

Elmbrook Humane Society

# Adoption Guide



# Table of Contents

Check List.....4

- Rabbit Diet.....5

- Veterinary List.....6

Rabbit Health.....7

What To Expect.....8

Rabbit Housing.....9

Socialization and Playtime.....10

Bonding Rabbits.....11

Rabbits And Cats.....12

Rabbits And Dogs.....13

I've got a fondness for rabbits.

— *Martin McDonagh*





# Check List

☐ 01

## Hay

Rabbits need hay 24/7! Rabbits can develop gut stasis if they don't get enough fiber in their diet. Hay provides that fiber which is why they need an unlimited supply. Meadow, orchard, or timothy hay are the best choices.



☐ 02

## Pellets

Avoid pellet mixes that contain seeds, grains, dried corn, or dehydrated vegetables. Rabbits should be fed 1/8–1/4 cup of pellets daily.



☐ 03

## Vegetables

One cup (per 5 lbs) of fresh produce should be offered daily. Make sure you have a good mix of fresh veggies!



☐ 04

## Litter Box

You can train your rabbit to use a little box. Often times keeping hay in the box can help since rabbits will eliminate while eating hay.



☐ 05

## Toys

You can make homemade enrichment toys for your rabbits. There are also great chey toys they can have, and can use puzzle toys as well.



☐ 06

## Blankets and Bedding

Rabbits love to snuggle up whether it's in a warm bed or on a cozy blanket. Make sure you help your rabbit feel "at home".



☐ 07

## Cage or Pen

A good minimum cage size is 48"x18"x24" (LxHxD); bigger is always better. Baby gates and exercise-pen (x-pens) or pet fences work well to establish an area that will keep your rabbit safe.



☐ 08

## An Appointment With Your Veterinarian

Be sure to schedule an appointment with your vet so they can meet your animal and make sure they are up-to-date on treatments and vaccines.





# Rabbit Diet



## Hay

Rabbits need unlimited hay for optimal health. Hay in a litter pan also encourages good litterbox training, as rabbits tend to poop while eating hay. Meadow, orchard, or timothy hay are the best choices.

## Produce

Fresh produce is an important part of a healthy rabbit's diet. One cup (per 5 lbs) of fresh produce should be offered daily.

- 75% of daily produce should be leafy greens such as arugula, red or green lettuce, romaine, turnip greens, endive, escarole, dandelion greens, cilantro, and spring greens. (no iceberg lettuce).
- 20% should be vegetables such as carrots, bell pepper, edible flowers, squash, and zucchini.
- 5% should be fruits such as apple, banana, peach, pear, plum, papaya, mango, or berries.

## Pellets

Pellets are a good complement to a diet of hay and fresh vegetables to guarantee adequate nutrition, but should be limited:  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of pellets daily for adult rabbits. Avoid pellet mixes that contain seeds, grains, dried corn, or dehydrated vegetables.

## Water

Bunnies need unlimited access to fresh water. Water must be changed daily. We suggest offering water in a heavy crock rather than a bottle, to encourage drinking.

# Veterinary Clinics



Elmbrook Humane Society is grateful to these veterinarians for donating their services; however, this list is not an EBHS endorsement or recommendation.

You received a half sheet in your adoption folder for a free wellness exam. It is important to get your new pet established with a vet in case anything medical arises. We have a list of veterinary clinics that accept the half sheet and you can view the lists below. Vets with an asterisk by their name treat exotic animals.

## Veterinarians Inside Waukesha County

Click [Here](#) for the list of vet clinics in Waukesha County.

## Veterinarians Outside Waukesha County

Click [Here](#) for the list of vet clinics outside of Waukesha County.



# Rabbit Health

Rabbits' instincts are to hide signs of illness; they often show little outward sign of being unwell until they are very sick. The first hint of potential illness are subtle changes in your rabbit's behavior and routine that make you feel "something's not quite right". If you notice a change you are worried about, call your vet to set up an appointment.

## Behaviors of an unwell rabbit to watch for:

### Changes to Grooming

- Soiled or dirty fur, dirty ears, excessive scratching, chewing fur, wet fur around eyes, chin or bottom.

### Changes to Activity

- Less active than normal, slower to greet you, aggressive, spending less time playing, exploring or interacting.

### Changes to Movement

- Limping, stumbling, dragging back legs, uncoordinated, tilting to one side, reluctant to move.

### Changes to Eating Habits

- A change in food preferences, only eating favorite foods, eating less, dropping food, chewing oddly.
- Not eating at all is an emergency.

### Changes to Toilet Habits

- Losing litter training, increased urinating, small or odd shaped droppings.
- Diarrhea or producing no droppings are emergencies.

### Stomach Pressing (Pain)

- Pressing the stomach to the floor, restlessness, and unable to find a comfortable position to sit or lie in.

### Signs of Pain

- Sitting huddles/hunched up, eyes tense or semi-closed, reluctant to move, may grind their teeth.

### Seizure

- Rapid twitching, kicking, or shaking. May stagger or appear disorientated but not necessarily fall over.

### Unresponsive

- Laying on side limp, floppy, or cold. Some rabbits sleep in this position but will act normally when disturbed.

### Difficulty Breathing

- Mouth breathing (rabbits usually breathe through their nose), laboured breathing, wheezing, blue lips.





# What To Expect



## Rabbit No-Nos

- Rabbits hate strong smells like perfume, smoke, and even the smell of other animals can be stressful.
- Most rabbits don't like being held.

## Your Rabbit Needs A Friend

Rabbits are social animals, this means that if they are alone they can sulk, get bored, and even get depressed.

## A Rabbit's Love Language

Friendly nudges from your rabbit can mean "hello." A rabbit says "I'm happy!" by jumping up in the air and twisting, known as a binky. Head pets are often a favorite of most rabbits and they love to sunbathe. Rabbits also love routines and will learn schedules. They can even learn commands with proper training!



# Rabbit Housing

## Housing Types

### Cage

A good minimum cage size is 48"x18"x24" (LxHxD); bigger is always better. Smaller cages can lead to muscle atrophy, urine scald, and boredom. Do not use aquariums or cages with solid walls. Other great choices are multi-level hutches connected with carpeted ramps.

### Cage Free

Baby gates and exercise-pen (x-pens) or pet fences work well to establish an area that will keep your rabbit safe and contained without being limiting. Larger rabbits may be able to scale some pet fences and baby gates. Living "cage free" will reduce the chance of aggressive behaviors and will not make your rabbit feel trapped.

## Other Considerations

### Temperature

Keep your rabbit in a cool room (60-70 degrees °F). On hot days run the air conditioner or place a frozen plastic bottle in the cage with a fan

### Rabbit Proofing

Often rabbits chew furniture and pull out carpet fibers when they are bored or upset. Provide lots of alternatives both in and out of the cage (see toy list above). It is often safest to keep your rabbit caged or confined when you are asleep or not at home.

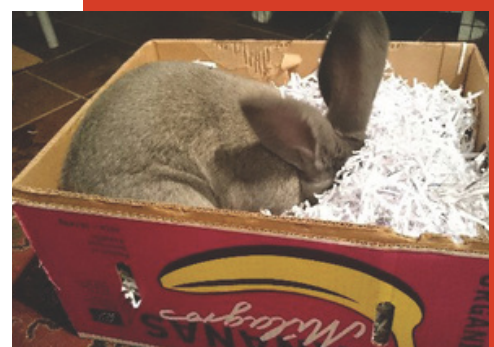




# Socialization and Playtime

The following are a few toys and activity station ideas to try with your rabbit to help keep them mentally and physically stimulated!

- **Digging or Foraging Box** – One helpful tool is a digging box. Digging boxes can be made of a sturdy cardboard box, a kiddie pool, or a covered or uncovered litter box. Fill the box with 3 to 4 inches of play sand, straw, newspaper, or shredded paper for the bunny to dig through. A foraging box could be made out of the same materials, but instead fill with a variety of hay (1st, 2nd, 3 cut timothy, grass hay, bermuda grass, orchard grass, oat grass, or alfalfa), dried plants (ie: willow leaves, flowers, etc...), and sprinkle a few treats or vegetables so that the rabbit can snoop through and find the yummy stuff to eat.
- **Chewing Sticks** – Rabbits' teeth never stop growing. Provide a variety of chew toys to help prevent their teeth from becoming overgrown. Store-bought chewing sticks or natural, untreated wood work great. Many rabbits find apple and willow twigs especially appealing.
- **Treat Clothesline** – Clip produce to a string to encourage stretching, chewing, and mental stimulation!
- **Treat Ball** – Make treat balls out of toilet paper and paper towel rolls to promote mental and physical stimulation. Add your rabbit's favorite treats, sticks, or hay. Bonus: Cut holes in a small/medium bottle (ex: water bottle) for rabbits that need a more difficult challenge.
- **Egg Carton Puzzle Feeder** – Make a great puzzle feeder for your rabbit by putting their pellets and/or treats in a cardboard egg carton.





# Bonding Rabbits



## Bonding Basics

Bonded rabbits tend to live longer, stay healthier, and greatly enjoy the company of a friend. Your bonding goal is to match two rabbits with compatible personalities. Rabbits' reactions to one another can vary from love at first sight (about 10% of the time) to neutral indifference (about 80% of the time) to aggression or strong dislike (about 10% of the time).

Your interaction can encourage your rabbits to become friends. Help them associate bonding time with positive experiences. Put the rabbits side-by-side, and pet and praise both at the same time. Allow them to share a salad, or offer them a special treat while they are together. Never favor one rabbit over the other, and always try to end bonding sessions on a positive note.

## Becoming Good Neighbors

Once the rabbits are getting comfortable with one another, put their living quarters close to one another. This allows them to see and smell each other and get used to the other's presence.

## Living Together

Once your rabbits are peacefully spending one to two hours together daily, they can be introduced into their intended permanent living space, initially under supervision.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS



### What To Expect

- **Positive interactions:**
- Relaxed, normally behavior
- Grooming themselves or each other
- Seeking each other peacefully
- Sitting or lying near each other

### Negative Interactions:

- Persistent chasing
- Persistent mounting
- Fighting
- Growling

## Bonding Resources

It may be helpful to speak to your vet or to an experienced shelter or rescue volunteer for more detailed advice before and during the bonding process. Online groups, forums, and websites can offer first-hand tips, tricks, and trouble-shooting.

# Rabbits and Cats

Exercise caution during introductions. If your cat is aggressive or your rabbit is scared, stop the interaction. Do not begin introductions until both animals are feeling confident and comfortable in their environment

## Set Up For Success

- Start with your rabbit in a large cage with bars too small for your cat to reach in. Make sure your rabbit has room to run around and stand up so your cat can become accustomed to your rabbit's movements. Provide a cardboard box inside the habitat so your rabbit has a safe place to retreat.
- When both are comfortable with each other's movements and smells (this can take days, weeks, or even months), move forward with your introductions.
- Hold your cat on your lap and let your rabbit investigate at their own pace. Continue short sessions until everyone is feeling comfortable and peaceful together. Provide a safe place to retreat for each animal. A cat tree for your cat and a wooden hide box for your rabbit works great

## Once They Are Friends

- Don't be surprised if your rabbit is the dominant personality in the relationship. Rabbits can be bossy and territorial, sometimes causing a wary, defensive reaction from your cat. Ideally, your cat will leave if your rabbit is being too bossy but watch for defensive swipes. Consider trimming claws monthly or using claw covers.
- If a bite or scratch happens, be sure to monitor the wound very closely. Injuries from cats get infected easily and infections are difficult to treat in rabbits. A vet visit is in order if the skin around the injury is puffy, pink or red, or looks irritated.



# Rabbits and Dogs

For a successful rabbit-dog household, your dog must have a low prey drive and must not be interested in chasing and killing wildlife. A low prey drive dog is gentle with other animals even in play. Introducing dogs and rabbits should be done with caution and preparation.

## Set Up For Success:

- Never allow your dog to meet your rabbit when both animals are free roaming.
- Keep the dog on a leash and make sure your rabbit has a place to hide.
- Keep sessions short and gradually extend supervised introductions.
- Proceed slowly. Take your time and have patience.
- Safety of your rabbit is your top priority during this process.
- Use positive reinforcement and be consistent.

## Once They Are Friends:

- Always provide escape routes for your rabbit and dog.
- Always keep separate feeding areas.
- Never allow your dog to chase your rabbit, even in play.
- Dogs and rabbits should never be left alone together, even if they get along.





Elmbrook Humane Society



# Contact Information

Address :

20950 Enterprise Ave, Brookfield, WI, 53045

Phone Number :

(262) 782-9261

Email :

[elmbrookhs@ebhs.org](mailto:elmbrookhs@ebhs.org)

Website:

[www.ebhs.org](http://www.ebhs.org)

