



Rabbit Haven

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FOOD/DIET

PELLETS:

Rabbits should NOT be fed primarily on commercially produced pellets. Commercial breeders who are raising rabbits for the table do pellet feeding. Rabbit's digestive systems evolved to allow them to survive on a marginal diet; alfalfa pellets are far too rich and refined to provide a balanced diet.

HAY:

The primary staple of your rabbit's diet should be Timothy Hay and some good local hay.

WATER:

Fresh water should be provided daily. Dump out water that is left in bottles or bowls and refill daily. Rabbits use more water from bowls than bottles because it is easier to drink. Use a heavy ceramic dish that can not be easily overturned. You may want to use a bottle as a backup, in case the bowl does get overturned.

Water containers should be washed thoroughly with soap and water every couple of days, or run through the dishwasher. Scum build up in the bowl is not good for your rabbit. If you wouldn't drink out of it, neither should your rabbit.

HAY AND VEGETABLE DIET:

Feed a minimum of 1 cup of vegetables for each 4 pounds of weight

Timothy Hay or good grass hay must be available 24 hours a day

Select a minimum of three types of vegetables daily. A variety is necessary to provide adequate nutrients. Choose one that contains Vitamin A, indicated by an *.

Add one new vegetable at a time. If soft stool or diarrhea occurs, eliminate that vegetable from the diet.

NEVER USE VEGETABLES SPRAYED WITH PESTICIDES!

SALAD MIX VEGETABLES

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Alfalfa/Radish/Clover Sprouts | Escarole | Spinach ✓ * |
| Basil | Kale ✓ * | Watercress |
| Beet Greens (tops)* | Mint | Wheat Grass |
| Bok Choy | Mustard Greens* | |
| Cilantro | Parsley* | |
| Collard Greens* | Clover | |
| Dandelion (flowers & stems) | Raspberry Leaves | |
| Endive* | Romaine/Red/Green Leaf Lettuce | (NO Iceberg) |

HARD VEGETABLES

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Broccoli (leaves & stems) | Cauliflower | Radishes & Tops |
| Brussels Sprouts | Celery | |
| Carrots & Tops* | Green/Red/Yellow Peppers | |

✓ Use sparingly, high in oxalates or toxic in large quantities.

* High in Vitamin A



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FRUITS:

1 to 2 per day. Small amounts totaling 1 – 2 tablespoons per 5 pounds of body weight (none if dieting).

FRUITS

Apple (cored & seeded)
Bananas (½" slices)
Blackberries
Blueberries
Grapes
Kiwi

Mango (pitted)
Melons
Papaya
Peaches
Pears
Pineapple (fresh only)

Prunes
Raisins
Raspberries
Strawberries

**Avoid plums & cherries
Poisonous!**

Rabbits need roughage to keep their digestive systems working properly. Good sources of roughage are Timothy hay, Apple tree branches, Willow tree branches, Blackberry vines (thorns and all), Raspberry leaves and Alder tree branches. Do NOT use Cherry or Plum branches, as they are poisonous.

DO NOT USE IF TREES OR VINES HAVE BEEN SPRAYED WITH CHEMICALS!

AVOID SUGAR Rabbits will overindulge and beg for it. It increases the bad bacteria in their digestive systems and can cause intestinal trouble resulting in diarrhea and/or not eating. Too many sweets can cause obesity. Never feed your rabbit chocolate ✓ !

HOUSING

CAGES IN GENERAL:

Rabbits were not designed to live on wire floors, a house rabbit does not need a wire floor. Wire floors cause sores to develop on rabbits' feet. All cages with wire floors must have a piece of plexi-glass or a piece of plywood that the rabbit can sit on. When using grass hay, the ENTIRE wire floor should be covered. Carpet squares are good for some rabbits. If they chew on the carpet, you must remove it immediately or risk the rabbit getting an intestinal blockage.

RABBITS OUTSIDE:

It is a joy to watch your bunny play outside but.....

Do not let your rabbit play on grass that has been fertilized or had a weed killer put on it. Always supervise your rabbit while it is outside, it takes just a few seconds for a dog to kill or frighten your rabbit to death. Never leave your rabbit outside after dark. Predators are raccoons, stray dogs, cats, possums, owls and coyotes. Even in the city, these predators exist. Even in a secure hutch, a rabbit can be frightened to death by a predator attempting to get in.

CAGED PART OF THE TIME:

An "untrained" rabbit probably should be caged while you are not home. Rabbits are nocturnal, so they generally sleep while you are away. They are ready to play when you get home. If you work during the day, they won't mind so much being in a cage but, they must be let out for at least several hours to exercise and have social time with you everyday. Rabbits that are never let out of their cages have problems with muscle atrophy, they can't even hop.

CONFINED TO A ROOM OR A CAGE ONLY WHILE YOU ARE AWAY:

Bored rabbits become naughty rabbits. If they are left to roam the house while no one is home to talk to them and pet them, they will find something to do. That is when they chew a hole in the leather couch or dig a hole in the carpet or chew the corners off of the sheet rock. Younger rabbits are usually the ones that get into this type of trouble. Often a bathroom or laundry room is a safe place for your rabbit to stay while he can't be supervised. These rooms are easy to rabbit proof. Make sure they have their bed, food, water, litterbox and some toys.



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FREE RUN OF THE HOUSE:

This is what we all hope for and many of us are able to achieve. This requires more work on your part. You must inspect every room for wires and other things that are dangerous to your rabbit. Houseplants can be toxic. If you have a computer room, you might want to exclude him from that room. The more room that your rabbit has the more delightful he will be to be around. Nothing is nicer than to have "Flopsy" curled up at the foot of your bed.

RABBIT PROOFING YOUR HOUSE

WIRES:

Rabbits love to chew on wires – electric, phone, cable and computer wires. You must protect your possessions as well as your rabbit's life. You can purchase plastic tubing which, when slit open, can be slipped over most wires and taped in a few places. Bunny doesn't find this as enticing. Some wires can be taped up higher on the wall or tucked under the rug. Check hidden places where the rabbit could climb up and reach those wires. He might find wires that you can't see as well, such as behind the washer or dryer, behind the TV or behind or under the bed.

CORNERS:

Some rabbits will chew on the corners of the walls or wood trim on windows and baseboards. This is one reason you must watch your rabbit while he is free in the house. If he finds an irresistible spot, you can purchase hard plastic corners at the hardware store. These were meant for the edges of wallpaper. Sheet rock is not good for them.

WOOD:

For items like chair legs, coffee tables, kitchen cabinets and doorframes, a product called "Bitter Apple" can be purchased at most pet stores. It is applied to the wood and serves as a deterrent to chewing. They must have their own piece of wood to chew on. If they continue to chew on your wood, clap your hands loudly to make them stop then give them their own wood to chew on. (NO CEDAR)

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

DISCIPLINE:

NEVER hit your rabbit. They don't understand and become angry or aggressive. When you find your rabbit doing something that is not allowed, try any or all of the following:

- Clap your hands together loudly
- Thump your foot on the floor like a fellow rabbit
- Whistle loudly
- Shout loudly

BITING:

Biting must be stopped as soon as possible. A rabbit does not usually bite because they hate you. Within a rabbit's social structure, nipping is used as a way to control other rabbits. A bite might signify that the rabbit wants to get down or is through being petted. He might accidentally bite your leg while tugging at your pants or shoes. This is usually done for attention. Whatever the reason, if you are nipped, you must immediately let out a shrill cry. Rabbits do this when they are hurt. Since they usually did not intend to hurt you, they will be surprised and generally stop this behavior within a couple of times.

DANGERS TO RABBITS:

Amoxicillin: Antibiotic used for cats and humans. Kills rabbits ✓
Cedar/Pine Shavings: Inhaled hydrocarbons cause liver damage
Houseplants: Many houseplants are toxic, bunny doesn't know what is safe
Electric Wires: Fires and electrocution could result
Stray/Strange Dogs: Always supervise your rabbit around dogs
Hairballs/Intestinal Blockages: Feed plenty of Timothy hay and give plenty of daily exercise

GROOMING



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SHEDDING:

Rabbits shed every three months. Alternate shedding will be light and may not be that noticeable. You will not be able to miss the heavy shedding time.

Rabbits are fastidious groomers. They lick themselves like cats, and like cats can accumulate hairballs. Unlike cats, they can not vomit. Hairballs that are allowed to form mix with food and block the exit from the stomach. The rabbit may starve to death while his tummy looks very fat. Rabbits need weekly brushing to remove any loose hair and prevent matting. During heavy shedding you will need to brush daily. Some rabbits shed over a couple of weeks and others loose their entire old coat in just a day or two. These rabbits can not be neglected. A grooming glove, small toothed comb or a soft brush will help remove the shed hair.

Bald spots on rabbits are common while they are shedding; especially the ones who loose their coats all at once. These spots will grow in within a week or two.

NAILS:

Rabbit nails grow to be very long and sharp. Using a pair of dog nail trimmers, you can clip the nails to a proper length. On light colored nails, the quick (blood vein) is easy to see. Trim about one eighth of an inch beyond quick. Dark colored nails are harder to see. It is helpful to hold the rabbit's foot up to a bright light.

People are often afraid to clip their rabbit's nails for fear that they will cause the rabbit to bleed. If this happens, use Kwik Stop on the toe or apply pressure with a cotton ball until the bleeding stops. Be sure to remember that rabbits have a dewclaw higher up on their front legs. Their nails should be clipped about every 6 – 8 weeks. If you are not comfortable doing this yourself, your vet or Rabbit Haven can do this for you.

TEETH:

Rabbits teeth grow constantly. They must be checked periodically to ensure they are properly aligned and wearing evenly. Rabbits teeth that are improperly aligned will not wear down evenly causing the rabbit to have difficulty eating and possible starvation. If the teeth are not wearing properly they will need to be clipped. Your vet or Rabbit Haven can do this for you or show you how to do it. In any case it **must** be done. Drooling may be a sign of misalignment of the back teeth and should be examined by your vet.

ANGORA & OTHER LONG HAired RABBITS:

These types of rabbits are truly beautiful to look at but require a lot more attention. As a house pet, we recommend that you use scissors and trim the long fur to one inch or so. This keeps the rabbit cooler in the summer and helps prevent hairballs and matts. A matted rabbit is not a pretty sight. They are not comfortable either.

RABBIT BEHAVIOR

SNIFFING:

May be annoyed or just talking to you

GRUNTS:

Usually angry, watch out or you could get bitten

SHRILL SCREAM:

Hurt or dying

CIRCLING YOUR FEET:

Usually indicates sexual behavior. Bunny is in love.

SPRAYING:

Males that are not neutered will mark female rabbits in this manner. They will mark their territory and you as well. Some females will also spray. Use white vinegar to clean up.

CHINNING:

Their chin contains scent glands, which they use to mark their territory, you and all things that they deem to be theirs.

FALSE PREGNANCY:

Usually just unsprayed females will build a nest by pulling out belly hair to line a nest. They may even stop eating as truly pregnant rabbits do a day before birth.



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| | |
|------------------------|---|
| BUNNY HOP: | A sign of pure joy and happiness. |
| BEGGING: | Rabbits are worse than dogs about begging. Especially for treats. Avoid indulging them too much. An overweight rabbit is not as healthy as a trim rabbit. |
| TERRITORIAL DROPPINGS: | Droppings that are not in a pile, but are scattered are signs that this territory belongs to this rabbit. It is a form of marking and will often occur upon entering a new environment. If two rabbits live in the same house there may always be some problem with this. |
| PLAYING: | Rabbits like to push or toss things around. They may also race madly across the room, jump up on the couch and bound over the top of you. They are just having fun. |
| DON'T TOUCH MY STUFF: | Rabbits are creatures of habit, when you rearrange their things they often are displeased. They get things arranged just right and want them to stay that way. |
| STOMPING: | He's frightened, mad or trying to warn you of danger (in his opinion) |
| TEETH GRINDING: | This indicates contentment, much like a cat's purr. |

TOYS

- Toilet paper and paper towel tubes
- Cardboard tubes (8" or larger)
- Paper cups
- Newspaper (wadded up) and scraps of white paper
- Straw baskets and Rattan paper plate holders (unpainted)
- Soft drink cans with a pebble inside (tape the hole closed)
- Rubber balls (unless they chew them up)
- Wire balls with a bell inside (cat toys)
- Cardboard boxes, you can get as creative as you like with boxes
- Things to jump up on (they like to be in high places)

LITTER BOX TRAINING

OUTSIDE RABBITS MOVING IN & NEW RABBITS:

1) Place a litter box inside of the hutch over whatever area the rabbit uses for a bathroom, usually a corner. Place some of the droppings into the box.

If the rabbit likes to dig and moves the box around, you can use a large metal clamp to fix it to the side of the hutch. They can be purchased at most hardware stores. You might also drill a small hole in the side of the box and secure it with twist ties.

2) Organic litter is the best for rabbits because they have very little dust. (Rabbits are susceptible to upper respiratory ailments caused by dust) Clay litter is not recommended because it is very dusty. Recommended organic litters:

- Cat Country
- Care Fresh
- Crown Animal Bedding

**** WARNING: DO NOT USE CAT WORKS – LINKED TO ZINC POISONING****
<http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/health/vet-talk/zinc.html>



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Place about a 1" layer in the litter box and add some of the rabbit's droppings and urine, place the rabbit in the box and tell her what a good bunny she is. She will soon get the idea.

NOTE: Do Not use any litter that has cedar, cedar oils, zinc or the clumping clay litters.

3) Confine the rabbit to a cage, bathroom or utility room. Place the litter box in whatever enclosure you choose for training.

4) A bathroom or other small room without carpeting is a good place to start the training. Since vinyl floors can be slippery, give bunny something like a rug or towel to lay on. This is also a good time to trim nails. He will feel more comfortable. Do not let him into any other room of the house until he is always urinating in his box. If he has an accident outside of the box, wipe it up with vinegar immediately. Nature's Miracle is also very effective but more expensive.

When you first let him out of his cage or enclosure, stay in the room with him. When he leaves droppings on the floor, immediately put both bunny and the droppings in the litter box. Tell him what a good bunny he is and pet him. Spend as much time as you can with him and when you have to leave, put him back into his cage or enclosure. A baby gate (not light plastic) works well to divide a room into a manageable space. Repeat this often until he has the training room mastered. Only then can you let him out into another room.

5) Let the litter box stay a little dirty while the rabbit is learning. If you keep it too clean he will think that he is not supposed to use it. You can dispose of organic litter directly in the toilet or into the compost pile. Wonderful fertilizer is an added bonus of sharing your home with a rabbit.

NOTE: It is almost impossible to litter train an unspayed or unneutered rabbit. If you can't resist letting bunny have the run of the house immediately, be prepared to have him consider your house as one very large litter box. Once this habit is established, it is very hard to change. It is far better to spend the time in the beginning and enjoy your fuzzy friend's good manners.

HEALTH CHECKUPS FOR YOUR RABBIT, ARE THEY NECESSARY?

YES! Just as you regularly trim your own nails and check your teeth, you need to check your rabbit's health every 6 – 8 weeks.

NAILS:

Trim every 6 – 8 weeks (see grooming)

FEET:

Check the soles of each rear foot for bald or sore spots. The hair on the heels can wear off and result in sores. This is usually the result of living on a wire floor. It can also be due to an overweight or heavy rabbit living on a hard or rough surface. Pasteurella (a bacteria) can easily infect these sores. See a vet immediately. Check each toe and, if you find a broken nail, trim it and be sure it heals properly. You can rinse the nail with Hydrogen Peroxide.

TEETH:

Check to make sure that they are properly aligned. Top teeth should be directly in line with the bottom teeth and they should come slightly over the bottom teeth. They should be white and free from buildup.

EYES:

Rabbits can have a little crust like substance in the corners of their eyes. This is common. Simply remove with a damp Q-Tip. Their eyes should be bright and clear with no sign of discharge in the eyelashes, tear ducts or under the eye. The lids should not be puffy.



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Note: The smaller dwarf breeds have more protruding eyes and will often develop a tissue like substance that floats on their eye. Because of the shape of their eye, they can not blink this off by themselves. You will need to remove it for them. If necessary, use artificial tears such as Bosch & Lomb eyewash (Visine is very irritating to bunny eyes.) One drop in each eye should help remove the matter. Often you can use a dampened Q-Tip and gently lift the matter off of the eye. This should be done daily.

EARS:

Check inside ears to be sure that they are clean and free of mites. Mites will produce a brownish waxy substance and the ears will look reddish inside.

NOSE:

Look for a clean, dry nose. If there is moisture of a "snotty" substance in the nose, see your vet immediately. This could be a sign of Pasteurella. Even if the rabbit is not sneezing and you see moisture, check the inside of each front leg to see if there is an accumulation on them. Rabbits will wipe their noses with their front paws and can easily hide signs of Pasteurella (Snuffles).

CHIN:

Check under the chin for a waxy buildup from their scent glands. If you find this condition, you can wipe the chin gently with warm water. If this does not remove the buildup, you will need to clip it off with a pair of round tipped scissors. Rabbits that drink from unsanitary bowls will occasionally develop dermatitis, look for redness or irritation.

GENITAL SCENT GLANDS:

In addition to the scent gland under the chin, rabbits have a pair of scent glands located on either side of their genitals. They are a little hard to discover. This area needs to be cleaned and checked. It is convenient to clean the glands at the same time and frequency as the nails (every 6 – 8 weeks).

To find these glands, lay the rabbit on its back or sit it on a counter with its back to you, holding its stomach with your left hand, gently use your fingers to separate the area directly adjacent to the genitals on each side. You will find a little "packet". In this pocket is a scent gland looking a lot like a pimple. A musky, waxy substance builds up in there. Sometimes it is white and flaky and other times it will be waxy and brown. If allowed to build up, it can cause an infection. At the least, it does not smell good. You should clean this area with a Q-Tip dipped in warm water or Hydrogen Peroxide. Gently wipe the area clean. There will be a small brown dot on the center of the gland that you will not be able to remove as this is the opening to the gland.

LUMPS AND BUMPS:

Check your rabbit all over, his legs, neck, back, belly, head and face. Female and male rabbits will have nipples on their stomach but there should be no other bumps. If you find any other lumps, it is wise to have your vet check them out. As with humans, the earlier you find and treat a problem the easier it is to cure.

FLEAS:

If your rabbit likes a bath, you can bathe him in warm water with a kitten type flea shampoo containing pyrethrins. Wash according to the directions, rinse and dry well. Use a hair dryer set on low and a comb to separate the fur. If your rabbit hates baths, don't take the chance of a struggle and him breaking his back. You can use a flea comb and remove as many fleas as possible then use a kitten type flea powder. Rub this into the fur and down to the skin. After using the flea powder, wipe the outer fur with a damp cloth to remove as much powder as possible. The bunny can't groom as much off this way. Do not use powder or spray on the rabbit's head. "Advantage" has been used with good success, but watch for signs of poisoning such as lethargy, diarrhea and not eating. As with any insecticide, discontinue use if there is any negative reaction.

DANDRUFF:

A DRY FLAKING SKIN MAY BE FUR MITES. The mites are microscopic so you will be unable to tell without a microscope. Irritated, red patches with no fur are indicative of mites. The skin can become crusty. A mite infestation often starts near the base of the ears and the neck. Your vet or Rabbit Haven can best treat this. You may also see very thin hair, dandruff and redness caused by itching due to flea infestation. Check for fleas first.



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MEDICAL CONCERNS

RED URINE:

Rabbits urine varies in color from clear to yellow to brown to bright red. This is usually not a cause for alarm **UNLESS** there are additional signs such as sitting & straining to urinate, loss of appetite or a temperature. When you see red urine, don't panic, just keep your eyes open for other signs that might indicate a problem. The red color will usually be gone in a day or two, but can last for a much longer time. If you're in doubt, your vet can test to see whether or not there is blood in the urine.

AMOXICILLIN DANGER:

Never let a vet give your rabbit Amoxicillin. (It is an antibiotic and is recognizable as a pink liquid that smells like bubble gum. It is killing a very large percentage of the rabbits that receive it.) All drugs in the penicillin family are bad for your rabbit as they kill the "good" germs in the rabbit's intestines and can cause other organs to malfunction. There are other very effective antibiotics that can be safely given to rabbits, such as Baytril. Occasionally, a rabbit can't tolerate one antibiotic. For instance, they may stop eating or experience diarrhea, and another antibiotic will have to be tried instead.

CEDAR & PINE SHAVINGS:

These are very bad for your rabbit and other pets. "Aromatic hydrocarbons from cedar and pine bedding materials can induce biosynthesis and hepatic microsomal enzymes" which are known to cause liver disease. (Quoted from the US Dept. of Health and Human Services guide for the care of laboratory animals.) Please pass the word to pet shops and others who carry this material for small animals. If they won't use it for lab animals, we sure don't want it for our house rabbits. Use organic litter for the litter box and put newspaper in the tray if you have a cage for your rabbit.

SPAY/NEUTER:

The House Rabbit Society has had over 850 (as of March 1991) rabbits spayed or neutered with one reported death from anesthesia. That's .1%, not 10% or 50% that some veterinarians quote as deaths due to anesthesia. To a knowledgeable vet, a rabbit neuter (male) is relatively simple and quite safe. A rabbit spay (female) can be dangerous and life threatening if improper technique or general anesthesia is used. If the female is over 18 months old, it is recommended that blood tests be done to assess liver and kidney function prior to general anesthesia.

Why Spay/Neuter? 80% of unsprayed females (some statistics quote as high as 95%) will get uterine or ovarian cancer between two and five years of age. Preventing cancer by spaying your rabbit will give her the potential to reach her possible life span 8 – 10 years of age. Some rabbits, that I'm aware of, have lived to be 16 years old.

Upon reaching sexual maturity the male rabbit will often become a real nuisance. He will fight with other males. He will fall in love with your slippers (both off and on your feet) and will spray you, your slippers and other items that he wishes to make his very own. Neutering has completely stopped that behavior in all of the males that I've had altered, although it's probably not a guarantee.

AMPUTATIONS:

Rabbits can live as amputees. You many have to help them off and on the couch, but if an accident or illness causes you to make a decision to amputate or to consider euthanasia, please also consider that they can get along just fine on (for instance) just three legs.

PARAPALEGIC RABBITS:

It does not happen often, but it is not uncommon for a rabbit to break their back. Not everyone can put the time and energy into caring for a paraplegic rabbit, but be aware that it is possible for a paraplegic rabbit to live out it's life with you. If it's an only rabbit, you might even consider getting it an older, quieter rabbit as a friend to help with the grooming. I can put you in touch with other people living with this type of friend.

TEETH:

Rabbits teeth can be misaligned. This condition is known as a malocclusion, which means that their constantly growing teeth do not wear properly. If the misalignment is bad, the teeth will need to be clipped periodically so that the rabbit can eat. One of my rabbit's teeth must be clipped weekly, but it is usually



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required on once every 2 – 4 weeks. Your vet or Rabbit Haven can do this for you or show you how to clip your rabbit's teeth at home. The misalignment of the front teeth can be easily seen. The back teeth usually cannot be seen and the vet may have to anesthetize the rabbit in order to check their molars. One indication that their back teeth may be a problem, is a wet chin that is caused by drooling.

HAIRBALLS:

Rabbits shed their hair every three months. Every second shedding is light, followed three months later by a heavy shedding. This is the largest cause of problems and deaths in rabbits. You **MUST** brush and comb your rabbit to get the hair off of them when they start to shed. Rabbits groom themselves like cats and will ingest all of the loose hair on themselves and their rabbit companions. They must have a handful of Timothy Hay each and EVERY DAY (do not give the small compressed hay blocks as the fiber is too small and therefore not helpful) as well as plenty of exercise, in order to help the hair that they do ingest to pass through their system. The hay will not eliminate the need for brushing. Rabbits that ingest carpeting and other material may also suffer from the same symptoms.

The first sign of hairballs (or rabbits having an unusual amount of foreign substance in their stomach): Droppings will get smaller and will often be strung together or will have hairs or pieces of carpet fiber showing in the round droppings. As time goes on, the rabbits' stomachs will get larger and appear to be quite fat, but when petting or rubbing its back, you'll begin to feel the bones as it loses weight on its way to starving to death.

Another idea is to give your rabbit Petromalt or Laxatone (2 brand names of a cat hairball remedy) once a week when not shedding and then daily or twice daily when they shed. Some rabbits like the taste and will lick it from the container. For other rabbits you can smear it on the top of their paw and they will (usually) lick it off. If this gives your rabbit diarrhea, then don't give it to him.

Treating the first signs of hairballs is controversial, please call if you ever have a problem, but the first thing to do is to get them to eat as much roughage as they will. Hay, tree branches, blackberry vines (stickers and all), etc.

SURGERIES:

Food and water should **NOT** be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Ignore this direction if given by the front office staff and discuss this with your vet if the instructions come from him/her. Rabbits cannot throw up and possible vomiting is the reason that food is removed from cats and dogs. It is harmful to the rabbit and causes a longer recovery time if food is removed. The rabbit should also be tempted to eat as soon as they are awake to assist with the recovery process.

PARASITES:

Rabbits can get the common dog or cat flea. Be very careful about the products you use to treat the home and yard, as well as the products you use on your rabbit. If the yard is treated, do not allow your rabbit on it for at least a week and then water it thoroughly to wash off any residual chemicals. Use a spray or "bomb" that contains "pyrethrins" and "precort" (methoprene). Flea powders labeled for use on *kittens* that contain pyrethrins can be used.

A mite that lives on the skin dander of rabbits will cause your rabbit to scratch and if left untreated, will eventually develop thick crusts on their bodies. An injectable drug called Ivermectin can be given twice, two weeks apart, to eliminate this problem. Rabbits can die if the Ivermectin dosage is not correct, so for your home-treatment people, please see your vet for this one.

Ear mites cause rabbits to shake their heads frequently and scratch at their ears. If left untreated, a middle ear infection could develop which can cause a problem with their balance. Ivermectin is again the preferred treatment.

An internal parasite called coccidia can infect the small intestines. Symptoms can be loss of appetite to chronic diarrhea and occasionally death. A rabbit is considered to have diarrhea if the droppings are not firm and round. If the droppings are round but squish when you pick them up, your rabbit has diarrhea. The test for coccidia seems to be the one test that vets routinely perform, but I have yet to have one test positive.



Rabbit Haven

Sue Brennan
PO Box 2268
Gig Harbor, WA 98335
(253) 265-6067



It's usually unnecessary, but might help your peace of mind to have your newly acquired rabbit tested for the above parasites. But once you have your rabbit, if you keep his home clean, these shouldn't be a problem.

PUBLICATIONS

House Rabbit Handbook
By: Marinell Harriman
Available at most bookstores

House Rabbit Journal
(\$12.00 yearly)
1615 Encinal Ave
Alameda, CA 94501

VETERINARY REFERRALS

Please phone if you'd like to find a veterinarian qualified to treat your rabbit. We are finding many veterinarians that are treating rabbits who are not qualified to do so. If a veterinarian is not keeping up on the available literature, he/she will not be aware of the latest antibiotics or the proper anesthesia to use, etc. We have one list of veterinarians that we recommend for spay/neuter surgeries and another list of veterinarians that are well schooled in all phases of rabbit medicine. Unfortunately, this is not a very long list and it has taken us considerable time to locate qualified doctors. If we give you a doctor's name within a clinic, ask for the doctor when you make an appointment.

If your veterinary clinic treats rabbits, I'd like to add them to my mailing list so that I can send them periodic information on rabbit medicine. If we do not have a qualified veterinarian in your area, phone around before you need a doctor. Do not be afraid to ask questions (call us for help).

My highest recommendation for all around rabbit medicine and for someone your veterinarian can consult with is:

Dr. Diane Mitchell
Sno-Wood Veterinary Hospital
17954 Woodinville-Snohomish Rd.
Woodinville, WA
(425)483-5834

Dr. DeCent
Custer Road Animal Hospital
7616 Custer Rd W
Lakewood, WA
(253)474-2121

For excellent spay/neuter surgeries and one of the lower costs in the area:

Dr. J. McGill
Alderwood Companion Animal Hospital
19011 36th Ave W
Lynwood, WA
(206)775-7655

Additional Veterinarian Listings

Dr. Barbara Deeb DMV
Allpet Veterinary Clinic
1222 NE 145th Street
Shoreline, WA
(206)365-1102

Dr. Carla Rasmussen
Evergreen Animal Hospital
6225 Wollochet Dr NW
Gig Harbor, WA
(253)851-9195

Dr. Jones
Jones Animal Hospital
3322 S Union
Tacoma, WA
(253)383-2616