.

Some great forums include:

- https://www.rabbitsonline.net/
- https://www.bunspace.com/forum/
- https://binkybunny.com/forums/

You can also scroll through current discussions on these forums to find some already answered questions you may have, general rabbit information, and more.

## Charities

If you feel like helping out rabbits further, you can look for some good charities to support. These charities often use donations to help find new homes for pet rabbits, conduct research, save them, and more. A lot of these charities will also help save/re-home other small animals, too, like Guinea Pigs and Ferrets.

A rabbit charity's aim is not for financial gain or profit; it is solely to help protect, re-home, and save rabbits. So when you donate to a charity or help them by adopting one of their rabbits available for re-homing, you are helping all of their small animal (including rabbits) goals to give them a better life.

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You can also find local charities with a quick Google search, by asking your local pet store or vet clinic, and you can also call shelter/rescue organizations around your area to learn more about the different charities you can support. Check out the list below for a good place to start.

**Volunteering**

If you have the spare time and are looking for a new hobby, you could offer to volunteer at your local animal shelter, pet store, or even a local breeder you know of.

Volunteering usually won't involve just sitting around cuddling rabbits all day - but there will be a little of that to help socialize the rabbits with human interaction. You will be doing a lot of cleaning, so keep that in mind! But throughout the volunteering process, you will learn so much about their care and may even pick up a few tips along the way you never knew about before.

The following might have some good volunteering, rescuing, and donation opportunities available for you:

- https://www.vrra.org/wp-beta1/
- http://bhrabbitrescue.org/
- https://bunnybuddies.org/
- https://bestfriends.org/sanctuary/volunteer
- https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/volunteer
- http://rabbitrescue.ca/
- https://rabbitats.org/

https://rabbit.org/international-resources/ also has a useful list of international rabbit rescue organizations.

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# 13
# Coping With A Loss

Coping with any loss in life isn't easy - whether it's a person, a dog, and even a rabbit. A life is a life, and there is no easy way to accept it. With that said, there are some ways you can help yourself to cope with the loss of a pet rabbit, which are outlined in this chapter.

## A New Rabbit

One thing many owners do to distract themselves from the loss of a pet rabbit and to fill that empty void is to get a new rabbit to put all of your focus, love, and care on. This, of course, isn't a suggestion to just "forget" your old rabbit that passed, but rather to help you stay productive without lingering on your feelings of sadness. You can help save a rabbit's life and remember why you got one in the first place - for their love, affection, and companionship.

## Keeping Busy

If you aren't ready to get a new rabbit or pet just yet, it's a good idea to stay busy with other things, so you don't let your mind continuously wander back to the sadness. You could try volunteering somewhere in your spare time, picking up a new hobby, or educating yourself on a new pet or challenge to take on.

## Accepting & Talking About It

You should never bottle up your emotions about the loss of a rabbit. Doing so could only make you more upset about it. It's always a good idea to talk to someone - whether that's a family member, friend, or even a therapist, if necessary.

You can let out your emotions, and they can help give you their advice, keep you social, and take your mind off the situation. Once you accept that they are gone, you can start to remember the wonderful things about them and the

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great life you gave them rather than always remembering the sadness.

### Connecting With Other Owners

You might also find new ways to cope by visiting the online rabbit forums I previously mentioned in chapter twelve. You can connect with other rabbit owners who have also lost their pets to discover how they cope.

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# 14.
# Rabbit Breeding

The final thing I want to talk about in this last chapter is Rabbit Breeding. If you're interested not only in the care and health of rabbits but also how to breed and sell them for profit, then read on. This is a concise chapter covering the basics of rabbit breeding.

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# -Before You Breed Rabbits...-

If you want to breed rabbits, then you should know it takes work - more work than merely "owning" a pet rabbit. It's recommended for experienced owners who have previously owned rabbits and understand everything about their care/health.

You're going to have to do a bit of research in regards to the particular *breed* of rabbit you want to breed, too, as each can vary in terms of size, requirements, behavior, and more.

Breeding rabbits will require more frequent monitoring/supervision of the males and females to determine when a pregnancy occurs as well as to prevent any aggressive behaviors that could cause injury to you and other rabbits.

# -The Basics-

Let's go over the basics and general information about rabbit pregnancy, including the does (female rabbits) and bucks (male rabbits).

**When Can Rabbits Get Pregnant?**

- Small doe rabbits can typically become pregnant at around the age of 5 months. A small buck rabbit is ready to mate at around 6 months of age.

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- Medium doe rabbits are ready around 6 months, and the buck at 7 months.
- Large doe rabbits are ready around 8 months and bucks at 9 months.

## Choosing Rabbits

If you are going to breed rabbits, you should be choosing them from a line of good genetics and previous breeding. This will result in a healthy litter of kits (baby rabbits) with a reduced chance of breed-specific illnesses or genetic diseases. Never breed a rabbit that has genetic defects, like tooth malocclusion, for example. You should always strive to meet the breed standards when breeding rabbits, and you can find some useful information on the https://arba.net/ website to learn more about this and the breed-specific standards for breeding.

## Breeding Group

When getting a group of rabbits to breed, it's best to get one buck and up to 10 does together. This is a good ratio. Having more than one male in this group will likely cause hormonal aggression. If you plan on having multiple groups, make sure you keep a record of what goes with what, and it's a good idea to label the cages for this if you want to breed a lot of rabbits. Always maintain a good level of cleanliness if this is the case.

## Gestation Period & Litter Size

The gestation period for rabbits (how long they are pregnant) is approximately 31 days. Once the doe "kindles" (gives birth), she can be used again for breeding about 6 weeks after. Rabbits can produce anywhere from 8 to 16 kits, depending on their size/breed. The kits should be weaned at around 5-7 weeks. A rabbit is usually retired from breeding at around 4 years old, or if you think her production is poor.

## Breeding Selection

Never breed rabbits of different breeds together if you plan on selling pedigree rabbits. A pedigree rabbit with mixed blood can't be sold going back

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4 generations. If you want a mixed breed, it should only be because you want them with certain characteristics. Furthermore, never breed rabbit sisters/brothers together. However, you can breed mother-to-son and father-to-daughter, as well as cousins. But you should ***not*** focus on inbreeding rabbits at all until you have some experience with genetics and breeding after a while.

## During Mating

When it comes to the mating part of breeding, you should always make sure the rabbits are in a healthy condition to breed. For example, you should be examining their cage and the doe/buck's bottom areas to search for any signs of loose stools that could indicate a health issue. You should also check their genitals, teeth, ears, and everywhere else to confirm they are in optimal condition.

Always take the **doe** to the **buck's** cage, and never the other way around. It is much quicker and efficient this way - if you put the buck in a cage full of females, he will likely spend more time sniffing around rather than selecting a female to breed with straight away. You can leave the doe in the buck's cage overnight, or you can wait and watch to make sure they have mated. After the first time, put the doe back in again anywhere from 1 to 12 hours after to increase the chance of pregnancy.

After around 28-30 days, you should place a nesting box in the pregnant doe's cage for her to give birth in more comfortably.

Bucks can typically breed up to 7 times a week, but most breeders will only use them twice a week or so.

During breeding, it's also recommended to get a calendar or diary to document the records of breeding, pregnancy, litter size, health, and any other observations so you can keep track of the breeding more effectively.

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You will also be able to help determine when the doe will give birth by using a calendar. Other ways of checking for pregnancy can include monitoring their behavior (signs of nesting, for example) and palpating the doe's lower abdomen using your thumb and forefinger.

These are the basics of rabbit breeding! If you're new to everything about rabbits, why not try keeping one or two as a pet first before you move onto breeding? This way, you can gain experience with their care, health, and pick up some other useful tips along the way before starting.

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# Conclusion

Rabbits aren't "super easy to care for," nor can they "only thrive on carrots," as many of the myths claim. There is a lot more that goes into their care that many new owners don't think about! They need adequate exercise, more than just "carrots" for a nutritious, balanced diet, and you probably never knew that they could be trained to perform tricks!

I hope this book on raising rabbits properly has given you some useful guidance on everything you need to know, whether you are a first-time rabbit owner or an experienced one looking to brush up on some knowledge.

With the right care, training, and bonding, a rabbit can become just as much of a loyal, loving companion as a dog or cat. Give them a chance, and you'll know for yourself!

Thank you for reading and learning more about these adorable and wonderful little creatures that you can welcome into your life, family, and home.

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