

BUNNY CARE INFORMATION PACK



Bunnies are very special creatures and make wonderful house pets. Although they are a prey animal, with gentle and constant care they learn to trust their owners and you will be rewarded in time with bunny kisses and affection and be entertained as they hop and jump (binkies) with the pure joy of living. They respond well to human interaction and when they are confined to a back yard, they are less interactive. Bunnies frighten easily and it is important not to raise your voice to them in anger or trust can dissolve quickly and they can become afraid of you. You need to monitor their eating and health and take action immediately if they appear unwell or their behaviour changes.

Thank you to all bunny owners for caring and particularly to those who have welcomed orphan bunnies into their homes and for giving them a second chance to be part of a loving family.

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WARNING Myxomatosis

Risk of myxomatosis, a virus carried by mosquitoes is very high and pet bunnies that housed outside are dying all over Victoria. This is due to the increase in mosquitoes from a very wet winter and a humid summer. There is no vaccine available in Australia to protect our pet rabbits. In 2011, a leading rabbit vet has reported 15 to 20 calls a day from worried owners, and vets mirror this across the state. Please keep your rabbit indoors.

Contact Us

Rabbit Run and Rabbit Runaway Orphanage

Phone 1300 959370

Email: enquiries@rabbitrun.com.au Web: www.rabbitrun.com.au or www.rabbitrunaway.org.au

IS A BUNNY THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU?

Please consider if a bunny is the right pet for your lifestyle or should you consider a more suitable pet to join your family.



As a responsible adult, are you willing to be the primary carer?

Bunnies are prey animals and hide illness. Can you monitor your bunny twice a day to ensure that they are well?

Are you allergic to rabbits?

Can you afford vet bills if your bunny becomes ill?

Can you provide exercise for your bunny for 4 hours outside their hutch each day?

Outdoors is an unsafe place for bunnies, due to predators' and mosquitoes, particularly at night. Can you house your rabbit inside?

Can you protect your bunny from the heat (above 25 degrees) and cold?

Bunnies like to dig and chew. Are you willing for your bunny to dig in the lawn or garden or are you willing to bunny proof the inside of your house if necessary?

Outside enclosures must be sheltered from the weather and be fox proof and mosquito proof with large, safe exercise areas outside the hutch.

Are you willing to desex your bunny? Desexing will protect the girls from cancers and eliminates antisocial behaviour in the males. Desexing makes litter training easier.

Can you provide human companionship each day for your bunny or a desexed bunny companion for your bunny?

Can you provide fresh hay, fresh salad greens and fresh water and exercise daily for your bunny?

Are you willing to have your bunny inside so that they can interact as part of the family?

and can easily escape in a short time. Summer is a problem for bunnies; they do not sweat and therefore cannot expel heat. They should be brought indoors when the temperature reaches more than 25 degrees or the area where they are kept heats up. Bunnies also need to be out of their enclosures daily for extended periods to exercise and play.

Indoor

Indoor bunnies can live for up to 12 years. If your bunny lives inside, they also need a pen or space where they can go to feel safe. Bunnies sleep a lot during the day, so they can be secured in their hutch and patio area while you are at work. However, they need room to run and play at other times. If your bunny lives inside, you should bunny proof your home by covering electrical cords and watch out for them chewing the carpet to get to the ground underneath and furniture initially as they explore. This behaviour mirrors a bunny digging burrows and clearing tree roots.



Toilet Training



Bunnies are smart and will toilet train quickly, they will choose either a litter tray or a hay tray for their toilet. The idea is to train them to use one of these. Use paper based litter in a cat litter tray. Pick up any droppings and put them in the litter tray, so that you bunny gets the idea. If your bunny digs in the litter, you may need to get a litter tray with a lip on the edge. HAY TRAYS can be used as litter trays. Get a suitable sized container for your bunny, put some litter in the base to soak up the urine then put a thick layer of hay in the base and up the sides of the container. Your bunny will choose where their favourite toilet spot is, so you may

need a couple of litter trays and 'chew and poo' stations to start with. Be sure to put a permanent one in the hutch area as well. Your bunny may prefer a separate hay tray and bunny litter tray.

Bunny Health

All bunnies should be vaccinated against the Calici virus every 10 to 12 months, and desexed (5 to 7 months for girls and 3 months for boys, or as soon as the testicles drop for boys. Smaller breeds must be at least 1kg in weight prior to desexing. Please check with your bunny savvy vet. A list of Australian bunny savvy vets is located on www.rabbitrunaway.org.au or please contact us. Undesexed girls have a high mortality rate from uterine cancer and also display aggression and destructive nesting behaviours, while the males can be aggressive and spray urine to mark their territory. Your bunny should also have their teeth and nails checked regularly. Bunnies are prone to problems with their teeth and gut. If your regular vet does not see a lot of bunnies, they can contact Dr Brendan Carmel at Warranwood Vets (contact details on our website) for updated information on bunny health. Bunnies do get mites, but NEVER use bird mite spray on your bunny. Mite sprays are for feathered creatures, while bunnies are fur creatures and require different medications. Rabbit savvy vets prescribe a kitten dose of revolution to treat mites and fleas in bunnies. Never try to self diagnose or medicate your bunny from information on the internet, which is often misleading. If a bunny stops eating they must be taken to the vet immediately as they can go into gut stasis and die quickly if the gut stops working. Bunnies need to be eating hay continuously to maintain gut and teeth health. IMPORTANT: Bunnies like routine and feeding them greens morning and night will ensure that you are aware if your bunny is unwell and off their food. This will give you time to get them to a vet. Your bunny can die within 24 hours if they stop eating or from other causes.

Diet

Water

Bunnies drink lots of water. Use a strong ceramic flat bottomed water bowl that your bunny cannot tip over. Bunnies cannot get enough water from the water drip bottles alone and consume a lot of water at night especially in summer. If you have a drip bottle put a water bowl in for the bunny as well. Dehydration can cause many health problems in bunnies.

Hay

All bunnies, no matter what age need an UNLIMITED supply of fresh oaten hay or grass hay. This helps with their teeth and digestion and prevents them from getting gut stasis, a common health condition in rabbits, which can be fatal if not treated quickly. **IMPORTANT:** Never give alfalfa/lucerne hay to mature bunnies (over 12 months old), as it has high levels of calcium unless advised by your bunny vet.

Bunny Salad

You bunny needs a variety of fresh greens twice a day to ensure that they are still eating. Never give your bunny salad greens that you would not eat yourself. They must be fresh to avoid gut problems. Your rabbit should eat one tightly packed cup of greens per 2 kilograms of body weight twice a day. Never change your bunny's diet suddenly and always introduce new foods gradually. **IMPORTANT:** Never give iceberg lettuce, raw beans, corn, rhubarb, potato peels, and anything with corn, seeds or processed sugar.

Good greens: twice a day: basil, beet tops, bok choy, clover, collard greens, dandelion flowers (be careful of pesticides), endive, escarole, mint, mustard greens, parsley, peppermint leaves, radicchio, radish tops, raspberry leaves, mixed lettuces, spinach, watercress, wheat grass basil, dill, coriander, chicory, parsley.



Salad treats: once a day in small amounts

Fruit and vegetables: apple, banana, blueberries, grapes (limited quantities), mango, papaya, peach, pear, pineapple, raisins, raspberries, strawberries.

IMPORTANT: Dutch carrot tops, dandelion greens, kale... Give in limited quantities...high calcium levels

Wood to Chew (not really necessary but the bunnies enjoy chewing)

Good sources of wood that has not been exposed to chemicals include apple, willow, spruce, ash, birch, maple, juniper, pear, hazel and hawthorn. **IMPORTANT:** Single seeded fruit tree branches such as plum, cherry, apricot and peach may be toxic to bunnies.

Companion Bunnies

Bunnies are sociable animals, and are happier with company. It is better to introduce bunnies after they are desexed as their smell and temperament may change. Rabbit Run-Away Orphanage has de-sexed and vaccinated orphans from babies to 12 months old, as well as older bunnies looking for good homes. You can take your desexed bunny on a bunny date to find a compatible desexed bunny friend as not all bunnies like each other. We can only re-home bunnies with bunnies that are also de-sexed and vaccinated.



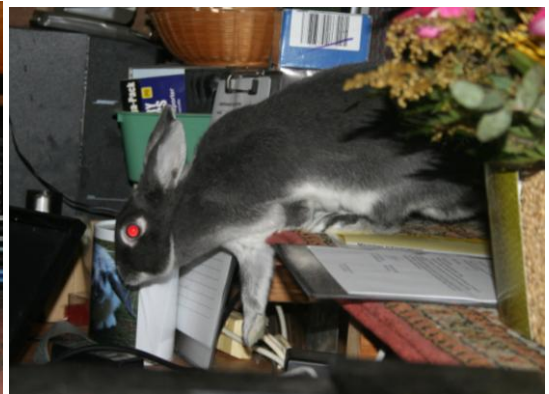
What to Do if you can No Longer Care For Your Bunny

Please contact Rabbit Run-Away Orphanage for advise or take your bunny to one of the many animal shelter to be rehomed. You need to ask the question “Will the bunny be euthanaised?” Releasing a bunny into the wild is illegal, as they will not survive, due to incomplete diet, predators and myxomatosis carried by mosquitoes.

Warning

The high number of rabbits surrendered, or found, and handed into shelters means that many happy, healthy bunnies are euthanised just because there is no room at the shelter to keep them. Some shelters regularly “cull” their rabbits, so there is no guarantee that your rabbit will survive if surrendered. The euthanasia rate of rabbits is very high.

If the rabbit has anything wrong with then they are killed immediately, even if the ailment can be treated. Shelters will not rehome rabbits that intermittent require vet treatment. Rabbits are sentient, intelligent and curious and make the most beautiful, gentle pets when welcomed as part of the family.



THE BUNNY DIET

Information to Get You Started

A bunny can live on a diet of unlimited fresh hay and water; however, as pet owners we like to provide variety for our pets, by including fresh greens and a small amount of fruit and vegetables. Pellets are not necessary for a healthy rabbit and should only be used as a treat or if the bunny is very young, underweight or ill. Sometimes a small amount of pellets can be given as a treat if your bunny has a healthy diet and weight. A bunny's diet will change as it grows, and if they need pellets, an adult will require different pellets to those given to baby rabbits. It is important to discuss this with a bunny savvy vet.

IMPORTANT: If your bunny stops eating, take them to a bunny savvy vet immediately as they can go into gut stasis, where the gut stops working, which can be fatal if not treated quickly.



Healthy Teeth

Unlimited hay is essential for healthy teeth. Your bunny will also enjoy natural untreated wood to chew such as apple branches. Good sources of wood to chew that has not been exposed to chemicals may include apple, willow, spruce, ash, birch, maple, juniper, pear, hazel and hawthorn. **IMPORTANT:** single seeded fruits and fruit trees such as plum, cherry, apricot and peach may be toxic to bunnies as well as a variety of other plants and trees.

Some Important Points to Remember

- Always introduce new foods slowly and never change your bunny's diet abruptly as this can cause digestion and gut problems.
- Always use fresh fruit and vegetables that you would eat yourself.
- Provide plenty of fresh water.
- Provide branches for your bunny to chew for entertainment. Our bunnies' love apple tree branches as well as the leaves. However, some tree branches are toxic to bunnies.
- Bad diet such as a diet of pellets of seed mixes, is responsible for serious teeth problems, and teeth must be checked by a bunny savvy vet regularly.
- Only provide pellets as a treat or on the advice of your bunny savvy vet, and avoid commercial rabbit seed mixes (even the ones endorsed by celebrities or well known organisations) as most contain corn and other ingredients detrimental to your bunny's health
- Food that is detrimental to your bunny's health and can cause a condition called gut stasis in many young bunnies is explained by Medi-Rabbit as...

Whole seeds and grains, nuts, corn, peas, lentils, beans, potatoes, bamboo shoots, all dairy products, sugary and starchy products. These types of food have been known to contribute to lethal doses of enterotoxaemia especially in young rabbits. Seeds, grain and corn also contain more starch than the rabbit's gut can handle. While some of the starch can pass through the small intestine without problems, the majority will reach the cecum. Here it serves as nutrition for the malignant bacteria that produces toxins and can make your rabbit very sick. In contrast to fibre, which prevents fermentation, starch leads to fermentation processes in the cecum. This may cause an overgrowth of bad bacteria and GI stasis, which can be lethal if left untreated (Medirabbit.com/Diet, viewed March 2007, p20-21)

Suggestions to Get You Started

As bunnies are prey animals and hide illness, feeding your bunnies twice a day ensures that you can see if they are eating and well. If the bunny does not eat then there is time to take them to a bunny savvy vet before their gut stops working altogether and they go into gut stasis which can be fatal.

The Importance of Hay

Your bunny needs an UNLIMITED supply of hay to maintain good digestion and teeth. The primary type of hay should be fresh OATEN HAY. If you have trouble finding oaten hay, then GRASS HAY is the next best alternative.

IMPORTANT: The one type of hay to avoid for adult rabbits (over one year old) is alfalfa/Lucerne hay. Alfalfa is acceptable for young rabbits but because of the high level of calcium should not be fed in large amounts to a mature rabbit as it can cause calcium blocks. Avoid bagged hay as it may not be fresh and can contain mites.



The Bunny Salad



Your bunny should eat one tightly packed cup of a variety of salad greens per 2 kilograms of body weight, twice a day with a small amount of vegetables and fruit as a treat once a day. We give the salad treats in the evening, which encourages our bunnies into their enclosures/hutches. **IMPORTANT:** Never give iceberg lettuce, cabbage, raw beans, rhubarb, potato peels or anything with corn, seeds or processed sugar, or human sweets or snacks.

Good Salad Greens: (Twice a day, washed to remove pesticides) beet tops, bok choy, cilantro, clover, collard greens, dandelion flowers, endive, escarole, mint, mustard greens, parsley, peppermint leaves, radicchio, radish tops, raspberry leaves, romaine, cos and rocket lettuce, spinach, swiss chard, watercress, wheat grass, basil, dill, coriander, chicory, parsley and snow pea sprouts.

Salad Treats: Once a day

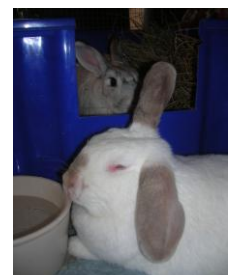
Give in small quantities because of high levels of calcium: dutch carrot tops, dandelion greens, kale.

Good Salad Vegetables: green peppers, carrots, broccoli (mostly flowers, cut up the stems into strips and give them in small amounts), very small amount of cauliflower flowers as too much can cause bloat in bunnies.

Good Salad Fruits: Apple (without core and seed), banana, pear, blueberries, grapes (limited quantities), mango, papaya, peach, pear, pineapple, raisins, sultanas, raspberries, strawberries.

Water

Bunnies need an unlimited supply of fresh water each day. Provide fresh water in a sturdy ceramic bowl, as most bunnies do not get enough water through water bottles especially during the hot weather. If you use a water bottle, also supply a bowl of water for your bunny. Dehydration can contribute to many health conditions.



BUNNIES AS INDOOR PETS

10 Reasons Why Bunnies Should Be Housed Indoors

1. Bunnies are prey animals. They are gentle intelligent creatures and not predator to any other creatures. However, they are prey to cats, dogs, foxes, snakes and birds.
2. Bunnies have sensitive temperaments and are easily frightened and stressed by unfamiliar noise or animals and people in their surroundings. They can die from fright and are reliant on their carers to keep them safe and stress free. They see in shapes and will only see a shape approach them. It is important to talk to your bunny so that they recognise your voice as you approach them. The more the bunny is around you the more they will recognise and become used to your voice. A bunny left outside alone in a small hutch will become fearful of you and their surroundings. They mistrust humans if scared and their only defence is to bite to protect themselves. A child poking fingers into the bunny enclosure will also alarm the bunny.
3. Bunnies with human interaction are affectionate pets. Bunnies learn to trust and will bond with humans the more interaction you have with them. They like routine and will let you know when it is dinnertime.
4. Bunnies have sensitive health needs. As a prey animal, bunnies hide illness, it is important to know their habits, and what is normal for the bunny. This is evident in disinterest in food, no droppings and sitting quietly hunched and not interested in playing or exploring. Any of these symptoms can result in your bunny dying within a day if not taken to a vet. A house bunny interacts with you daily and you are able to monitor their eating habits and behaviour.
5. Bunnies must be protected from mosquitoes and are prone to contracting the calici and myxomatosis virus carried by mosquitoes and other insects. The government has released a new strain of myxomatosis to control wild rabbit populations and there is no vaccine available for pet rabbits. Bunnies can be vaccinated against the calici virus.
6. Bunnies can die in the heat and cold. Bunnies do not have sweat glands and do not perspire. Temperatures above 25 degrees can be fatal, as well as exposure to wind and rain. In nature they would retreat into cool burrows in the heat of the day.
7. Bunnies can be litter trained and are clean animals. They use their litter trays more and more once they are desexed. Desexing protects the girls from uterine cancers and calms the aggressive and anti social behaviours in both sexes that result from puberty.
8. They are social animals. The more that you interact with your bunny the more they will learn to trust you and become inquisitive and affectionate and interactive.
9. They do not need a hutch. All they need is a fenced area in the family room for when you want to contain the bunnies, with a cathouse, a bunny tunnel, a litter and hay tray and a sturdy bowl of water. When you are home the bunnies can have a run around and interact with the family.
10. They are affective, inquisitive and interactive family pets in response to human kindness. The bunny is a barometer of how much quality time you spend with your pet. If your pet is isolated they will become depressed, withdrawn and afraid of you. They can attack and bite if you enter their space.



HOW TO TELL IF YOUR BUNNY IS SICK AND NEEDS TO SEE A VET

Bunnies are prey animals and are very good at hiding illness; therefore bunny owners must watch their bunnies closely to identify if the bunny is unwell. This is why bunnies should be inside, so that they are part of the family and you become familiar with their normal temperament and behaviours. Your bunny can also go into shock from heat, noise or fright. If your bunny is unwell, you must take them to a bunny savvy vet immediately.

CAUTION: Not all vets see enough bunnies to be experienced with bunny health diagnosis and medications, as they are different to cats and dogs. Bunnies need to be treated by a bunny savvy vet who can identify the different conditions in bunnies. Bunnies must continuously eat for gut mobility. The anatomy of a bunny is mostly gut and if the gut stops working then your bunny could die quickly.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

The most common symptoms that your bunny is unwell include:

- Not eating, or a disinterest in their favourite foods
- No droppings or loose droppings
- Sitting hunched for extended periods
- Walking dandruff (mites)
- Any swelling or lumps or wetness around the mouth or eyes
- Sudden weight loss



Some bunnies may also display other serious symptoms such as

- Bloated stomach
- Head tilt
- Unable to stand or lethargic or weakness in legs etc
- Other conditions such as sneezing, nasal discharge should also be investigated (NOTE: this does not mean that the bunny has snuffles, some bunnies can sneeze from hay, dust and other causes – also see a bunny savvy vet)
- There may be other symptoms not mentioned here

If your bunny shows any of these symptoms you need to **seek vet help immediately** from a bunny savvy vet, we recommend Dr Brendan Carmel at WARRANWOOD VETS or go to Dr Gerry Skinner at ANIMAL EMERGENCY CENTRE at Hallam. With any of these symptoms your bunny may be in pain, have teeth problems that make it painful to chew, have bloat, heatstroke, worms or other parasites or suffer from a number of other conditions that can potentially kill them within a few days if not treated. These conditions can cause the bunny to stop eating then their gut can stop working and they can die. If treated early the bunny can recover from most conditions or partly recover to still live a quality bunny life.

TREATMENTS

An annual visit to the vet is a necessity to have their calici vaccination and the teeth checked and claws trimmed to ensure your bunny is well. If a bunny stops eating this can be caused by a range of conditions – the vet will try to stabilise the bunny first with pain relief, fluids and critical care (a nutrient rich feed mixture), and possibly treat with gut mobility drugs or other medications depending on the diagnosis. Further tests may also be done if the bunny does not respond. Bunnies are fragile and will not recover by themselves from these conditions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For bunny owners it is frightening when the bunny gets sick, and this often happens at night and on weekends when the bunny savvy vets are closed and a trip to the Animal Emergency Centre is inevitable to save the bunny from dying. As emergency centres cost a bit more, we suggest that you set up a pet account to deposit money for unexpected vet visits so that this money is on hand for emergencies.

- Feed your bunny greens (and a small bunny treat of pellets) morning and night and monitor if they are eating enthusiastically
- Always introduce new foods gradually in very small amounts to prevent upset tummies
- Have a regular check-up with a bunny savvy vet. The checkup should include vaccinations, teeth check and a claw trim.
- Always bring your bunny inside into an air conditioned room if the temperature heats up or their area becomes warm. Do not have the bunny enclosure in direct sun during the day.
- Always house your bunny inside at night to protect them from predators and mosquitoes and supervise them if they are outside in the day.
- Only feed pellets as a treat (for example no more than a tablespoon morning and night). Pellets cause the bunnies to put on weight and therefore they cannot clean themselves properly or get out of the way of their urine. This can lead to painful conditions such as urine scald and fly strike.
- Make sure that your bunny has unlimited supply of fresh oaten or grass hay and fresh water. This keeps the teeth ground down and the gut moving normally.

A list of Bunny Savvy Vets are listed on our website www.rabbitrunaway.org.au. Please contact us at any time for support or referrals. (03) 9751 1229.

COMPANION BUNNIES



There is a Bun for every Bun

Most bunnies, like humans, need a companion. However, like humans, bunnies like to choose their own companion as not all bunnies like each other. Rabbit Run-Away conducts bunny dates through its Rabbit Run-devzvous Bunny Dating Service, to ensure that your bunny finds Mr or Mrs Right Bunny. Dating has nothing to do with breeding. All bunnies must be desexed and their hormones settled before trying to date them. This can take 8 to 12 weeks for the boys after castration. Most girls can be bonded 10 days after the desex.

What You Should Know

- Your bunny will be a lot happier, content and less stressed with another bunny to share their life.
- Having a second bunny is no more work than a single bunny. In fact a single bunny is a lot more dependent on humans for companionship and entertainment than when they have a friend.
- Depending on the size of the bunnies and your current housing, you do not need to increase your hutch size (unless it is the wire cage type) as two bunnies can share the same housing, food bowls, litter trays and pet carriers, as long as they have exercise areas and room to move around.
- If you need to increase the size of the enclosure, you can attach a pet fence to the hutch allowing you to leave the door of the enclosure open for the bunnies to come into the fenced area.
- There is Mr or Mrs Right bun for every bun.
- Bunnies must be desexed before trying to bond your bunny with another bunny.



Rabbit Run-devous

Rabbit Run- devous is a free bunny dating service where you can bring your desexed bunny for a bunny date.

- Both bunnies must be desexed.
- You can choose the bunny that you would prefer to bond with your bunny, but your bunny will make the ultimate decision if they agree with your choice.
- A boy and girl make the most permanent bonds, as they accept who will be the boss and this is usually established for life.
- The size and breed of the bunny does not matter when it comes to matters of the heart.



All the bunnies have been taking lessons in using their litter trays and in good manners and grooming and we have many handsome and eligible bachelor boys and pretty girls just waiting for their Mr or Mrs Right and their caring humans to welcome them into their new home. Some of our successful couples include our own Mali and Tai where it was love at first sight for these two who just adore each other. Tai would much rather groom Mali than his toy Ducky that he had before he met Mali. For new bunny owners we can also bond a couple of our bunnies to be rehomed together.

BUNNY HOUSING OPTIONS



Indoor Housing

People do not think twice about keeping a cat or dog indoors but will leave their rabbit, which is a prey animal, outside. A bunny is less equipped to cope with outdoor living than either a cat or dog and living outside will mean that the bunny can become wild natured and possibly die from predators, stress or weather conditions. They are intelligent and interactive creatures and once desexed, bunnies will litter train easily and love being inside as part of the family. They are sensitive creatures and require a safe environment and constant monitoring to survive, which is not always possible if housed outdoors. When a bunny becomes part of your family you will see their true nature develop. The more you interact with the bunny, the more they will relax into being part of the family.

There are two options discussed here for housing your bunny indoors

- a. **Indoor Hutches**
- b. **Indoor Fenced Enclosure**



Indoor Hutches

Remember hutches should be used as a safe haven for your bunny not as a prison. The bunnies should want to spend time in their hutches where they feel safe and secure. Most hutches on the market are too small for bunnies. If someone in the family has some basic carpentry skills, you can purchase a two level hutch on eBay and then adapt it for indoor use by:

- Putting in a solid floor that is lined with lino and covering the top floor with lino also
- Putting a hinge on the lower level so that it can be opened for easy cleaning
- Putting the hutch on wheels so that it can be easily moved for cleaning
- Remove the partition upstairs otherwise the bunnies will use this as a toilet
- Shorten the ramp so that the hay tray will fit inside the hutch
- You can then attach a patio fence to the front of the hutch so that the bunny can come out of the hutch and stretch out or sleep. We attach the fence with cable ties
- We always leave the hutch door open for the bunny to come in and out of their hutch into the patio area.



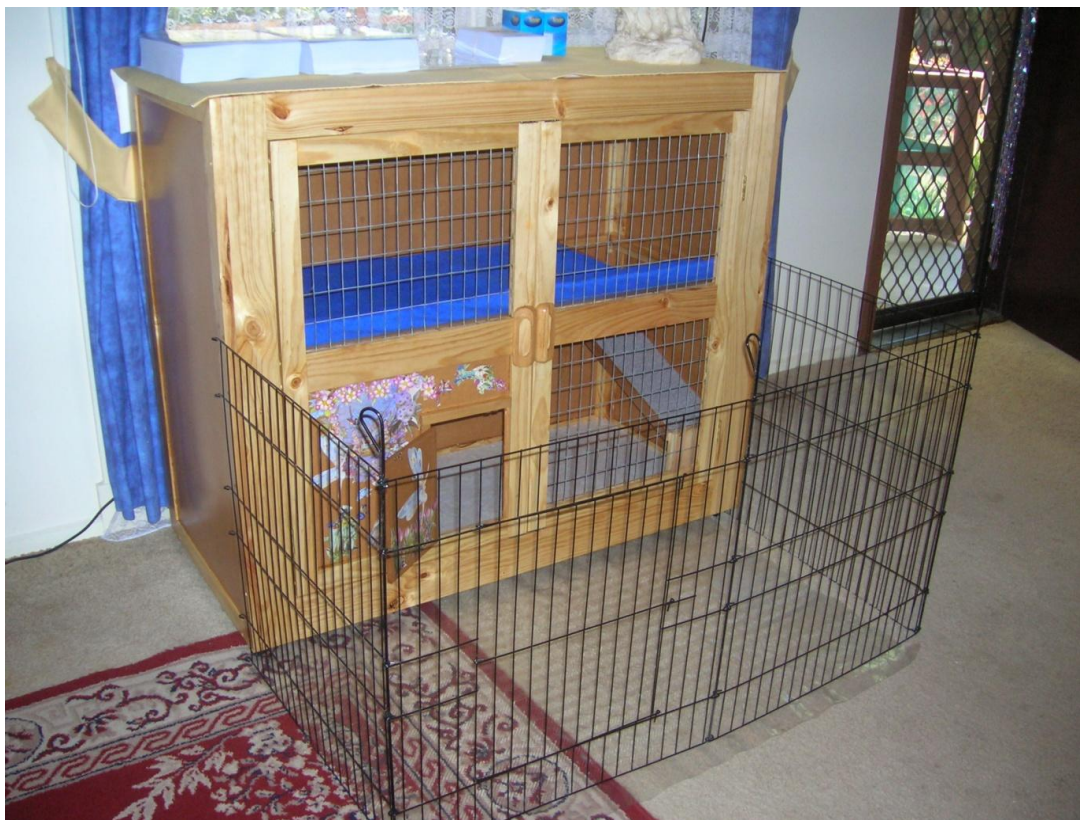
Other things you will need:

- A strip of lino to put under the hutch, for easy cleaning and to protect carpet and floors
- A litter tray and hay tray
- A sturdy flat bottomed water bowl
- A carpet square
- Pre loved towels or mats so that your bunny will not slide
- Cable ties to attach the fence panels to the side of the hutch



Adapting existing furniture

You can also adapt a cupboard into a hutch by putting a ramp from one level to the next and replacing the panels with wire so that the bunnies can look out. Attach a fence around the structure so that the bunny can come in and out.

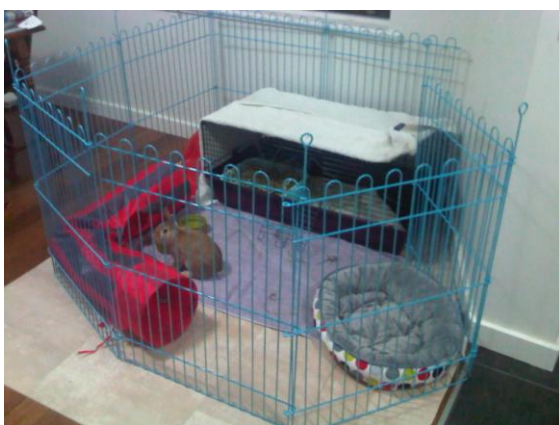


Indoor Fenced Enclosures

Instead of a hutch, you can use a fenced enclosure for securing your bunny when you are not home. This enclosure can be in the family room. You can make the fenced enclosure as large as you wish or use the panels to secure off a section of the room. When you are home you can open the gate on the fence and the bunny can come and go from their enclosure. Always feed them in their enclosure so that they associate this area with their space.

You will need:

- A minimum of 8 panels
- A strip of inexpensive lino to put under the fence
- A mat or preloved towels to place over the lino
- A cat house for the bunny to retreat into for security
- A sturdy flat bottomed water bowl
- A hay tray
- A litter tray with paper based litter
- Maybe a tunnel and cat toys to play with



Alternatively, you can place a little cat house and a litter and hay trays into a laundry area and leave the door open with a child's fence across the door. Your bunny will be able to see out and you can open their gate to let them interact with the family when you are home. The more your bunny is around the family, the more interactive they will be and display their unique personality.

Play Areas and Enclosures



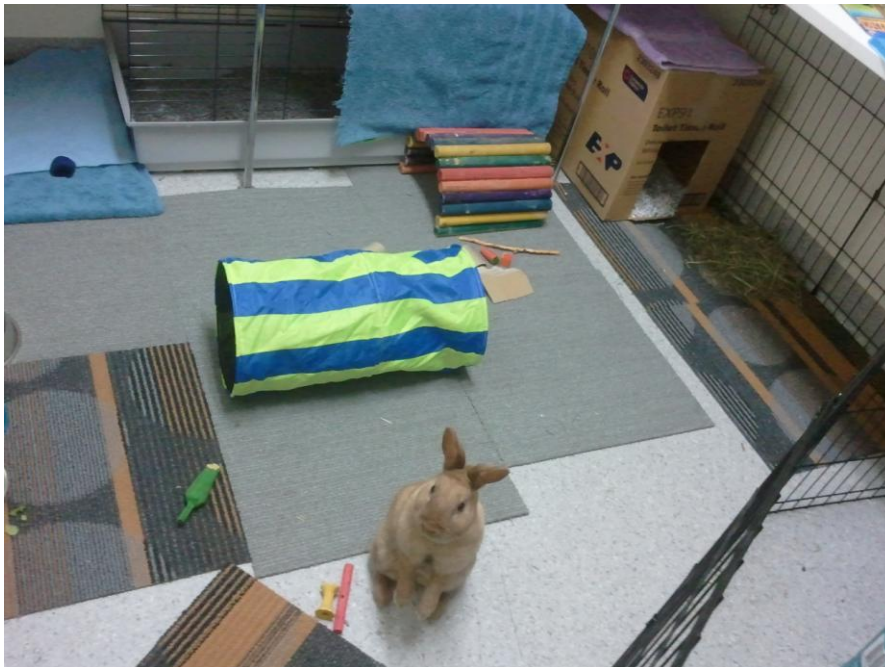
Young rabbits are inquisitive and interactive. They enjoy climbing and burrowing, so creating spaces where they can display this behaviour and where you can enjoy watching them is essential to having a rabbit as a companion pet. As the bunny matures, they become more sedentary and will enjoy just sitting around with you

Essentials for you

A strip of lino under the enclosure allows for easy cleaning

Long handled broom to collect any pellets that the bunny may leave to mark his space

Paint scraper to collect any Cecals (night droppings) that are discarded



- Carpet tiles or mats for grip on lino (and use pre loved bath mats)
- Pre loved towels to place in tunnels and bedding areas
- Chew, toss and throw toys (*some bird, rodent, cat or dog toys may be suitable*)
- Tunnels
- Boxes, carriers or cat beds to climb on and hide in
- Dig area with hay
- Water bowl (flat bottomed)
- Dish for greens and treats
- Litter and hay trays

Outdoor Housing



There are two options discussed here for housing your bunny outside and we consider these the most suitable options for outdoor living. However, in extreme weather conditions, the bunny should still be brought indoors.

Large Child's Cubby House or other building
Porch Living
Converting a carport

Nature of rabbits

Rabbits in the wild live in burrows, which remain a constant temperature and where they feel safe from predators. They live in families and are social, intelligent and inquisitive creatures. Hutches must imitate the conditions of a burrow with protection from extreme weather.

Hutches

There is no hutch on the market that is weather and predator proof or large and secure enough to house bunnies. Hutches should not be placed in the garden and exposed to weather. The hutch should be considered by the bunny to be a safe haven, not a prison. It is extremely cruel to isolate and confine your bunny to a hutch for the rest of its life. Outdoor hutches must be weather and mosquito proofed, and housed within other buildings, enclosed patios or verandas. Outdoor hutches should also be large enough to accommodate a litter and hay tray to keep them clean and dry. Towels or mats can be used to give the bunnies a cosy area that is completely wind proofed. Do not put hay on the floor of the hutch as this encourages the bunnies to use the hay as their toilet. Use hay and litter trays instead.

Large Child's Cubby House or other building

Converting a child's cubby house or shed into a bunny house is an excellent option as shown below.

This cubby house is lined, mosquito proofed and air-conditioned. The bunnies have their hay and litter trays, a dog bed to sit on, tunnels, and tables inside to jump onto and look out the windows.

When you are home the bunnies can play in the enclosed garden area, which is large enough for children to sit with the bunnies.





Porch Living

The best environment for an outside hutch in winter is on a sheltered large porch, where the bunny's hutch is completely protected from direct rain and wind. The bunnies must be brought inside in summer when the weather is over 25 degrees or their area heats up (see indoor housing options). The hutch should have an area that is cosy and warm. Large cupboards or bookcases can be converted into multi level hutches with ramps from one level to the next. The doors on the front can be replaced with doors with sturdy wire and clear perspex on the top level so the bunny can remain warm and draught free and the bunny can still look outside.

Bunnies will learn to use a cat door so that they can come and go from their hutch onto the porch. The porch can be secured with a fence enclosed with shade cloth. Our porch hutches also have a small oil heater enclosed in a wire frame on the top level so that the bunnies cannot burn themselves. On really cold nights we put the heater on low and it takes the chill out of the air. We also have a cathouse in this top level to give them more warmth and security. If the bunnies get warm they move to the lower level, which is more open.

The wire must be sturdy enough to prevent predator attack and we always secure the cat door shut at night for added security.

Four level porch hutch with ramps to each level





Porch living...

allows the bunnies to run around on the porch in bad weather and go back into their hutch if they feel afraid or just want to rest in a safe haven. Lino can be placed in their porch area for easier cleaning.



Enclosing a Carport

Enclosing a Carport

Enclosing a carport that is no longer used is an excellent way to make a child's play room, store room or a bunny area, with a hutch and play area that is outside the house.

This carport has been enclosed with laser-light and predator proof sturdy wire. A door was constructed and the floor covered with lino. The windows are strong predator proof wire covered in flywire to protect from mosquitoes.

The bunny hutch is then placed in this area.



There is good airflow through the mosquito-proofed windows, which are fitted with clear blinds that can be drawn in winter to block out the wind. The building is temperature controlled, with ceiling fans.

It serves as a safe building for the bunnies that is outside the home, but completely protected from the elements.

